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Exploring Communication Strategies and Fear of Oral Presentation among Undergraduates

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Abstract

Communication strategies are basically ways utilised by students to manage their interactions in a target language learnt. Fear of oral presentations is still common among students due to many reasons. In order to cope with such fear when communicating in English, communication strategies (CS) are employed by students to assist them in communicating in the most effective way they feel they could. This preliminary study on CS and fear of oral presentations are conducted to investigate how CS influences oral presentations and how factors leading them to fear oral presentations influence their oral presentations. A survey was done on 51 undergraduates of a public university. Data was analysed using the SPSS and reported in a form of mean values. Findings on participants' use of communication strategies in influencing their oral presentations revealed that most participants were inclined to use more strategies involving human factor in influencing how they would present orally. Furthermore, findings on fear of oral presentation in influencing their oral presentations indicated the highest concern on evaluation marks and nervousness in reflecting how they would perform oral presentations. These findings could reflect the need for the university to guide students on communication strategies available to them so that they could be employed by students to communicate more effectively in public.

Keywords: Communication Strategies, Oral Presentations, Fear, Communication, Effective Communication

Introduction

Background of Study

Oral presentation skills are necessary to polish students' skills to communicate publicly in a target language. This is to prepare undergraduates to become more efficient and confident in communicating in the target language. Tridinanti (2018) stressed the need for speaking skills for communication and to communicate effectively. Speaking skills, in relation to foreign language learning, is necessary in communication and globalisation aspects (Hanita et al., 2018). Tsang (2017) connected presentation skills to employment such as for job interviews and workplace assignments and that the goal of education is to create 21st century global citizens who, making presentation skills valuable. Gan et al (2017), in their study on

communication strategies training, stressed the importance of oral communicative learning of English in preparing them for future work. They concluded the significance of oral communication ability to set the learners apart in terms of their capability to connect their ideas, thoughts and messages. Using communication strategies will assist learners to “survive” breakdowns in communication (Nursuhaila et. al., 2022).

Despite courses offered to teach them the necessary strategies to enable them to communicate well in the second language, fear of oral presentations is still taking a stronghold among Malaysian students, particularly in communicating their ideas publicly in English. The perception that they cannot communicate well and confidently in English still exists. This results in poor performance when communicating in public with weaknesses notable in their proficiency, content and body language. Speaking anxiety is a “common phenomenon” of speaking anxiety when they speak in a foreign language as they lack ability and practise less (Tridinanti, 2018). Hazila (2014) cited in Nalini et. al (2021) listed reservations, uncertainty, and weak performance as effects on students who are compelled to speak in public. Nalini et.al (2021), in their study on anxiety during oral presentations found factors of students’ language ability, reactions from the audience, and feedback from teachers as influencing anxiety among undergraduates. Farhan’s (2017) study on anxiety level in students of public speaking: causes and remedies found that students could do well if their fear can be fought using certain strategies and majority of the participants agreed that their fear can be successfully dealt with if appropriate counselling, teaching and guiding is offered. Learning and exploring more communication strategies is essential for L2 students so that they can be better at performing public speaking (Nursuhaila et. al., 2021).

This is where communication strategies take place as a coping mechanism for students to make decisions on what approach they perceive would be the best in helping them to communicate effectively. Students’ ability and way to communicate orally can be based on communication strategies they choose to use, as a type of strategy can determine the strength and success of their communication. As a result, this could reduce the negative effects or help manage problems faced when doing oral presentations. Furthermore, factors that lead to fear that they have when presenting orally can affect the way students would deliver their presentations. This study explores students’ choice of communication strategies that they need to determine the best way they can deliver in the target language and how fear of oral presentations influences their oral presentations.

Statement of Problem

There are varied ways to develop or in fact to inspire one’s communication and presentation skills. Therefore, many experts have come out with good planning and strategies to help improve people’s communication and also presentation to ensure no or less communication breakdown occurs. Most language users would try to apply communication strategies (CS) in order to solve communication problems (Amin, 2017). Communication strategies can be of numerous factors – for knowledge transfer (Interactional) or for some linguistics aspects Amin (2017) - and they can be picked out to suit the person’s or the presenters’ preferences and suitability. For example, Amin (2017) conducted a study on CS focusing on gender differences. One of the strategies that is ‘Message Abandonment Strategy’ was asked and the male and female respondents seemed to have a contrasting idea about it. The male tends to leave “the messages when he faced language difficulty” and asks for help; while the female

“tried to continue till message delivered” without having interest to ask for help. This shows that different individuals may choose strategies that suit them most.

To be consistent to what a person is focusing when communicating, to practise “one-minute monologue” about a given topic (Karpati, 2017), to be prepared with content and to organize the content systematically, to practise to ensure consistency of content and to ensure smooth flow, to encourage people’s responses and feedback during and after communication takes place and so forth are some of the strategies that can be applied and adapted to enhance one’s communication. In addition, many out there will search for guidance when they are not sure about doing a presentation or when this is their first time doing it. Fortunately, there are always skills and activities offered which can develop their experiences. For instance, Nofrion et al (2019) conducted a study to “45 students who take the Curriculum and Geography Textbooks” to investigate if “CABARITUS - which stands for the series of activities as follows: 1) Mencari (CA), 2) Membaca (BA), 3) Meringkas (RI), 4) Menuliskan ulang (TU), 5) Sampaikan (S)” - (that is Search (CA), Read (BA), Simplify (RI), Repeat (TU), Present (S) - can improve the quality of presentations amongst their learners. In their study, it was found that learners are able to improve delivering ideas and opinions as well as to improve the quality of their presentation. It shows that by giving a series of activities to learners - with teacher’s guides - and by practising and repeating can help learners to gain confidence to deliver ideas without fear. In addition, presentation skills amongst learners can also be developed and improved via social media. In a study done by Gangi et al (2017), social media platforms have been proven to be one effective activity to help learners manage their presentation. This study involved one hundred and seventy-five students from “undergraduate introductory information systems courses”. It was found that these students were able to improve on their presentation when they were exposed to “interactive classroom experience where students have opportunities to learn directly and indirectly about presentation skill”. Giving such freedom in learning and providing opportunities to interact with their peers have proven to assist learners to see their own potentials as well as to brush up their oral presentation skills - as oral presentation nowadays is amongst the skills that is important not only to academicians, but also to students at higher learning institutions (Hanifa and Yusra, 2018).

While many opportunities are given and many activities have been exposed to students to improve and inspire on their presentation and communication skills, some activities, however, may not seem helpful. Chandren and Yaacob (2016) mentioned the worries over learners’ presentation when “neutral body language, poor voice qualities, no attempt to establish rapport with audience, no eye contact and read continuously most of the time” are portrayed. These weaknesses are observed could decrease the learners’ potential after school or college when the soft skills are needed after they graduate (Chandren and Yaacob, 2016). Naser and Isa (2021) also highlighted the necessity of oral presentation after learners have graduated that “employers frequently mentioned that they chose not to offer employment to candidates because of their incapability to communicate well, especially in the English language”.

In addition, in a presentation activity that has been conducted by Leinonen et al (2018), they have found that gamification features that have been incorporated as one learning platform to improve presentation skills do not show positive results. The respondents perhaps like the

idea that the tool is easy to use but they are not interested so much in applying the tool to improve their presentation. From the study, it was found that the design did not help much to grab the respondents' interest and it was also said that the respondents did not like the idea when their presentation was shared publicly. This could be the case that the respondents are not satisfied with the activity. Here, it can be observed that learners' own preferences on CS when communicating are very important for the instructors to understand in order to ensure that the learning activities are carried out effectively and successfully. There are students who utilise their own CS that they are comfortable with and what they feel effective enough to use when communicating with other people in a target language. Since communication and presentation skills are needed for most individuals for their study and career pursuance, some actions have to be taken and some new and creative implementations have to be done in order to help these individuals to achieve their future goals.

