

DIFFICULTIES FACED BY THE FOURTH-YEAR ENGLISH MAJORS AT HAI PHONG UNIVERSITY WHILE GIVING A PRESENTATION AND SOME SUGGESTED SOLUTIONS

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ABSTRACT: Presentation is the process of communicating predetermined messages in a systematic way to a group of listeners. Learning and performing presentation skills are always a serious problem with English majors at Hai Phong University, especially the fourth-year students. By using a questionnaire designed to investigate difficulties that students from Class K18.1 might face, the researcher aims at finding out the real problems related to the poor performance of these students. The questions used in the questionnaire focus on how these students feel before a presentation, what they find most difficult when preparing a presentation, how is their eye contact during a presentation, how they often use the body language and what problems they most encounter while using presentation tool such as PowerPoint. At the end of the research, the researcher offers some suggestions students could get benefits on and improve their presentation.

Keywords: presentation, presentation skills, fourth year English majors, questionnaire, eye-contact

CÁC KHÓ KHĂN TRONG KHI THUYẾT TRÌNH CỦA SINH VIÊN NGÔN NGỮ ANH NĂM THỨ TƯ TẠI TRƯỜNG ĐẠI HỌC HẢI PHÒNG VÀ MỘT SỐ GIẢI PHÁP KIẾN NGHỊ

TÓM TẮT: Thuyết trình là quá trình truyền đạt thông tin một cách có hệ thống đến một nhóm người nghe. Học và thể hiện kỹ năng thuyết trình luôn là vấn đề khó khăn đối với sinh viên chuyên ngành tiếng Anh trường Đại học Hải Phòng, đặc biệt là đối tượng sinh viên năm thứ tư. Bằng cách sử dụng bảng câu hỏi được thiết kế để điều tra những khó khăn mà sinh viên lớp Ngôn ngữ Anh 1 - K18 gặp phải, tác giả hướng đến tìm ra nguyên nhân của sự thiếu hiệu quả trong quá trình thực hiện thuyết trình của sinh viên. Các câu hỏi được sử dụng trong bảng câu hỏi tập trung vào tìm hiểu trạng thái tâm lý của sinh viên trước khi làm bài thuyết trình, những vấn đề sinh viên cảm thấy khó khăn nhất khi chuẩn bị một bài thuyết trình, cách giao tiếp bằng mắt của sinh viên trong khi thuyết trình, cách sinh viên thường sử dụng ngôn ngữ cơ thể và những vấn đề sinh viên gặp phải khi sử dụng công cụ trình chiếu như PowerPoint. Ở cuối nghiên cứu, tác giả có đưa ra một số gợi ý giúp sinh viên cải thiện được khả năng thuyết trình của mình.

Từ khóa: thuyết trình, các kỹ năng thuyết trình, cử nhân Tiếng Anh năm thứ tư, bảng câu hỏi, giao tiếp bằng mắt

I. INTRODUCTION

In recent years, the renewal of teaching and learning methods is being applied to many universities around the country. Schools have been changing from traditional teaching which is teacher - centered teaching and learning to learner - centered one.

Therefore, students not only listen to lectures and take notes but also have to prepare the lessons and present them in front of class. Presentation is considered the simplest way of expression to let others understand the content that someone wants to convey. A good speaker is a person who takes the least

time to convey information to listeners but still makes them understand clearly what has been conveyed. The researcher realized that there are many problems faced by the fourth-year English majors at Haiphong University while performing presentation skills.

The research was conducted to assess the current state and to improve presentation skills for the fourth-year English majors of at Haiphong University.

Firstly, the research is aimed at finding out difficulties while making presentation faced by English majors at class K18.1, Haiphong University.

Secondly, the research is aimed at giving some suggestions to improve the presentation skills for the fourth-year English majors at class K18.1, Haiphong University.

