

USING TED TALKS TO ENHANCE PRESENTATION SKILL FOR 1ST YEAR ENGLISH MAJORS AT THAI NGUYEN UNIVERSITY OF EDUCATION

Nguyen Thi Hong Chuyen*, Tran Thi Thu Tra, Nguyen Thi Hoang Trang

TNU - University of Education

ABSTRACT

Along with industrialization and modernization process in our country as well as globalization and international integration, presentation skills in general and English presentation skills in particular play a crucial part to perform effective communication activities. Presentation skill is considered one of the meaningful ways to express opinions and gain achievements in life, career and business. This paper aims to investigate the effectiveness of a new English presentation learning strategy - using TED Talks in teaching presentation at Thai Nguyen University of Education. This course framework adopts TED Talks as the useful materials in teaching and learning presentation. In the meantime, it aims to identify difficulties affecting the presentation skills of students and the outcome of using TED Talks to help students improve their presentation skills. The participants of the study are the first-year English majors at Thai Nguyen University of Education ranging from 18-19 years old. The study has collected the presentation errors that students have and suggested solutions to improve and enhance them by applying videos of Ted Talks. The findings of the study will be useful for first year English majors at Thai Nguyen University of Education in particular as well as for English majors in general.

Keywords: TED Talks; presentation skills; English major; students; presentation errors.

Received: 20/5/2019; Revised: 23/3/2020; Published: 29/3/2020

NÂNG CAO KỸ NĂNG THUYẾT TRÌNH TIẾNG ANH CHO SINH VIÊN CHUYÊN NGỮ NĂM NHẤT TRƯỜNG ĐẠI HỌC SƯ PHẠM – ĐẠI HỌC THÁI NGUYÊN THÔNG QUA TED TALKS

Nguyễn Thị Hồng Chuyền*, Trần Thị Thu Trà, Nguyễn Thị Hoàng Trang

Trường Đại học Sư phạm – ĐH Thái Nguyên

TÓM TẮT

Trong thời kỳ công nghiệp hoá, hiện đại hoá đất nước, với chính sách đổi mới và chính sách mở, hội nhập quốc tế của Đảng và Nhà nước, kỹ năng thuyết trình, đặc biệt là kỹ năng thuyết trình tiếng Anh đóng một vai trò rất quan trọng. Kỹ năng thuyết trình hiệu quả là một phần của giao tiếp. Tất cả các kỹ năng thuyết trình giúp định hướng quan điểm và giải thích về những thành tựu một cách có hiệu quả nhất. Đó là lý do tại sao kỹ năng thuyết trình đóng vai trò rất quan trọng trong cuộc sống, sự nghiệp và trong kinh doanh. Mục tiêu của nghiên cứu này là điều tra hiệu quả của việc sử dụng TED Talks như một công cụ học tập giúp học sinh năm nhất trường Đại học Sư phạm – Đại học Thái Nguyên nâng cao kỹ năng thuyết trình tiếng Anh. Cách học tập này sử dụng các video của TED Talks làm tài liệu học tập để khuyến khích học sinh đạt được kết quả tốt hơn trong thuyết trình. Trong khi đó, nhằm tìm ra những khó khăn mà ảnh hưởng đến kỹ năng trình bày của học sinh và kết quả của việc sử dụng TED Talks để giúp sinh viên nâng cao kỹ năng thuyết trình. Đối tượng nghiên cứu là sinh viên năm nhất chuyên ngành Sư phạm Tiếng Anh tại Trường Đại học Sư phạm – Đại học Thái Nguyên, trong cùng một nhóm tuổi 18-19 tuổi. Thông qua việc áp dụng phương pháp phân tích của sinh viên, nghiên cứu đã thu thập các lỗi thuyết trình mà sinh viên gặp phải và đề xuất các giải pháp để cải thiện các lỗi đó. Những phát hiện của nghiên cứu sẽ hữu ích cho sinh viên chuyên ngữ năm nhất tại Trường Đại học Sư phạm – Đại học Thái Nguyên nói riêng cũng như sinh viên chuyên ngành tiếng Anh nói chung.

Từ khóa: TED Talks; kỹ năng thuyết trình; sinh viên chuyên ngành Sư phạm tiếng Anh; sinh viên tại TUE; lỗi thuyết trình.

