Psychological Factors Affecting English Presentation Skills: Problems and Solutions

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ABSTRACT

In higher education, presentation is a skill that students must master and perform in most subjects. Among the various factors that influence the success of a presentation, psychological aspects often play a crucial role, particularly when learners present in a foreign language, such as English. Therefore, this study was conducted to explore the problems and solutions related to psychological factors that students often encounter when giving English presentations. This study employed both quantitative and qualitative research methods, with 80 students responding to the questionnaire and 20 selected for in-depth interviews. Findings reveal that students are primarily influenced by their own shyness, lack of confidence, and Anxiety when delivering presentations in front of the class. Interestingly, they remained motivated throughout the learning process, thanks to teacher support and positive peer feedback during presentation activities. Regarding the methods students often use to overcome the above-mentioned psychological barriers, the most common is to prepare carefully and practice presentations regularly. Through this study, teachers should be aware of students' presentation difficulties and employ various teaching strategies to mitigate students' psychological problems during class participation, thereby helping them achieve their best results in their studies.

Introduction

In language learning, particularly in English, speaking skills play a crucial role that students must master to communicate effectively and acquire other skills more easily (Grieve et al., 2021). Speaking is a linguistic interaction process that includes the production, reception, and processing of information (Brown, 2001). Richard (2008) argued that most language students judge the success and usefulness of an English course based on how much they have improved their speaking skills. One classroom learning activity that can improve speaking

skills is giving a presentation in front of the class. According to Baker (2025), a presentation is akin to a formal conversation, which can be conducted individually or in groups. Presentation skills help students conduct effective question-and-answer sessions, thereby increasing student participation in the classroom. Presentation also benefits students by integrating language skills, practicing speaking, making decisions, preparing for real life, and acquiring knowledge through English (Al-Issa et al., 2010). It is evident that presentation skills are essential in learning English, and this ability is highly valued in preparing students for their future careers.

Several factors influence the success of an English presentation, including social, linguistic, and psychological factors (Pham et al., 2022; Pham & Le, 2022). However, according to Nijat et al. (2019), some psychological factors, such as shyness and Anxiety, are considered to be the leading underlying causes of students' inability to deliver a presentation successfully. Presentation can be regarded as a part of public speaking, and according to research by many scholars, it is considered a scary thing for some individuals (Liang & Kelsen, 2018; Tran, 2022; Nguyen, 2022; Nguyen & Tong, 2024). Some estimates suggested that as many as 20-85% of individuals experience presentation Anxiety (Moneva & Tribunala, 2020). Other studies have also found that psychological factors, such as Anxiety, shyness, low confidence, and low motivation, are the primary reasons university students are reluctant to give presentations in English (Brown, 2001; Elhadi, 2017; Gebhard, 2006; Schwarz, 2005). These studies confirmed that psychological factors strongly influence students' presentation skills.

At Vietnam National University (VNU), students are required to give presentations to the class in most subjects. It is evident that this is an essential skill that students must master to achieve good results in their studies. By observing actual lessons in class, the researcher noticed that students still have difficulty making presentations in English. For example, sometimes students forget words or hesitate because of something that makes their words inappropriate. Thus, learners' failure to speak is not only due to a lack of language rules but also to psychological factors that interfere with speaking. This is something that English teachers need to pay attention to. Therefore, this study aimed to investigate the main psychological barriers affecting students' English presentation performance and to explore the practical solutions learners use to overcome these challenges and enhance their confidence in public speaking.

Literature review

Views on psychological factors and main classifications

Research on psychological factors and their impact on the foreign language learning process has attracted the attention of many scholars worldwide. The earliest studies include Nunan (1999), in which the author affirmed that psychological factors are among the main reasons learners are reluctant to speak English. More specifically, Brown (2001) stated that certain psychological factors, such as shyness and Anxiety, are considered the primary reasons why

learners dislike speaking foreign languages. This result aligns with the study by Gebhard (2006), which found that the main cause of learners' difficulties in learning to speak is their shyness or Anxiety. The authors all emphasized the role of teachers in guiding and supporting learners to reduce those feelings and encourage them to learn to speak English.

