



FOSTERING EFL STUDENTS' ORAL COMMUNICATION SKILLS THROUGH INDIVIDUAL PRESENTATION

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Submitted
2024-01-07

Accepted
2024-06-30

Published
2024-07-03



Abstract

This classroom action research aims to foster the EFL students' oral communication skills in the English and English literature program in a presentation skills class through an individual presentation project. This research was conducted at the Sekolah Tinggi Bahasa Asing (STBA) Pontianak, whose participants were taken from the fourth-semester students. This research was carried out in three cycles using observation checklists and field notes to collect the data. Afterward, the data were explained quantitatively and qualitatively. The findings show that individual presentation concretely fosters the students' oral communication skills in the third cycle. The fostering is proven by improving individual presentation aspects such as clarity, sound volume, body position and eye contact, pause, and listener's attention. Moreover, the fostering is indicated by the changing of the scoring scale from need improvement to good. Hopefully, this research can contribute to advancing research in oral communication skills.

Keywords: *fosterin; EFL students; oral communication skills; individual presentation.*

Abstrak

Penelitian tindakan kelas ini bertujuan untuk meningkatkan keterampilan komunikasi lisan mahasiswa pembelajar Bahasa Inggris sebagai Bahasa Asing di Program Studi Bahasa dan Sastra Inggris pada kelas keterampilan presentasi melalui proyek presentasi individu. Penelitian ini dilakukan di Sekolah Tinggi Bahasa Asing (STBA) Pontianak yang mana partisipannya merupakan mahasiswa semester empat. Penelitian ini dilaksanakan dalam tiga siklus dengan menggunakan ceklis observasi dan catatan lapangan sebagai alat pengumpul data. Setelah itu, data yang telah terkumpul dianalisa dengan cara menjabarkannya secara kuantitatif dan kualitatif. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan adanya peningkatan pada keterampilan komunikasi lisan mahasiswa di siklus ketiga. Peningkatan ini dibuktikan dengan meningkatnya aspek presentasi individual seperti yang terlihat pada aspek kejelasan presentasi, volume suara, posisi tubuh dan kontak mata, jeda, dan perhatian pendengar. Sebagai tambahan, peningkatan yang terjadi ditandai dengan perubahan pada skala penilaian dari yang membutuhkan peningkatan ke skala baik. Penelitian ini diharapkan dapat berkontribusi untuk pengembangan penelitian khususnya pada keterampilan berkomunikasi lisan.

Kata Kunci: meningkatkan, pembelajar Bahasa Inggris sebagai Bahasa Asing, keterampilan komunikasi lisan, presentasi individu.

INTRODUCTION

Communication is a form of conveying information by a person or group to another person or group to fulfil their nature as social beings. Moreover, communication is exchanging information, ideas, thoughts, and feelings through language, signals, writing, or actions (Wambui et al., 2016). Good communication

skills will help facilitate the delivery of ideas and the exchange of information in the learning process (Fitriah et al., 2020). Communication skills play an essential role in teaching and learning because students are required to perform well in the subject matter. Nevertheless, many students are tense about venturing class presentations, particularly when marked (Chivers and Shoolbred, 2007). Speech anxiety and reluctance to speak in the classroom remain a hurdle for many students, and it became a primary concern for the lecturers to help them foster their communication skills.

To help students overcome obstacles, the lecturers could apply individual presentations in teaching and learning. A presentation can be defined as a speech that is usually given in a business, technical, professional, or scientific environment (Mandel, 2000). In higher education, students need good presentation skills to reinforce their ability to perform a topic or material that will boost their career (Rahmania, 2020). To do so, there are three different techniques that the students could use in formal or informal conversation, such as modifying the voices, substituting the tone, and expressing body language, a silent but voluble way of sending a message (Emden and Becker, 2016)

Previous research on communication skills in college students has shown that learning such skills is essential. The individual presentation on communication skills allows students to learn by doing while improving critical thinking and self-evaluation through the direct feedback they receive during their presentation. Despite the obstacles faced, the individual presentation task effectively boosted the students' confidence and gave them the experience of speaking in front of a crowd (Burhanuddin, 2021). The setting or environment is also considered a factor for a successful presentation. Student improvement can be achieved when the learning process occurs in good, fearless settings that are fun, communicative and not oppressive (Yundayani and Kardijan, 2018). Hence, individual presentations motivate students to speak better. They will have more opportunities to use English effectively than when they have one-way teaching and learning (Ati and Parmawati, 2022).



To sum up, the present study intends to contribute to developing research on English oral communication skills among EFL students at the university level. Research shows that individual presentations can be used in teaching and learning activities and potentially foster students' verbal communication skills. Considering the good results of previous studies, research on the performance of individual presentations in teaching learning activities will continue.

