



## EXPLORING LINGUISTIC AND NON-LINGUISTIC DIFFICULTIES IN ORAL PRESENTATIONS AMONG ENGLISH-MAJORED STUDENTS

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### **Abstract:**

Oral presentations play an important role in English language learning; however, many students experience difficulties that affect their performance. This study investigated the primary linguistic and non-linguistic difficulties encountered by English-majored students during oral presentations. Guided by Sociocultural Theory and the Interaction Hypothesis, the study employed a quantitative research design. Data were collected from 180 English-majored students at Nam Can Tho University using a structured questionnaire and analyzed through descriptive statistics. The findings revealed that the most prominent linguistic difficulties included maintaining fluency, avoiding grammatical errors, and coping with limited vocabulary. In terms of non-linguistic difficulties, presentation anxiety, fear of making mistakes, and concerns about negative evaluation emerged as major challenges. The results indicate that students' oral presentation performance is influenced by both linguistic competence and psychological factors. The study offers pedagogical implications for improving oral presentation instruction and supporting students' speaking development in EFL contexts.

**Keywords:** oral presentations, linguistic difficulties, non-linguistic difficulties, English-majored students, sociocultural theory, interaction hypothesis

### **1. Introduction**

Oral presentations are an essential component of English language education, particularly for English-majored students who are expected to communicate effectively in academic and professional settings. Through oral presentations, students have opportunities to develop speaking proficiency, critical thinking skills, and confidence in public communication. Moreover, presentation skills are increasingly recognized as important competencies that contribute to academic success and future employability.

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Despite their importance, oral presentations remain challenging for many EFL learners. Previous studies have shown that students frequently encounter various linguistic difficulties, including limited vocabulary, grammatical inaccuracies, pronunciation problems, and lack of fluency during oral communication (Leong & Ahmadi, 2017; Sugiyati & Indriani, 2021). In addition to linguistic barriers, non-linguistic factors also affect presentation performance. Presentation anxiety, fear of negative evaluation, lack of confidence, and audience pressure have been identified as major obstacles that hinder students' ability to communicate effectively in front of others (Horwitz *et al.*, 1986; Kalra & Siribud, 2020). These challenges often reduce students' willingness to speak and negatively influence their overall presentation quality.

Although a growing body of research has examined speaking difficulties in EFL contexts, limited attention has been paid to the combined linguistic and non-linguistic challenges experienced by English-majored students in Vietnamese universities. Therefore, the present study aims to investigate the primary linguistic and non-linguistic difficulties encountered by English-majored students during oral presentations at Nam Can Tho University. The findings are expected to contribute to a better understanding of students' presentation challenges and provide pedagogical implications for improving oral presentation instruction in EFL classrooms.

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1 Sociocultural Theory

To understand why oral presentations trigger such profound psychological and linguistic friction, it is necessary to examine the fundamental nature of human learning. Originating from the seminal work of Lev Vygotsky (1978), Sociocultural Theory posits that cognitive development is inherently inseparable from its social context. Learning does not occur in an isolated mental vacuum. Rather, it is a highly collaborative process mediated by social interactions, cultural artifacts, and the immediate environment.

In the context of a foreign language classroom, this theory entirely reframes the act of public speaking. Delivering a presentation is not merely a mechanical regurgitation of memorized vocabulary; it is a highly charged social performance. When English majors stand before their peers and instructors, their language production is heavily dictated by the cultural expectations and evaluative dynamics of that specific room. Vygotsky's concept of mediation perfectly explains how students navigate this intense pressure. Linguistic deficits or psychological panic often arise when learners feel socially exposed, pushed far beyond their Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) without adequate pedagogical scaffolding. Consequently, the coping strategies they deploy—whether gripping a physical script, seeking supportive eye contact, or relying on visual slides—act as vital mediational tools. These external mechanisms allow the speaker to temporarily regulate their internal emotional chaos, helping them maintain communicative competence within a socially demanding framework.

