

Applied Techniques in Making Flawless Oral Presentations of Engineering Students in Technological University (Hmawbi)

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Abstract— The author aims to point out the ways which can make successful oral presentation in the language classrooms and to give valuable experience to build communicative abilities and interpersonal skills for the students' future. The effectiveness of applied techniques in making oral presentations is analysed by the questionnaire which distributed to the engineering students, attending at the classrooms the author is teaching. One hundred and twenty students from two engineering classes contributed to answer the questionnaire and participate in the presentation groups. In front of the audience, the students have participated to make flawless presentation as much as they can with the instructions and support of the teacher.

Keywords— Successful oral presentation, applied techniques, communicative abilities, interpersonal skill

I. INTRODUCTION

At present, according to the changing educational environment and more challenging work environment, oral presentation is considered as one of the vital transferrable skills by the stakeholders, including employers, graduate and undergraduate students and parents too and the students are more willing to learn and study about the effective oral presentation skill. Since all the technological universities from the author's country is trying to walk on the way of outcome-based education system and the quality assurance, every educational demands from industries and factories comes to the curricular and extra-curricular activities for the classrooms. Now in Technological University (Hmawbi), teaching oral presentation skill and making oral presentations in the different engineering courses are the compulsory task to enhance the engineering students' transferrable skill and develop their language skill. Moreover, one thing which everyone can't deny is that oral presentation is one of the most effective classroom activities to promote the students' critical thinking, analysing abilities and collaborative and interpersonal skills besides using English language. But there is one thing which is very important in making a presentation. It is the effectiveness of oral presentation. Even if the oral presentation may have obvious flaws which have been ignored by the audience, the effectiveness of the presentation still depends on the ability of the presenter to communicate with his or her audience. Although the use of visual aids can dramatically develop the quality of a presentation, very effective presentation can be given without using visual aids. That is why no matter how great the visual aids are, if a presenter does a poor job communicating with the audience, the presentation will suffer (Collins, J, 2004). Therefore, this paper is intended to point out how to teach giving oral presentation which is effective and flawless in the English language classrooms and the author wants to share the applied techniques, used in her classrooms in Technological University (Hmawbi).

II. LITERATURE REVIEW FOR MAKING EFFECTIVE ORAL PRESENTATION

If the majority of the class time, taken up by teacher-fronted and drill-oriented activities in lecture hours of English language classes is tried to change, oral presentations are the one example of a student-centred, communicative activity which can be used to handle this problem. Moreover, English language teachers can give their students the opportunities to communicate with other students by using English in giving oral presentation. It is also a task-based communicative activity which can provide the students with an enjoyable way to use English to communicate with their classmates. As a result from it, it may improve the student's motivation to learn English and help improve students' English language abilities (Thornbury. S, 2005). Before starting a communication with real audience in delivering a speech, English language classrooms come to be an ideal place where the students can gain both confidence and experience by practicing with the classmates to get more or less presentation expertise. But speaking and communicating is not similar because if someone speaks to a listener but if he or she does not comprehend the message, the speaker fails to communicate it with the listener. Gregory noted to examine how speech communication works in both formal and informal speaking situations, seven components of the speech communication process is needed to identify (Hamilton. G, 1987).

- a. Speaker: The speaker is the source or originator of a message that is transmitted to a listener.
- b. Listener: The listener is the recipient of the message sent by the speaker and also shares parts of the responsibility for the communication.
- c. Message: The message is whatever the speaker communicates to listeners and is the combination of both verbal (i.e. words) and non-verbal (i.e. extra-linguistics feature involved in communication) symbols.
- d. Channel: The channel is the medium used to communicate the message. For oral presentation in the classroom, students' primary channel is auditory (voice), accompanied by a visual channels (gestures, facial expressions, visual aids etc.).
- e. Feedback: Feedback is both verbal and nonverbal responses that listeners give to the speaker.
- f. Interference: Interference is anything that blocks or hinders the accurate communication of a message. It can be of three types: the external interference arises outside the listener (e.g. people talking loudly in the hall), the internal interference comes from within the listener (e.g. she/he might be worried about personal problem) and the speaker generated interference (e.g. use of unfamiliar words).
- g. Situation: The situation is the context (time and place) in which communication occurs. Different situations call for different behaviours by both speaker and listener.