Based on the results of the aforementioned studies, Elhadi (2017) proposed several psychological factors that affect learners' speaking abilities and affirmed that these factors are closely related to learners' success in acquiring speaking skills. Numerous studies have been conducted to investigate the role of psychological factors in the success and failure of English language learners. Sharing Elhadi's view, Schwarz (2005) also believed that psychological factors, such as fear of making mistakes, Anxiety, shyness, lack of confidence, and lack of motivation, hinder learners' speaking skills. Recent studies continue to support similar classifications of psychological factors associated with speaking or presentation anxiety. For example, Pabro-Maquidato (2021) found that for Filipino university students, fear of negative evaluation, emotional stress, physiological symptoms, and low self-esteem were the main psychological barriers. Similarly, in Thailand, Kurakan (2021) reported that engineering students experienced moderate levels of Anxiety, especially before presentations, mainly due to fear of making mistakes and fear of being evaluated. Additionally, Wang (2023) found that foreign language classroom anxiety, low self-esteem, and low enjoyment of English significantly affected students' willingness to speak English. The above results clearly demonstrate that psychology plays an important role in making learning speaking skills difficult. Although many studies have proposed different ways to classify learners' psychological factors, this study adopted the classification framework of Nijat et al. (2019), which was conducted with primary school students in Malaysia (about 60 upper primary students, aged 10 to 12, randomly selected from two classes). Their study employed a questionnaire comprising Likert-type, dichotomous, and open- and closed-ended questions to identify psychological barriers to speaking English. They found that fear in class, shyness, Anxiety, lack of confidence, and lack of motivation were the main psychological factors affecting English speaking. These factors closely align with my research context, as students at VNU frequently reported similar issues. Therefore, Nijat et al.'s classification system provides a clear and practical foundation for analyzing the psychological aspects affecting English presentation skills in this study.

a. Anxiety

According to many researchers, Anxiety is a factor that makes learners have difficulty in speaking English. According to Hemerka (2009), Anxiety acts as a part of the emotional factors that negatively influence learners in mastering their speaking skills; it causes feelings of Anxiety and fear, which can lead to poor speaking ability. Additionally, learners fear negative evaluation from friends and teachers, which in turn leads to a fear of public speaking.

b. Shyness

According to Royal et al. (2018), shyness is an emotion that is often clearly expressed through

a feeling of discomfort or awkwardness when a person does something or engages in a conversation with others, especially in new situations or with unfamiliar people. The above view affirmed that shyness is also considered an obstacle for learners when speaking English. Besides, the above statement also explains that learners who experience phobia when speaking in public feel a sense of shyness that makes their minds go blank, causing them to forget what to say.

c. Lack of confidence

Lack of confidence occurs when learners perceive that their interlocutors do not understand or misinterpret their messages. Chen et al. (2018) suggested that the primary cause of learners' lack of confidence is their inability to speak English fluently. Besides, Brown (2001) explained that a lack of teacher encouragement is one of the main causes of learners' low confidence. This makes them lose hope in their abilities and indirectly lose motivation to speak English. It can be seen that teacher support and encouragement play an important role in promoting and enhancing learners' confidence.

d. Lack of motivation

Motivation is a fundamental factor in the learning process for learners to achieve success. Nunan (1999) asserted that motivation can affect students' English speaking ability. Many studies have shown that students with strong motivation to succeed are more likely to persevere in their learning and achieve better results than those who lack motivation. Babu (2010) argued that a lack of motivation to learn can hinder learners' ability to speak English in the classroom. This is due to learners' lack of motivation and to teachers' lack of support in communicating in English. Therefore, teachers' attention is a crucial factor in motivating learners to actively participate in English communication.

