

English Oral Presentation Skills among DAD1 Students of Politeknik Sultan Mizan Zainal Abidin

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Abstract

This action research is aimed to overcome students' difficulties in delivering good English oral presentation. This research involves 40 semester one Diploma in Mechanical Engineering (Automotive) students of Politeknik Sultan Mizan Zainal Abidin (PSMZA) June 2017 session. The objectives of this research are to find out the oral presentation skills of DAD1-S1 students, to identify the factors that lead to ineffective English oral presentation skills and to find out students interest in preparing effective English oral presentation skills. The methodologies used in this research are combination of quantitative and qualitative. The data were gathered through questionnaires and also from observation and was analyzed using graphs and tables. Based on data gathered, it was found that 62% of students have limited ability to deliver good oral presentation. Therefore, three action plans have been implemented within 10 weeks in order to help students to excel in oral presentation. The action plans carried out were videos viewing, topic of interest presentation and phonetic learning. Based on the action plans conducted, 63% of DAD1-S1 students showed positive improvement in oral presentation in final observation. Confident level was found as the main factor lead to ineffective oral presentation of the students. 55% students claimed they have interest in preparing and delivering good presentation. The results of the actions implemented verified that students' oral presentation skills can be improved if they are given sufficient exposure and practices.

Keywords : English, Oral, Presentation skills

Reflection

English may not be the most spoken language in the world but it is the official language in a large number of countries. Being able to communicate well in English will eventually boost one's confidence in dealing with other people. Communication skills facilitate myriad of life opportunities. Mastering good communication skills can also aid one's life, career and relationships to become more successful. Malaysia is one of the countries that regards English as a second language. Thus making the language as one of the entry requirements for Malaysian students to join local universities and colleges.

In polytechnic, English is one of the compulsory courses and it is offered for semester 1, 3 and 5 students. The course assessments are designed specifically to familiarize students with the language and to instill awareness of the importance of English language. Each semester students are required to deliver oral presentation on certain topics. In semester 1, two out of five assessments involve oral presentation which carry 60% marks. This shows that oral presentation has a high weightage compared to other language skills. This is inline with The Malaysia Blueprint(2015:6) which advocates that tertiary institutions have to ensure that their courses are able to harness graduates with directly employable skills, values and behaviours that match industry demand.

Oral presentation has always been an effective communicative activity to promote students proficiency in English classroom. According to Girard & Trapp (2011) students can gain knowledge not only from the research they and other students perform, but also by observing the other presenters' strengths and weaknesses to develop better communication and presentation skills. During oral presentation, students are involved in their own learning process as active participant, engaged in real-world experience and they build creative and critical thinking and problem-solving skills as important characteristics for success in the 21st century (Mahripah, 2014). This shows that oral presentation can be considered as an activity that can aid students in learning and mastering English language. In oral presentation activity, students are expected to be deeply involved in sharing and putting forward their ideas. Students are also expected to be confident in elaborating and explaining the issues given to them. However, when oral presentations are assigned in class, the lecturer will get either complete silence or grumbles from students who find the idea of oral presentation frustrating and intimidating. The students may become too concerned and start thinking that they will never be able to pronounce a word correctly or give a good presentation (Horwitz et al., 1986). This fear of not able to do well in the oral presentation will distract their focus and make them worry throughout the presentation.

Most students find it challenging when asked to present orally and often encounter difficulties such as lack of proficiency as well as lack of confidence when speaking in front of the audience (Kho & Leong, 2015). The inability of delivering ineffective oral presentation may stem from a communication-related anxiety known as oral communication apprehension. McCroskey (1977) explained this broad-based anxiety as "an individual's level of fear or anxiety associated with either real or anticipated communication with another person or persons". Bashir, Azeem & Dogar (2011) enlightened the issues by stating that sometimes, extreme anxiety may lead to despondence and sense of failure in learners. When this happens, the students are likely to stop trying because they don't want to take risk of making mistakes. According to Mahripah (2014), learners who have a low self-respect tend to stop taking risk of committing mistakes in their speaking tasks which resulting in inhibition to the betterment of their speaking skills. Besides, it is also stressful for students who are not fluent in English and are expected to speak in the target language, especially during their English lessons (Khairi & Nurul Lina, 2010). Thus, this anxiety mentioned by many researchers can best explained the condition of the students when dealing with oral presentation activity.

