How to Prepare a Project-Based Business English Presentation in the Vocational Higher Education Context

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Abstract:
This article presents the process of preparing project-based business English presentations in the vocational higher education context. It emphasizes the relevance of these presentations in preparing students for the workforce by developing practical skills. The article provides a comprehensive guide, covering topic selection, research, presentation organization, and the development of language and communication skills. Likewise, it offers strategies for delivering engaging presentations, managing anxiety, and handling questions. The importance of evaluation, self-reflection, and ongoing improvement is highlighted. By following the guidelines offered in this article, students can enhance their communication abilities, gain confidence, and effectively showcase their business English skills in a vocational higher education setting.

INTRODUCTION

Within the realm of vocational higher education, the ability to deliver impactful business English presentations holds tremendous significance for students aspiring to thrive in the professional world (Anas et al., 2022). These presentations serve as a pivotal tool for honing practical skills and equipping individuals with the essential competencies demanded by contemporary workplaces (Musdariah et al., 2016). This article delves into the intricacies of preparing project-based business English presentations specifically tailored for the vocational higher education context, providing

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valuable insights and guidance. Despite the increasing recognition of project-based learning in vocational higher education and the importance of business English presentations for preparing students to thrive in their professional endeavors, there is a notable absence of comprehensive guidance on effectively preparing and delivering project-based business English presentations tailored to the vocational higher education context. Existing literature predominantly focuses on general presentation skills or business English language proficiency, without providing specific strategies and approaches that address the distinct requirements and challenges faced by vocational higher education students. As a result, there is a clear need for research that explores optimal practices, methodologies, and tools specifically designed to assist vocational higher education students in successfully preparing and delivering project-based business English presentations, while considering the industry-specific knowledge and skills crucial for their future careers.

The journey commences with the crucial task of selecting an appropriate topic, urging students to opt for projects that seamlessly blend relevance and alignment with their course objectives. By thoughtfully choosing practical business subjects, students can forge a direct connection between classroom learning and real-world applications, fostering their confidence in delivering a presentation (Marcel, 2015). To establish a strong foundation, comprehensive research efforts are advised, enabling students to gather reliable information and data pertinent to their chosen topic (Hanifa & Yusra, 2018). This entails sourcing material from reputable sources and implementing proper citation techniques. A well-informed presentation not only showcases expertise but also instills confidence in both the presenter and the audience (Medina & Avant, 2015). A paramount aspect of successful presentations lies in the organization and structure employed. Students are guided in crafting a cohesive framework that flows smoothly, encompassing an engaging introduction and a compelling conclusion. By emphasizing the significance of these pivotal elements, students can leave a lasting impact and effectively convey their intended message.

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Developing language proficiency and effective communication skills form the bedrock of delivering a compelling business English presentation (Bhatia & Bremner, 2012; Sweeney, 2003). In doing so, students are encouraged to expand their vocabulary and familiarize themselves with industry-specific terminology relevant to their chosen project. They are also introduced to effective communication strategies, such as clear pronunciation, appropriate intonation, and the skillful utilization of visual aids, body language, and eye contact (Jothi et al., 2015; Lee & Oh, 2013). Moreover, ample opportunities for practice and constructive feedback are provided, enabling students to refine their presentation skills and continually enhance their performance. Such opportunities include the actual delivery of the presentation which necessitates the adept management of nerves and anxiety to ensure a confident and engaging performance. Alongside this, strategies encompassing relaxation techniques and positive self-talk are recommended to help students overcome stage fright and deliver their presentations with poise and assurance.

Engaging the audience throughout the presentation is another crucial aspect that should not be underestimated (Stuart, 2013). Students are introduced to various techniques and approaches to captivate and maintain the attention of their listeners. By incorporating interactive elements, compelling narratives, and thought-provoking visuals, students can create a captivating and memorable experience for their audience. Part of audience engagement necessitates effectively handling of questions and feedback which is yet another vital skill that students must master. They are encouraged to actively listen to questions, provide thoughtful responses, and engage in constructive dialogues with their audience. This skill not only demonstrates a deep understanding of the topic but also showcases their ability to think critically and communicate persuasively. Evaluation and assessment serve as integral components of the students' learning process. Clear criteria are delineated to assess the content, language proficiency, and delivery of the presentation. By establishing individual and group goals, students are motivated to strive for excellence and consistently push themselves to achieve improvement.

