

Improving Presentation Skills in English Using an Asynchronous Teaching Method Based on Social Learning Theory

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Abstract

This preliminary study reports an empirical investigation of whether an asynchronous teaching method targeting presentation skills based on social learning theory will facilitate learners' self-efficacy in English learning. The asynchronous teaching method applied in this study employed a mediational process with four stages: attention, retention, reproduction, and motivation. Thirty female Japanese university students participated in a fourteen-week training. The group was divided into high and low groups according to the initial results of the English Self-efficacy Questionnaire developed by Matsunuma (2006). The results of the first week were compared with that of the fourteenth week. The analysis indicated no significant differences in the gain between the two groups. The results suggest that it is necessary to include a process for students to realize their growth through this training. Therefore, further study is necessary on how the asynchronous teaching method based on the social learning theory applied in this study should be modified to facilitate learners' self-efficacy in English learning.

Keywords: asynchronous learning method, social learning, self-efficacy, presentation skills

Introduction

One of the key factors in language learning is the acquisition of rules and skills to convey a message clearly and effectively, in addition to grammar, phonology, and a new lexicon, as Hymes (1972) refers to as the patterns of sociolinguistic rules of the target language. Asynchronous training was applied in this study to the basic rules of presentation in English to improve students' sociolinguistic skills. In addition, this study incorporates Bandura's social learning theory (1977) to facilitate the acquisition of these skills and improve students' self-efficacy in English learning, hoping that students will retain the skills they have learned through this training and use the skills in the future.

There are several ways to tailor online learning systems. This study is designed based on the asynchronous method using video submission, where students can complete the tasks given by the instructor within a certain timeframe. This benefits the EFL novice learners in presentation skill classes. Saidalvi and Mansor (2012) found that students were provided with many opportunities to practice before they submitted the final product without having to be

nervous about presenting it in front of their peers. Hallemans (2021) suggested that the use of recorded videos instead of live presentations can reduce students' anxiety and increase their motivation. Hung and Huang (2015) reported that providing models and creating video blogs are effective in improving presentation skills.

In addition, the framework of social cognitive learning theory was applied in this study to facilitate the learning of presentation skills, following past research findings (ex. De Grez, Valcke, & Roozen, 2009; Hung & Huang, 2015). According to Bandura (1997), people can learn complex cognitive skills, such as presentation skills, through observation of a model, and there are certain steps termed the mediational process.

The first stage is attention. In this stage, learners watch and pay attention to the model. The model should be meaningful and rewarding for learners to pay attention to. If the model is not meaningful enough for the learners, they will not pay attention to the model and will not move on to the next step. Therefore, the provided models should be highly qualified, constant, and valued by students so that they will result in gains in students' self-efficacy with the tasks (De Grez et al., 2009). Following this stage, the retention process will occur. This is the process of storing the observed models. Additional instructions can enhance this process (De Grez et al., 2009). Then, students should be provided with opportunities to practice the modeled behavior in the production process. The final stage is the motivational process, where students receive feedback from others, such as grades or compliments from their instructors, or make self-judgments about whether the expected outcomes are valued. At this stage, if the modeled behavior is considered invaluable, its behavior will decline; however, if it is considered valuable, the appearance of the behavior will increase.

Previous research findings argue that using videos as models is effective in improving students' presentation performance (for example, Hung & Huang, 2015; De Grez et al., 2009; Hallemans, 2021; Okada, Sawaumi, & Ito, 2017; Toland, Mills, & Kohyama, 2016). However, since watching a presentation of videos requires a lot of concentration in listening, it is easy to imagine that novice learners, especially those with difficulties listening, not retaining or understanding the content of the presentation. Giving a good presentation does not only require proper tones, voice, and gestures from the presenter, but also a certain logic flow to convey messages clearly. Therefore, to scaffold the skills of the target students in this study, a transcript of the presentation is included in addition to the videos as the model. Students do not only watch model videos but also have access to the transcripts of the presentation to foster modeling.

In addition, this study uses video of the instructor as a model. Toland et al. (2016) argued that the use of students' videos was effective in improving their presentation performances, but it also reported that many participants were concerned about their privacy. Therefore, the

submitted videos of the students are shared only with the instructor and not with their peers in this preliminary study.

