

Difficulties in English Presentations among Final-Year English Majors at A Vietnamese University: A Quantitative Study

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ABSTRACT: English presentations are gradually becoming extremely important in higher education and professional environments. Despite their importance, many English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners continue to experience difficulties when delivering presentations in English. This study investigated the attitudes, presentation frequency, and presentation difficulties of final-year English majors at Thu Dau Mot University, Vietnam. We used an online survey with 25-item questionnaire adapted from Bui et al. (2022) to collect data from 100 final-year English majors. The data were analyzed using descriptive statistics in SPSS 26. Results showed that participants generally held positive feelings toward English presentations because 98% of people recognized that English presentations are important. However, students also felt struggles related to English presentations. Among the three categories of difficulties, psychological barriers were the most serious difficulty ($M = 3.42$) followed by linguistic difficulties ($M = 2.99$) and contextual and delivery difficulties ($M = 2.40$). To be specific, anxiety, lack of confidence, vocabulary limitations, and unfamiliar presentation topics were identified as main challenges. The findings suggest that to improve students' English presentation skills, we need to address both linguistic development and psychological readiness.

KEYWORDS: English presentations, EFL learners, presentation anxiety, oral communication, higher education.

1. INTRODUCTION

In the 21st century, English presentation skill has become an essential part of academic achievement and professional communication. Oral presentations are often used as learning activities and assessment tools in higher education because they allow students to demonstrate their language proficiency, critical thinking and communication competence. The ability to present in English is very important for English majors because it is not only a reflection of their linguistic skills but also shows their readiness to pursue future academic and professional contexts.

Oral presentations have repeatedly been shown to provide educational benefits in previous studies. To be specific, oral presentation activities develop speaking proficiency, communicative competence, vocabulary acquisition, grammatical accuracy and learner confidence (Riadil, 2020; Rizqi & Haryanto, 2024; Al-khresheh, 2024). Regular presentation practice has also been shown to enhance speaking performance and self-confidence among EFL learners (Toghroli & Afraz, 2021; Waluyo & Rofiah, 2021). In Vietnamese context, Pham et al. (2022) also reported that presentation skills played an important role in enhancing public speaking ability and preparing English-major students for future academic and professional communication. Thus, oral presentation competence is becoming an important output of English language education.

Despite these benefits, delivering presentations in English remains challenging for many English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners. Previous studies claim that presentation difficulties are multidimensional and can be categorized into linguistic, psychological and contextual factors. Linguistic challenges often include limited vocabulary, grammatical inaccuracies, pronunciation problems, and inadequate fluency (Amna, 2021; Bui et al., 2022; Abdullah et al., 2024). For example, Bui et al. (2022) reported that English-major students experienced difficulties related to vocabulary, pronunciation, and grammar during oral presentations. Similarly, Abdullah et al. (2024) identified weaknesses in vocabulary, pronunciation, fluency, and grammatical competence as major barriers to effective public speaking.

In addition to linguistic barriers, psychological factors have been widely recognized as influential predictors of presentation performance. Fear of making mistakes, public speaking anxiety, lack of confidence, and fear of negative evaluation often reduce learners' willingness to communicate and affect presentation quality (Sahara et al., 2021; Grieve et al., 2021; Fathikasari et al., 2022; Thaksanan, 2024). Similar patterns have been reported in higher education contexts where speaking anxiety remains a major barrier to oral communication competence (Özdemir, 2025; Muhyidin & Chuquin, 2025; Nguyen & Tong, 2024)

Difficulties in English Presentations among Final-Year English Majors at A Vietnamese University: A Quantitative Study

Moreover, several studies suggested that presentation effectiveness was dependent on contextual and situational factors. Challenges such as unfamiliar topics, inadequate preparation, limited institutional support, ineffective audience interaction, and technological constraints can negatively affect students' presentation experiences (Le, 2021; Mardiningrum & Ramadhani, 2022). The findings imply that the performance in oral presentation is affected not just by the language ability but also by the psychological preparedness and contextual factors.

