| **RESEARCH ARTICLE**

# Perception, Attitude and Practice of English Presentation Skills by Students at the University of Danang-University of Foreign Language Studies, Vietnam

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| **ABSTRACT**

The study aims to find out the perception, attitude, and practice of English presentation skills of first-year English students from the Faculty of Foreign Language Teacher Education and the Faculty of English at The University of Danang-University of Foreign Language Studies (hereafter called EFL students for brief) as well as to propose appropriate solutions to assist them. Data were collected from 200 questionnaires, and the analysis of the in-depth interviews was conducted with 10 student informants and observations of 30 students in total. The findings showed that most students were familiar with English presentation skills. Also, they were aware of the importance of presentation skills and agreed on the necessity for a successful presentation. Knowledge was what caused participants the most difficulties during the preparation stage, and when presenting, students struggled the most not to replicate the textbook word-by-word. To solve these problems, several solutions were discussed in the study.

## 1. Introduction

At present, Vietnamese higher education institutions are changing to learner-centred teaching methods to replace the old one-way learning style that has been used for years. Thus, students have their fair share in work as preparing for the lesson in advance or studying and making a quick presentation on the day's primary topic. For them, presentation skills are essential. They must communicate as part of a group, use their body language to convey messages and modify their speech in an academic manner. This is unavoidable at every stage of a student's life at the university.

Despite the above-mentioned facts, not all Vietnamese students of English in general, and first year students at UD-UFLS in particular, can give effective English presentations. As a result, they may face significant difficulties when entering the labor market. For these reasons, we conduct the study to find out the perception, attitude, and practice of English presentation skills of first year English students from the Faculty of Foreign Language Teacher Education (FFLTE) and the Faculty of English (FE), as well as to propose appropriate solutions to assist them in overcoming their obstacles. To achieve the stated aims, this research tried to answer the following questions:

1. How do the first-year EFL students of UD-UFLS perceive the English presentation skills (EPSs)?
2. What is the first-year EFL students' attitude towards the EPSs?
3. What mistakes and difficulties do first-year EFL students encounter when presenting in English?

## 2. Theoretical Background
### *2.1 Presentation*
To present is to share information on a specific topic with a group of people. It is to achieve a specific goal by effectively introducing and conveying ideas to listeners in a limited amount of time (Lại et al., 2021). A presentation is similar to a brief discussion about a topic, with the goal of imparting knowledge and encouraging the exchange of ideas. How to present is a skill that needs to be learned and would be applied in future work environments (Peoples, 2015). Class presentations, according to The Ontario Curriculum Unit Planner (2002), are a tactical method of assessment that requires students to deliver their understanding of the topic, select and present what they have done in their studies, and organize their flows of thoughts into a condensed speech. It gives teachers a foundation for evaluating their students' performances later on.

From the above-mentioned definitions of the presentation, in this study, a presentation is understood as an academic speech that is meant to deliver information on a particular topic by first-year EFL students.

### *2.2 Structure of a Presentation*
(Lundeberg, 2009) suggested that a presentation have 3 main parts: Introduction, Body, and Conclusion.

The introduction should introduce the audience to the topic and purposes of the presentation. It should inform the audience about what to expect in order to pique their interest and set expectations, as well as define the main points and relevant information. In the case of team presentations, presenters can be introduced at this stage. The introduction should make up 10% - 15% of the performance.

The body of the presentation should commit to the purpose and information made in the introduction. The body must proceed logically regardless of whether it is organized chronologically, by priority, or by theme. The main points should be presented one by one, with concise and relevant supporting evidence, statistics or examples, and verbal 'signposting'. This should make up 75% of the presentation.

The conclusion should be short and concise. It should reiterate the main points and what has been learned or demonstrated. It may also provide the implications of the findings and make creative recommendations. This should make up 10% of the performance.

### *2.3 Presentation skills*
Presentation skills are the ability to apply learned knowledge and skills to the presenting process, with the aim of helping the audience understand the presentation content (Lại et al., 2021).

### *2.4 Elements of a Successful Presentation*
Despite differences in wording, common ideas about what qualities are required to successfully deliver a presentation were noted in works as "Effective Presentation Skills" by Steve Mandel (1987), "Kỹ năng thuyết trình" (Presentation Skills) by Hồ et al. (2007), "Brilliant presentation: What the best presenters know, do and say" by Richard Hall (2009), and "Kỹ năng thuyết trình và làm việc nhóm" (Presentation Skills and Group Work) by Lại et al. (2021). Those qualities include:

**Analytical thinking** is defined as the ability to evaluate and break down facts and concepts into their strengths and weaknesses, as well as to build the capacity to think in a careful, discerning manner, solve issues, analyze data, and retain and use knowledge (Amer, 2005). As part of presentation skills, this can be understood as the ability to analyze the audience and be prepared to think quickly if questions requiring demonstration are posed. As Bradbury (2006) stated, one of the first things presenters should do before giving any presentation is to learn as much as they can about their intended audience and then tailor the presentation to their needs.

**Organization** has much to contribute to a well-regarded presentation. An efficient presenter, according to Bradbury (2006), consistently hones and refines content to make it as appropriate as feasible for their listeners. Furthermore, the presenter must regularly check that the presentation is on track and change the style and speaking speed to each situation.

**Nonverbal communication** involves "open body gesture, eye contact, facial expressions, hand gestures, posture and space between you and the audience" (Dolan, 2017: p.2). Mehrabian (1969) investigated social communication and discovered that visual communication, also known as body language, was the most effective level of communication. Students' physical bearing and poise should convey a sense of comfort and confidence when speaking in front of an audience, and active listening, respect and emotional intelligence would be extremely beneficial in group discussions.

**Verbal communication** plays an important role in a presentation. Arguably, it is the most pervasive method of communication in human society (Andrea Rocci, 2016). Assertiveness, affirmation, and enunciation are all skills that will help students restate and make key points clear in response to questions or concerns during their presentations. Dolan (2017) claimed that the impact of communications is greatly influenced by presenters' appearance and voice, in addition to what they say. Moreover, unless it is original or uncommon, information by itself can be boring; however, when it is communicated through stories, gestures, and analogies, it becomes intriguing.

**Presentation software** such as Microsoft PowerPoint, Microsoft Word, Apple Keynote, Google Slides, and Adobe Presenter is useful in visual creation. Mandel (1987) claimed that slides and visuals were an excellent way to engage the audience and clarify points. The use of slides, charts, and graphs can help to illustrate and simplify ideas. Graphics can help students present information engagingly, reducing the need for lengthy presentations. Mandel also noted that too many visuals, however, can be overwhelming and confusing.

