

A STUDY ON THE INTERACTION BETWEEN THE PRESENTER AND AUDIENCE IN THE PRESENTATION SKILL FOR ENGLISH MAJOR STUDENTS AT SCHOOL OF FOREIGN LANGUAGES - THAI NGUYEN UNIVERSITY

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SUMMARY

This study is an investigation into the interaction between the presenter and the audience in the presentation skill for English major student at School of Foreign Languages, Thai Nguyen University (SFL-TNU) with the purpose of indicating factors influencing the interaction in students' presentation. This investigation was conducted using the upper-intermediate level of English proficiency in SFL-TNU with forty fourth-year English major students, as respondents. The main data collection instrument of this investigation was a questionnaire named Interaction Inventory for Language Presentation. While, the supplemental instrument was the Process questionnaire designed mainly to gain the subjects' background information. The results of the study were thoroughly analyzed and discussed to find out how students use these factors to improve their interaction skills. From the results, some suggestions for students and teachers at SFL-TNU proposed to intensify the interacting quality in presentation.

Key words: *presentation skill, presenter, English major students, School of Foreign Languages, Thai Nguyen University*

INTRODUCTION

Nowadays, English is used all over the world for communication. It is necessary for everybody in the world in general and in Vietnam in particular to communicate in English with people from other countries. One thing which marks the breakthrough of the way the teachers teach their students and the ways the students learn things are indications to the growth and development of the Oral Presentation. Students are asked to make presentation in many subjects. Therefore, learning presentation skills is, without any doubt, very useful for students to initiatively acquire and practice the languages that they are studying. As a matter of fact, through the subjects that require students to make presentations, there are a number of problems related to presentation skills that they confront with such as overload of information, body language, interaction between audiences and presenters, illustration, etc... Typically, the biggest problem that presenters are facing is the interaction with their audience; many

presenters cannot lead their audiences to be interested in the speech for many reasons. Foreign language learners tend to lose their audiences' interest during presentation time. They mostly concentrate on ensuring adequate content as well as the amount of information of the speech and forget how they are presenting or if their audiences pay attention to the speech or not. Presenters may lose confidence during the presentation, speak quickly and just present like a "machine". Hence, listeners are not interested in the presentation and cannot acquire useful and interesting information from the speech. This is academic reality and is proved by feedback of teachers and students at the end of each presentation in the School of Foreign Languages in particular and in Thai Nguyen University in general.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Definition of presentation

According to Kathleen (2011, p.249) [7] "Public speaking occurs when one person addresses a group of listeners for a specific purpose" Likewise, Clella (2007, p.27) [1] defines, "Public speaking occurs when one

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person prepares and performs a speech for a group that listens, generally without interrupting the speaker's flow of ideas". Accordingly, speaker presents a particular topic to a group of listeners for a specific purpose. Presentation is the method of presenting: a verbal report presented with illustrative material such as slides, graphs, etc... In detail, a person presents a topic using verbal and non-verbal strategies to listeners for a certain purpose. Based on this purpose, the topic is created for these specific listeners. The listeners comprehend the ideas from the presentation and then provide feedback to the presenter.

Factors influencing interaction in presentation

Topic selection

According to Joseph (2000, p.285) [6], "A suitable presentation topic should be worthwhile and deal with matters of substance; appropriate to presenters and their audience". Accordingly, the topics should be appropriate to both presenters and their audience.

Audience analysis

Dwyer (2005, p.21) [2] defines, "a good speaker always considers how to connect the audience and the message". The preparation for a presentation must include gathering information about the audience and their needs. It is critical that preparation efforts include some amount of audience analysis. As Nelson *et al.*, (2009, p.21) [8] states that, "Audience analysis is discovering as much as possible about an audience for the purpose of improving communication with them. Audience analysis is considered as a presenter's key to success".