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UNDERSTANDING THE CONTEXT

Vocational higher education in Indonesia pertains to specialized educational programs that focus on equipping students with practical skills and knowledge essential for specific professions or industries. It aims to prepare students for the workforce by emphasizing the application of the theory in real-world settings (Fairman et al., 2020). In the context of business administration students, vocational higher education programs aim to enhance their competencies in various business-related areas, including management, marketing, finance, and entrepreneurship (Musdariah et al., 2021). In this setting, business English is a mandatory subject that highlights the significance of language proficiency and effective communication skills in the business realm (Wen, 2022). It focuses on the use of English for professional purposes such as presentations, negotiations, and business correspondence. By developing their business English skills, students are equipped to communicate effectively in a business environment where English is widely used as a global language of commerce. Such is anchored on the notion that business communication skill is needed to become at par with the global standards. In fact, effective communication in dealing with customers and peers was identified as one of the skill trends of 2023, alongside digital skills, data visualization and management skills (The Job Skills, 2023).

The unique requirements of vocational higher education in Indonesia for business administration students revolve around practical applications and industry relevance (Mahirda & Wahyuni, 2016). The curriculum is designed to provide hands-on experience and foster a profound understanding of business principles and practices. Students engage in real-world scenarios, case studies, and industry-specific challenges to enhance their critical thinking and problem-solving abilities. Moreover, vocational higher education in Indonesia aims to prepare students for the local job market by aligning the curriculum with industrial needs and trends. Such exhibits continuous change in the educational landscape of Indonesia, placing graduates of vocational schools to be competitive and responsive to the challenges of the industry (Putro et. al, 2022). This ensures that graduates possess the

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sought-after skills and knowledge required by employers in the business sector. Ultimately, the goal is to enhance students' employability and career prospects by equipping them with the necessary competencies to succeed in their chosen professions within a dynamic business landscape. Given this, academicians and scholars continuously reflect on how students can be competent, attempting to build a framework of reference in Business Communication while underscoring a graduate's ability to contribute in the job market (Wahyuni et al., 2018).

PREPARING FOR THE PRESENTATION

Conducting Research

Conducting research is essential in the preparation of a presentation as it allows presenters to acquire in-depth knowledge, ensure accuracy and credibility, identify relevant and up-to-date information, enhance the quality of content, and add value and depth to their presentation.

In addition to these benefits, conducting research also enables presenters to anticipate and address potential questions or counterarguments that may arise during the presentation. By thoroughly researching their topic, presenters can anticipate different perspectives and viewpoints, allowing them to prepare well-thought-out responses and engage in meaningful discussions with their audience. Gathering information about the audience and the context of the presentation are essential during the preparation stage. To become a good presenter, Mauludin (2019) suggests being prepared in aspects such as materials, the setting and equipment available during the presentation, and these can be part of any speaker's initial step in gathering information. Understanding one's audience and context of delivery can enable the speaker to establish good connection (Mauludin, 2019). With the audience carefully considered as part of the preparation, the speaker increases the credibility of their presentation (DeCaro, Adams & Jefferis, 2022).

Moreover, research provides presenters with the opportunity to discover and incorporate compelling examples, case studies, and real-world applications, making their

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presentation more relatable and impactful. By showcasing the practical relevance of their topic through well-researched evidence, presenters can capture the interest and attention of their audience, creating a memorable and persuasive presentation experience. Thus, conducting research is a fundamental step that can contribute to the overall success and effectiveness of the presentation.

