

DIFFICULTIES IN ORAL PRESENTATION OF FIRST YEAR ENGLISH MAJORS AT TAY DO UNIVERSITY, VIETNAM

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ABSTRACT

The research “*Difficulties in oral presentation of first year English majors at Tay Do University*” is conducted with the purpose of helping freshmen to improve their oral presentation skills. The participants of the study are English majored freshmen from Bachelor of English Class of Tay Do University. The two main instruments of this study are questionnaire and interview. The researcher will collect student’s information through questionnaire and paper interview questions. Then, the data collected from the questionnaire and interview will be analyzed. The results of this study will point out the way to improve oral presentation skill in English of first year English majors at Tay Do University.

Key words: *difficulties, oral presentation, first year English majors, university*

CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Rationale

Nowadays, English plays a necessary role for many people because English is used as a general language to communicate or connect with people from different countries. Thanks to English, they can open their knowledge outside, exchange culture and build many social relationships with other countries. In Vietnam, English is used as a foreign language. For that reason, English is one of the important languages for those who want to get a good job in foreign companies, live aboard and study for higher education.

English learners usually focus on four basic skills without focusing on oral presentation skill. Presentation in English is one of the most popular forms of public speaking and is also the most effective way to convey the message. “You will jump out, much more than you can anticipate, if you get really comfortable with public speaking,” the billionaire Warren Buffett once told a class of business students. English oral presentation is used popularly as one of convenient ways for many subjects, but it is very difficult to present in English smoothly. In high school, teachers often focus on 4 basic skills and do not give students the small presentations to practice in classroom. Therefore, students feel strange and face many difficulties when present in university.

First year English majors at Tay Do University usually face many difficulties when make a English oral presentation in speaking subject because of some reasons: lacking of vocabulary, mistakes in pronunciation and some other elements such as grammar, background knowledge, etc. For those reasons, the researcher understands how other learners as well as English students at Tay Do University deeply want to improve their English oral presentation skill. The study of “*Difficulties in oral presentation of first year English majors at Tay Do University*” is conducted to find out the solution deeply to improve their English oral presentation skill.

1.2 The significance of study

This study is expected to help the freshmen majoring in English at Tay Do University realize their difficulties in English oral presentation skill. In addition, basing on the problems mentioned in this study, some useful methods will be suggested to improve these problems and help students have a good English oral presentation skill.

1.3 The organization of the study

This research includes five chapters consisting of

Chapter I: Introduction

Chapter II: Literature review

Chapter II: Research aims- Research questions - Hypothesis

Chapter IV: Research methodology

Chapter V: Expected outcomes

CHAPTER 2 LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Definition of oral presentation and its importance

2.1.1 Definition of oral presentation

Oral presentation is the process of designing and delivering a message to an audience. So, oral presentation is one of the communicating manners. However, not everyone has good presentation skill. People usually face many difficulties when present in mother tongue, so there are more difficulties when present in foreign language. According to Rajoo (2011), “oral presentation or speaking in public is a type of communication whose purpose is to communicate or deliver some thoughts, information, and messages to the audience. In other words, oral presentation is a part of communication skills whose function is to share some important ideas”. This is one of the most significant ways to share ideas in front of a lot of people.

Jessica Cook (2014) mentioned that “oral assessments come in a variety of formats, from multimedia projects to group work to speeches. An oral presentation simply involves explaining something to an audience. In the classroom, teachers grade these oral presentations based on the quality of the information presented as well as the method used in presenting it”. In speaking classrooms at university, teachers usually give some presentations for English freshmen to practice with some familiar topic that can help students to accustom to presentation skill. Presentation skills can be defined as a set of abilities that enable an individual to: interact with the audience; transmit the messages with clarity; engage the audience in the presentation; and interpret and understand the mindsets of the listeners. These skills refine the way you put forward your messages and enhance your persuasive powers.

In addition, an oral presentation is similar to giving a speech but is usually not just a person behind a lectern. Teachers often divide the class into several small groups, each one consists of 4 or 5 students to make presentation. Visual aids and teaching tools are used to further enhance the spoken words. It also might add components of technology, such as a slide show, video clip or audio recording. Another term for an oral presentation with technology or other aids is a multimedia presentation, indicating that forms of media are being used. Most oral presentations require the presenter to use a combination of spoken words and visual aids to present an idea or explanation to their audience.