## 2.2 Interaction Hypothesis

While Sociocultural Theory maps out the broad environmental pressures, the actual mechanical breakdowns that occur mid-speech are best explained through the Interaction Hypothesis. Refined significantly by Michael Long in 1996, this framework argues that language acquisition is deeply driven by the active process of communication, specifically through the “*negotiation for meaning*.” When learners engage in discourse and hit a linguistic wall, such as a forgotten specialized term or a mangled grammatical structure, they must immediately modify their speech to prevent a complete communicative collapse.

Although a formal academic presentation often appears as a rigid, one-way delivery, it remains a fundamentally interactive event. The speaker constantly monitors the live audience for non-verbal cues of confusion or disapproval, adjusting their output based on that perceived feedback. When an English major experiences a sudden cognitive block on stage, the Interaction Hypothesis illustrates exactly how they survive the ordeal. They are forced to negotiate meaning in real-time. This desperate negotiation manifests directly as linguistic coping strategies. To keep the interaction alive, speakers might rapidly simplify their sentence structures, use circumlocution to explain a missing word, or heavily employ body language to bridge the semantic gap. By actively modifying their language to bypass these immediate breakdowns, students do more than just save their presentation; they engage in the exact cognitive restructuring that drives long-term second language acquisition.

Drawing upon Sociocultural Theory and the Interaction Hypothesis, the present study seeks to explore the challenges experienced by English-majored students during oral presentations. While Sociocultural Theory highlights the influence of social and psychological factors on learners’ performance, the Interaction Hypothesis provides insights into the linguistic difficulties that emerge during real-time communication. Together, these frameworks offer a comprehensive lens through which students’ oral presentation difficulties can be examined. Accordingly, the study addresses the following research question:

- What are the primary linguistic and non-linguistic difficulties English-majored students encounter during oral presentations?

## 2.3 Definition of English Presentations

Delivering a speech in an academic context requires far more than basic conversational ability. Public speaking or an oral presentation is generally understood as a highly structured discursal event used to convey complex information, present opinions, or propose ideas in a logical manner (Lucas, 2008). In a formal language classroom setting, it acts as a discursal action where a speaker delivers thought-provoking messages to a live audience to construct shared meaning (Sellnow, 2005). The speaker must systematically organize their speech and manage their delivery flow while the audience listens largely without interruption (Jaffee, 2007). For students majoring in English, these

oral tasks go beyond simple daily communication because they serve as a critical and highly visible measure of their overall communicative competence.

The primary objectives of any presentation usually revolve around informing, persuading, or inspiring the listeners. However, engaging in this specific type of public discourse is heavily associated with intense, anxiety-provoking situations. Standing in front of peers to articulate ideas in a second language triggers a multitude of immediate challenges, which explains why a significant number of individuals suffer from a severe fear of public speaking (Coskun, 2017). This tension often surfaces regardless of how much prior experience a student might actually have in formal speaking environments.

Despite the inherent stress involved, mastering oral presentations serves as a massive catalyst for both personal and professional improvement. It functions as a powerful instrument for idea transmission and active audience engagement, ultimately elevating the social presence and internal confidence of a speaker (Astuti, 2011). In the professional world, this level of communicative proficiency is considered a highly valuable asset. Effective public speaking actively develops leadership capabilities and paves the way for career advancement, securing its place as an indispensable skill in the modern workplace (Baccarani & Bonfanti, 2015).

Within an academic framework, the ability to present effectively is particularly crucial for university students learning English as a foreign language. It facilitates deep academic discourse and allows for active participation in scholarly conversations (Phan *et al.*, 2022). Nevertheless, the process remains fraught with relentless obstacles. Problems specifically concerning sudden vocabulary reduction, grammatical insecurity, and overwhelming psychological anxiety continue to exert a heavily negative impact on learners (Seli & Santosa, 2023). When students step up to the podium, they must independently manage these overlapping linguistic and non-linguistic hurdles simultaneously.