These communication components are related to the step by step procedures of making successful oral presentation (Rockland, R.H., 2001).

A. Planning Presentation

There is an old saying, 'Plan your work; then work your plan' (T.K. Kollins, 1996). Before starting a creation of a presentation, it is needed to be addressed many questions by the presenters selves.

1.) *Who is the audience?* : Understanding what kind of audience will listen to the presentation is the support to presentation approach, use of words, background material and even choice of presentation topic.

2.) *What are the goals of the audience?* : In making presentation in the classrooms, the goal is to inform. If the presenter understands what kind of information the audience wants to get from the presentation, the presentation will be considered a success.

3.) *What is going to be presented?*: This is outlining a plan what the presenter wants to talk and wants the audience understand and remember a certain amount of information. The presenter should have two purposes: a general overview, to present, to summarize, to outline; to discuss the current situation or to explain how to do something or how something is done. The latter is what the present wants the audience to take away with them after listening to the speaker, what he/she wants them to do, what they should remember.

4.) *How is the presentation going to be given?*: Using visual aids in the presentation is a good idea. But according to the venue, time and circumstances, what kind of equipment should be used can be determined.

B. Reducing Anxiety

Feeling anxiety in front of the audience is the fear of failure, especially forgetting something important. In this line of thinking, preparation is critical. Then this anxiety can be overcome by many ways.

1.) *Know the presentation.* : Every presenter who tries to memorize the presentations tends to forget key points. So know the presentation by practicing the full presentation at least 5-6 times.

2.) *Determine the slides.* : When practicing, determine which slides are not being able to remember and if any difficulty with a word about paraphrasing the slides, try substituting these words and the presenter doesn't need to hold any notes but add enough information on each slide.

3.) *Build a rapport with audience.* : Starting off the presentation with a yes/no question is one of the effective ways to get the audience attention. Trying humour early on in the presentation as an ice-breaker will help reduce tension in the speaker and lighten the subject matter.

C. Creating Presentation

A good presentation is well structured and this makes it easier for the audience to follow. Fundamentally there are three parts to a presentation: Introduction, Body and Conclusion.

The beginning of a presentation is the most important part of the whole presentation because it is when the speaker establishes a rapport with the audience and when the speaker has its attention.

All the information the speaker wants to give the audience is needed to show in the middle of presentation by well organizing the speaker's ideas: logical, chronological order,

from general to specific; from known to unknown; from accepted to controversial; cause/effect; problem/solution.

To make sure the audience has retained the main points, the speaker should briefly summarize the speech at the end of the presentation. So, the conclusion of the presentation should include a brief reminder of what the speaker tried to show in the presentation, how the speaker tried to do so, thanks to the audience for listening and an invitation to ask questions, make comments or open a discussion.

D. Practice

The presentation should be practiced at least 5-6 times, and should be practiced with the presenter standing in front of the computer screen and talking out loud. This practice will not only reduce anxiety but also enable the speaker to develop the best presentation. During each practice, the presentation should be reviewed and enhanced for clarity eye appeal, quality of the presentation, logical flow, mix of styles, clarification of all points and timing, placement of clip art on specific slides and delivery modes of presentation (Rockland, R.H., 2001).

III. APPLIED TECHNIQUES TO TEACH ORAL PRESENTATION SKILLS

The author understood that as the oral presentation was the student-centered and student-led activity, it would be time-consuming and it was needed to determine the effective teaching strategies and prepare well-structured lesson plan.

A. Students' Existing Knowledge

Firstly, before starting giving explanation about how to make a presentation, the author distributed the questionnaire which had analysed the students' prior knowledge about presentation to the one hundred and twenty engineering students who were attending at the second year and fourth year respectively.