This study attempts to measure the gains in students' self-efficacy in English learning instead of English proficiency. Self-efficacy is the self-confidence in whether a given task or goal can be achieved (Bandura, 1977). Previous research suggests that self-efficacy is one of the predictors of oral presentation performance (De Grez, Valcke, & Roozen, 2006). This study utilizes the English Self-Efficacy Questionnaire (ESE) developed by Matsunuma (2006) to measure self-efficacy in learning English.

Objective of this Study

This study investigates whether an asynchronous teaching method based on Social Learning Theory will improve learners' self-efficacy in English learning.

Method

Participants

Thirty female Japanese university students (aged 18–20 years) participated in this study. All participants were Japanese, with no experience studying overseas. The participants took the author's online English class, which targeted at improving their presentation skills. This was part of the graduation requirement. This study was conducted with class activities during a fourteen-week course between April and July 2022.

Materials

Textbook

This study employed the book titled “Workbook for Presentation Skills Basic” written by Nakayama, Bulach, and Schnickel (2017) as course material. It has five units, and each unit consists of three chapters designed to be completed in three lessons. As the title suggested, students could write their answers directly into the book and complete their tasks. Students were asked to complete all five units (from Unit 0 to Unit 4) in fourteen weeks. Table 1 lists the contents of the study.

Table 1

The Contents of the Textbook Used in this Study (modified from Nakayama, Bulach, & Schnickel, 2017)

Unit 0 What is a Presentation?

DAY 1: Practice the Sample Presentation

Unit 1 Describing Your Hometown

DAY 2: Make an Outline

DAY 3: Write a Presentation Script and Make a Poster

DAY 4: Rehearse Presentation

Unit 2 Product Development

DAY 5: Write a Product Proposal and Make an Outline

DAY 6: Write a Presentation Script and Make a Poster

DAY 7: Rehearse Presentation

Unit 3 Which Hamburger Shop Do You Like the Best?

DAY 8: Read an Article and Make an Outline

DAY 9: Write a Presentation Script and Make a Poster

DAY 10: Rehearse Presentation

Unit 4 Fashion: Which Apparel Brand Do You Prefer?

DAY 11: Read an Article and Make an Outline

DAY 12: Write a Presentation Script and Make a Poster

DAY 13: Rehearse Presentation

Self-efficacy Questionnaire

This study employed The English self-efficacy Questionnaire developed by Matsunuma (2006) in the pre-test and post-test. This questionnaire had eight items rated on a five-point Likert scale, with 1 for “not at all agree” and 5 for “strongly agree” in each item.

“Manaba”

This study employed a cloud learning management system called “Manaba,” which was adopted by the institution, and students were required to use this system. The instructor could post messages or instructions for assignments to the whole class, as well as assign grades to submitted assignments and communicate with students through the message function in the system. The system allowed students to submit assignments online, communicate with the

instructor, and share messages with peers.

“Flip”

This study employed “Flip” developed by Microsoft® for students to submit their video assignments since Manaba did not have a video uploading function. Students were asked to first upload their videos on Flip, then create a link of the videos and submit them through Manaba.

Procedure

The mediational process

Based on social learning theory, this study applied the mediational procedure shown in Figure 1. First, in the attentional stage, students watched a model video of the instructor and read the presentation transcripts. The students could watch and read repeatedly since this model was open to them until the end of the courses so that they could refer to these resources at any time desired. At the next stage, the students were instructed to engage in various tasks that were designed to foster retention of the model. For example, the students were asked to outline their own presentations based on the model given. In another task, students were asked to make a poster or PowerPoint presentation slide for their presentation. Then, in the production stage, the students were instructed to video record their presentations. Students could record and review their videos as many times as desired and submit the best version by the deadline. Finally, students received feedback on the submitted assignments from the instructor.

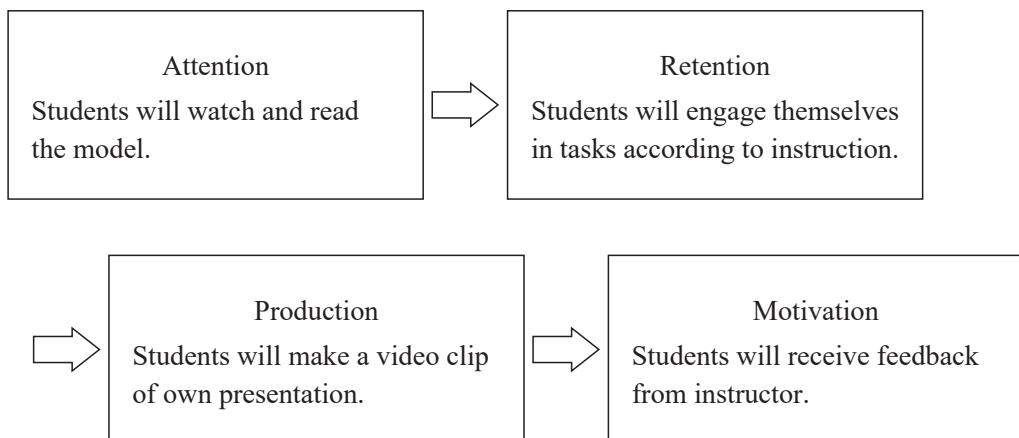


Figure 1.