Organizing the Presentation

Organizing a successful business presentation involves eight steps. It begins with careful planning which involve understanding of the audience and having a well-defined objective (Pinson, 2008). The next step is structuring the content by dividing it into sections with seamless transitions, and utilize visual aids to enhance the presentation's impact. Following this step is engaging the audience through interactive elements and encourage participation for active learning. Equally important is having practice and refining the delivery, paying attention to tone, body language, and pace, while seeking feedback for improvement. Completing this step is preparing for the question-and-answer session and managing time effectively. By following these steps, a business presentation can captivate the audience, convey the message clearly, and achieve the desired objectives. These steps are elaborated in Table 1.

Table 1
Organizing a business presentation

Steps	Descriptions
Understand your audience	Prior to arranging your presentation, it is important to obtain a comprehensive comprehension of your intended audience, encompassing their level of knowledge and areas of interest. Tailor your content and manner of delivery to cater to their particular requirements.
Define the objective	It is crucial to clearly define the purpose of your presentation and the specific outcome you intend to accomplish, whether it is to inform, persuade, or inspire your audience. This clarity will keep you focused and enable you to deliver a well-structured and cohesive message.
Structure the content	Structure your presentation by dividing it into coherent sections that seamlessly transition from one to the next. Start with a captivating opening that grabs the audience's attention and provides context for your topic. Organize the main body of your presentation into key points or topics, supported by appropriate data, examples, and visuals. Finally, wrap up with a concise summary that highlights the main takeaways and ends with a

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	compelling call to action, encouraging the audience to take the desired next steps.
Utilize visual aids	Elevate the quality of your presentation by incorporating visual aids, such as slides or graphics that effectively reinforce your key messages. These visual elements serve to enhance audience engagement and comprehension. It is important to maintain a consistent visual framework throughout your presentation to ensure a polished and cohesive appearance that aligns with your content. By doing so, you create a professional and visually appealing presentation that effectively supports and complements your overall message.
Engage your audience	To maintain a high level of audience engagement, integrate interactive elements into your presentation, such as thought-provoking questions, interactive activities, or relevant case studies. These elements encourage active participation and foster a deeper connection between the audience and the material being presented. By creating opportunities for interaction and involvement, you promote active learning and increase the audience's understanding and retention of the information. Encouraging participation also helps to make the presentation more memorable and impactful, as it allows individuals to actively apply the concepts being discussed, fostering a more immersive and engaging learning experience.
Practice and refine	To ensure a polished and effective presentation, it is crucial to dedicate time to rehearse and become familiar with the content. During rehearsal, pay close attention to your tone of voice, body language, and pacing. Practice delivering the presentation in a confident and engaging manner, aiming for a natural flow. Seeking feedback from trusted colleagues or recording yourself can provide valuable insights and help you refine your presentation skills. By actively reviewing and incorporating feedback, you can make necessary adjustments to improve your delivery, enhance clarity, and increase overall impact. Rehearsing and seeking feedback are essential steps in becoming a more effective and persuasive presenter.
Prepare for Q&A	In preparation for your presentation, it is important to anticipate potential questions that may arise from the audience. Take time to consider different perspectives and potential areas of interest or concern. By anticipating these questions, you can be better prepared to provide thoughtful and well-informed responses. When addressing questions during the presentation, demonstrate confidence in your knowledge and expertise on the subject matter. Respond in a professional and respectful manner, ensuring that your answers are clear, concise, and relevant to the inquiry. Engage in active listening, acknowledging the questioner and maintaining a positive and respectful tone throughout your response. By addressing questions effectively, you enhance your credibility as a presenter and create a favorable impression among your audience.
Manage time effectively	To demonstrate respect for your audience's time, it is essential to deliver your presentation within the designated timeframe. Practice your presentation with a timer to ensure that you can effectively cover all the essential points while allowing ample room for interaction and discussion. Time management is key to maintaining engagement and preventing the presentation from feeling rushed or incomplete. By rehearsing and timing your presentation, you can adjust your pace and make necessary

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adjustments to ensure a smooth flow within the allotted time. This enables you to strike a balance between delivering the core content and allowing for valuable audience participation, fostering a more interactive and meaningful experience

Developing Language and Communication Skills

Developing language and communication skills is essential for successful business presentations (Hargie, 2006). Effective communication allows presenters to convey their message clearly and engage their audience. It involves using strong language skills to articulate ideas concisely and employing persuasive techniques to captivate listeners. By adapting language and communication style to the audience, presenters can establish rapport and build trust (Barker, 2019).