Furthermore, public speaking proficiency is directly linked to overall workplace readiness. Employers actively seek out graduates who possess exceptional oral skills to handle demanding interpersonal situations with clients and colleagues (Phan *et al.*, 2022). Therefore, delivering an English presentation is not merely an isolated academic chore to be graded and forgotten. It is inextricably bound to the linguistic, cognitive, and social competencies that dictate future success. Because of its complex nature and broad real-world application, acquiring robust presentation skills remains a primary target in language education, especially for English majors who are expected to communicate flawlessly.

## **2.4 Linguistic Speaking Difficulties**

Articulating complex thoughts in a non-native tongue pushes the cognitive capacity of a student to its absolute limits. Linguistic barriers emerge naturally when learners possess only a partial grasp of the target language system. A profound lack of vocabulary stands as one of the most visible hurdles in this entire process. Speakers frequently freeze mid-sentence, struggling to retrieve the precise terminology needed to convey their ideas

effectively (Leong & Ahmadi, 2017). This desperate search for words disrupts the natural flow of communication and immediately signals insecurity to the audience.

Beyond mere word recall, grammatical inaccuracy presents another formidable wall. Interestingly, students who craft flawless written essays often stumble when forced to build coherent sentences on the spot. The intense and real-time pressure of a live presentation strips away their ability to self-edit, causing their previously stable grammatical framework to collapse completely. Finally, the physical mechanics of speech delivery cannot be ignored. Poor pronunciation combined with unnatural intonation frequently warps the intended message. These specific phonetic struggles can easily render a carefully researched presentation completely incomprehensible to listeners, regardless of how valuable the underlying content might be (Sugiyati & Indriani, 2021).

### **2.5 Non-Linguistic Speaking Difficulties**

Beyond the mechanical constraints of grammar and vocabulary, students face a formidable array of non-linguistic obstacles. These barriers stem deeply from psychological distress and heavy environmental pressures rather than a lack of linguistic knowledge. Presentation anxiety consistently emerges as the most debilitating factor within this category. This specific emotional turbulence is largely driven by a profound fear of negative evaluation. Students step in front of the class, acutely aware that their peers and grading instructors are scrutinizing their overall performance (Horwitz, Horwitz, & Cope, 1986). The mere anticipation of receiving harsh judgment can easily paralyze a speaker before they even utter a single word.

This psychological tension rarely exists in isolation. A severe lack of practical preparation drastically magnifies the internal panic of a student. When learners fail to rehearse their speeches adequately or neglect to organize their thoughts, they step onto the academic stage feeling entirely unprotected. Such a lack of readiness instantly strips away their fragile self-confidence. It leaves them highly susceptible to sudden mental blocks, rapid heartbeats, and severe memory lapses (Liu, 2006).

Environmental factors also heavily dictate the intensity of this anxiety. The immediate physical surroundings and the social dynamics of the classroom can violently alter the emotional stability of the presenter. For instance, speaking to a large audience filled with unfamiliar faces naturally triggers an intense physiological stress response. The authoritative presence and perceived strictness of the grading lecturer further compound this pressure. When a student perceives their learning environment as hostile or overly competitive, their resulting psychological distress will inevitably overshadow their actual communicative competence (Kalra & Siribud, 2020).

### **2.6 Related Studies**

Bringing the focus strictly to the local Vietnamese context, Cham Chau, *et al.* (2022) conducted an essential study on third-year English majors at Can Tho University. Their quantitative approach highlighted how a severe lack of confidence acts as a primary obstacle to public speaking success. Interestingly, their results perfectly demonstrated the

collision of different barrier types. Non-linguistic factors like a deep fear of making mistakes and receiving negative teacher feedback are directly combined with the linguistic hurdle of a limited vocabulary. This toxic mixture heavily contributed to their presentation failures. The authors ultimately suggested that increasing classroom speaking activities in a highly encouraging environment is the only way to help students overcome their distress.

More recent empirical studies further validate the critical division between internal language skills and external environmental pressures. Wijaya (2024) investigated learners at an Islamic boarding school and successfully categorized their struggles. The research identified internal factors such as a severe lack of linguistic knowledge alongside external factors like harsh classmate responses and negative evaluations. To cope with these specific triggers, the students instinctively turned to thorough preparation and targeted relaxation techniques.

