

THE STUDENS' DIFFICULTIES IN PRESENTING THE ACADEMIC SPEAKING PRESENTATION

Ikhfi Imaniah

English Education Study Program Teachers Training and Education Faculty Muhammadiyah University of
Tangerang Jl. Perintis Kemerdekaan I/ 33 Cikokol, Tangerang-Indonesia Telp: 081311485305

E-mail: iqvee.sorrow@gmail.com

Abstract

The aim of the research is to observe the activities of the students in academic speaking classroom, to analyze the student's problem in presenting the academic speaking presentation and to identify the student's special needs in academic speaking presentation. The method used in this research is field research that is qualitative, while the analysis of the data used descriptive analysis. The focus of the research is on the student's difficulties in presenting academic speaking presentation. In sum up, most of the students of English Education Study Program of Teachers Training and Education Faculty of Muhammadiyah University are lack of: 1) *Goal setting* on their academic speaking presentation, 2) *Prioritization* on what the essential point need to be presented, 3) *Self-awareness* on themselves, while they present the presentation in front of the audience, 4) *Self-motivation* while presenting the materials, it connects with self-awareness; if students have improved their self-awareness so they will have a great deal of the information that they need to motivate themselves. In short, the students need to be able to motivate themselves to take action; 5) *Planning*, most of students are not planning the materials well so they are not able to manage their time to present the academic presentation; and 6) *Communication skill*, strong communication skills will enable the students to build supportive relationships with the audience while presenting the materials, in fact not all the students have good communication skill. In short, the student's preparation well made their presentation is good and it also established good communication between the presenter and the audiences.

Keywords: *Academic Speaking, Presentation, Communication*

INTRODUCTION

Speaking is a constructing meaning interactive process which is comprised producing and receiving information (Brown, 1994; Burns & Joyce, 1997). Speaking is viewed to be at the heart of second language learning among the four language skills (Egan, 1999). A common problem confronted among English language learners in Indonesian context is that they can understand what they read and write despite the probability of making mistakes in writing and understanding the text incorrectly; yet, they are not being capable of transferring their feelings, and ideas through oral language.

Academic speaking is similar in many ways to academic writing. It is linear, explicit, it has one central point and it is presented in standard language. Academic spoken style is also similar in many ways in that it is formal, explicit, hedged, and responsible. However, it is less complex and objective than written language. In general, this means that when someone is doing academic presentation he should avoid colloquial words and expressions. So, it is the responsibility of the speaker in English to make it clear to the listener how various parts of the talk is related.

Speaking in academic context is becoming increasingly important as teaching methods change to involve more group work, joint project or group mark. Students in higher education are not seen to be pulling their weight in collaborative work. It is therefore important to try to be more of what is involved in seminar or group activity and to learn

some of the interactional language that is used there. It is important to practice making presentation, taking part in discussion on academic topics and so on.

When speaking in an academic context, facts and figure are given precisely. Thus, in any kind of academic speaking, it is necessary to make decisions about the stance on a particular subject, or the strength of the claims. Therefore, in academic speaking the speaker are responsible for demonstrating an understanding of the source text by providing the evidence and justification.

Due to those reasons, the students need to learn about the purpose of presenting the academic speaking, making a power point presentation, controlling the discussion, participating in the discussion, listening and note taking. In academic speaking presentation, the same as with writing, the students must plan the talk. If the students are going to get as many marks for speaking as writing, spend as much time on it as writing. Writing language is different from spoken language, if the students just read the essays, no one will understand them.

Wallace (1980) stated that, it can be very boring to listen to something read aloud. Therefore, what students must do is follow the following point, 1) *decide on a time limit for your talk*, 2) *write out your spoken presentation*, 3) *speak from the outline notes*, 4) *look at your audience when you are speaking*. 5) *make a strong ending*. In short, it is very important when students doing presentation, they must tell to the audience what it is, and stick to the time limit. Moreover, the students must do some of the works of writing the papers again, in a sense. This means, the students concentrate only on the main points and try to make the presentation lively and interesting. The students also need to write everything that they have to say and when they know exactly what they are going to say, they must reduce it to outline notes.