Proficient language and communication skills are particularly crucial in a business context. They enable presenters to deliver complex information in a clear and understandable manner, showcasing professionalism and expertise (Kumar & Lata, 2015). Strong communication skills also enhance the presenter's credibility, instilling confidence in the audience. Continuously honing these skills empowers presenters to deliver impactful presentations that resonate with their audience, leading to successful outcomes.

Effective communication strategies

Effective communication strategies are crucial for presenters as they enable the clear delivery of their message, ensure audience understanding, and achieve the desired impact. These strategies help presenters engage and connect with their audience, convey ideas persuasively, and deliver information in a memorable and meaningful way.

Key strategies for effective communication during presentations include using clear and concise language, organizing content in a structured manner, incorporating visual aids to enhance understanding (Kernbach et al., 2014), actively listening to the audience, employing engaging delivery techniques, and adapting to the audience's needs. By implementing these strategies, presenters can effectively communicate their message, hold

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the audience's attention, and create a presentation experience that is both engaging and impactful.

Practice and feedback

Practice and feedback play a vital role in preparing for a business presentation as they contribute to the improvement and refinement of both content and delivery. Practicing allows presenters to become familiar with the presentation's flow, internalize key points, and deliver the content confidently (Asnur, 2013). Through practice, presenters can identify areas that require further development, adjust timing, and ensure a cohesive and smooth presentation. Moreover, practice helps presenters enhance their delivery skills, including voice projection, body language, and eye contact. By rehearsing, presenters become more comfortable with their presentation style, enabling them to effectively engage the audience and maintain their attention (Asnur, 2013).

Additionally, seeking feedback from others is invaluable in improving the presentation's quality. External feedback provides fresh perspectives and insights, highlighting strengths and areas for improvement. It allows presenters to make necessary adjustments, refine their content and delivery, and tailor the presentation to better resonate with the audience. Feedback also helps presenters gauge the audience's understanding and perception, enabling them to make targeted improvements. Therefore, incorporating practice and feedback into the preparation process is crucial for a successful business presentation. It allows presenters to enhance their confidence, refine their delivery skills, and receive valuable insights to improve the overall quality and impact of their presentation.

In the classroom setting, feedback also plays an important role in improving student's overall performance. In a study conducted by Santos (2021) among technical-vocational livelihood students (TVL), the researcher recommends that teachers use varied tools in teaching and assessing students' communication skills. Part of which is using

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analytic rubric in assessing the latter. With the use of such tool, the learners can be provided feedback about their performance.

DELIVERING THE PRESENTATION

Managing nerves and anxiety

One of the indicators of successful presentation is the ability to manage nervousness and anxiety, requiring a presenter to have a high motivation (Tanaka, 2022). To overcome the feeling of anxiety during a presentation, the implementation of strategies suggested in relevant literature can prove highly beneficial for students, ultimately leading to improved performance. According to Asnur (2013), these strategies encompass five aspects: Firstly, maintaining a positive mindset towards the audience, the content of the speech, and oneself as the speaker is crucial. Secondly, thorough preparation is essential, encompassing the organization of presentation materials, creation of effective PowerPoint slides, and attention to personal appearance, speech delivery, and overall physical well-being. Thirdly, engaging in rehearsal and practice with the guidance of supervisors and colleagues plays a significant role. This includes receiving feedback on grammar, pronunciation, and overall performance. Fourthly, cultivating self-confidence is emphasized, which can be achieved through comprehensive preparation, positive thinking, a polished appearance, physical well-being, and a genuine smile. Lastly, incorporating relaxation techniques both prior to and during the presentation can help manage anxiety levels.

