

FACTORS AFFECTING STUDENTS' PERFORMANCE IN ENGLISH ORAL PRESENTATIONS

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Abstract

The researcher aims to investigate and expose several main factors affecting students' performance in oral presentations. A quantitative method was used in this study whereby a set of online questionnaires has been designed and sent to the respondents. The four-point Likert Scale questionnaires was adopted and modified from previous research and divided into four main sections: psychological factor, presentation skill factor, surrounding factor and linguistic factor. There were 43 respondents from semester one students Session II 2021/2022 involved in this study. The analysis of data involved descriptive statistics, and independent t-tests. The results revealed that students' oral presentations performances were moderately being affected by linguistic factor. While another 3 factors showed a combination of moderate and low level of mean value scores in terms of their effects on students' oral presentations performance. As regards to the t-tests result, across gender, there were no significant differences observed on all 4 variables. Some constructive remedies were also proposed with regards to the enhancement of students' performance in oral presentations.

Keywords: Affecting factors, students' performance, oral presentations

INTRODUCTION

English Language is one of the prominent languages learned by majority of the world's population, especially among the commonwealth countries including Malaysia. Malaysian students learned English as their second language since childhood in kindergarten or primary school. They were widely exposed with all 4 basic components of English language throughout their learning experience up to the tertiary level. These four components are: reading, listening, writing, and speaking skills. However, from these four components, most of them seem to have certain issues pertaining to the speaking component.

An oral presentation is a part of English-speaking component and commonly used as one of assessment types to assess students' ability in speaking. The phrase of oral presentation as explained by Cook, J. (2018), refers to the way an individual/team members explaining something to an audience. According to Wikipedia, presentations could be carried out in a form of demonstrations, introduction, giving lecture or speech pertaining to inform, persuade, inspire, motivate, build goodwill, or present a new idea/product.

In general context, there are many factors associated with students' ability while delivering their oral presentations. Some may include the internal factors like psychological factor, and some others are the external factors like the oral presentation skill, surrounding and linguistic factor.

PROBLEM STATEMENT

Politeknik Kota Bharu as one of the tertiary level institutions in Malaysia has also implemented the oral presentation assessments for the three English modules that are compulsory to be taken by all Diploma students. Among the problems regularly raised by the English lecturers of Politeknik Kota Bharu is regarding students' performance in oral presentation assessments. Majority of the students showed a relatively unsatisfactory performance in their oral presentation assessments. Thus, this study would like to investigate some of the underlying factors contribute to this problem.

OBJECTIVES

1. To investigate factors affecting students' performance in oral presentations
2. To determine whether gender difference has a direct relation with students' psychological factor, their oral presentation skills, surrounding and linguistic factor.
3. To propose some constructive remedies to enhance students' performance in oral presentations.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Language barrier is one of the most common problems faced by non-English native speakers especially when dealing with oral presentation as a form of their study assessments. According to Al-Nouh, A.N., Abdul Kareem, M.M., & Taqi, H. (2015) , several main issues related with this linguistic factor were lack of vocabulary knowledge, grammar, translating directly from their mother tongue's words to English and fluency. Jahbel, K. (2017) deduced that among the linguistic factors reported to hinder students' oral presentation include lack of vocabulary and incorrect pronunciation.

Other than this linguistic factor, there were also several other related factors affecting students' performance in English oral presentations. Riadil, I. G. (2021) examined several main factors and found that there was a correlation between students' performance and psychological factor. His findings suggested that the frequency caused by psychological factors are high enough. These internal factors include anxiety, shyness, and low self-confidence. Hadi, M.S., Izzah, L., & Masae, M. (2020) research findings also concluded that the average mean score of Thai students was associated with high anxiety.

Presentation skill factor may also affect students' oral presentation's performance. As stated by Al-Nouh, A.N., et.al, (2015), some of their respondents believed that shortage of oral-skills courses led to their low performance.

Regarding the surrounding factor, Alwi & Sidhu (2013) commentated that their respondents hardly found to make a consistent eye contact with the audience. Some other related issues regarding this factor may include instructor related problems and facilities provided. However, Riadil,I. G. (2021) stated that the results associated with instructor related problems are low.

