

Business English Presentation Simulations

Do They Truly Enhance Foreign Language Communicative Competence?

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Abstract: The study is aimed at investigating the use of business English in business presentation simulation at linguistics and literature study program in one public university in Bandung. The research particularly explored the use of business presentation simulations to observe how patterns of linguistic interactions among students were structured which was, as a final point, to find out whether the business presentation simulations could enhance linguistic competence and how significant the enhancement was. The research employed Interrupted Time Series design (ITS) advocated by Campbell and Stanley (2015). The data were gathered through videotaping students' individual presentation at the beginning of, mid, and end of the semester. The students' presentation performance was rated to yield quantitative data. To see students' FLCC improvement from one presentation to another, t-test was administered. To enhance its validity, the videos were also transcribed, coded and analyzed using QDA Miner (Onwuegbuzie and Frels, 2016). The qualitative data analysis was also quantified to discover frequency of errors each participant made in his/her respective presentation simulation. The analysis of the data revealed that presentation simulations had made significant improvement in students' FLCC.

1 INTRODUCTION

Foreign language communicative competence (FLCC) has become almost a compulsory quality of many careers. However, it is a common knowledge that university graduates' FLCC, particularly in Indonesia, is low, that, often times, becomes a stumbling block in their career endeavour. One of the most important FLCC-related skill required in corporation is business presentation (Dickinson, 1998; Sukitkanaporn and Phoocharoensil, 2014). The ability to deliver presentation effectively in a foreign language is a reflection of possessing good FLCC (Jankovich, 1997).

The notion of communicative competence was pioneered by Hymes referring to speaker's ability to produce and understand sentences which are appropriate to the contexts in which they occur (Canale and Swain, 1980). It encompasses linguistic (forms), discourse (the ability to combine grammatical form and meanings so as to achieve a unified spoken or written text in different genres), sociolinguistic (social contexts where language is used), and strategic competences (ability to handle communication problems resulted from imperfect

knowledge). To be able to produce context-appropriate utterances or sentences necessitates the speaker to possess those competences (Robinson and H, 1988).

As a reflection of FLCC, presentation skills in foreign language are important to both individual and business success (Levin, 2006; Tisdale, 2005; Yate and Sander, 2003). According to a new Prezi survey (Galo, 2014), seventy percent of employed Americans who give presentations agree that presentation skills are critical to their success at work. Even though one doesn't have to deliver presentation before the public on regular bases, there are a lot of situations where good presentation (and public speaking skills) can help you advance your career and create opportunities.

Despite its prominence, presentation skills in universities, both business and academic, gains merely slim attention from lecturers (Sukitkanaporn and Phoocharoensil, 2014). Presentation is a merely routine information-telling showing off comprehension of being discussed lesson without knowing what and how presentation should be like. This deficient attention has brought about deprived graduates' presentation skill. Kawasaki, an expert

presentation trainer, observed that 95 percent of presentations in *the first LITU International Graduate Conference* were poor (Reynolds, 2007). He said the presenters' openings were unclear, contents were delivered too quickly, presenters read from the screen, and too much text on slides. In contrast, a presenter, who was revealed to have attended a presentation course, had the following positive qualities: clear opening, making good use of visuals, and engaging the audience. Therefore, realizing how critical presentation skill is, there should be efforts to enhance the skill in universities. As learning from aforementioned case, presentation skill can actually be fostered through training, that can eventually enhance FLCC (Boyd, 1995; Evans, 2013; Friend, Adams, and Curry, 2011; Knapp, 1968).

Vocabulary.com defines simulation as the act of imitating the behavior of some situation or some process by means of something suitably analogous (especially for the purpose of study or personnel training). In broader sense, it refers to creating a close representation of real life events. Simulation can enhance critical thinking, content retention, and decision making skills. When it is used in the classroom or laboratory setting, the lecturer can provide immediate feedback, and the students can repeat the exercises, and experience (Billings and Halstead, 2015). Role play, a form of simulation, is one active learning method typically used to practice communication skills.

