

The Effects of Critical Friends on the Self-Esteem and Academic Oral Presentation Ability of Teacher Students

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Abstract

The purpose of this study is to evaluate the effects of critical friends on self-esteem and the academic oral presentation ability of undergraduate students. A pretest was conducted in the first week of the semester. A pre-academic oral presentation preparation was held from the second week to the seventh week and followed by pedagogical speech activities from the eighth week to the eleventh week. The research instruments are Academic oral presentation behavior and self-esteem evaluation forms. The samples were 37 third year undergraduate students, who were purposively selected from the educational technology class at the Chulalongkorn University. The statistics used for analyzing quantitative data are frequencies, means, standard deviations, one sample t-tests, and Pearson's Product-Moment Correlations. It was found that the 37 third year undergraduate teacher students had higher self-esteem at the statistically significant level of .05 and academic oral presentation scores after the activity were statistically significant at the .05 level.

Keywords: self-esteem, academic oral presentation, critical friends

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Introduction

The ability to communicate effectively is one of the basic competencies required of teacher's and is also a precondition for professional as well as personal success. To be effective in classroom teaching, which is linked to instructional speech and a component of pedagogical speech, principles of successful public speaking must be observed (Petek, 2014). Academic oral presentation is an important skill that must be taught to student teachers before allowing them to enroll in a teaching practicum course. Therefore, training these students to speak in front of the public fluently and confidently is an important preparation for their teaching practicum success. It is imperative for students to train themselves to be able to communicate via academic oral presentation. However, not all students will succeed in speaking well. Many of them feel bad or fear academic oral presentation, fear being stared at, fear crowds, fear being in an open space, etc. These feelings are very closely related self-confidence and preparation.

A fear of academic oral presentation is one form of social anxiety, which could be overcome by strengthening speakers' self-esteem as speakers with low self-esteem usually fail to deliver a good speech or lack the ability to speak in public. The promotion of self-esteem and public speaking ability is an alternative method in education that focuses on the students to reflect critical thinking in self-development and multiple assessment activities. The critical friends depend on sharing knowledge through social media in order to reduce the time constraints that might otherwise limit students' ability to provide feedback to others. This connection created interactions for exchanging knowledge, providing support and suggestions, and cheering each other on in order to develop the learners' academic communication skills, critical thinking skills for learning new knowledge and solutions, and self-efficacy about ethical, mental, and emotional growth.

Self-esteem that boosts confidence is not an innate quality that people have from birth, it is a quality that can be cultivated through different strategies, and a critical friend is one among many. The critical friends' behaviors are a process used to compare and improve self-esteem and public speaking ability. A critical friend can be defined as a trusted person who asks provocative questions, provides data to be examined through another lens, and offers critiques of a person's work as a friend. A critical friend takes time to fully understand the context of the work presented and the outcomes that the person or group is working toward. The friend is an advocate for the success of that work (Heller, 1988; Gray, 1988). Thus, this study focused on using a critical friends strategy to increase students' self-esteem and the academic oral presentation ability of teacher student.

Research Objectives

1. To compare the average mean score of the students' self-esteem between before and after participating in the academic oral presentation practices using the critical friend approach.
2. To compare the average mean score of the students' oral academic presentation ability between before and after participating in the academic oral presentation practices using the critical friend approach.
3. To determine a correlation between the students' self-esteem and oral academic presentation ability between before and after participating in the academic oral presentation practices using the critical friend approach.

Review of Related Literature

Online Social Media

Online social media can be used as a tool for building relationships between individuals, controlling communication demands, and reducing anxiety from face-to-face communication in the form of virtual-reality in order to train the individuals and adapt themselves to real life (Steinfeld, Ellison, & Lamp, 2008). The VoiceThread website was selected as the medium for data collection of this study because visitors could write their reflective notes and share links to other online social media such as YouTube or Facebook.

Self-Esteem

Self-esteem is an individual's feeling towards him/herself. Being accepted by others and being successful are from being encouraged by others (Maslow, 1970). Self-evaluation is presented by the individual in the forms of thoughts, beliefs, and feelings towards him/herself with both positive and negative sides. These are measured with the Self-Esteem Inventory School Form developed by Coopersmith (1984) and translated by Monsaporn Vitoonmetha (2000).

Academic Oral Presentation

An academic oral presentation skill is different from other speaking, conversation, or discussion skills. In other words, it focuses on providing academic knowledge and opinions in a limited time and in front of a large audience. There are many types of public speaking such as lecture, discussion, report, academic conversation, meeting, and seminar. There are many aspects of public speaking including: accuracy, completeness, order, and content quality (Kerby & Romine, 2009).

Research Methodology

Research Sample

The samples in this study was comprised of 37 third-year students enrolled in the course “Issues and Trends in Educational Technology” offered at the Chulalongkorn University during the first semester of the 2015 academic year. The teaching in this class was conducive to applying the critical friends technique and to academic oral presentation activities in class throughout the semester. The lecturer gave consent to the researcher to conduct this study with the students.