Engaging the audience

Engaging the audience can be done through creating effective slide presentations (Medina & Avant, 2015). Well-designed slides serve as visual aids that support the presenter's message, promote comprehension, and encourage active participation. To ensure audience engagement, it is important to consider key aspects of slide creation. This includes selecting visually appealing designs and layouts that align with the presentation's theme. By employing suitable colors, fonts, and graphics, the slides can convey the intended atmosphere and enhance visual appeal (Kernbach et al., 2014). In addition, the slide content

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should be concise, relevant, and logically organized. Avoiding information overload and opting for bullet points, images, or diagrams that effectively convey key points can optimize audience comprehension. High-quality visuals, such as charts or infographics, can also enhance engagement and facilitate understanding.

Integrating subtle visual effects, such as animations or transitions, can further captivate the audience's attention and sustain their interest (Zelazny, 2006). However, it is important to use these effects judiciously, ensuring they enhance rather than distract from the core message. Furthermore, incorporating interactive elements into slide presentations can foster audience participation. Embedded quizzes, clickable links, or interactive prompts encourage the audience to respond, ask questions, or provide feedback. This interactive approach creates a more immersive experience, fostering a stronger connection and facilitating better understanding. Therefore, developing impactful slide presentations is a valuable strategy for engaging the audience. By focusing on design, content organization, visual effects, and interactivity, presenters can create a captivating presentation experience that effectively communicates their message and promotes audience engagement.

Handling questions and feedback

Efficiently managing questions and feedback is of utmost importance in a business presentation as it enables presenters to actively engage with the audience, address any uncertainties or concerns, and enhance the overall effectiveness and value of their presentation (Anderson, 2013). Firstly, skillfully handling questions and feedback showcases the presenter's expertise and credibility, thus providing thoughtful and well-informed responses to establish themselves as knowledgeable professionals in their field, earning the audience's trust and confidence in the information being presented.

Secondly, questions and feedback offer valuable opportunities for clarification and further exploration, thus opening an opportunity for a dialogue and discussion (Carless, 2016). They allow presenters to delve deeper into specific topics, elaborate on key points, and provide additional examples or evidence to support their arguments. This interactive

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dialogue ensures that the audience comprehends the content thoroughly and helps rectify any potential misunderstandings or misconceptions. Moreover, engaging with questions and feedback encourages active participation from the audience, creating an atmosphere of inclusivity and involvement. Such interaction not only enhances the audience's learning experience but also enables presenters to assess the audience's level of understanding and adapt their delivery accordingly.

Furthermore, embracing questions and feedback demonstrates the presenter's willingness to listen, learn, and grow. Constructive feedback provides valuable insights and suggestions for improvement, enabling presenters to refine their content, delivery style, and overall presentation skills (Rosa et al., 2016). This iterative process fosters continuous growth and development in delivering impactful presentations. Therefore, effectively managing questions and feedback is essential in a business presentation as it allows presenters to engage with the audience, establish credibility, clarify information, and cultivate an interactive environment. By skillfully addressing questions and feedback, presenters can elevate the quality and impact of their presentations, enhance audience comprehension, and continuously refine their presentation skills.

EVALUATION AND REFLECTION

Self-reflection

Self-reflection is a crucial aspect of delivering a business presentation as it empowers presenters to evaluate their performance and identify areas for improvement. Through self-reflection, presenters can gain a deeper understanding of their strengths and weaknesses (Grez et al., 2009). This can allow the presenter to (1) evaluate and refine their content; (2) assess deliver style and techniques; (3) gauge impact to audience; and (4) make necessary adjustments.

They can critically analyze their delivery style, content organization, and audience engagement strategies. By identifying areas that require enhancement, presenters can focus on honing their skills and refining their presentation approach. In addition to assessing

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personal strengths and weaknesses, self-reflection allows presenters to evaluate the effectiveness of their content and messaging. Presenters can reflect on whether their message was clear, concise, and tailored to the audience's needs. By analyzing the content, presenters can identify gaps or areas that need further elaboration or supporting evidence. This evaluation enables them to refine their content and ensure future presentations are more focused and compelling, resonating with the audience more effectively.