This problems can be noticed in the first session of English DAD1-S1 class where the students were expect to talk briefly about themselves. It can be said that 90% of the students were unable to deliver effectively in this first task. It can be said that more than half of the students tend to look down and refuse to have eyecontacts with the lecturer when they are called to talk or present in front of the classroom. Leong & Seyedeh (2017) believed that this situation happens because the students encountered inhibition that when they want to say something in classroom, they are worried about making mistakes, fearful of criticism and ashamed of the other students

attention towards themselves. In this situation, students who encounter with this fear often feel worried when they are required to do oral presentations in English as they fear of getting low marks, corrected for their mistakes and being laughed at by their friends when making mistakes in front of the class. It is always difficult to find students to volunteer when it comes to oral presentation. 60% of them claimed to have limited vocabularies, problem in pronunciations and sentence structures. These are the common issues mentioned by the students that lead to ineffective oral presentation.

A study conducted by Juhana (2012) showed that linguistic factors such as lack of vocabulary, lack of understanding of grammatical patterns and incorrect pronunciation are obstacles for students to present in the English class. In conjunction to that, Leong & Seyedeh (2017) also expressed that English speaking is not an easy task because the speakers should know many significant components like pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, fluency and comprehension as well as having enough English speaking ability in order to communicate easily and effectively. These factors are found to be the setbacks to the development of students' communicative abilities. Based on the research made by the researchers, it somehow confirms the problems and the disabilities of students in performing effective oral presentation. Through impromptu oral presentation task held in class, 90% of the students failed to perform.

Thus, this paper looks into the factors of oral presentation difficulties faced by DAD1-S1 students at PSMZA.

Research Focus

The research focus is to enhance DAD1-S1 students English oral presentation skills. This issue needs to be rectified in order to find effective ways for lecturers in teaching and learning oral presentation skills.

Research Objectives

General objective

This research aims to enhance DAD1-S1 students English oral presentation skills by showing samples video of public speaking, emphasizing on phonetics symbols and organizing poster presentation

Specific objectives

1. To find out the oral presentation skills of DAD1-S1 students.
2. To identify the factors that lead to ineffective English oral presentation skills among DAD1-S1 students.
3. To find out DAD1-S1 students interest in preparing effective English oral presentation skills.

Target group

The target of this research was 40 respondents of DAD1-S1 students from June 2017 session.

Research Methodology

The methodologies used in this research were combination of quantitative and qualitative. The data were gathered through questionnaires and also from observation done by lecturers.

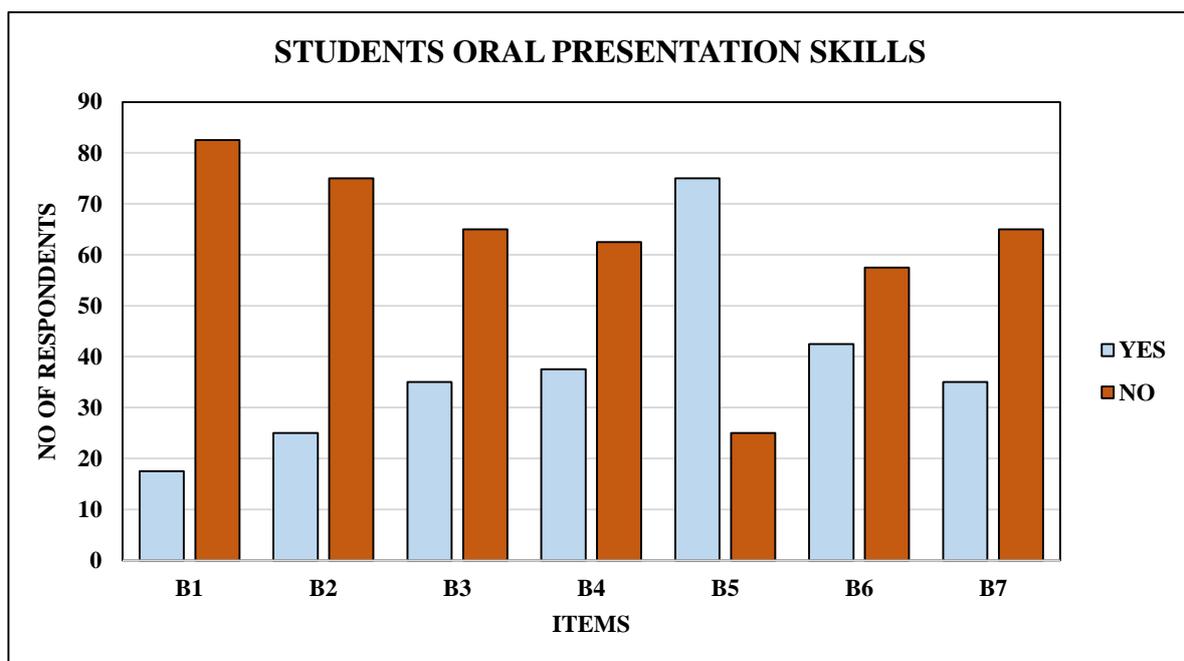
- a. A set of questionnaire is given to 40 students from DAD1-S1 class. The questionnaire was distributed to gather necessary data about ineffective English oral presentation skills among DAD1-S1 students. The questionnaire was divided into four sections. Section A is respondents background, Section B is asking on students oral presentation skills whereas Section C is on factors that lead to ineffective English oral presentation skills. Lastly, Section D is asking about students interest in preparing effective English oral presentation skills. The findings were tabulated and analyzed using graphs.
- b. Three observations were made to observe students' ability in delivering good oral presentation:
 - i. Observation 1: To know students' oral presentation skills.
 - ii. Observation 2: To look at students early improvement in using oral presentation skills.
 - iii. Observation 3: To look at overall improvement in oral presentation.