Previous studies have brought us some insights of oral presentation difficulties, but there are still some gaps. Firstly, most of the previous research focused on general EFL learners or English-major students at different levels of education (Sahara et al., 2021; Bui et al., 2022; Nguyen & Tong, 2024). Besides, presentation difficulties of EFL learners have been studied, but there has been a relatively low focus on final year English majors who are supposed to demonstrate advanced communicative competence and professional readiness. Understanding the challenges this group faces is important, as persistent presentation problems at this stage may suggest mismatches between the way language is taught and the demands of communication in the workplace. The present study aims at filling in these gaps by studying the attitude, presentation frequency and presentation difficulties of the final-year English majors at Thu Dau Mot University. The specific research questions of the study are as follows:

1. What is the attitude of final-year English majors towards English presentations and their frequency of giving English presentation?
2. What are the problems of final year English majors in conducting presentations in English?

This study identifies major challenges encountered by final-year English majors and hence contributes to a better understanding of oral presentation difficulties in Vietnamese higher education and to pedagogical implications for improving students' presentation competence.

2. METHODS

2.1. Research Design

This study employed a quantitative survey design to investigate final-year English majors' attitudes toward English presentations, their presentation frequency, and the difficulties they encounter when delivering presentations in English. A quantitative approach was considered appropriate because it enables the collection and analysis of numerical data from a relatively large group of participants, allowing researchers to identify common patterns and trends.

2.2. Participants

The study was conducted at Thu Dau Mot University, Vietnam. Participants consisted of 100 final-year English majors enrolled in the English Language program. Participants were selected through convenience sampling because they were readily accessible to the researcher and had substantial experience with English presentations throughout their academic program. The target population was chosen because final-year students are expected to demonstrate relatively advanced English proficiency and frequently participate in presentation-based assessment activities. Their experiences therefore provide valuable insights into the challenges associated with English oral presentations in higher education contexts.

2.3. Instrument

Data were collected using a structured questionnaire adapted from Bui et al. (2022). The questionnaire consisted of 25 items divided into two sections. The first section included seven items examining participants' demographic information, attitudes toward English presentations, and presentation frequency. The second section contained eighteen statements measuring perceived presentation difficulties. These statements were categorized into three dimensions:

- Linguistic difficulties (8 items)
- Psychological barriers (5 items)
- Contextual and delivery difficulties (5 items)

Responses were measured using a four-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 4 (Strongly Agree). Higher mean scores indicated greater perceived difficulty. Prior to analysis, reliability testing was conducted using Cronbach's Alpha. The linguistic difficulty scale demonstrated high reliability ($\alpha = .885$), while the psychological barrier and additional difficulty scale showed acceptable reliability ($\alpha = .749$, $\alpha = .730$, respectively), with all corrected item-total correlation > 0.3 , which indicates satisfactory internal consistency for subsequent analyses.

2.4. Data collection

The questionnaire was developed and distributed through Google Forms. Data collection was conducted over a three-week period. Participation was voluntary, and respondents were informed that their responses would remain anonymous and be used solely for research purposes. A total of 100 completed questionnaires were returned and deemed suitable for analysis.

Difficulties in English Presentations among Final-Year English Majors at A Vietnamese University: A Quantitative Study

2.5. Data analysis

The collected data were analyzed using IBM SPSS Statistics 26. Descriptive statistical procedures, including frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations, were employed to summarize students' attitudes, presentation frequency, and perceived difficulties.

The interpretation of mean scores followed the four-point Likert scale framework:

- 1.00–1.74 = Strongly Disagree
- 1.75–2.49 = Disagree
- 2.50–3.24 = Agree
- 3.25–4.00 = Strongly Agree

This classification facilitated the identification of major challenges experienced by participants during English presentations.

