

Student Presentation as a Means of Learning English for Upper Intermediate to Advanced Level Students

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This study observes and examines how upper intermediate to advanced level college students perform and perceive one-topic-for-each student presentation as a means of learning English. It is also to have the prospective medical doctors ready for their future use of English presentation and paper writing since such demand is on the rise in the medical field. The 49 second year medical students enrolled in English reading and writing class of spring semester 2008 were given a single topic for each at least two weeks prior to their presentation in class as part of writing assignment. They were encouraged to be creative, informative and fun to induce class participation. At the end of the semester, the questionnaire was given to learn of students' opinion on the presentation. Based on the presentation and questionnaire, the data were analyzed to see if preparing and giving presentation was conducive for medical students. The results revealed that students wrote an average of 51-sentence (587 words) paper, almost double the previous year writing assignment. And 92% of the students felt presentation on different topics was interesting and helpful for learning English, and 80% of them felt having presentation in class was more effective than the traditional face-to-face lecture classes. More than two-thirds of the students (69%) thought that preparing for their class presentation provided them with a chance to learn new vocabulary, expressions as well as knowledge in English. The results of the study show that presentation on various topics can be used as a means of learning English for upper intermediate to advanced level students.

Key Words: one-topic-for-each student presentation, Power Point, UCC

1 Introduction

Before the demand of the English language swept the nation as a requirement for globalization, having an ability to speak English well was often considered as higher status and elite group as stated in Shim's (1994) study. However, as the world has become a big global village, competence in the English language seems like a must acquired skill regardless of individual's major or interest.

Being financially hit hard during the IMF era, the Korean government lead by former president Kim Dae-jung emphasized importance of the language. A decade later, the incumbent president Lee Myung-bak and his cabinet members seemed to be

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driven by reformative measures of accelerating the speed of the Korean people's language competence, thus poured out plans like immersion program, more support for the native and bilingual teachers into teaching, and utilizing the military service period of the men, educated in the English speaking countries, as substitution for English teaching. Such measures have caused a national ripple and resistance from the people due to lack of thorough preparation by the experts and professionals in the field. Any kind of reform in English education seemed to cause more money spending on the private education market due to parents' fear that their children might not have the edge in the language.

At the upper level of education, English for Specific Purposes (ESP) has become a popular theme for the people who learn and teach majors other than English. Teaching at a medical college, ESP has been one of the research topics for the researchers. Medical students need to get by with the language as a lot of their textbooks are written in English, and they are demanded to publish and present medical papers in the language even after they graduate from medical college. Such phenomenon triggered the demand for English competence greater than ever. Accordingly, teaching the language in the way they are expected to use may serve the purpose of medical college English. As pointed out in Kim's (2008) study, English ability is no longer a choice but a tool for survival. This seems so true especially for these professionals because of their Science Citation Index (SCI) research paper publication in English.

This paper observes and examines an English reading and writing course of second year medical students. All students were asked to prepare a presentation on different topics similar to a research paper and present it in class. It was also intended to induce students' participation in the English class. The student presentation turned out very interesting as each student created a praiseworthy one with unique Power Point materials and intriguing audio-visual clips relevant to his/her topic. The students agreed that the class was enjoyable and active. Presentation class provided them with a chance to learn English on their own to explain about the topic and be able to answer the questions their peers had with a close interaction between the presenter and the classmates.

2 Literature Review

2.1 Effective ways of English teaching

As the demand and emphasis on communicative competence grew, fluency has become the objective of the English education. Once prevalent grammar-translation method, in some cases still used in classroom, was replaced with learner-centered way of communicative method partly because of the change in the national curriculum policies and fulfilling the demand from the language users. Such communicative method included audio-lingual method in which students were exposed to the listening materials to improve listening and speaking skills.

Toward the end of the 20th and beginning of the 21st century, computer technology became part of the English education. Kelm (1992) and Warschauer &

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Kern (2000) stated that since computer technology helps students to generate their own discourse in the target language, such as in English, with much more freedom than ever before, computer assisted English language instruction could be more learner-centered, allowing students to have multiple opportunities to participate in real-life communication in English. In recent years, many instructors rely on the visual materials as educational technology is highly desirable because it can help improve the effectiveness of English teaching (Park, 2004). A growing number of studies have explored ways to incorporate technology into language classrooms (e.g., Kim, 2002; Kim, 2003; Hong, 2003), especially by comparing two delivery modes: computer-mediated communication (CMC) and face-to-face instruction. Lee & Chang (2001) presented a model of CMC-based English teaching materials intended to improve adult learners' communicative interaction skills. They claimed that CMC could provide an ideal learning environment for Korean learners who have some affective barriers to English language learning.