Data Analysis

Questionnaire

a) Skills

Based on table 1, the analysis showed the percentage of oral presentation skills among 40 students of DAD1-S1. From the analysis, we can see that the students were lacked of oral presentation skills.



Graph 1: Oral Presentation Skills

Table 1: Oral Presentation Skills

SECTION B: SKILLS	ITEMS	YES	%	NO	%
B1	I use examples to support my points	7	17.5	33	82.5
B2	I maintain good eye contact with the audience at all time	10	25	30	75
B3	I apply natural gestures during presentation	14	35	26	65
B4	I apply appropriate facial expression when delivering presentation	15	37.5	25	62.5
B5	I deliver my presentation with clear voice	30	75	10	25
B6	I am able to organize my presentation well	17	42.5	23	57.5
B7	I am able to use visual aid effectively during presentation	14	35	26	65

This was identified by item (B1- 82.5 %) where the students said they do not use examples to support their points when delivering speech. Item B2- 75%, B3- 65% and B4-62.5% proved that students have limited knowledge on presentation skills which were eye contact, gestures and facial expression. This data also showed students were unable to organize their presentation well (B6-57.52%), and visual aid was not used effectively during presentation (B7-65%). Even though the students were lacking in most of the presentation skills, they agreed (B5-75%) on having clear voice projection during presentation. Overall, the data indicated that average 62% students acquired limited ability of presentation skills.

b) Factor

Table 2: Factors that lead to ineffective oral presentation skills.

SECTION C: FACTOR	ITEMS	YES	%	NO	%
C1	I have confidence to deliver a presentation	8	20	32	80
C2	I speak without hesitation during presentation	19	47.5	21	52.5
C3	I have no problem in pronunciation during presentation	30	75	10	25
C4	I have sufficient vocabularies throughout presentation	17	42.5	23	57.5
C5	I have no fear in doing presentation in public	13	32.5	27	67.5
C6	I can accept teacher's negative evaluation	32	80	8	20

Based on table 2, the analysis showed the percentage of factors lead to ineffective oral presentation among students of DAD1-S1. From the analysis, we can see that the students were not confident when delivering oral presentation (C1-80%). This was aligned with item (C5-67.5%) where the students admitted they feared when doing presentation in public. Despite of having issue on confident level, 75% of students have no problem in pronunciation while 80% of the students can accept teachers' negative evaluations.