3. RESULTS

3.1. Students' Attitudes Toward English Presentations

The findings revealed generally positive attitudes toward English presentations among final-year English majors. As shown in Figure 1, 71% of respondents reported being interested in English presentations, while only 29% expressed a lack of interest. This result suggests that most students view presentation activities favorably despite the challenges they encounter.

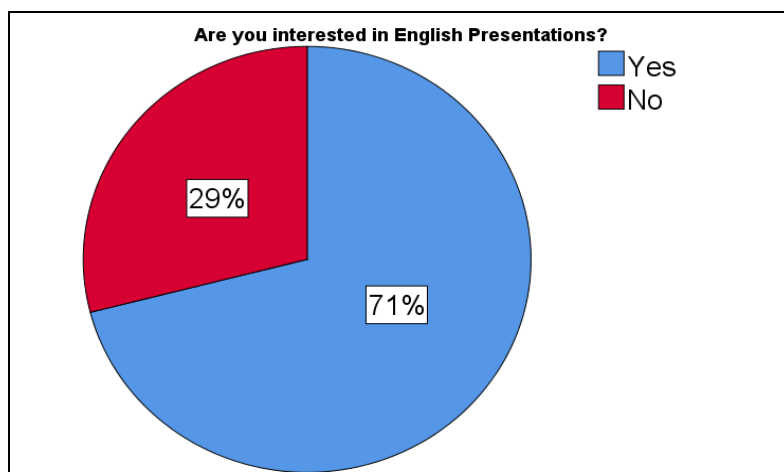


Figure 1. Final-year English majors' interest in English presentations

Students also demonstrated a strong awareness of the importance of presentation skills. Figure 2 shows that 98% of participants considered English presentations an important component of English language learning, whereas only 2% disagreed. This overwhelming consensus indicates that presentation competence is widely recognized as a valuable academic and professional skill.

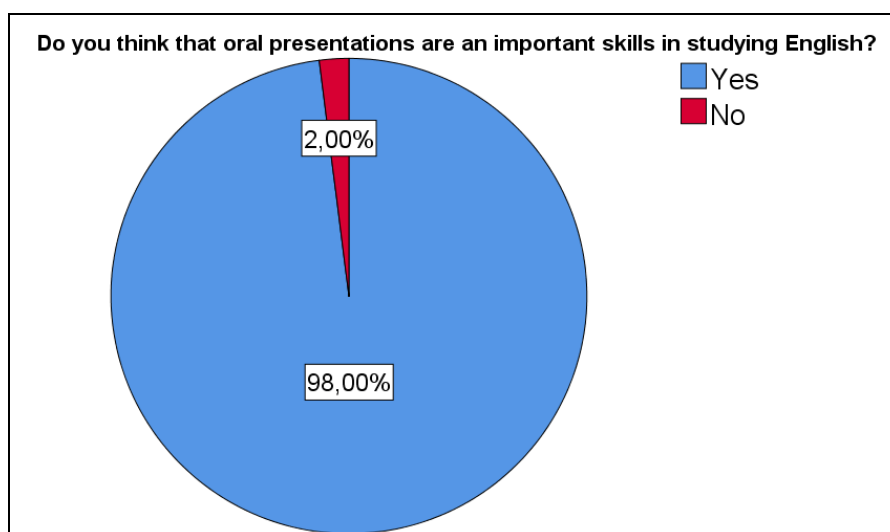


Figure 2. Final-year English majors' opinions about the importance of English oral presentations

Difficulties in English Presentations among Final-Year English Majors at A Vietnamese University: A Quantitative Study

Overall, these findings suggest that final-year English majors maintain positive perceptions of English presentations and acknowledge their importance for future academic and career development.

3.2. Frequency of English Presentations

Participants reported frequent engagement in English presentation activities. As illustrated in Figure 3, nearly half of the respondents (49%) indicated that they often delivered presentations in English. An additional 20% reported always participating in presentation activities, while 31% stated that they sometimes gave presentations.