Finally, by answering the question above, the author hopes to find out as many difficulties while making presentations of the fourth-year English majors at Haiphong University as possible, then to offer some suggested solutions to these students.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Definition of presentation

Oxford dictionary defines the word “presentation” as ‘a talk or speech which shows or explains idea, product or set task to the audiences. According to Dương, T. L. (2011), presentation is verbal presenting to many people on a certain issue in order to provide information or persuade others. Robins, G. (2008) claims that “presentation” is a form of communication first mentioned on Egyptian papyrus about 4500 years ago. According to Dlugan, A. (2010), Aristotle classified three elements that the presenter can use: ethos (accuracy),

pathos (inspiration, movement) and logos (reasonable). Cope, E. M., and Sandys, J. E. (Eds) (2010) show that according to the socio-economic development, Aristotle’s judgments persist over time and in the presentation, like any other traditional form, there are five basic elements that are often expressed as follows: Who presents? Presenting to whom? What is presented? Why present? How to present? Relating to presentation objectives, Lucas, S. E. (2009) claims that there are two main types of presentation: providing information and persuading. Presentations that provide information are aimed at sharing, providing, conveying information to listeners.

Definition of presentation skills

Presentation skills are defined in Oxford dictionary as the set of skills and methods required to orally present information to other people. According to De Grez, L., & Valcke, M. (2010), presentation skill relates to the oral presentation competence which is the combination of the understanding, attitudes and abilities needed to speak in public in order to give information, to convince and to relate. According to Tkachenko, I. (2014), these skills comprise many aspects such as layout of the presentation, the outline of the slides, the voice tone, the body language and these skills are very useful in many areas of work and life. Tkachenko (2014) claims that efficient presentations and public speaking skills are vital in business, sales, training, teaching, lecturing, etc. He also states that when students are asked to present in English, it is a difficult task because they are usually stressful while presenting in their own language, so making a presentation in English is even harder to them.

III. METHODOLOGY

Research method

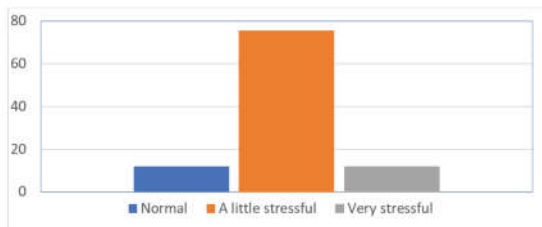
The method chosen by the author is the quantitative research.

To collect quantitative data, the author uses a survey also known as a questionnaire. Once the data is collected, the author analyzes and visualizes the data by using bar graphs.

Description of the research objects

Object of this study is the fourth-year English Majors of Language Department at Haiphong University. After studying and consulting with my research partner, the author conducted a survey on thirty-three students of English Class 1 K18 of Foreign Language Department at Haiphong University. Firstly, the fourth-year English Majors have to be proficient at using presentation language like pronunciation, vocabulary, grammar and fluency. Secondly, they are required to be good at greeting, answering questions as well as using body languages such as gestures, gestures, and eye contact. Finally, their presentation must have good organization characterized by cohesive three part structured speech. Even if they present in groups, there must be smooth step transference between members.

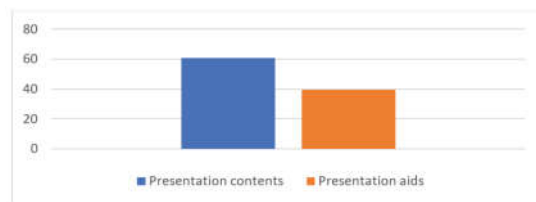
DISCUSSIONS



Graph 1: Stress level of students while giving presentation (in percent)

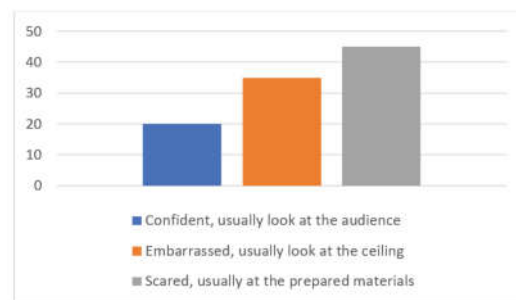
It is clear from the graph that approximately three quarters of survey

participants, at 75.76 percent, feel a little stressful and anxious before a presentation. The survey also shows that they will be stable after some minutes of presenting. On the other hand, a small minority of survey participants, namely 12.12 percent, feel very stressful, nervous, anxious and tremble. In the same way, 12.12 percent of the others are normal, easeful and confident before a presentation.