Ngày nhận bài: 20/5/2019; Ngày hoàn thiện: 23/3/2020; Ngày đăng: 29/3/2020

* Corresponding author. Email: chuyenknn@gmail.com

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.34238/tnu-jst.2020.03.1561>

1. Introduction

English is an international language in the world and the official language in a large number of countries; an increasing number of people are concerned about the purposes of learning English. Especially, when Vietnam is in the process of developing and integrating with other countries in the world, the use of English as a bridge helps learners exchange with foreign partners, associate friends, and exchange experience as well as knowledge with other countries. Therefore, English has become a subject, an important task in the education and training of each country, including Vietnam. However, in our country, the investment in teaching English to students is not really effective because the curriculum is not suitable and focuses too much on the language. Because of the lack of confidence and soft skills in presentation, several students, specially, the first year English majors could not make a fluent presentation. However, in order to have a great command of English, Vietnamese students in general and first year English majors at Thai Nguyen University of Education in particular have many difficulties in using English in presentation. The materials that are used by most teachers are acceptable for some learners; however, the nature of these typical textbook activities fails to promote most students, according to H. Reinders [1]; R. Waring [2] and W. Renandya's research [3]. This has led to the increasing use of authentic materials. The genuine nature of TED Talks [4] provides students, especially English-major students, the opportunity to study and expose to speeches and presentations that are actually intended for English input. Field's research in 2002 [5] found that authentic materials used provided students with "hesitations, stuttering, false starts, and long, loosely structured sentences" (p.244). In this research, readers can easily see that authentic materials directly reflect what students will face in real life problems which many non-

native speakers are unable to deal with or understand English in its entirety, and therefore "need to be shown that making guesses is not a sign of failure" in [6]. This is how non-native English speakers can cope with everyday situations that complete and thorough understanding is not always the most important factor. This research aims to shed light on teachers and learners to enhance presentation skills, supply materials, and design syllabus for the students' need. Therefore, in the research paper, the researcher studies "Using Ted Talks to enhance presentation skills for 1st year English majors at Thai Nguyen University of Education (TUE)" with the hope that it can help 1st year English majors at TUE to improve presentation skills in particular and gradually improve effectively communicating abilities and English speaking skills in general.

2. Methodology

The tools used in this study to collect data were questionnaires, face-to-face interview and observation.

The researcher firstly used questionnaire to collect information about students' presentation skills, the specific difficulties and challenges that students have to face up in developing professional capacity. The researcher provided some suggestions for students to choose. To exploit more information from respondents, the researcher used open-ended questions.

The researcher then used face-to-face interviews with the teachers of first-year English majors to explore more deeply about the current situation of students' presentation skills. Furthermore, from face-to-face interviews, the researcher was aware of the objective assessments of the teachers for students' competences, and then elicited them to some solutions in enhancing students' presentation skills.

Thirdly, observation was also used as the main source of collecting data in this study. The observation process was divided into two

distinct parts: pre-presentation and post-presentation which were observed in 2 groups (the control group studied with traditional method and the experimental group studied with Ted Talks). After five weeks of process, the scores of pre-presentation and post-presentation of two groups were compared to draw a conclusion on the effectiveness of using TED Talks to enhance presentation skills.

3. Findings and discussions

The researcher gave a report in this chapter on the results of analyzing the data collected from the participants' questionnaires, interviews, and observations. Results on the following aspects were shown: (1) results of questionnaire; (2) results of interview; (3) results of observation. At the same time, the researcher presented substantial results-based discussions.

3.1. The results of questionnaire

Firstly, the researcher examined the students' experience of English study. The result was shown in Figure 1.

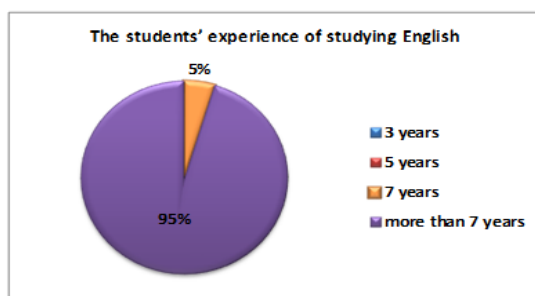


Figure 1. The student's experience of studying English

As can be seen from Figure 1, most subjects have been learning English for more than 7 years (95%). This fact revealed that they seemed to have a good foundation for English learning.

Secondly, Figure 2 gives a self-evaluation on the presentation skills of students. The results from the descriptive statistics indicated that the subject found it difficult to deal with the lack of presentation competencies. As shown in the chart, 84 percent of students said their capacity for presentation was basic. They are in the first year and for a few lessons they've

practiced presenting. Two students (5%) also revealed poor presentation skills. Nevertheless, five students asserted that they were so good at presentation skills. These students need to improve their presentation skills more. Therefore, these findings showed that most students possessed the presentation capacity at an acceptable level.