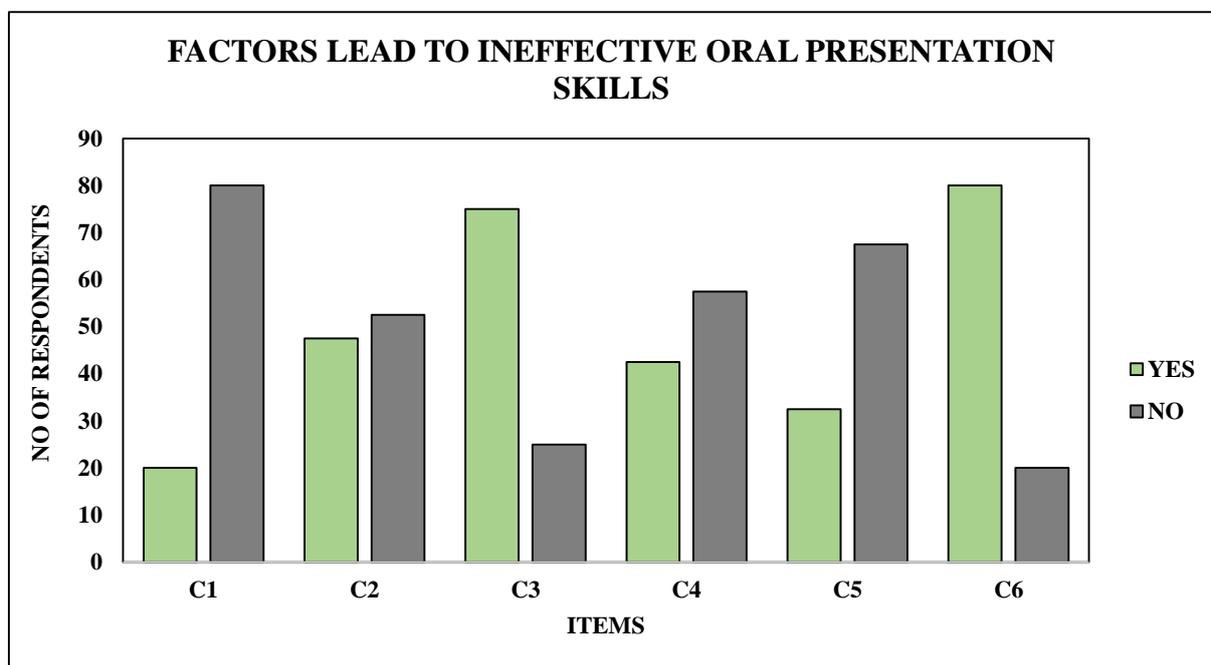


Figure 2: Factors that lead to ineffective oral presentation skills.

c) Interest

Table 3: Students' interest in preparing effective English oral presentation.

SECTION D: INTEREST	ITEMS	YES	%	NO	%
DI	I communicate ideas enthusiastically	6	15	34	85
D2	I go to the library to do research on my topic before presentation	10	25	30	75
D3	I do online research on my topic before presentation	27	67.5	13	32.5
D4	I plan and practice my presentation	34	85	6	15
D5	I can prepare my presentation with less guidance	29	72.5	11	27.5
D6	I have high interest in delivering good presentation.	31	77.5	9	22.5