TABLE I
SCALE OF MOTIVATIONAL LEVEL

Scale	Assessment Level
0	Strongly Dissatisfied
1	Dissatisfied
2	Neutral
3	Satisfied
4	Strongly Satisfied

Table I shows the level of assessment on the components related to the effective oral presentation.

TABLE III
FONT SIZES FOR PAPERS

Variations	0 (%)	1 (%)	2 (%)	3 (%)	4 (%)
Preparing a presentation	8	8	67	17	-
Structuring a presentation	8	8	67	17	-
Linking Ideas	33	38	17	13	-
Summarizing a presentation	38	21	25	17	-
Public Contact	42	15	18	25	-
Enthusiasm	42	15	25	18	-
Body Language	46	17	25	17	8

Language Delivery	58	8	8	17	8
Paraphrasing Visual Aids	67	8	8	17	25
Dealing with questions	38	13	33	8	8

Table II describes the background situation of the students' self-assessment to the components of making an oral presentation.

After recognizing the students' situation, the author helped the students in taking the following steps which could lead to an effective classroom presentation.

B. Introducing Students to Basics of Effective Communication

Firstly, the students were made familiar with the communication components. Then, to reduce their speech anxiety, the author provided the students with both verbal and printed instructions to take preparation for presentation beforehand. Moreover, the teacher encouraged them to have a deep understanding on the topic and discouraged them to memorize the difficult words and expressions to be sound familiar, discussed weaknesses and strengths of other presenters, provided the development of their summarizing and outlying skills and explained the importance of using pauses, visual aids, gestures and voice clarity. The last and most important one was that it was needed to be a good listener to become a good presenter. Good listeners could provide far more clues to a speaker's success or failure than poor ones (Carlin & Payne 1995).

C. Concentrating on a Focus

Since the students could build their interpersonal and collaborative skill during the oral presentation, the teacher focused on the whole class to participate in the oral presentation as a group work. So the teacher divided the whole class into several groups and scheduled two groups per week throughout the second-semester of that academic year. She gave the groups free choices to select topics according to their interests. This was to inspire the students to use research strategies and gave the fully right to improve their self-esteem.

D. Preparing the Content

The author was a mentor while the students were preparing their group presentation but in some time, the possible sources were informed to the students such as websites, library research and so on. The teacher let the students try themselves to develop their critical thinking skill in preparing the content of their presentation which could bring the audience attention.

E. Organizing the Speech

The well-structured presentation could make successful speech if it was also added timed rehearsals as many times as possible. Then when required, the teacher helped the students to identify their pronunciation errors and guided them how to operate equipments such as computer, projector and pointer and so on and supported them in designing visual aids.

F. Presenting the Speech

The teacher emphasized on students' appropriate and confident use of voice and tone modulation, confident use of body language, eye contact, comprehensible speaking rate, vocabulary and humor to communicate with the audience in

the class while delivering speech (Akhter & Nusrat,). Moreover, the teacher reminded them not to use unfamiliar terms and expressions because it could make the message ambiguous and later, the audience could be bored.

G. Peer Assessment

In the author's English classroom, the effectiveness of making oral presentation was built by this peer assessment form. Each student group could assess and evaluate other groups' presentation. By making the assessment themselves, they came to know what the requirements to develop their presentation skill were and what kind of improvements they had to do in their presentation. If they couldn't apply these presentation skills in this academic year, they could take advantage from this learning and self-cooperating next academic year and even when they were in their respective work environment.