As more native speakers of English were put into the English classrooms, more awareness for producing English similar to native speakers has grown among the non-native English teachers. To encourage using the target language in the classroom, teaching English through English (TETE) has become popular mode of teaching. Although TETE has been verified as effective, some Korean students' affective barriers have not been overlooked. There are also some studies on TETE conducted in higher education setting (Jong-Bai Hwang, 2002; Eun-Ju Kim, 2002, 2003; Yo-An Lee, 2006). Jong-Bai Hwang (2002) looked into anxiety and achievement motivation of Korean college students enrolled in a content-based course for a period of semester. Hwang's (2002) study examined how the students' anxiety and motivation would change over time by using anxiety and motivation questionnaires (FLCAS & AMQ, respectively). The study found that the students' anxiety decreased and that their utilitarian goal orientation increased over time.

Chomsky (1988) stresses the importance of activating learners' motivation and claims that "the truth of the matter is that about 99% of teaching is making the students feel interested in the material" (p.181).

Schumann (1997) also asserts in his book, *The Neurobiology of Affect in Language*, that second language acquisition is primarily emotionally driven and emotion underlies most, if not all, cognition. Research on motivation (Covington, 1999; Heckhausen, 1991; Heckhausen & Kuhl, 1985; Husman & Lens, 1999; Karniol & Ross, 1996) has incorporated time elements into the motivational research paradigm.

There are numerous factors involved in the second (foreign) language acquisition. The effective methods that take affective barriers of the EFL learners into account may be desirable for language teaching.

As a measure for improving English competence of Korean teachers of English so that they can be fluent English teachers with all four skills, the Ministry of Education plans to include an intensive oral interview and writing test as part of the teacher certification exam beginning in 2009.

2.2 Presentation in English

Even though efficient ways of teaching the language are adopted in the classroom, learners still need to produce their language (Swain, 1985, 1995; Swain & Lapkin, 1995). It obviously means that learners ought to use the language in the target form. Once they do, as pointed out in Izumi & Bigelow (2000), Pica, Holliday, Lewis, & Morgenthaler's (1989) study, they become more observant not only in meaning of language but also in forms.

While presentation may be a stressful task for learners who are not yet readily equipped with the skills of preparing, it can be an effective tool for upper intermediate to advanced level learners.

As shown in Choi et al's (2008) study that was done on developing English discourse competence through self-directed practices, the results showed the subjects became more confident in the language in the process of preparing for the weekly presentation session:

First of all, most participants reported they became more confident in speaking in English, and they also developed, they observed, some other language skills such as reading, writing, vocabulary, and grammatical knowledge as a result of incidental learning in the process of preparing for the weekly presentation session. (p. 41)

They continue listing the merits of presentation as:

Apart from these linguistic aspects, the teachers seem to have earned social and cultural knowledge, as well as developed some practical skills for strategic preparation and critical thinking through this collaborative project. The analysis of the participants' speech data proved their self-perceived improvement was not simply subjective estimation. Their discourse competence had increased actually in terms of the length and complexity of utterance, spontaneity of speech, and attention capacity available to the content and style of discourse. (p. 41)

The study explores the possibility of utilizing student presentation in classroom whether the upper intermediate to advanced level students benefit from preparing for class presentation and learn on their own in terms of new vocabulary, expressions, and knowledge in English as well as practice pronouncing unfamiliar words, where to pause, and even memorize the content of their presentation.

3 Method

3.1 Participants

For the study a second-year English reading and writing class was observed. The total of 49 medical students were given a single topic for each at least two weeks prior to their presentation to prepare and present in class. The rationale for the two-week time was to let the students have sufficient time to do research to write a research paper and

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be ready for the class presentation. To encourage the students' active participation, the presentation was given 15 percent of the grade as medical students tended to perform better when points or credit were given. Grading was based on creativity, content information and interesting presentation to attract the class members' attention. Also as for an incentive, excellent presenters were awarded at the end of each month, March through May, as well as the ones with outstanding content.

The length of the presentation was set for 10 minutes each for 4 students a week. At the beginning of the semester, the length of the presentation was less than 10 minutes. But in a couple of weeks, the students seemed more absorbed in showing various visual materials from the Internet, UCC, and the Power Point, thus presenting in a more interesting way. Consequently, the presentation time gradually became longer. Some were enthusiastically applauded by their peers after the presentation and the class atmosphere was lively with more questions and answers afterwards. A few students mimicked the instructor's lecturing style that brought a good laugh and some came up with witty remarks and answers at the end of their session. By the end of each presentation, the class seemed relaxed and contented.

