

Voices of the Future: Assessing Public Speaking Competence Among University Students in EFL Class

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Abstract: Public discussion panels serve as dynamic platforms to engage diverse perspectives on critical issues, foster informed discourse, and promote democratic dialog in society. This abstract explores the essential characteristics and benefits of public discussion panels as catalysts for knowledge dissemination, opinion exchange, and the development of community engagement. Public discussion panels typically feature a diverse group of experts, leaders, and stakeholders who bring diverse insights and experiences. These panels play an important role in addressing complex societal challenges, ranging from political and economic to cultural and scientific issues. By incorporating diverse voices, panel discussions contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of topics, fostering a nuanced and informed public discourse. The interactive nature of public panel discussions facilitates the exchange of ideas, allowing participants and audience members to challenge assumptions, question perspectives, and explore alternative viewpoints. This open dialog not only improves the quality of decision-making, but also fosters a culture of critical thinking among citizens. Moreover, the accessibility of panel discussions through various media channels ensures wide dissemination of information, reaching a wider audience and promoting inclusivity in public discourse. Public panel discussions also serve as a bridge between experts and the general public, breaking down complex topics into easily digestible information. This accessibility helps bridge the knowledge gap and empowers individuals to make informed decisions, encouraging a more educated and engaged society. Furthermore, the public nature of these discussions promotes transparency, holding panelists accountable for their views and encouraging a culture of constructive debate.

Keywords: Debate; Visual Media; Panel Discussion

1. Introduction

There are at least two important factors that influence adult learning in the class that is cognitive and affective aspects. Cognitive is actually the ability of students to proceed information and knowledge by using brain while affective is related to very personal or individual which commonly controls learning success based on interest, motivation, and self-confidence, etc. The content subjects at university levels usually demand students to have activities more independently with many discussion and presentation. In this case, the characteristics of the students are highly active, proactive, and high self-confidence to accomplish all processes and activities in the class. The affective aspect of being self-confident in this case is very important to be notified at the content subjects for adult learning especially at university students [1], [2]. The ones with high self-confident have good potencies to have improved acquisition because the confidence has already made the students aware of preparing the readiness to experience the class [3]. Otherwise, when the students do not have enough confidence to join the class, the danger is that they will never enjoy the learning and finally it creates the high possibility to deviate from the class [4], [5]

Self-confidence is built because the students have natural experience in the process of achieving learning goals and learning process. The learning goals are important to consider

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because that is the initial process to orient the students to accomplish all activities easily. This goal realization usually causes easiness on realizing the process of learning especially the strategy that is offered by the lecturer [6], [7].

In fact, the choice of teaching strategy which really opens students' awareness to naturally join the process of learning is not easy. Even the most complicated teaching strategy does not always guarantee the successful engagement of the students. There should be some fundamental issues which are grounded to the successful implementation of teaching strategy in adult learners. Some experts agree that the more varieties and authenticities of the teaching procedures given to the adult classroom, this will potentially open students to create genuine creativities and learning outputs. This, in turns, automatically creates the students capacities to increase their self-confidence because they feel that the activities can be accomplished individually and easily or in group, which finally makes them enjoy the class [8]

Since the demands of students to hopefully optimize their potency in learning especially to create the maximum interaction which result students' confidence, a panel-discussion is an alternative teaching strategy that really provides the students' challenges to have more creative activities in thinking, sharing, and presenting ideas [7], [9], [10] This method is not actually new, but it seems that some teachers do not maximally optimize this as the beneficial model in teaching adult learners especially in the content-subjects at higher education in Indonesia. The basic principles of the panel discussion is actually linear with the development of students' center learning in which the main goal of the activities is to provide students with maximum opportunities to develop their potency by optimizing interaction among friends [11], [12]. The true interaction is actually to engage students' awareness that they are not alone to finish class-works, they have their potency among individuals to accomplish all the tasks [13], [14]. The important point is that the students have to be encouraged to work together to maximize their potencies in any single opportunity especially in classroom interaction. This research, therefore, is intended to analyze whether panel discussion really have potential influence of the implementation panel discussion especially in the content subject of qualitative research at English Language Education Department, University of Muhammadiyah Gresik. The second purpose is to find the appropriate teaching principles or procedures that might be useful in implementing the panel discussion in the classroom setting of adult learners.

2. Preliminaries or Related Work or Literature Review

Definition of Public Speaking Public

speaking is basically defined as an ability possessed by someone to convey or be presented orally on a problem or topic in front of an audience. However, it is more than in public speaking. [15]defines public speaking is one person talks and several people. [16] describes public speaking does not merely mean speaking in public. It is the means to express and deliver the speaker's notion or opinion to public. When people do public speaking, they have important messages or ideas that they want to deliver to audiences.