In fact, most of students in Muhammadiyah University of Tangerang of fourth semester get lost when they are presenting the topics. Most of them are doing reading rather than presenting something to the audience. Therefore, the students must remember that listening is different with reading. Something that is going to be listened must be prepared in a very different way from something that is intended to be read.

Therefore, the researcher is eager to conduct the research to observe the activities in the academic speaking classroom, to analyze the student's problems in presenting the academic speaking presentation, to identify the student's special needs in academic speaking presentation.

Academic Learning Difficulties

Academic learning difficulties are related to the basic subjects, i.e. the problems which are shown by students such as reading, writing, speaking and spelling difficulties. Academic learning difficulties are relevant to and result from developmental learning difficulties. They may be of quality difficulties which appear when the student fails to fulfill the skills of success in more than one subject. Learning difficulties refer to the children who suffer from obvious difficulty in one of academic subjects, although they enjoy ordinary mental abilities in other subjects. Thus, the researcher concludes that it is necessary to pay attention to the developmental learning difficulties in order to discover and solve the problems of academic difficulties.

Moreover, Clements (1993) states that learning difficulties originate from psychological inability and weakness or sharp failure in using the verbal and communicative language. The symptoms of learning difficulties are: 1) there is no harmony between learning and behavior; 2) the student does not learn by methods, ways and materials in which most students learn, but he needs special procedures.

Many studies dealt with learning difficulties. Most of these refer to the learning

difficulties in terms of the learner and his tendency for learning, education system and the difficulty of the subject. Some difficulties refer to curricula and text books, or to the psychological, social and emotional sides. Psychological disorder and lagging behind and failure in education cause learning difficulty. So, it can be concluded that anxiety and disquiet in the class, fear and alarm reflect directly on individual learning ability and study progress of the students.

Learning Difficulties of University Students

Westberry (1994:45) clarifies that although technology provides easy access to knowledge, it has some demerits. Today, culture imposed on individual specific lifestyle. Such culture can be accepted in food and clothes field, but it is not acceptable in education, training and skill acquisition. Consequently, the ready-made culture caused the following issue: 1) weakness in the level of students' preparation and qualification; 2) decreasing student acquisition in different kinds of basic education skills, thinking and problem solving; 3) miss of credibility of scientific degrees obtained by all kinds of students. And such degrees do not reflect true qualification; 4) spread of learning difficulties in all different kinds of educational levels from preparatory school up to university level, even in higher studies level; 5) providing adequate prequalification and training. Due to some issues above, it assumes that the students should be aware on the ready - made culture because it can be problems in their academic life particularly to their education.

Nature of Learning Difficulties of University Students

Some individuals believe that learning difficulties refer to disorder in the function of the central nervous system, but Zayat (2002) believes that learning difficulties refer to weakness and bad learning inputs and cognition processes. Learning difficulties are not limited to a certain culture. They occur in different ages and levels. Learning causes many problems which result from frustration for those who suffer from learning difficulties, because there are invisible, which leads the teachers to believe that the students are disabled. In sum up, the learning difficulties are not student's bad talent but it is a process to accept some materials in teaching and learning process on to present something in seminars which ask the students to understand them well, understand what they want to do and say appropriately.

Academic Oral Presentation

In EFL context, academic oral presentation involves oral communication using English as a foreign language. It has been noted that people who have difficulty in communicating with people are likely to experience more anxiety in a foreign language class because these people encounter many various difficulties that negatively affect their ability during the oral presentation (Horwitz et al., 1986). It was found that native and nonnative speakers reported experiencing linguistic and psychological difficulties with academic oral presentations (Morita, 2000). Thus, it is not surprising that Muhammadiyah University of Tangerang in English education study program students find oral activities difficult because they encounter many difficulties using a foreign language to think; express and communicate orally. Public speaking, in various contexts, was reported as one of the most anxious experiences one could encounter (Jackson & Latane, 1981). Therefore, EFL graduate students face a dual task, of learning English and using it to present ideas. Both of these tasks can be anxiety-provoking, and it is likely that EFL students experience considerable stress with academic speaking. Moreover, speaking activities have been identified as the most anxiety-provoking activity in a foreign language classroom (Hilleson, 1996).

