Original Article

Teaching Presentation Skills: An Effective Tool to Enhance University Beginners' Learning

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Abstract - Presentation is one of the academic skills of the present time, and it is a tool to improve in academic courses. Students, especially at the college level, need this skill to enhance their academic qualifications. Professionals, university professors, and students require presentation skills in academic and professional fields to explore their future perspectives. Studies indicate that oral communication and presentation skills can also command other skills and knowledge of life. Presentation skills are very relevant and rational in language classes, where teachers and students can have a chance to engage in several language skills among them. Considering immediate and far reaching implications, this article tries to study how effective presentation can be taught to students in other subject matters or language areas through consistent practice under supervision. One of the tools envisaged in this article is task based approach. The task based approach was applied to university students, and they responded well; thus, this can be the sample for those students who want to study presentation skills.

Keywords - Self-Efficacy, Task based, Rapport, Verbal and Non-Verbal Communication, Cognition.

1. Introduction

The recent trend of professional development has gone through a paradigm shift. There are some skill-oriented areas that a student is required to learn while pursuing a university degree. In the past, professional competency included education and written power of expression. However, academic and professional skills today comprise degrees, including analytical and critical thinking, written and oral communication skills, and interpersonal skills. In this sense, a professional career fairly includes effective presentation skills in the chosen field.

As it is the age of information sharing through diverse modes, presentation is considered an effective way of delivering the message. Admittedly, information sharing has been revolutionized since the advent of modern technology, which facilitates several processes and skills being used. That is, skills and knowledge of presentations are becoming widely acceptable in the academic and professional fields. Considering its far reaching significance, most of the academic researches and professional fields require human resources with presentation skills and articulate speaking abilities. In the area of language teaching and learning where several activities are involved oral communication and presentation skills are considered of great significance.

Communication and presentation, as soft skills based on interpersonal interactions and social cognitions, prove to be assets for the students. They learn these skills in group communication, sharing, interacting, and responding to different academic and professional skills, not entirely from college, but through interpersonal environment and learning (Robels, 2012). Furthermore, the presentation makes things more reliable in that the audience can quickly validate information and things presented in front of them. That is to say, presentation skill provides the supplemented benefits to the students in developing confidence, thereby establishing interpersonal skills and social cognition. Studies also indicate that good presentation skills expand students' affective domain and power to influence others. Rosenbaum (2001) is of the opinion that students with interpersonal skills are far better in their interviews and skill exposure in attaining jobs. His studies further assert that about 87 percent of students get jobs and lead successful career paths in American job markets, and these have been found to be compatible with the index of human capital formation.

Though presentation is an important skill for professional and academic growth, no concerted research has been conducted on how this skill can be enhanced in students. Moreover, there is a common fallacy that making a good presentation is a gift for only a few who can excel in this skill. However, this article supplants a point of departure, analyzing how presentation skills can be taught and learned. That is, students can make gradual progress in presentation through feedback, peer group comments, self reflection, and self-efficacy. These tools have been highly adopted in social and cognitive areas, as developed by Albert Bandura (1997). His social cognitive theory stipulates learners make significant outcomes in any field when they believe in their competency and self-efficacy, motivated through a gradual process of feedback, comments by peers, and retrospection. In the same vein, another veteran psychologist and Harvard professor, B.F Skinner (1976), developed a concept of behavioral stimulus response theory, which emphasizes positive reinforcement of effective and correct habits. In this sense, presentation skills will be gradually enhanced. It can be effectively taught in language teaching and learning.

Considering Bandura's self-efficacy theory, it can be asserted that students can not only learn skills but also make tremendous gains in presenting skills through specific targets, as well as persistent practice and feedback. Furthermore, Chivers and Shoolbred (2007) also contend that when students' presentations are frequently assessed and awarded with feedback, they cope with wider communication skills and increase confidence, thereby making themselves ready for the workplace and professional fields.

2. Why Presentation Skill is Crucial in Language Teaching and Learning?

At present, the dissemination of knowledge in any field is greatly diversified because of modern technologies and computer-facilitated tools. However, a presentation has become crucial in language teaching and learning. We know that language teaching is associated with several activities like listening, speaking, sharing, and other activities. Presentation skills are an asset for language teachers because language teaching largely dominates oral communication and effective presentation. Teachers and students   get engaged and transfer knowledge and skills as:

> "Transferable skills are those that you can take with you; they are valuable for the rest of your
> life. The ability to speak well enough to interest, influence or persuade other people is a major
> asset whatever you choose to do in the future" (Emden & Becker, 2004).