**Confidence** is crucial when presenting. As for Bradbury (2006: p.16-17), most skillful presenters have the "unshakable belief that each presentation is bound to be successful, no matter what happens". Confidence projection would make an impact on the way the audience perceives and processes the messages.

Besides the aforementioned qualities, there are others that can be of great help depending on the topic of the presentation, the audience, and the desired results. Some examples include summarizing, designing handouts, being aware of ethical, political, and religious diversity, being consistent, creating and managing expectations, not interrupting others, et cetra.

### 2.5 Importance of Presentation Skills

There have been numerous discussions about the value of presentation abilities in a variety of areas. Most organizations list communication skills as one of their most critical issues, and presentation skills are a large component of communications; thus, presentation skills are important in almost every aspect of academic/business life, from meetings, interviews, and conferences to trade shows and job fairs (Dolan, 2017: p.1). Swathi (2015) also stated that presentation and public speaking skills were useful, especially in business, sales, training, teaching, and lecturing, as well as in other social situations. Verbal communication skill ranked 4.63/5.0 in NACE's Job Outlook 2016 and was the top talent employers desired. These days, the presentation ability is no longer a bonus point that gives students an advantage over their peers but rather a highly sought-after one (Lai et al., 2021). Furthermore, "the ability to speak well enough to interest, influence, or persuade other people is a major asset for whatever they want to do in the future, and it may change them in ways that they did not expect," Emden and Becker (2004: p.1) wrote. The statement has strengthened the viewpoint that students of the 4.0 era need to be equipped with good presentation skills. In their article, Mehta and Mehta (2019: p.124) considered presentation skills "the art that can enable the professionals to scale new heights of excellence in their workstations" and that they "play a paramount role in transferring the information and knowledge in an effective and better manner".

### 2.6 Perception

"The way you notice something, or the ability to understand the true nature of something" (Hornby, 2003: p. 938)

### 2.7 Attitude

Attitudes are spontaneous reactions such as agreement or disagreement, acceptance or denial, and are psychological structures that determine our response to a situation (Vũ, 2008).

### 3. Literature Review

Up to now, there have been many studies on university students' presentation skills. According to Haber & Lingard (2001), the purpose of oral presentations was perceived differently by third-year medical students and teachers, and this was reflected in performance. Students described and carried out the presentation as a rule-based, data-storage activity governed by order and structure, whereas teachers viewed it as a flexible mode of communication and a method for constructing the details of a case into a diagnostic or therapeutic plan. Alshare and Hindi (2004) compared the perspectives of students and instructors regarding the essence of presentation skills. Their study's findings revealed that students and instructors agreed that the critical objectives of presentations were to improve communication skills and train students to speak in front of a group of people. However, students and instructors disagreed on how to rank the elements of a presentation on a scale. That is, they could not reach a consensus on which whether "the presentation content" or "the presentation organization" should be ranked first. Tanveer (2007) believed that sociocultural factors were the primary cause of students' difficulties in their presentation, but Juhana (2012) determined that linguistic factors hampered students' ability to present.

In the Vietnamese setting, Nguyen Thi Phuong Huyen (2008) conducted research on third-year students of the English Department at the University of Foreign Language Studies, The University of Danang. She pointed out students' lack of attention to the presentation structure, as well as their difficulties when presenting and what they expect from a presentation. Results showed that linguistic factors troubled students the most, and when doing a presentation assignment, students hoped to get feedback from their teachers. Nguyen Thi Minh Tram's study (2013) on presentation skills of second-year students from the Faculty of Foreign Language Teacher Education of the University of Languages and International Studies - Vietnam National University, Hanoi, indicated the importance of presentation skills to its students. The study also pointed out that there was a lack of techniques and tactics for dealing with presentation difficulties. Nguyen Thi Hong Chuyen et al. (2020) investigated how TED Talks could improve presentation skills for first-year English majors at Thai Nguyen University of Education and concluded that barriers to good performance could be external or internal and that students should practice hard and use TED Talks as a resource for vocabulary, grammar, and nonverbal expressions. Psychology is the most commonly chosen cause to impede students' ability when presenting in English (Tu, 2021). According to Doan Thi Phuong Diem and Le Thi Hoa Binh's research (2021), some effective methods include careful preparation, group practice, and participation in presentation and speaking courses.

Generally speaking, previous research mostly focused on students' difficulties and mistakes when presenting or methods to improve their skills rather than their perception and attitude. Moreover, little has been done on first-year English students of FFLTE and FE from UD-UFLS in this matter. For these reasons, we decided to conduct this study about the perception, attitude, and practice of English presentations among first-year English students of FFLTE and FE from UD-UFLS.

## 4. Methodology
### 4.1 Research Methods
The study was conducted in quantitative and qualitative approaches. Questionnaires, face-to-face interviews, and observation were used to collect data in this study. Questionnaires were designed based on checklists from the books "Kỹ năng thuyết trình" (Presentation Skills) by Hồ Thanh Mỹ Phương et al. (2007) and "Effective Presentation Skills" by Steve Mandel (1987).

### 4.2 Population and Samples
- Population: In this study, the population consists of students from the Faculty of Foreign Languages Teacher Education and the Faculty of English from UD-UFLS.
- Samples: 200 freshmen from the Faculty of Foreign Languages Teacher Education and the Faculty of English from UD-UFLS.

### 4.3 Data Collection
First, 200 random first-year EFL students were given the questionnaire. Both paper questionnaires and Microsoft Forms were used at this stage. Second, 10 randomly selected students were interviewed for their perspectives on EPSs and how they practice EPSs in more detail. Third, the author attended 6 classes to gain additional information on how students applied EPSs in their real performances.

### 4.4 Data Analysis
First, the author determined students' perceptions, attitudes, and practices of EPSs based on the questionnaire results. The percentage that each studied factor contributes to students' perception, attitude, and practice of English presentation skills was the expected result. Second, the author used recorded presentation videos to confirm questionnaire results and, if necessary, added additional details to the final findings.

### 4.5 Data Analysis Tools
The study analyzed the collected data and calculated the percentage of researched elements using Microsoft Excel and SPSS 26.0.

## 5. Results and Discussion
### 5.1 Subject Traits
200 first-year English students participated in the study in order to find out their perception, attitude and practice in EPSs.