METHODOLOGY

In this study, the researcher has chosen a quantitative method of research in a form of online survey designed by using google form application. A set of questionnaires was adopted and modified from Riadil, I.G. (2020 & 2021). There were 22 instruments consisting of (2) items for demographic profile and another (20) items represented the (4) different variables. It uses the four-point Likert Scale design that ranging from Strongly Disagree scale to Strongly Agree scale.

Referring to Table 1, 43 semester one students of Session II 2021/2022 became the respondents of the survey. (32.6%) represented Diploma of Electrical Engineering Department and (67.4%) were from Commerce Department.

Table 1: Department

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Electrical Engineering	14	32.6	32.6	32.6
	Commerce	29	67.4	67.4	100.0
	Total	43	100.0	100.0	

There are (20) male students representing 46.5% of the overall respondents and the rest (23) are females which equals to 53.5% as shown in the Table 2.

Table 2: Gender

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Male	20	46.5	46.5	46.5
	Female	23	53.5	53.5	100.0
	Total	43	100.0	100.0	

DATA ANALYSIS

Descriptive statistics, including frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations were employed to measure factors affecting students' oral presentation from four variables: psychological, oral presentation skill, surrounding and linguistic. Four different t-tests were also being used to compare the gender difference in relation to the afore-mentioned four variables.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Overall, the mean score recorded for all survey items were in between the range of (2.00-2.93) or at the ‘low’ and ‘average’ level, according to Hadiyanto & Amirul (2013) Mean’s Interpretation Table as shown in Table 3.

Table 3: Interpretation of Mean Score

1.0 to 2.33	Low / Negative
2.34 to 3.66	Average / Neutral
3.67 to 5.00	High / Positive

Source: (Hadiyanto & Amirul, 2013)

The following discussion analysed the results obtained from all the (4) variables:

1. Psychological factor:

Table 4: Means and Standard Deviation for factors affecting students’ oral presentation according to psychological state

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
1. I don’t like the idea of oral presentations.	43	1.00	4.00	2.2326	0.97192
2. I feel an oral presentation is difficult because I have low self- confidence.	43	1.00	4.00	2.4651	0.66722
3. I do not think I will make use of English-speaking skills.	43	1.00	4.00	2.3721	0.84581
4. I feel shy when delivering oral presentations.	43	1.00	4.00	2.8140	0.79450
5. My anxiety is too high. That thing prevents me from speaking well.	43	1.00	4.00	2.5814	0.87919

Table 4 disclosed the means and standard deviations for factors affecting students' oral presentation according to psychological state. Clearly, it can be seen that 'feeling shy' (statement 4) and 'feeling anxious' (statement 5) while delivering the oral presentations 'moderately' and 'slightly' affect students' performance psychologically and indirectly make them to have low self-confidence because they think the oral presentation is difficult to be carried out (statement 2). These findings were closely supported by Al-Nouh, A.N., Abdul Kareem, M.M., & Taqi, H. (2015) study who stated that majority of their respondents reported they 'sometimes' get embarrassed and feel anxious during presentations. Hadi, M.S., Izzah, L., & Masae, M. (2020) research findings also concluded that the average mean score of Thai students was associated with high anxiety. However, the result opposed the Alwi, N.F., Sidhu, G.K. (2013) study who reported that their respondents experienced 'high' level of anxiety, embarrassment, and lack of confidence during oral presentation. Haidara, Y. (2016) also reported that his respondents encountered with self-confidence problem when speaking English.

Next, another 2 items related with this psychological factor showed a relatively lower mean score (2.37 for statement 3) and (2.23 for statement 1). Some respondents in average, think they will not make use of this speaking skill (statement 3) and delicately consider it as their unpreferred list of assessment (statement 1).

2. Oral presentation skill factor

According to the means and standard deviations table for factors affecting students' oral presentation in relation to Presentation Skill as shown in Table 6, the result revealed that the presentation skill factor 'moderately' served as the main underlying factor that affects students' performance in their oral presentation assessments with the highest mean score (2.93) recorded for Statement 6 (refer Table 5).