METHOD

This research was conducted using classroom action research (CAR) by Goral, Mazurkiewics, Jalocho, and Zawadzki (2021). The researchers have carried out three cycles of CAR, and every cycle consists of four stages: planning, acting, observing, and reflecting. The participants or the subject of this research were the fourth-semester students in class 2A of Sekolah Tinggi Bahasa Asing (STBA) Pontianak in even semester of the academic year 2022-2023. It consists of 22 students. The researchers used nonprobability sampling that does not offer an equal chance for all members of the population to be chosen as samples. One method of nonprobability sampling employed by the researchers is purposive sampling. The researchers deliberately select the sample based on specific criteria or consideration (Lenaini, 2021). In addition, the data was taken from April to June 2023.

In the baseline, the preliminary data were taken from the individual presentation in which the students were assigned to present any English topics according to their interests. The English topics could be either informative or persuasive, delivering within 5 to 7 minutes concerning the aspects of individual presentation, which included: 1) Readiness, 2) Clarity, 3) Content, 4) Sound volume, 5) Body position and eye contact, 6) Pause, 7) Duration, and 8) Listener's attention. Each aspect was given a score from 0 to 100 and a scale such as poor for below 0-59, needing improvement for 60-69, satisfactory for 70-84, and good for 85-100. The score scale is based on the standard of STBA Pontianak. Hence, the research will come to an end when the score could elevate towards good for students who are in a satisfactory scale.

The instruments used in this research were observation checklists and field

notes by Ary, Jacobs, Sorenson, and Razavieh (2017). In this research, the researcher observed the students' activities as the lecturer in the classroom, and another lecturer acted as her collaborator in collecting the data. An observation checklist was used to observe the students' behaviours during the teaching and learning progress so it could be monitored. Subsequently, the researchers verify the presence or absence of each behaviour. Meanwhile field notes were used to note unpredictable things that might happen during the students' presentations. The researchers

Moreover, the data analysis used in this research followed the Miles and Huberman (2007) model consisting of data reduction, data display, conclusion drawing and verification. For data reduction, the researchers selected the proper information needed to conduct research from the observation checklist and field notes. Last, the researchers concluded the qualitative data for conclusion drawing and verification.

FINDING AND DISCUSSION

The implementation of using individual presentations to foster students' oral communication with the fourth-semester students of Sekolah Tinggi Bahasa Asing (STBA) Pontianak has been done in cyclical stages of classroom action research. This research was conducted in three cycles. Each cycle involved planning, acting, observing, and reflecting as the classroom action research procedures. The research findings will be discussed in the progress of findings in the first, second, and third cycles. As mentioned in the method, the cycle will be stopped when the students' score achieved a good scale. This is done because in action research, it requires critical reflection as a basic competent of every cycle, which necessitates a process.

Before the CAR was implemented, it was found that the students were not involved in classroom activities. They looked excited before the class began, up to the first 30 minutes of the first meeting. Knowing most of the teaching and learning activities consisting of materials and practice in individual presentation tasks, they found it laborious to be adept in the aspects of the individual presentation. The lecturer attempted to adapt the teaching-learning activities to the class condition by



having the lecture and discussion methods in contextual teaching-learning activities before the individual presentation began. Most of the materials were related to the techniques for effective presentation and how to prepare it. Some students tried to participate in the discussion section, but most of them thought that the individual presentation would be challenging. Besides, the observer found that the students' self-confidence was too far below the requirements.

First Cycle

The first cycle took place in the fourth meeting after the class agreement had been made. The students had been assigned to do the individual presentation according to their turn. In the planning stage, it was written that the students would discuss any of the English topics according to their preferences. There were various types of student presentation topics, such as campus life, how to relieve stress, hobbies, Korean wave, culinary, how to maintain health, tips and tricks when playing games, astrology, etc. It was instructed that the students had a week to two weeks to prepare for the individual presentation. Moreover, the lecturer organised contextual teaching-learning activities based on the lesson plan. In the first cycle, when the classroom action research was conducted, it was found that the students were not paying attention to the aspects of the presentation.

The observation checklist and field notes from the collaborator are summarised as follows. Before the presentation began, the lecturer reminded the students that they could arrange their position in terms of body position aspect. They could choose to sit or stand behind or in front of the presenter's desk, be on the left, right or in the middle of the class, move back and forth among the audience, etc. However, most of the students chose to stand behind the presenter's desk and did not engage with the audience, especially in making eye contact. It was found that mainly the audience could not focus and seemed busy talking to each other during the presentation. Some students seemed nervous, which led them to mispronounce the words and talk too fast. Most of the students' presentations' content was well organised because they started the presentation from general to specific and made some parts in points. The presentation was also attractive because of the various kinds of templates they used. Nevertheless, some students ended the presentation

earlier, and some took longer than it should be. Although most of the students did not allocate the time well when they did the presentation, they knew when they needed to give pauses in some parts of the presentation. Below is the distribution of students' average scores in the first cycle, as seen in Table 1.