If the speech does not contain any message or purpose, it means the speech cannot be considered as public speaking. Moreover, public speaking is different from talking to others in daily conversation. Public speaking is special and it cannot be learned by talking with your friends or families only. Speaking is one of language skills which is very important to be mastered, [17] states that speaking skills is an oral communication that gives information involves two elements, they are; the speaker who gives the message and the listener who receives the message in the world, the communication involves the productive skill of listening. Fromkin (1988) also states that an act of communication through speaking is commonly perform in face to face interaction and occur as a part of dialogue or rather than form or verbal exchange. Because public speaking is special, the speaker must know what he or she wants to talk about first before delivering the speech. The speaker must practice again and again about his or her speech. The speaker needs to rally careful about what messages or ideas he or she wants to deliver to public. [18]explains people can get through life without practicing what to say. People don't clam up when they ask for us ticket. And there's no single „right“ way of asking for the bus ticket. People just start speaking and you get your message across. Once they know what they want, public speaking is no different. In addition, public speaking is also important skill that everyone should have.

Skills of Speaking

Speaking is one of language skills which is very important to be mastered. [19] maintains that speaking is a verbal use of language to communicate with others. It means that speaking is a delivery of language through the mouth, to great the message that is going to be delivered. Speaking is significant to an individual's living processes and experiences as are the ability of seeing and walking. Speaking is also the most natural way to communicate [20]

Without speaking, people must remain in almost total isolation from any kind of society. For most people, the ability to speak a language is the same with knowing a language since the speech is the most basic means of human communication. Speaking is an ability that is taken for granted, learned as it is through process of socialization through communicating. A recent study [11], [21] concluded that speaking skills is one of the elements of communication which is communication is output modality and learning is the input of language acquisition and the use of language in ordinary voice; uttering words; knowing and being able to use a language; expressing oneself in words.

As human in the world we need to communicate each other to express an idea to do everything, what is more as students or learners they have to speak with the teachers and friends as long as in learning to express the idea [1], [22]. In speaking skills teacher should teach students how to listen to others, how to talk with others, and how to negotiate meaning in a shared context. It means that in formal environment between teachers and students have to always interact to make communication, because in facts, most of our daily communication remains interactional.

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From definition above, it can be concluded that speaking skills is a form to say or talk something with expressing of ideas, opinions, views and description to other for getting response or way of conveying message in order to make understanding of wishes to other and to contribute to the other. To do speaking activities, it must involve the speaker and the listener or only speaker involved.

3. Proposed Method

The research used in analyzing the performance of the panel discussion of 3 students with the names Shabrina as moderator, elsa as MC (Master of Ceremony) and syafira as speaker of the 3rd semester students of muhammadiyah university of Tangerang is to use naturalistic observation method, which is a research approach without manipulation, researchers observe and document behavior or phenomena naturally. While naturalistic research is "natural" or natural, as it is, without being manipulated, regulated by experiments or tests [24]

This analysis uses a qualitative approach to explain the performance of the subject with students consisting as moderators, moderators, speakers. qualitative research as research that aims to understand the phenomena experienced by research subjects. Qualitative research as research that aims to understand the phenomena experienced by research subjects. More fitting and suitable to be used to examine matters relating to behavioral research, attitudes, motivations, perceptions and actions of the subject. In other words, this type of research cannot use quantitative methods

[25] case study research method research method is an appropriate strategy to used in research that using the main research questions how or why, little time researchers have to control the events under studied, and the focus of the research is contemporary phenomenon, to track contemporary events. In the case study method method, the researcher focuses on the design and implementation of the research.

4. Results and Discussion

This discussion discusses or analyzes the roles in the panel discussion of the master of ceremony, moderator, and speaker where the master of ceremony (MC) has the main task of guiding the event with enthusiasm, introducing speakers, conveying important information,

and maintaining positive energy among the participants. and the moderator has the task of ensuring that the discussion or conversation in the forum takes place according to the main topic that has been determined. and the speaker's job is to contribute positively to the discussion and provide valuable insights to the audience [26]. below I will explain in more detail about the MC, moderator and speaker.

In the context of an academic panel discussion, there are three main roles that contribute significantly to the success and impact of the event: the emcee, the moderator and the speaker. Each of these roles has distinct responsibilities, which if executed effectively will enhance the overall coherence, engagement and professionalism of the forum [27]. MCs serve as hosts who guide the event with vigor and ensure smooth transitions between segments. Their duties include welcoming the audience, introducing speakers, maintaining a positive atmosphere, setting the duration of the event, and collaborating with other personnel. Their ability to build rapport with the audience and project a confident and charismatic energy is crucial to setting the tone and rhythm of the discussion.