Table 1: Number of students participating in the study

| | |
|---|---|
| Faculty of English | 163 |
| Faculty of Foreign Language Teacher Education | 37 |
| Total | 200 |

### 5.2 Results from Questionnaires and Interviews
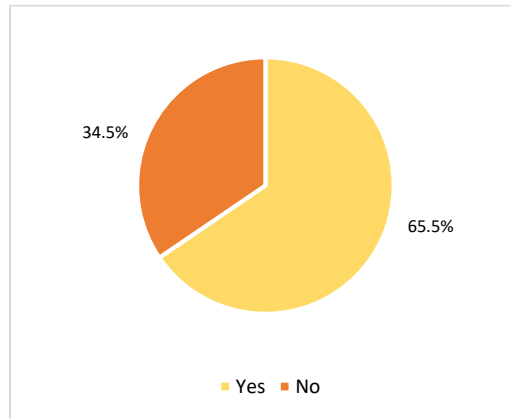### 5.2.1. General Information



Figure 1: Students' familiarity with English presentation skills

According to Figure 1, 65.5% of students responded positively, while 34.5% did not apply the EPSs in their performance. The figure was quite the same when separately surveying the two faculties. When asked why they refused to apply the EPSs, the majority stated that they were familiar with the term but found it difficult to practice it. This accounted for 26.5% of all answers. 5% of those polled said they had never heard of the EPSs, and 3% said they were unwilling to apply it despite knowing about it.
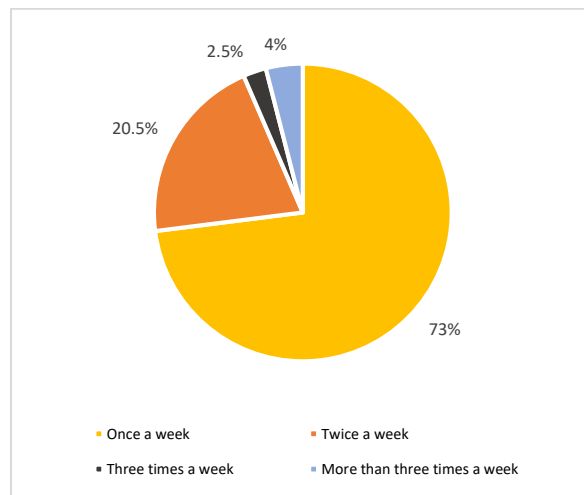


Figure 2: Students' presentation frequency

As can be seen in the above Figure, UD-UFLS English students are quite familiar with presentations. Over 70% of students presented or participated in presentation-based lessons once a week. 20.5% claimed to give two presentations per week on average, and some may have given more per week in the previous semester. This finding is similar to what Nguyen Thi Phuong Huyen (2008) discovered in her study: the majority of third-year English students presented in groups at least once a week.

The findings also helped to explain UD-UFLS first-year English students' familiarity with the EPSs, as shown in Figure 1. During the interview, most students agreed that the first semester at the university allowed them to improve their presentation skills to some extent. That is because "*courses are taught in English, and many tasks take the form of presentations. The preparation process, including PowerPoint, can help us strengthen our soft skills. Furthermore, subjects such as Critical Thinking help to increase our thinking capacity, and we must control our pronunciation, developing concept ability, and delivery style if we want the audience to grasp what we are trying to say*".
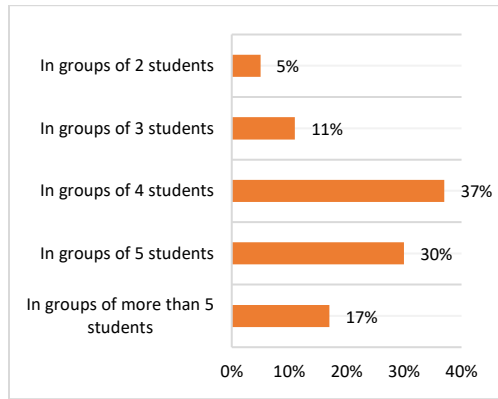
Figure 2: Students' presentation group work

The majority of presentations (37% of the total) were in the form of 4-student group work. "Groups of five" follows by 30%. There is little difference between figures for "groups of three" and "groups of more than five", 11% and 17%, respectively. Presentations given by two students were the least common, accounting for only 5% of all recorded data.
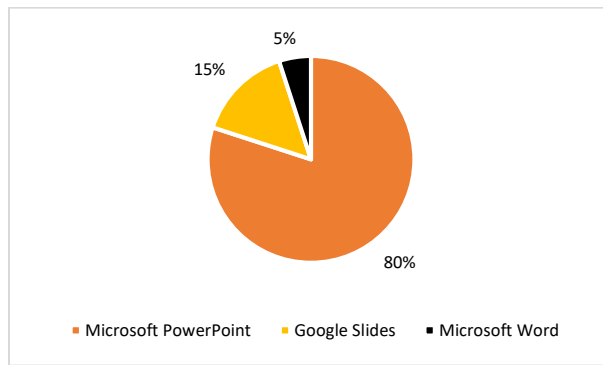


Figure 3: Presentation software

Presentation software is no longer difficult to obtain as we move into the 4.0 era. When it comes to creating captivating presentations, students nowadays have many options. According to the survey, Microsoft PowerPoint ranks first, accounting for up to 80%. Google Slides comes in second with 15%. Microsoft Word now has the remaining 5% of the collected data. Despite being a powerful visual assistant, Adobe Presenter appears to be underutilized among students. In the research with third-year students by Nguyen Thi Phuong Huyen (2008), PowerPoint also outperformed the surveyed options. Reasons may vary, but one possible explanation could be that UD-UFLS students are taught to use Microsoft PowerPoint in the IT course as an essential component of the training curriculum, so they should be more familiar with it than the other three options.

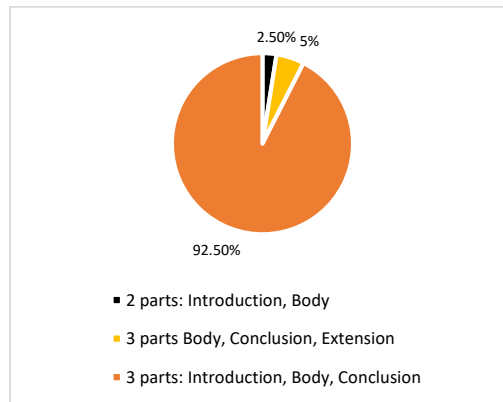### 5.2.2 Perception of English Presentation Skills



Figure 4: Presentation of main parts

When asked about the main parts of a presentation, 92.5% of students correctly answered. This is a very good sign because, whether applied or not, a sizable proportion of UD-UFLS students understood the fundamentals of a presentation organization. This lays the groundwork for future work in the process of encouraging presentation skills.