Review of Studies on the Influence of Psychological Factors on Presentation Skills in the World

In recent years, studies worldwide have addressed the effects of psychological factors on English-speaking skills in general, and English presentation skills in particular. Aouatef (2015) conducted a study with 50 second-year students from the English Department at Biskra University, as these students had been speaking English since their first year. After analyzing the survey questionnaire, the results indicated that self-esteem, motivation, and Anxiety were the primary factors influencing learners' speaking ability in presentations. Furthermore, Hardi (2017) pointed out four main reasons that contribute to students' difficulties in English presentations: (1) language ability, (2) instructor assessment, (3) type of communication task, and (4) instructor feedback. Among them, the psychological barrier of shyness was emphasized as an important internal factor that affects students' presentation ability in presentation classes. The study identified shyness as a major barrier that hinders students' ability to give effective presentations in English.

In addition, the study by Grieve et al. (2021) employed thematic analysis to identify specific

fears that students experience when speaking in public, including fear of being assessed, physical symptoms, uncertainty about the topic, lack of practice, and inadequate preparation in college. This survey provided further evidence that higher education institutions should acknowledge the fear of public speaking in some students and provide more support in assessing presentations. In addition, a study investigating the fear of presenting in English in higher education, conducted by Arlan et al. (2022), found that students experience various types of fear, including fear of communication, negative evaluation, and testing. From there, the authors proposed strategies to help students overcome their fear of presenting in English, including a first group focused on the problem — such as exercising, taking notes, and seeking support — and a second group focused on emotions — such as self-control and positive thinking.

Furthermore, the research by Jabir et al. (2022) showed that psychological factors are the most significant factors affecting students when presenting. They are afraid of making mistakes (42%), anxious (42%), and lack motivation (50%). Through this study, the authors also proposed a way to address the psychological problems students encounter when presenting by motivating and encouraging them to practice presenting. Similarly, Sari (2022) also believed that psychological factors are the root cause of students' aversion to speaking in front of the class. Students' speaking ability is affected by many psychological factors, including Anxiety, shyness, low confidence, and low motivation (Sari, 2022). According to the author, students need to understand their psychological state to manage it during the learning process. In this study, the term "psychological states" refers to learners' internal emotional and mental states, such as Anxiety, shyness, self-confidence, and fear of negative evaluation, which may influence their English presentation performance. These psychological factors were analyzed through a student survey, focusing on how these states hinder or support their public speaking ability. By identifying these internal states, the study aimed to explore the strategies students use to regulate their emotions and improve their presentation skills.

Review of Studies on the Influence of Psychological Factors on Presentation Skills in Vietnam

In Vietnam, although few studies have been conducted in this field, in recent years some scholars have examined the influence of psychological factors on learners' English presentation skills. First, Nguyen (2020) asserted that the higher the level of Anxiety, the less effective English communication will be. Students with high levels of language anxiety tend to use fewer sentences. The length of these sentences is shorter, and the error rate is higher than that of students with low levels of Anxiety. Hesitation and fear of making mistakes are also prominent psychological characteristics among students. Sharing the same point of view, Dang (2020) also noted that English majors often experience Anxiety when making presentations in English. From there, the author proposed several suitable solutions to transform an English presentation skills class into a positive environment that would help alleviate students' Anxiety.

When analyzing the Anxiety of first-year students about English-speaking skills at Hanoi

University of Technology, Do and Vu (2022) identified a lack of confidence, unfamiliarity with grammar rules, and limited opportunities as the primary causes of anxiety when communicating in English. In addition, the research results of Ho and Truong (2022) showed that students felt more anxious when presenting in front of the class than when acting in front of the class and working in groups. In addition, students also said that speaking Anxiety was caused by factors such as English speaking ability, the nature of teachers' questions, fear of losing face and being evaluated, and fear of getting low marks. To cope with speaking Anxiety, students used social and cognitive strategies.

