

DIFFICULTIES IN MAKING PRESENTATION OF ENGLISH-MAJORED JUNIORS AT TAY DO UNIVERSITY IN VIET NAM

Nga H.T. NGUYEN, Tay Do University, Vietnam

Thi D. Thai, Tay Do University, Vietnam

ABSTRACT

English is a popular language in the world. It has become an important part of society and plays an important role in students' academic and professional development. It can be seen that English presentation skills are one of indispensable skills in study, work, and travel. However, students majoring in English language face some problems in the process of studying and giving presentations in English. For the above reason, the research "Difficulties in making presentation of English-majored juniors at Tay Do University" is to find out some common factors that cause difficulties for students majoring in English in presentation skills. The subjects of this study are 60 students majoring in English, year 3, class 14, randomly selected from classes 14A, 14B, and 14C. The questionnaire is used as a data collection tool. Finally, the findings of this research will point out the participants' difficulties in background knowledge, vocabulary, pronunciation, and psychology.

Key words: *presentation, English-majored juniors, difficulty, university*

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Rationale

Nowadays, English is an international language in the world. It is commonly used in many countries and is indispensable in today's modern society. Meyer (2009) says "It is the language of government, the law, the media, education, and business. Because of the significance of English language, it has been extensively studied and taught." Many countries around the world use English as their mother tongue, with more than a quarter of the world's population using this language, including Vietnam. According to Harmer (2004), "Speaking is used for a variety of purposes that involves many skills thus, the capability to speak a new language is challenging for second language learners." Currently, English is an indispensable need in the era of global citizenship integration. In the face of the integration of the world along with the penetration of foreign companies into the Vietnamese market, the importance of English has been shown even more. Having good language skills and using them fluently in communication helps students become more confident with international friends. To learn English effectively, students need to have good presentation skills. In addition to the four basic skills of English, presentation is also an important skill to help students improve English levels. Indeed, in studying as well as at work, presentation skills become an essential skill to match the appropriate needs in life. If you want to become a senior leader, you must have a lot of skills, including presentation skills. Many young people succeed by expressing themselves in front of a crowd in seminars. Good presentation skills help students communicate fluently, professionally, and effectively in study and work. In the process of learning presentation skills, students learn many skills for future work. Not only practice English, but presentations also help students practice personal skills with confidence in communication. Especially with the ability to communicate fluently, students have a forward to thinking and outperform those who do not learn foreign languages.

At Tay Do University, students are exposed and have many opportunities to give English presentations in the school academic programs. Students are required to give English presentations with familiar topics as an assessment of students' ability. However, speaking in English is a challenge for students because some people think that presentation skills are not more important than other skills, so they often do not care about and spend little time on improving this skill. As an English major, a third-year English major has some difficulties in presentation skills.

For the above reasons, the study “Difficulties in making presentation of English- majored juniors at Tay Do University” to find out some factors affecting the students' presentation ability. Furthermore, the purpose is to help students realize their problems and find good methods to improve presentation skills.

1.2 Significance of the study

Presentation skills are considered a challenging subject that many students are neglectful in the process of studying English. The research is conducted to find out the problems that English-majored juniors at Tay Do University face in English presentation skills. Based on the issues found, students can recognize difficulties, be more motivated to learn, overcome obstacles, and improve presentation skills.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Definitions of presentation and its importance

2.1.1 Definitions of presentation

Presentation is an activity that students are exposed to a lot at university, and it is an indispensable skill in study and work. Understanding the definitions helps students master important presentation skills. Furthermore, a presentation is a systematic presentation of a problem in front of a group of people to provide information, knowledge, and ideas. A presentation often shows the speaker's personality better and allows direct interaction with audiences. Morrissey and Sechrest (1987) claim, “A presentation involves preparation and delivery of critical subject in a logical and condensed form, leading to effective communication.” Thereby, having good presentation skills is an advantage to help students advance in careers and relationships.

Another definition of presentation is “An activity used in an academic course in conveying the content of learning and allowing the students for developing the team working.” (Chivers and Shoolbred, 2007). Group presentations increase the ability to think multi-dimensionally, express creativity, and increase the ability to learn and make the most of an individual's talents.

A presentation may seem to be a straightforward activity, involving understanding the assigned material, summarizing it and presenting it to the instructor and classmates. The ability to give a brief presentation to help audiences shorten the time and absorb information quickly is a common occurrence in study and work, and it is a skill that can be learned. Besides, Chivers and Shoolbred (2007) say, “Doing presentation is very good learning experience.” Presentation skills are just as important as other soft skills.

For many schools and universities, presentations in class take place regularly to help students increase language ability, and give feedback in front of the crowd. Additionally, Meloni and Thompson (1980) also state that, “If the presentation is guided and organized, it will give students a learning experience and teach them a significant skill that will be beneficial in all educational subjects and later in work.”