Table 2: Students' perception of presentation part contribution

|  | **Frequency** | **Percent** |
|---|---|---|
| **Introduction** | | |
| 10% - 15% of the presentation | **123** | **61.5%** |
| 20% - 30% of the presentation | 6 | 3% |
| 30% - 40% of the presentation | 68 | 34% |
| 50% of the presentation | 3 | 1.5% |
| **Body** | | |
| 65% of the presentation | 7 | 3.5% |
| 85% of the presentation | 53 | 26.5% |
| 75% of the presentation | **128** | **64%** |
| 90% of the presentation | 12 | 6% |
| **Conclusion** | | |
| 10% of the presentation | **127** | **63.5%** |
| 20% of the presentation | 6 | 3% |
| 30% of the presentation | 66 | 33% |
| 50% of the presentation | 1 | 0.5% |

The survey results tell us about students' opinions on the contribution of presentation parts. Apparently, most of them understand how much time they should allocate to each part. 10% - 15% for the introduction is sufficient, according to 61.5% of students. 64% of students understand how much the body should make up. The contribution of the conclusion to the total presenting time was correctly answered by 63.5% of students.

Besides, more can be drawn from the survey. The Table also shows that a significant percentage of students are still unaware of how much each part should contribute to the presentation. Many students are still perplexed by this, and consequently, they either spend too much time on the introduction or too little time on the conclusion.
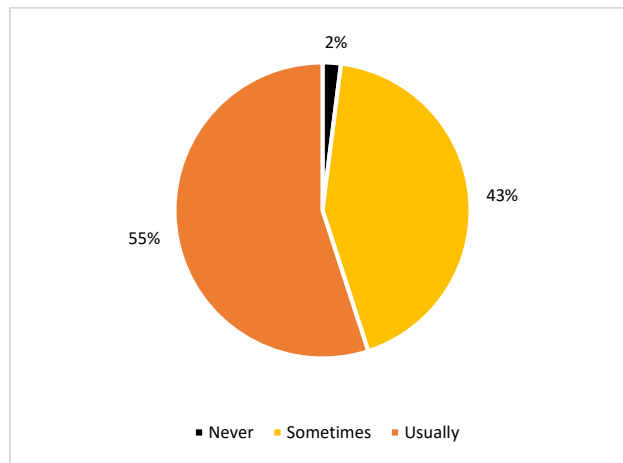


Figure 5: Students' understanding of presentation content

55% of students believe they can understand what they present most of the time. 43% of the remaining respondents are less confident, but they responded positively to the issue. Only 2% of the 200 participants said the content of what they needed to convey was beyond their ability. Overall, this is a positive reaction for first-year students who have just entered a new environment and must adjust to a completely different study style than they have had for the previous 12 years.

Figure 6: Students' posture awareness

A high percentage of students (59% and 33.5%) demonstrated awareness of their presenting posture. 7.5% are unconcerned about it. The results are not so surprising, given that students participate in presentation-involved classes nearly every week. Although research into practice is ongoing, fee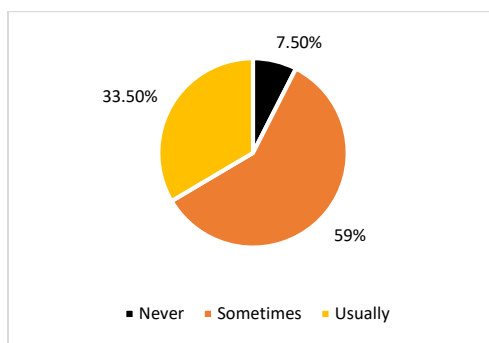dback from the audience and teachers should familiarize students with the importance of reflecting on their postures when presenting. Nonetheless, perception is the first step on their path to mastering presentation skills, and the statistics indicate that their presentation skills application in their performances is highly anticipated.

Table 3: Students' perspectives on the significance of presentation skills elements

|  | **Frequency** | **Percent** |
|---|---|---|
| Analytical thinking | 134 | 67% |
| Organization | 112 | 56% |
| Confidence | 185 | **92.5%** |
| Nonverbal communication | 103 | **51.5%** |
| Verbal communication | 139 | 69.5% |
| Presentation software | 106 | 53% |

According to Table 3, EFL students all realized the importance of analytical thinking, organization, confidence, nonverbal and verbal communication, and presentation software when they gave a presentation. Among them, surprisingly, nonverbal communication was the least well-regarded (51.5%). The underestimation of nonverbal communication can be attributed to a variety of factors, but the passive learning style that has been promoted throughout high school may be one explanation for their stiffness and unnaturalness when speaking in public. Furthermore, it is possible that a lack of presentation requirements in high school years resulted in students' lack of awareness of the need to use body language. Students may have been so focused on delivering as much and as precise information as possible that they overlooked this component.

The majority of EFL students thought that the other five options in a presentation were crucial. Confidence is the most popular, with an impressive 92.5% vote share. Following that are verbal communication (69.5%) and analytical thinking (67%). Though not as popular, students still rank organization and presentation software as must-haves for a successful presentation, with 56% and 53%, respectively.

### 5.2.3 Attitude towards English Presentation Skills

Table 4: Students' attitude towards English presentation skills

|  | **Minimum** | **Maximum** | **Mean** | **Std. Deviation** |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| I think presentations are necessary. | 1 | 5 | **4.3** | 0.74 |
| I think presentation skills are important. | 1 | 5 | **4.47** | 0.70 |
| I think analytical thinking is necessary. | 1 | 5 | 4.17 | 0.69 |
| I think I have all the necessary qualities to be a good presenter. | 1 | 5 | **3.15** | 0.95 |
| I think organization is important. | 1 | 5 | 4.06 | 0.74 |
| I think nonverbal communication is important. | 1 | 5 | **3.63** | 1.10 |
| I think verbal communication is important. | 1 | 5 | 4.16 | 0.67 |
| I think presentation software is important. | 1 | 5 | 4.00 | 0.77 |
| I think confidence is important. | 1 | 5 | **4.67** | 0.66 |

Reactions were neutral (2.61<Mean<3.4, Std. Deviation<1) when students were asked whether they agreed that they had all the necessary qualities to be a good presenter. The Figure depicted their doubts, and this is the only negative reaction of the surveyed

options. In their research, Nguyen Thi Hong Chuyen et al. (2020) showed similar results. The authors surveyed students' opinions as they self-evaluated their presentation skills, and the collected descriptive statistics indicated that 84% of the subject considered their skills just at an "acceptable" level. In fact, 5% of the students even rated their skills as "poor".

