Improving Oral Competency of Tourist Guide Students by Means of Visual Aids and Presentation

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Abstract

In many Second Language (L2) communication classes, the majority of the class time is taken up by teachers –fronted, drill –oriented activities. Oral presentation is one example of learners' central activities. The problem is that if this activity is not implemented correctly in communicative activities, this can cause a notable problem. However, teachers should understand the skills involved in giving an effective presentation and the potential difficulties oral presentation can cause for L2 learners. This paper focuses on oral presentation and some other drills that may enhance the speaking and oral output of the students and examine the benefits of poster presentation in L2 classroom. This can be done by examining the tasks involved and the pedagogical justification behind these tasks. For this reason, this study is conducted on 15 Tourist Guide students at Petra Collage for Tourism and Archeology in Al Hussein Ben Talal University. They were given a 14-week course titled "Jordan cultural Heritage" as a communicative course. The results showed that it was difficult to find an activity that suited all students in the class. Each student had different interests that were reflected in their claims and expectation. The teacher was not able to cover all the students' needs in every lesson, but was able to present an activity in different interesting ways in order to provide ESP activities for the learners.

Keywords: oral presentation, visual aids, teaching speaking

ملخص

ركزت هذة الدراسة على الامور التي يحتاج المعلمون الى ادراكها عندما يطلبون من الطلاب استخدام العرض الشفوي في الصف . و قدمت ايضا عددا من الاقتراحات لكيفية استخدام المعلمين للعروض التقديمية داخل المحاضرات . يجب على المعلمين مساعدة الطلاب على التخطيط و تقديم العروض الشفويه و مساعدتهم على التغلب على الخجل و التوتر من خلال اعدادهم داخل الصف لتقديم العروض الشفويه امام جمهور صغير و من ثم الانتقال الى جمهور كبير .التوصيات الوارده في هذه الورقه تنبع من الخبرة المكتسبة خلال التجربة الحالية . و لهذة الغاية هناك بعض المهارات و الاجراءات التي تم تسليط الضوء عليها و التى تبدو مهمه لاي شخص لاستخدام العرض البصري داخل المحاضرة .ومن المامول ان تقدم هذة الورقه اقتراحات حول ما يمكن القيام به لاستخدام العرض الشفوي بشكل فعال وان يكون هنالك حوار بين المعلمين المهتمين باستخدام العروض المرئيه كوسيلة لتطوير مهاراتهم باللغه الانجليزيه .

1. Introduction

Many students feel that the major problem with their oral communication classes is that they are not provided with adequate opportunists to use English to communicate with other students in the classroom (Farris and Tagg ,1996). Even though, most teachers recognize the need for the students to interact with their peers in their L2 classes, the size and curriculum focuses more on grammatical accuracy than on communicative competences and also, the lack of training time designated for such activities. Add to this, the attitudes of the learners to learn L2 beside the inhabitation of their mother tongue, which is Arabic. All of these are reasons that show why teachers can't provide students with sufficient opportunities to use spoken English (Brawn and Wada, 1998, King, 2013). Besides this, even when students are asked to speak in English, they aren't asked to speak with peers and this oral practice usually uses traditional methods such as repetition (Nishino, 2008. P30) rather than tasks that require students to actually speak and interact with one another.

Oral participation also helps to improve students' English language abilities (Thornbury, 2005). However, despite the obvious benefits of using presentation in the classroom, very few higher-education students are given the opportunities to do oral presentation in their L2 classes (Tsou and Huang ,2012).

2. Literature Review

Due to the idea that oral presentation can be challenging and often includes unfamiliar tasks for many students, they can potentially pose many problems for students (Meloni and Thomson, 1980). Because of this, many teachers who have tried to use presentations in their classrooms have reported that they had found it to be a time-consuming activity with a little or no pedagogical value (Ross, 2007). However, one of the main reasons for this has been that oral presentations need to be scaffold if they are to be effective. Many problems can occur before and during the presentation; these include, students choosing inappropriate or boring topics, students being inattentive or disrespectful when listening to other oral presentation, add to this, shyness and stress which can be of a very negative impact on the presenter as well as on his/her peer audience. So, this results in students who dislike presentations or who try to avoid them. And above all of this, instructors who believe that his students gain nothing from a given oral presentation would be a pessimistic advocate of such activities and would do no effort to progress his students to present orally.

Another problem of enforcing the use of oral presentations in the classroom is the time consumed by a single presentation. It can cost an entire class time; therefore, teachers avoid it. The students who are not presenting are often passive members of the audience which lead to boredom (Chiu, 2004). However, this is not the case at all times since teachers can do much to ensure that all the members of their class be active and alert and, hence, benefit from both giving and listening to oral presentation.

