

Proficient Language Learners' Perception on the Use of Affective Strategies in Presentation

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ABSTRACT

EFL learners employ various strategies in presentation. Affective strategies help them to give effective presentation in English on any topic. The objective of this study was to find out the most frequently used affective strategies adopted by the proficient learners of the Department of English, Jagannath University, Dhaka, Bangladesh, in their presentation sessions. A mixed-methods approach was used to collect the data in this research. The participants of this research were fourteen (five males and nine females) proficient learners. Oxford's (1990) SILL ("Strategy Inventory for Language Learning") questionnaire and interview were used to collect the data. The result showed that the good language learners employed the following affective strategy most frequently to develop their presentation skills: "I encourage myself to speak a foreign language even when I am afraid of making a mistake" (50%). The next most frequently used strategy was "I talk to someone else about how I feel when I am learning a foreign language" (42.85%). The third most used strategy was "I notice if I am tensed or nervous when I am studying or using a foreign language" (28.59%). The findings of the research will help learners to develop their presentation skills in English in Bangladesh.

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1. Introduction

EFL learners employ various strategies in presentation. Affective strategies are emotional features which help them to apply effective presentation techniques. The language teachers can inquire about the use of affective strategies in the learners' presentation sessions.

According to Oxford and Crookall (1989), language learning strategies are "actions, behaviors, steps, or techniques – such as seeking out target language conversation partners, or giving oneself encouragement to tackle a difficult language task – used by learners to enhance learning" (29). To learn a foreign language effectively, learners consciously use specific external skills, which can be termed as learning strategies (Reid, 1998). Language learning strategies are the deliberate choice of procedures in taking actions to develop their foreign language learning through "the storage, retention, recall, and application of information about that language" (Cohen, 1998, p. 4; Lestari & Wahyudin, 2020; Rahman, 2018). Language learning strategies are comprised of cognitive strategies, meta-cognitive strategies, affective strategies and social strategies (Cohen, 2000; Kosimova, 2022; Pawlak & Oxford, 2018). O'Malley and Chamot (1990) classify the language learning strategies into three types: cognitive, meta-cognitive and affective or social strategies. Oxford (1990) maintains that affective strategies provide learners adequate means by which they can efficiently deal with "their own emotions, motivation, and attitudes, such as lowering anxiety, self-rewards, self-encouragement".

According to Rossiter (2003), learners can make a relationship between "the learning environment" and "their personal strength of learning" with the help of affective strategies. In the research of Wijirahayu and Dorand (2018), it was revealed that the learners' positive attitudes greatly impact the use of affective strategies, which motivate them to speak and give presentations by reducing anxiety.

Norah and Daniel (2021) state that good language learners enjoy learning a language as they are highly motivated. Lai (2009) maintains that "It is believed that strategies used by successful learners may be learned by less successful learners, and language instructors can assist the language learning process by helping learners develop

appropriate strategies". More research should be done to find out the reasons behind the success of the good language learners.

Proficient language learners are fully aware of the relationship between a positive attitude towards language learning factors and learning procedures. To learn a foreign language, they can apply their knowledge of self-mastery over their emotions and attitudes. Rubin and Thompson (1982) define a good language learner in the following way: "Good learners find their own way", "Good learners organize information about language", and "Good learners make their own opportunities, and find strategies for getting practice in using the language inside and outside the classroom".

Another key term is presentation skills, which are productive skills. These skills are "the abilities one needs in order to deliver compelling, engaging, informative, transformative, educational, enlightening, and/or instructive presentations. Central to effective presentation skills are public speaking, tone of voice, body language, creativity, and delivery" (Eilers). In this research, new avenues will be explored to find out the relationship between the use of affective strategies and the performance of the learners in presentation.

Researchers have conducted significant research to explore the students' perceptions of using affective strategies in learning presentation skills. No studies have attempted to discern a relationship between affective strategies and students' presentation skills at the Department of English, Jagannath University, Dhaka, Bangladesh. The results of this research will play a significant role in improving their presentation skills. The teachers will also be enriched with the knowledge about their students' preferences and they can cater to their needs accordingly in the classroom.