Not surprisingly, no consensus was reached on students' attitudes towards the need to have the nonverbally communicating ability (Std. Deviation>1) since the figure for students' perception towards the essence of this factor is not so promising. Also, compared to the rest, the mean value for this quality is just in the low range of "agreement" level according to the Likert scale, at 3.63 (3.41<Mean<4.2). However, generally speaking, the answer to the question regarding the vitality of nonverbal communication ability remains a "yes".

Table 4 shows that statements about presentations, presentation skills, and confidence yielded the most positive responses (Mean>4.21, Std. Deviation<1). According to first-year EFL students, self-belief is the most important step towards becoming a good presenter, given that quality possesses the highest value of 4.67.

### 5.2.4 Practice of English Presentation Skills

Table 5: First-year EFL students' practice of English presentation skills

| | Never | Sometimes | Always |
|---|---|---|---|
| I have all the necessary parts of a presentation. | 4% | **66%** | 30% |
| I am prepared for questions from the audience. | 4% | **63%** | 33% |
| I identify aims and objectives before preparing my presentation. | 3.5% | 42.5% | **54%** |
| I think about my audience's needs, expectations and limitations when preparing my presentation. | 10.5% | **58%** | 31.5% |
| After presenting, I self-assess for improvement. | 3.5% | **50%** | 46.5% |
| I keep track of time. | 11% | **55.5%** | 33.5% |
| I double-check everything before a presentation to ensure that everything goes as planned. | 4% | 39.5% | **56.5%** |
| My body language is natural, even if I am anxious. | 22.5% | **53%** | 24.5% |
| My voice is loud and clear. | 6.5% | **49.5%** | 44% |
| I make eye contact with the audience. | 5.5% | **47.5%** | 47% |
| I avoid reading from scripts. | 8% | **50%** | 42% |
| I listen and make changes according to feedback. | 3.5% | 34.5% | **62%** |
| I use attractive visual aids. | 10.5% | **53%** | 36.5% |
| I present the information in a captivating manner using slides and graphics. | **3%** | 45.5% | **51.5%** |

Table 5 investigated EFL students' English presentation practice. The results show that UD-UFLS first EFL students performed all of the surveyed actions, with the highest figures falling into the categories of "sometimes" or "always" but "never." Presenting information in an engaging manner using slides and graphics is reported to be the most popular, as only 3% of respondents were negative.

Respondents claimed to practice identifying aims and objectives before preparing their presentation, double-checking everything before a presentation to ensure that everything goes as planned, listening and making changes according to feedback, and presenting information in a captivating manner using slides, graphics most (54%, 56.5%, 62% and 51.5% respectively). "Sometimes" was the most common response given by the majority of students to the remaining statements.

In general, students' assessments of their EPSs practice can be classified as neutral. The three categories they ensure to fulfill in their performances the most frequently are the organization, verbal communication, and presentation software. Interestingly, these three do not rank at the top of students' lists of essential presentation skills, as they only reach the middle "agreement" level. Statistics in their perception and attitude demonstrate the point clearly.

Students' perceptions and attitudes towards the need for confidence are consistent. Both have very high figures, but Table 5 shows that students have a lot to do in practice. This may have something to do with their view on nonverbal communication, as it plays a great role in confidence projection. Less than half of those polled believed that nonverbal communication was required for a successful presentation, and statistics for their attitudes vary as well.

The data for analytical thinking and verbal communication are encouraging. Not only do UD-UFLS first-year EFL students understand their significance, but they also take serious attitudes and actions towards these two.

### 5.2.5 Students' Difficulties at the Preparation and Presentation Stages

Table 6: Students' difficulties at the preparation stage

|  | Frequency | Percent |
|---|---|---|
| There is too much terminology. | 113 | 56.5% |
| The knowledge is new and difficult. | 149 | **74.5%** |
| The amount of content is too much. | 118 | 59% |
| The topic is not interesting. | 60 | **30%** |
| Collaboration does not go smoothly. | 114 | 57% |
| I have to get used to the new college environment. | 120 | 60% |
| It takes time to get to know new friends. | 144 | 72% |

The majority of students (74.5%) struggle with knowledge during the preparation stage. Surrounding-involved factors such as new friends or environment come in second and third, with 72% and 60%, respectively. 57% of the respondents stated that collaboration hindered them at this stage. Next is the content-related category, with the content size and terminology being the surveyed areas. A sizable proportion of students agreed that having less on their plates would have greatly improved their performance (59% for the former and 56.5% for the latter).

Only 30% of EFL students said they did not find the presentation topic amusing, indicating that few students had problems with it. With this figure, topic amusement can be excluded as a hindrance factor when participants prepare for their presentations.
The questionnaire results were supplemented by the results of the interviews. Collaboration was cited as a difficulty in groupwork: "*Because we came from different backgrounds, finding a common voice was really difficult, especially during the first assignments*". In addition, students stated that it was challenging to identify appropriate activities to captivate the audience when preparing for their presentation: "*I, like others, am well aware that activities might help us, presenters, in our performances. However, sometimes the topic is too broad or too new, making it impossible to broaden it to make it more fascinating.*"
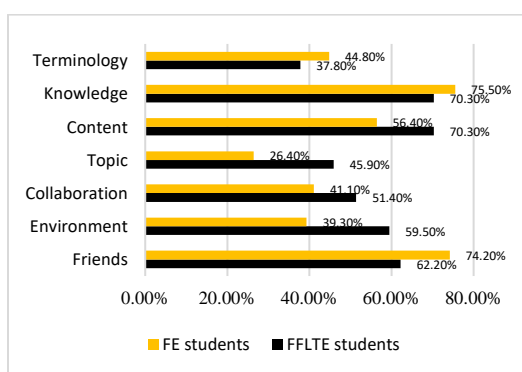


Figure 7: Differences at the preparation stage between FFLTE students and FE students

Certain differences can be seen when surveying two faculties separately. Figure 8 agrees with Table 6 on the most difficult aspect of preparing presentations for EFL students: new and difficult knowledge. Nonetheless, while the nerve that happens when acting in front of new friends was ranked as the second most difficult task for FE students, FFLTE students struggled with the allocated size of content more. Moreover, in the case of FFLTE students, it was terminology that they were least worried about, while FE students had the least to deal with the topic-related factor. In fact, the percentage of FFLTE students who were discouraged by the topic nearly doubled that of FE.