Instruments

1. Self-Esteem Inventory

A 58-item measure of attitudes toward oneself, which was translated from Coopersmith's (1967) Self-Esteem Inventory (SEI) by Vitoonmetha (2000), was used to measure students' self-esteem. These questions measure 5 subscales which form students' self-esteem. These subscales are: 1) General Self 2) Social self-peers 3) Parents 4) Lie Scale and 5) School Academic. The Kuder-Richardson Formula calculation of the Self-Esteem Inventory used in this study was .8121

2. Academic Oral Presentation Ability Assessment Form

This form comprised of 8 items of ability was used to evaluate the effectiveness of academic oral presentations delivered by the students. The items covered enumeration, correctness and clarity, language used in the content, speakers' posture, expression and voice, and uses of presentation instruments. A four rubric scale (Schreiber, Paul & Shibley, 2012) was assigned accordingly to the students' quality of their speech. Three experts in public speaking and education speaking were asked to evaluate the quality of the scale and the index of item – objective congruence (IOC) calculation was = 0.839.

Data Collection

This study used a pretest-posttest to collect data.

Pretest phase

1. The students answered a pretest of Self-Esteem Inventory.
2. The students gave a 3-minute academic oral presentation. The researcher evaluated the students' ability using the Academic Oral Presentation Assessment Form.

Experiment phase

1. The students formed a group of critical friends consisting of five people.
2. A topic of the presentation was assigned to the students and they had one week to prepare their 3-minute oral presentation.
3. In the class, the students delivered their academic oral presentation to their peers. During the presentation no comments or questions were allowed from the audience. Every speech has been video recorded and uploaded to the VoiceThread website for further comments by their peers.
4. Every student viewed the video clip of their group friends' academic oral presentations and was required to comment on the VoiceThread (below the video screen). These comments can only be viewed by the speakers, researchers, and lecturer.
5. Every student wrote their reflection of their own presentation after reading the comments of their friend on VoiceThread. This self-reflection was private and can only be viewed by the speaker, researcher, and the lecturer.
6. The researcher assessed the ability of the presentation each week using the Academic Oral Presentation Ability Assessment Form.

7. The students delivered their weekly academic oral presentations for eleven weeks. The weekly topic to be presented was assigned one week prior to the presentation.

Posttest Phase.

1. After completing all eleven academic oral presentations, the students completed the posttest of the Self-Esteem Inventory.

2. Students delivered an academic oral presentation and the researcher evaluated this presentation using Academic Oral Presentation Ability Assessment Form.

Data Analysis

Data from two instruments from the pretest and posttest phase were analyzed using frequency distribution, mean, and standard deviation. A t-test was used to compare the differences of the average mean score of the self-esteem and academic oral presentation ability before and after participating in the critical friends and academic oral presentation process. Pearson's Product Moment Coefficient Correlation was used to determine correlation between self-esteem and academic oral presentation ability.

Result

Samples' Profile

The sample was 75.68% female and 24.32% male, all in the age range of 18-20 years, and 72.97% had passed one course which required public speaking, 13.51% had passed two courses, 8.11% had passed three courses, and 5.41% were not been identified as having any previous experience in being trained to speak in public. Of the respondents, 86.48% had never participated in a public speaking course or training, 8.11% had participated once, and 5.41% had participated twice. 72.97% of the sample had given a

public speech more than ten times, 10.81% had given a public speech between one and three times, 8.11% had given a public speech between four and six times, and 8.11% had never given a public speech.

Self-Esteem

The difference between the mean score of the self-esteem of the participants at the pretest and the mean self-esteem score after treatment was statistically significant at 0.05 ($t = -1.10989$, sig. = 0.000). The average rating of self-esteem at the posttest is greater than the average rate of self-esteem during the pretest, with a significance level of 0.05.

Table 1: Comparison of the Self-Esteem Inventory Average Mean Scores Between Before and After Participating in the Academic Oral Presentation Practices Using the Critical Friend Approach.

Self-Esteem Inventory	Mean	S.D.	T-test	Sig.
Before	83.30	9.53	-1.10989*	0.000
After	85.59	8.23		

* significance level at 0.05

Academic Oral Presentation Ability

The difference in the mean score of the academic oral presentation ability at the pretest and the average mean score at the posttest was statistically significant at 0.05 ($t = -13.242$, Sig. = 0.000). The average mean score of academic oral presentation the trial is higher than the average mean score of academic oral presentation the trial, at a significance level of 0.05.

Table 2: Comparison of the Average Mean Score of the Academic Oral Presentation Ability Between Before and After Participating in the Academic Oral Presentation Practices Using the Critical Friend.

Academic Oral Presentation Ability Score	Mean	S.D.	T-test	Sig.
Before	25.46	4.093	*13.242-	0.000
After	31.00	3.009		

* significance level at 0.05

Table 3: Correlation of the Posttest Self-Esteem's Average Mean Score and Pretest-Posttest Academic Oral Presentation Ability's Average Mean Scores.