Nguyen et al. (2023) investigated anxiety among non-English-major students when giving group presentations. The results showed that several factors influence students' Anxiety, which are internal factors, including fear of failure, fear of criticism, conflicting emotions, Anxiety about speaking, fear of being interrupted, and negative thoughts; and external factors, including presentation room conditions, lack of practice, gender, and physical factors. The strategies participants can use to cope with their Anxiety when presenting in English include always thinking positively about the audience, the speech, and themselves as speakers; preparing well; practicing; staying confident; and remaining relaxed.

Review of Studies on the Methods to Overcome Psychological Factors

Several studies, both internationally and in Vietnam, have identified a range of strategies that students use to overcome psychological barriers in English presentations. A common and effective method is early and thorough preparation, which helps students feel more in control and reduces presentation anxiety. This strategy is highlighted in studies by Nguyen et al. (2023) and Le and Nguyen (2023), who found that careful planning, mastery of content, and familiarity with the topic contributed significantly to students' confidence levels. In addition, practice and rehearsal of presentations have been widely encouraged in both local and international contexts. Nguyen et al. (2025) found that repeated practice improved the speaking fluency and presentation performance of Vietnamese EFL students. Several studies also highlighted the importance of psychological readiness and emotional regulation. Strategies such as positive thinking, physical relaxation, and mental preparation for unexpected situations are considered important in managing presentation anxiety (University of Queensland, 2024). These strategies promote self-awareness and resilience, helping learners overcome high-pressure moments during presentations.

Furthermore, social and interpersonal factors also play an important role. Seeking encouragement during presentations and being open to feedback after presentations have been shown to improve students' overall experience and reduce their fear of being judged (Nguyen et al., 2023). These factors foster a supportive learning environment, encouraging students to view feedback as a tool for growth rather than criticism. Finally, although less mentioned in previous studies, the strategy of establishing audience impact values is consistent with the concept of audience-centered communication. Several recent studies have directly addressed strategies related to audience awareness and impact. For example, Lee and Liu (2022) found that when students presented to an authentic audience, they tended to prepare more

thoroughly and to make their message more relevant and appealing to the audience. Similarly, Thaksanan (2024) reported that students learning English as a foreign language in Thailand focused on audience expectations and being mentally prepared for unexpected questions to reduce Anxiety.

Together, these approaches form the theoretical and practical basis for the second part of the questionnaire in the present study, which explored how students actively manage psychological factors in English presentations.

Research Gap and Research Questions

As the literature review shows, various views and classifications of psychological factors influence learners' presentation skills. In this study, I support the classification proposed by Nijat et al. (2019), which includes factors such as Anxiety, shyness, low confidence, and low motivation. These factors served as the main theoretical framework for designing the survey and interview questions presented in the next section. These related studies also inspired me to conduct this research to investigate the primary psychological factors that influence presentation skills, thereby providing solutions from students' perspectives to help teachers make informed adjustments in their teaching. These goals can be achieved through the following two research questions:

1. What psychological factors affect students when they make English presentations?

2. What strategies do students use to cope with psychological barriers in English presentations?

Methods

Pedagogical Setting& Participants

The participants in this study were 80 students from two Presentation Skills classes taught by the researcher during the 2023-2024 academic year at Vietnam National University (VNU). To participate in this class, students must have an English level of B1 (equivalent to level 3 according to the 6-level foreign language proficiency framework for Vietnam).

The Presentation Skills course is 3 credits long and is organized entirely in a direct learning format (face-to-face) over 15 weeks, with 3 lessons per week. There is no online learning in this course. The program is designed to be practice-oriented, combining theory and application. After each theoretical lesson, students are required to conduct practical presentation exercises in class to confirm their understanding and application of presentation theories, while also developing their positivity, creativity, and critical thinking. Within the framework of the English Presentation Skills program at VNU, practical exercises are regularly integrated into classroom activities to help students develop both language proficiency and public speaking skills. These activities are usually implemented in five basic forms: (1) individuals provide information and/or present their views on an issue of interest;

(2) class, group, or pair discussions; (3) prepare presentation slides and/or other illustrative tools (posters, pictures, real objects, etc.); (4) write a presentation script; (5) practice actual presentations. These forms are used consistently throughout the semester as part of class assignments and assessments.