Generally speaking, FE students had more trouble with terminology, knowledge, new environment and friends. In the meantime, FFLTE students saw the amount of content, topic and partnership as things they needed to get better at. It seems that most

difficulties FE students need to conquer are objective factors. FFLTE students, on the other hand, would increase their work efficiency drastically if they could derive pleasure from their work.

Table 7: Independent Samples T-Test for differences in difficulties of FFLTE students and FE students at the preparation stage

| | | Levene's Test for Equality of Variances | | T-test for Equality of Means | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | F | Sig. | t | df | Sig. (2-tailed) |
| Terminology | Equal variances assumed | 3.651 | 0.057 | -0.767 | 198 | 0.444 |
| New knowledge | Equal variances assumed | 1.479 | 0.225 | -0.651 | 198 | 0.516 |
| Content | Equal variances not assumed | 16.836 | **0.000** | 1.616 | 56.433 | 0.112 |
| Topic | Equal variances not assumed | 9.827 | **0.002** | 2.174 | 49.268 | 0.035 |
| Collaboration | Equal variances assumed | 1.137 | 0.288 | 1.135 | 198 | 0.258 |
| Environment | Equal variances assumed | 0.075 | 0.784 | 2.257 | 198 | 0.025 |
| Friends | Equal variances not assumed | 5.881 | **0.016** | 1.374 | 49.826 | 0.175 |

The result of Levene's Test for Equality of Variances (Sig.<0,05) indicates that there is a statistical difference in the quantity of content, the interestingness of topics and the act of getting to know new friends when it comes to students' difficulties during the preparation stage.

Table 8: Students' difficulties at the presentation stage

| | Frequency | Percent |
|---|---|---|
| I force myself to remember everything from my memory rather than try to present information. | 120 | 60% |
| Technical issues (devices malfunction, blackout, etc.) | 68 | **34%** |
| I think in Vietnamese, then translate it into English, so it's hard for me to process information spontaneously. | 106 | 53% |
| I forget things if something unexpected happens, for example, the interruption of a late arriving classmate. | 94 | **47%** |
| I am not confident in my pronunciation, so I usually speak very softly. | 105 | 52.5% |
| I panic when people start laughing or pointing at me during the presentation. | 52 | **26%** |
| The audience does not react as I have imagined. | 84 | **42%** |
| I make some grammatical mistakes when presenting the content or interacting with the audience. | 101 | 50.5% |
| My vocabulary is not good. | 117 | 58.5% |

During English presentations, EFL participants struggled the most with memorization. 60% said they would concentrate on word-by-word delivery rather than the presentation style. They highlighted exactness according to their workbooks, and only a word-for-word accurate presentation was considered a successful performance. Nevertheless, a presentation is not a memory test, and missing one or two words cannot possibly lead to a lower score. According to the interviews, it appears that students were aware of this as well, yet they could not help due to a lack of confidence and fear of failure: *"Because I was scared and worried about being evaluated if I made a mistake, I could not help but fix my gaze on the ceiling or the back of the classroom and force myself to memorize what I had learned the night before"* – student A shared. What is more, according to student B, *"we cannot put too many words on a single slide because the audience will be confused. As a result, I usually try to condense concepts into one or two keywords, which leads me to the practice of memorizing as much information as possible, regardless of their importance"*. The passive learning style and social emphasis on grades that students had been exposed to throughout their high school years had a significant impact on their creativity.

The next highest voted are linguistic factors. This entails vocabulary (58.5%), the practice of thinking in Vietnamese rather than English (53%), pronunciation (52.5%) and grammar (50.5%). These are inevitable for language learners, especially UD-UFLS first-year students. This is because back in high school years, they were exposed to English for approximately 4 periods per week (according to Circular 13/2022/TT-BGDĐT), yet they now find themselves involved in more English subjects due to their college major. Besides, students are required to develop both receptive skills and productive skills if they want to have good grades in their English presentations. All those combined, EFL students were unavoidable to feel pressurized by their language capacity.

The article by Bui et al. (2022) supported these findings. The authors determined that students' problems were primarily due to psychological variables and linguistic knowledge after examining data from questionnaires and interviews. This further emphasizes the importance of efforts to increase students' confidence and language capacity.

Technical issues and audience-related factors do not matter much to EFL students. The figures for unexpected interruptions and audience reactions are both just under 50% (47% and 42%, respectively). Students did not appear to be intimidated when the audience laughed or pointed at them during their performances, as only 26% chose this as a difficulty.

When interviewed, most students answered to be aware of their difficulties. Nonetheless, avoiding all of these obstacles is quite tough for them. This is because they "*do not believe in their own ability*", which is why even if they have prepared thoroughly, they still need to "*rely on materials to ensure that what they say is correct and that the presentation may proceed without errors.*"
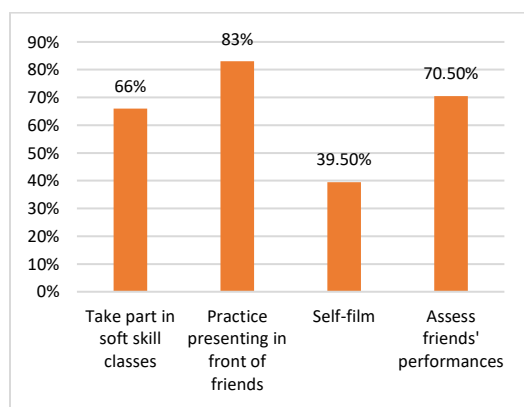
### 5.2.6 Students' Recommended Solutions



Figure 8: Students' solution recommendations

Some options were given to students about English presentation skill enhancement. The most popular method was practicing presentations in front of friends, which was chosen by 83% of respondents. Following that are learning from the performances of friends (70,5%) and soft skills classes (66%). Self-filming received the lowest ranking of the four, indicating that students did not use this method frequently to improve their presentation skills.

Besides, interviewed students suggested the following methods for overcoming EFL difficulties during the presentation stage: "*having a balanced diet the day before presenting*", "*taking part in extra English classes to improve their speaking skills*", "*turning to social platforms such as Google for ideas*", "*practicing meditation*"...

### 5.3 Results from Observations

The study observed 6 presentations in total. Noticeably, only 2 of them ensured all the main parts of a standard presentation. Although questionnaire results showed that the percentages of students who understood the relevance of the three parts were relatively high, in reality, the conclusion was frequently overlooked. It was either omitted or just a sentence indicating the end of the presentation with no more summary or recommendations. A possible explanation for this is that the teachers' rubric does not emphasize the importance of this, as the only 2 presentations were from classes where the rubric highlighted the need for all the 3 parts. Another reason may be that students did not time their performance accurately, resulting in a lack of time and the final presenter having to conclude his task quickly. Similar results were found in the study of Nguyen Thi Phuong Huyen (2008), as only 47.6% of participants in her study enclosed main ideas in their introductions, and 25.8% rephrased them in their conclusions.