Objectives of the Study and Research Questions

Hence, specifically, this study's objectives are;

- to explore learners' perception on what strategies they use to communicate
- to explore causes of their fear of oral presentation

This study is done to answer the following questions;

- How do communication strategies influence oral presentation?
- How does fear of oral presentation influence oral presentation?

Literature Review

Communication Strategies

There are various definitions of communication strategies but a similarity can be seen in how it is viewed as steps taken to manage communication. Ellis (1985) as cited in Ayuni (2013) explained communication strategies as "psycholinguistic plans which exist as part of the language user's communicative competence. They are potentially conscious and serve as substitutes for production plans which the learner is unable to implement". Communication strategies are also viewed as a skill set that learners utilise for them to solve their weakness in a target language (Ellis, 1994 as cited in Putri et al., 2013). Dornyei (1995) referred to Corder's (1981) "working definition" of communication strategies as "a systematic technique employed by a speaker to express his (or her) meaning when faced with some difficulty".

Dornyei (1995) listed communication strategies (CS) as "following traditional conceptualisations" which are Avoidance or Reduction strategies, Achievement or Compensatory strategies, Stalling or Time gaining strategies, as well as CS classified by Nijmegen University Group as Conceptual and Linguistic/code strategies. Dornyei (1995) also highlighted the need for communication strategies, referring to Canale and Swain's (1980) definition of CS as an act of reducing failure in communication due to lack in competence or performance variables. According to Ayuni (2013), due to students experiencing failure in communication due restricted knowledge in a target language, they need to seek an alternative way to communicate which includes code switching, evading topics or copying sounds. She also outlined reasons influencing the selection of communication strategies: learners' attitude, learners' L2 proficiency level, learners' personality, learning situation, and context of communication. Communication strategies are employed when conveying thoughts and ideas are problematic and occurs when users are not able to choose suitable

words, phrases, structures and idioms (Latif et al., 2012). They also connected such problem to the users' inadequacy in communication competence. Shazwan, et. al (2021) linked the use of strategies when having problem conveying ideas to their inadequacy in communication skills. Therefore, the need for CS could be linked to the occurrence of fear and managing it, due to lack of proficiency in expressing in a target language.

Fear of Oral Presentation and How to Reduce the Fear

Communication and presentation; "this soft skill is prominent for career opportunity and success in accounting profession" (Chandren and Yaacob, 2016) and also for life after learners have graduated, and undoubtedly, both involve two-way contacts or interactions which is sometimes hard to do. However, the two-way contacts here may differ when it comes to 'how to do' it. Since a presentation is aimed to deliver information or ideas (Nofrion et al., 2019), communication comes with the idea of transmitting the information which allows the recipients to listen attentively in order to respond while the communication takes place. In short, presentation is 'what' you say and communication is more to 'how' you say it to produce an interpretable and meaningful context. Nevertheless, both require ones' active participation - during the interaction - and high confidence level so that the information presented and transmitted is successfully understood and can be responded to. In this case, not many people or language users, especially learners are able to perform steadily; some may not have the confidence and many would have the fear to speak up - in public. This is actually a normal state. Hanifa and Yusra (2018) did mention in their study that learners can be "extremely anxious, could become highly stressed and almost sick because it was very difficult for them to control their nervousness" when it comes to oral presentations.

The fear, the nervousness or sometimes mentioned as anxiety can come from varied reasons that possibly are inherited from family members, could be from the psychological factors or could be from the speakers' life experience and background. The fear, if it happens, can hardly be overcome when it appears out of one's unconscious reasons. Some of the reasons could be because the speakers tend to be nervous every time they try to voice out an opinion; they could have experienced breathing difficulty when they start to panic due to speaking or presenting; or they may have the feeling of never being satisfied with their own ability. This weakness can ruin one's potential; that to present or to share knowledge is deemed one noble effort, as it is not only helping to educate others but also to improve their own selves. In addition, speakers also are found to be panicky or to experience being nervous and self-conscious when they fear talking or voicing out ideas to a large audience (Dansieh et al., 2021). They fear presenting ideas to many audiences that they feel many would judge what they are presenting and sharing (Dansieh et al., 2021). Some may be afraid of presenting to a group of people when they are not mentally prepared or it could be that they do not have sufficient detail of information to be shared. Fear that people may judge them and fear that not much preparation is done are interrelated. It is common that one would have fear when not much information is gathered. The fear is that the audience might be more knowledgeable than the presenter. Thus, when it comes to the 'question and answer' - Q & A session, the presenter may be worried that they will not be able to respond or to explain in detail. However, in this case, the feeling of fear can be reduced, if not overcome, when the presenters are ready. Ready in the sense that they are confident with the quality of ideas to be shared, with the awareness about the knowledge that they have and with the amount of

information that has been gathered. Here, preparedness and awareness seem to be the essential keys.

Instead of that, a presenter may also be afraid of the presentation due to feeling embarrassed; worried that their audience may have negative remarks and perception towards them professionally or physically (Dansieh et al., 2021). In another situation, presenters also can experience anxiety during their presentation when they are not well equipped with language skills. To be competent at language rules for instance grammar and syntax skills is indeed important to allow smooth presentation amongst the learners (Majidova, 2022). When they are not proficient; at English language for example, how prepared they are can still result in fear of the presentation (Naser and Isa, 2021). Xie et al (2019) in their study also found out that language barrier can be one of the presentation interference; however, given an interesting learning tool like 'virtual reality' (VR), the learners were found to feel free from presentation anxiety. This fearful feeling possibly could impact the whole presentation process negatively as the confidence level can be dropping. Presenting either in front of large audiences or to just a small number of crowds requires one to be motivated along the presentation. The active and positive support that comes from the audience is needed, and it turns out to be very helpful indeed as it encourages and motivates the presenters to perform better every moment - it can also strengthen their confidence. Hence, to ensure effective and successful presentation, presenters should build their strength earlier before the presentation day and learn to ignore unnecessary interference. The impact of fear of presentation can frustrate the presenters themselves and also can spoil the audience's excitement.

When many of us are excited over people's presentations and waiting to gain knowledge from it, at the same time, the presenters themselves are making preparations for the presentation. As mentioned earlier, preparation is the key (Hanifa and Yusra, 2018). This assists all presenters to be prepared mentally as well as in terms of content preparation. Speaking of preparations, this could be one way to help many presenters from feeling nervous and fearful over the presentation. For instance, presenters can almost always make themselves comfortable and less fear during the presentation when they are well-organized; that is, by getting ready with the necessary materials for presentation - for example; statistical data, some samples, pictures, etc, by arranging and organizing their content accordingly, by making sure that their appearance is presentable, and so forth. Moreover, presenters too can practise beforehand (Majidova, 2022) to help them remember the content and to help them be familiar with the presentation flow. Practicing in front of the mirror is very common to many of us because it helps the presenters to be aware of how their appearance - body language and facial expressions - may portray or look like. Practicing can also help to adjust the flow of one's presentation (Majidova, 2022). They may realize that they need to reorganize the content arrangement. By practicing in front of peers or family members can also help when presenters may receive constructive feedback from them. Peer-feedback to improve oral presentations has been found effective (Qaiser et al., 2022); and "a rewarding activity, as it encouraged class engagement, critical evaluation, student-to-student interaction, and the improvement of individual's presentation skills" (Selvi and Chandramohan, 2016). In addition, presenters also have to learn to relax and stay calm (Majidova, 2022). It is normal when people forget some examples to share or some points to highlight. Presenters are advised to stay calm and do not worry about the

audience. Presenters can always refer to their notes prepared. Panicking does not bring any good at this stage. Therefore, learn to be relaxed and learn to know your own potential that you manage. Furthermore, presenters can try to foresee what is expected of them during the presentation. They may need to understand well the content to be presented and that helps them to foresee what will be the questions that may be asked by the audience. When such preparation is done, presenters may feel secured and can reduce the fear over the presentation. Finally, presenters should allocate quality time for themselves before the presentation. They can either join the crowd for a few minutes to get to know some of the audience or the members, or they can spend time alone to find some inspiration. Though it takes few ways to reduce presentation fear and anxiety as mentioned above, the basic need is that all presenters have to be ready. Hence, the worry and the fear have to be seen as common obstacles that we can adjust and overcome.