These practical presentation exercises are commented on and evaluated by teachers and fellow students throughout the semester, allowing each individual student to gain experience and produce the best final presentation.

Data collection & analysis

To achieve the study's objectives, the researcher employed a combination of quantitative and qualitative research methods. Specifically, the researcher collected data from students using the following procedure.

First, in week 14 of the semester, after the students had completed most of the presentation practice exercises, the researcher distributed a questionnaire to the whole class to find out about the psychological factors that affected the performance of the presentations they had conducted throughout the semester, and the methods they used to overcome those difficulties. The questionnaire consists of 2 parts, each corresponding to 1 research question. Part 1 was designed using a 5-point Likert scale (completely disagree, disagree, neutral, agree, completely agree) and included 12 questions on psychological factors that affect students' presentations. The researcher developed part 1 of the questionnaire based on Nijat et al.'s (2019) classification of psychological factors, which includes anxiety, shyness, lack of confidence, and lack of motivation. To ensure the questionnaire's reliability, the split-half Spearman-Brown reliability coefficient was calculated. The results showed that the coefficient was greater than 0.70, indicating an acceptable level of internal consistency for part 1 of the instrument. Part 2 of the survey was designed as a multiple-choice format, consisting of 8 suggested statements that focused on common strategies students used to cope with psychological barriers in English presentations. Students were allowed to choose more than one answer if applicable, to reflect the combination of strategies they had applied. The quantitative data from the questionnaire were entered into Microsoft Excel and processed using Excel's formulas to generate descriptive statistics, including frequencies, means, and standard deviations for each item.

Second, after analyzing the survey results, the researcher conducted semi-structured interviews with 20 students (10 students per class) to clarify issues arising from the survey responses. These students were selected using the maximum-variance sampling method, accounting for differences in presentation performance, participation, and survey responses (both high and low scorers on the psychological factors scale). The goal was to ensure a wide and balanced range of perspectives. All interviews were conducted in groups of 2-3 students, totaling 8 small-group interviews. This format was chosen to create a more relaxed and less pressurized environment, helping students feel more comfortable sharing sensitive psychological experiences. Each interview lasted approximately 30-40 minutes and was

recorded using a mobile phone with the participants' consent. No video recordings were made to avoid causing discomfort or increasing performance anxiety. The interview questions (10 in total) were developed based on the two research questions and the survey results, allowing for a deeper exploration of psychological challenges and coping strategies. All audio recordings were transcribed verbatim. The qualitative data were then manually analyzed using thematic analysis, following Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-stage approach: familiarisation, coding, theme development, theme review, theme identification/naming, and reporting. Each student was assigned a unique code (e.g., S1-S20) to ensure confidentiality and facilitate reference to specific interviewees during analysis. Although 20 students participated in the interviews, only 12 (S1–S12) were directly quoted in the results section. These quotes were selected based on their relevance, clarity, and representativeness of the main themes that emerged during the data analysis. Although all 20 responses were analyzed to identify patterns and support thematic coding, only the most illustrative and thematically rich excerpts were included to avoid duplication and maintain focus and coherence in the presentation of the results.

The following research methods are employed, and the corresponding research results are presented in the section below.

Results/Findings and Discussion

Research Question 1: What psychological factors affect students when they make English presentations?

To investigate the psychological factors that affect students' English presentations, the researcher relied on survey and interview results. The survey results are presented in Table 1.