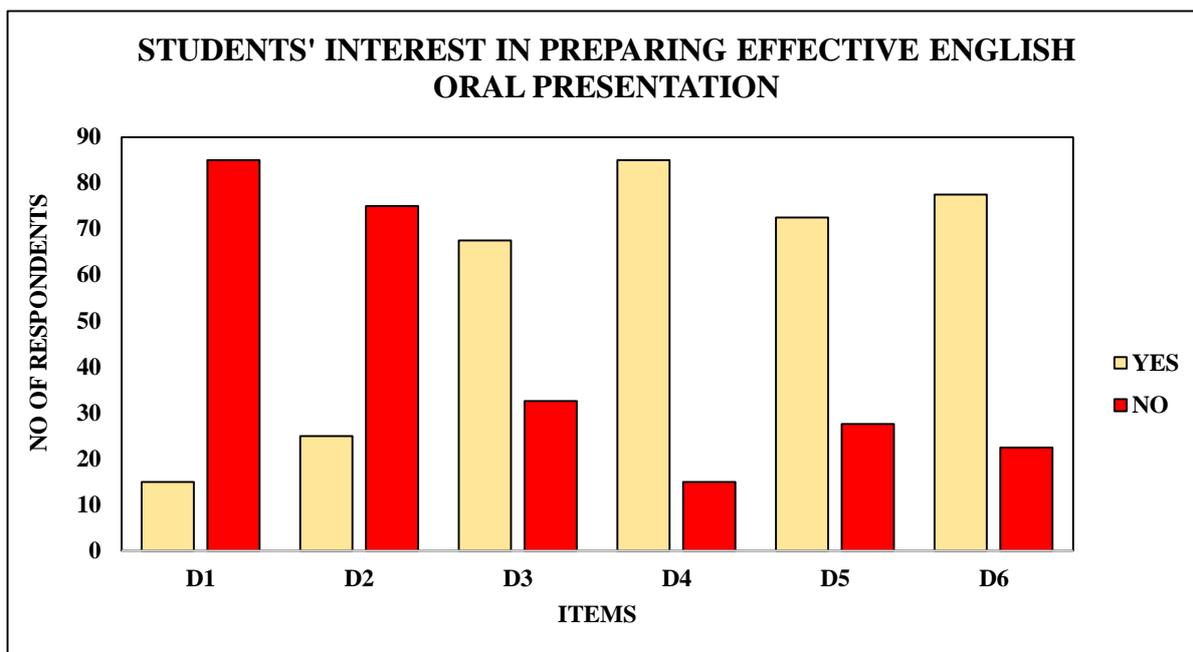


Figure 3: Students’ interest in preparing effective English oral presentation.

Based on table 3, the analysis showed students interest in preparing English presentation. From the analysis, there was 85% of students who unable to communicate ideas enthusiastically during presentation. The students admitted they do not do library research but prefer online research instead (D2-75% and D3-67.5%). 85% of students do plan and practice their presentation and able to do preparation with less guidance (D5-72.5). Lastly 77.5% of students claimed to have high interest in delivering good presentation.

Observation analysis

Table 4: Observation Analysis

Aspect		Observation 1			Observation 2		
		1 (Weak)	2 (Satisfactory)	3 (Good)	1 (Weak)	2 (Satisfactory)	3 (Good)
1	Voice projection	0	100	0	0	82.5	17.7
2	Eye contact	85	15	0	37.5	37.5	25
3	Gestures	75	25	0	12.5	62.5	25
4	Visual aid	100	0	0	0	100	0
5	Confident level	87.5	12.5	0	37.5	37.5	25
6	Facial expression	100	0	0	25	65	10
7	Pronunciation	7.5	92.5	0	7.5	92.5	0
8	Vocabulary Range	0	100	0	0	70	30

Two observations were carried out in the classroom to observe 8 aspects of presentation skills among the students. The observation was categorized under 3 scales which were 1- Weak 2-Satisfactory and 3- Good. The first observation was done in week 2 of class and the second observation was carried out in week 4.

Below were the outcomes of the observations for the 8 aspects:

1. Voice Projection

In the second observation, there was only 17.7% of the students showed good voice projection during the presentation.

2. Eye contact

In observation 2, 37.5 % of the students were still unable to maintain good eye contact when delivering oral presentation

3. Gestures

In observation 2, there were 12.5%.students who were unable to use appropriate gestures when delivering oral presentation

4. Visual aid

There were no good category for this aspect . The students have not reached the expected level of using visual aid effectively during presentation.

5. Confident Level

Students' confident level can be seen to climb up during second observation but 37.5 % showed no improvement.

6. Facial expression

In second observation 25% of the students unable to show appropriate facial expression during presentation. This aspect showed only 10% increment under good category.

7. Pronunciation

Through the observations, this aspect showed no improvement. There was no student categorized under good category.

Vocabulary range

There was only 30% of the students used varied vocabularies while the rest were still using limited vocabulary range in their oral presentation.

Summary

Based on the questionnaire and observation 1 results displayed in table 5, it can be said that the students acquired limited abilities in delivering good oral presentation. Through questionnaire, 75% students claimed that they were not able to maintain good eye contact. This was supported by observation 1 where eye contact fell under weak category by 85%. Furthermore, questionnaire results showed 65% of students were not able to display natural gestures during presentation. It was proven in observation 1 where 75% students were categorized under weak category. Moreover, questionnaire also showed that 62.5% of the students were unable to apply appropriate facial expression when delivering oral presentation. However, in observation 1 100% of the students were unable to do so. After observation 2 was carried out, students showed slight improvement in all aspects of presentation skills except for visual aid and pronunciation.

