

A Discussion on Presentation Skills in English as a Second Language (ESL)

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Abstract: *This article looks at presentation skills in almost all of the aspects including the definition, the significance of presentation skills in ESL, the challenges faced by learners, and strategies to enhance these skills, ultimately contributing to their academic, professional, and personal success.*

Keywords: *Presentation skills, definition, significance, challenges, strategies, enhance*

1. Introduction

Presentation skills are a fundamental component of effective communication, particularly in English as a Second Language (ESL) contexts. For ESL learners, developing strong presentation skills is not just about mastering the language; it's about conveying ideas clearly, confidently, and persuasively. Especially in Viet Nam nowadays, the recharging of education and learning strategies is being connected to numerous universities around the nation. Schools have been changing from the conventional instructing method which is teacher-centered education and learning to a learner-centered one. Hence, students, instead of listening to lecturers and taking notes, ought to prepare the lessons and present them in class. Likewise, presentation skills are essential in professional contexts where reports or plans are expected to be displayed in the form of oral speech with the use of visuals. In this article, the author discusses what presentation skills are, what they are composed of, how important these skills are in ESL, what difficulties the learners often face and how to have effective presentations in both academic and professional contexts.

2. Content

2.1. Definitions and Components of presentation skills

Presentation skills in ESL involve the ability to prepare, structure, and deliver content effectively in English, taking into account both verbal and non-verbal communication elements. These skills are multifaceted and include several key components as follows.

- *Language Proficiency:* This refers to the mastery of vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation, which is fundamental. Effective presentation requires clear articulation of ideas, correct use of language

grammatical structures, appropriate use of vocabulary, especially correct pronunciation (Thornbury, 2005). Speakers are also expected to be speak fluently so that the speech is convincing to the audience. Without a solid foundation in language proficiency, ESL learners may struggle to convey their message effectively.

- *Organization and Structure:* This is known as the story message of a presentation, which has a clear beginning, middle, and end. A well-organized presentation typically includes an introduction that outlines the main points, a body that elaborates on these points with supporting evidence, and a conclusion that summarizes the content and reinforces the main message (Gillett, 2013). Specifically, in the introduction, the speaker is expected to introduce the personal background in such a way that give trust to the audience and the clear overview so that the audience can follow the speaker easily; the body should be the detailed and logical discussion of the main points, which are expressed in well-structured and logically linked sentences; the conclusion is expected to focus on the summary of the main points and the concluding sentences so as to remind the audience of the key information of the speech. This effective structure of the presentation helps the audience follow the presentation and understand the key ideas.

- *Content Development:* Developing relevant and engaging content is crucial. This involves researching the topic, selecting pertinent information, and presenting it in a way that is interesting and informative to the audience. The topic should be exploited into various main points, each of which is well supported by a series of sub – main ideas and supporting ideas and is summarized before the speaker moves to a new main idea. Effective ESL learners must also consider the cultural context and background knowledge of

their audience to make their content accessible and engaging.

- *Delivery Techniques*: These are known as physical message of a presentation, which consists of postures, eye contacts, gestures and voice inflation (David H. & Charles L. (2009). In other words, effective delivery involves the use of appropriate tone, pace, and volume. It also includes non-verbal communication skills such as eye contact, gestures, and body language, which help to engage the audience and convey confidence (Anderson, 2016). ESL learners must practice these techniques to avoid the common mistakes in postures such as pendulum, washing the hands, soldiers, bird watchers... . As far as the volume is concerned, the speaker is expected to start at 150% of the volume in order to release the fear energy (David H. & Charles L. (2009). Good delivery techniques help to enhance their overall presentation effectiveness.

- *Use of Visual Aids*: These are known as visual message of a presentation, which have several visual aids such as slides, charts, graphs, pictures, real objects and videos (David H. & Charles L. (2009). Visual message is very effective in presentation because “a picture is worth a thousand words”, especially even if the audience can miss something, they can look at the visuals and understand the message the speaker want to convey. In other words, visuals can enhance the clarity and impact of a presentation. They provide visual support for the spoken word and can help to illustrate complex ideas more effectively. It is crucial that the speaker use the right visuals for the right information, otherwise, it brings about adverse effects. The three steps in using visuals include introducing the visual, explaining it and emphasizing the information (David H. & Charles L. (2009). Last but not least, ESL learners should be adept at integrating visual aids into their presentations to complement their verbal communication.

- *Audience Engagement*: Engaging the audience is a crucial aspect of presentation skills. This can be achieved through interactive elements such as questions, discussions, and activities that involve the audience. The question time, ie, when the audience should ask questions, should be mentioned at the end of the introduction, otherwise, the speaker’s presentation may be interfered. When engaging with the audience, effective presenters also pay attention to audience feedback and adjust their delivery accordingly.

2.2. Importance of presentation skills in ESL

Presentation skills are crucial for several reasons. They enhance language proficiency, contribute to academic success, and are crucial for professional and personal development.