Organization

A well-organized presentation is more likely to be believed. If speakers present a poorly organized presentation, their listeners will find them less believable at the end than they did at the beginning of the presentation. Stephen (2004, p.203) [9] gives evidence that, "Using a clear, specific method of

presentation organization can boost the presenters' confidence; improve their ability to deliver a message fluently and interact with their audience more effectively.

Stage fright

One of the major concerns of any presenters in making presentations is stage fright. As Galvin & Terrell (2001, p.9) [4] states that, "Stage fright is anxiety over the prospect of giving a presentation in front of the audience". Actually, most people tend to be anxious before doing something important in public. This is perfectly normal as Steve, M. (2000, p.7) [10] states that, "anxiety is a natural state that exists any time people are placed under stress. Giving a presentation will normally cause some stress".

Visual aids

There are various types of visual aids but a competent presenter needs to know the pros and cons of each type to select the right ones for his or her purposes right after he or she has identified places where support is helpful. Several visual aids could potentially make their ideas more understandable, although one type is often better than another. Clella (2007, p.39) [1] points out that, "the key is to choose the best support, not the kind that is easiest to create".

Making interest

One of the best effective methods that presenters use to interact with their audience is making interest and gaining attention. It will be easier for presenters to convey their message more effectively if their audience are interested in their presentation. The following sections discuss some common methods to grab the audience's attention as suggested by Diana & James (1995) [3]: Quotation, Arousing audience curiosity, Inviting audience to participate, Humor, Rhetorical question, Role – play, Startling statement.

Eye contact and facial expressions

Eye contact refers to making a visual connection between presenters and audience.

Having good eye contact with the audience is important for three reasons: (1) It creates an important bond of communication and rapport between presenters and audience. (2) It shows the presenters' sincerity. People distrust someone who will not look at them openly and candidly. If the presenters want their audience to have confidence in what they are saying, look at them. (3) It enables the presenters to get the audience feedback. Looking directly to the audience makes the presenters instantly aware of any lapses of communication. As Jaffe (2007, p.310) [5] concerned, "If the presenters do not look at the audience, they will lose their audience's attention and respect, the goal is to give each and every audience member the sense that the presenters are connected to their audience".

METHODOLOGY

Research Questions

How do the fourth-year English major students interact with the audience during their presentation?

What are possible factors influencing the interaction in the presentation skill of the fourth-year English major students?

What are the effective methods that the fourth year English major students can use to interact with their audience in presentation?

Participants and Setting of the Study

The study was undertaken with the participation of 40 students in one class. At the time of the study, all respondents had at least five years of English learning experience at secondary schools, high schools where they mainly had been taught grammar and vocabulary, and three years at university to study and practice the four main language skills (listening, reading, writing and speaking). Most of modules that students study in the fourth year have requirements for the students' presentation in the process of studying but there is only a module that mainly focuses on teaching presentation skills, the subject "Oral presentation in English". There

are 45 periods were dedicated specifically to presentation; in other words, students had 3 periods (150 minutes) for presentation a week.

Instruments

The Interaction Inventory for Language Presenting (IILP) questionnaire was used as the main data collection instrument for the present study. It concentrates on factors influencing interaction in presentation process like audience analysis, gesture, eye contact, facial expression, etc. In the IILP questionnaire, five choices provided for the subjects correspondingly (1) never or almost never true, (2) occasionally true, (3) sometimes true; (4) usually true; and (5) always or almost true.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Students' preparation before the presentation

Topic selection and audience analysis

Table 1 shows that more than two third of the students (64%) answered usually and always in choosing a topic that they like best. On the contrary, nearly one third of the totals (36%) answered sometimes and occasionally in choosing a topic that interests them. No student answered never choose such topic.

