

Cognitive Processes in Delivering Classroom Oral Presentation by High Performing EFL Pre-service Teachers

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Abstract

This study explores the cognitive processes that were experienced by EFL pre-service teachers during classroom oral presentations in an Indonesian context. Using a descriptive qualitative approach, three high-performing pre-service teachers from a local university in Riau were purposively selected as the participants. Data were collected through observations, questionnaires, and open-ended questions. Further, the data were analyzed thematically. The findings were grouped into three main themes: (1) pre-presentation stage, (2) during-presentation stage, and (3) post-presentation stage. In the pre-presentation stage, it was revealed that the students' mind focused on content preparation, language performance, and anxiety management. Several strategies to get succeed were revealed such as rehearsing multiple times, visualization, and positive self-talk. During presentation stage, all of the students were thinking about getting engaged with the audience. They used both verbal strategies (i.e., rhetorical questions, storytelling, and humor) and non-verbal strategies (i.e., eye contact and gestures) during presentation. Meanwhile, in the post-presentation stage, the students were thinking about self-reflection (i.e. assessing pronunciation, fluency, and confidence). Future research could investigate research that includes diverse population, research instruments, technology-related presentation aids, or longitudinal designs that investigate the students' presentation skills development over time.

Keywords: *cognitive processes, during-presentation, pre-presentation, post-presentation.*

A. Introduction

Oral presentations are often found in teaching and learning activities. Presentations are considered as the centered student learning that is widely practiced around the world. However, to successfully deliver a presentation, a student presenter needs to have some skill of public speaking. Among others, (1) to structure the content into introduction, body, and conclusion that is easy to understand by the target audience, (2) use appropriate gesture and body language, (3) comfortable/confident to talk in front of the audience, (4) interact with the audience, and (5) obey time-management. However, the skill is probably not possessed by majority of the students. Therefore, many students find classroom oral presentation challenging.

In an EFL context, classroom oral presentation is viewed as virtuous to practice the necessary language skills. However, the students who deliver a presentation in English, whether individually or in group are reported to poorly perform. For example, the presenters just read the book/power point in front of their peer with zero creativity; the audience find their friends' presentation as dull; no two-way interaction between the presenter and the audience. In other words, oral presentation that is thought a useful platform to develop students' soft skills and language proficiency has turned out to be

ineffective session for both for the presenters and the audience. Yet, oral presentation skills in English indeed are critical components of academic and professional success. In the future, the students will probably need the skill to get the job done. For pre-service teachers, mastering these skills is essential for their future roles as educators.

Studies on classroom oral presentation have been extensively conducted by many researchers. For instance, the researchers have reported that classroom oral presentation is useful (i.e., Sundrarajun & Kiely, 2010; Mardiningrum & Ramadhani, 2022; Amelia, 2022; Duklim & Musigrungsi, 2018) however, they also highlighted a number of problems that the students' encountered in oral presentation. First, the challenges related to psychological factors, such as, nervousness, anxiety, and lack of confidence (Mardiningrum & Ramadhani, 2020; Aziz et al., 2022; Benraghda et al., 2017). These psychological barriers often hindered students' performance and affect their ability to communicate effectively. Second, the challenges related to language proficiency. The students were found to experienced issues related to accuracy and fluency (Mardiningrum & Ramadhani, 2020; Aziz et al., 2022; Otsoshi & Heffernen, 2008). Third, the challenges related to preparation and planning, whereas lack of goal setting, prioritization, and planning were common problems (Imaniah, 2018; Whai & Mei, 2015). Students often struggled with organizing their materials and managing their time effectively during presentations. Fourth, the challenges related to audience interaction as the students had difficulties to engage with the audience and maintain directed eye contact (Mardiningrum & Ramadhani, 2020; Otsoshi & Heffernen, 2008). Effective communication skills are essential but often lacking. Fifth, the challenges related to group dynamics. Some students had reported issues such as lack of coordination and collaboration among group members that pose additional challenges (Mardiningrum & Ramadhani, 2020).