In conclusion, from the above definitions, it can be seen that presentation can be understood in many different ways depending on certain circumstances. Presentation is about standing in front of a crowd and conveying information to the audience, through which we draw lessons from presentations. It can also be considered a human communication tool.

2.1.2 The importance of presentation

Nowadays, presentation is considered an important part of many subjects as an effective method to develop students' English skills. At the same time, presentations also reveal the personality and creativity of students, promoting the confidence, creativity, and adaptability of students. Furthermore, presentation is a practical instructional activity, students will be able to self-correct and learn. Through these activities, lecturers can assess students' current capacity and offer appropriate solutions to develop students' competencies.

Moreover, presentations increase the effectiveness of classroom learning, helping students communicate and exchange knowledge with each other more. Girard & Trapp (2011) states that, “Potential benefits of student presentations include greater class interaction and engagement, increased interest in learning, new perspectives that have not been addressed, and improve communication and presentation skills.” For students who want to demonstrate ability to speak in front of a crowd, giving presentations is what excites them, organizational, and presentation skills will be developed based on presentation experience.

In short, giving presentations is an essential part of university, and students need plenty of presentation opportunities to practice presentation skills. On this basis, lecturers comprehensively assess students' learning ability through presentation and content.

2.2 Some common difficulties in making a presentation

The presentation brings many benefits to students for learning foreign languages, improving multi-dimensional thinking ability, expressing creativity, increasing learning ability, and working in groups. Besides, good presentation skills also help students gain confidence in communication and job opportunities. Besides the benefits of presentation skills, students face many difficulties and obstacles in terms of background knowledge, vocabulary, pronunciation, and psychology in-class presentation activities.

2.2.1 Background knowledge

Background knowledge is one of the important factors to make a good presentation. Background knowledge is essential information or prior knowledge about a situation or problem. According to Schallert (2002), "A person's background knowledge, often called prior knowledge, is a set of abstract residues that have been formed from all life experiences." A good presenter needs a deep understanding and knowledge of a topic to convey information to the audience. In addition, the rich factual links will be an advantage to make the presentation interesting and engaging. In addition, Anderson & Lynch (2000) states that "Lack of sociocultural, factual, and contextual knowledge of the target language can also interfere with comprehension because the language is used to express culture."

Similarly, if the presenter does not know the topic well, they upset audiences because the listener only wants to absorb knowledge and information from those who are knowledgeable about the issue. There are many topics for students to talk about, and it is very important to choose the topic as well as have enough information to provide to the audience. Therefore, students need to have background knowledge about the topic to be presented.

In addition, having a good and creative idea is the success of a presentation, but coming up with a good and groundbreaking idea takes a lot of time. Having an interesting and unique idea will keep the audience focused on the presentation, the listener will want to learn more about the information the speaker provides and make the presentation successful.

Presentation skills are also an influencing factor. Presenters need to be able to express, the presentation in a concise, logical way and get the point of the presentation. Presentation skills are considered art. Therefore, good presentation skills help students a lot in all areas of life.

In summary, lack of background knowledge on topics, ideas, and presentation skills is the cause that affects the presentation in preparation as well as student ideas.

2.2.2 Vocabulary

Vocabulary is the word we must know for effective communication. Abundant and rich vocabulary will greatly aid in developing and perfecting other skills more effectively. Vocabulary is at the heart of language and is important for typical language learning. From the above definitions, it can be concluded that vocabulary is the total number of words needed to convey the speaker's ideas. Vocabulary learning is essential for presentations.

In the presentation, presenters cannot convey the content clearly and the message to the audience without the vocabulary. Gough (2007) claims "Vocabulary is important because it is words which carry the content of what we want to say, the more you know, the more you will be able to communicate; so, with a bigger vocabulary, you will be able to talk about more things. A new word is useless unless you know how to use it." Research shows that lack of vocabulary is a major obstacle affecting students' speaking skills. Vocabulary is considered a key issue in the speaking ability of foreign language learners' words. Using only a few words makes the student's presentation misleading, repeating words.

Vocabulary mastery is not enough, students need to learn how to use vocabulary to choose the right words, avoid misunderstandings and fail to convey the message to the audience. "The purpose of vocabulary learning should include learning both remembering words and the ability to use them automatically in a wide range of language contexts when the need arises." (McCarthy, 1990). Therefore, choosing the right word is not easy for students. Students need to carefully consider the topic and purpose of the presentation to pick the appropriate vocabulary. It helps the presenter to convey the content and inspire the audience through the presentation process.

In addition, the lack of linking words is also common among students when giving presentations. Connecting words in English seems insignificant, but they play a huge role in helping listeners understand what the speaker wants to convey. Students often do not use linking words such as using some cause and effect linking words to diversify sentences, avoiding the situation of using the same sentence forever. Using linking words indicating the opposite helps to use flexible vocabulary in communication.