Table 1 shows that students were mainly affected by their shyness and lack of confidence when presenting in front of the class (M= 3.65-4.27). Some students felt anxious when having to present or explain something in English (M= 3.71-3.83). In particular, the data show that students did not feel a lack of motivation to learn (M< 2), indicating that this is not a psychological factor affecting students' presentations.

First, it can be seen that a lack of confidence is the psychological factor that affects students the most (M = 3.94-4.23). A student shared:

> *In the presentation, I am nervous about the Q&A section at the end because I will have to answer questions from the audience. I am not confident that I can answer this part well, and I always hope that my classmates will not ask any questions.* (S1)

Some students felt insecure because of peer pressure. Student responses to the interviews indicated that insecurity arose if they felt that other students in the class were more proficient in English. Furthermore, students felt pressured when they thought the audience had better English-speaking skills than they did. One student said:

I think my English-speaking level is not as good as my other friends'. They speak very confidently and fluently. Therefore, when I present in front of the class, I always feel nervous when I have to speak English in front of many good friends. (S2)

Table 1.

Psychological Factors Affecting Presentations

Psychological factors	Mean	Std
Anxiety		
1. Learners are afraid of making mistakes when presenting in English.	3.83	0.56
2. Learners feel nervous when asked to explain something in English.	3.71	0.61
3. Learners fear receiving negative feedback from teachers and peers.	2.42	0.47
Shyness		
4. Learners have difficulty looking someone straight in the eye.	3.65	0.67
5. Learners are afraid of speaking in front of a crowd.	3.73	0.71
6. Learners feel embarrassed if people look at them.	3.87	0.54
Lack of confidence		
7. Learners think that other learners are better presenters than they are.	4.06	0.62
8. Learners are not confident about their English speaking ability.	3.94	0.74
9. Learners are uncomfortable answering audience questions.	4.23	0.48
Lack of motivation		
10. Learners lack motivation because of uninspiring teaching methods.	1.52	0.69
11. Learners lack motivation due to a lack of guidance and attention from teachers.	1.34	0.58
12. Learners lack motivation due to a lack of positive feedback from peers.	1.67	0.46

This result is quite similar to that of the studies by Grieve et al. (2021) and Do and Vu (2022), in which all participants reported feeling self-conscious, confused, and pressured when presenting in front of people with higher English proficiency. In the study by Soomro et al. (2019), participants also agreed that a lack of confidence created barriers such as incorrect pronunciation and incorrect use of terminology. Overall, students emphasized that lack of confidence is a psychological factor that greatly affects English presentation skills.

Second, regarding psychological factors associated with shyness, many students participating in the survey reported feeling shy about speaking in front of a crowd or uncomfortable when others looked at them (M = 3.65-3.87). This was explained more clearly by the students in the interview. One student shared that it came from personal personality:

I think I am an introvert and shy about sharing, so when I stand in front of the class, I feel quite nervous, especially when many people are looking at me. That makes me forget what I need to say and have difficulty expressing my presentation fluently. (S3)

Some other students attributed their shyness to the fact that this was the first year they had to give formal presentations in English in front of the class. As one student shared:

Before, when I was in high school, I did not have to give individual presentations, but

I often worked in groups and had to present only very few times. When taking this course, I was required to give a presentation that covered all the steps and skills. I felt this was quite new. (S4)

The psychological factor of shyness is also cited by many researchers as a major hindrance to students' performance in presentations, as noted in the studies by Hardi (2017) and Sari (2022). In addition, in the study by Soomro et al. (2019), participants reported that shyness is a major obstacle when communicating in English, which makes them reluctant to present ideas in front of the class. The authors also stated that introverted and shy students are often uncomfortable when asked to answer questions in class.