Meanwhile, in facing the challenges, the research report that the EFL students had developed strategies to overcome the problems. For example, students engaged in better preparation and self-assurance tend to perform better (Mardiningrum & Ramadhani, 2020; Aziz et al., 2022). They also conducted presentation planning and rehearsal. The students also used collaborative learning and feedback from peers to improve their presentation skills (Mardiningrum & Ramadhani, 2020; Shoureshjani & Ghanbari, 2012). Meanwhile, to enhance their presentation quality, the students used the presentation aids to make clear presentations (Mardiningrum & Ramadhani, 2020; Shoureshjani & Ghanbari, 2012). Last, the students found that regular practice and confidence-building activities was able to overcome psychological barriers and improve performance (Whai & Mei, 2015; Aziz et al., 2022). Some previous researchers also argued that the students held positive attitude towards oral presentation, such as, improved language and academic skills (Amelia, 2022; Benraghda et al., 2017). The positive attitudes of students towards oral presentations highlight their potential as a valuable tool for language and skill development.

While previous research has explored the challenges in classroom oral presentation, there remains a research gap, namely, a lack of research on the cognitive processes of high-performing EFL students during classroom oral presentations. Cognitive processes are mental processes that are experienced by the thinking mind. Studies on cognitive processes offer different perspectives to look into problems. Therefore, this study aims to fill the gap by examining the cognitive experiences in the classroom oral presentations by high performing pre-service teachers in an EFL setting. By focusing on high-performing students, the research seeks some insights on the thinking processes of diligent and hardworking students, offering practical implications for both learners and educators. The research question is formulated as follows “What are the thought processes of the high-performing EFL pre-service teachers in delivering classroom oral presentation?”

Review of the literature

Oral presentation skills are considered one of the important skills that must be acquired by the university level that are believed to benefit future career (i.e., Al Nouh et al., 2015; Soureshjani, & Ghanbari, 2012, Živković, 2014). Oral presentation is a structured speech delivered individually or in group to the audience that aims to inform, convince or entertain the audience using verbal and non-verbal language skills (i.e., Leeds, 2003; Оразбаева, 2024).

In a review by Papanas et al. (2011) a presenter is like a performer who uses their best appearance, voice, eye contact, movement, and other visual aids to be an effective speaker. Therefore, they argue that a presenter must prepare in advance, like a careful preparation of the whole presentation, clear objectives that are aimed, duration of presentation, how to engage the audience, and any other audio-visual aids to support the presentation. In addition, they also mention that there are several problems that may occur during a presentation, such as, the presenter literally reads out of their note/power point slide, exceed the duration for presentation, poor language commands, low voice, and poor control of nervousness.

As reported from previous studies, many student presenters often encounter following challenges in classroom oral presentations. The problems are associated with cognitive, psychological and social issues (i.e., Chang, & Windeatt, 2024; Klimczak-Pawlak, 2024).

a.Cognitive problems

Cognitive problems are those mental problems that are related to one’s information processing and thinking abilities that influence the information delivery. For instance, the presenter encounters a difficulty in organizing the ideas to be explained that the audience find the explanation confusing or not easy to understand; the presenter presents too much new information at the same time that the audience find it hard to grasp; the presenter uses words that are too textbook (too sophisticated) that the audience are unfamiliar with the

meanings; the presenter does not read well that they themselves are confused with what is explained; or the presenter easily forgets what they have to say during presentation.

b. Psychological problems

Psychological problems are those mental problems that relate to one's confidence and fear management. For instance, the presenter feels not comfortable to stand and talk in front of many people that made them sweating, shaking, or speechless; the presenter fears of the audience negative reaction that they become nervous; the presenter is overthinking about mistakes that they cannot focus with their talk; the presenter is not confident with their performance; or the presenter has many kinds of stress that they cannot handle well that their mind is blank and finds it hard to recall what they have to say.

c. Social problems

Social problems are problems that relate to one's engagement with the audience. There are many instances of social problems that have been reported, such as, the presenter feels awkward to look people in their eyes; the presenter cannot appropriately present themselves that the presenter does not get good response from the audience; or the presenter is inexperienced to manage the audience.

Due to the multiple problems that student presenters may encounter in delivering oral presentation, they may anticipate them through developing a good self-regulation. Self-regulation in oral presentation context refers to an individual's ability to control and manage themselves during the preparation and delivery of a presentation. In other words, it involves self-awareness, emotional control, and strategies to enhance communication effectiveness (e.g., Zimmerman, 2010; Schunk & Zimmerman, 2012; Soureshjani, 2013).

