Effective Design of Visual Aids

A Case Study in Communication Skills

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Introduction

Objectives

- Practice-oriented guidelines and key rules to design effective visual aids
- Teaching and training purposes
- Focuses on designing PowerPoint presentations

Outline

- Importance of Visual Aids
- Types and occasions for visual aids
- Designing Visual Aids
    - Key Rules for an Effective Design
    - Other Decisions in Effective Design
- Using Visual Aids
- Avoiding Problems during the Presentation
- A Case Study

1. The Importance of Visual Aids

- We use visual aids because they:
  - Clarify and simplify material
  - Emphasize some points
  - Illustrate some complicated passages:
    by pictures, sound or animation.
  - Help visual learners
  - Add audience's participation and engagement
  - Save time
  - Serve as an outline for the trainees

2. Types of Visual Aids

- There are numerous ways, which include:
    - Black- or white boards and pens,
    - Projector and transparencies,
    - Flip charts,
    - Colored paper and glue and pens, to create flow charts
    - PowerPoint Presentations,
    - Video tapes about certain topics
    - Video recording

Occasions for Visual Aids

- Occasions for presentations include:
  - Teaching & Training
  - Business Meetings (Selling, Marketing)
  - Academic conferences and seminars
  - Presenting a Project or Research
  - Persuasion in Social Development
  - Sometimes: Send a greeting
  - Telling a Story, drawing a "slide (for kids)

Occasions for Visual Aids (continued)

- The appropriate visual aid you decide to use varies on your audience, topic and occasion, and whether or not it is appropriate for it.

- Examples:
  - Colored paper & glue ➡ younger audience or workshops
  - PowerPoint ➡ standard in formal meetings
  - Flipchart ➡ less formal and offers interactivity with the audience

Pros & Cons of PowerPoint

PowerPoint pros:

- relatively inexpensive
- attractive designs
- smooth transitions between slides
- possible to add/subtract material from slides

PowerPoint cons:

- complicated equipment required
- hassle to set up
- special effects often distracting
- time-consuming to prepare, except for experienced users.

3. Designing Visual Aids

Before proceeding to design

MATERIAL

- Prepare the material into a logical sequence

- Break the flowing text into small units

- Skip some passages or rephrase

ROOM

- Check the room, computer & screen that will be used

- Check lines of sight to your visual aids from all parts of the seating area

- Check PowerPoint versions

Key Rules for an Effective Design

Main Aim:

- To make your audience understand and remember key points

- Leave out any material where you might say:

  - "Skip this"

  - "This might not be important"

1) Make each visual stand on its own

- clear and understandable on its own
- limit each slide to only one topic, and give it a relevant title
  - Continued after a title
  - Tables can be broken down
- number headings to show where you are
- highlight key information to focus your audience's attention
- make points concise yet meaningful
- avoid abbreviations unfamiliar to your audience

2) Achieve balanced and consistent layouts

- Slides should fit together into a coherent whole
  → "creating a unity"

- Choose a Master Slide and background or a certain color scheme

- keep type sizes and fonts consistent

- format headings consistently in color & size

- use no more than two fonts per slide

- choose contrasting colours

- use parallel grammar for points

3) Make visuals easy to read

- Visuals are only effective if your audience can physically see them
- Aim: Make visuals easy & fast to read
- no less than 24 - 28 point font for main text
- no less than 32 - 40 point font for headings
- avoid distracting, unnecessary graphics and complex backgrounds
- use clear, standard fonts (even in Arabic)

3) Make visuals easy to read (continued)

- consider boldface lettering
- avoid putting much text in italics or upper-case
- limit each point to one line when possible
- spread the information, that it fills the screen
- ensure diagrams are not too complicated

WordArt: choose the readable Word Art formats

limit it to headings only

4) Include only your main points

- visuals should aid your audience, not you!
- write only main points on your visuals, not details
- Avoid long sentences and passages, they:
  - consume more time when reading
  - distract your audience from what you're saying
- make your points clear: do not simply break up paragraphs
- assume your audience will copy down everything on a visual