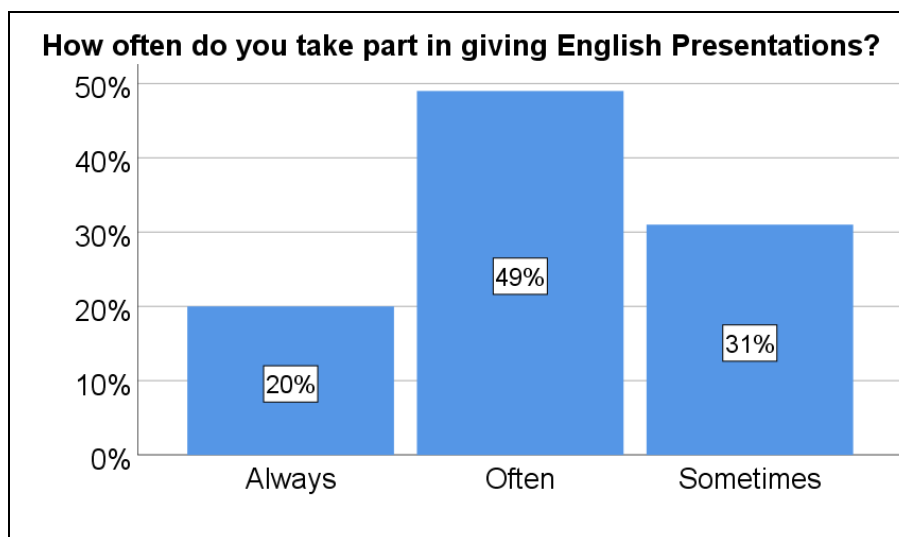


Figure 3. Final-year English majors' frequency of giving English presentations

3.3. Overall Presentation Difficulties

Despite positive attitudes and frequent participation, all respondents reported experiencing difficulties when delivering English presentations.

As shown in Table 1, psychological barriers emerged as the most severe category of presentation difficulties ($M = 3.42$), followed by linguistic difficulties ($M = 2.99$) and contextual and delivery difficulties ($M = 2.40$). The findings indicate that emotional and affective factors exerted a stronger influence on students' presentation experiences than language-related or contextual challenges.

Table 1. Overall mean scores of presentation difficulties

Difficulty type	Number of items	Mean	SD
Psychological difficulties	5	3.42	0.50
Linguistic difficulties	8	2.99	0.61
Contextual and delivery difficulties	5	2.40	0.73

3.3.1. Linguistic Difficulties

Vocabulary

Vocabulary-related challenges emerged as one of the most prominent linguistic difficulties. As shown in Table 2, students agreed that limited vocabulary affected their presentation performance. The highest-rated vocabulary difficulty involved repeating words because of insufficient lexical resources ($M = 3.07$, $SD = 0.61$). Participants also reported difficulties expressing ideas, thoughts, and emotions due to limited vocabulary knowledge ($M = 3.05$, $SD = 0.67$). Difficulties selecting contextually appropriate vocabulary were reported at a slightly lower level ($M = 2.91$, $SD = 0.74$).

Table 2. Final-year English majors' vocabulary difficulties during English presentations

Statements	Mean	SD
I do not have enough vocabulary to express my ideas clearly.	3.05	0.60
I often repeat the same words because my vocabulary is limited.	3.07	0.61
I have difficulty choosing suitable words for different presentation topics.	2.91	0.74

Difficulties in English Presentations among Final-Year English Majors at A Vietnamese University: A Quantitative Study

These findings indicate that vocabulary limitations may reduce students' ability to communicate ideas effectively and flexibly during presentations.

Pronunciation

Pronunciation difficulties were also evident. As illustrated in Table 3, Students reported challenges related to intonation ($M = 2.98$, $SD = 0.71$), word mispronunciation ($M = 2.97$, $SD = 0.82$), and incorrect stress placement ($M = 2.96$, $SD = 0.75$). Although these scores remained within the "agree" category, the relatively similar means suggest that pronunciation difficulties were experienced consistently across different aspects of spoken production.