Furthermore, language teaching is becoming more varied in modern times. Several approaches, like communicative language teaching, task based language teaching, collaborative language teaching, and interactive language teaching, are in practice. All these approaches require a great deal of interpersonal connections in which students feel, share, respond, and hypothesize different processes of learning. In this case, the presentation seems to be compatible with the modern language teaching learning act. As Siddons (2008) specifically hints:

"Seeing something is often more memorable than just hearing about it; tasting or smelling something leaves a stronger impression than just hearing about it, and particularly in the cause of manual skills, touching and doing something will be more effective than just listening. It is also true that the more senses that are involved in processing new information, the stronger will be the memories associated with that information."

This indicates that language teaching is full of skills and activities in which the learners and teachers go through different stages of processing information. Presentation skills, by nature, employ different modes of information.

There is another aspect to deal with. It is one of the pragmatic sides that shows the importance of language presentation. Presentation in a language class is all about language and how it is used in the pragmatic context of presentation. Primarily,   the students learn about the business of language use, function, expression, articulations, and social and cultural modes. This, therefore, can help both the learners and presenters.

Finally, cognitive linguists see personal factors in the process of language teaching and learning in which learners and presenters have their affective domain. The affective domain refers to the personal factors that make one feel confident and gratified in language activity. Language learning activities are parts of the affective domain, including the desire to receive information, the desire to respond, the desire to set values in language learning, the desire for belief making, and the desire for self-identity (Brown, 2014). Furthermore, these affective factors motivate a person to use, learn, and exercise language activities. Presentation skills can help in this greatly compared to simple language learning.

3. Some Myths about Presentation Skills

There are some myths regarding oral presentation. Some of them are as follows:

- Though presentation skills require some technical know-how and interpersonal skills, the most important element is good and articulate language.
- Some people think that a good presentation is to use as many slides as possible. However, this is not reasonably logical. The audience enjoys the presenter's lively talk and his body language rather than the slides.
- Some people think that oral presentation is an allotted task and everything should be done according to the time. Of course, time is important, but the way the presentation is channelized in pattern and coherence becomes far more important rather than being time conscious.
- Some people think that presentation is the sole act of the presenter, in which he is the central and things and management are according to his choice. However, the presenter alone is not the sole entity needed for an effective presentation. Equally important is the role of the audience in going along with the presenter. A good presenter is therefore required to make a good rapport with the audience.

4. What is the Presentation All about?

Generally, presentation is the way of communicating verbally, non-verbally, and visually about a particular subject within an assigned time and with the assigned audience. Unlike class lectures, presentation is two-way communication in which the presenter and audience are involved in knowledge and skill-building activities. It is said that presentation is both the art and the science. It is art in the sense that it is associated with human faculty, like body language and interpersonal faculties. It is science in the sense that it comprises certain scientific components like technological use and apparatuses that make it effective. That said, a presentation becomes successful when the information and knowledge are disseminated through interactive and interpersonal approaches. To this end, the communication process adopts tactile (things to be perceived by emotions), visual,

and auditory mediums. Thus, it is the process of delivering a message using verbal, written, audiovisual and graphic information.

According to Sidons (2008), a presentation has two fundamental goals: The first goal is to impact the audience intrinsically. It means that the audience should be ready to interact and think on their own. The second thing is: The audience should be ready to participate, discuss, and share their opinions. The bi-party give and take and interactive structures are the basis for meaningful presentations. The perfect and efficient presenters understand this common sense and try to make their presentations effective. At the same time, the audience feels that they have learned something worthwhile. The following things are included in the effective presentation:

- It is not only a product of knowledge but also of skill.
- It is not the information delivery but the artful delivery of information.
- It is an organized form of information, unlike class lectures.
- It is based on specific areas, knowledge, and content that the audience is not aware of.
- It embodies precise, clear, and bias free language.
- It is the way of expression in which the presenter requires specific body language, tone, voice modulation, and behaviors that sustain the attention of the audience.

5. Methodology

This article adopts a qualitative and analytical approach.   It relies on Albert Bandura's theory of self-efficacy, in which he makes a point that students can learn even difficult concepts and skills enhanced by self-motivation, feedback, and retrospection through systematic task-oriented skills and learning.

6. Strategies for Presentation

Different factors play roles in the process of presentation. The audience in a formal setting of the presentation conceives the presenter as a person who not only shares information but is also congenial in the process of presentation. Generally, the style of presentation, whether it is for a class or managerial level,   has to be targeted for the maximum output. For this, many presenters believe that the beginning part of the presentation should be memorable. In order to have a lasting impression, the presenter must have elements like anecdotes, humour, involving questions, and quotations. (Mandel, 2000). Several experiences of the presenters indicate that these techniques guide the audience in further engagement during the course of the presentation.