### **3. Methods**

#### **3.1 Research Design**

This study employed a quantitative research design to investigate the linguistic and non-linguistic difficulties encountered by English-majored students during oral presentations. A survey method was adopted because it enables researchers to collect data from a relatively large number of participants and identify common patterns, trends, and perceptions within a target population. Quantitative research was considered appropriate for the present study as it allows for the systematic measurement of students' perceived difficulties and facilitates statistical analysis of the collected data.

#### **3.2 Participants**

The participants of this study consisted of 180 English-majored students enrolled at Nam Can Tho University. The participants were selected using convenience sampling due to the accessibility and availability of the students during the data collection period. The sample included students from different academic years who had prior experience delivering oral presentations in English courses. As English majors frequently engage in presentation-based activities, they were considered suitable participants for exploring the linguistic and non-linguistic difficulties associated with oral presentations.

#### **3.3 Instrumentation**

Data were collected through a structured questionnaire designed to examine students' perceived difficulties during oral presentations. The Linguistic Difficulties cluster included items related to common language-related challenges encountered during oral presentations, such as vocabulary limitations, grammatical accuracy, pronunciation difficulties, fluency problems, and difficulties in organizing ideas. The development of these items was informed by previous literature on EFL speaking difficulties and oral communication (Ellis, 2016; Schmitt, 2019). The Non-Linguistic Difficulties cluster

focused on psychological and contextual factors that may influence students' presentation performance. This section examined issues such as presentation anxiety, fear of negative evaluation, lack of confidence, nervousness, audience pressure, and concerns about making mistakes. The items were developed based on previous research on foreign language anxiety, learner psychology, and speaking performance (Dörnyei, 2020; Horwitz *et al.*, 1986).

All questionnaire items were measured using a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree), with higher scores indicating greater perceived difficulty. Prior to the main data collection, the questionnaire was reviewed by two EFL lecturers to ensure content validity, clarity, and relevance to the objectives of the study. Minor revisions were made based on their feedback before the final administration.

### **3.4 Data Collection**

Data collection was conducted during the academic semester at Nam Can Tho University. After obtaining permission from relevant faculty members, the researcher distributed the questionnaire to English-majored students either in person or through an online survey platform. Before completing the questionnaire, participants were informed of the purpose of the study and assured that their responses would remain confidential and be used solely for research purposes.

Participation was entirely voluntary, and students were allowed to withdraw from the study at any stage without any consequences. The questionnaire required approximately 10–15 minutes to complete. After the data collection period ended, all responses were compiled and prepared for statistical analysis.

### **3.5 Data analysis**

The collected data were analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). Descriptive statistics, including frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations, were employed to identify the major linguistic and non-linguistic difficulties experienced by the participants during oral presentations.

To examine the internal consistency of the questionnaire, Cronbach's alpha coefficients were calculated for each cluster. The mean scores of the questionnaire items were then interpreted to determine the extent to which students perceived each difficulty.

## **4. Results and Discussion**

### **4.1 Linguistic Difficulties in Students' English Presentations**

To fully comprehend the specific language-based barriers that English majors face, data collected from statements 1 to 10 were subjected to descriptive statistical analysis.

**Table 1: Overall Linguistic Difficulties**

Category	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	SD
Linguistic Difficulties	180	1.00	5.00	3.82	1.05

As shown in Table 1, the participants reported an overall mean score of 3.82 (SD = 1.05) regarding their linguistic challenges. This average falls squarely into the “High” interpretation bracket, suggesting that foundational language deficits act as a significant challenge during oral presentations.

To determine if this high level of impact is statistically significant rather than just a sample fluctuation, a One-Sample T-Test was conducted. The mean scores were tested against a constant value of 3.41, which serves as the established threshold for a high impact classification.