In facing oral presentation, an established self-regulated student presenters most likely focus their attention to do their best in their presentation. Hence, they work hard on three stages of presentation, namely, pre-presentation (planning stage), during presentation (delivery stage), and post-evaluation and reflection stage (e.g., Zimmerman, 2010; Schunk & Zimmerman, 2012; Soureshjani, 2013). In the planning stage, the student presenters have decided what objectives they want to attain. To make the objective attainable, they make effort to structure to content systematically. Lastly, they practice through rehearsal or visualization to make their presentation running according to plan. In the delivery stage, self-regulated student presenters do several things, among others, using effective delivery, i.e., monitoring the verbal and non-verbal language; observing the audience responds, controlling the speaking pace and using pauses effectively. This stage is the peak of the performance where the student presenters make sure they can execute their plan well. In the last stage, the student presenters do evaluation and reflection on what have happened during delivery stage. They evaluate their performance and do self-reflection to get better next time. In so doing, they are willing to receive

feedback from the audience. They determine what things that need improvement and things that they have achieved according to the plan.

B. Research Methodology

The research used a descriptive qualitative approach. Three pre-service teachers at a local university in Riau province Indonesia were selected purposively. They were among the top performers of classroom oral presentation in their class. Three participants were recruited in this research. Two of them were female and another one was male. Their age was similar that was twenty years old. In the background, one of them mentioned that they had taken a course on presentation skills. High performing students were selected due to their attributes as diligent and hardworking students, therefore their perspective on the students' cognitive experiences in delivering classroom oral presentation would be suitable resources to unveil the mental processes that occur in classroom oral presentation of an EFL setting. The data were collected through observations, a questionnaire and open-ended question. Data from the questionnaire was Furthermore, the all data were analyzed through thematic analysis to answer the research question, namely, to reveal the students' thinking processes during classroom oral presentation. The procedure of thematic analysis for the data from observation, and open-ended questions were as follows, (1) the data were examined to find out repeated patterns that were relevant to the students' thinking processes; (2) furthermore, the identified patterns were grouped into themes, namely, pre-presentation, during-presentation, and post-presentation themes; (3) the findings were generated based on the grouped data. Triangulation was employed to enhance data verification and validation across data from questionnaires, observations, and open-ended questions

C. Results and Discussion

1. Results

Based on the collected data, the results of the EFL pre-service students' thinking processes in classroom oral presentation are presented in the following themes, (1) pre-presentation thinking processes, (2) during-presentation thinking processes, (3) post-presentation thinking processes. Each is presented in the following.

1) Pre-presentation thinking processes

Data from the questionnaire and open-ended question revealed that there were some concerns that were thought by the students during pre-presentation, namely, content, language, and anxiety. Firstly, in term of the content, all of the students stated that they prepared their content well beforehand, either through outlining main points, rehearsing in front of a mirror or writing a full

script. Each had their own strategy to achieve their aim. The data from the questionnaire is presented in Diagram 1.

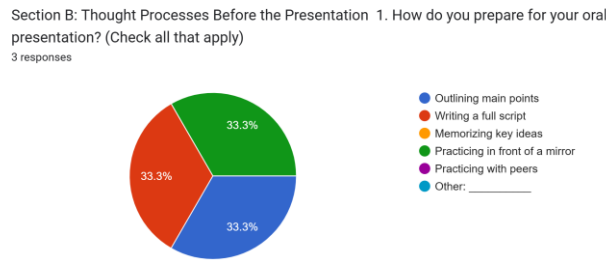


Diagram 1. Preparation before presentation

Data from the open-ended question were in line with the data from questionnaire. The excerpts can be found as follows.

“To improve my delivery I used visualization strategy, like I imagined I successfully delivered the presentation. In addition, I did the presentation practice multiple times to help me to have fluent and smooth talk. Grouping the information into smaller parts was also important to make it easier to remember.” (S1)

“I use rehearsal to practice my speech.” (S2)

“I always imagine that I do presentation, before I do actual presentation” (S3)

As well, data from observation indicated that the students had prepared their presentation well.

“S1, S2, and S3 did the presentation well” (Observation journal)

From the data some students described that they used visualization technique to imagine how they would present the material before they came into the actual presentation. They made sure that their presentation is satisfying. In the open-ended question, the student added that they might practice with peers or seek feedback before actually presenting. In addition, they also mentioned that had the information been complex, they would try to find a way to break it down and use appropriate examples/analogies to help the audience to easily get the points.