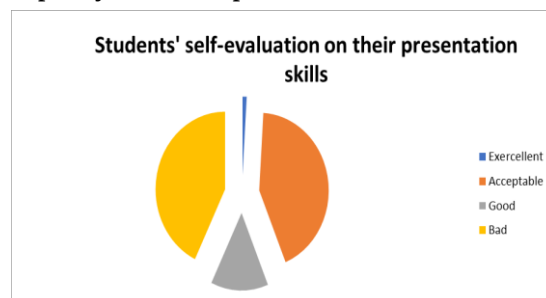


Figure 2. Students' self-evaluation on their presentation skills

Thirdly, the researcher carried out some difficulties in developing presentation capacity students had to encounter in the learning process. The results were described in Figure 3.

It is clear from Figure 3 that most of students had problems in the process of developing presentation competences. In fact, in 20 students, the number of students lacking soft presentation skills was the largest. Similarly, there were no good presentation skills for all 20 students. General speaking, students tended to learn more theories, and most of them did not have many chances to practice or else there is not enough time for students to practice presentation. Moreover, self-studying at home is always a good solution with suitable conduction. Therefore, they should study theories at home and then have presentations in classes to improve their presentation soft skills. In addition, more than half of the students thought that it was difficult to have English public speaking and have good interaction with listeners. In contrast, they seemed to be better at preparing a presentation. It is obvious that an English presenter is not only required to have good knowledge but also needed to have enough techniques, experiences and soft skills.

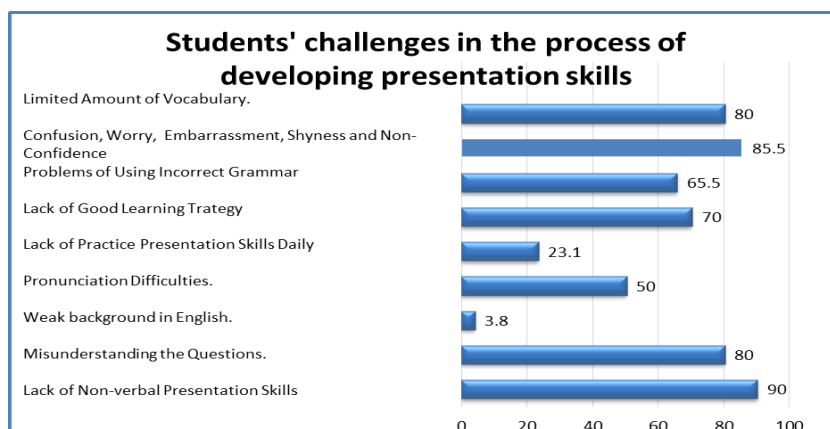


Figure 3. Students' challenges in the process of developing presentation skills

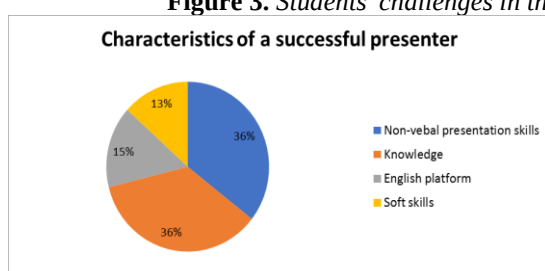


Figure 4. Characteristics of a successful presenter

Then, Figure 4 indicates that 36% students chose the knowledge. It is not denied that good knowledge is the firm basis of a successful presenter. In addition, the presenter could not lack confidence. If speakers are always timid in front of audiences, they will not surely get audiences' attention as well as provide them with good knowledge.

Obviously, audiences have little respect for an unconfident presenter. Moreover, 20% students said that a successful presenter should have interaction with students as they are speaking by movement, eye contacts... In addition, soft skills are extremely necessary for the presenter to finish the objective.

3.2. Results of classroom observations

One of the effective strategies was using TED Talks. However, not every student was aware of the role of TED Talks in enhancing presentation skills. The researcher observed two groups. Each group has 20 students who have the same educational level and academic ability. The researcher designed an observation checklist to assess students' skills. The results are displayed from table 1 to table 4.