In order to effectively enhancing FLCC in business presentations with the aforementioned benefits, simulation, in which the students are exposed with modeling and practice, can be a good method. Boyd (1995) and Stipek (2002) emphasizes the importance of exposure as the necessity to be proficient and productive language learners. He asserts that English language learners (ELLs) should be given a lot of opportunities to interact in academic and social like circumstances in the classroom. Previous study by Sukitkanaporn and Phoocharoensil (2014) reported that there was some statistically significant difference between English presentation skills of the students who studied Effective Presentations and those who did not. Thus, business presentation simulation is an effort to create a social like situation in the classroom to enable the learners get sufficient language and skill exposure.

Simulation which is commonly employed in medical, computer, and sport science to improve performance can be well-transferred to other disciplines like language study. Various research has confirmed that simulation is effective in enhancing

performance (Lateef, 2010; Taher and Khan, 2014). The reason for the improvement is that simulation can amplify real experiences. It can scaffold the learners to optimally acquire learned competence and skills. Meaningful feedback that is usually provided following students' simulation is also a key factor in students achieving the objectives, as well as in being encouraged to reflect on misunderstandings (Rivera, 1984).

According to Leigh and Maynard (2011), Russell and Munter (2013), and Sweeney (2003), Business Presentation is structured into opening, body, and summary. The opening itself can be structured into introducing problem(s) to be addressed and context, Stating the objectives, scope and main message, and giving outline or structure of presentation. In a body of a presentation, the presenter (1) makes a story board; (2) breaks up with each section making a key point; (3) present incrementally, concisely and in logical order Illustrate with clear examples and visual aids. And finally at the end of the presentation, a presenter must have a clear end to talk, brief and simple summary of main points, and strong reinforce the main message.

Besides mastering the stages of a presentation with linguistic aspects that fit the stages and contexts, body language is essential for the success of a presentation. Body language comprises gesture, stance, and facial expression. These are all the more important when all eyes of an audience are upon the presenter. When he/she is presenting, strong, positive body language becomes an essential tool in helping him/her build credibility, express emotions, and connect with listeners. It also helps listeners focus more intently on the presenter and what the presenter is saying.

2 METHODS AND PROCEDURES

The participants involved were 25 third semester students of English language and literature study program Universitas Pendidikan Indonesia learning business presentation in English as part of Listening in professional contexts course.

The research employed interrupted time series research design (ITS) proposed by Campbell and Stanley (2015). It is a set of measurements taken at intervals over a period of time. Each participant or sample is observed multiple times, and its performance is compared to its own prior performance. In other words, each participant or population serves as its own control. The main advantage of this design is that it allows the

researcher to evaluate trends, predictable patterns of events that occur with the passing of time (Goodwin and Goodwin, 2012). The research is initiated with pre-test (or pre-intervention) before treatment and ended with post-test (or post-intervention) after treatment. Interruptions can be conducted during the treatment to measure the progress (see figure 1).

The design fits the research well for the reason that it has characteristics elaborated in the previous paragraph. The research was aimed at finding out the progress or improvement in the students' communicative competence displayed in business presentation as a result of intervention which was in the forms of simulations. The research was initiated with pre-test before commencement of the program and ended with post-test at the end of it. Another test was administered in the middle to measure the progress and see the trend. The test in the middle and the end of the program was to see the improvement and ascertain that the improvement was attributed to the interventions/treatments. The design has no control group(s) with consideration that random assignment to treatment and control groups difficult to carry out for practical reasons. The students could not randomly be assigned different tasks as the assignments were given continuously and completed outside classroom. Business Presentation was only one of the topics in the course to be covered in two sessions while the students were required to work on it every week during the semester.

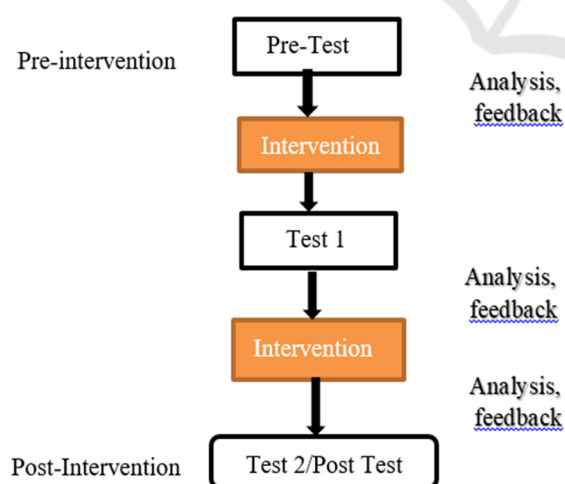


Figure 1: Interrupted time series design.