Past Studies

Past Studies on Communication Strategies and Why people Fear of Oral Presentation

A qualitative study was done by Masitoh et al (2018) to investigate the use of communication strategies on the perspective of language proficiency. The participants chosen are twelve students with high and low proficiency level. They are second year students of English Education Department at one of the universities in Indonesia. Data was collected from a few sources such as observation, interview, and documentation. The results showed that the students with high proficiency level used five(5) types and ten (10) sub-types of communication strategies. The 5 types are avoidance or reduction strategies, achievement or compensatory strategies, stalling or time-gaining strategies, self-monitoring strategies and interactional strategies. whereas the ten sub-types were message abandonment, all-purpose words, non-linguistic means, restructuring, literal translation, fillers/hesitation devices/gambits, self-repetition, self-initiated repair, self-rephrasing, and appeal for help. Findings also showed that students with low proficiency level used four (4) types and nine (9) sub-types of communication strategies. This means that students with high proficiency level utilized more types and sub-types of communication strategies than the low proficient students did. The four types consisted of avoidance or reduction strategies, achievement or compensatory strategies, stalling or time-gaining strategies, and interactional strategies. While the nine sub-types are topic avoidance, message abandonment, restructuring, literal translation, code-switching, fillers/ hesitation devices/gambits, self-repetition, appeal for help, and meaning negotiation strategies. The study provides valuable contribution in introducing communication strategies and raising students' awareness to actually use English in real-life communication.

Next, the qualitative study by Grieve et al (2021) was done with two objectives. First, it sought to gather further insight into the fears experienced and strategies used by students who fear public speaking, including oral presentations. The second objective was to determine whether their fear affected their experience of higher education. Four open-ended questions was completed by 46 undergraduate and postgraduate students with a fear of public speaking from the University of the West of England (UWE), Bristol. Thematic analysis was used to identify the following six themes, namely: fear of being judged, physical symptoms, uncertainty about the topic, negative effect on university experience, practice and preparation, and more practical support needed. The results of this survey identified the

specific fears students have in public speaking and provide evidence of the overall negative effect on their higher education experience.

The quantitative study by Rahmat, et.al (2022) explored the relationship between the three constructs; fear of negative evaluation, external and internal reasons in oral presentation. 129 respondents responded to the instrument survey. The survey has 4 sections, section A has items on demographic profile, section B has 9 items on fear of negative evaluation, section C has 7 items on external factors, and section D has 7 items on internal factors. Findings revealed that there is a weak positive relationship between fear of negative evaluation and external and internal factors. There is a strong positive relationship between external and internal; factors.

Conceptual Framework of the Study

According to Yaman and Kavasoglu (2013), when people communicate, they use several types of strategies. Firstly, they may use (a) social-affective strategies and these strategies are strategies that includes lowering the anxiety, encouraging oneself, cooperating with others or even taking risks. Next is (b) fluency-oriented strategies are strategies that make the person pay attention to the rhythm and intonation of the communication. It is also paying attention to the pronunciation, conversation flow. It can also be changing the way of saying things according to the context. The next communication strategy is (c) negotiation for meaning. This includes making comprehension checks to ensure the listener understands what is being said. It also involves repeating what is being said until the listener understands. Nevertheless, some people focus on using (d) accuracy-oriented strategies. This includes attention to grammar and word order during conversation, using an expression which fits a rule, correcting oneself when he/she makes a mistake, or even emphasizes the subject and verb of the sentence. The last communication strategy is (e) message reduction, orientation and non-verbal strategies. This includes reducing the message and use simple expressions, using familiar words, replacing the original message with another message due to make the message clearer.

According to Endler (1980), the fear of oral presentation can be either external and internal. External causes can come from the learner being afraid of the marks they would get. They could also be haunted by their previous marks- low marks can repeat itself or good marks are difficult to get again. Intrinsic causes refer to the trait of the learner that makes them fear presentation. It could be their personality. Both types of fear can be also be "push" factors that encourage learners to strive to do their best when it comes oral presentation. Learners are motivated to look for information and this knowledge-searching improves their critical thinking skills and become more persuasive in their presentation of ideas (Rahmat, 2020)



Figure 1- Conceptual Framework of the Study-Communication Strategies and why Learners Fear Oral Presentations

Methodology

This quantitative pilot study is done to explore the perception of learners on their use of communication strategies and also on their fear of oral presentation. 51 participants responded to a survey with 5 Likert-scale of never, rarely, sometimes, very often and always. There are three sections in the survey. Section A has 3 items on demographic profile. Section B has 26 items on Communications strategies and they are adopted from (Yaman and Kavasoglu, 2013). Section C has 14 items on Causes of Fear of Oral Presentation adopted from (Ender, 1980).

Table 1

Distribution of Items in Survey

SECTION	VARIABLE	SUB-COMPONENT STRATEGIES/FACTORS	NO OF ITEMS
B	COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES (CS) Yaman & Kavasoglu (2013)	Social-affective	6
		Fluency-oriented	6
		Negotiation for Meaning S	4
		Accuracy Oriented	5
		Message reduction, orientation and non-verbal	5
		Total for cs	26
C	CAUSES OF FEAR OR ORAL PRESENTATION Ender (1980)	External factors	7
		Internal factors	7
		Total for fear	14
	Total number of items		40

Table 2 shows the reliability statistics for the survey. SPSS analysis showed a Cronbach alpha of .886, thus revealing a high reliability for the instrument.

Table 2

Reliability Statistics for the Survey

Reliability Statistics	
Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.886	40

Findings

Findings for Participants' Demographic Profile

Q1. Respondents' Gender

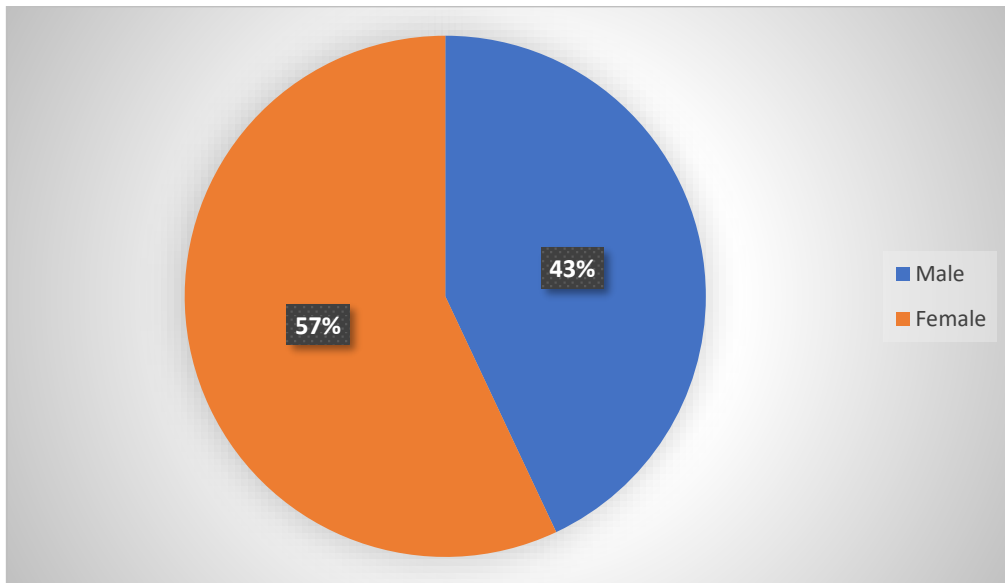


Figure 2 -Percentage for Gender

Figure 2 above shows the percentage of the participants' gender. Fifty seven per cent of them were females, while 43 per cent were male students.