In the end, lack of vocabulary, word choice, and linking words are common factors students encounter when giving presentations. The flexible and diverse use of vocabulary in communication also helps presenters to make a good impression on audiences.

2.2.3 Pronunciation

Pronunciation is an important skill in learning English. Standard pronunciation creates a professional feeling, helps listeners understand the message, and gives the feeling of wanting to hear what presenters have to say. Students often face some difficulties in pronunciation such as:

Poor pronunciation is an obstacle that makes it difficult for students to convey information to audiences. Harmer (2004) says that "If students want to be able to speak fluently in English, they need to be able to pronounce phonemes correctly and appropriate stress and intonation." Words that are pronounced the same but are spelled differently can confuse students, so students often put the wrong stress on words. Moreover, if presenters pronounce well, audiences understand what they want to convey, and vice versa, listeners will not understand correctly and may misunderstand what speaker means. To illustrate, Gilakjani (2012) says that "Learners with good English pronunciation are likely to be understood even if they make errors in the other area, whereas learners with bad pronunciation will not be understood, even if their grammar is perfect."

In pronunciation, intonation is also a very important factor to help attract the audience. Beebe & Giles (1984) insists that "Pronunciation always affects what we communicate and how well we communicate it, and therefore it should be taken seriously." Through this, it can be seen that phonetics always affects the ability to communicate as well as present in front of a crowd. Intonation helps students attract audiences when giving a presentation. Students are frequently shy and find it difficult to practice according to the intonation of outsiders. Students are often not used to using intonation when speaking because of their habits when speaking Vietnamese and are afraid to change.

Most students do not pronounce ending sounds. Specifically, when asked to read words that are almost the same, except for ending sounds, students tend to pronounce the same thing e.g., five – fine, nice – night – nine. Besides not pronouncing ending sounds, some students mispronounce ending sounds. For example, students often add the letter /s/ after any word because they think that they are speaking English.

In short, pronunciation is always one of problems that students face such as stress, intonation, and ending sounds. This can be considered as a factor that prevents students from being appreciated in presentations.

2.2.4 Psychological

Presenters need to be fully equipped with psychology, confidence, dare to think, and dare to express views in front of audiences. Besides, presenters must be able to solve problems better and react faster to challenges. A successful presentation depends largely on confidence, and ability to solve problems that may be encountered during presentations.

Firstly, lack of confidence is one of problems affecting presentations. The reason is that students lack practice, vocabulary, and background knowledge. Lack of confidence can lead to ineffective presentations. Besides, being shy in a front of friends or lecturers is a disadvantage because presenting requires the confidence to stand in a front of a crowd. On the other hand, a feeling of lack of confidence can lead students to misbehave or misrepresent body language during presentations. According to Wheelless (1975), "The fear of misinterpreting, inadequately processing, and/or not being able to adjust psychologically to messages sent by others." Lack of confidence will limit ability to speak and affect the fluency of your presentation. Lack of confidence leads to fear and anxiety. Students fear that their friends will laugh at them and underestimate them because they have poor pronunciation.

Secondly, students often experience anxiety before and after presentations. Before giving a presentation, students carefully prepare information, and knowledge about the topic and find vocabulary, pronunciation, and intonation for the presentation. During the presentation, students worry about their pronunciation, how to convey content and messages, and contract to answer questions from audiences. Then students worry about their grades and the teacher's comments. Thereby, it can be seen that students face a lot of anxiety when giving presentations. Horwitz and Cope (1986) identify three key sources of student's anxiety: communication issues, social anxiety, and academic anxiety. Furthermore,

students' anxiety is influenced by a dread of teacher evaluation. According to Harmer (2007), "To alleviate anxiety, teachers must pay attention to each student's strengths and limitations to devise a learning technique that is appropriate for all students in the class."

Finally, Deci and Ryan (1985) believe that, "Intrinsic motivation plays a significant role in students' language learning. The monotonous and unattractive teaching also affects the motivation of students because of the feeling of boredom among students." Responding to the issue of student motivation, Babu (2011) points out that, "Lack of motivation makes students hesitate to speak English in class." He said that the situation is that teachers who convey information in English do not motivate students. He further explained, then emphasized that to motivate students to learn well and actively communicate in English, teachers need to be passionate, creative, and care about their students. In other words, students' motivation is influenced by the effective teaching of teachers. Therefore, it is important that teachers also show enthusiasm in teaching effectiveness and inspiring students.

In brief, lack of confidence, anxiety, and lack of motivation are the factors students encounter. Due to fear of confrontation, students often shy away from presentations and hinder development.