In the open-ended question, all of the students answered that they had strategies to involve the audience through their presentation, like giving them questions, humor and analogies that were easy to understand. The data can be seen in the excerpts as follows.

“To involve the audience, I use rhetorical questions to make them feel involved. I will also use relatable or interesting analogy to make them focus on me. Body language and eye contact are necessary to use in presentation. I will give them some room to make interactive communication.” (S1)

“Asking them question, such us do u get it.” (S2)

“I will make an analogy according to the listener's background, therefore before presenting I have to do research on the listener.” (S3)

Two of the students (S1 and S2) did not worry much about grammar mistakes as fluency was seen more significant, meanwhile, another student highly concerned about English language performance. The data can be seen in the following.

“I focus to content comprehension so that I can talk precisely about my content. After that I practice to deliver my content fluently, not focus to perfect grammar. I use outline on the slides and small notes to help me on speaking on the track.” (S1)

“I focus on delivering clear ideas. For fluency.” (S2)

“I’ll think about a lot of words and make it into a good sentence, I will make sure that my words are easy to understand.” (S3)

From the observation, all of the students were having a good command of speaking skills. However, these two students did not think much about English because they were confident, they could automatically verbalize the ideas that they want to say in seconds without much hassle. Meanwhile, for the student who was less confident the English expressions would not come out as easily as she wanted, so she pre-planned her narration by writing a script. Data from observation are given below.

“S1 and S2 speak fluently and relaxed with their English mistakes. However, S3 speaks more carefully. She repeats herself sometimes to correct her English.” (Observation journal)

Even though the students were highly performing students, but they still faced anxiety. Despite admitting to having anxiety, all of the students thought that they should be presenting confidently and relaxed. To be able to present confidently and relaxed, the students overcome their anxiety differently. Two of the students said that they rehearsed their part of presentation multiple times, meanwhile, another one used positive self-talk and things that calm them down. Data from close-ended question were in line with the data from the questionnaire. The excerpts of the participants’ answer are presented subsequently as follows.

“I do deep breathing to calm nerves, then I say positive self-talk to make me confident. I will focus on main points and audience engagement instead of overthinking about mistakes. Plus, I practice a lot to familiarize myself with the content and feel comfortable in delivering it.” (S1)

“Normally, I always practice myself in front the mirror before that day. During the presentation I try to engage with the audience, by using suitable body language.” (S2)

“I imagine that I do the presentation by a lake.” (S3)

The data indicate that students were used to handling anxiety in oral presentation by having preparation in advance. In another answer, they also demonstrated that they knew how to professionally behaved as presenters. When something happened out of plan, they said they remained calm instead of panic, took some deep breaths and made improvisations as to avoid the presentation turn into a mess.

Based on the findings in the pre-presentation stage, the students' thinking process were found to center around the presentation preparation and pressure management. It seems that they were mentally confident in delivering the presentation. In responding to their own thoughts, the students showed that they made some efforts that could be identified as cognitive and psychological strategies. The excerpts are in what follows.

“Self-confidence is very important in delivering a presentation. When our confidence is high, we can talk fluently, clearly, and engage communicatively with the audience. If we lack of confidence, we can be hesitant and nervous. Due to anxiety, we are overthinking about things. Our voice trembles, our mind goes blank mid-presentation. Motivation to do the presentation is another key factor. When we are passionate about the material or other reasons like, good score, we are more prepared both in the preparation dan delivery.” (S1)

“Self-efficacy boosts my confidence, reduces anxiety, and helps me deliver the presentation more effectively.” (S2)

“My self-efficacy makes me feel confident and make me trust my own abilities.” (S3)

2) During-presentation thinking processes

When presenters deliver their presentation, they focused on their main duty, namely, delivering the material. They were asked about their strategies to stay focused during presentations. They said they were three strategies that they used, namely, maintaining eye contact, using gestures and body language, and focusing on key points. The answers are consistent with other answers given, namely, they aimed. In other words, all participants tried to make the audience understand the material by focusing on key points while using gestures, body language and eye contact to lock the audience's attention on them. The data can be found in Diagram 3.