The Mediational Procedure Applied in this Study

Assignment schedule

Students were requested to submit assignments every week following the schedule indicated in Table 2. The assignment was set on every Wednesday by the instructor, with the following Wednesday as the deadline for the assignment. The instructor gave written feedback in English to each submitted assignment on the day following the deadline. In addition, students were encouraged to participate in a 45-minute synchronous online follow-up session every week if they had any questions or wanted to receive direct feedback from the instructor.

Table 2.*Assignment schedule*

Topic	Week	Task
Food	1	Students practice the sample presentation and write an outline
Introducing hometown	2	Students choose a town and make an outline based on provided model
	3	Students write a presentation script and make a poster
	4	Video submission 1
Comparing hamburger shops	5	Students read the article on the textbook and make an outline
	6	Students write a presentation script and make a poster
	7	Video submission 2
Comparing apparel brands	8	Students read the article on the textbook and make an outline
	9	Students write a presentation script and make a poster
	10	They rehearse the presentation based on the provided model
	11	Video submission 3
Development of new products for convenience stores	12	Students make a product proposal
	13	Students write a presentation script and make a poster
	14	Video submission 4

English Self-efficacy Questionnaire

Students were asked to participate in the English self-efficacy questionnaire online in the first week as a pre-test through the Google form. Students read the purpose of the questionnaire, including information stating that participation was optional. The questionnaire was administered

again in the fourteenth week as a post-test, but the order of the items was changed to prevent repetition effects.

Results

The Results and Analysis of the Questionnaire

The results of the questionnaire were shown in Table 3. Students were divided into two groups (high/low) according to their pre-test scores. Students who obtained a score above the mean score were placed in the High Group, and students who obtained a score below the mean score were placed in the Low Group. The reliability of the scale was determined before further statistical analyses. The Cronbach's alpha of .95 indicated that the results were sufficiently reliable for further analysis. An Analysis of Covariance (ANCOVA) was run by setting the pre-test results as a covariate, the post-test results as an objective variable, and the group as an external factor to identify significant differences between the pre-test and post-test results between the groups. The results showed that only the difference in the pre-test result was significant [$F(1, 29) = 6.45, p < .05$], but the difference in grouping was not [$F(1, 29) = 0.10, n.s.$]. Therefore, this study could not confirm any differences in the improvement of self-efficacy states between the High Group ($M = 27.27, SD = 3.17$) and the Low Group ($M = 19.67, SD = 6.00$).

Table 3.
Results of questionnaire

	High		Low	
	Pre	Post	Pre	Post
<i>N</i>	15	15	15	15
<i>Mean</i>	27.00	27.27	16.13	19.67
<i>SD</i>	3.42	3.17	3.48	6.00

Discussion

This study investigated whether an asynchronous teaching method targeting presentation skills based on social learning theory would facilitate learners' self-efficacy in English learning.

The asynchronous teaching method involved a mediational process with four different stages: attention, retention, reproduction, and motivation. Thirty Japanese female university students who participated in a fourteen-week training were divided into high and low groups, and the gain of self-efficacy in English learning was compared using the English Self-efficacy Questionnaire developed by Matsunuma (2006). The analysis indicated no significant differences in gain between the two groups. One of the factors that affected the results may be that students were only able to watch the model of the instructor but not that of their peers. Following Toland et al. (2016), this study did not provide opportunities for students to share their videos. Because of privacy and technical issues, it is challenging to do so. For example, Flip allows students or anyone with the account and password to download videos unless the access of student's individual videos is limited to the instructor. Therefore, further study is necessary on the additional process for students to realize their growth through this training.

Future Research

As stated above, the instructional design of the asynchronous learning system applied in this study should be revised accordingly. Further study is necessary to investigate whether the addition of peer reflection and feedback to videos in this instructional design can facilitate better improvement of self-efficacy in English learning.

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