A study on difficulties and solutions to improve oral presentation skill in English of the second-year non-English major students- faculty of electronic and electrical engineering, Hung Yen University of technology and education

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Abstract*: This study investigates teachers' and non-English major students' perceptions of oral presentations, identifies common challenges, and proposes solutions. It aims to: (1) Examine students' current oral presentation skills, (2) Identify difficulties during presentations, and (3) Suggest strategies for improvement. Surveys with 53 students and interviews with 5 students and 5 teachers from Hung Yen University of Technology and Education reveal numerous difficulties in delivering oral presentations. The study provides practical solutions to overcome these challenges and boost confidence in presenting.*

Keywords: *Oral presentation skills, difficulties, solutions, non-English majors.*

1. INTRODUCTION

English, a global language, significantly influences education and professional fields. In Vietnam, it is a compulsory subject in schools and key for integration. Hung Yen University of Technology and Education (UTEHY) incorporates English into its programs to prepare students for global job markets.

Oral presentations are essential for effectively conveying ideas. They require mastery of structure, slide design, voice, and body language. Despite their importance, many second-year non-English major students at UTEHY's Faculty of Electronic and Electrical Engineering struggle with confidence and technique. This study explores these difficulties and proposes solutions to enhance their presentation skills.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. An overview of oral presentations

2.1.1. The definition of oral presentations

For the dictionary, "oral" is spoken, said or something that relates to the mouth. And "presentation" means delivering an address to a public audience. Oral presentation is a great way to deliver the best possible information what the presenter would like to say to audiences in a clear and coherent manner. In other words, oral presentation is a speech or talk which a new product, idea or pieces of work is shown and explained to audiences. Almost all oral presentations have to contain three main parts: introduction, body and conclusion. Smith, F.C, Bace, R.G(2002) defines that presentations are ways of communicating ideas and information to a group. A presentation carries the speaker's personality better and allows immediate interaction between all the participants."

2.1.2. The importance of oral presentation in English

In introduction part, the research provides a number of reasons why oral presentation skills should be developed. Moreover, Emden and Becker (2004) shares: "Ability to speak well enough to interest, influence or persuade other people is a major asset for whatever they want to do in the future and it may change them in ways that the did not expect." Thus, it can not be denied that oral presentation skills bring a lot of benefits for the good presenter.

2.1.3. Difficulties in making oral presentations

According to Malcolm Kushner (from Presentations for Dummies, problems can occur at any time during a presentation that involves an audience. Visual aids can get screwed up; loud sounds can interfere with the audience's understanding of your point; or you might just make a mistake in what you say-or how you say it-during your presentation.

Other studies wer concerned with listing difficulties that students usually face in oral presentation, such as feeling nervous (Chuang 2009; Abu El Enein, 2011 Alwi&Sidhu 2013). One of the main difficulties reported facing students in oral anxiety or fear of speaking. Some studies investigated

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the reasons behind students' anxiety, such as lack of vocabulary (Subasi, 2010; Mazdayasna, 2012), while others proposed ways to overcome these difficulties, such as choosing a familiar topic and practicing a lot (Zappa-Hollman, 2007). Making an oral presentation is not easy for presenters to do without careful preparation. A bad presentation can put your audience to sleep or send them running for the doors. There are many difficulties in making presentations that most of presenters have experienced.

3. THE STUDY

3.1. Aims and Objectives

The study aims to identify and address the challenges faced by second-year non-English major students at UTEHY in delivering oral presentations. Objectives include:

- Showing the second-year non-English major students' current oral presentation situation in English at UTEHY.

- Pointing out the challenges of making oral presentations in English of the second-year non-English major students, at Faculty of Electronic and Electrical Engineering, UTEHY.

- Suggesting some solutions to enhance oral presentation skills in English.

3.2. Research Questions

1. What are the second-year non-English major students' current oral presentation situation in English?

2. What are the challenges of making oral presentationin English for the second-year non-English major students at Faculty of Electronic and Electrical Engineering UTEHY?

3. Which solutions should be used for for the second-year non-English major students at Faculty of Electronic and Electrical Engineering UTEHY to improve oral presentation skill?

3.3. Methodology of the study

Validity is an importance key to effective re-search. If a piece of research is invalid then it is worthless. Validity is thus a requirement for both quantitative and qualitative research. The meaning of reliability in quantitative research is essentially a synonym for dependability, consistency and reliability overtime (Cohen et al 2007 Research Methods in Education)

In terms of the methods, both qualitative and quantitative approaches are exploited. Survey questionnaire, interview are the main tools. After the data is collected and analyzed, some conclusions will be drawn and some suggestions will be made in the thesis.