As seen on figure 1, for the purpose of the research, and coincidentally fulfilling students' demand to learn business presentation, the data were collected through scores of participants'

performance in pre-test, mid test, and final test. For that purpose, the students were asked to videotape their presentation outside classroom (not in class sessions). Their performance was then carefully scored and analysed. Based on the pre-test, the participants were given feedback and trained how to deliver effective business presentation. The participants were pre-taught with notions of business presentation (Sweeney, 2003; Templeton, 2010), and videos taken from various internet sources. In the first month of the semester, they were also exposed to business presentation by modelling effective business presentation from business presentation videos. The participants were then assigned to videotape their own presentations in the middle of the program (after three months, in the time of mid semester test) and at the end of the program (in the time of final examination). Therefore, videotaping was done three times during the semester in which the interventions were given between each. The presentations were rated based on delivery, mastery of the content, the ability of applying notions of presentation, language aspects, such as pronunciation, usage and vocabulary, and non-verbal language. The students were then given feedback to improve their performance in the upcoming presentation.

To answer the research question whether or not presentation simulations improve students' FLCC, and how significant the improvement is, quantitative data analysis was administered to find out the improvement of each aspects rated and how significant students' FLCC as a whole from one simulation into another. To reveal the significance, t-test available in Excel 2013 was used yielding t-values. To know improvement from the first to the second simulation, t-test was administered to rate score of presentation 1 and 2, and the improvement from second to third simulation, t-test was administered to rated score of the second and third presentations. If t-values are greater than t-table at df 24 (df is the number of participants subtracted by 1), and $\alpha.05$, the null hypothesis, there is no significant improvement, is rejected meaning that the hypothesis is accepted, in other words, presentation simulations can improve students' FLCC.

To enhance validity, another analysing tool was used. When all videotaping was completed, the videos were transcribed and analysed using QDA Miner to find out students' FLCC progress from one presentation to another. QDA Miner is a qualitative text analysis software package for coding, retrieving, annotating, and analysing text documents. The qualitative data resulted from QDA Miner analyses

were then quantified to compute each aspects analysed. The progress was measured by frequency of linguistic errors (pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary) and organization errors, e.g. [opening (greeting audience, self-introduction, stating the objective, stating the structure of the presentation)]. The participants' FLCC experience improvement if their errors kept decreasing in the last two presentations. Even though body language, which has been stated earlier as essential factor for the success of a presentation, was not in the analysis. Apart from time limitation, as videotaping was not part of class sessions, it was quite hard to analyse non-verbal communication from videos.

3 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Result

Six-month research on improving FLCC through business presentation simulation has eventually yielded some findings:

(1) There was significant improvement of students' FLCC in language aspects from one presentation to another (see Figure 2). The improvement can be seen from average score of each participant in three elements of language rated: usage, vocabulary, and pronunciation.

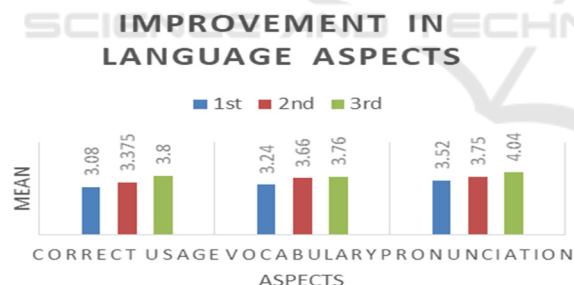


Figure 2: Improvement in language aspects.