Q2 Respondents' Cluster

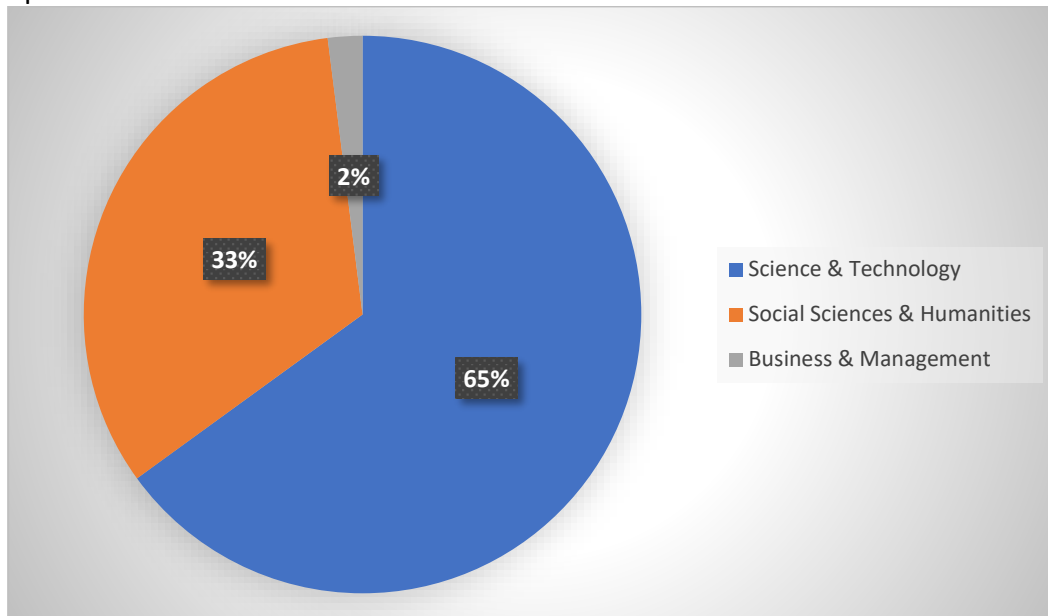


Figure 3 -Percentage for Cluster

Figure 3 indicates the percentage of clusters the participants belonged in. The highest (65%) belonged in the science and technology cluster, while the lowest was in the social sciences and humanities. The other 2 per cent was in the business and management cluster.

Q3. How many years have you been exposed to the experience of giving oral presentations?

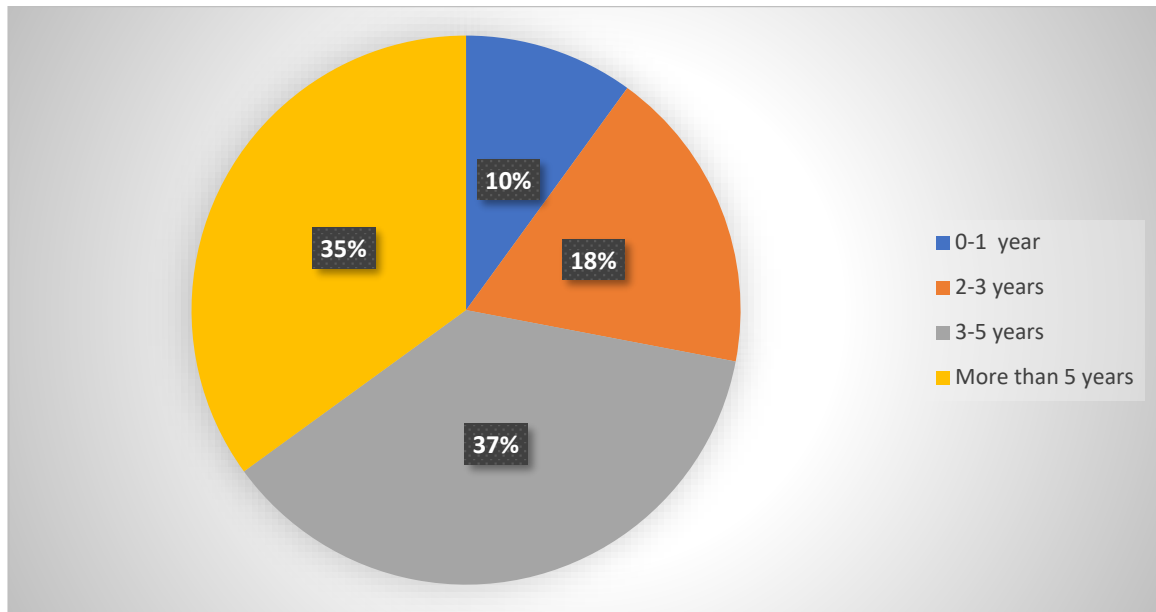


Figure 4 -Percentage for Experience with Oral Presentation

The figure above portrays the participants' number of years of experiences doing oral presentations. Majority of them, with 35 per cent, had experience of between 3 to 5 years of doing oral presentations. Meanwhile, the lowest was zero to a year, with 10 per cent. The other 35 per cent had more than 5 years of experience and another 18 per cent had 2 to 3 years of experience.

Findings for Communication Strategies

This section presents data to answer research question no 1: How do communication strategies influence oral presentation? In the context of this study, communication strategies are (i) social-affective strategies, (ii) fluency-oriented, (iii) negotiation for meaning strategies, (iv) accuracy-oriented strategies, and (v) message reduction, orientation, and non-verbal strategies.