Table 5: Questionnaire Result vs Observation 1 Result

Aspect		Questionnaire Result		Observation 1		Observation 2	
		-VE	+VE	1 (Weak)	3 (Good)	1 (Weak)	3 (Good)
B2	Eye contact	75	25	85	0	0	17.7
B3	Gestures	65	35	75	37.5	37.5	25
B4	Facial expression	62.5	27.5	100	12.5	12.5	25
B5	Voice projection	75	25	0	0	0	0
B7	Visual aid	65	35	100	37.5	37.5	25
C1	Confident level	80	20	87.5	25	25	10
C3	Pronunciation	25	75	7.5	7.5	7.5	0
C4	Vocabulary Range	57.5	43.5	0	0	0	30

Action Planning

Based on the above analysis, researcher carried out a few action plans in order to overcome the problems. The solutions planned were:

- (a) viewing samples video of public speaking
- (b) emphasizing on phonetics symbols
- (c) organizing poster presentation

The action plans together with 3 observations were carried out within 10 weeks during teaching and learning sessions.

Step 1:

Action plan (a) was carried out by showing two videos to the students. Video 1 by Project I-DEA which focused on the Do's & Don'ts of oral presentation explained the elements students can learn on how to do good presentation such as maintaining good eye contact, using good gestures, displaying appropriate facial expression as well as using effective visual aid.

Video 2 showed was a sample of good public speaking by Darren Tay, the World Champion of Public Speaking 2016. This video was chosen as the sample to be watched as it displayed all the elements of a good oral presentation. After watching video 2 lecturer asked the students to give feedback on the elements used by the speaker and compared with the elements mentioned in Video1. The purpose of this session was to guide students on how to prepare good oral presentation.

Step 2:

Action plan (b) was carried out by lecturer introducing phonetic symbols. In this lesson students were taught the sound of the symbols and phonetic transcriptions. Besides that, the students were taught on the correct pronunciation of English words. One of the activities done was the students have to check the correct pronunciation of list of words using online dictionary from their smart phone. Examples of words that often

mispronounced are *Parachute*, *Gauge*, *Debris*, *Charade* etc. In this activity, students were exposed to the correct pronunciation by the native speakers. Students were taught on how to pronounce using phonetic transcription (Refer table 5). It was hoped that with the exposure, students can be more confident in pronouncing English words.

Table 6: Example of phonetic transcription.

Word	Phonetic Transcription
Parachute	/ˈpærəˌʃu:t/
Gauge	/geɪdʒ/
Debris	/ˈdeɪbrɪ:/
Charade	/ʃəˈrɑ:d/

Step 3:

Action plan (c) was carried out in pairs. Each pair was asked to choose an interesting campaign to be presented. Some of the topics were Patriotism, Stop Smoking, Vandalism and Go Green. They were required to create a creative poster as a visual aid to enhance the presentation. With the poster the students were required to use all presentation skills learnt earlier in presenting the campaign. In order to make this campaign successful, students were to convince the audience by implementing all the elements of good presentation. The purpose of conducting this activity was to encourage students to improve their confident level as well as presentation skills by delivering topic of interest speech. Students showed much interest throughout the poster presentation.

Reflection on research improvement

After 10 weeks, DAD1-S1 students' oral presentation skills showed good improvement. The percentage of good category increased significantly compared to the first observation done in the classroom. Table 7 below displayed the comparison between observation 1 and observation 3 results.

Table 7: Observation 1 vs Observation 3 results

Aspect	Observation 1 (Week 2)			Observation 3 (Week 10)			Remarks
	1 Weak	2 Satisfactory	3 Good	1 Weak	2 Satisfactory	3 Good	
1.Voice projection	0	100	0	0	12.5	87.5	Improved
2.Eye contact	85	15	0	0	25	75	Improved
3.Gestures	75	25	0	0	25	75	Improved
4.Visual aid	100	0	0	0	37.5	62.5	Improved
5.Confident level	87.5	12.5	0	0	27.5	72.5	Improved
6.Facial expression	100	0	0	0	30	70	Improved
7.Pronunciation	7.5	92.5	0	0	75	25	Improved
8.Vocabulary Range	0	100	0	0	62.5	37.5	Improved

Suggestion and recommendation

There are few action researches suggested that could be conducted as the follow up to this prior research.

1. The lecturer should help the students to overcome fear of oral presentation by having friendly, helpful and cooperative behavior to make students feel comfortable in classroom.
2. The students should be exposed to the real world communication in order to experience the real language learning.
3. The lecturer should promote reading aloud technique to improve students pronunciation

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