The results of this research will play a significant role in improving their presentation skills as it will reveal the degree of their getting relaxed during presentation sessions, their self-encouragement, their rewarding or treating themselves, their self-observation of getting nervous, their expression of feelings in a language learning diary, their sharing of feelings to another person etc. The teachers will also be enriched with the knowledge about their students' preferences and they can cater to their needs accordingly in the classroom

The study investigated the following research question: Which affective strategies do successful learners of the Department of English, Jagannath University, Dhaka, Bangladesh, employ more frequently to develop their presentation performance?

2. Methodology

2.1. Research Design

The objective of this study was to find out the most frequently used affective strategies adopted by the proficient learners of the Department of English, Jagannath University, Dhaka, Bangladesh, in their presentation sessions. In this study, a mixed-methods approach was used to collect the data.

2.2. Population

The participants of this research were fourteen (five males and nine females) accomplished learners. The learners' scores (more than 80% marks) in the final presentation examination denoted the term "proficient".

2.3. Instruments

To collect the data, Oxford's (1990) SILL ("Strategy Inventory for Language Learning") questionnaire was used. The frequency of students' language learning strategy use was measured by SILL questionnaire with 5-point Likert scale options, i.e. 'never true of me', 'usually not true of me', 'somewhat true of me', 'usually true of me', and 'always true of me'. Only six items which denote affective strategies were chosen for data collection. The interview provided answers to the questions, which assisted to understand the learners' perceptions better. The quantitative data was validated by this procedure. Five students participated in a semi-structured interview on the learners' use of affective strategies. The interview data was transcribed by the researcher.

2.4. Data Analysis

A descriptive statistical analysis was followed to analyze the data collected by the questionnaire to find out the relationship between the use of affective strategies and the performance of the learners in presentation skills. A qualitative procedure was also used to analyze the interview data.

3. Result and Discussion

3.1. Research Findings

Research findings on the affective strategies of the proficient learners were analyzed below:

Table 1. Affective Strategies used by the good students to develop their presentation skills

No.	Affective Strategies	1	2	3	4	5
1.	"I try to relax whenever I feel afraid of using a foreign language"	1	2	8	2	2
2.	"I encourage myself to speak a foreign language even when I am afraid of making a mistake"	0	0	5	7	2
3.	"I give myself a reward or treat when I do well in a foreign language"	4	4	1	3	2
4.	"I notice if I am tensed or nervous when I am studying or using a foreign language"	1	5	2	4	2
5.	"I write down my feelings in a language learning diary"	6	2	3	2	1
6.	"I talk to someone else about how I feel when I am learning a foreign language"	3	3	0	6	2

Table 1 shows the affective strategies employed by the proficient learners in their presentation sessions. It was revealed that the proficient learners used the following affective strategy: "I encourage myself to speak a foreign language even when I am afraid of making a mistake" (50%). The second most frequently used affective strategy was: "I talk to someone else about how I feel when I am learning a foreign language" (42.85%). The next one was: "I notice if I am tensed or nervous when I am studying or using a foreign language" (28.59%).

3.2. Qualitative Results

The semi-structured interview conducted by the researcher facilitated the quantitative data. Selected affective strategies were used more frequently by the proficient language learners for the development of their presentation. The most frequently used affective strategy was "I encourage myself to speak a foreign language even when I am afraid of making a mistake".

During the interview, they expressed their preferences and these were similar to the quantitative data. The proficient learners reported during the interviews in the following ways:

"My belief is learning starts from mistakes and encourage myself to speak in SL". (Proficient learner 1)

"Because I am not hopeless. That's why, this is true of me". (Proficient learner 2)

"Yes, usually I think of the progress from my college life". (Proficient learner 3)

"To build up a good confidence level, I encourage myself." (Proficient learner 4)

"It is the best way to be a fluent speaker." (Proficient learner 5)

The second preferred affective strategy was "I talk to someone else about how I feel when I am learning a foreign language." The participants gave their opinions in the following manner:

"By sharing my feelings in SL, I actually practice speaking". (Proficient learner 1)

"I share my positive feelings with my friends". (Proficient learner 2)

"I talk to my best friend about how I am learning SL. He motivates me to learn". (Proficient learner 3)

"So that I can calm myself". (Proficient learner 4)

"I always share SL learning with my elder brother, and he encourages me". (Proficient learner 5)

The next preferred affective strategy was “I notice if I am tensed or nervous when I am studying or using a foreign language.”