i) Social-Affective Strategies

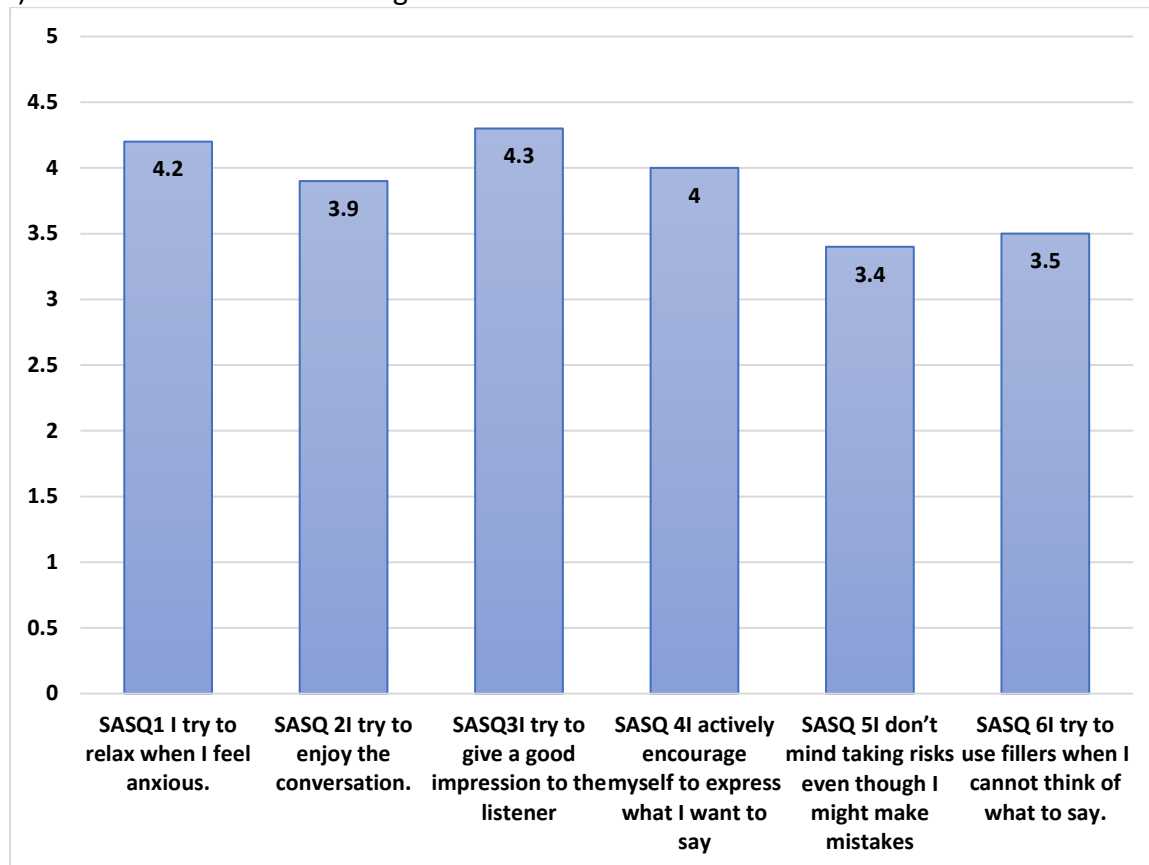


Figure 5- Mean for Social-Affective Strategies

Figure 5 shows the findings on participants' preference on the use of social affective strategies when communicating. The highest mean of $M=4.3$ indicated most of the participants preferred using a strategy of giving a good impression to the listener when communicating. This shows that many of them are interested about how the audience feel about them when presenting. This is followed by a mean of $M=4.2$ referring to participants' preference of relaxing when feeling anxious. These participants could be seen to feel the importance of being calm when they feel anxious communicating. The next mean ($M=4$) showed there were participants who wanted to encourage themselves to express what they wanted to say, illustrating the need to motivate themselves when speaking as well as to reflect confidence in speech. The other mean, which was $M=3.9$, showed that the participants try to enjoy the conversation as a strategy to communicate. They seem to prefer to just view the communication positively. The other item, SASQ 6I, which was the strategy of using fillers when they could not think of what to say with a mean of $M=3.5$, could refer to a way for them not to look lost or out of content when interacting or presenting. The lowest mean ($M=3.4$) was on the preference of willing to take risks despite making mistakes, indicating their least preference on readiness and knowledge that there will be mistakes when delivering their message.

ii) Fluency Oriented Strategies

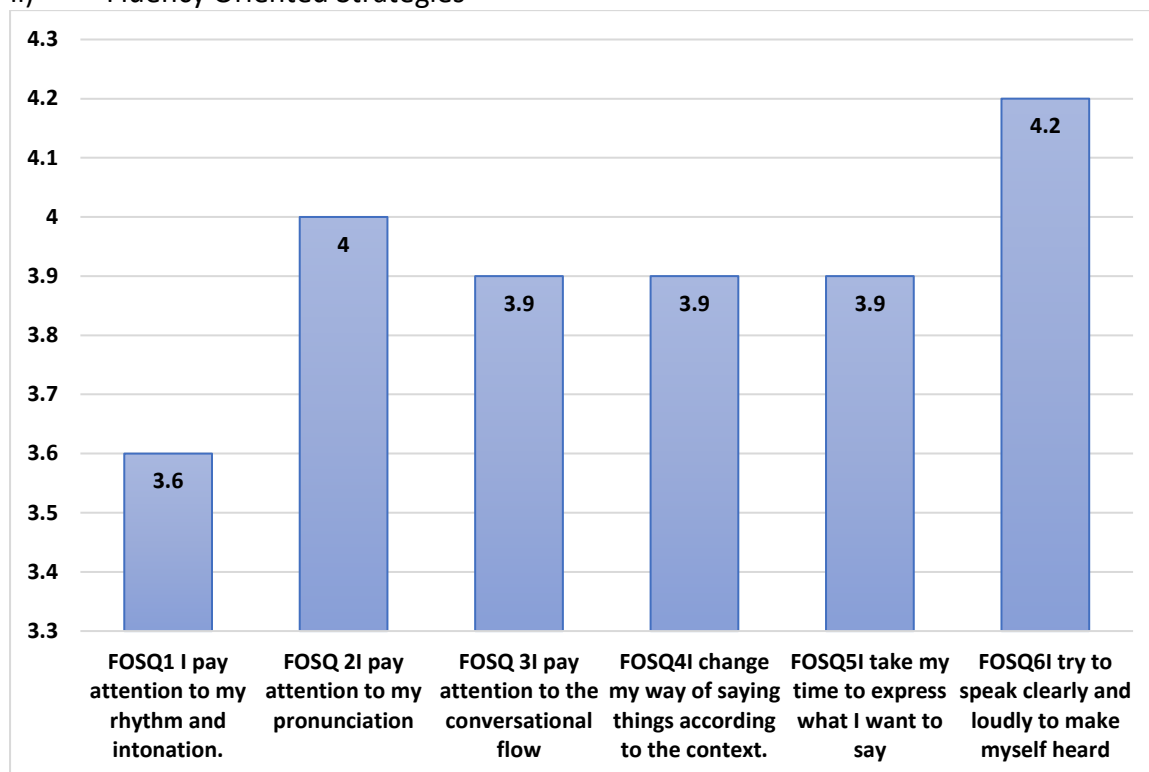


Figure 6- Mean for Fluency Oriented Strategies

Figure 6 illustrates the findings on CS used by the participants categorised as fluency oriented strategies. The highest mean of $M=4.2$ indicated that most of the participants tried to speak clearly and loudly to make themselves heard. This may indicate that they feel clear pronunciation and projected voice will help others understand them. The other mean ($M=4$) showed their use of paying attention to pronunciation strategy, indicating their emphasis on saying the words right to get messages across. The other 3 strategies involving paying attention to conversational flow, changing their way of saying things according to the context and taking their time to express what they wanted to say reflected a mean of $M=3.9$ respectively. This could mean there is a similar emphasis among the respondents on these aspects of fluency oriented strategies. These could assist them in organising what they want to communicate, helping them to express certain messages in certain ways, and not rushing to get their message across. The lowest mean ($M=3.6$) referred to the participants' least preference on paying attention to their rhythm and intonation when speaking, indicating their lack of value of clarity in speech by the way they speak.