Interestingly, in this study, students were not affected by a lack of motivation (M< 2). This point was also made clear by the students in the interviews. One student explained:

Although I do not feel confident in my English presentation skills, I always receive positive feedback from my friends and teachers after my presentations. That makes me feel very happy and motivated to try harder in the next presentations. (S5)

Students also felt quite satisfied with the teachers' guidance and attention to presentation activities throughout the semester. This is a good result for me to continue to inspire the next courses. One student said:

My teachers and friends always support me to have the best presentation. Although I am still shy when presenting in front of the class, I feel that with the support of the whole class, I can gradually overcome my weaknesses and improve. (S6)

This result differs significantly from those of some previous studies. For example, negative feedback from teachers and friends is considered by many researchers to be the leading psychological factor that prevents students from performing well in presentations (Hardi, 2017; Arlan et al., 2022; Ho & Truong, 2022). Furthermore, a student in the study by Soomro et al. (2019) reported that a lack of interest and almost no positive feedback from friends and teachers in class led them to be less interested in presentations and other communication activities. This difference may be due to the nature of the presentation skills training program at VNU, which not only focuses on developing language and presentation skills but also promotes effective interaction and mutual support between learners and lecturers. Such an environment fosters a more cohesive, collaborative learning atmosphere rather than merely viewing presentations as an opportunity to showcase individual talents or pursue personal achievements.

The above results show the psychological factors commonly encountered by students when presenting in English. Based on the overall learning outcomes in class throughout the semester, students showed significant improvement in their final presentations. The strategies they used to overcome these psychological challenges and improve their performance will be discussed in the following section.

Research Question 2: What strategies do students use to cope with psychological barriers in English presentations?

The results obtained from the survey for question 2 of the study are presented in Table 2 below.

Table 2.

Methods Students Use to Overcome Psychological Factors

Methods	Percent
A. Prepare early and thoroughly	94.8%
B. Set a value that impacts your audience	83.8%
C. Relax your body	40%
D. Think positively	45%
E. Prepare yourself mentally for unexpected situations	42.5%
F. Practice and rehearse your presentation	92.5%
G. Find encouragement while presenting	45%
H. Be happy to take comments after the presentation	80%

Table 2 shows that the two strategies most students used during the semester to overcome psychological factors when presenting in English were early and thorough preparation (94.8%) and practice of the presentation (92.5%). In the interviews, students also emphasized these strategies to achieve good results in the final presentation. One student shared, "*I always follow the motto 'Practice makes perfect. I think that when you prepare carefully, you will be more confident when giving presentations. We formed groups to practice presentations before writing the final paper*" (S7). It can be seen that practicing and preparing have helped students overcome many weaknesses in their presentations. Another student shared a specific approach to practicing, stating, "*I usually list out what I will say and practice saying it once or twice. I also keep track of the time while practicing, which helps me control my speaking time without fear of going overboard*" (S8). Some students even planned what they would wear to their presentation. One student said:

> *I think it is important to choose an outfit that you feel comfortable wearing. And most importantly, it should be something that you know will make you stand out. Deciding in advance what you will wear on the day of your speech will make you less nervous and more confident.* (S9)

The above research results are quite consistent with the views of authors such as Jabir et al. (2022) and Nguyen et al. (2023), who emphasize that preparation and practice before a presentation are basic strategies to help students overcome psychological difficulties. In addition, in the study of Do and Vu (2022), most students (79.3%) said that they should

practice speaking skills more to overcome Anxiety when presenting in English. Besides, according to Do and Vu (2022), in addition to practicing speaking skills, students in their study also increased their practice of listening and reading skills in English to avoid Anxiety when communicating, with a rate of 53.4%. These are also very useful suggestions for students to develop more effective practice strategies and achieve the best results.