Firstly, they enhance language proficiency. Preparing and delivering presentations require learners to research, organize, and articulate their thoughts in English. By delivering various speeches, presenters become fluent and eloquent speakers who possess the correct use of grammar and vocabulary. This process improves their vocabulary, grammar, and overall language fluency.

Secondly, strong presentation skills are essential in academic settings. During the course, ESL students learn many subjects which require them to present projects, participate in debates, and engage in group discussions. Effective presentation skills enable them to express their ideas clearly and confidently, contributing to better academic performance.

Thirdly, in the professional realm, presentation skills are equally important. Many job roles require employees to present information, whether in meetings, training sessions, or client pitches. For ESL learners, possessing strong presentation skills can be a significant advantage, setting them apart in the job market and enhancing their career prospects.

Finally, presentation skills are valuable in personal and social contexts. They enable individuals to communicate effectively in various situations, from social gatherings to community events, fostering better relationships and community engagement.

2.3. Common difficulties faced by ESL learners

Despite the importance of presentation skills, ESL learners often face several challenges in developing them. One of the primary challenges is language proficiency. Many ESL learners may struggle with limited vocabulary, grammatical errors, and pronunciation issues, which can hinder their ability to deliver clear and effective presentations (Harmer, 2001). Additionally, cultural differences can pose challenges. Communication styles vary across cultures, and ESL learners may find it difficult to adapt to the presentation norms and expectations of an English-speaking audience.

Another significant challenge is anxiety and lack of confidence. Public speaking is a common fear, and for ESL learners, this fear can be exacerbated by language barriers and self-consciousness about their language abilities. This anxiety can manifest in various ways, including nervousness, hesitation, and difficulty in

maintaining eye contact, all of which can negatively impact the effectiveness of their presentations.

2.4. Strategies to enhance presentation skills

To overcome these challenges and enhance presentation skills, ESL learners can employ several strategies as follows.

Firstly, practice is paramount. The more learners practice, the more comfortable and confident they become. Practicing in front of a mirror, recording oneself, or presenting to a small group of friends or family members can help learners refine their skills and gain valuable feedback.

Another effective strategy is to focus on the structure and organization of the presentation. A well-structured presentation is easier to follow and understand. Learners should start with a clear introduction, outlining the main points they will cover. Each point should be developed logically, supported by examples or evidence, and the presentation should conclude with a strong summary or call to action. Using visual aids, such as slides or props, can also enhance the clarity and impact of the presentation.

Improving language proficiency is also crucial. ESL learners should continuously work on expanding their vocabulary, improving their grammar, and practicing pronunciation. Reading extensively, engaging in conversations with native speakers, and using language learning apps can aid in this process. Additionally, learners should focus on developing their listening skills, as understanding questions and feedback from the audience is an integral part of effective presentations.

Building confidence is another essential aspect. To combat anxiety, learners can practice relaxation techniques, such as deep breathing or visualization, before their presentations. Joining public speaking clubs, such as Toastmasters, can provide a supportive environment for practicing and improving presentation skills. Additionally, receiving constructive feedback from teachers, peers, or mentors can help learners identify areas for improvement and build confidence over time.

Moreover, in today's digital age, incorporating technology can significantly enhance presentation skills. Various tools and platforms can aid ESL learners in preparing and delivering effective presentations. For instance, presentation software like PowerPoint or Prezi allows learners to create visually appealing slides that complement their spoken words. These tools can help organize content, highlight key points,

and maintain the audience's interest.

Furthermore, online platforms like YouTube and TED Talks provide a wealth of resources for ESL learners. Watching presentations by proficient speakers can offer valuable insights into effective presentation techniques, such as body language, tone of voice, and pacing. Learners can also use video recording tools to practice and review their own presentations, identifying strengths and areas for improvement.

Finally, the role of educators is of great importance. Educators play a pivotal role in developing presentation skills in ESL learners. They can create a supportive and encouraging environment that fosters confidence and growth. Incorporating presentation activities into the curriculum, such as group projects, individual speeches, and class debates, provides learners with regular opportunities to practice and refine their skills (Richards & Rodgers, 2001). Teachers can also provide targeted feedback, focusing on both strengths and areas for improvement. Constructive feedback should address language use, content organization, delivery techniques, and audience engagement. Additionally, educators can introduce learners to various presentation formats and styles, helping them adapt to different contexts and audiences.

3. Conclusion

In conclusion, presentation skills in ESL encompass a range of abilities that are crucial for effectively communicating information to an audience. These skills include language proficiency, organization and structure, content development, delivery techniques, use of visual aids, and audience engagement. They are essential for enhancing language proficiency, academic success, professional development and personal growth. By developing strong presentation skills, ESL learners can communicate their ideas clearly and confidently, paving the way for success in various aspects of their lives. Thorough understanding about presentation skills helps both the ESL teachers and learners get success when teaching and learning these skills.

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