iii) Negotiation for Meaning Strategies

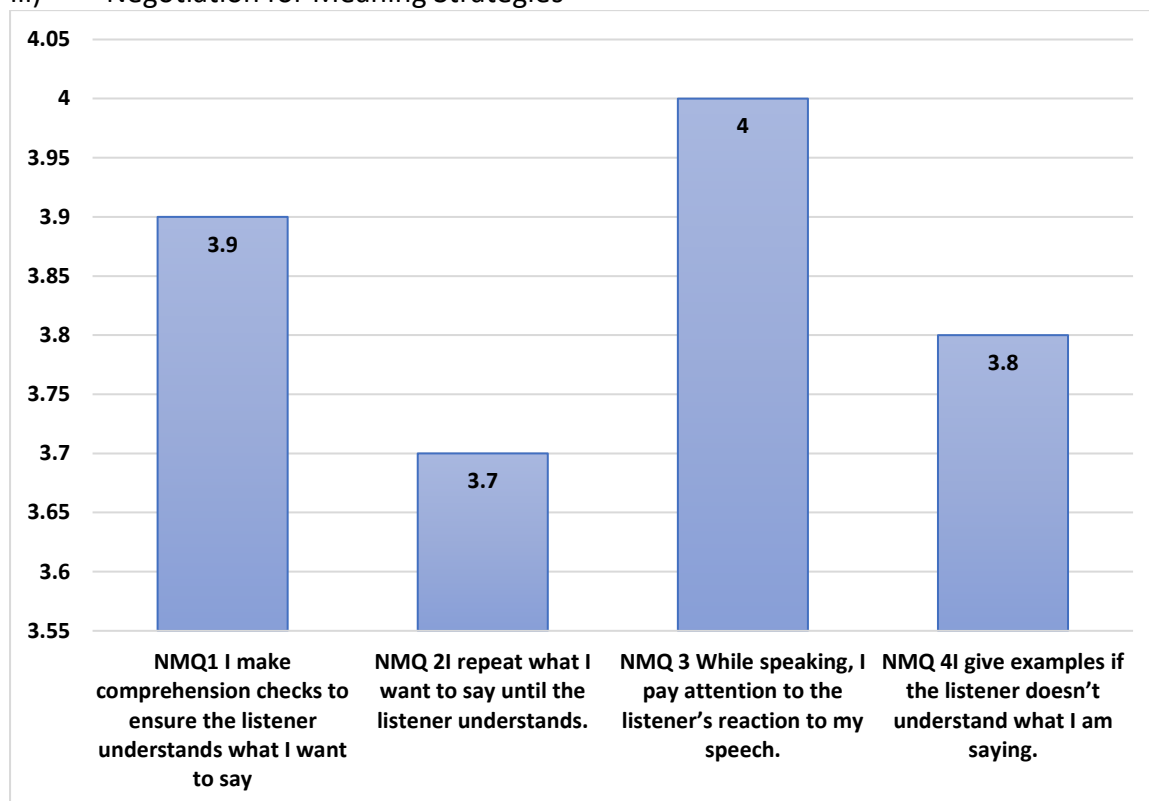


Figure 7- Mean for Negotiation for Meaning Strategies

The figure above reveals the participants' frequency of the use of negotiation for meaning strategies when communicating. The highest mean ($M=4$) showed many of the respondents paid attention to the listener's reaction to their speech. They could be seen to place an importance on what others think or feel about what they said to ensure clear communication. The following mean of $M=3.9$ indicated their frequency of choice to make comprehension checks to ensure their listener understood what they want to say. This may suggest their emphasis on the need to check clarity of their content or language before delivering the message. Meanwhile, a mean of $M=3.8$ showed the frequency of use of examples if the listener did not understand what they were saying. These participants may want to use examples to further explain what they want to say better, hence improving communication with their listeners. Finally, the lowest mean of $M=3.7$ showed the least frequency of the use of repetition of what they wanted to say until the listener understands when communicating. They may value repetition strategy until others follow or remember what they are saying the least.

iv) Accuracy-Oriented Strategies

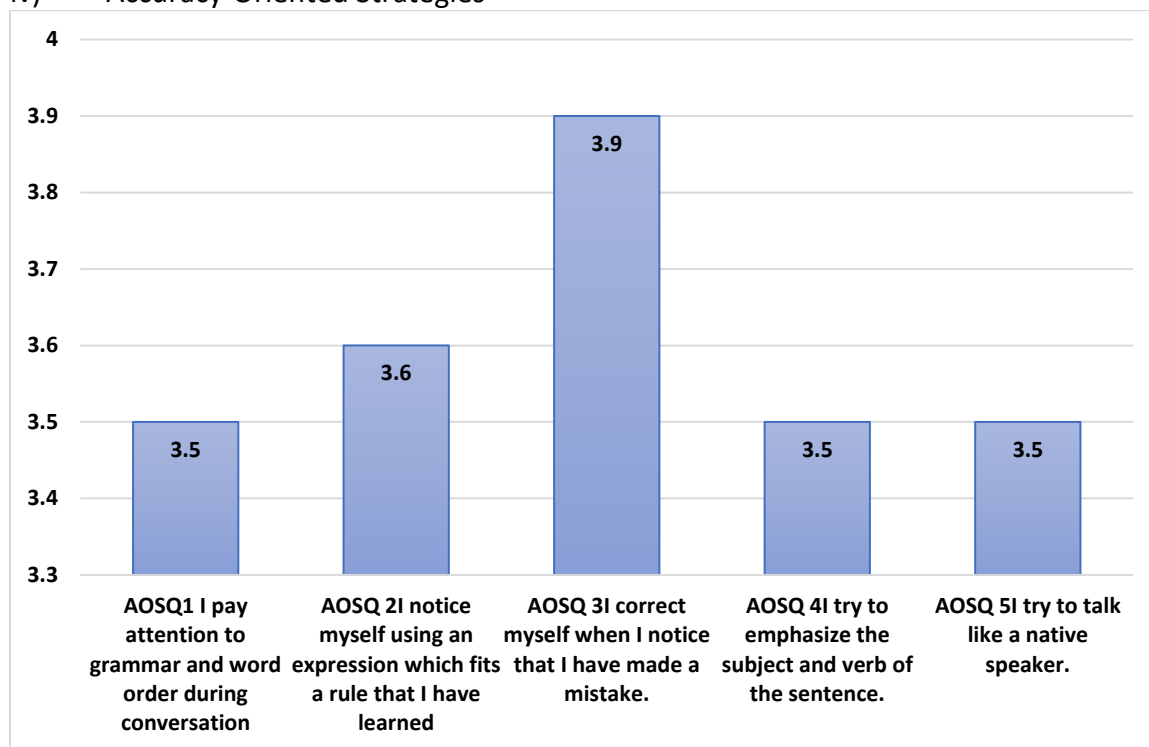


Figure 8- Mean for Accuracy -Oriented Strategies

The findings above portray the frequency of the use of accuracy oriented strategies when interacting. The mean of $M=3.9$ was the highest, indicating the most frequently used strategy of correcting themselves when they noticed that they had made a mistake. This highly used strategy among the respondents could reveal they would want to make as little mistakes as possible and that they are aware of language rules to create a more accurate delivery. The mean of $M=3.6$ referred to the strategy of using an expression when it fits the rule they learnt. This could reflect the participants' emphasis on using suitable language expression to create clarity and flow in what they are communicating. The lowest mean of $M=3.5$ was derived from 3 strategies least utilised, namely paying attention to grammar and word order during conversation, emphasising subject and verb of the sentence and trying to talk like a native speaker. There are similar, but the least emphasis on these 3 strategies that may indicate a balanced focus on syntax and to speak as accurately or closely like it is their mother tongue.