Table 1. Topic selection and Audience analysis

Items \ Option	1	2	3	4	5
1	0%	16%	20%	20%	44%
2	8%	40%	32%	10%	10%

Finding the right topic is one of the most important skills in successful presentation. In most speaking classes, students are permitted to choose their own topics. Given such freedom, some students spend days walking around with confusion to choose a suitable topic to speak on and they get stuck at this stage. Speakers need to choose topic as far ahead of presentation date as possible because they will need to spend a great deal of time and energy on other important tasks, such as researching, outlining, and practicing.

Therefore, it is important for students to select a topic that is appropriate not only for themselves but also for their audience. Table 1 also shows 48% students thoroughly analyze their audience before a presentation. Conversely, only 10% of the students always thoroughly analyze their audience before a presentation and 10% usually use audience analysis method in preparation process; and 32% sometimes analyze the audience to prepare a presentation.

In presentation, only when students are aware of the importance of audience analysis, they must have the ability to confidently stand in front of their audience to present something. They need to know a well prepared presentation given to wrong audience can have the same effects as a poorly prepared presentation given to the correct audience. Audience is always the most important factor in making an interactive presentation. A presenter's purpose is always based on a consideration of the audience, and a presenter's situation includes the audience. In other words, students can never forget that their presentation is intended for the audience. Some students say that it is unnecessary to analyze who their audiences are because most of their audiences usually are their classmates and they already know their classmates' ability as well as needs.

Dealing with nervousness

As can be seen from Table 2, one third of the totals cannot overcome the nervousness while delivering a presentation with 30% occasionally true and 5% never true; whereas, 37% can use both energy and composure in delivering a presentation. Out of 28% the students who sometimes reduce their anxiety.

Table 2. *Dealing with nervousness*

Option Items	1	2	3	4	5
3	5%	30 %	28 %	32 %	5%
4	5%	25 %	19 %	35 %	16 %

The results show that many students cannot overcome the stage fright while delivering a presentation. They cannot use both energy and composure to effectively convey their message. As can be seen, 37% of the students who can use both energy and composure in delivering a presentation and 35% students are not factual but occasionally true to use both energy and composure in delivering a presentation, in order to deal with nervousness, they need to do their best to act cool and confident on the outside.

Item 4 shows that majority of the respondents said they communicate ideas with enthusiasm in delivering a presentation (51%). In contrast, only 5% out of 40 students said that they are not enthusiastic to present something and 25% students just occasionally communicate ideas with enthusiasm. The percentage of the students who sometimes feel enthusiastic to present is 19%. As mentioned earlier, a suitable presentation topic should be worthwhile and appropriate to both the presenters and the audience. After analyzing the audience, students should choose a topic that is interesting not only for their audience but also for themselves.

Using visual aids

The finding clearly shows that more than a half of the totals (54%) do not put all information and ideas of the presentation in their slides, while the percentage of students who put all information of their presentation in slides account for about one fifth of the totals (21%). The majority of the students are aware of the fact that if all information of the presentation appeared in the slides that means they misuse their slides instead of slides as a tool to reinforce their presentation. A slide with many information and ideas inside will distract the audience. Listeners will pay attention to the slides instead of listening to the presenters causing lack of interaction between presenter and audience in a presentation.

Table 3. Using visual aids

Option Items	1	2	3	4	5
5	32%	22%	25%	13%	8%
6	12%	26%	32%	20%	10%

Item 6 aims at indicating another angle of the combination between preparation and designing slides. The figures in Table 3 show that one third of the totals (32%) sometimes reading from their notes or slides and not paying much attention to the audience. Another one third of the totals (30%) responded that they are independent of notes or slides and pay maximum attention to their audience. On the contrary, 36% of the students said that they need to depend on their notes or slides and therefore, they cannot pay much attention to their audience (38%). In terms of preparation, the main reason for this problem is that students do not prepare the speech carefully at home. The numbers of words, figures, or pictures on one slide should be limited. For these reasons, it is necessary for students to prepare their presentation cautiously at home and learn some tips in using powerpoint effectively in order to avoid depending too much on notes or slides and improve interaction in presentation.