Presentations also require a lot of time and effort to be implemented in an acceptable manner in the class room. This means that a presentation needs to be divided down into manageable stages, and it must be made clear to the students what is expected from them at each stage of the presentation process. Should this not happen, students would feel uncomfortable about giving their presentation (King,2002).

Numerous researchers have shown the benefits of using oral presentations in the classroom. Girard, et. al. (2002) found that their students improved their communication and oral presentation skills, and that, in turn, enabled them to interact and participate more in the classroom. That also increased students interest in the classroom in general. While other studies showed that oral presentations can also be beneficial to students by helping them to bridge the gap between language study and language use (King, 2002).

Finally, presentations are useful not only because of how they can be used to improve students' communication abilities and motives but also because of the benefits they can provide them with for future experiences. This is especially true in English for Specific Purposes (ESP) where their students will be asked to use English to present on their future jobs (Bruce, 2011). However, this can provide students with skills that will be valuable when they are seeking employment; many employers look more for the importance of their employee's abilities to give public formal presentations in English (Pittance, 2004).

3. Methodology and framework

3.1 An overview of the course

The course discussed in this paper was a content-based class which was a significant component of the class and it focused on visual presentations. The course was designed

with the purpose of providing the Tourist guide students at Petra collage for Tourism and Archeology with the opportunity to use English in topics that interest them with the goal of encouraging them to use more communication skills using their L2. This 14-week course titled "Jordan cultural Heritage " was intended to shed light on the Jordanian culture and heritage.

The course comprised lectures, group work activities, class discussions, and reading activities that were chosen to increase the awareness about the Jordanian culture. This was done by opining a dialogue about the Jordanian culture and during the third week, students were asked to prepare oral presentations about any aspect of the Jordanian heritage that they found of interest to them by using visual aid such as Data show, picture or even poster presentation. furthermore, by the fifth and the sixth weeks, they were asked to make a group research about any other country's culture and heritage and to present it in front of the class. Each group then had to preparer the visual presentation by making either a slide show or a PowerPoint presentation, such that, each member of the group was required to prepare an oral presentation.

As it is previously established, most of the students at the university enrolled in the class would have a limited experience with both oral presentation and visual presentation, therefore, it is important for teachers to clarify the process of how to do oral presentation for them with patience and ease.

Previous studies had shown that this approach was necessary if we wanted students to succeed in their presentations (Shimo, 2011). In order to do this, students received input from their teacher with regards to the appropriate content of their presentation and the instructions in the skills required to do oral and visual presentation. So, this included how and when to use eye contact and how to connect with the

audience, also how to use body language and manage their time during their presentations (Otoshi and Heffernan, 2008).

Students were also expected to be able to conduct basic internet research and take notes, which would help them to produce speaking points for the oral presentation they were interested in. This process, should enable students to:

1- Choose an appropriate topic for the presentation.

2- Select a content that is suitable for the topic of interest.

3- Organize their topic effectively.

This goal is related to the visual-aid (e.g. data show) presentation which students were expected to create and make sure that it connects to their audience through appropriate visuals. So, at this stage, it is important to mention the two steps to make a good presentation and these are good a careful planning and a finished presenting.

3.2 Planning a good presentation

In this section I present how students should know how to plan for any presentation because without a good planning, their presentation would be inadequately presented. Furthermore, this step includes: researching and writing a presentation, the use of visual aids and finally how to use presentation skills.

One of the most important aspects for students is to be able to plan for any research is by using internet which, in fact, may seem simple for many teachers while students do find it difficult and have problems selecting suitable key words and subject headings, bibliographical details. During the researcher's teaching years, it has been noticed that students who attempted to give their presentation without adequate instruction on how to get information for their presentation ended up with presentations that lacked substance and adequacy. Also, they were unsure what to include in their

presentations due to lack of planning. Planning has an important impact on their oral presentations. So, to discourage this behavior, students were given instruction on how to search for information for their presentations.

Students were also asked to participate in small group discussions and larger class discussions that focused on the same topic that they were presenting. After groups had decided on their topic and the aspect of Jordanian heritage they seleceted, they were asked to talk about them and required to make short weekly presentations in front the class. These activities served as a way of keeping students on task while allowing them to practice some of the presentation skill they would need.

Above all, students were also asked to do assignments in class or homework that helped them to be familiar with the structure of the presentation. Homework assignments included reading about others countries' cultures including brain storming topics, writing presentation including the writing of scripts or reports or preparing visual aids. Additionally, students were shown presentation that could then be used as a module for their own presentation.