On this backdrop, the presentation covers several areas; it comprises both visible and invisible factors. The physical elements are palpable and shared by the presenter and audience. They include the slides, the notes, handouts, and things that facilitate the process of the presentation. However, the invisible aspects include interpersonal skills and social cognition. Further to the point, effective presentation combines both soft skill and hard skills. Basically, the following components need to be holistically combined:

- Language for presentation
- Skills for presentation
- Materials for presentation

7. Planning and Writing Presentations

There are several presentation techniques, depending on where and for whom the presentation is about. However, in whatever circumstance, experts hint that the following elements are mandatory:

- Clear
- Specific
- Measurable
- Achievable
- Realistic

- Challenging
- Worthwhile
- Participative

Adair, 2003, it is said that good presentation is the holistic combination of verbal communication, visual communication, and non verbal communication. These have to be properly balanced. According to presentation specialists, it is said that visual presentation focuses on body language, which is about 55 percentage. Vocal presentation, which is based on voice, is 38 percentage, and verbal, which is based on words, is 7 percentage (cited in Bradbury, 2007). Above all, the presentation is a matter of speech articulation that is the basis of message delivery. Adair (2003) indicates that for a successful speech, the following elements are required.

- To be clear
- To be prepared
- To be simple
- To be vivid
- To be natural
- To be concise

The process of presentation has two distinct parts: The first part is the preparedness of the presenter.   The second part includes the audience. The roles of the audience, their participation, and attitudes largely impact the process of presentation. A good presenter, therefore, pays attention to this matter.

8. Understanding the Needs of the Audience and Subject Matter

There may be several things associated with the course of the presentation, like materials, technology, preparedness, and good writing presentation, besides others. However, the subject matter and the needs of the audience are indispensable in determining the scenario of the presentation. For this, the following questions become crucial:
- Who are the audience?
- What do they already know?
- What they want to expect to know?
- What is their size?
- What is their educational and intellectual capacity?
- What is the subject matter?
- What is undercurrent knowledge associated with it?
- Has one read and incorporated recent trends of knowledge?
- What are the resources to be covered?
- What are the resources to be discussed and referred to?

9. Making Actual Presentation

Making the actual presentation is the final outcome, which is the blueprint of the presentation. Apparently, this comes into shape when the presenter has already worked on several things. Before making any presentation, the presenter is required to introduce his main objectives, how he wants to go in the course of the presentation, and how he ends up making conclusive remarks. The clever presenter, however, tries to engage the audience from the very beginning with some questions, anecdotes, and stimulating remarks. This helps in building rapport. This is one of the most effective tools for the presentation. Bradbury (2007) candidly asserts, "The presenter who can create rapport with her audience is operating on both the conscious and subconscious levels.

At its best, the effect can be quite magical. The good news is that there is nothing 'magical' about it. It is a skill which almost anyone can master with time and effort".

In the same vein, McCarthy and Hatcher (2002) are of the opinion that presentation is comprehensive oral language production where language, interpersonal skills, and technological aspects seem to be important. Moreover, body language, voice control and the relationship with the audience are equally important. Good presentation skills have many advantages besides the sharing of knowledge. Siddon points out: "An effective presenter can also expect to leave each member of the audience feeling that they have learned something that is used to them, in a way that made the information real to them personally and with a clear sense of what the next step will be".

However, a presentation and its style cannot be appropriate in all cases of presentation for all types of audiences. It is commonly studied that human beings have certain mental characteristics from the perspective of understanding things. Some people possess theoretical minds who understand theories. Some people's minds adapt to practical things and understand when they see practical things being presented. Some other people, however, like to have stories because they enjoy stories being told to them. In the process of presentation, the presenter needs to know about all this and devise his plans. A good presenter, therefore, makes a holistic approach to presentation. Similarly, the resources required for presentation should be properly tuned. For this, some novice presenters present a sample in closed groups and get feedback. They revise their blueprint of presentation and thus devise verbal, non-verbal, and visual information to be delivered.

10. Presentation on the Part of Students

The scope of presentation skills has pushed many language teachers to design presentation courses so that students can gradually learn it as a productive language skill. As it is a specialized productive skill, it can be taught to the students with pedagogical formats. Teaching presentation skills, though, is challenging as it requires sound, productive language skills. To that end, the presenter needs language competency, communicative competency, and cognitive and interpersonal skills. Attaining communicative skills in front of an audience obviously becomes a daunting experience for students. We see even professional presenters feel frightened when they think of giving a presentation. Sometimes, situations arise in such a way that the presenter starts to feel panicking. This fear is quite natural for the notice presenter or the students who are giving a presentation for the first time.