**Table 2: One-Sample T-Test for Linguistic Difficulties**

	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
					Lower	Upper
Linguistic	7.186	179	.000	.413	.299	-.526

The results in Table 2 demonstrate a highly significant statistical difference ( $t = 7.186$ ,  $p < .05$ ). Since the p-value is far below 0.05, it can be firmly concluded that linguistic barriers exert a provably strong influence on the students’ presentation capabilities.

**Table 3: Descriptive Statistics for Specific Linguistic Difficulties**

No.	Statements	Mean	SD
1	I lack sufficient vocabulary for presentations.	3.80	1.02
2	I make grammatical mistakes when speaking.	3.96	0.94
3	I have difficulty with pronunciation.	3.59	1.13
4	I find it hard to organize ideas in English.	3.71	1.08
5	I have trouble using linking words to connect ideas.	3.74	1.11
6	I struggle to speak fluently.	3.99	1.04
7	I have difficulty using appropriate grammar structures.	3.84	0.98
8	I translate from Vietnamese to English when speaking.	3.73	1.12
9	I repeat words because of limited vocabulary.	3.96	1.04
10	I have difficulty using correct sentence structures under pressure.	3.91	1.00

A closer examination of the descriptive statistics in Table 3 reveals the highly interconnected nature of the linguistic obstacles confronting English-majored students. The data leans heavily toward the upper end of the scale, indicating a widespread and systemic crisis in real-time language production.

The most paralyzing hurdle, unequivocally, is the sheer inability to maintain oral fluency (Item 6:  $M=3.99$ ,  $SD=1.04$ ). However, this disruption in speech flow cannot be viewed as an isolated issue. Rather, it acts as a cumulative symptom of several underlying structural deficiencies. Chief among these are profound vulnerabilities in real-time language mechanics. The tendency to make grammatical errors mid-speech (Item 2:

M=3.96, SD=0.94) and the habitual repetition of words due to a restricted lexicon (Item 9: M=3.96, SD=1.04) share the second-highest severity rankings. The notably low standard deviation for Item 2 (0.94) is particularly telling; it implies a strong, unified consensus among the respondents that on-the-spot grammatical instability is a nearly universal struggle.

This mechanical failure is severely exacerbated by the live presentation environment. While students may possess adequate theoretical knowledge in a written context, the performative pressure of an audience strips them of the ability to retrieve and apply that knowledge accurately. This breakdown in application is clearly reflected in their reported difficulty constructing correct sentences under pressure (Item 10: M=3.91, SD=1.00) and selecting appropriate grammatical structures (Item 7: M=3.84, SD=0.98).

Pushing deeper into the cognitive processes of the speakers, the data highlights a severe processing bottleneck. A substantial portion of the learners remain heavily dependent on mental translation, instinctively processing academic concepts in their native Vietnamese before converting them into English (Item 8: M=3.73, SD=1.12). This silent, internal translation process acts as a massive drain on working memory. It inevitably slows down delivery speed, creating awkward pauses that destroy the structural coherence of the presentation.

Because the students' cognitive resources are entirely consumed by translating sentences and desperately hunting for sufficient vocabulary (Item 1: M=3.80, SD=1.02), higher-order discourse management inevitably falls apart. This cognitive overload explains why they subsequently find it hard to organize their ideas logically (Item 4: M=3.71, SD=1.08) and fail to deploy the necessary linking words to bridge those concepts smoothly (Item 5: M=3.74, SD=1.11).

Interestingly, while phonetic accuracy remains a valid concern, pronunciation difficulties recorded the lowest mean severity within this linguistic cluster (Item 3: M=3.59). Yet, this specific item also displays the highest standard deviation (SD=1.13), indicating significant variability within the sample. While some students are acutely self-conscious about their accents, the broader statistical consensus suggests that finding the right words and structuring them correctly poses a far more immediate threat to presentation success than sounding perfectly native. Ultimately, these linguistic deficits form an intricate web of failure: a limited vocabulary forces mental translation, this translation destroys spoken fluency, and the resulting grammatical errors shatter the student's academic confidence.