Graph 2: Difficulties while preparing a presentation faced by students (in percent)

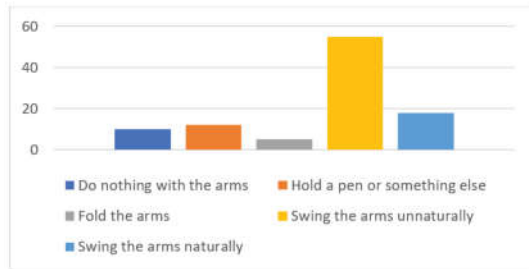
60 percent of students get troubles in preparing presentation contents while approximately 40 percent of presenters consider presentation aids are more complicated when preparing a speech.



Graph 3: The using of eyes-contact made by students (in percent)

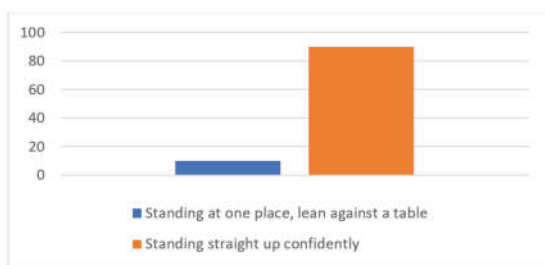
In terms of using eye contact, can be seen from the bar graph that only 21 percent of students fourth-year English Majors at Haiphong University are confident to look at the audience. There are twice as many as presenters feels scared and have to stare at the prepared speech, and more than

a third of students, which is 36 percent, are embarrassed and usually look at the ceiling, the walls or outside the window.



Graph 4: Body languages used by students (in percent)

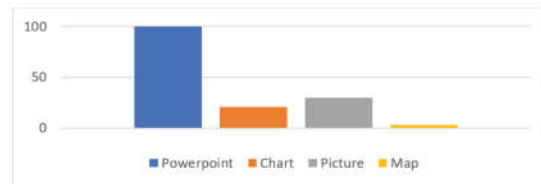
As is illustrated by the graph, most of the students do not know how to use their arms appropriately and effectively when making a presentation. More than half of the English Majors, about 51 percent, swing and point their arms unnaturally. Besides, nearly 6 percent of the others fold their arms over their chest while presenting. There are nearly twice as many students holding a pen or something else in their hands as students crossing their hands. There is still a minority of presenters even do nothing with their arms. Only more than a third of English Majors can swing and point their arms naturally while making a speech.



Graph 5: Postures used by students (in percent)

This bar chart shows the stance of fourth-year English Majors at Haiphong University while making a speech. As one will expect, a very large majority of students

have good stance. They stand straight up confidently, and sometimes move around the place during their presentation. Only a small minority of English Majors have ineffective stance which is standing at one place and leaning against a table, a chair or a wall.



Graph 6: The most problematic presentation tools faced by students (in percent)

It is obvious from the graph that PowerPoints are used by all of the English Majors when they make presentations. Charts are less used than pictures by more. Only a very small number of English Majors use maps for their speech.

Many fourth-year English Majors at Haiphong University feel stressful and nervous before making a speech. Nervousness and embarrassment is common in speakers. So what are the reasons causing stress for fourth-year English Majors at Haiphong University before a speech? The survey data shows that a very large percentage of the reasons come from poor preparation for the presentation. During the preparation of a speech, English Majors at Haiphong University go through the process of researching the topic, collecting and processing information, building the outline for speech, designing visual aids, and practicing presentation. First and foremost, in researching the topic, limitations of knowledge of presentation topic is a huge obstacle for fourth-year English Majors.