Table 1 Aspects of Individual Presentation

No	Aspects	Average	Scale
1	Readiness	72	Satisfactory
2	Clarity	67	Need improvement
3	Content	71	Satisfactory
4	Sound volume	64	Need improvement
5	Body position and eye contact	63	Need improvement
6	Pause	67	Need improvement
7	Duration	65	Need improvement
8	Listener's attention	70	Satisfactory
Average		69.25	Need improvement

As shown in Table 1, some aspects of individual presentation need to be improved, especially clarity, sound volume, body position and eye contact, pause, and presentation duration. Regarding clarity, the students are instructed to speak more clearly, concisely, and coherently so the audience can understand and follow the presentation. Consider all of the aspects of the individual presentation are interconnected. To gain clarity, the students need to pay attention to their body position, sound volume, and eye contact. Some of the students were nervous and afraid of the audience's gaze, leading them to suffer in the individual presentation and couldn't naturally relax their body position. Some of them also made mistakes in pausing and emphasising key points. They should have given pauses before and after the critical points of their presentation, but they found it difficult to do so. As a result of their action, the duration of the individual presentation was not in accordance with the requirement.

Second Cycle

The second cycle was prepared a week after the researcher gave a thoughtful description. In the first cycle, the students determined the English topics by themselves. Nonetheless, the researcher decided on the English topics in this second cycle. The English topics relate to college life, the advantages and disadvantages of



social media, lifestyle, mental health, flexible careers, online marketplace, artificial intelligence, the Internet of Things, feminism, and Marxism. The instruction would be similar to the one that had been used in cycle one that the students had a week to two weeks to prepare for the individual presentation. There would also be changes in the classroom activities besides the changes in English topics. In the second cycle, before the individual presentation began, the students were asked to give a short introduction about the topic being discussed. This was done in a minute or two in order to relax the students' tension and get them used to talking and positioning. The contextual teaching learning activities had been adapted in this cycle, too. In the second cycle, when the classroom action research was carried out, it was found that the students showed improvement in individual presentation aspects.

The observation checklist and field notes from the collaborator are synthesised as follows. Before the presentation began, the lecturer reminded the students that they needed to pay more attention to the aspects of individual presentations. Starting from how they arrange their position, such as body position aspects, movement, and gestures. They could choose the position they were willing to as long as they could convey the presentation well and meet the requirements. Some students still felt comfortable standing behind the presenter's desk and avoiding making eye contact with the audience. They tried to engage with the audience only when it was the time for discussion. Some were starting to dare themselves to move back and forth in front of the audience. They also tried to make eye contact with the audience and got along with them in the discussion section. However, the students were in good shape with their body positions because they stood with their feet apart, their shoulders were open, and they seemed naturally relaxed. The audience was trying to focus on the individual presentation, but sometimes, they were caught having small talk with their classmates. Some of the students still mispronounced the words because they felt a bit nervous, but they started to talk in a good rhythm. Until then, most of the students finished the presentation on time, and there were just a few who took longer than they should have. Although most of the students did not allocate their time well in this second cycle, their effort to pause at some of the

significant points in their presentation deserves to be appreciated. Moreover, the students arranged the content of individual presentation well and clearly explained it. The presentation template that they used was also appealing. Below is the distribution of students' average scores in the second cycle, as seen in Table 2.

Table 2 Aspects of Individual Presentation

No	Aspects	Average	Scale
1	Readiness	80	Satisfactory
2	Clarity	75	Satisfactory
3	Content	78	Satisfactory
4	Sound volume	76	Satisfactory
5	Body position and eye contact	80	Satisfactory
6	Pause	80	Satisfactory
7	Duration	78	Satisfactory
8	Listener's attention	80	Satisfactory
Average		78.375	Satisfactory

As shown in Table 2, all aspects of the individual presentation are fostered from a need improvement scale for some aspects to a satisfactory scale. However, the researcher and collaborator decided to continue to the third cycle to clarify the results of students' improvement and to meet the expectation of this research to elevate the students' scores to a good scale.

Third Cycle

The third cycle was prepared after the third cycle's result was concluded. The researcher also determined the English topics for the third cycle by considering the improvement made by the students in the second cycle. The English topics consisted of social media: bane or boon?, pros and cons of online learning, hybrid learning, environment conservation, the best lesson I have learned, how to tackle a bad habit, music has healing power, the social impact of Covid-19, the importance of learning English, and fake news. Furthermore, the classroom instruction and activities were identical to the second cycle. In the third cycle, it can be concluded that the students felt more relaxed and enjoyed the individual presentation, considering that this was not their first time, and they already knew their weaknesses and strengths. Through this third cycle, it was found that the students showed accurate improvement in accordance with the research objective.