The findings on linguistic difficulties support the Interaction Hypothesis (Long, 1996), which suggests that learners experience communication breakdowns when they lack sufficient linguistic resources for real-time communication. The high mean scores for fluency problems, grammatical errors, and vocabulary limitations indicate that students struggle to negotiate meaning effectively during oral presentations. These findings are consistent with Cham Chau *et al.* (2022), who identified limited vocabulary as a major barrier, and Wijaya (2024), who reported insufficient linguistic knowledge as a key

challenge. Together, the results suggest that linguistic competence remains a significant factor influencing presentation performance.

#### 4.2 Non-Linguistic Difficulties in Students' English Presentations

Beyond raw language skills, psychological and environmental pressures play a massive role in oral communication. Items 11 through 20 were analyzed to measure these non-linguistic factors.

**Table 4.4:** Overall Non-Linguistic Difficulties

Category	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	SD
Non-Linguistic Difficulties	180	1.00	5.00	3.75	1.13

The total mean score for non-linguistic difficulties stands at 3.75 (SD = 1.13), which also falls into the "High" impact category. To verify this, a second One-Sample T-Test was executed against the 3.41 threshold.

**Table 4.5:** One-Sample T-Test for Non-Linguistic Difficulties

	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
					Lower	Upper
Non-Linguistic	5.499	179	.000	.343	.220	-.467

The analysis ( $t = 5.499$ ,  $p < .05$ ) confirms a statistically significant difference. Therefore, it is academically sound to conclude that psychological distress-acting independently of actual English proficiency, is a major contributing factor to public speaking anxiety.

**Table 4.6:** Descriptive Statistics for Specific Non-Linguistic Difficulties

No.	Statements	Mean	SD
11	I feel nervous when giving presentations, even when I am well-prepared.	3.97	1.06
12	I am not confident when speaking English.	3.59	1.13
13	I worry about forgetting what to say during presentations.	3.84	1.09
14	I feel pressure when speaking in front of others.	3.82	1.13
15	I have difficulty maintaining eye contact with the audience.	3.60	1.17
16	I lose focus when I feel nervous.	3.81	1.12
17	I feel embarrassed when I make mistakes in front of others.	3.83	1.04
18	I avoid speaking English in class.	3.47	1.22
19	I feel my classmates are better than me.	3.93	1.02
20	I worry about being negatively evaluated by others.	3.68	1.20

A critical examination of the descriptive statistics in Table 4.6 exposes the profoundly fragile psychological state of the presenters. The data vividly demonstrates that non-linguistic distress is not merely a secondary side effect of poor language skills; rather, it operates as an independent, highly destructive force.

The most striking revelation emerges from Item 11, which recorded the highest severity mean within this entire cluster ( $M=3.97$ ,  $SD=1.06$ ). Contrary to traditional pedagogical assumptions, rigorous academic preparation does not inoculate students against stage fright. Even when armed with well-researched content and memorized scripts, the sheer act of standing before an audience triggers a severe emotional hijack. This paradox suggests that for these language learners, public speaking anxiety is less about a lack of content mastery and entirely about performative vulnerability.

What exactly fuels this intense vulnerability? The statistical breakdown points directly to a highly toxic classroom dynamic rooted in peer comparison. Respondents overwhelmingly agreed with the debilitating perception that their classmates are academically and linguistically superior (Item 19:  $M=3.93$ ). The notably low standard deviation for this item ( $SD=1.02$ ) confirms that this lingering imposter syndrome is a deeply shared consensus among the student body. When learners fundamentally believe they are the weakest link in the room, the presentation podium ceases to be a learning platform. Instead, it transforms into a high-stakes arena of social judgment.

Driven by this internalized inferiority, students become hypersensitive to how they are perceived. They are terrified of losing face by making visible errors in front of others (Item 17:  $M=3.83$ ,  $SD=1.04$ ) and are constantly plagued by the looming threat of negative evaluation (Item 20:  $M=3.68$ ,  $SD=1.20$ ).

