Engineering Undergraduates’ Self-Assessment in Delivering Technical Oral Presentations in ESL Context

Abdelmadjid Benraghda,* and Noor Raha Mohd Radzuan**

*Centre for Modern Languages and Human Sciences, Universiti Malaysia Pahang

In recent years, alternative assessments have progressively gained attention in L2 speaking. An area which has received significant attention in the ESL literature has been the implementation of self-assessment strategy. The purpose of the present study is to find undergraduates’ perceptions pertaining to the use of self-assessment on technical oral presentations. In order to achieve this aim, the study conducted 113 engineering undergraduates from the Faculty of Civil Engineering & Earth Resources to be involved in this research. The study delved into the participants’ perceptions on self-assessment in delivering technical oral presentations. A questionnaire which had been adapted from previous studies was found to be reliable and was distributed to the participants. The results of the study revealed that the engineering undergraduates’ perceptions on self-assessment were positive. According to the findings of the study, it can be concluded that implementing self-assessment technique among Malaysian undergraduates can be helpful in overcoming some of their oral presentation difficulties. Hence, the results of the study have clear implications on teaching and learning. Educators can implement self-assessment technique as an autonomous learning opportunity to alleviate their students’ oral presentation apprehension. The strategy can polish the oral presentation skills of individuals in both academic and professional spheres.

**Keywords:** Self-Assessment; Technical Oral Presentation Skills; Perception; and Engineering Undergraduates

1. INTRODUCTION

Undergraduate students are required to be good English communicators in different educational contexts because there have been a worldwide expansion of English, resulting in increased demand for English communication competencies. The essential objective of learning English is to have good communication skills. The English language has been taught as a second language (ESL) in several countries such as Malaysia, Philippines, and India. In Malaysia, the English language has been introduced to children in their kindergarten years, and has continued until they reach university. Nevertheless, it has been reported that many Malaysian undergraduates had negative experiences when communicating in English. Educators and researchers have argued that many undergraduate students in ESL classes were more apprehensive compared to any other classes. The apprehension they referred to stemmed from speaking situations, particularly when students were tasked to deliver presentations. ESL communication skills have been viewed as a major impediment for teachers as well as undergraduate students, in overcoming students’ difficulties when they were tasked to perform oral presentations. Therefore, great emphasis should be placed on oral communication skills, rather than written communication skills, particularly in the engineering industry. Indeed, fluency in the English language is seen as an advantage in the sphere of engineering. Fluency in the English language has assisted engineers to become more professional and successful. Additionally, there have been a number of communicative events such teleconferencing for advice, and presenting various ideas, which have been considered indispensable for engineers at the workplace.

2. SELF-ASSESSMENT (SA)

Self-assessment or self-appraisal is a process where a student grades their own oral performances. Many educators have consistently scrutinized whether their undergraduate students were competent to make significant contributions to their own assessments. Self-assessment also named as self-appraisal, self-rating or self-evaluation, has been recurrently used to enhance student-centered learning. A number of studies concluded that SA technique was reliable. In this context, the reliability of SA referred to the steadiness and consistency of the grades produced by a measurement instrument that could likely be determined in numerous ways. For instance, one study pointed out that a multilingual group of EFL learners in the United States were able to self-grade their oral communicative competencies. Furthermore, another instance of success with student self-assessment strategy was found in Bachman and Palmer’s study. The study investigated a number of students’ competencies with French as a foreign language in the USA, to estimate their own speaking performances. The researchers realised that the general accuracy of students’ self-evaluations were impressive. Additionally, a number of researchers posited that self-assessment technique was a successful effective method in assessment. The researchers also demonstrated that self-assessment technique was reliable method of augmenting students’ competencies and abilities. Thus, the present study was aimed to answer the following research question: What are the engineering undergraduate