3.2 Data Analysis Procedure

The topics were selected by the instructor based on the reading materials and current issues. Eighteen topics were given in March and the lists are as follows: Picasso, Taaan oil spillage, great CEOs, earthquake, pets, global warming, newspaper, broadcasting, psychology, Sigmund Freud, Louvre Museum, Da Vinci Code, real estate speculation, credit card, Oprah Winfrey, Nobel prize, autism and great American anchors. In April, 16 topics were given such as materialism, Socrates, cross-over music, Ecstasy (drug), foreign legendary musician, hip-hop music and young generation, recycling, Korean legendary musician, famous Korean anchor, great musician and actor, religion & science, stocks & funds, pesticide, FTA, great inventors, and ballet. Then in May, 15 topics were given and the lists are as follows: 3Ds, social belief, weather forecasting, Asperger's syndrome, Grameen Bank & Yunus, pneumonia, ideal government, genetics, great choreographer, impressionism, obsession, maniac, diet, and pollution. From these lists, the students selected the one they were interested in. After the presentation, the students' papers were collected and reviewed. Several noticeable things were the marks indicating where to pause, stress, and how to pronounce certain words on the paper. It showed that the students did research, wrote papers in accordance with a format, and practiced to present it in class.

During the month of March, 18 students presented their papers, and 16 in April and 15 in May, respectively. They were also given a questionnaire on the presentation at the end of the semester. Based on the content of the presentation and how well they presented it, two presenters were selected each month to be praised with an award written in English. Each presentation paper was then reviewed and counted how many words and sentences were used. The results of the questionnaire were also analyzed.

4 Results and Discussions

There were 20(40%) female and 29(60%) male students. They took the TOEIC by the end of the first year and their results showed that they were categorized as upper intermediate to advanced students with the mean score of 793 (806 for female and 780 for male students). The lowest was 715 and the highest 990. Table 1 shows the range of the TOEIC scores.

Table 1 . TOEIC score range

TOEIC Score Range	Number	Percentage
715 – 799	35	72%
800 – 899	9	18%
900 – 980	5	10%
Total	49	100%

The next table showed how many words and sentences the subjects used for the presentation and how many students used the Power Point and user created content (UCC).

Table 2. Number of students, average sentences and words used, Power Point & UCC

	N (%)	Sentences	Words	Power Point	UCC
Male	29	49	578	29(100%)	24(85%)
Female	20	52	595	20(100%)	18(90%)
Total	49(100%)				

Table 3 and Table 4 show the results of the questionnaire on what the students felt about the presentation.

Table 3. Is the presentation interesting and useful?

Strongly Agree	Agree	Undecided
22 (51%)	18 (41%)	3 (6%)

Answers to the questionnaire on whether the presentation was interesting and useful and whether the presentation on different topic rather than the same-topic-for-all student presentation was more interesting, 40 students (92%) gave favorable answers and only 3 students (6%) were not sure. As shown in Table 4, majority of the students (80%) agreed that it was more effective than face-to-face lecture-only class.

Table 4. Is the presentation more effective than lecture-only class?

Strongly Agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree
8 (18%)	27 (62%)	4 (9%)	4 (9%)

Upon asked whether preparing for the presentation helps acquiring new vocabulary, expressions and knowledge in English, 30 students (69%) answered favorably.

Table 5. Is the presentation helpful to acquire new vocabulary, expressions and knowledge in English?

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Strongly Agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree
7 (16%)	23 (53%)	8 (18%)	5 (11%)

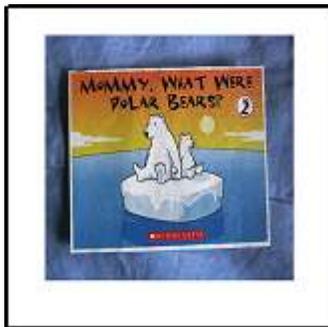
The following is a sample presentation on global warming. This particular student approached a somewhat boring topic to most of her classmates with light and interesting materials using comic strips, cartoon materials, and various visual clips. She presented it very nicely and intriguingly. Other than her written script, she added interesting explanations on each picture spontaneously.