Section C: Thought Processes During the Presentation 4. What strategies do you use to stay focused during the presentation?
3 responses

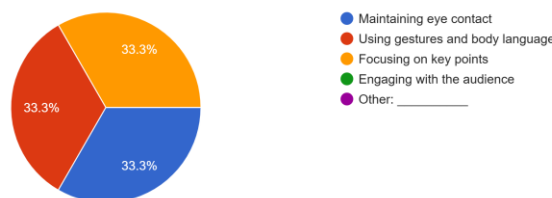
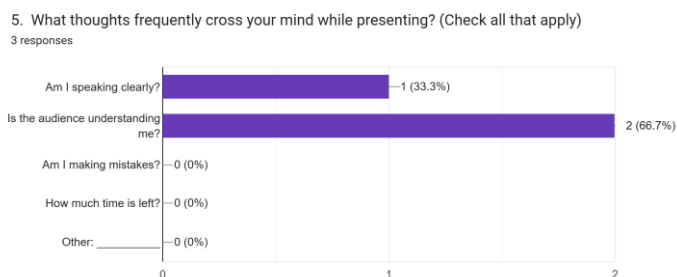


Diagram 3. Strategies to stay focus during presentation

In relation to their aim to make the students fully understand the material and lock their attention on them, the participants revealed that they consistently monitored whether (1) they were speaking clearly to the audience; (2) the audience understood the presentation; or (3) any mistakes had occurred in their speech. All of the students aimed to make their talk clear and easy to be followed. The data can be seen in Graphic 1.



Graphic 1. Thoughts that are frequent in delivering presentation

However, when unexpected situations happened during the delivery, they said that they would do some improvisation to make sure the presentation went on track. Two of them said that they would not let it noticed by the audience by elaborating ideas based on their existing knowledge. However, another student said that it is okay to pause for a moment to recall some information mid-speech. Each of the presenter had their own ways to make their presentation run smoothly. The data are as follows.

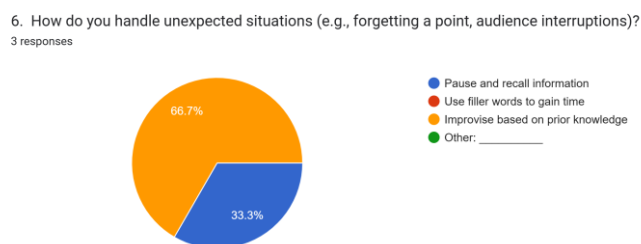


Diagram 5. Strategies to handle unpredicted challenges

Meanwhile, the presentation was not fully conducted in English due to language barriers. Thus, the students combined both English and their first language in delivering the presentation. Whenever, English was difficult to use and or understood by the audience, they switched to Bahasa Indonesia. Their focus was to get their explanation clear to the audience. The data were generated from observation, as can be found in following excerpt.

“The students used Bahasa Indonesia to compensate the students’ lack of English proficiency. Even the high performing students” (Observation journal)

Data of the research mentioned that the students did not pay specifically particular attention to time duration. However, based on the data from observation, the students finished all of the material delivery in twenty to thirty minutes, meanwhile, the allotted time of meeting was 2 x 50 minutes. It means the students had much time. In other words, the students did not need to get worried about exceeding time limit. Therefore, time management in this research context seemed was not a part of the students’ concerns. The data are were generated from observation, as can be found in following excerpt.

“The delivery of presentation lasts around 20-30 minutes. The presentation duration never exceeds the allotted time 2 x 50 minutes.” (Observation journal)

3) Post-Presentation thinking processes

All of the students said that after the presentation was over, they did some evaluation and self-assessment about their presentation. However, they focused on different things. Two students said that they were interested in finding out about the audience's opinion on their presentation. Meanwhile, the other student was interested on reflecting their English language performance. By doing self-assessment, all of them were motivated to do better next time. They wanted to get better on confidence and stage presence, organization of the content, and pronunciation and fluency. The excerpts are in the following.