The next two methods that also received the support of the majority of students were setting the value of impact on the audience (83.8%) and happily accepting feedback after the presentation (80%). It can be seen that setting the impact on the audience is a strategy employed by many famous speakers, as they aim to convey certain values through their speeches. Presentation is also a means of communication, and the presenter's task is to serve the common good of the audience, not to show off their personal brand. The goal of a presentation is always to inspire others to change for the better or to solve a problem in a positive way. Therefore, many students have paid attention to this method to become more confident in their presentations. A student shared:

> *Before presenting, I always try to find out the purpose of the presentation, who the audience is, what they need, and what will motivate them to change. Understanding these things will help me and the audience have a closer connection*. (S10)

In addition, receiving positive feedback after a presentation makes students more confident for the next one. As mentioned in the previous section, this is a difference from other studies. The highly inspiring classroom environment made students feel less stressed when receiving feedback and suggestions from friends and teachers. One student shared, "*I think it is normal not to be able to answer a question. Everyone can make mistakes. Therefore, I am always ready to accept feedback from lecturers and classmates*" (S11).

From Table 2, it can be seen that the methods in the emotion-focused strategies group, such as positive thinking and preparing for unexpected situations, received approval from fewer than half of the students participating in the study. Some other students did not use these strategies often. One student explained:

> *I feel that I still do not understand my psychological state well enough to be able to control it well during the presentation. I hope that, over the years of studying and gaining more experience, I will develop more strategies to regulate my emotions*. (S12)

This is quite understandable, as the group in the presentation skills course is all first-year students, so they do not have much experience making presentations or developing effective emotional control strategies. This result was also confirmed by Arlan et al. (2022) in their study, in which only about 6.7% of students chose emotion-focused strategies such as self-control or seeking help, and about 20% chose positive thinking methods. These results also provide teachers with suggestions for guiding students in developing methods for emotional control, enabling them to be more successful when presenting to a crowd.

Conclusion

This study aimed to understand the psychological factors students encounter when making English presentations and the solutions they use to overcome these barriers. Using a combination of quantitative and qualitative research methods with 80 VNU students, the research results indicate that students were primarily affected by shyness, lack of confidence, and Anxiety when presenting in front of the class. Interestingly, students did not feel unmotivated during the learning process, thanks to teachers' guidance and care, as well as positive feedback from friends on their presentation activities throughout the semester. This is also a positive result for teachers, as it allows them to make appropriate adjustments to help students increase their confidence when presenting to a crowd. Regarding the methods that students often use to overcome the above psychological barriers, the most common are careful preparation and regular practice for presentations. In addition, students had little experience using effective emotional control strategies. This is also a note for teachers to guide them in the following semesters.

The findings of this study have several practical implications for presentation skills curricula at VNU and similar educational institutions. First, the clear influence of psychological factors such as Anxiety, shyness, and lack of confidence suggests that presentation courses should incorporate not only language and technical training, but also structured support for psychological readiness. This could include classroom mental-preparation activities, guided peer feedback, and low-stakes presentation-practice opportunities. Specifically for VNU, instructors might consider designing assessment criteria and class assignments that emphasize collaborative learning, audience engagement, and self-reflection rather than individual performance. This approach can help create a more supportive learning environment where students feel safe to experiment, make mistakes, and improve. Besides, curriculum developers and educators are encouraged to implement strategies that promote early preparation, positive thinking, practice, and resilience to help students overcome psychological barriers and perform more confidently in academic and professional contexts. These implications emphasize the importance of addressing both the cognitive and affective aspects of presentation learning in higher education settings.

Although this study was limited to two presentation skills classes taught by the researcher herself and involved a relatively small number of participants, it provides insights into the psychological challenges students face when presenting in English. These findings provide educators with a foundation for better understanding these issues and making informed pedagogical adjustments to support learners more effectively. In particular, teachers are encouraged to recognize the psychological barriers that may hinder student performance and apply various teaching strategies to help reduce Anxiety and other emotional factors in classroom activities. At the same time, students should be encouraged to increase their awareness of their own emotional states and proactively apply appropriate strategies to improve their confidence and presentation performance. Future research, ideally on a larger

scale, is recommended to further explore the psychological factors that influence students' speaking skills, with a focus on developing and implementing specific strategies. Such research could significantly improve the effectiveness of university presentation skills courses.

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