Moreover, an oral presentation is most often assigned as part of class coursework but can have other purposes as a teaching tool. A teacher might assign students an oral presentation on a particular topic or set of topics that requires them to learn more about the subject. The presenting students then take on a teaching role in sharing that new information to the class through their presentation. Oral presentations are effective teaching tools in this way because they add variety to the classroom and allow students the opportunity to teach one another. A person with expertise on a skill or process utilizes an oral presentation to explain their knowledge about that subject to the assembled group. The group members can follow along and learn a new skill while watching the presentation. In the classroom, students might share an oral presentation in the form of a mock trial or instructions on how to play a sport. A workplace presentation might involve sharing information on new technologies or a topic presentation at a related conference. Presentation is not only a difficult skill, but also a collection of many other skills.

Oral presentations incorporate a variety of skills including intonation, eye-contact, speech of preparation and engaging an audience. The presenter learns to hone their public speaking skills which include keeping track of time and offering well-researched information. The presenter might also learn multimedia skills as they prepare visual and auditory aids for his presentation as well as research skills when studying the topic. If the presentation takes place in the classroom setting, the additional skill of teaching others a new subject is another benefit. In short, oral presentation is a vital skill in learning language which can help students become a good English learner and have a good communication.

2.1.2 The importance of oral English

For many individuals the first important presentation they deliver might be to the selection committee. It might be labeled as a "job interview" but it's really a presentation. Success rides on their presentation outshining the competition. The results are black and white but the skills are a rainbow. In most organizations day to-day business entails teamwork. That means presenting to your team or on behalf of your team. Career growth necessitates presenting your ideas to others. And if you want to be promoted you need to train others to handle your old job. If you want to fast track your career - volunteer to work on projects and deliver more presentations.

Oral presentation skill is very necessary for the language learners. Without speech, a language is reduced to a mere script. People communicate with others, to express our ideas, and to know others' ideas as well. Almost conversations rely on speech. Without speech we cannot communicate with one another. The use of language is an activity which takes place within the confines of our community. People use language in a variety of situations. Interaction with others is a routine job of businesses in today's world. The importance of good presentation skills is established on the basis of following points.

They help an individual in enhancing his own growth opportunities. In addition, it also grooms the personality of the presenter and elevates his levels of confidence.

Furthermore, in case of striking deals and gaining clients, it is essential for the business professionals to understand the audience. Good presentation skills enable an individual to mold his message according to the traits of the audience. This increases the probability of successful transmission of messages.

Lastly, business professionals have to arrange seminars and give presentations almost every day. Having good presentation skills not only increases an individual's chances of success, but also enables him to add greatly to the organization. In summary, oral presentation is very essential factor to express the thought to another people.

2.2 Problems in oral presentation skill

In the process of learning English, oral presentation is not an easy skill. Most of students consider that oral presentation is the most difficult skill because universities and schools pay more attention to 4 basic skills: listening, speaking, reading and writing. Especially, oral presentation subject is very difficult for freshmen because most students have not adapted to the new learning environment. In this study, there are three common problems affecting student's ability of oral presentation.

2.2.1 Linguistic factors

Linguistic knowledge is one of the most meaningful parts assisting students to learn oral presentation skill efficiently. It consists of many elements such as vocabulary, pronunciation, grammar, etc. Moreover, students will learn this skill better if they realize these problems.

2.2.1.1 Vocabulary

Vocabulary has great importance in learning a language and communication. Without enough vocabulary knowledge, students are not possible to employ grammatical or other types of linguistic knowledge in communication which makes students find difficulties to present their thought. Chastain (1988) maintained "*The lack of needed vocabulary is the most common cause of students' inability to say what they want to say during communication activities*". According to Folse and Bologna, D. (2003) "*Without syntax, meaning is hindered; but without vocabulary meaning is impossible*". Wilkins (1972) stated "*without grammar, very little can be conveyed; without vocabulary, nothing can be conveyed*". With the same ideas, Wilkins (1972) stated "*without grammar, very little can be conveyed; without vocabulary, nothing can be conveyed*". So, learners have to get knowledge about way to use this vocabularies, context, and vocabulary of various fields, etc. that can help learners develop oral presentation skill.

Besides, vocabulary knowledge is often viewed as a critical tool for second language learners because a limited vocabulary in a second language impedes successful communication. Schmitt (2000) also emphasized that *"lexical knowledge is central to communicative competence and to the acquisition of a second language"*. In addition, Richards and Renandya (2002: 255), thought that *"Vocabulary is a core component of language proficiency and provides much of the basis for how learners speak listen, read and write"*. Thus, the learners should study vocabulary harder because lack of vocabulary is a reason why the students cannot show what they are thinking. They cannot speak fluently because they do not have enough vocabulary to express ideas, thoughts and emotion. Therefore, students should be equipped with more vocabulary to help them improve their oral presentation skill.