“After presentation, I usually do reflection about the outline of my presentation, whether the audience follow my explanation easily. What important during the evaluation are the clarity of explanation and the audience's response—whether they were involved or not. I also evaluate parts I could not do smoothly and need improvement in the future, mainly on material and interaction with the audience.” (S1)

“I always ask my friend “What do you think about my presentation”. (S2)

“I'll evaluate my pronunciation and my words” (S3)

In the reflection, the students got some closure about their performance. In the beginning, the presentation was a bit tense but as it progressed the pressure got easier. According to previous experiences, when they were worried too much about their performance, more mistakes were likely to happen. Therefore, the students remained calm and enjoyed their job until it ended. In their reflection, the students revealed that there were some growing subsets of skills in relation to delivering oral presentation, namely, confidence, anxiety management, and motivation. The excerpts of the data are in what follows.

“The thinking process during presentation, as I progressed, was more relaxed and structured. I used to get worried about little mistakes, like making errors and forgetting the material. However, now I focus more on material and messages and how to the deliver them effectively. As well as to look at their responses and to adjust the presentation to be more interactive and engaging.” (S1)

“It may be very difficult at first, but the more we enjoy it, the easier it will become” (S3)

After the presentation was over, the participants revealed that they were motivated to do better next time and they were relieved that the presentation was finally over. These answers are consistent with previous answers, whereas the participants viewed the presentations were beneficial to develop their confidence, anxiety management, and communication skill. The data can be seen in diagram 6.

8. What do you usually feel after completing an oral presentation?
3 responses

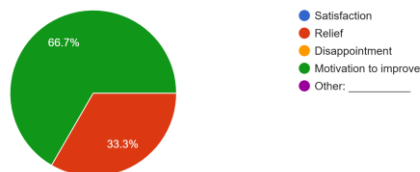


Diagram 6. Participants' feeling after the presentation is over

2. Discussion

Based on the data on pre-presentation, the participants demonstrated that they had developed some effective strategies (i.e., Reynolds, 2010; Bradburry, 2006; Boher, 2002). Strategies to manage the fear of the linguistic accuracy highlights the psychological pressure that are commonly reported in language learning, where self-consciousness about linguistic accuracy can hinder performance (Ockey, 2011; Gregersen & Horwits, 2002; Hakim, 2019). The reliance on rehearsal and positive self-talk to manage the anxiety that is experienced by most presenters indicate effective self-regulation strategies that are already possessed by the participants (Conley, 2019; Kross et al., 2014, De la Fuente, 2018). To sum up, they knew how to manage the cognitive and psychological problems that commonly occur in pre-presentation stage of oral presentation.

The data during-presentation also demonstrate that the participants were consistent with their preparation plan. The students could implement their plans. Overall, they had followed some of the principles of public speaking, such as, having a clear structure, use simple language, and anticipating misunderstanding (Anderson, 2016). The descriptions of the thinking processes match the principles of public speaking whereas the presenter remains calm and continues the presentation as if problems do not occur (Connoly, 2018). The students' strategies to face problems during a presentation delivery reflects growing self-efficacy and adaptability. In addition, these are positive indicators of self-confidence and problem-solving skills (Anderson, 2016, Connoly, 2018).

In regards the communicative skill, the participants had realized the importance of understanding the role of the audience. They were not only focused on their material but the focus on understanding their audience as well. They found ways to get connected with the audience, such as, being communicative through giving relevant analogies and involving humors. This support Usera's (2023) arguments on techniques to engage audience in oral presentations. However, Usera suggests many more techniques that can be used by the student presenters to engage their audience, namely, polling, discussion, recitation, imagination, and reflection. Polling is normally conducted by requiring the audience to give some verbal answers but this time the answer should be given nonverbally. For instance, the presenter asks the audience about how much they like jogging and the audience give the answer through the curl of their smile. The more they like it, the bigger the curl is. Creative ways of

engaging with the audience improve the audience engagement (Meier & Michaeler, 2018), as well as an interesting explanation (Murali et al., 2021).

EFL students' problem with language barriers have been reported by many researchers as one of the main challenges in oral presentation (i.e., Mardiningrum & Ramadhani, 2022, Amelia, 2022). Despite the recommendation to use English as the only language spoken in the classroom, some experts have argued that using first language is facilitative to some extent because the EFL students are in the process of learning (i.e., Cook, 2001; Littlewood & Yu, 2011; Shin et al, 2020).