Table 5: Means and Standard Deviation for factors affecting students' oral presentation according to Presentation Skill Factor

Descriptive Statistics					
	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
6. I need to read from my notes during oral presentations.	43	1.00	4.00	2.9302	0.85622
7. I don't know how to use technology in my oral presentation.	43	1.00	4.00	2.3721	0.84581
8. Not knowing how to do an oral presentation is the reason behind my low performance.	43	1.00	4.00	2.4884	0.79798
9. The conversation course is not enough to improve my speaking skill.	43	1.00	4.00	2.2558	0.90219

10. The difficulty of the topic is the reason behind my low performance in oral presentation.	43	1.00	4.00	2.7674	0.81174
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For this statement, 69.8% of the respondents agreed that lack of presentation skill caused them to read from their notes during the oral presentation. This is in line with Al-Nouh, A.N., et.al. findings that 66.9% of their respondents feel they need to rely on their notes during oral presentations. Slightly less than three-quarters of the respondents (67.5%) were in agreement that the difficulty of the topic was among the reason behind their low performance in oral presentation (statement 10). The mean score obtained for this statement accounted for (2.76). On the other hand, more than half of the respondents (53.5%) with the mean score of (2.48) reported that not knowing the proper way to do the oral presentation also affect their performance (statement 8). Some other respondents with mean score of (2.37) proposed that their inability to use the technology led to their low performance in oral presentation (statement 7). Meanwhile, the lowest mean score obtained for this presentation skill factor accumulated for item No. 9 with (2.25), whereby more than half of the respondents ($N = 27$) disagreed that the conversation course is not enough to improve their speaking skill.

3. Surrounding factor

With regards to the Surrounding factor displayed in Table 6, almost two-thirds of the respondents with 67.5% proportionally admitted that they feel frightened when a lot of people are watching them during presentation (statement 11). This is in line with Alwi & Sidhu's (2013) study that mentioned their respondents hardly resist their eye contact with the audience. The mean score recorded for this item is (2.88) which indicates the 'average' level. On the other hand, 26 of them (60.5%) were conscious about their audience reactions (2.72) and worried they will laugh at them when delivering their presentation in English (2.76) (statement 12 & 13). Some other respondents reported that they were slightly affected by their friends' performance who are better than them (statement 14). The mean score recorded for this statement is (2.34). The last 2 statements (statement 15&16) under this surrounding factor showed a 'low' mean score with only (2.00) and (2.27) scores. In a nutshell, it can be concluded that all the findings derived from the surrounding factor showed an 'average' level or portrayed a neutral response, except for statement 15 and 16.

Table 6: Means and Standard Deviation for factors affecting students' oral presentation according to Surrounding

Descriptive Statistics

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
11. I feel frightened when a lot of people are watching me.	43	1.00	4.00	2.8837	0.85103

12. The students' reactions affect my performance in the oral presentation.	43	1.00	4.00	2.7209	0.85428
13. I worry that students will laugh at me when I speak English	43	1.00	4.00	2.7674	1.04283
14. My friends can speak effectively. That thing discourages me.	43	1.00	4.00	2.3488	0.92282
15. There is no cooperation spirit among my classmates and the teacher in my speaking classes.	43	1.00	4.00	2.0000	0.92582
16. I have difficulty finding opportunities to practice my speaking outside the classroom.	43	1.00	4.00	2.2791	0.98381

4. Linguistic factor

Table 7 disclosed the results for the last variable, which is linguistic ability. Overall, all statements were analysed as 'moderately' significant to be as one of the affecting factors that hinder students' performance in oral presentations. The mean score recorded for all 4 items examined under this variable is between (2.69-2.76). Some issues recited by the respondents include not have enough vocabulary knowledge (2.69), grammar knowledge (2.67), and improper pronunciation (2.76). Some previous studies revealed the same findings. Jahbel, K. (2017) deduced that among the linguistic factors reported to hinder students' oral presentation include lack of vocabulary and incorrect pronunciation. Similarly, Al-Nouh, A.N., Abdul Kareem, M.M., & Taqi, H. (2015) reviewed that several main issues related with this linguistic factor were lack of vocabulary knowledge, grammar, translating directly from their mother tongue's words to English and fluency. All these linguistic factors further developed afraid feeling of making mistakes among students when speaking in front of the class (2.72). These findings however contrasted with Haidara, Y. (2016) study who revealed that his students' English-speaking performance was negatively affected as they achieved good level of English grammar and vocabulary. Similarly, Waluyo & Rofiah (2021) pointed out that their study finding sheds light on the direct effect of English proficiency on students' English presentation performance.