The observation checklist and field notes from the collaborator are discussed as follows. Before the presentation began, the students were already aware of what they needed to prepare and put most of their attention to the aspects of the individual presentations. Most of the students were trying to engage with both their presentation and the audience. They seemed more relaxed and tried to move from one corner to another to relieve the tension and draw the audience's interest. They also made eye contact with the audience, particularly when it was the time for the questions and answer section. Some were starting to dare themselves to move back and forth in front of the audience. They also tried to make eye contact with the audience and got along with them in the discussion section. The audience paid attention to the student's individual presentation by asking questions and comments. Most of the students pronounced the words carefully and spoke in a good rhythm. Then, most students finished the presentation on time because they kept watch and anticipated the situation that might happen during the individual presentation. Most of them also gave satisfying pauses to the significant points in their presentation. Likewise, the students organised the individual presentation material well and gave spectacular explanations. The template that they used in the individual presentation was fascinating, too. Below is the distribution of students' average scores in the third cycle, as seen in Table 3.

Table 3 Aspects of Individual Presentation

No	Aspects	Average	Scale
1	Readiness	88	Good
2	Clarity	90	Good
3	Content	88	Good
4	Sound volume	85	Good
5	Body position and eye contact	86	Good
6	Pause	88	Good
7	Duration	85	Good
8	Listener's attention	87	Good
Average		87.125	Good

As presented in Table 3, the students' average scores and scales are growing. The individual presentations performed in the three CAR cycles encourage learning by using different English topics, additional instruction, and classroom activities.

After the students' results met the research expectations, both the researcher and collaborator agreed to stop the cycle.

Over all, despite the numerous problems occurred in each cycle, the structured organization of the presentation process provided students with clear guidance on their roles, time limits, and expected outcomes. As a result, students were able to develop effective strategies for articulating their ideas and engaging in interactive discussion during the presentation. This structured approach facilitated increased interaction among students, fostering a more cohesive learning environment where they could confidently share perspectives and contribute meaningfully to the discussion. Consequently, observable progress can be noted across successive cycles of presentations, indicating improved student engagement and communication skills as a direct result of adequate preparation time preceding each performance.

Some experts posit that engaging students in authentic communication tasks is crucial for driving their language development forward and providing them with novel insights into language use (Tiu et al., 2023; Zellouma, 2018). By immersing students in real-life linguistic challenges, such activities serve as a natural stimulus for upgrading and enhancing language proficiency. Furthermore, the presentation used in this research constitute meaning-focused activities, wherein learners actively participate in the comprehension, expansion, and expression of meaning. As a result, students are better equipped to effectively navigate language forms required by the interaction process. Nevertheless, the pedagogical approach employed by the teacher facilitated meaningful communication among students, as evidenced by their reported increased confidence and security in expressing their thoughts and ideas. Students noted that the teacher not only provided sample opportunities for speaking, but also offered model task guidance, and additional preparation time.

The previous research findings indicate that students who were exposed to experienced presentations in the classroom exhibited superior performance on the final speaking post-test compared to those in the control group (Mahdi, 2022). This suggests a significant positive impact of utilizing presentations with the



experimental group in enhancing student speaking abilities. These results align with previous studies, such as (Mardiningrum & Ramadhani, 2022), which have demonstrated the efficacy of using presentations to enhance oral language production and facilitate meaning negotiation. Overall, these findings support the notion that incorporating presentations in language teaching can be a promising approach for fostering second language production and ultimately developing speaking skills.

In conclusion, the utilization of presentation in language teaching within the classroom environment has been shown to enhance students' communication skills and motivation to use the target language confidently. By engaging in presentation-based activities, learners are able to actively participate in shaping and controlling discourse, ultimately leading to improved language proficiency (Brooks, 2018). Additionally, the learner-centered approach of task-based language teaching promotes social practices that encourage resolution of social trouble within the learning environment.

CONCLUSION

The research conducted analysed the enhancement of classroom practices and student's progress in developing their speaking skills through the integration of presentations. A crucial discovery in the study posits that the provision of language exposure, opportunities for language utilization, feedback mechanisms, and sustained motivation during instruction are pivotal factors influencing language acquisition. Consequently, the outcomes attained emphasize that the presentation implemented enabled diverse avenues for language practice to facilitate language learning, meeting fundamental prerequisites for effective language acquisition. In conclusion, the students' score enhanced by 9,125% from first cycle to second cycle and 8,75% from second cycle to third cycle.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Researchers would like to thank all those who have supported the completion of this research and hope it can be helpful to anyone who reads it.

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