The benefits of doing evaluation and self- assessment after presentation are in line with public speaking principles as the evaluation allows the students to understand about the quality of their performance (Tsang, 2020). They can do it by directly observing the audience reaction, asking the audience through a feedback survey and recording their presentation. Aspects to assess could vary. They can also evaluate their intonation, gesture and supporting media to improve overall presentation skills (Chen, et al., 2016)

Furthermore, the findings of participants' thinking processes in classroom oral presentation on pre-presentation, during presentation, and post presentation support previous studies in the following issues.

1) *The importance of thorough preparation and visualization for effective presentations*

The students' focus on content preparation, outlining, rehearsing, and using visualization techniques that aligns with studies that emphasize the importance of thorough preparation for effective presentations (i.e., Soureshjani, 2013; Chen, 2025; Al-Khresheh, 2024; Zayapragassarazan, & Mohapatra, 2021; Lee, 2019). These strategies are well-documented as effective ways to reduce anxiety and improve performance.

2) *The use of self-regulation strategies (e.g., rehearsal, positive self-talk) to manage anxiety*

The students' use of rehearsal, positive self-talk, and mental relaxation techniques to manage pre-presentation anxiety is consistent with findings from Soureshjani (2013), Utami & Amalia (2024), Ho et al. (2023), Soureshjani & Ghanbari (2012). These studies highlight the effectiveness of self-regulation strategies in managing psychological stress during public speaking.

3) *The strategies by EFL students in balancing linguistic accuracy and fluency*

The fear of linguistic accuracy and audience negative reaction among EFL students is a well-documented challenge in language learning (Soureshjani, 2013; Zaharuddin et al, 2023; Gurbuz & Cabaroglu; 2021, Amelia, 2022). The research supports the idea that self-consciousness about language performance can hinder presentation effectiveness, but thorough preparation (e.g., scripting) can mitigate these concerns (Toth, 2024, Wallwork & Wallwork, 2020; Roy et al., 2024).

4) *The effectiveness of audience engagement techniques and adherence to public speaking principles*

The students' use of eye contact, gestures, rhetorical questions, analogies, and humor to engage the audience aligns with Sakkampang's (2024), Flores et al (2023), Lei, Weiwei & Di (2016) who emphasize the importance of creative and interactive methods to maintain audience interest. In addition, the students' focus on clarity, structure, and improvisation during unexpected situations reflects established principles of public speaking (Zoller, 2024; Hall, 2014, Garmston, 2013). Their ability to remain calm and adapt to challenges demonstrates strong self-efficacy and problem-solving skills, which are critical for effective presentations.

5) *The value of self-assessment and reflection in improving presentation skills*

The students' practice of assessing their performance post-presentation aligns with Soureshjani (2013), Scott-Monkhouse (2023) and Gan et al. (2019), who highlight the importance of self-evaluation for improving presentation skills. Reflecting on audience reaction, language performance, and areas for improvement (e.g., confidence, organization, fluency) is consistent with best practices in public speaking. The students' motivation to improve and their recognition of growing skills (e.g., confidence, anxiety management) support the idea that repeated practice and reflection lead to skill development in public speaking. This aligns with studies that emphasize the role of motivation in driving preparation and performance (Huang, 2020; Ahmad, 2021).

Theoretical and practical impacts

The findings of this research have significant theoretical implications, contributing to our understanding of self-regulation, public speaking, and language learning anxiety. They also have practical implications, offering actionable strategies for learners, educators, and professionals to improve presentation skills and manage anxiety.

1) *Theoretical Impacts*

The findings highlight the importance of (1) self-regulation strategies (e.g., rehearsal, positive self-talk, visualization) in managing pre-presentation anxiety and improving performance. This supports Self-Regulation Theory (Zimmerman, 2013), particularly in the context of EFL learners and public speaking. The study also demonstrates how self-regulation can be applied to overcome psychological barriers and enhance presentation skills. The research (2) reinforces established principles of public speaking, such as the importance of audience engagement, clarity, and adaptability (Anderson, 2016; Connolly, 2018). It also adds nuance by showing how EFL learners navigate linguistic and cultural challenges while adhering to these principles. This contributes to a more inclusive understanding of public speaking theories, particularly for non-native speakers. The findings align with (3) theories related to language learning anxiety (e.g., Horwitz et al., 1986;

Gregersen & Horwits, 2002). They highlight how anxiety about linguistic accuracy can impact EFL learners' performance and how proactive strategies (e.g., scripting, rehearsal) can mitigate these effects. This contributes to the broader discourse on the psychological aspects of language learning. The study demonstrates how cognitive processes (e.g., visualization, self-assessment) and social learning (e.g., peer feedback, audience interaction) interact to improve presentation skills. This aligns (4) Social Cognitive Theory (Bandura, 2001; Schuk & DiBenedetto, 2020), emphasizing the interplay between personal, behavioral, and environmental factors in skill development.