Furthermore, self-reflection helps presenters assess their delivery style and techniques. They can reflect on their tone of voice, body language, and overall stage presence. By examining these aspects, presenters can gauge how they influenced audience engagement and perception. For example, using a video-assisted self-reflection (VASR) can help presenters evaluate their oral English presentations (Li, 2018). Self-reflection enables presenters to make necessary adjustments, such as improving vocal modulation, utilizing effective gestures, or enhancing their overall stage presence. This process allows presenters to elevate their delivery and create a more impactful and confident presentation experience for the audience. Therefore, self-reflection is a fundamental practice for presenters preparing for a business presentation. It enables them to evaluate their performance, identify areas for improvement, and refine their approach. By assessing personal strengths and weaknesses, evaluating content effectiveness, and reflecting on delivery techniques, presenters can enhance their presentation skills and deliver more engaging and impactful presentations.

Peer-reflection

Peer-reflection is an essential component of delivering a business presentation as it offers valuable insights and perspectives from colleagues or peers. It positions the presenter to (1) external viewpoints on the presentation; (2) opportunities for collaboration and knowledge sharing; (3) the culture of continuous improvement; (4) supportive environment; (5) growth and improvement.

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Seeking feedback from others provides an external viewpoint on various aspects of the presentation, including content, delivery style, visuals, and audience engagement (Hattie & Timperley, 2007). This external perspective allows presenters to gain a more comprehensive understanding of how their presentation is perceived by others, helping them identify strengths and areas for improvement. In addition to the external viewpoint, peer-reflection promotes collaboration and knowledge-sharing. Engaging in constructive discussions with colleagues or peers allows presenters to tap into their collective expertise and experiences. Colleagues may have encountered similar presentation scenarios or possess unique insights to offer. By seeking feedback, presenters can learn from their colleagues, gather fresh ideas, and refine their presentation approach based on the collective wisdom of their peers. This collaborative approach not only enhances the quality of the presentation but also fosters a culture of continuous improvement.

Moreover, peer-reflection creates a supportive and encouraging environment. By establishing a safe space for open and honest feedback, presenters can receive constructive criticism from their colleagues. This environment nurtures personal and professional growth, enabling presenters to discuss their strengths and weaknesses openly, exchange ideas, and receive guidance on how to improve their presentation skills. The supportive nature of peer-reflection allows presenters to build confidence, refine their delivery, and explore new strategies to engage and connect with their audience. Therefore, peer-reflection plays a pivotal role in delivering a business presentation by providing an external viewpoint, promoting collaboration and knowledge-sharing, and fostering a supportive environment. For example, Capp et al. (2018) assert that learning together through peer tutoring can grow learners' socio-emotional need. By seeking feedback from colleagues or peers, presenters can gain valuable insights, refine their presentation approach, and ultimately deliver more effective and impactful presentations. The collaborative nature of peer-reflection facilitates growth and improvement, helping presenters enhance their skills and create meaningful connections with their audience.

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CONCLUSION

In the context of vocational higher education, the proficiency to deliver influential business English presentations carries immense importance for students aiming to excel in their future professional endeavors (Anas et al., 2022). Mastering the art of conducting project-based business English presentations in the vocational higher education context is crucial for students aiming to thrive in the professional world. Through comprehensive research, effective communication strategies, meticulous organization, and continuous practice, students can develop the necessary skills to deliver impactful presentations. Engaging the audience, handling questions and feedback, and seeking self-reflection and peer-reflection further contribute to their growth and improvement. By honing these essential presentation skills, students can confidently navigate the demands of the business world, effectively communicate their ideas, and make a lasting impression in their chosen field. Moreover, recognizing the significance of teamwork is crucial within this framework, as it allows for the integration of various viewpoints, stimulates innovation, and guarantees a comprehensive presentation. By cultivating a collaborative environment and leveraging the collective abilities and proficiencies of team members, students can craft compelling presentations that resonate with the audience. In doing so, the student does not only have to establish connection with their peer but also with their teacher, who can provide meaningful feedback and support as they journey with the project. Ultimately, the mastery of project-based business English presentations alongside an appreciation for teamwork empowers students to thrive in their vocational higher education pursuits and equips them for triumph in their future professional endeavors.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

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CONFLICT OF INTEREST

No conflict of interest reported by the author

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