Other Decisions in Effective Design

Graphics

- graphics should clarify the content, not complicate it
- leave out any clips or pictures that aren't really relevant or might distract the audience
- Avoid overuse
- Colors should match the used template
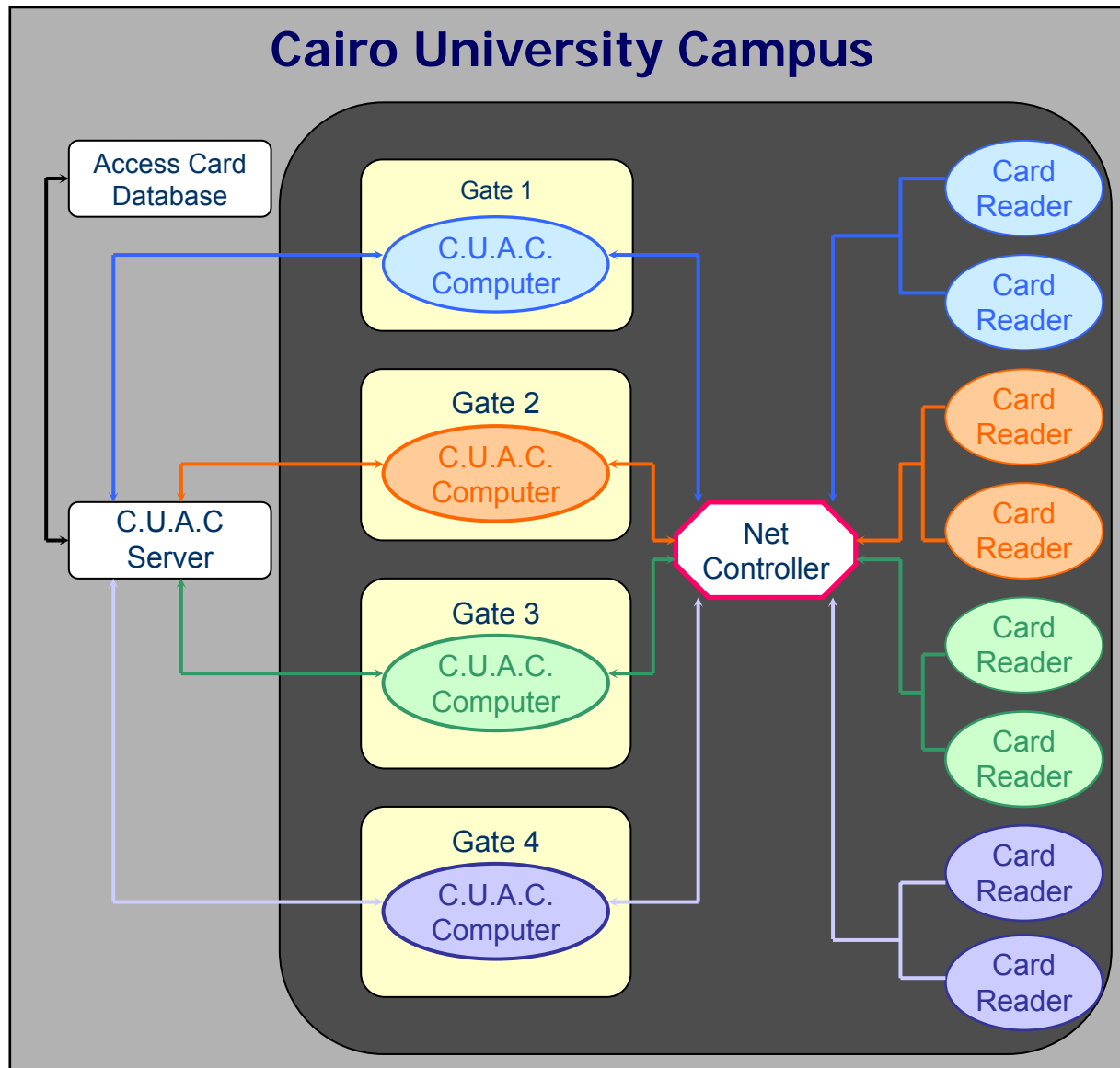- Screenshots are very attractive (Print Screen)

Other Decisions in Effective Design
(continued)

Animation

- not always distracting, when used logically
- standard and professional animation:
  - Appear & Wipe Out
  - or Fade in & Fade Out
- Avoid overuse, can be distracting
- Motion can also help to clarify the process in complex charts and graphs

Example from another presentation

Cairo University Campus

Access Card Database

C.U.A.C Server

Gate 1 — C.U.A.C. Computer
Gate 2 — C.U.A.C. Computer
Gate 3 — C.U.A.C. Computer
Gate 4 — C.U.A.C. Computer

Net Controller

Card Reader

Other Decisions in Effective Design
(continued)

Sound

- It's not usual to add sound in visual aids for training purpose
- Unless it's really relevant or clarifying
- Example:

    camera sound in photographer's portfolio

Other Decisions in Effective Design
(continued)

Video clips

- might help clarify a situation,
- for example in:

    English Language

    or Communication Skills

Other Decisions in Effective Design
(continued)

Timed presentations

- option to time each slide so it moves automatically
- <u>Benefits</u>
  - lessens the trainer's clicking
  - keeps him focused
  - helps him to stick to the scheduled time
- <u>Drawbacks</u>
  - if the trainer cannot keep track or hasn't practised enough ➡ a presentation disaster

Other Decisions in Effective Design
(continued)

Slide transition

- options to animate the slide transition
- subtle transitions:
  - won't distract your audience
  - will maintain their attention

A possible structure for your presentation

- Title/author/affiliation/ logo (1 slide)
- Goals of the material (1 slide)
- Outline (1 slide)
- Body of Material (not less than 5 slides)
- Summary (1 slide)
- Bibliography (Sources) (0-1 slides)
- Acknowledgments (0-1 slides)
- Thank the Audience (1 slide)