Academic oral presentations involve complex and constant decision-makings for the students from the beginning – the preparation stage, to the final stage – the presenting stage. The presenting stage is likely the most anxiety- provoking stage because much of the decision-making is required immediately. Moreover, it was found that a discrepancy existed between the instructor and the students about what constitutes an academic oral presentation and its goal. This may also contribute to students' anxiety about oral presentations because students were likely uncertain about the quality of their preparation and performance.

Oral presentation is a common task in graduate seminars in which presenters lead seminar discussion. An oral presentation may seem to be a straightforward activity, involving understanding the assigned material, summarizing it and presenting it to the instructor and classmates. However, it has been shown that oral presentation requires constant negotiation and decision making for it to be successful (Wu, 2008).

In short, academic oral presentation is an activity through which the presenters communicate with the audience. It is called academic because these presentations deal with college or university life. They also deal with courses that are taught in the universities sections and academics.

The Essential Ingredients of a Presentation

Siddons (2008:1-2) states that there are three essential ingredients of a presentation, they are 1) the audience, 2) the presenter, and 3) the presentation itself. Each of these three ingredients is important to enhance the goals of presentation to be successful. No matter how well-constructed the presentation if it is badly delivered it will fail; no matter how well-delivered the presentation if it doesn't make sense then it will fail. Most essentially of all, even if the presentation is perfect and the presenter inspired and charismatic, if the audience is not interested or engaged, then the presentation will certainly fail (Wallwork, 2010). Thus, it is important to prepare the presentation in advance to get the best results from it.

Moreover, Jacobi cited in Siddons (2008:1) wrote about the necessity for preparation, he said that ninety percent or more of preparation is typically devoted to content and countless hours go into creating and fine-tuning the presentation materials, and do not reserved for practice how the presenter can literally make or break the presentation. Keep in that, a lot of presentations die on the vine because they are not rehearsed properly, or they are never rehearsed at all.

In short, the presenter not only should prepare the material well but also need to prepare themselves in rehearsing the presentation properly which focus on three essential ingredients of a presentation; they are the audience, the presenter and the presentation itself.

RESEARCH METHOD

Research method that is used in this research is qualitative. As Fraenkel&Wallen (2007) state that qualitative researchers go directly to the particular setting of interest to observe and collect their data. Here, the researcher as lecturer who observes the students in academic speaking class. So, this research has been conducted at Muhammadiyah University of Tangerang which is located at Jl. PerintisKemerdekaan I/33 Cikokol Kota Tangerang. The researcher selected this location because the students at Muhammadiyah University of Tangerang still lack awareness of speaking English, particularly in presenting academic speaking. In this research the data was focused on the student's difficulties in presenting academic speaking presentation.

Therefore, this method will be applied in investigating the analysis of student's

difficulties in presenting the academic speaking presentation of fourth semester students of Muhammadiyah University of Tangerang.

The participants in this research are the students of fourth semester of Muhammadiyah University of Tangerang consist of 200 students.

The validity of data in qualitative method is based on credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. The reliability of data in this research is based on construct dependability and certainty criteria come from objectivity concept.

The data collecting instruments are document, observation, and interview. The data included facts found in the document, the observation, and the analysis of student's academic presentation in the classroom. In doing the observation, the researcher observed the classroom activities. In doing the interview, the students answered the questions which prepared by the researcher.

The data analysis in this research was qualitative research, which had been conducted to analyze the report from the data source from the materials, pictures, and interviews.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Student's problems in Presenting Academic Speaking Presentation

In presenting academic presentation, time management is important to manage the presentation time. As quoted from MTD training on "Successful Time Management", successful time management will help the presenter to become more effective in completing the task that presenter need to complete to present to the audience, so there is more time available for presenter to spend on the things that are important to presenter. In fact, most of students have lack ability in managing the time of their presentation. They cannot manage the time presentation to become effective. Moreover, the students do not know how to spend their time to tell the most important point that they need to share to the audience, yet they only tell all what they have written in their power point.

In line with the time management, the University of Georgia explains in detail about ten strategies for better time management. One of the strategies is the presenter need to know how to spend their time in presenting the academic presentation.