v) Message Reduction, Orientation, and Non-Verbal Strategies

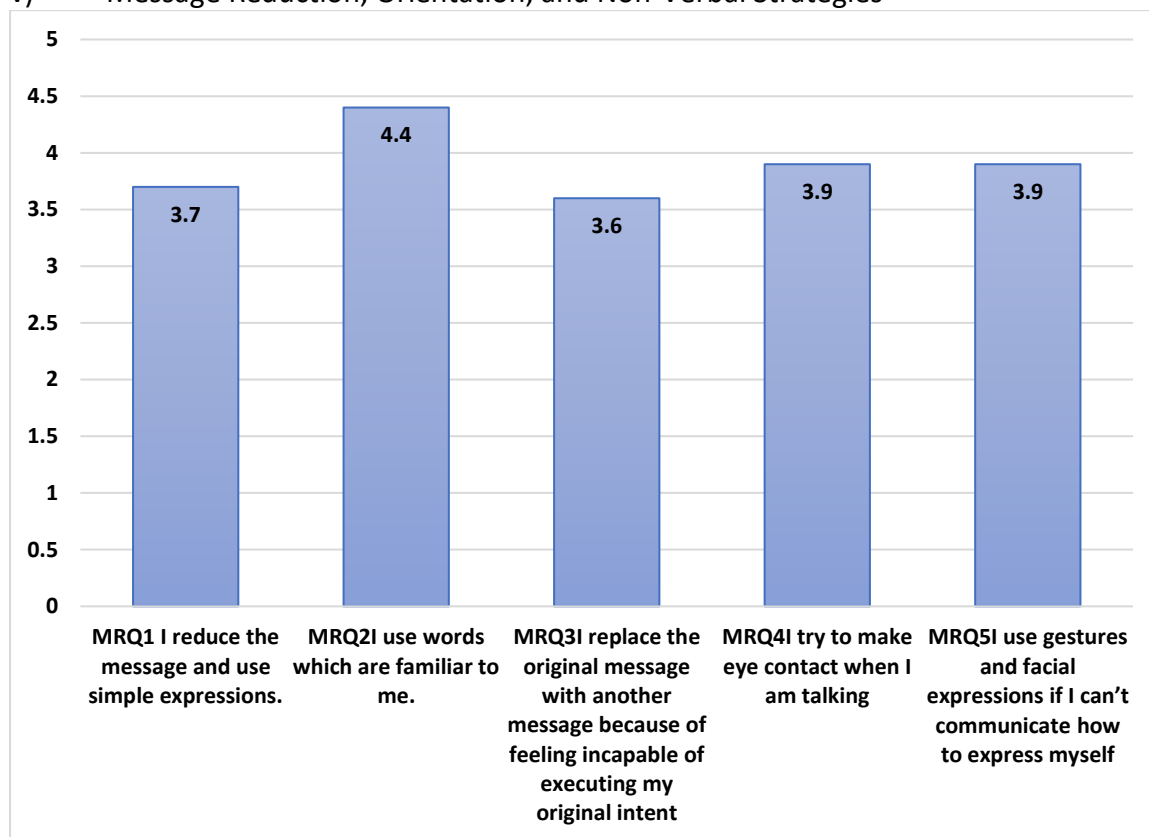


Figure 9- Mean for Message Reduction, Orientation and Non-Verbal Strategies

This paragraph reveals the final finding for RQ1 that is under the element of 'message reduction, orientation, and non-verbal strategies'. With the five (5) items asked, item MRQ2I shows the highest mean ($M=4.4$). This is to demonstrate that the respondents highly prefer to "use words which are familiar to them" when communicating and also when they are to face problems to deliver the information during the communication takes place. They will feel more confident choosing the words or the vocabularies that they know of the meaning in order to ensure meaningful communication. Items MRQ4I and MRQ5I shared the second highest mean score with $M=3.9$. The respondents revealed that they would apply non-verbal strategies to ensure effective information transfer. It can be observed that the respondents chose to use eye-contact; which is a good communication skill, that they can obviously see how the recipients (the audience and/or the other communicators) react when they are speaking or presenting. Here, it can provide the speakers or presenters a kind of signal that the audience or the other communicators fully understand what has been delivered. This finding also shows that the respondents chose to use their creativity by applying 'gestures and facial expressions' when they have difficulty to explain or to deliver any particular information in detail. The next mean, that is $M=3.7$, is the third highest. The respondents shared the idea that they will 'reduce the message and use simple expressions' during communication. This is to show the effort made in order to deliver information; the respondents are observed not to give up hope to transmit the information though the task is challenging. The drawback is that the message conveyed may not be completely delivered. However, it is a good effort when the presenters have the courage to keep the conversation active. The lowest mean score is item MRQ3I (replace the original message with another message because of feeling incapable of executing my original intent) with

M=3.6. This is not a popular choice as the respondents may feel that changing the original idea may lead to confusion, may cause misinterpretation to the recipients or the content to be transmitted may not be the exact intention of the speakers.

Findings for Fear of Oral Presentation

This section presents data to answer research question no 2: How does fear of oral presentation influence oral presentation? In the context of this study, fear of oral presentation is caused by (i) external and (ii) internal factors.

i. External Factors

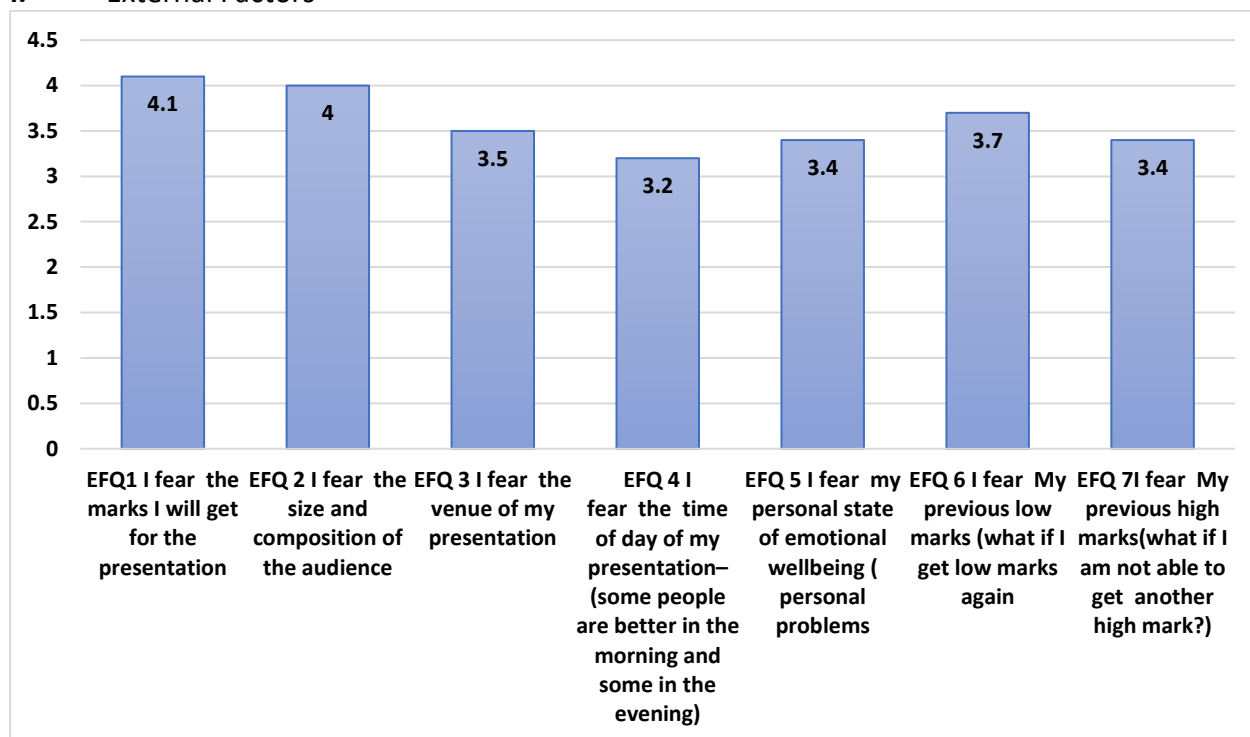


Figure 10- Mean for External Factors

This finding is to answer RQ2 - fear of oral presentation is caused by (i) external factors. The highest mean is M=4 that is for item EFQ1 (I fear the marks I will get for the presentation). The respondents are observed to have high concern over their evaluation marks. This seems a very typical mindset that assessment score becomes the priority. The second highest mean that is M=4.0 is for item EFQ 2 (I fear the size and composition of the audience). The result shows that the large crowd again becomes one fearful factor by the presenters or speakers - in which many studies have reported the same findings (Dansieh et al., 2021). The next mean is M=3.7 which is the third highest score - this is for item EFQ 6 (I fear my previous low marks (what if I get low marks again). The fourth highest mean is for item EFQ 3 (I fear the venue of my presentation) with mean score M=3.5. This factor could cause fear and anxiety amongst the presenters possibly when they are not familiar with the new environment or the different culture of the audience. This can create worries and uneasiness amongst the presenters - that their confidence level too can be decreasing. The fifth mean score is shared by two items that are EFQ 5 (I fear my personal state of emotional wellbeing - personal problems) and EFQ 7I (fear that my previous high marks (what if I am not able to get another high mark?) with M=3.4. The respondents seem to fear if their personal problem could ruin their excitement

and their concentration over the presentations. This is not supposed to occur to presenters as the focus to remember the content is required at this stage. In addition, the respondents also are still concerned over their marks of evaluation. However, this item is not as popular as the previous items that shows the respondents are worried if they would score very low. Finally, the lowest mean score which is the least favourite amongst the respondents is $M=3.2$. This is for item EFQ 4 (I fear the time of day of my presentation – some people are better in the morning and some in the evening). This factor is not so much affecting the respondents regarding their presentation. Time factor is not the main fear after all.