3.2.1 The use of visual aids

One of the most important parts of a presentation is the use of the visual aids. Students found it beneficial when they used it during presentation time because those aids provided support for both, the speakers and the listeners and helped in making presentations more successful (Lambert ,2008). So, visual aids can give more details about the topic with pictures and sometime sounds, and help the audience to understand what is being presented. While the types of visual aids are different, most of the students preferred to use data show or slide show projectors. Some groups created a PowerPoint presentation with pictures and drawings, while others were satisfied with

showing videos while they were talking and telling others about cultural life in Jordan. Even those who felt they were lacking in artistic talent seemed to enjoy the task of making the slideshow. This allowed them to show their own creative style while using both English and visual communication information for other students.

3.2.2 Presentation skill

In teaching methods according to the presentation class, teachers should focus on two levels of skills, the micro-level skills for specific students and the macro-level skills for students in general. These could include things like genre specific language items, such as vocabulary and grammar. It is important for the students to learn these skill for two reasons:

1. They allow students to be successful during presentation.
2. These skills are thought to be important for them on other situations that involve spoken English (Thornbury, 2005).

Therefore, teaching such skills is important for the student's motives as most students believed that improving their English language is primary for improving their Oral communication skills.

In our current research group, we identified a number of speaking skills that the students need in their presentations such as providing them with exercises that focused on some grammar and fluency and their importance to oral skills.

In weeks one through week four, time was set aside for students to practice these skills, so during these weeks, students were asked to give five-minute presentations in small group or individually then in larger group in order to reduce shyness and to get over the fear of presentation. During the first two weeks, students were asked to do presentation about themselves, their life and family using correct English grammar as

possible. In the following weeks, they were required to do homework and discuss them in the class with other students. These were related to the cultural life in Jordan and were meant to improve their presentation skills. In addition to that, it was found that repeated activities and mini-presentation significantly reduced the stress that was often an inevitable part of presenting in front the class.

3.3 Giving a finished and effective presentation.

Until the date of presentation, students were given clear instructions about what to expect on the day of presentation; like the schedule of presentations, time allowed and ask-answer time. Instructions like these are important for students, they help to ensure that the visual presentation ran smoothly and help to reduce their anxiety by providing them with clear scenario.

3.3.1 Giving the presentation

Visual presentations took place over the whole semester with half of the group presenting during the first half of the semester and other on the next half. On the days of the presentations, students prepared their slideshow or video presentations, including the titles of their topics and picture. They were also asked to prepare some questions for the students to keep the class lively during presentation and to make sure that their presentations were not too short or too long. After that, the presenter repeated the information before finalizing his presentation to make sure that he was clear and understood and to improve the communication ability and confidence for himself and for others. By doing this, the audience (i.e. other students) would be encouraged to ask questions in reference to the slideshow, this, in turn, prompts the speaker to share his knowledge on the topic he researched with others and to add more interactive nature to the presentation.

3.3.2 Assessment and feedback

The purpose from teaching such a course was to enhance the use of more communicative ways of teaching and learning and to gain more practical knowledge about how presentations take place. In the context, an oral communicative presentation means:

1. To have a completed and interesting topic and slideshow.
2. To use the visual aids as aid to develop the speaking skills.
3. To have an oral discussion about their chosen aspect of the Jordanian culture and heritage with audience.
4. To be able and confident while answering questions from audience.
5. To enjoy the process and the experience and to want to do it again.

So, these five points were reinforced when the students previewed their oral presentations from the beginning of this experiment (i.e. the teaching this course). Students' presentations were evaluated as such (A+, A, B+, B, C+, C or Incomplete) and they were given ten points, five points for communicativeness and audience engagement and the other five points for the content and the design of the slideshow.

4. Conclusion

This study has focused on things that teachers need to be aware of when they ask students to use oral presentation in class. It has also presented a number of suggestions for how teachers can successfully use presentations in their own courses. Teachers must help their students plan and give oral presentations and help them get over their shyness and stress by preparing them during class time to do oral presentations before small audience and then moving to a larger audience.

The recommendations that are offered in this paper drow upon the experience gained during the current experiment. To this end, there are some skills and procedures that were highlighted which seem to be important for anyone planning to integrate visual presentation into their own teaching classes.

It is hoped that this paper provides suggestions about what can be done to effectively use oral presentation in the classroom. It also hopes that it will start the dialogue among teachers who are interested in using or who are currently using visual presentations as a way to develop their students' English language skills.

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