Table 1. Results of observation checklists (week1)

		Unit: %									
		0.5	1	1.5	2	2.5	3	3.5	4	4.5	5
I – Grammar	a. Range					10	20	40	10	20	
	b. Accuracy				20	20	20	20	20		
II - Vocabulary	a. Range				40	10	10	10	10	10	
	b. Accuracy				10	50	20	10	10		
III -Pronunciation	a. Stress and rhythm			20	20	50	10				
	b. Intonation			10	40	10	20	10	10		
	c. Linking/elision/assimilation						80	10	10		
IV – Fluency	a. Speed of talking					70	10	10	10		
	b. Hesitation while speaking			10	20	60	10				
	c. Hesitation before speaking					80	20				
V – Non-verbal	a. Eyes contact and body posture			40	30	20	10				
	b. Gestures, facial expressions			70	10	10	10				

Table 2. Results of observation checklists (group 1 – week 5)

		Unit: %									
		0.5	1	1.5	2	2.5	3	3.5	4	4.5	5
I – Grammar	a. Range						30	40	10	20	
	b. Accuracy				10	30	20	20	20		
II - Vocabulary	a. Range				20	20	20	20	10	10	
	b. Accuracy				10	30	30	20	10		
III - Pronunciation	a. Stress and rhythm			10	10	60	20				
	b. Intonation				40	20	20	10	10		
	c. Linking/elision/assimilation						70	20	10		
IV – Fluency	a. Speed of talking					60	20	10	10		
	b. Hesitation while speaking				20	70	10				
	c. Hesitation before speaking					70	30				
V – Non-verbal	a. Eyes contact and body posture			20	40	30	20				
	b. Gestures, facial expressions			50	20	20	10				

Table 3. Results of observation checklists (group 2/ experimental group – week 5)

		Unit: %									
		0.5	1	1.5	2	2.5	3	3.5	4	4.5	5
I – Grammar	a. Range						20	20	10	40	10
	b. Accuracy					20	20	20	20	10	10
II - Vocabulary	a. Range				10	20	20	20	10	20	
	b. Accuracy				10	10	30	20	20	10	
III - Pronunciation	a. Stress and rhythm					50	20	10	10	10	
	b. Intonation				50	10	20	10		10	
	c. Linking/elision/assimilation						30	20	30	10	10
IV – Fluency	a. Speed of talking					40	30	20	10		
	b. Hesitation while speaking				10	20	50	10	10		
	c. Hesitation before speaking					20	40	10	10	10	10
V – Non-verbal	a. Eyes contact and body posture				10	20	20	30	10	10	
	b. Gestures, facial expressions			10	20	20	20	10	10	10	

Table 4. Results of observation checklists

(Compare student progress between group 1 and group 2 after 5 weeks)

		Unit: %	
		The increased percentage of group 1	The increased percentage of group 2 (experimental group)
I – Grammar	a. Range	1	9
	b. Accuracy	1	11
II – Vocabulary	a. Range	10	22
	b. Accuracy	3	10
III – Pronunciation	a. Stress and rhythm	4	16
	b. Intonation	2	2
	c. Linking/elision/assimilation	1	12
IV – Fluency	a. Speed of talking	1	4
	b. Hesitation while speaking	2	12
	c. Hesitation before speaking	1	16
V – Non-verbal	a. Eyes contact and body posture	9	24
	b. Gestures, facial expressions	3	21

According to table 1 and 2,

+ Table 1: Grammar – Range:

Average: $2.5 \times 10\% + 3 \times 20\% + 3.5 \times 40\% + 4 \times 10\% + 4.5 \times 20\% = 3.55$

+ Table 2: Grammar – Range:

Average: $3 \times 20\% + 3.5 \times 20\% + 4 \times 10\% + 4.5 \times 40\% + 5 \times 10\% = 4$

Presentation point of students has increased from 3.55 to 4 in Grammar-Range. From there, researchers can calculate:

$$\frac{4-3.55}{5} \times 100\% = 9\%.$$

Similarly, researchers can calculate the statistics in table 4.

Through statistical tables, the factors, that impact on students' presentations, have improved significantly over the process used TED Talks within 5 weeks.

After using TED Talks, the result is concerned with the effectiveness and motivation of language input. Students are willing to explore among the topics as researchers had expected and find the one which they are interested in. Moreover, most students watch not just one video before finally deciding which one they want. Moreover, self-motivated language input can be found to reveal results. Most students agree that they prefer to imitate the video speaker's intonation and pronunciation as well as using words and phrases in the video to form their own speech. The result also indicates that during video watching vocabulary acquisition is improved. In addition to language input, it has been shown that the role of note-taking in the presentation is very positive.

The observation result focuses on the students' language output. As shown in table 2, students must continue to practice until they can speak fluently before giving the classroom speech. Increasingly, students not only retell what they have heard from the video, but also integrate their own idea to

create their own speech. After finishing their speech, they are willing to answer questions raised by their peers, which indicates they are eager to interact in English and are very active in being a language creator. The transfer of roles is critical for teaching and learning.