TABLE IV
PEER ASSESSMENT FORM

Peer Assessment Form					
Group Name -	Date				
Circle the most appropriate response using the following scoring key: 5 indicates excellent and competent 4 indicates above average and competent 3 indicates average and competent 2 indicates below average, not competent 1 indicates poor/unacceptable, not competent					
Organization & Preparation	5	4	3	2	1
Clear, action-oriented objective					
Developing rapport					
Sequenced Ideas					
Questions answered skilfully					
Effective ending					
Observing Time limit					
Information accurate					
Major Points included					
Visual Aid Usage	5	4	3	2	1
Appropriate to audience and setting					
Appropriate to presentation topic and content					
Readability assured through adequate size and clarity					
Design					
Error Free					
Delivery Specific	5	4	3	2	1
Easy open posture					
Eye Contact					
Appropriate Dress					
Confident Appearance					
Body Language appropriate					
Appropriate Language					

H. Improvement Checklist

After finishing all presentation groups in the class, the author distributed the following questionnaire to her one hundred and twenty students again. The results were definitely different the ones of former questionnaire. This questionnaire was not only a questionnaire, but also an improvement checklist for the students to indicate how much

development they had made themselves. This could also be a motivational technique to learn English language and approach to outcome-based education.

TABLE IIIII
PEER ASSESSMENT FORM

Variations	0 (%)	1 (%)	2 (%)	3 (%)	4 (%)
Preparing a presentation	-	-	17	67	17
Structuring a presentation	-	-	17	67	17
Linking Ideas	-	-	17	67	17
Summarizing a presentation	-	-	33	67	8
Public Contact	-	-	50	25	17
Enthusiasm	-	-	50	25	17
Body Language	-	-	58	17	17
Language Delivery	-	-	58	25	8
Paraphrasing Visual Aids	-	-	50	25	17
Dealing with questions	-	-	50	25	17

IV. ISSUES AND BENEFITS IN MAKING ORAL PRESENTATION IN THE CLASSROOMS

Since English language is the foreign language in the country, Myanmar, many students feel that they have big problem in communicating with each other and most teachers consider they are not able to provide the students with sufficient opportunities to use English language in the classroom according to the class size and allocated teaching hour. Now the author has described the benefits and issues when making oral presentations in the classrooms. These two different portions may become the starting point of a new teaching method in teaching English to engineering students.

A. Issues in making oral presentation in the classrooms

Although teaching approach is changing from the conventional teaching to new teaching approach: teacher-centered to student-centered approach, the students are still unfamiliar with the student-led teaching and learning process. So oral presentations are still challenging and often give them unfamiliar tasks. In the classrooms, the students' language level is still the heterogeneity and the teacher has been teaching the mixed-level students. Although some students can join in the group presentation easily and enthusiastically, some individuals have difficulty to perform in front of the class because of their language needs and anxiety. From the teacher point of view, making presentation in the classroom requires a lot of time and effort to implement. Moreover, the most important thing is making presentation is the alternative way of building self-confidence. But if one student may feel uncomfortable about giving presentation in front of others, in turn, it will undermine the student's confidence.

B. Benefits of making presentation in the classrooms

Oral presentations in the classrooms allow the students to interact and participate more in the classrooms which improved the students' interest in learning English. Other researchers have shown that oral presentations can also be benefit students by helping them to bridge gap between

language study and language use (King, 2002). Oral presentation makes the students use English in a natural way since they make their classmates understand their topic and communicate with them. Another benefit of oral presentations is that they can help provide students with additional motivation to study English (Hovane, 2009). This is because oral presentations do more than just give students an opportunity to practice language skills; they also give students an opportunity to teach something to their peers. Finally, oral presentation is useful not only to improve students' communicative abilities and motivation in the classrooms but also to benefit in the future employment.

V. CONCLUSIONS

This paper is intended to give some applicable techniques to develop the students' oral presentation skill, which is very important and definitely needed to apply the future work environment. Along with improving individual oral presentation skill, the collaborative and interpersonal skills of students can be promoted and to be like this, classroom presentations should be organized in groups and then teachers have to monitor each group member's activities. Teachers have to assign specific roles to team members so that they can perform accordingly. The techniques used in the classrooms of the author are to highlight the effective ways of teaching oral presentation skill. It is hoped that it will start using oral presentation as a way to develop students' motivation in learning English and interpersonal skill which is much trended in the present world as a soft skill. By sharing the ideas and experiences, the English language teachers from technological universities can provide their students with the tools they need to succeed as the language learners.

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