Students' performances in the presentaion (Using body language)

In terms of body language, three items in the IILP are focused on studying the students' eye contact, facial expression and gestures in presentation. Following are the results analyses of each.

Table 4. Using body languages

Option Items	1	2	3	4	5
7	5%	15%	30%	40%	10%
8	8%	23%	25%	27%	17%
9	2%	30%	38%	20%	10%

The responses for item 7 show that a half of the totals are aware of the importance of having eye contact with the audience. Eye contact creates the bond of communication and rapport between students and their listeners. It helps students not only to show their sincerity but also to get the audience feedback. With 20% of the students who do not know how to communicate with their listeners by eye contact, they should know that they will lose their audience's attention and respect. Some students said that they do not know how to use eye contact as an interactive method; they just rarely look at their listeners, all the time they look at their notes, slides, background or ceiling of classroom or around the room.

It can be seen from Table 4 that 44% of the respondents can keep facial expressions natural and friendly; whereas, one third of the total respondents cannot show their face expression naturally and friendly. Results show that facial expressions, especially smiles can make students deal with nervousness and overcome stage fright. Furthermore, the audience will also feel more comfortable and relaxed if their speakers are not too serious and fastidious.

Gestures express emotions through the movement of presenters' limbs, body, or head. Although these students are probably unaware of their hands when they talk to their classmates, their arms and hands may seem larger than life when they are standing in front of a roomful of people. Some of them put their hands in the pocket, others tie their hands behind their back while presenting.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, interacting with the audience in the presentation involves various techniques that are quite easily comprehended if well learnt and regularly practiced. Interaction helps to improve the quality of the presentation, involve the audience to participate in the presenters' speech, and build the presenters' skills as well as

competence. Moreover, presentation is a typical part of a language, consequently, when delivered in English by students at SFL-TNU, certain problems cannot be avoided.

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TÓM TẮT

NGHIÊN CỨU VỀ SỰ TƯƠNG TÁC GIỮA NGƯỜI THUYẾT TRÌNH VÀ KHÁN GIẢ KHI HỌC KỸ NĂNG THUYẾT TRÌNH CỦA SINH VIÊN CHUYÊN NGÀNH TIẾNG ANH TẠI KHOA NGOẠI NGỮ - ĐẠI HỌC THÁI NGUYÊN

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Nghiên cứu này tìm hiểu về sự tương tác giữa người thuyết trình và khán giả khi học kỹ năng thuyết trình của sinh viên chuyên ngành tiếng Anh tại Khoa Ngoại ngữ, Đại học Thái Nguyên (SFL-TNU) với mục đích chỉ ra các yếu tố ảnh hưởng đến sự tương tác khi thuyết trình của sinh viên. Nghiên cứu được thực hiện trên 40 sinh viên chuyên ngành tiếng Anh năm thứ tư ở trình độ tiếng Anh trên trung cấp tại Khoa Ngoại ngữ - ĐHTN. Công cụ thu thập dữ liệu chính của cuộc điều tra này là bảng câu hỏi có tên Bảng câu hỏi về sự tương tác khi thuyết trình (IILP). Bảng câu hỏi này được thiết kế chủ yếu nhằm thu thập thông tin cơ bản của các sinh viên khi thuyết trình và các kỹ năng cũng như yếu tố cần thiết khi thuyết trình. Các kết quả của nghiên cứu được phân tích và thảo luận kỹ lưỡng để trình bày cách sinh viên sử dụng các yếu tố này để nâng cao kỹ năng tương tác của các em. Từ kết quả, một số gợi ý cho sinh viên và giáo viên của SFL-TNU được tăng cường chất lượng tương tác trong khi học môn thuyết trình và thực tế thuyết trình trước khán giả.

Từ khóa: kỹ năng thuyết trình, thuyết trình viên, khán giả, sinh viên chuyên ngành tiếng Anh, Khoa Ngoại ngữ, Đại học Thái Nguyên

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