Besides, a small number of fourth-year English Majors at Haiphong University feel nervous and anxious before a presentation because they do not have skills and techniques to stabilize their psychology. Objectively, this comes from the lack of courses that provide psychological stability skills for students before presentations. Courses in the university's training program mostly focus on developing skills for students to build up an informative presentation and skills to use support tools effectively without paying attention to their psychology. Subjectively, fourth-year English Majors themselves have not actively explored and learned psychological stability skills from other sources.

A large number of fourth-year English Majors at Haiphong University are not good at using eye contact. Many students have timid look and usually stare at the prepared material, while some of the other awkwardly look at the ceiling or the walls. So what are the reasons of bad eye contact of fourth-year English Majors at Haiphong University? This comes from the fact that students have not practiced their presentations carefully. Most English Majors at Haiphong University often write presentation contents which are very detailed on their notebooks and bring them along when giving presentations. That is reason why approximately 36 percent of English Majors often look at the ceiling or the walls when making their speech.

Most of fourth-year English Majors of Foreign Language Department at Haiphong University have good awareness of the role of using gestures in presentations. However, many of them do not know how to make appropriate and

effective hand gestures during a speech. Half of the students swing and point their arms unnaturally. Besides, there is still a small proportion of students even do not do anything with their arms. These often see their limbs redundant and do not know where to hide their hands. Subjectively, fourth-year English Majors themselves are not proactive in learning skills of using hands from other sources. Nowadays, with the development of information technology, it is easy for students to search information from other resources such as Internet, newspapers or electronic libraries.

As illustrated by the survey, about three-fifths of fourth-year English Majors at Haiphong University find it difficult to prepare the presentation content rather than presentation tools, in which more than half of them find the Body of a speech the most complicated. However, the survey results also indicate that for the Body section, English Majors seem to meet all its requirements. Specifically, most of them ensure almost three parts of each Body paragraph which are introducing the matter, presenting the matter, and concluding the matter. In addition, methods are often applied to increase the convincing of a problem. It is shown by the survey that the method of giving practical examples is used by most English Majors, followed by the method of giving proof of data and the method of telling a story of the illustration. In addition, English Majors also pay attention to using connectors and phrases to transfer smoothly between ideas and link paragraphs in the Body to create coherence for the Body of the presentation. However, it can be seen that many fourth-year English Majors at

Haiphong University find the Body section causes difficulties for them in preparing the content of a presentation because it needs more information and takes more time to prepare than Introduction and Conclusion. As a result, students too focus on and spend a lot of time preparing their Body that they forget to invest time to prepare for an impressive Introduction and an effective Conclusion.

It is obvious from the survey results that in all kinds of support tools, PowerPoint is most used by all the fourth-year English Majors at Haiphong University when they have to make presentations. Students are interested in using PowerPoint because it brings them with many benefits. First and foremost, PowerPoint is an integrated application in Microsoft Office, so it is very convenient and easy to use. Because the final year students at Haiphong University are required to get informatics certificate which includes requirement of proficient use of PowerPoint, using PowerPoint for presentations to them is no problems. However, when preparing PowerPoint for presentations, many fourth-year English Majors at Haiphong University encounter with the problems of multi-word slides. Many students use PowerPoint to replace notes when speaking. As a result, each slide is full of words so the presenters can read it to the audience. Obviously, slides with many words reduce the affection of students' presentation.

IV. SUGGESTIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

Suggestions for better preparation before giving a presentation

Managing stress is the biggest step that fourth-year English Majors have to pass to become good presenters. To control stress,

preparation is very essential because it brings confidence to speakers. An excellent speaker often works harder than you can imagine to join things together, making sure he or she will be confident enough when delivering the presentation. When preparing the original, choose the topic you already know. Speaking about the topic that is familiar to you will definitely give you the advantage of confidence because you know what you need to say and control your speech process. After having designed the PowerPoint as well as other support tool, spend two hours to check out the slides, making sure the sequence of slides is the same order of the speech process, the content on each slide is short but informative enough, no spelling mistakes, full-size font, harmonious color combination of font and background, suitable pictures and charts, video clips in function, appropriate effects. The final preparation step is practice. The success or failure of your presentation depends on your preparation and rehearsal. Every careful preparation will be useless if you cannot express what you have in front of the audience. The goal of practice is to memorize the contents and order of presentation. "Practice makes perfect". If you prepare well and practice well, surely your presentation will go smoothly. Rehearsal is also a good opportunity for you to master the content, adjust the time and correct the mistakes in your presentation.