To find out how significant the improvement from 1st to 2nd, and 2nd to 3rd presentation was, t-test was administered. The t-test of the 1st to the 2nd presentation, at df 24, $\alpha.0.5$ revealed that t-value was 2.96 and the test to 2nd to 3rd presentation, t-value was 2.64. Both t-values 2.96 and 2.64 were greater than t-table 2.064 meaning that FLCC improvement from presentation 1 to 2 and 2 to 3 was significant. This improvement was probably as a result of participants' effort in response to feedback from one presentation simulation to another. The improvement of FLCC in the aspects of language is visualized in a bar graph as seen in Figure 3.

(2) The t-test to find out how significant was improvement to mastery of content, revealed that both t-values 0,031 and 0.002 were lower than the t-table 2.064, at df 24 and $\alpha.0.05$. The finding means that the improvement in mastery of content was not significant (see Figure 4). Different from language aspects, the improvement in mastery of the content which was not significant, was probably resulted from the fact that the content was different from one presentation to another.

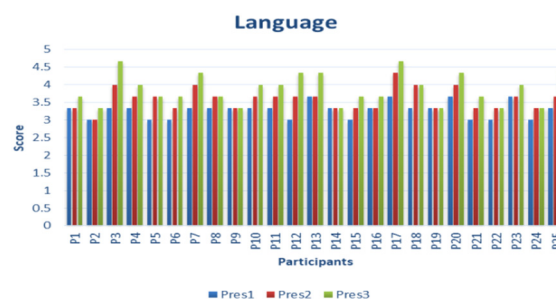


Figure 3: FLCC improvement in language aspects.

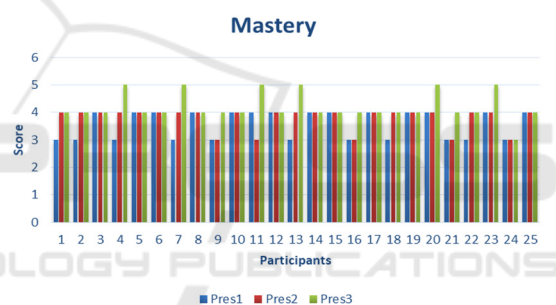


Figure 4: Improvement in content mastery.

(3) In delivery, as seen on Figure 5 and 6, t test reveals that t-values to presentation 1 to 2, and 2 to 3 were respectively 2.281 and 2.37, both greater than t-table 2.064 at df 24 and $\alpha.0.05$, meaning that the improvement in delivery was significant. Out of three aspects rated in delivery, rapport or engagement with the audience had the highest improvement. It is probably as a result of strong criticism in feedback as at the beginning, the rapport was the weakest.

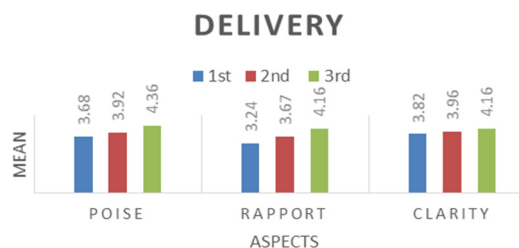


Figure 5: Improvement in delivery.

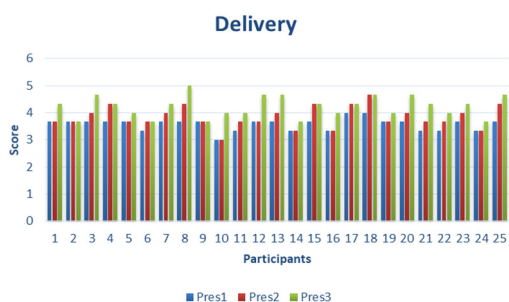


Figure 6: Individual improvement in delivery.

(4) The result of analysis on error frequency using QDA Miner was also in line with the aforementioned findings. The data, visualized in two graphs below, show that the students' FLCC improved from one presentation to another. The improvement can be seen from the decreasing frequency of errors in language aspects and organization/norm of presentation from one presentation to another. The average of frequency of errors in the aspects of language in the first presentation was 53.307. The errors declined to 42.912 in the second, and 27.304 in the last presentation (see Figure 7).