Table 7: Means and Standard Deviation for factors affecting students' oral presentation according to Linguistics ability

Descriptive Statistics				
N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation

17. I do not have enough vocabulary knowledge.	43	1.00	4.00	2.6977	0.80282
18. I do not have enough grammar knowledge, which leads to a lack of accuracy in my speaking.	43	1.00	4.00	2.6977	0.86009
19. My pronunciation is not proper enough, which causes difficulty in my communication.	43	1.00	4.00	2.7674	0.75078
20. I am afraid of making mistakes when speaking in front of the class.	43	1.00	4.00	2.7209	0.98381

Regarding the independent t-test results showed in Table 8, it can be summarised that all 4 variables employed in this study showed insignificant relationship between gender difference and the 4 variables that may affect their oral presentation's performance. For the psychological factor for example, the mean score recorded for male (2.50) is slightly bigger than female (2.48). However, when referring to the Independent Sample Test showed in Table 9, the level of alpha value obtained was (0.94) which is more than 0.05. This indicated that there was no significant difference between male and female regarding the psychological factor that may affect their oral presentation's performance.

Table 8: Summary of the independent t-tests results in relation to Gender Difference and 4 variables

Group Statistics

Variable	Gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Mean Psychological Factor	Male	20	2.500	0.62408	0.13955
	Female	23	2.4870	0.61148	0.12750
Mean Presentation Skill Factor	Male	20	2.4900	0.70629	0.15793
	Female	23	2.6261	0.59484	0.12403
Mean Surrounding Factor	Male	20	2.5500	0.71341	0.15952
	Female	23	2.5391	0.67267	0.14026
Mean Linguistic Factor	Male	20	2.7700	0.70569	0.15780
	Female	23	2.5130	0.68178	0.14216

Table 9: Summary of the independent sample tests results in relation to Gender Difference and 4 variables

Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test Equality of Means						
		F	Sig.	T	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Standard Error Difference
Mean Psychological Factor	Equal variance assumed	0.482	0.491	0.69	41	0.945	0.01304	0.18875
	Equal variance not assumed			0.69	39.931	0.945	0.01304	0.18903
Mean Presentation Skill Factor	Equal variance assumed	0.703	0.407	-0.686	41	0.497	-0.13609	0.19839
	Equal variance not assumed			-0.687	0.37384	0.502	-0.13609	0.20081
Mean Surrounding Factor	Equal variance assumed	0.261	0.612	0.051	41	0.959	0.01087	0.21153
	Equal variance not assumed			0.051	39.398	0.959	0.01087	0.21242
Mean Linguistic Factor	Equal variance assumed	0.070	0.792	1.213	41	0.232	0.25696	0.21187
	Equal variance not assumed			1.210	39.746	0.233	0.25696	0.21239

CONCLUSION

To recapitulate, the oral presentations performed by students were affected by many factors. There are factors related to their psychological state, their presentation skill, surrounding factor and also some other factors associated with their linguistic ability. As students come from different backgrounds of education, family upbringings and cohorts, they might face different kind of difficulties in performing their oral presentation skills. As in the case of this present study, it can be concluded that Polytechnic Kota Bharu semester one students of Session II 2021/2022 encountered several problems regarding the 4 factors mentioned earlier. However, the level of the problem's difficulties can be considered at the medium and sometimes at low level only. In other words, most of them were moderately and slightly affected by those factors. Gender difference also not showing a significant

relationship with all these factors. It implies that there is no significant difference between male and female students as regards to their psychological state, presentation skill, surrounding and linguistic ability.

RECOMMENDATION

In the light of the results of this study, the researcher would like to make the following recommendations to improve the Polytechnic Kota Bharu students' oral presentation performance:

1. Teachers should try to create a positive atmosphere and a fun learning session to reduce most of the psychological barriers like shyness, anxiety, and low self-confidence.
2. Teachers should always motivate students to engage actively in class and inform them regarding the importance of speaking confidently and how they can improve this skill.
3. Teachers must always give equal opportunity for all students to make real conversation inside the classroom.
4. Students should be encouraged to participate in any programs or language competitions to increase their confidence level.
5. Students should be encouraged to learn about current technology to be used to enhance their presentation.

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