Table 3. Final-year English majors' pronunciation difficulties during English presentations

Statements	Mean	SD
I often mispronounce words during English presentations.	2.97	0.82
I have difficulty placing stress on the correct syllables.	2.96	0.75
I have difficulty using appropriate intonation during presentations.	2.98	0.71

The findings indicate that pronunciation remains a persistent challenge among final-year English majors despite years of English language study.

Grammar

Grammar-related difficulties were reported at a moderate level. Students indicated difficulties selecting appropriate grammatical structures during presentations ($M = 2.99$, $SD = 0.81$) and acknowledged making grammatical mistakes while presenting ($M = 2.97$, $SD = 0.80$) (see Table 4).

Table 4. Final-year English majors' grammar difficulties during English presentations

Statements	Mean	SD
I often make grammatical mistakes during English presentations.	2.97	0.80
I have difficulty choosing appropriate grammar structures when presenting.	2.99	0.81

3.3.2. Psychological Barriers

Psychological barriers emerged as the most severe category of difficulty. As shown in Table 5, anxiety or fear of speaking in front of others received the highest mean score among all questionnaire items ($M = 3.57$, $SD = 0.50$). Participants also reported low confidence when delivering presentations ($M = 3.41$, $SD = 0.49$), embarrassment when making mistakes publicly ($M = 3.41$, $SD = 0.49$), lack of motivation ($M = 3.35$, $SD = 0.48$), and fear of being judged by lecturers and classmates ($M = 3.35$, $SD = 0.50$).

Table 5. Final-year English majors' psychological barriers during English presentations

Statements	Mean	SD
I do not feel confident when giving English presentations.	3.41	0.49
I feel anxious when speaking in front of others.	3.57	0.50
I feel embarrassed when I make mistakes during presentations.	3.41	0.49
I feel less motivated when I have to give presentations in class.	3.35	0.48
I am afraid of being judged by lecturers and classmates.	3.35	0.50

Notably, all psychological items exceeded the threshold for "strong agreement," indicating that psychological factors represented the most significant obstacle to successful presentation performance.

3.3.3. Contextual and Delivery Difficulties

In addition to linguistic and psychological barriers, students experienced several contextual and content-related challenges (see Table 6). Among these difficulties, unfamiliar presentation topics received the highest level of agreement. Participants indicated that insufficient background knowledge made it difficult to organize ideas and communicate effectively during presentations. Other reported difficulties included preparation-related issues and challenges associated with content development and delivery.

Table 6. Contextual and Delivery Difficulties during English presentations

Statements	Mean	SD
I struggle when the presentation topic is unfamiliar to me.	2.51	0.54
I do not have enough time to prepare and practice before presentations.	2.43	0.70
I have difficulty using body language and maintaining eye contact with	2.35	0.63

Difficulties in English Presentations among Final-Year English Majors at A Vietnamese University: A Quantitative Study

the audience.		
I have difficulty using visual aids effectively, such as slides, images, charts, or videos.	2.31	0.75
I have difficulty preparing for the Q&A or discussion part after presentations.	2.41	0.59

Collectively, these findings demonstrate that presentation difficulties extend beyond language proficiency and involve broader contextual factors that influence presentation effectiveness.

3.4. Summary of Findings

Three major findings emerged from the study. First, final-year English majors demonstrated positive attitudes toward English presentations and frequently engaged in presentation activities. Second, all participants reported experiencing presentation difficulties despite their extensive exposure to presentation tasks. Third, psychological barriers represented the most substantial challenge, followed by linguistic difficulties and contextual factors. Among individual difficulties, fear of speaking in front of others emerged as the strongest obstacle, while vocabulary limitations constituted the most prominent linguistic concern.