Figure 1. A sample of a student's presentation on global warming





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references

- <http://images.search.yahoo.com/search/images?p=global+warming&ni=18&e=UTF-8&tryto=1-501-s&saiga=0&pslart=1&b=1>
- www.wikipedia.com

Presentation topic: Global Warming

Introduction to presentation:

My topic is a very controversial issue all over the world but I know also that it might be boring. So, before I start I would like the audience to understand the aim of my presentation. I did not focus much on the information and details in general but I selected some comic strips and pictures of this issue. I did this because I believe global warming is a very well-known issue to us which mostly everyone knows and has heard about. Also I thought that if I just gave information during the whole presentation, it would turn out boring and uninteresting. So what I am about to do might not be like most presentations but I hope you'd understand my aim and enjoy it as well.

Ending:

After I did my research on global warming, I have seen a very big problem in our society. It's not just that mother earth is dying but how ignorant and selfish human being can be for our pleasure and comfort. I hope that by now you have realized my aim. My aim was to give a sense of interest and concern to the audience who would have expected just details and facts on global warming. I hope my aim went across to all. Thank you for listening.

5 Conclusion and Implications

Acquiring the English language takes time and effort on both teachers and learners. At the same time, students need to be motivated to learn the language. With an ever-more emphasis on the communicative aspect and other skills in the language, college English should include what students can benefit from.

The study was done in the premise that the student presentation might help students participate more actively, have them ready for future presentation in the medical field, and provide them a chance to learn new vocabulary and knowledge in English and to appropriately use what they learned in class.

By observing a class conducted with student presentation on a single topic for each student, it was learned that the students could outperform in preparing their own presentation using the Power Point and UCC to create an interesting, creative, and informative presentation. For example, one student with a topic of global warming approached a rather heavy topic lightly showing cartoon clips, comic strips, and pictures to get the message across, and therefore, her presentation was easily connected to the class. Other topics such as the Korean B-Boys, and famous entertainers prepared the UCC clips of actual performance and such various audio-visual materials were indeed entertaining. The students actively participated by asking numerous questions. Also a student whose topic was Oprah Winfrey did a thorough research and delivered a very strong message on poverty, determination, and fame.

However, the study has some limitations: The students' improvement was not tested or measured in the current study. It was a descriptive study based on the presentation paper and student questionnaire. Also since students' presentation skills are considered a prerequisite for such an English presentation, implementing it may be limited. Some students were extremely shy and their eye contact and/or interaction

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with other students were non-existent. Even though the substance of the presentation was good, such a presenter made the class boring and students not pay attention.

Overall, the reading and writing class otherwise can be somewhat boring, turned out to be a very lively and fun activity having student presentation. It was learned that upper intermediate to advanced level students benefit from such a class. These students felt that learning through presentation is effective and helpful.

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Appendix A. Questionnaire for English Presentation

1. Do you feel that having a single topic for one is more interesting and helpful than having the same topic for all?
 - a. Strongly agree
 - b. Agree
 - c. Undecided
 - d. Disagree
 - e. Strongly disagree
2. Is presentation class more effective than the lecture-only class?
 - a. Strongly agree
 - b. Agree
 - c. Undecided
 - d. Disagree
 - e. Strongly disagree
3. Is preparing for the presentation helpful for acquiring new vocabulary, new expressions, and knowledge in English?
 - a. Strongly agree
 - b. Agree
 - c. Undecided
 - d. Disagree
 - e. Strongly disagree
4. What length of presentation time is adequate and how many presenters each class?
 - a. 10minutes each
 - b. 15 minutes each
 - c. 20 each
 - d. 25 each
 - e. Doesn't matter
5. Is making up a story using the words in the textbook vocabulary?
 - a. Strongly agree
 - b. Agree
 - c. Undecided
 - d. Disagree
 - e. Strongly disagree
6. If the answer is positive for the question 5, in what area is it helpful?
 - a. Think in English
 - b. Improvement in writing
 - c. Improvement in vocabulary memory
 - d. Improvement in vocabulary use
 - e. All of the above
7. Are peers' presentations interesting?
 - a. Strongly agree
 - b. Agree
 - c. Undecided
 - d. Disagree
 - e. Strongly disagree
9. If the answer is negative for the question 7, what is the cause?
 - a. No interest in the topic
 - b. Lack of fluency of the presenter
 - c. Poor presentation
 - d. No interest in English
 - e. Don't like the presenter
10. Do awards encourage students to actively participate?
 - a. Strongly agree
 - b. Agree
 - c. Undecided
 - d. Disagree
 - e. Strongly disagree
11. What are your opinions of the award?