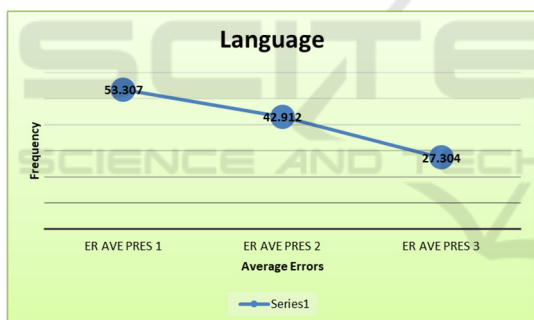


Figure 7: Frequency of errors in language aspects.

Finally, the frequency of errors in presentation procedure or organization also declined from one presentation into another. At the first presentation simulation, the average frequency of errors was 26.73, while at the second, it decreased to 16.23, and 12.09 at the final simulation (see Figure 8).

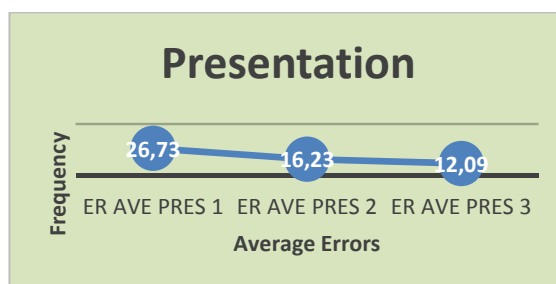


Figure 8: Average frequency of errors in the three simulation.

3.2 Discussion

The research has yielded important positive confirmation to previous research in providing simulation as a way to improve competence and performance (Amparo García-Carbonell, Beverly Rising, Begoña Montero, and Frances Watts, 2001; Dostal, 2016). The rising trend in measurement from pre to mid, and post intervention shows that it is indeed essential to facilitate students with simulation, hands on experience and meaningful feedback. The participants were much more competent in foreign language (English) as seen in their last business presentation compared to that of the first. They were able to use appropriate expressions in formal events like business presentation with lessening language errors such as usage, pronunciation, and vocabulary (diction). Similarly, communicative competence improvement took place in delivery as in poise, rapport and clarity. The improvement, however, varied in both language aspects and aspects of delivery.

In language, compared to pronunciation and vocabulary, the highest improvement was in correct usage from 3.08 to 3.8 or almost 8 points. It probably stem from the use of much better formal English. At the beginning, though their English was fluent, the participants were not accustomed to use English in formal events. Participants' ability in using appropriate formal English usage (form) was the weakest aspect of their communicative competence. The treatments of engaging provision of simulation and feedback during the program seemed to take effect to the participants' use of formal English. On the other hand, with regard to pronunciation, regardless of its formality, words are not pronounced differently that the change was not as high as usage. The improvement was probably the result of feedback that have made participants aware of carefully checking the pronunciation before giving presentation. Finally, presentations with different topics needed different diction, therefore,

the learned vocabulary for one presentation was unable to be used for another. However, similar to pronunciation, feedbacks had made participants to check appropriateness in diction from one presentation to another.

In regard to delivery, at the beginning, participants had minimal knowledge of presentation techniques that the continual treatment had possibly made them learn the techniques a lot resulted in significant improvement. Among the three aspects seen in the research, rapport gained the highest, almost 9 points. The reason for the change was probably that presentation technique is not commonly taught at universities even in language study program. Continues treatments during the program had probably made them realize of the importance of techniques for the success of presentations, especially of business. Besides, simulations had probably given them model of various techniques to learn and practice.

Considering how important business presentation skill is to acquire by students regardless of their study programs, the skills have to be given space to be taught as a separate course in universities so the students can have more competitive edge in jobs and careers. Language competence as seen in TOEFL or TOEIC score, for instance, is not a warranty to make it workable in real use of language for occupational purposes especially in business.

4 CONCLUSIONS

Based on above analysis, considering how important business presentation skill is to acquire by students regardless of their study programs, the skills have to be given space to be taught as a separate course in universities so the students can have more competitive edge in jobs and careers. Language competence as seen in TOEFL or TOEIC score, for instance, is not a warranty to make it workable in real use of language for occupational purposes especially in business.

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