2.2.1.2 Grammar structure

Grammar is also one of the essential elements which helps students get good oral presentation skill. *"Grammar is the whole system and structure of a language or of languages in general, usually taken as consisting of syntax and morphology (including inflections) and sometimes also phonology and semantics"*, according to Oxford Dictionary. In other words, grammar is rules of words and how words combine together in a language. English grammar has been traditionally viewed as *"A system of syntax that decides the order and patterns in which words are arranged in sentences"* (Close, 1982, p.13). Thus, grammar structure is the requisite factor affecting oral presentation skill if the learners are good at it, they can express what they thought successfully. However, English majored freshmen usually make grammatical errors in their oral presentation because they often think that grammatical structures of English are the same as the grammar structure of Vietnamese. Beside that there are singular and plural forms that students have to distinguish and they do not know how to use them in a sentence.

In short, grammar is the component which cannot be ignore if students want to become good oral presenter. As the result, freshmen ought to learn more grammar to support other skills in general as well as oral presentation skill in particular.

2.2.1.3 Pronunciation

Pronunciation is the most hindrance in studying English and oral presentation because it includes many other factors such as intonation, stress, linking, accent, etc. It can make different meaning in the same sentence which depended on raising intonation or failing intonation, change function of words in the sentence. Therefore, Celce-Murcia, Brinton & Goodwin (1996) defined *"As part of successful communication, pronunciation teaching has become important"*. With the same ideas, Hinofitis and Baily (1980, pp.124-125) reported that *"Up to a certain proficiency standard, the fault which most severely impairs the communication process in EFL/ESL learners is pronunciation, rather than vocabulary or grammar"*. Improper pronunciation can lead to negative impression misunderstanding and ineffective communication. If you can master the differences in pronunciation between these words, you'll improve your pronunciation and be able to talk more like a native English speaker. In the opinion of Gilakjani (2012) considered 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"*. Moreover, students often face many difficulties in their pronunciation and intonation. When they learn how to pronounce an English word, their mother tongue sometimes has an effect on the way they pronounce. As Wikipedia showed that *"The speech of non-native English speakers may exhibit pronunciation characteristics that result from such speakers imperfectly learning the pronunciation of English, either by transferring the phonological rules from their mother tongue into their English speech or through implementing strategies similar to those used in primary language acquisition. They may also create innovative pronunciations for English sounds not found in the speaker's first language"*.

That is the reason why students usually face impediments to become a good presenter. Therefore, students need to focus on pronunciation, although they are good at grammar, vocabulary or topics...

2.2.1.4 Background knowledge

Background knowledge is also one of disadvantage in listening skill for the learners because Bartlett (1932) had said that *"listeners' background knowledge about a passage can have a profound impact on their ability to understand what has been said. Without a schema, understanding a passage can be extremely difficult. A classic demonstration of this phenomenon was first"*. It can be realized that the level understanding of learners is assessed through knowledge that they have such as religious, technical and cultural knowledge or topic familiarity. In reality, students meet difficulty to show their opinion because of lack of general knowledge. Therefore, students have to prepare as well as learn about knowledge of topics before presentation. Besides, knowledge of the language elements such as vocabulary and grammatical structure seems necessary but not sufficient. The reason is that when making the oral presentation, students seem to lack knowledge to understand

the topic. In addition, Turner, Husman and Schallert (2002) said that "*a person's background knowledge, often called prior knowledge, is a collection of 'abstracted residue' that has been formed from all of life's experiences*". Actually, experience plays an important role in oral presentation skill because it not only helps presenters understand implicate the meaning of the topic but also express the information to the audiences exactly. To sum up, background knowledge is a necessary factor in learning English language because it helps students make sense of new idea experiences. So, background knowledge plays a significant role in oral presentation skill.

2.3 Other elements affecting oral presentation skill

2.3.1 Psychological obstacles

Psychological obstacle is the most complicated influence causing many issues in oral presentation by English of many students which confines presenter's ability to accepting information and made students feel anxious when presenting English. Additionally, they always think that they are not good at presentation, so this is the most popular psychological obstacle. Anxiety, lack of self-confidence, shyness and fear of making mistakes are causes that delay students when presenting. First, anxiety is defined by Horwitz EK all cited in Nascente (2001) "*Anxiety is oa feeling of tension, apprehension and nervousness associated with the situation of learning a foreign language*". It occurs when students feel they are confronted with a mission that is too hard or strange to them. Moreover, when students present the long text, they usually feel stressful and pressured. They sometimes feel tired of presentation even if they are interested because it requires an enormous of effort to follow what they express. In addition, students' lack of confidence usually occurs when they realize that the audiences do not understand the topic or they cannot attract the audience's attention. Nunan (1999) said that "*students who lack of confidence about themselves and their English necessarily suffer from communication apprehension*". This shows that building students' confidence is a principal part of teacher's focus of attention.