Moderators play a more content-focused role, ensuring that the discourse stays aligned with the main topic and flows logically. Moderators serve as facilitators and mediators, balancing participation among panelists and steering the conversation with timely questions or directions. Their performance is reflected in their ability to manage time effectively, stimulate diverse viewpoints, and foster an inclusive and respectful discussion environment [28]. By creating opportunities for reflective dialogue and encouraging panelists to probe multiple perspectives, moderators increase the depth of discussions while maintaining structure and coherence. Their interpersonal and organizational skills are crucial to creating an intellectually stimulating and orderly space.

On the other hand, the speakers are responsible for contributing substantive insights that align with the theme of the panel. They are usually selected based on their expertise and ability to deliver engaging and informative presentations. In this situation, the speakers demonstrate a high level of linguistic proficiency and clarity in message delivery. Their articulation, logical structuring of content, and audience responsiveness mark their performance. In addition, their use of PowerPoint presentations was also noteworthy [1], [29]. The visual aids were designed with simplicity and clarity, allowing the audience to focus on key ideas without cognitive overload. The careful integration of visuals with the verbal narrative greatly enhanced the accessibility and impact of their messages.

During the panel discussion, the speakers actively engaged the audience by inviting questions, encouraging comments, and responding thoughtfully to questions. This participatory approach not only fosters a more inclusive and dynamic learning environment, but also reflects a genuine responsiveness to audience needs. The speakers' ability to maintain clarity, relevance and interaction underscored their communicative competence and commitment to knowledge dissemination. In short, the interplay between the dynamic host, the strategic facilitation of the moderator, and the insightful contributions of the speakers created a well-rounded and engaging academic discourse [30]. Each role, with its unique set of functions, contributes integrally to the effectiveness and professionalism of the panel discussion. Simplicity and Effectiveness of PowerPoint Presentations

A standout feature of speaker performance was the simplicity and effectiveness of their PowerPoint presentations. The visual materials were thoughtfully designed, featuring clear visuals, concise text, and a logical sequence. This approach resonated well with the audience, facilitating focused attention on the speaker's narrative without distractions [9], [31], [32]. The excellence displayed by the speakers in the panel discussions is foundational to effective communication and knowledge dissemination. Their proficiency in language skills, strategic use of visual aids, clarity in message delivery, active audience engagement, and the simplicity of PowerPoint presentations collectively contributed to the success of the panel discussions. Particularly, the use of PowerPoint presentations is a crucial aspect of effective communication, showcasing the speakers' ability to convey complex information with clear and concise visuals that enhance audience understanding and emphasize the importance of accessibility in educational settings [23], [33].

5. Comparison

This study found that students' speaking skills, especially in the context of panel discussions, are greatly supported by their ability to engage the audience and present effective visual presentations. Audience engagement was realized through invitations to discuss, ask questions, and provide feedback, creating a participatory and inclusive atmosphere. In addition, the use of simple yet effective PowerPoint was also a major highlight in supporting the delivery of clear and memorable messages.

This finding is in line with Lucas' (2020) theory in *The Art of Public Speaking*, which emphasizes that audience engagement is an important component in successful public speaking. Lucas explains that speakers who are able to build a two-way connection with the audience will be more effective in delivering messages and achieving their communicative goals. This is supported by the concept of active audience involvement, where audience participation encourages deeper and contextually relevant learning.

Meanwhile, Reynolds' (2011) theory in *Presentation Zen* states that simplicity in visual aids such as PowerPoint is crucial to maintain audience attention. Clean visuals, concise text, and logical sequences help audiences process information without being distracted by excessive visual elements. This is strongly reflected in the research findings that simple yet effective slide designs optimally support oral narratives.

Furthermore, this finding is also supported by Duarte (2012) who states that a strong presentation is a combination of clarity of message, strategic use of visuals, and interpersonal skills of the speaker. It is this combination that forms effective public communication, as seen in the discussion panel of Universitas Muhammadiyah Tangerang students. Thus, the findings of this study not only reinforce established theories of public communication, but also show that the use of simple presentation strategies and active audience engagement are key indicators of successful public speaking in a higher education context.

6. Conclusions

Panel discussions represent a rich and in-depth discussion on a relevant topic. The panelists collectively discuss various viewpoints and perspectives related to the issue at hand. Each panelist brought their unique expertise and experience to the table, creating an environment that allowed participants to gain deep insights. The discussion not only detailed crucial issues, but also provided practical solutions and suggestions for dealing with the challenges faced by the community. The panel discussions created a productive dialog platform where diverse ideas were presented and debated, enriching the collective understanding of important issues. Furthermore, the panel discussion highlighted the importance of cross-sectoral collaboration and cooperation in responding to complex problems. Panelists emphasized that the best solutions often involve contributions from multiple sectors, including government, industry and civil society. The discussion raised awareness of the importance of integration and synergy to achieve sustainable progress. As such, the panel discussion not only provided deep insights, but also encouraged collective action towards positive change in the context of the topics discussed.

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