Through observations, all presentations were accompanied by slides and graphics. Students split work well among members as each of their sections had a reasonable amount of time. The presentations proceeded logically, and although the conclusion did not quite meet expectations, the introduction was quite good.

Table 9: Comparison of observation and questionnaire results

|  | Observation | Questionnaire |
| --- | --- | --- |
| The presentation has all the necessary main parts. | 33.3% | 30% |
| Presenters have natural body language. | **63.2%** | **24.5%** |
| Presenters maintain eye contact with the audience. | **57.9%** | **94.5%** |
| Presenters' voices are loud enough and clear. | 78.9% | 93.5% |
| Presenters do not read scripts. | 57.9% | 42% |
| Presenters present information in a convincing way, using storytelling, supporting evidence, statistics and examples. | 73.7% | 97% |
| Presenters do not force themselves to remember all the words from the textbooks. | **36.8%** | **60%** |
| Presenters are affected by sudden interruptions | **5.3%** | **47%** |
| Presenters make grammatical mistakes when presenting the content or interacting with the audience. | 36.8% | 50.5% |
| Presenters make pronunciation mistakes when presenting the content or interacting with the audience. | 47.4% | 58.5% |
| Technical issues happened. | 43.2% | 34% |

Table 9 compares how students actually practice their presentation skills with how they think their practice is. In general, students have pretty accurate self-assessments of their English presentation ability practice in terms of presentation organization, voice, presenting etiquette, and language competence.

When asked about their body language, only 24.5% of students were confident. Nevertheless, in observed presentations, the actual result is roughly three times as high as that, with 60%. Recorded body language includes natural gestures of hands, legs and facial expressions. Students may perform this unconsciously, which possibly explains their underestimation of their body language.


Figure 9: Unconscious body gestures

Students, on the other hand, overestimated their eye contact with the audience and their presentation style. 94.5% were confident in maintaining eye contact for the majority of the time; however, observations revealed that only 57.9% did. On other occasions,

students glued their eyes on the ground or elsewhere while speaking. Similarly, 60% claimed not to force themselves to present word-by-word correctly after the textbooks, yet in reality, half of the figure could do this. Sudden interruptions also witnessed a huge gap between questionnaire and observations results as well; however, this factor is dependent on objective factors such as whether the lesson is the first lesson of the day or takes place in the middle of the day, or whether the presentation time coincides with any outbreak or not. Hence, this factor must be investigated further.



Figure 10: Students did not maintain eye contact

## 6. Conclusion

The study has investigated the perception, attitude, and practice of the English presentation of first-year English students from the Faculty of Foreign Language Teacher Education and the Faculty of English, as well as proposed appropriate solutions to assist them in overcoming their obstacles. In general, most EFL students are familiar with the term English presentation skills. First-year English students present once a week, and usually in groups of 4 students. Microsoft PowerPoint is the most popular software for visual aids. Most students could tell how many main parts a presentation should have. They claimed to grasp their presentation content as well as be aware of their posture during their performance. Students understood the importance of all 6 surveyed elements of English presentation skills. They agreed on their necessity as well. Knowledge is what caused participants the most difficulties during the preparation stage, and when presenting, EFL students struggled most not to replicate the textbook word-by-word as it would make their performance less natural. According to observations, students underestimated their use of body language while overestimating their eye contact and presenting manner. The study also found statistical differences in the level which the amount of content, the amusement of the topic and the act of getting to know new friends troubled students as they prepared for their performance. To solve their problems, most students suggested presenting in front of their friends beforehand.

## 7. Implications

Some implications to help students improve their English presentation skills are:

- Using video technology: Videotaping student presentations has long been used to improve presentation skills. There is a large body of work indicating that using video data to improve communication skills can be of great help (Ball & Lampert, 1999; Brophy, 2004; Zhang, Lundeberg, and Eberhardt (2010), etc.). Many educators (Allen & Ryan, 1969; Derry et al., 2010) agreed that videotape should be available at all times in any teacher education setting.

- Creating impromptu speech: During lessons, students can be given a few minutes to gather their opinions on a topic. This strategy would improve their critical thinking as well as their speaking abilities because students would need to think quickly and organize their ideas logically in order to convey their thoughts. Students would be more engaged in class by doing so as well.

- Including the typical structure of a presentation in the rubric: When explaining their assessment criteria, teachers should explicitly state the necessity for a solid introduction, body, and conclusion. By emphasizing this, students will pay closer attention to how they organize their performance.

- Anticipating questions related to the presentation topic: Students should try to anticipate what questions they might be asked and prepare some responses ahead of time. This would shield them from any mental concerns that might affect their presentation results. Anticipation may be built around basic facts on their presentation topic, or they may ask their peers for some.

- Arriving at the presentation site early: Arriving early allows students to double check their appearance, equipment, and changes in content. Furthermore, they can connect with their audience, which may aid them in tailoring their presentation to their preferences.

- Practicing breathing techniques: Breathing exercises can assist in reducing anxiety, making it easier to shake pre-presentation butterflies and nervousness. While presenting, breathing techniques can prevent presenters from gasping sounds as well.

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**Appendices**
*Questionnaire*
**Perception, Attitude And Practice Of English Presentation Skills By Students At The University Of Danang - University Of Foreign Language Studies**

We are conducting a study on *"Perception, attitude and practice of English presentation skill by students at The University of Danang – University of Foreign Language Studies"* in order to assist students in improving their English presentation skills. Your contribution is greatly appreciated. We guarantee that your information will only be used for research purposes. Thank you very much!