In short, psychological obstacles have a huge impact on learning oral presentation skill of students. Therefore, they need to find ways to overcome these obstacles in order to present well.

2.3.2 Learning environment

Brent Wilson (1996) said that "*learning environment is a place where learners may work together and support each other as they use a variety of tool and information resources in their guided pursuit of learning goals and problem-solving activities*". Indeed, not only learning environment can exchange information, get much knowledge from others but also a place for learners can solve their problems. Learners who have a good learning environment will develop their oral presentation skill easily.

Moreover, Brent Wilson (1996) showed "*the idea of a learning environment evokes the notions of place and space, room to move and explore and generous access*". He also suggested that "*among the many ways we think of knowledge, the notion of a learning environment resonates best with the vision of knowledge as meaning constructed by interaction with one's environment*". Brent Wilson's views are sensible view because if English learners have a good environment that they can study and develop in a long-term as English club inside and outside their school. This issue, they should create new presenting environment for exchange information and learning effectively. In short, learning environment is a determine factor to learners' success because if learners have good learning environment they will become confident and get more information from others. In addition, English Freshmen at Tay Do University can solve their problem thank to others' helping.

CHAPTER III

RESEARCH AIMS-RESEARCH QUESTIONS-HYPOTHESIS

3.1 Research aims

The aims of this study are to analyze problems that freshmen are facing in oral presentation skill in English. The most important purpose of this research is to help them find some useful methods to improve their oral presentation skill.

3.2 Research question

The research is expected to find out the solutions to improve oral presentation skill of English freshmen at Tay Do University. Therefore, the study conducted to answer the following question:

- 1) What are some common difficulties in oral presentation of first year English majors at Tay Do University?
- 2) Why do first year English majors at Tay Do University encounter those difficulties?
- 3) How to overcome the difficulties in oral presentation of first year English majors at Tay Do University?

3.3 Hypothesis

According to most of first year students at Tay Do University, presentation skill is the most difficult skill. It is conditional on literature review and the research questions this research will discover difficulties in oral presentation skill. Besides, the researcher would like to help the first year students at Tay Do University notice the difficulties in presentation skill and they can follow some advices to improve their presentation skill.

CHAPTER IV RESEARCH METHODOGY

4.1 Design

The research is conducted to answer the research questions and to test the hypotheses. The first year English students course 13 at Tay Do University are picked as the sample to the research. The data from the participants will be collected depends on the questionnaire and the interview. Lastly, the data will be analyzed to show the difficulties in oral presentation skill.

4.2 Participants

Participants of this research include all students of first year English majors course 13 (2018-2022) at Tay Do University. They speak Vietnamese as their mother tongue and English is considered as their foreign language. They have been learning English 7 to 12 years. They will be given questionnaires about difficulties that they have faced in oral presentation skill.

4.3 Instruments

The instruments of this study are questionnaires and paper interview. The questionnaire is used to gather information from students. It can survey the difficulties in English oral presentation. Furthermore, the questionnaire can be used to find the causes of the difficulties. In addition, paper interview is designed with the aim of confirming the hypothesis and getting more detailed information to understand the issues deeply.

4.3.1 Questionnaire

The questionnaire had two parts. Part 1 included 7 questions that aim at getting background information from student such as participants' years of learning, learners' practicing time, learning motivation, etc. Part 2 was a table about 12 difficulties of English majored freshmen at Tay Do University in English oral presentation skill. It had 15 statements corresponding to five levels such as strongly agree, agree, no idea, disagree, and strongly disagree. Students could tick on the appropriate column next to the statement.

4.3.2 Paper interview

The paper interview for students is designed to get information about the difficulties in English oral presentation skill. It consists of 4 interview questions which mentioned the students' thought about oral presentation, problems in oral presentation and the way to improve oral presentation skill.

CHAPTER V

EXPECTED OUTCOMES

The first year English majors at Tay Do University have many difficulties about linguistics, background knowledge and other elements in oral presentation skill. So, it is hard for them to be able to realize their problems when presenting. First, students faced many obstacles in oral presentation because of lacking of vocabulary which makes them cannot express their ideas smoothly. Moreover, if students are not good at grammar, they will not be able to produce the grammatical sentences. In addition, they cannot make the audiences understand what they said because of mispronunciation. Second, many students usually get problems when they try to express ideas or messages to the audiences because of lack of background knowledge and information about topics or fields. Third, psychological obstacles have a huge impact on oral presentation skill of students. Learning environments also have directly effects to students.

Briefly, basing on the problems mentioned in this study, the researcher expects that the first year English majors at Tay Do University can realize and improve their problems in oral presentation skill. In addition, lecturers can encourage and suggest suitable solutions for students in order to help students overcome their problems in oral presentation skill.

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