In short, giving effective and successful presentations is not easy, students face many difficulties in giving presentations. This chapter has discussed and found the difficulties encountered by students majoring in the English language in the process of giving presentations.

3. RESEARCH AIM, RESEARCH QUESTION AND HYPOTHESIS

Research aims

This study aims to find out the problems encountered by English-majored juniors at Tay Do University in presentation skills. It is also expected that students can realize their problems, overcome them, and improve presentation skills.

Research question

This study examines some difficulties that students often face in English presentation skills to answer the following questions:

1. Are there any problems with the presentation skills of English-majored juniors at Tay Do University?
2. What are the problems English-majored juniors at Tay Do University in English face in presentation skills?

Hypothesis

According to English-majored juniors at Tay Do University, presentation skills are one of the most difficult subjects during the process of learning English. Hence, based on the related literature review and research questions, it is hypothesized that background knowledge, vocabulary, pronunciation, and psychology are problems for English-majored juniors for English presentation skills.

4. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

4.1 Research design

The research is supposed to find out some difficulties in presentation skills of English-majored juniors at Tay Do University, so answering the research questions and testing the hypothesis is the main purpose of this design. This research is descriptive study and survey. The study is a combination of quantitative and qualitative because its instruments is a questionnaire. Finally, the research data will be collected and then analyzed to show the common problems in presentation skills of English-majored juniors.

4.2 Research participant

The participants are 60 English-majored juniors course 14, chosen randomly in class English 14A, 14B, and 14C at Tay Do University. They all speak Vietnamese as their mother language and English as their second language. Most of them have been learning English from 7 to 11 years at school and English is considered their major. However, English presentation skills are less focused in their learning program before. They will be delivered the questionnaire related to common problems that they encounter in presentation skills.

4.3 Instrument

The main instrument in this study is questionnaires to figure out students' problems in presentation skills when learning the English language. The questionnaire consists of two parts. The first part includes questions related to students' information such as name, age, gender, years of studying English, etc. The second part consists of sixteen statements about background knowledge, vocabulary, pronunciation, and psychology. Students show their ideas by checking only one column for each statement according to the 5-degree scale, which includes (1) strongly agree, (2) agree, (3) neutral, (4) disagree, and (5) strongly disagree.

5. EXPECTED OUTCOME

Effective presentation skills are the part of communication that helps convey messages clearly and meaningfully. Good presentation skills help students present what they have learned and help them remember longer. In addition, presentation skills also train good communication skills, behave flexibly, and confidently in communication. So presentation skills are important to build leadership, communication skills, soft skills, and career development skills. Research shows that students' difficulties when giving presentations related to background knowledge, vocabulary, pronunciation, and psychology.

5.1 Background knowledge

Background knowledge is an important factor affecting students' English learning. Lack of background knowledge about topics, ideas, and skills are the difficulties students face giving presentations in English. Most students do not have enough background knowledge on an unfamiliar topic. Due to the lack of background knowledge, students often do not have many ideas, which makes presentations unattractive. Besides, students often do not have many presentation skills, making them unable to complete presentations well. In order for presentation to be effective, students need to have a wide variety of background knowledge in various fields, and skills required to give presentation.

5.2 Vocabulary

Students often have difficulty giving presentations due to lack of vocabulary, which makes them unable to convey the message to audiences. Although they tried to express what they wanted to say to listeners, due to lack of vocabulary, they could not speak fluently, at the same time, the inappropriate choice of vocabulary and lack of linking words made listeners may misunderstand and sometimes fail to understand what speakers are saying. That is why students cannot give presentations in English. This requires students to put in more effort, absorb more words, and memorize them.

5.3 Pronunciation

Pronunciation problem is something that many students face when giving presentations, they are afraid to speak English for fear of making mistakes. Students often make mistakes with stress, lack intonation when speaking, and forget ending sounds. These are common errors that are easy to fix. Students can listen to music, and watch movies to improve their pronunciation.

5.4 Psychology

Psychology also causes many obstacles when giving English presentations to students. It is all about planning the details and ideas for presentation, then spending time practicing. Presenters always feel nervous about presentation. Due to lack of confidence, as well as anxiety during presentation process and expectations of results, many students did not perform well in presentations. Students are not motivated to complete presentation due to many objective factors. To overcome this shortcoming, students should prepare carefully and practice more, one solution for students is to be able to present to friends in advance and ask them to evaluate it. Criticism or feedback from friends will help improve presentation skills and learn lessons for yourself.

Conclusion

In summary, students face some difficulties related to background knowledge, vocabulary, pronunciation, and psychology. However, the benefits of presentation skills manifest in many different ways, creating many advantages, and great opportunities for those who know how to take advantage. Through this study, it is hoped that the third-year English language major students will realize their weaknesses and shortcomings to improve and promote their abilities in presentation process.

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