**I.      General Information**
**1.   Gender:**          □ Male                    □ Female
**2.   Which faculty are you in?**
□ Faculty of Foreign Language Teacher Education          □ Faculty of English

**II.      Questions**
**1.   Have you ever applied presentation skills in your English presentation?**
□ Yes *(proceed to question 3)*                    □ No *(proceed to question 2)*
**2.   Why have you not applied presentation skills in your English presentation?**
□ I have never heard of English presentation skills.
□ I have heard of English presentation skills, but I do not want to use them.
□ I have heard of English presentation skills and want to use them, but I do not know how.
**3.   How often do you and your friends give presentations in English?**
□ Once a week                              □ Three times a week
□ Twice a week                             □ More than three times a week
**4.   How do you normally give presentations?**
□ In groups of 2 students                  □ In groups of 4 students
□ In groups of 3 students                  □ In groups of 5 students
□ In groups of more than 5 students
**5.   Which presentation software do you usually use?**
□ Microsoft PowerPoint                     □ Microsoft Word
□ Google Slides                            □ Adobe Presenter
**(1) Perception of English presentation skills**
**6.   How many main parts should a presentation have?**
□ 2 parts: Introduction, Body        □ 3 parts: Body, Conclusion, Extension
□ 2 parts: Body, Extension           □ 3 parts: Introduction, Body, Conclusion
**7.   The conclusion should make up**
□ 10% - 20% of the presentation          □ 20% - 30% of the presentation
□ 30% - 40% of the presentation          □ 50% of the presentation
**8.   The body should make up**
□ 40% - 50% of the presentation          □ 20% - 50% of the presentation
□ 60% - 80% of the presentation          □ 90% of the presentation
**9.   The conclusion should make up**
□ 10% - 20% of the presentation          □ 20% - 30% of the presentation
□ 30% - 40% of the presentation          □ 50% of the presentation
**10. I fully understand the content of my presentation.**
□ Never                    □ Sometimes                    □ Always
**11.  I am aware of my posture when presenting.**
□ Never                    □ Sometimes                    □ Always
**12.  Which is necessary for a presenter?** *(You may tick more than 1 option)*
□ Analytical thinking                    □ Nonverbal communication
□ Organization                           □ Verbal communication
□ Confidence                             □ Presentation software
**(2) Attitude towards English presentation skills**

| | Strongly disagree | Disagree | Neutral | Agree | Strongly agree |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| I think presentations are necessary. | | | | | |
| I think presentation skills are important. | | | | | |
| I think analytical thinking is necessary. | | | | | |
| I think I have all the necessary qualities to be a good presenter. | | | | | |
| I think organization is important. | | | | | |
| I think nonverbal communication is important. | | | | | |
| I think verbal communication is important. | | | | | |
| I think presentation software is important. | | | | | |
| I think confidence is important. | | | | | |

**(2) Practice of English presentation skills**

| | Never | Sometimes | Always |
|---|---|---|---|
| I have all the necessary parts of a presentation. | | | |
| I am prepared for questions from the audience. | | | |
| I identify aims and objectives before preparing my presentation. | | | |
| I think about my audience's needs, expectations and limitations when preparing my presentation. | | | |
| After presenting, I self-assess for improvement. | | | |
| I keep track of time. | | | |
| I double-check everything before a presentation to ensure that everything goes as planned. | | | |
| My body language is natural even if I am anxious. | | | |
| My voice is loud and clear. | | | |
| I make eye contact with the audience. | | | |
| I avoid reading from scripts. | | | |
| I listen and make changes according to feedback. | | | |
| I use attractive visual aids. | | | |
| I present information in a captivating manner using slides, graphics. | | | |

13. **Which difficulties do you encounter when preparing presentation content as a first-year student?** *(You may tick more than 1 option)*
    ☐ There is too much terminology.
    ☐ The knowledge is new and difficult.
    ☐ The amount of content is too much.
    ☐ The topic is not interesting.
    ☐ Collaboration does not go smoothly.
    ☐ I have to get used to the new college environment.
    ☐ It takes time to get to know new friends.

14. **Which difficulties do you encounter when presenting in English?**
    *(You may tick more than 1 option)*
    ☐ I try to remember everything from my memory rather than try to present information.
    ☐ Technical issues (devices malfunction, blackout, et cetra)
    ☐ I think in Vietnamese, then translate it into English, so it's hard for me to process information spontaneously.
    ☐ I forget things if something unexpected happens, for example the interruption of a late arriving classmate.
    ☐ I am not confident in my pronunciation, so I usually speak very softly.
    ☐ I panic when people start laughing or pointing at me during the presentation.
    ☐ The audience does not react as how I have imagined.
    ☐ I make some grammatical mistakes when presenting the content or interacting with the audience.
    ☐ My vocabulary is not good.

☐ Others:  ........ ................................................................................................................................................................................
**15. Which solutions would you recommend to improve presentation skills?**
*(You may tick more than 1 option)*
☐ Take part in soft skill classes
☐ Practice presenting in front of friends
☐ Self-film
☐ Assess friends' performances to figure out which skill to improve
☐ Others:  ........ ................................................................................................................................................................................

**Thank You For Your Cooperation!**

*Observation sheet*
**Date:**
**Time:**
**Class:**
**Faculty:**
**A. Structure of the presentation**

|  | Yes | No | Notes |
|---|---|---|---|
| The presentation has all main parts. |  |  |  |
| The introduction contains relevant background information. |  |  |  |
| The introduction introduces the main topic. |  |  |  |
| The introduction introduces main points. |  |  |  |
| The body proceeds logically. |  |  |  |
| The conclusion summarizes what has been demonstrated. |  |  |  |
| The conclusion emphasizes main points once again. |  |  |  |
| The conclusion includes findings and recommendations. |  |  |  |
| Information is presented with the assistance of slides, graphics, etc. |  |  |  |
| Each member has a reasonable amount of time allotted to his/her section. |  |  |  |

**B. The performance of Presentation**

|  | Yes | No | Notes |
|---|---|---|---|
| The presentation has all the necessary main parts. |  |  |  |
| Presenters have natural body language. |  |  |  |
| Presenters maintain eye contact with the audience. |  |  |  |
| Presenters' voices are loud enough and clear. |  |  |  |
| Presenters do not read scripts. |  |  |  |
| Presenters present information in a convincing way, using storytelling, supporting evidence, statistics and examples. |  |  |  |
| Presenters do not force themselves to remember all the words from the textbooks. |  |  |  |
| Presenters are affected by sudden interruptions. |  |  |  |
| Presenters make grammatical mistakes when presenting the content or interacting with the audience. |  |  |  |
| Presenters make pronunciation mistakes when presenting the content or interacting with the audience. |  |  |  |
| Technical issues happened. |  |  |  |

*Interview questions*
1. Do you think that studying at The University of Danang-University of Foreign Language Studies helps you to develop your English presentation skills?
2. What difficulties do you encounter during the preparation and presentation stages?
3. Which solutions do you practice to overcome your difficulties?
4. Were you aware of those times when you forced yourself to remember all of the information in the textbook, or when you fixed your eyes on the slides or scripts instead of keeping eye contact with the audience…? If yes, what do you think the factors that prevent students from overcoming these are?