This potent cocktail of internal self-doubt and external social pressure inevitably leads to a complete cognitive and physical breakdown. The heavy mental toll of anxiety consumes their working memory, clearly reflected in their paralyzing fear of suddenly forgetting their carefully prepared content (Item 13:  $M=3.84$ ,  $SD=1.09$ ). As the perceived pressure of the observing audience mounts (Item 14:  $M=3.82$ ,  $SD=1.13$ ), the speaker's concentration violently shatters (Item 16:  $M=3.81$ ,  $SD=1.12$ ).

Crucially, this distress does not remain trapped in the mind; it bleeds into their physical delivery. Overwhelmed by the evaluative gaze of their peers, students instinctively resort to defensive body language, most notably failing to maintain professional eye contact with the audience (Item 15:  $M=3.60$ ,  $SD=1.17$ ).

Interestingly, the statement regarding the active avoidance of speaking English in class (Item 18:  $M=3.47$ ) recorded the lowest mean severity but the highest standard deviation ( $SD=1.22$ ) in the table. This variance highlights a tragic and inescapable reality for English majors. While they genuinely lack fundamental confidence in their speaking abilities (Item 12:  $M=3.59$ ,  $SD=1.13$ ), they simply cannot afford to avoid oral tasks due to their strict degree requirements. Consequently, they are trapped in a vicious cycle of forced exposure-compelled to repeatedly face an audience while silently battling an intense, unresolved fear of public failure.

The findings on non-linguistic difficulties can be explained by Sociocultural Theory (Vygotsky, 1978), which emphasizes the impact of social and psychological factors on learning. High levels of anxiety, fear of negative evaluation, and lack of confidence suggest that students perceive oral presentations as socially demanding situations. These results align with Cham Chau *et al.* (2022), who found that lack of

confidence and fear of making mistakes hindered presentation performance, and Wijaya (2024), who highlighted the influence of negative peer responses and evaluation. Therefore, social and emotional factors play a crucial role in shaping students' oral presentation experiences.

## **5. Recommendations**

Firstly, English language instructors should provide students with more opportunities to engage in presentation-based activities throughout their courses. Regular practice can help students improve fluency, vocabulary retrieval, and grammatical accuracy in real-time communication. Secondly, teachers should implement scaffolding strategies such as presentation outlines, rehearsal sessions, peer feedback, and model presentations. These supports can help learners gradually develop confidence and presentation competence. Finally, creating a supportive classroom atmosphere is essential. Teachers should encourage constructive feedback and reduce excessive fear of negative evaluation by emphasizing learning and improvement rather than perfection.

## **6. Conclusion**

This study investigated the linguistic and non-linguistic difficulties encountered by English-majored students during oral presentations. The findings revealed that both categories of difficulties were experienced at a high level. Among the linguistic difficulties, fluency problems, grammatical errors, and vocabulary limitations emerged as the most prominent challenges. Regarding non-linguistic difficulties, presentation anxiety, fear of making mistakes, and concerns about negative evaluation were identified as major obstacles. These findings indicate that successful oral presentations require not only sufficient linguistic competence but also effective management of psychological and social factors.

The study highlights the importance of providing students with greater opportunities for oral practice, presentation training, and supportive classroom environments. By addressing both linguistic and non-linguistic challenges, educators can better assist English-majored students in developing confidence and improving their presentation performance. Future research may employ qualitative or mixed-method approaches to gain deeper insights into students' experiences and coping strategies during oral presentations.

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### **Conflict of Interest Statement**

The author declares no conflicts of interest.

### **About the Author(s)**

Pham Nhu Ngoc is a senior student majoring in English at Nam Can Tho University, Vietnam. Throughout her academic journey, she has developed a keen scholarly interest in the challenges faced by foreign language learners, with a particular focus on the linguistic and non-linguistic barriers that hinder effective oral communication. Her undergraduate research reflects a deep commitment to understanding the real struggles students encounter in academic speaking environments and exploring practical strategies to overcome them. Driven by a passion for English language education, she aspires to contribute meaningfully to the improvement of language teaching and learning in the Vietnamese educational context.

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