4. DISCUSSION

The present study investigated final-year English majors' attitudes towards English presentations, presentation frequency, and perceived presentation difficulties at Thu Dau Mot University. The findings revealed that although students generally held positive attitudes towards English presentations and frequently engaged in presentation activities, they continued to experience substantial difficulties. These difficulties were particularly evident in psychological, linguistic, and contextual dimensions.

First, the findings indicate that students recognized the importance of English presentations and frequently participated in presentation-related activities. The high percentage of students acknowledging the importance of presentation skills suggests that final-year English majors are aware of the role of oral communication in both academic and professional settings. This finding is consistent with previous studies emphasizing the educational value of oral presentations in developing communicative competence, speaking proficiency, and professional readiness (Riadil, 2020; Rizqi & Haryanto, 2024; Togholi & Afraz, 2021). The relatively high frequency of presentation practice observed in this study also suggests that presentation activities have become an integral component of English language instruction.

Despite these positive attitudes, all participants reported experiencing difficulties during English presentations. This finding supports previous research suggesting that presentation competence remains challenging even for advanced EFL learners (Bui et al., 2022; Abdullah et al., 2024). The results indicate that positive attitudes alone do not necessarily translate into presentation confidence or performance effectiveness.

Among the three categories of difficulties, psychological barriers emerged as the most prominent challenge ($M = 3.42$), followed by linguistic difficulties ($M = 2.99$) and contextual and delivery difficulties ($M = 2.40$). These findings suggest that students' presentation performance was influenced more strongly by affective factors than by language-related limitations or contextual challenges. These results align with previous studies identifying public speaking anxiety as a major obstacle to oral performance (Sahara et al., 2021; Grieve et al., 2021; Fathikasari et al., 2022). In particular, the present findings support Fathikasari et al. (2022), who found that fear of negative evaluation and audience-related anxiety were among the strongest predictors of public speaking anxiety. Similarly, Nguyen and Tong (2024) reported that fear of making mistakes and concerns about audience judgment significantly reduced students' confidence during public speaking tasks. These findings are also consistent with recent studies indicating that public speaking anxiety remains one of the most influential barriers to oral communication performance among university EFL learners (Thaksanan, 2024; Muhyidin & Chuquin, 2025; Yüce, 2025). In the present study, this issue was especially notable because the participants were final-year English majors. They were expected to have advanced language ability and considerable experience with presentations, yet many still felt strong psychological pressure.

One possible explanation is that final-year students may face higher expectations. They may feel that, as English majors close to graduation, they should present fluently, accurately, and professionally. This pressure may make them more sensitive to mistakes, audience judgment, and lecturer evaluation. Therefore, psychological barriers should not be seen as a problem only for low-proficiency learners. Even advanced EFL learners may struggle when they have to perform publicly in English under evaluation. Linguistic difficulties also remained significant despite participants being English majors in their final year of study. Vocabulary-related challenges received relatively high mean scores, particularly difficulties in expressing ideas precisely and avoiding repetitive language. These findings are consistent with previous studies that identified vocabulary limitations as one of the most common barriers to oral presentations (Bui et al., 2022; Tuyet & Nga, 2024). Limited vocabulary can affect not only accuracy but also confidence. When students cannot find suitable words, they may pause, repeat themselves, or avoid complex ideas, which can increase anxiety during presentations.

Difficulties in English Presentations among Final-Year English Majors at A Vietnamese University: A Quantitative Study

Similarly, pronunciation and grammar difficulties were frequently reported. Students acknowledged problems related to word pronunciation, stress placement, intonation, grammatical accuracy, and selecting appropriate structures during presentations. These findings support those reported by Amna (2021), who documented frequent grammatical errors among university students during oral presentations, and Abdullah et al. (2024), who highlighted pronunciation and grammatical competence as persistent obstacles to effective public speaking. The results suggest that final-year academic standing does not guarantee full control of spoken language use. In presentation contexts, students need to produce language in real time, organize ideas, and speak clearly before an audience. This makes linguistic difficulties more visible and more stressful.