Based on the seventeen essential time management skills, however it is important to understand each skill and the role it plays in student's time management. (<http://www.coachingpositiveperformance.com>). Here the researcher adapts those seventeen essential times management into several points is needed to be analyzed on student's academic speaking presentation. In sum up, most of the students of English Education Study Program of Teachers Training and Education Faculty of Muhammadiyah University are lack of: 1) *Goal setting* on their academic speaking presentation, 2) *Prioritization* on what the essential point need to be presented, 3) *Self-awareness* on themselves, while they present the presentation in front of the audience, 4) *Self-motivation* while presenting the materials, it connects with self-awareness; if students have improved their self-awareness so they will have a great deal of the information that they need to motivate themselves. In short, the students need to be able to motivate themselves to take action; 5) *Planning*, most of students are not planning the materials well so they are not able to manage their time to present the academic presentation; and 6) *Communication skill*, strong communication skills will enable the students to build supportive relationships with the audience while presenting the materials, in fact not all the students have good communication skill.

Student's Special Needs in Presenting Academic Speaking Presentation

This study has reported on well-designed oral presentations which enable students to function successfully in the future professional surrounding. It presents a challenge to both students and the teacher.

The challenge for the teacher is to provide a relevant framework for students upon which they construct knowledge and become active participants in the learning process. The teacher involves preparing detailed guidelines, organizing groups, helping students to select topics, guiding their research and helping them learn the use of various visual aids, providing feedback on the sequencing of ideas, and evaluating their performance (King, 2002). Importantly, the teacher is no longer perceived as the knowledge dispenser and decision maker. Instead, the teacher has become the facilitator of learning whose main task is to set goals and organize the learning process accordingly. The teacher creates social and intellectual climates, where collaborative and cooperative learning methods are supported. The teacher creates opportunities for students to interact with other learners and with the teacher as well. On the whole, the teacher is responsible for leading and coordinating the work and make learning progress easier.

Besides, the teacher is the supporter, one who supports the learner by means of suggestions that arise out of ordinary activities, by challenges that inspire creativity, and with projects that allow for independent thinking and new ways of learning information.

In Vygotsky's (1978) theory of constructivism, the teacher serves as the mediator who coaches and encourages students to formulate their own level of understanding.

In the Bruner's (1979) classroom, the teacher is the instructor, (direct and guide the learning process) who should try and encourage students to discover principles by themselves. The teacher and students should engage in an active dialog (Socratic learning).

Moreover, there is a demand for the teacher in the classroom not to be only a guide, organizer, instructor, mediator and supporter, but, as King (2002) comments, to hold questions and answers sessions, provide feedback, and evaluation of students' performance.

We have to agree with Crystal (2003) who claims that the actor and the teacher inhabit the same stable. They both have to put on a show (the actor on a stage and the teacher in the classroom).

On the other hand, students function as designers using the technology as tools for analyzing the world, accessing information, interpreting and organizing their personal knowledge, and representing what they know to others (Jonassen, 1994). Students must be given opportunities to be active in ways that will promote self-direction, creativity and critical analysis of problems requiring a solution (Jonassen, 1994). "Learning becomes a continuous, life-long process which results from acting in situations" (Brown et al., 1989).

It has been observed by Kim et al. (1999) that students have more positive attitude towards learning as they share their experiences with their peers and the teacher, as well as they experience increasing discussions in the classroom. Brown (1996) has proved that oral presentations help students to work collaboratively and make it easier to focus on a specific area useful for future work. Students are encouraged to search for solutions to real-world problems, and thus, they are engaged in transformative learning, leading to critical and analytical thinking which is essential for success in the 21st century.

CONCLUSION

Students need a lot of opportunity to develop and practice communication skills. Communication skills are required by students (future specialists) whether they are

expected to give presentations at conferences, symposia or other meetings. Because of the necessity for these skills, students need instructions and guidance in preparing, organizing and delivering oral presentations. Oral presentations have become a useful and effective way to increase students' awareness of communication skills. Thus, students' presentations become an important element in delivering positive learning experiences. They are an integral part of almost every professional environment, as professionals need to communicate with other professionals at meetings, seminars, conferences.

So, teaching students to design effective oral presentations implies training them insightful and well-trained thinking strategies. Improving the quality of presentation actually improves the quality of thought, and vice versa. This is the ultimate result of a successful presentation. This innovative framework provides a holistic approach in assessing a student's performance based on the content and the delivery of their presentation (Carroll, 2006).

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