Suggestions for maintaining psychological stability

English Majors should regularly train their psychology even if they do not make a presentation. Before a speech, it is advisable for fourth-year English Majors

at Haiphong University to apply some skills below to stabilize the psychology. In terms of intellect, continuously believe your introduction will be fruitful and warmly gotten by the gathering of people. Get freed of your pressure and rest well the night some time recently. In terms of body, gently move a few meters before giving a presentation, breathe deeply and evenly in order to create the necessary relaxation. For two hands, hold tight and loose as slowly as possible. You can do it many times before a speech. In terms of face, practice facial muscles to create the most natural emotion by closing your eyes tightly, closing your lips and frowning at the same time, then relaxing. This practice will help your muscles not be hard when speaking and your voice will be clearer. You can practice again and again before giving a presentation. Besides, you can open your mouth and your eyes as large as possible, and relax afterwards. This will help all your facial muscles to stretch and become more flexible. You can practice again and again repeatedly before starting your presentation.

Suggestions for making good eye contact

There are many behaviors expressed through eye contact. Beginning by making eye contact around the room. This will help to catch audience's attention. Next, giving your eyes attention to a group of listeners when you start your first words. Lastly, moving your eyes to all the audience, so that the audience will understand you are interested in everyone.

Suggestions for using notes more effective

Using notes is an effective way for English Majors during the process of delivering the presentation because few

students have the ability to memorize everything prepared. Instead of big sheets of paper or notebooks, students should use small sheets of paper. Palm sized sheets of paper are convenient for you to put in your palms and sometimes glance at quickly to remember the ideas.

Suggestions for using hand gestures

Hand gestures have become an indispensable part of communication skills. Thus, for any English Majors even those are bad at making presentations, there are some simple and safe suggestions of hand's position for them to follow. "The principle of keeping the ball". The simulated gesture acts as if you are holding a basketball between two hands is a sign of good confidence and control, as if you really hold the truth in your hands. Steve Jobs regularly uses this approach in his speeches. "Hands form a pyramid". When a person is worried, their hands often rub together and it is difficult to remain stable. Therefore, the best way is to place two hands like pyramids in a comfortable position. To do this, lightly touching the tips of your fingers together. But one thing to note is to avoid using it too much or combine it with an arrogant, smug attitude on the face. "Hands face up". This gesture shows openness and honesty.

V. CONCLUSIONS

Presentation skills and public speaking abilities are not constrained to certain uncommon individuals – anybody can provide a great introduction, or per-frame open talking to a proficient and impressive standard. Like most specialisms, this requires arrangement and training. Educating students the techniques to plan and provide a well-organised, fine,

efficient presentation is exceptionally vital. Substance, association, structure, non-verbal communication, utilizing of visual aids, dealing with questions ought to be instructed explicitly to the understudies.

The research was conducted on February 2021 with a view to finding out the difficulties while presenting of the fourth-year English majors at Foreign Language Department of Hai Phong University. From the analysis of the findings of the research in the previous chapter, it can be stated that there are more than one problem of performing a presentation.

By answering the main question: “What are some difficulties that the fourth-year English Majors at Haiphong University have to face to when making a presentation?”, the author discovered many problems while making presentations of the 4th year English majors at Haiphong University. The main problems they have to face while giving a presentation range from psychological factors such as anxiety and stress, the limit of using body languages (eyes-contact, hand gestures, postures, etc.) and the using of presentation tools. There are many methods and approaches that the teachers might use to help students deal with these problems.

Because of the limited time, the author have not yet applied these teaching methods on the real presentation classes. Most of these teaching approaches come

from previous researches and articles released in many trusted science journals. The author hopes that in the near future, he could do further researches of applying useful presentation teaching methods that help English majors at Haiphong University overcome their limitless and perform better oral presentation.

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