ii. Internal Factors

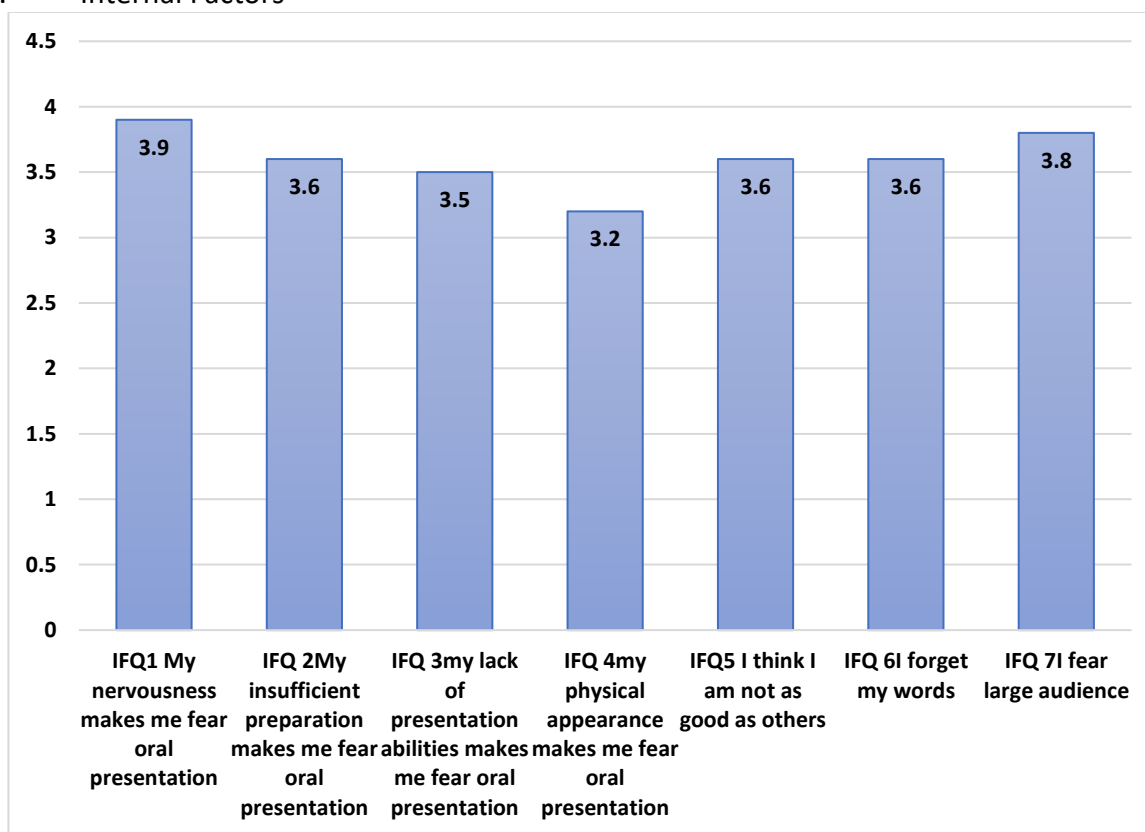


Figure 11- Mean for Internal Factors

This final finding is to answer RQ2 - fear of oral presentation is caused by (i) internal factors. This is to investigate if internal factors affect the respondents' presentation. The highest mean is for item IFQ1 (My nervousness makes me fear oral presentation) with $M=3.9$. The respondents revealed that they fear the most when they start to be nervous. This is common feedback when nervous and panic attacks almost always are causing fear of communication - in public especially. The second highest mean score with $M=3.8$ is for item IFQ 7I (fear large audience). The feeling of fear perhaps can be because the presenters may have the worry about being questioned by the audience. Nevertheless, if the presenters are well prepared, this obstacle can be overcome. In addition, the third highest mean is shared by three items that are items IFQ 2 (My insufficient preparation makes me fear oral presentation); IFQ5 (I think I am not as good as others); and, IFQ 6 (I forget my words), with $M=3.6$. These responses revealed that the respondents may lack preparation and practice. These three items required a presenter to be ready beforehand; that lack of preparation in terms of content and the

presenters themselves can decrease confidence level. Without a high confidence level, presenters may feel that they are not good enough or not qualified enough for the presentation and as a result, they may not be able to remember the content. Next, the second least popular is for item IFQ 3 (my lack of presentation abilities makes me fear oral presentation) with $M=3.5$. Finally, the lowest mean of all is item IFQ 4 (my physical appearance makes me fear oral presentation) with $M=3.2$. This factor of physical appearance is very subjective that different individuals may experience differently. Therefore, it is observed from this study that physical appearance is not a favourite item and it possibly does not affect the respondents negatively.

Conclusion

Summary of Findings and Discussion

This study focuses on investigating whether communication strategies influence oral presentation. The summary of findings below explores how their choice of strategies would influence how they would communicate orally in public in the best or most effective way.

In terms of the use of social affective strategies, the frequently utilised strategy shows that many of them are interested about how the audience feel about them when presenting. They may feel that creating positive perception among listeners, for example by getting listeners' attention, would assist them to communicate better with the audience. On the other hand, the least preferred social affective strategy indicates their lesser concern on making mistakes when communicating.

The participants' choice of fluency oriented strategies indicated that most of the participants may want to speak clearly and project their voice to deliver their message. Meanwhile, the least preferred fluency oriented strategy may reveal their lack of value on clarity in speech by the way they speak. Thus, these findings show many of the respondents may want to place an importance on what others think or feel about what they said to determine clear communication. However, the least used strategy may indicate they do not want to mention the same thing more than once when communicating. Based on findings on the accuracy oriented strategies, this could reveal they would want to make as little mistakes as possible and that they are aware of language rules to create a more accurate delivery. The least used strategy may mean that they possess the least knowledge in syntax and language structure to help them when communicating. In terms of message reduction, orientation and non-verbal strategies, they could be highly confident in choosing the words or the vocabularies that they know the meaning of in order to ensure meaningful communication. The lowest choice on changing the original idea strategy may reveal that they feel that changing the original idea may lead to confusion and misinterpretation among the recipients, or the content to be transmitted may not be the exact intention of the speakers.

It can also be generally concluded that most participants seem to be more inclined towards strategies involving the affective nature of involving other people and how others would receive their messages, as well as familiarity of words in how they feel could best help them communicate publicly. Findings from this study on the highly utilised strategies involving their preference on the importance of dealing with the audience, making self corrections and using clear speech seem to correlate with types of strategies used by students of high proficiency, which are self monitoring strategies and interactional strategies, as well as sub strategies of repeating and repairing, as revealed by (Masitoh et al., 2018).

In reference to answering a research question on how fear of oral presentation influences oral presentations, significant findings on factors causing them to fear oral presentations reflect how they would feel presenting orally and lead to how it would affect the way they would do presentations. In terms of external factors causing them to fear oral presentations, the respondents are observed to have the highest concern over their evaluation marks which could determine how they would value and do oral presentations. Furthermore, this seems to be a very typical mindset that assessment score becomes the priority when doing oral presentations. The least feared external factor is time of their presentation that does not seem to affect the respondents much when presenting. Internally, nervousness is the largest factor that they feel makes them fear speaking in public, which could reveal how negative emotions on public speaking could influence how they would speak in a target language. Fear of their physical appearance is what they feared the least which possibly indicates that how they look does not affect the respondents negatively when presenting in public. The biggest fear factor of nervousness when presenting orally found from this study's participants relates to Grieve et al (2021) findings on how the majority of its participants' fear of public speaking would be reflected in physical signs due to nervousness and stress.

Pedagogical Implications and Suggestions for Future Research

Based on the research findings, it can be said that the stakeholders that are the policy makers, schools, universities, and so forth need to furnish both educators and students with a better equipped teaching and learning environment. This effort would help educators and students to have a positive attitude towards learning and acquiring communication and presentation skills. Since presentation is known as a critical task for many individuals, perhaps, more creative but challenging activities should be planned and conducted with easy, manageable and approachable activities. The learning has to be adaptable so that learners can experience ease of learning.

As for future research, it could be suggested that future researchers look into other challenges such as the relationship between language skills and presentation skills, as well as to look into latest strategies, innovative methods or interesting activities that could help students to be more interested in acquiring communication and presentation skills, and also to be more enthusiastic to apply creative and better enhanced strategies in order to be more competent. Finally, future research could use qualitative methods in order to get more in-depth data.

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