2) *Practical Impacts*

The findings provide practical strategies for (1) EFL learners to improve their oral presentation skills, such as: (a) thorough content preparation and rehearsal, (b) use of visualization and positive self-talk to manage anxiety, (c) scripting for linguistic accuracy and confidence, (d) engaging the audience through questions, humor, and analogies. These strategies can be incorporated into language learning curricula to help students overcome presentation-related challenges. Another practical implication is on (2) Teacher Training and Curriculum Design, whereas educators can use the findings to design training programs that address both the linguistic and psychological aspects of public speaking. For example, incorporating anxiety management techniques (e.g., relaxation exercises, self-talk) into presentation training; teaching audience engagement strategies (e.g., storytelling, polling) to make presentations more interactive, encouraging self-assessment and reflection as part of the learning process. It can also (3) a support for high-performing students, whereas, the study highlights that even high-performing students experience anxiety and self-doubt. Educators can use these insights to provide targeted support, such as: offering opportunities for frequent practice and feedback; creating a supportive environment that reduces fear of judgment; encouraging peer collaboration and feedback to build confidence. In addition, the findings also support on (4) cultural and linguistic sensitivity, namely, the unique challenges faced by EFL learners, highlighting the need for culturally and linguistically sensitive approaches to teaching public speaking. This can inform the development of inclusive educational practices that cater to diverse learners. As well, the study also supports for (5) promotion of lifelong learning, whereas, emphasis on self-assessment, reflection, and continuous improvement aligns with the principles of lifelong learning. The findings encourage individuals to take ownership of their skill development, both in academic and professional contexts.

D. Conclusion and Suggestion

The findings from this study shed light on the multifaceted thinking processes and psychological factors that high performing EFL students experience before, during, and after delivering oral presentations. The pre-presentation stage revealed that students were thinking about content preparation, language performance, and anxiety management. They used some strategies to do

well in the presentation, such as rehearsing the content, visualization of performance, and used positive self-talk that they would do well. In short, the students were self-regulated. During presentation stage, the students revealed that they wanted the audience pay attention to their presentation and understand it fully. The students employed strategies such as maintaining eye contact, using gestures, and focusing on key points to stay confident and deliver their material effectively. However, as the presentation was supposed to be delivered in English, some of them revealed that it brought some psychological pressure because they also feared negative judgement about their English proficiency, thus they did code mixing and code switching. Post-presentation reflections revealed that students were evaluating their performance and determined to do better next time. Their thinking processes before, during and after delivering oral presentation reflect that they have shown some characteristics of self-regulation.

From a theoretical perspective, the research contributes to our understanding of the thinking processes that are experienced by EFL learners in delivering oral presentation in English. The findings highlight the interplay between cognitive, psychological, and social factors that must be overcome well by the students. Practically, the findings offer some insights for learners and educators to improve classroom oral presentation skills and manage anxiety. Some strategies, such as, how to make a well-structured content, visualization practice prior presentation, anxiety management, audience engagement, and self-assessment, need to be explicitly taught to the EFL students who do oral presentation.

This study focused on high-performing EFL students, which may limit the generalizability of the findings. Future research could include a more diverse sample, such as students with varying proficiency levels, different cultural backgrounds, or those from non-academic settings. This would provide a more comprehensive understanding of how different populations (i.e., students with varying proficiency levels, different cultural backgrounds, or those from non-academic settings) approach oral presentations and manage the potential challenges as well as to use different research instruments (i.e., thinking-aloud protocol, retrospective interview) to collect diverse data. It is also suggested to conduct longitudinal research to track the students' development of presentation skills over time, such as, how students' strategies, confidence, and anxiety levels evolve with repeated practice and experience. With the increasing use of digital tools and platforms for presentations (e.g., Zoom, PowerPoint), future research could as well explore how technology influences presentation preparation, delivery, and audience engagement.

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