The observation aims to investigate the use of body language in the delivery of presentation. The results of the data show that students are fully aware of the role that nonverbal language plays in making a public speech. For example, students respond positively in speech delivery about the importance of facial expression and are willing to display their body language in speech delivery. Despite recognizing the importance of nonverbal language, students are not entirely satisfied with their performance in body language, indicating that there is room for further improvement in future practice.

The results shown here approve that TED Talks works effectively to improve the skills of critical thinking and presentation. A significant number of students agree that they are given food for thought by TED-motivated speech class, motivate them to think, and the content is enlightening. TED Talks has successfully motivated language learning for students and has greatly enjoyed the learning process; at the same time, it shows that in this context, students have successfully transferred roles from a passive learner to an active explorer, and the result has confirmed that this process is both rewarding and fruitful.

3.3. Results of interviews

Question 1: Are the common problems related to presentation skills that students have?

According to the teacher of English teaching Presentation skills course of Course 50, they were rarely satisfied with students' presentation skills. Most of students were hard-working and had good knowledge; however their presentation skills are preliminary level. Some of them have strong background and make the teacher proud.

They were willing to broaden their knowledge and learn experience from each other.

Question 2: Which strategies do teacher do to help students improve presentation skill?

The teacher interviewed complained that theory was the students' strengths while practice was their weaknesses. Some students even had not been good at knowledge, especially vocabulary and non-verbal presentation skills. Therefore, they could not do the best presentation, or gave complex and unclear explanation. The reason of this drawback was that they are lacked experiences in presentation.

Question 3: Did teacher use Ted Talks as an educational tool to improve students' presentation skills?

The teacher has never used TED Talk as an educational tool to improve Students' presentation skills before.

4. Recommendation

From the findings revealed, the implication of a good presenter is believed to have gained distinct advantages for lecturers, students who lack presentation skills. However, the application of this strategy might have certain several difficulties. These problems would soon be tackled if there is more attention and support from faculty and school. Therefore, the researcher recommended some strategies based on the consensus between teachers in charge of the module and the teacher assistants. In order to achieve this below model, each of factors takes responsibilities:

In term of TED Talks users: They need to be more self-motivated and attend outdoor activities at university to improve soft skills; regularly observe presentation performance

Regarding the Department: the Department should organize professional presentation Contest in order to create opportunities for students to learn experiences from each other in order to encourage students to improve their presentation skills.

With reference to the teaching staff: Under the policy and regulation of the department,

most of the responsibilities belong to lecturers who teach students presentation skills. Therefore, they should pay attention to such aspects as selecting the professional presenters from the talented student groups; make sure that presenters are fully equipped with necessary knowledge and skills to do their presentation well; establish a quick and reliable channel of communication (email or e-learning system).

In conclusion, enhancing students' presentation capacity is very important. Student using TED Talks is one of the strategies to improve students' presentation skill. This strategy brings many benefits to students, teachers and schools. In the current conditions, the recruitment, training and management of student using Ted Talks effectively may be difficult to fully implement; however, this research applied the strategy which creates all favorable conditions for students to become a good presenter. From that, the researcher hopes that first-year English majors could improve their presentation skills

5. Conclusion

The main findings discussed above helped the researcher draw some conclusions in the current study on the three research questions.

The first research question examines the common presentation skills problems that English majors in TUE have in the first year. The findings demonstrated that the juniors had to face with several problems in the process of developing presentation skills. In particular, they found it difficult to pronounce correctly and limited amount of vocabulary. Moreover, students also feel confuse, worry, embarrass, shy and unconfident when they are talking in front of the class or in the crowd. In addition, students should pay attention to improve their skill when they at home every day. The researcher explored students' presentation skills. The researcher found that 30% of them had acceptable level. Findings from interview and observation also indicated that students had a tendency to be good at theory in comparison with practicing. In

addition, teachers said that they were not fairly satisfied with students' competences both knowledge and practical skills. Therefore, students needed to put more efforts into their learning as well as practicing.

The second research question concerns How TED Talks can help 1st year English majors overcome the weaknesses in presentation skills at TUE. The primary duty is that students needed to practice hard in order to widen their skill. A good teacher could not lack the basic skills. Moreover, the results of the study revealed that students must be practiced speaking regularly and using TED Talks like a best resource to improve the vocabulary, grammar even in eyes contact and body posture, movement, speed of talking, fluency...

In addition, enhancing students' presentation capacity through TED Talks need to be promoted, and paid more attention to presenters with adequate guidance of teaching English presentation as well as the other skills.

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