“For removing anxiety, I follow this. This is usually true of me”. (Proficient learner 1)

“Yes, sometimes I do it to continue my speech”. (Proficient learner 2)

“Before presenting myself, sometimes I feel that I am nervous or afraid, but while presenting or after presenting naturally I get no time to feel this”. (Proficient learner 3)

“This statement occurs always with me. For example, I notice when I give a presentation, I cannot speak properly. Even most of the sentences I mix up. I cannot manage properly”. (Proficient learner 4)

“I notice my tension or nervousness as a new SL learner, but I recover my nervousness as early possible”. (Proficient learner 5)

The qualitative result also showed that the proficient learners preferred these affective strategies to develop their presentation skills.

3.3. Discussion

It was found from the data obtained from the SILL questionnaire that the good language learners' most frequently used affective strategy was “I encourage myself to speak a foreign language even when I am afraid of making a mistake” (50%). The next most frequently used strategy was an affective strategy “I talk to someone else about how I feel when I am learning a foreign language” (42.85%).” This was followed by the affective strategy “I notice if I am tensed or nervous when I am studying or using a foreign language” (28.59%).

The proficient learners applied the strategy of self-encouragement most frequently in practising presentation skills. 60% of learners usually preferred affective strategy no. 2: “I encourage myself to speak a foreign language even when I am afraid of making a mistake.” Without practising a new language, a learner will not be able to present any topic spontaneously. Therefore, many learners try to speak up in their own ways to break the ice and utter the words fluently.

The affective strategy no. 6: “I talk to someone else about how I feel when I am learning a foreign language” was the second frequently used one. 42.85% accomplished learners mentioned that they usually used this strategy. Expression of one's feelings about learning a language to a friend or family member may increase the learner's confidence level.

28.59% of good students usually preferred affective strategy no. 4 (“I notice if I am tensed or nervous when I am studying or using a foreign language”) to develop their presentation skills. During presentation, learners get anxious and it is a common phenomenon. In this situation, being aware of anxiety and getting relaxed are the pre-requisites for learning a new language.

57.14% of the proficient learners chose “somewhat true of me” when they gave their opinion about affective strategy no. 1: “I try to relax whenever I feel afraid of using a foreign language.” They can take long breathe peacefully, meditate or listen to music to get relaxed before giving a presentation.

The quantitative data was validated by the interview sessions. The proficient learners become conscious of their use of the affective strategies. Frequent use of different categories of affective strategies and their effect on the good language learners are presented in the findings and discussion. The results showed that these strategies were very beneficial for the language learners when they give English-language presentations on any topic. These findings are consistent with several related studies. Roboh and Tedjaatmadja, (2016) showed that the learners frequently used the affective strategies, namely “lowering anxiety” and “encouraging oneself”. The affective strategy “taking your emotional temperature” was the least frequently used strategy by the learners. Vijaya, (2012) found in his study on “Student's Socio-affective Strategy in Reading” that the learners chose the following affective strategy: taking emotional temperature strategy through wise risk-taking. The findings of Indriana, (2019) showed that most students used affective strategies, including lowering anxiety, encouraging themselves, and taking their emotional temperature.

The proficient learners employ a few useful affective strategies which assist them to be efficient learners. Less competent learners can use these strategies to observe which strategies are suitable for them. In this case, teachers will be conscious about the learners' problems and may ask their students to practice these affective strategies in the

classroom and outside to solve those problems. Several training sessions for the teachers can be arranged to assist them in being knowledgeable about language learning strategies. Meditation, yoga and breathing exercise sessions can also be arranged by the authority to reduce the anxiety and nervousness of the learners in order that their performance in presentation will be improved.

4. Conclusion

The results of this research indicate that the proficient learners most frequently used the following affective strategies: "I encourage myself to speak a foreign language even when I am afraid of making a mistake", "I talk to someone else about how I feel when I am learning a foreign language", and "I encourage myself to speak a foreign language even when I am afraid of making a mistake". The finding will help learners, teachers and researchers in the development of the foreign language pedagogy. Awareness will be created among the learners regarding using specific affective strategies. Furthermore, the teachers will be able to incorporate effective affective strategies. This research will also assist the researchers in finding out new ways to nurture learners' positive attitudes towards English presentation.

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