Self-Esteem Inventory	Academic Oral Presentation Ability			
	Pretest		Posttest	
	Pearson Correlation	Sig	Pearson Correlation	Sig
Posttest	*0.696	0.000	*0.600	0.000

** significance level at 0.05

The analysis of the relationship between Coppersmith's Self-Esteem Inventory score and the academic oral presentation ability revealed that the rating of the self-esteem pretest correlated to a greater extent and in the same direction with a score of academic oral presentation samples before treatment ($r = 0.600$, $\text{Sig.} = 0.000$) significantly at the statistically significant 0.05 level. The rating of the self-esteem posttest correlated to a greater extent and in the same direction with a score of academic oral

presentation samples after treatment ($r = 0.696$, $\text{Sig.} = 0.000$) significantly at the statistically significant 0.05 level.

Discussion

The critical friends in these academic oral presentation activities played an important role in providing advice and recommendations to other members and, at the same time, also played a role in reflecting on their own performances. In the early stages of this study, each member had a high level of public speaking anxiety. This is in accordance with a study by Botella, Hofmann & Moscovitch (2004), which found that most university students have stress and anxiety about speaking in front of the class because they fear they might become a laughingstock to their classmates and teachers. Also, most of them are afraid that their public image will be ruined, if they do not perform well in front of the class. By using the critical friends process, students lowered their anxiety from talking with a smaller group of friends to share and learn from each other.

As a result, the students do not feel alone. As Arnau, Kahrs, & Kruskamp (2004) noted, the critical friends process enhances motivation to learn, collaborate, and work, because it allows students to learn together in a group process and allows learners to interact better with each other in a friendly atmosphere, whether it's talking to each other, exchanging ideas, advising, etc. The researcher found that the score of the critical friends collected after this study is higher; it does not imply that the participants turned the "critical friend technique" into their daily habit but rather accept and understand the concept of critical friends.

A study (Baskerville & Goldblatt, 2009) on positive feedback which was conducted on a group of people of working age found that working age people think positive feedback is insincere praise or false flattery, which is similar to the opinions of some of the participants in this study that said the use of critical friends is just a

consolation and lacks honesty (Baskerville & Goldblatt, 2009). To maximize the use of a critical friends, positive feedback should be realistic and based on the actual ability of the person being commented on or criticized. Critical friends can lift up the spirit of others, which leads them to feel good about themselves and feel hopeful of developing their academic oral presentation skills.

Technology and learning can be a tool to add value to communications (Zhao, Grasmuck & Martin, 2008). In this research, social media technology used VoiceThread to exchange knowledge with each other and allow users to create public or semi-public personal profiles, chat, comment, and share content in various formats such as text, images, and audio and also allowed them to share links to other social media such as YouTube or Facebook. By observing participants on VoiceThread, most study participants indicated that they feel free to comment through social media because, unlike face-to-face communication, they do not have to worry about the direct reaction or facial expression of the person they are communicating with. Also, commenting through social media made them feel empowered, especially when their opinions are similar to others.

In this research, it was found that social media plays a role as a communication medium to help develop self-esteem and the ability to speak in public by becoming a platform for a critical friend to share their opinions. However, there are members in the critical friends group that provide comical suggestions or tease other members due to the sense of freedom in using social media, which allowed them to act carelessly. They would feel proud when their comments gained attention and feel disappointed when receiving negative feedback from others. Many of the participants stated that they feel somewhat embarrassed when posting unrealistic things on social media such as a picture of a brand name bag they borrowed from someone else, a picture with too much editing, or a picture of them standing in front of a luxury store.

However, the participants' preparation time was limited. Teachers may need time to prepare for speaking in class at the right time. To reduce time constraints, many

students are concerned about the scores they receive in public speaking. Teachers should advise that such activities focus on self-development. Because VoiceThread may still be used, the teacher and learner determine what kind of social media to use, but it must have the features of video blogging, for example, and allow users to share video memos and comment. It should also include privacy settings.

Conclusion

Using critical friends to increase self-esteem should focus on trusting. A person tends to learn more effectively if that person has achieved a sense of pride. So, in practicing the skill of academic oral presentation skill, teachers should try to create a sense of success. If students' behavior is desirable, teachers should encourage the students immediately and constantly. Psychologically, such actions would result in repeated behavior and will eventually become a habit. Allowing students to express their opinions and providing them with positive reinforcement are good teaching tools. However, avoid exaggerating because it might lower students' trust toward a teacher. Prepare students to use technology and social media to the quality of working and learning together. The use of social media should primarily rely on each other for mutual success. The event using social media is to interact with each other to share ideas, information, and learning, as well as an analysis of both individual and group achievement can be monitored and assessed. More importantly, students need to feel safe and comfortable to use social media to express their personal opinions to reflect their suggestions and opinions to others.

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