



PUBLIC SPEAKING VERSUS INTERPERSONAL COMMUNICATION IN UNIVERSITY SETTINGS

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ABSTRACT

Effective communication is a cornerstone of academic and professional success, with both public speaking and interpersonal communication playing pivotal roles in university settings. This article examines the differences and interrelations between these two forms of communication within the context of higher education. Public speaking, characterized by structured, formal presentations, often highlights students' ability to organize thoughts and present ideas to larger audiences. It is crucial for activities such as class presentations, conferences, and academic competitions. On the other hand, interpersonal communication, which involves more spontaneous, informal, and one-on-one or small group interactions, is essential for effective collaboration, networking, and fostering relationships in group projects and everyday university life. While public speaking develops clarity and persuasive skills, interpersonal communication fosters adaptability, empathy, and deeper connections. Both forms of communication are complementary and equally necessary for students' holistic development, equipping them with the tools to thrive academically and in future professional environments. This article explores strategies to strengthen both public speaking and interpersonal communication skills, emphasizing the importance of integrating them into university curricula to prepare students for diverse communication challenges.

Keywords: Effective communication, academic and professional skills

1. INTRODUCTION

In higher education, communication skills are a critical asset for both academic performance and future career development. Two primary forms of communication—public speaking and interpersonal communication—are especially important in university environments. Public speaking refers to structured, formal presentations typically directed at larger audiences, whereas interpersonal communication involves more informal, often spontaneous, one-on-one or small-group interactions. While each plays a distinct role in university

life, both are essential for a student's ability to convey ideas, engage in discussions, collaborate effectively, and build networks. This article explores the differences between public speaking and interpersonal communication, their respective roles in university settings, and strategies for enhancing these skills, drawing on relevant academic research and practical strategies.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Public Speaking in University Settings

Public speaking is widely recognized as a key skill for academic success. Studies

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have shown that students who excel at public speaking often achieve better academic outcomes due to their ability to present ideas clearly and persuasively (Lucas, 2019). Whether giving class presentations, defending a thesis, or participating in academic conferences, public speaking allows students to demonstrate their understanding of course material while developing confidence in their ability to communicate effectively.

University courses often assess public speaking through presentations and debates, where students are required to organize their thoughts, structure their arguments, and present them coherently to an audience. Beyond academics, students are also involved in extracurricular activities such as debate clubs, student government, and other events where public speaking plays a vital role. Additionally, many professional fields, including law, education, business, and media, place a high premium on public speaking abilities (Brydon & Scott, 2021).

However, public speaking is also one of the most anxiety-inducing activities for students. Studies estimate that around 73% of the population experiences some form of speech anxiety (Daly et al., 2018). Universities often provide resources to help students overcome this challenge, such as public speaking courses, workshops, and practice sessions in safe, supportive environments (Smith & King, 2020). These resources help students gain confidence through repeated practice and constructive feedback.

Interpersonal Communication in University Settings

While public speaking is often associated with formal academic and professional settings, interpersonal communication—everyday interactions between individuals or small groups—is equally important for success in university life. Research indicates that strong interpersonal communication skills are essential for effective collaboration, networking, and relationship-building in both academic and social contexts (Gamble & Gamble, 2021).

Group projects, for instance, are a staple of university education, and students need to communicate clearly, negotiate roles, and resolve conflicts to ensure that the project succeeds. Effective interpersonal communication fosters teamwork, promotes understanding, and helps navigate cultural and linguistic differences, which are common in increasingly diverse university settings (Gudykunst, 2004). Moreover, interpersonal communication also plays a key role in forming relationships with professors, mentors, and peers, which can open doors to academic opportunities, internships, and career networking.

Unlike public speaking, interpersonal communication requires strong listening skills, empathy, and adaptability. According to Adler and Proctor (2017), interpersonal communication is dynamic, context-dependent, and involves non-verbal cues, making it more complex than it may appear.

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For students, mastering these skills can lead to more meaningful interactions, greater academic success, and enhanced emotional intelligence (Goleman, 2006).