Contextual and delivery difficulties were lower than psychological and linguistic difficulties, but they still played a role. Unfamiliar presentation topics received the highest mean score in this category. This finding corresponds with previous studies emphasizing the importance of content knowledge and preparation in successful presentations (Mardiningrum & Ramadhani, 2022). When students lack sufficient background knowledge, they may experience greater anxiety, reduced fluency, and difficulties responding to audience questions. Consequently, content familiarity appears to play a crucial role in presentation effectiveness.

Overall, the findings show that English presentation difficulties among final-year English majors are multidimensional. The main issue is not simply that students lack English knowledge. Rather, their presentation performance is shaped by the interaction between psychological readiness, linguistic resources, topic preparation, and delivery skills. The strongest message from this study is that frequent presentation practice does not automatically reduce psychological barriers. If students are repeatedly asked to present without enough support, feedback, rehearsal, and anxiety-reduction strategies, presentation tasks may remain stressful even after years of English study.

These findings have practical implications for English language teaching. Lecturers should not only assign more presentations, but also teach students how to prepare and manage them. Presentation instruction should include low-stakes practice, guided rehearsal, vocabulary preparation, pronunciation support, peer feedback, and reflection after presentations. Students should also be trained to manage anxiety, respond to audience questions, and use visual aids effectively. In this way, presentation practice can become a learning process rather than only an assessment task.

5. CONCLUSION

This study investigated final-year English majors' attitudes toward English presentations, their presentation frequency, and the difficulties they experienced when presenting in English at Thu Dau Mot University. The findings showed that students generally valued English presentations and frequently engaged in presentation activities. Most participants recognized the importance of presentation skills for academic and professional communication. However, frequent exposure to presentations did not remove students' difficulties. All participants reported facing challenges when delivering English presentations. Psychological barriers were the most serious difficulty, followed by linguistic difficulties and contextual and delivery difficulties. Anxiety, lack of confidence, fear of making mistakes, and fear of being judged were the most common problems. This suggests that presentation competence should not be treated only as a language issue. It also depends on students' emotional readiness and confidence when speaking in front of others.

Linguistic difficulties also affected students' presentation performance. Students reported problems with vocabulary, pronunciation, grammar, and choosing appropriate language during presentations. These challenges may make it harder for students to express ideas clearly and may also increase their anxiety. Contextual and delivery issues, such as unfamiliar topics, limited preparation time, weak use of body language, ineffective visual aids, and difficulty with the Q&A section, also influenced students' presentation experiences.

The main implication of this study is that lecturers should move beyond simply asking students to give more presentations. Students need structured support before, during, and after presentation tasks. Before presentations, lecturers can help students prepare topic-related vocabulary, organize ideas, rehearse in small groups, and practice pronunciation. During presentation training, lecturers can use low-stakes activities to reduce anxiety and help students become more comfortable speaking in front of others. After presentations, students should receive constructive feedback on both language use and delivery skills. Curriculum designers should also consider including presentation skills across several courses rather than treating them as one-time assignments. Presentation training should include language development, anxiety management, audience interaction, visual aid design, and Q&A practice. This would help students build confidence gradually and develop the skills needed for academic and workplace communication.

This study has some limitations. It was conducted at one university and relied on self-reported questionnaire data. Therefore, the findings may not fully reflect students' actual presentation performance. Future studies should include interviews, classroom observations, presentation recordings, or lecturer assessment to provide a fuller picture of students' presentation competence.

Difficulties in English Presentations among Final-Year English Majors at A Vietnamese University: A Quantitative Study

Research with larger samples from different universities would also help confirm whether similar patterns appear in other EFL higher education contexts.

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Difficulties in English Presentations among Final-Year English Majors at A Vietnamese University: A Quantitative Study

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