There are two things the students encounter: the first is their low confidence that they will not work as much as they expected. And the second is how the audience will react to his presentation. This leads to creating a psychological process in which the speaker chokes and stifles. Joles (2005)states this as a natural tendency without much to worry as "One of the biggest fears most people have when they are asked publicly involves their voices. The worry often involves how your voices sound. There is an easy way not to worry about the problem because there is nothing one can do about it. Almost none likes his own voice when he hears it played back". Making a presentation requires both receptive and productive language skills, and students cannot make effective presentations on their own until they are given skills and taught about these skills.

Positive learning, task based approach, group learning, and collaborative discussions can ease students' presentation tasks. Considering these problems to be faced by the students in the beginning process of presentation, teachers need to introduce skills that students learn in a systematic process as there is no specific teaching learning pedagogy for presentation skills for the students, even in the university. Most of the presentation classes are conducted as per need and differ from one group to the other. For example, a business presentation may be different from an academic presentation. Experts indicate that if tasks are pedagogically tuned and based on the need and use of language focusing on special skills, they produce desirable results.

11. What is Task Based Approach to Presentation?

There is no course design for teaching language or presentation, though it has been an important tool of language skills, a sophisticated, productive skill of language. Experts believe that students can enhance their language skills when they are actively involved in the process of language learning. In other words, students' active involvement can make a great deal of progress in using and producing language. Task based approach can be helpful in harnessing skills of presentation. "To a great extent, the introduction of Task Based Language Teaching (TBLT) into the world of language education has been a 'top-down' process" (Van den Branden, 2006). One of the skills that can be useful is the task based approach of presentation, which can gradually make students aware and orient towards learning basic skills to effective skills. Breen (1987) finds this useful in:

> Any structured language skill endeavour that has a particular objective, appropriate content, a specified working procedure, and a range of outcomes for those who undertake the task. 'Task' is therefore assumed to refer to a range of work plans that have the overall purpose of facilitating language learning – from the simple and brief exercise type to more complex and lengthy activities, such as group problem-solving or simulations and decision making.

Task based approach is an appropriate skill for the students to utilize language skills in real and pragmatic situations, and they can validate their skills and how good and bad they perform in the performance of all the language tasks, selecting certain tasks that lead them to certain desired skills. Ellis (2003) further highlights:

> A work plan that requires learners to process language pragmatically in order to achieve an outcome that can be evaluated in terms of whether the correct or appropriate propositional content has been conveyed. To this end, it is required to give primary attention to meaning and to make use of their linguistic resources, although the design of the task may predispose them to choose particular forms. (qtd. in Van den Branden, 2006).

Though the based approach gives much space to the students who can practice simple skills to higher skills of presentation, the role of the teacher is still thought to be instrumental in conducting several tasks for the students. In some cases, a teacher may fall short in proposing an effective pedagogical format. He, however, can devise some semi pedagogical strategies for the presentation that can benefit the students. Task based approaches, however, are properly structured into three processes. Many linguists indicate that teachers can make tasks that engage students from the beginning to the actual time of presentation. To be precise, the tasks for students should have three categories: the pre-task, the whole task, and the task. These three stages should be properly connected and should complement each other. Teachers are also required to combine these holistically for better outcomes.

12. Roles of a Teacher

The teacher can conduct these techniques for effective presentation skills:

- Formation of groups according to the class size (if there are 30 students, five groups should be formed.
- Assigning them task sheets and times
- Letting them discuss on a topic
- He can give sample videos or written presentation
- Each group will be assigned different tasks, like writing presentations, making slides, making provisional videos, and preparing speeches.
- When all students finish doing their assigned tasks, the teachers will sit them together and make suggestions.
- Then, he will assign each group.
- When a group finishes a presentation, the other groups will have to give written feedback regarding the presentation.
- The teacher should give the final feedback.

- All these feedbacks and comments should be incorporated in the final presentation.

13. Conclusion

Presentation skills are productive skills in language use because they incorporate not only the use of language but also how to influence others in order to make them explore further skills. This skill, though, is of significance in the modern academia and professional field: it is far more important in the beginning phase of university because it can help students' overall skills of language, thereby enriching confidence and interpersonal skills. The article advocates the concept that presentation skills can be taught, and students can gain this skill through a task based approach.

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