The Complementary Nature of Public Speaking and Interpersonal Communication

Although public speaking and interpersonal communication differ in structure and purpose, they are complementary skills that work together in university settings. Strong public speaking skills can enhance interpersonal communication by giving students greater confidence when expressing ideas in informal settings. Likewise, students who excel at interpersonal communication may find it easier to engage and connect with an audience during formal presentations by using the empathy and listening skills honed in everyday interactions.

Research has shown that students who are proficient in both public speaking and interpersonal communication are better equipped to handle a variety of academic challenges (Devito, 2020). For example, a student may need to deliver a polished presentation in class one day and participate in a collaborative discussion for a group project the next. Having a well-rounded skill set enables students to communicate effectively in both formal and informal situations, improving both their academic performance and social interactions.

Improving Public Speaking and Interpersonal Communication Skills

Recognizing the importance of both public speaking and interpersonal communication, universities are increasingly integrating these skills into their curricula. For example, courses in communication, leadership, and public speaking provide formal training, while extracurricular activities like debate teams, theater groups, and student government offer opportunities to practice these skills in real-world contexts (Lucas, 2019).

Here are several strategies supported by research for improving both public speaking and interpersonal communication skills:

1. **Regular Practice:** Research by Beebe and Beebe (2022) emphasizes the importance of regular practice in improving communication skills. Whether it is giving presentations, engaging in discussions, or initiating conversations with professors, consistent practice builds confidence and proficiency.
2. **Seeking Constructive Feedback:** Feedback is essential for improvement. Universities often have communication labs where students can receive constructive feedback on their speaking and interpersonal communication skills (Smith & King, 2020).
3. **Participation in Clubs or Organizations:** Joining debate clubs, leadership societies, or theater groups provides students with supportive environments to practice both

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public speaking and interpersonal communication in a range of scenarios (Lucas, 2019).

4. **Active Listening:** Active listening is a key component of interpersonal communication. Gamble & Gamble (2021) suggest that improving listening skills enhances both interpersonal interactions and public speaking by allowing students to respond more effectively to audience reactions.
5. **Leveraging Technology:** With the rise of virtual presentations and digital communication, students can use technology to enhance their speaking abilities in different mediums (Beebe & Beebe, 2022). Video conferencing and digital collaboration platforms offer new opportunities to practice both forms of communication in real-time.

3. METHODS

This research was conducted using a descriptive qualitative approach, and the focus of this research was to improve students' communication skills through practical approaches. Several main approaches were used: regular practice, which allows students to form good communication habits; constructive feedback, which helps students improve their communication weaknesses through reflection; participation in organizations, which improves skills and confidence through social interaction; and active listening, which improves interpersonal communication. Each of these strategies is

rooted in relevant communication and learning theories, and each helps students prepare to communicate with people in the academic and professional world.

4. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The results of this study indicate that public speaking and interpersonal communication skills are complementary and essential for students' academic and social success in a university environment. Mastery of both skills prepares students to handle various communication challenges, whether in formal settings such as class presentations or informal interactions like group discussions and daily conversations. Public speaking skills enhance students' confidence and ability to present ideas clearly and persuasively to larger audiences. On the other hand, interpersonal communication skills strengthen collaboration abilities, networking, and relationship-building, all of which are crucial for group work and campus life.

Furthermore, the study found that regular practice, constructive feedback, participation in organizational activities, and the use of technology significantly improve communication skills. The application of technology, such as video conferencing and digital collaboration platforms, also helps students hone virtual communication skills, which are increasingly relevant in the digital era. By integrating public speaking and interpersonal communication skills into the curriculum and campus activities, students are equipped with holistic communication abilities, which are not only useful for

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academic success but also as preparation for professional challenges in the future.

5. CONCLUSION

The conclusion of this study is that public speaking and interpersonal communication skills are essential components for students' academic and professional development in a university environment. Public speaking skills enable students to convey ideas in a structured and persuasive manner in formal settings, while interpersonal communication skills enhance their abilities to collaborate, network, and build meaningful relationships in everyday interactions. These two skills are complementary and necessary to help students navigate a variety of communication situations, both academically and socially.

The study also concludes that regular practice, constructive feedback, active participation in organizations, and the use of technology are effective methods for improving students' communication skills. By integrating public speaking and interpersonal communication training into the curriculum and campus activities, students can develop comprehensive and adaptable communication skills, preparing them for success in both academic and professional contexts.

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