

Abstract for International Conference on Media and Society (IC-MAS2022), 20-21 December 2022, UNIMAS, Kota Samarahan, Malaysia

Apprehension in Oral Presentation among Students from a Polytechnic in Sarawak

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Oral presentation apprehension besets people during oral communication, particularly public speaking. The study examined the relationships between English proficiency, experience and communication apprehension among polytechnic students when delivering oral presentations. The participants were 62 students from a polytechnic in Sarawak, Malaysia. A questionnaire was formulated to focus on the public speaking element based on McCroskey's (1982) PRCA-24 scale. Experience in oral presentations was based on their experience of making oral presentations during their secondary school years before entering the polytechnic. The results show that 22.6% of the students experienced a high level of oral presentation apprehension, most students (71%) experienced a moderate level, and only 6.5% experienced a low level. Some students felt nervous until they forgot what they were supposed to present while most other students experienced jumbled-up thoughts and were stressed out during the oral presentation. Unexpectedly, there was no significant relationship between English proficiency and the polytechnic students' level of oral presentation apprehension. Nevertheless, there was a significant relationship between experience in giving oral presentations and oral presentation apprehension level. The study suggests that extensive training in public speaking built into the curriculum can enhance public speaking skills and increase employability of polytechnic graduates.

Keywords: Communication apprehension, polytechnic students, oral presentation, PRCA-24, English proficiency, public speaking experience