4. Using Visual Aids

1) Use visuals to help your audience

USE THEM TO

- Focus the audience's attention
- Reinforce key components
- Maintain interest
- Visualize complex concepts
- Aid the audience's comprehension
- Increase retention

DON'T USE THEM TO

- Impress your audience
- Limit interaction with your audience
- Present simple ideas that are easily stated verbally
- Serve as your cue cards
- Avoid information overload

1) Use visuals to help your audience
(continued)

- Do not block view off the screen
- Do not wave with your hands a lot
- Avoid causing shadow
- Avoid monotonous presentation:
    - Make examples
    - Relate to previous material
    - Ask questions

2) Interact with your audience

- Do not get "Slidewiped"
- Maintain eye contact
- Do not directly read from visual aids
- Visual aids are <u>for your audience</u>
- Position screens diagonally of the class, you remain the center
- Don't stand in front of the projector's light
  (glare, heat, distraction)

5. Avoiding Problems during the Presentation

Before the presentation:

- Experiment with arrangements of furniture and visual aids

- Test overhead projectors and screens :
  - to focus and find the right distance for the projector to fill the screen

- Place overhead slides in a pile in order, right side up before the presentation, and number them

- Whatever happens, DON'T PANIC

5. Avoiding Problems during the Presentation (continued)

- You cannot use the prepared presentation:
  - Always have a "Plan B"
  - Refer to handouts or printed presentation
- You find you have less time than you thought:
  - Don't talk faster or skip slides
  - But talk less, stick to the main points in each unit
- People are moving ahead in the handouts at their own pace, not what you planned:
  - Refer to handout numbers
  - Give them an overview of the handouts

5. Avoiding Problems during the Presentation (continued)

- Someone else is assigned to handle the presentation
  - Say politely that you'd like to handle your own overheads
  - Set up a hand cuing system with the overhead operator
  - If possible, rehearse
- You drop your overheads on the floor
  - Make a joke about your clumsiness
  - Pick them up & take a few moments to put them in order

6. Communication Skills Course
A Case Study

Prepare and Organize the Material

- Get familiar with the place
- Downsize 80 pages into a trainee-friendly presentation, using a wordprocessor
- Keeping headlines & main points only
- Using tables
- Occasionally, refer to page numbers in the book

Consistent and balanced layout

- Color scheme:
    - Dark blue on white background
    - Purpose: to keep lights on, maintain eye contact
- Each file covered a chapter
- Three files, which had an identical layout to maintain unity

Pathways to Higher Education
Faculty of Engineering - CAPSCU
Cairo University

CAPSCU
Pathw@ys

Communication Skills

Chapter One
Communication
Concepts and Process

Make slides easy to read

- Main Points only
- Use colored bullets to indicate order of ideas

Intrapersonal Communication

- takes place within the individual.
- Includes:
  - Thinking
  - Remembering
  - Dreaming
  - Deciding.

Make slides easy to read (2)

- Used tables to show information in a concise form
- Used colors to give certain meaning
- Red
  - for what not to do,
- Black
  - for what you should do

A Guide to Verbal Skills

Do speak:	• With expressiveness and enthusiasm in your voice.
Do not speak:	• In a boring monotone.
Do speak: Do not speak:	• In a warm, pleasant tone. • In a distracting tone, for example, too nasal too high, too rough, or too whiny.
Do speak: Do not speak:	• Audibly • Too quietly aware of this pitfall especially (1) you are using visual aids, (2) you are woman. (3) your volume tends to drop tow the ends of your sentences.

What pictures can I use?

Emphasize meaning, by related pictures

(a "big ear" for listening skills)

Listening

- The importance of Active Listening
  - means the search for the real meaning of the message
  - Listening and Job Success
- Types of Listening
  - Selective Listening (e.g. TV)
  - Comprehensive Listening (e.g. Lecture)
  - Critical Listening (e.g. for analysis of speech)
  - Appreciative Listening (e.g. music)

What pictures can I use? (2)

Signs of Poor Listening (continued)

- Evading the difficult or technical (giving up to listen when you don't understand)
- Submitting to emotional words
- Sleeping (e.g. in Egyptian Parliament)
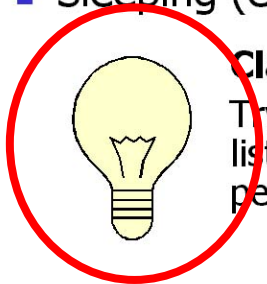
Class Activity:
Try to apply those nine signs of poor listening on situations you encounter in personal life or watch in mass media.

Use certain clip arts to indicate Class activities

(a light bulb)

Should I use animation or not?

- Generally, minimal animation
- Sometimes, in flowcharts to clarify the process
- To focus the audience's attention

Thank you for your attention