3.3.1 Questionnaire

In order to collect the data for the study, questionnaires were delivered randomly to 53 the second-year non-English major students at Hung Yen University of Technology and Education. They were designed to find out the ways to help the students improve their presentations skill.

3.3.2. Interview

The research was carried out with 53 the second-year non-English major students at Faculty of Electronic and Electrical Engineering,Hung Yen University of Technology and Education. (5 of them were invited to the short interview). Most of them have learned English for more than nine years and have quite similar English background. However, the students, who come from urban areas, seem to have a little bit better English background because their duration of learning English is normally longer and they had more convenient environment to study foreign languages as well. According to the questionnaire, before entering in university, they were rarely taught speaking skill. This means the students can do grammatical exercises very well but they are not confident in communicating and presenting in English.

Findings:

Importance of Presentation Skills: 80% of students find oral presentation skills very important for self-confidence, career prospects, and effective communication.

Challenges:

Difficulty Level: 60% of students find English oral presentations difficult, while 30% rate them as very difficult.

Skill Level: 66% rate their skills as "not very good." Only 14% consider themselves "good," and 12% feel "bad" at presenting.

Reasons for Learning: Most students (72%) study presentation skills to develop confidence, and 80% need them for class assignments.

Difficulties:

Frequent struggles (54% "often," 32% "very often") with pronunciation, preparation, nervousness, and time management.

Teachers noted reliance on course materials and lack of brainstorming.

3.3.4. Proposed Solutions

Preparation:

96% emphasize thorough preparation.

Create engaging introductions using stories or questions.

Focus on concise, informative content (64%).

Skill Development:

Practice body language, gestures, and eye contact.

Use visual aids effectively.

Build confidence through rehearsals and supportive environments.

Language Proficiency:

Improve grammar and sentence structure (63%).

Presentation Techniques:

Maintain open attitudes (85%).

Wear appropriate attire (56%).

3.3.5. Discussion

The oral presentation skills of second-year non-English major students at the Faculty of Electronic and Electrical Engineering (UTEHY) are concerning. Most students rarely practice, and while many feel confident, a significant number still lack confidence. Common self-study methods include recording videos, practicing in front of mirrors, and working with friends.

Challenges

Students face issues like shyness, nervousness, poor openings, ineffective time management, and improper use of gestures, body language, and eye contact. Teachers also note students' reliance on course materials, lack of creativity, and poor brainstorming skills. Additionally, some students struggle with English proficiency and lack vocal confidence.

Proposed Solutions

To address these challenges, students and teachers recommend:

Keeping presentations concise but informative.

Building confidence through gestures, body language, and eye contact.

Preparing topics thoroughly and creating engaging introductions.

Dressing appropriately and using correct grammar and sentence structures.

3.3.6. Recommendations

According to the students' point of views, we can summarize some best techniques which are chosen the most in the questionnaire and short interview: preparing the topic carefully, making the presentation short and informative, using visual aids, gestures, body language, being confident, having open attitude, making interesting introduction. In conclusion, when making oral presentations in English, the presenter should apply the above techniques properly in order to create a successful presentations and make it better.

4. CONCLUSION
4.1. Summary of the study

The study effectively analyzes the challenges faced by second-year non-English major students at the Faculty of Electronic and Electrical Engineering, Hung Yen University of Technology and Education, in making oral presentations. It highlights the current status of students' oral presentation skills and provides practical recommendations to help them improve as presenters. By applying the suggested methods, students can enhance their English presentation skills for future use.

To achieve these findings, the researcher involved 5 English teachers and 53 second-year students in a questionnaire, with 5 students participating in short interviews. Overall, the participants showed a positive attitude and cooperative spirit in supporting the research process.

4.2. Limitations of the study and suggestions for the further study

Despite significant efforts, this study has some limitations. Firstly, it focuses only on second-year non-English major students at the Faculty of Electronic and Electrical Engineering (FEE), UTEHY, representing a small sample size. The study involves 5 teachers and 53 students, with only 5 students participating in short interviews. Secondly, due to time and experience constraints, the methods proposed may not cover all effective strategies for building confidence in English presentations, leaving other potential solutions unexplored.

In conclusion, despite its limitations, this study aims to contribute to improving oral presentation skills in English for the target students, helping them engage their audience more effectively.

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