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The Relationship between University Students' Beliefs, Engagement and Achievements of Oral Presentation Skills: A Case Study in Vietnam

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Abstract. This case study examined 203 Vietnamese university students to explore their beliefs about the importance of oral presentation skills (OPS), their engagement and achievements of these skills, as well as test the correlations between the three variables. Descriptive statistics, independent samples T-tests, one-way ANOVA tests and Pearson tests were performed to achieved the research aims. Statistical analyses showed that regardless of strong beliefs about the importance of OPS for their studies and future work, students moderately engaged with developing these skills. There were statistically significant differences in OPS achievement levels between student groups that hold different beliefs about the importance of these skills. Finally, student beliefs and engagement were found to have a weak and moderate correlation respectively with their attainment of OPS. This article explains the findings with a focus on current situation of Vietnamese higher education system and gives some implications for success in training students in OPS.

Keywords: *oral presentation skills; student beliefs; student engagement; learning achievement; correlation*

Introduction

Oral communication skills in general and oral presentation skills (OPS) in particular have been found to be employers' most-wanted skills (Fallows & Steven, 2000; Ballard & Daniel, 2015; Ireland, 2016). At job interviews, the ability to present oneself and his or her competencies was found to be important to the final decision about acceptance or rejection for a job vacancy (Messum, Wilkes, & Jackson, 2011; Peterson, 1997; Ralston, 1989). In the workplace, employees are often required to use oral presentations to present new knowledge, project proposals or reports. Their performance during the presentations explicitly reflects their individual skills and professionalism, which may influence their promotion opportunities (Brown & Schmidt, 2009; Morton & Rosse, 2011).

In line with employers' demands, oral communication skills have become a focus in many higher education curricula and the most important generic higher education learning outcomes in recent years (De Grez, Valcke, & Roozen, 2014; Iksan et al., 2012; Yale, 2014). With the surge of student-centred pedagogical approach recently, students use oral communication skills for group discussions, for presentations of their individual assignments, or for reports of an assigned group project. Regarding assessment practice, although paper-based assessment tasks are still dominant in higher education, there has been an increasing use of oral assessment that requires students to present their ideas and arguments orally (Bhati, 2012; Burke-Smalley, 2014; Ducasse, 2008; Sayre, 2014; Simper, 2010).

In Vietnam, many studies have indicated that university graduates lack generic skills, and most severely, verbal communication skills (Bodewig, Badiani-Magnusson, & Macdonald, 2014; Tran, 2013b). Graduates have been found to express their opinions unconfidently or present their ideas incoherently. Such a shortage of communication skills in students is usually attributed to the fact that the education system does not train students in generic skills adequately but only focuses on transmitting knowledge (Tran & Swierczek, 2009; Tran, 2013b). To be fair, students themselves may have also contributed to the shortage of oral communication skills. They may believe that those skills were not as important as disciplinary knowledge and technical skills, so they do not engage in developing those skills for themselves. However, there have been mixed findings for correlations between student beliefs, engagement and learning achievement: Some researchers found positive correlations, while others found no correlation between them (Firmin, Chi-En, & Wood, 2007; Heng, 2014; Milkova, Crossman, Wiles, & Allen, 2013; Mokhtari, 2014; Paredes, Cantu, & Graf, 2013; Reyes, Brackett, Rivers, White, & Salovey, 2012; Sagayadevan & Jeyaraj, 2012; Skamp, Boyes, & Stanisstreet, 2013). This suggests that further studies need to be conducted to revisit the relationship between those factors. Taking OPS as part of oral communication skills, this study attempted to explore Vietnamese university students' beliefs about the importance of, their engagement with, and achievements in OPS and retest the correlations between the three variables. This study may shed some lights on factors hindering students' achievements of OPS in university education contexts.

Literature review

What makes a good presentation?

According to Mandel (2000), 'presentations' are speeches that are usually used in business, technical, professional, or scientific environments. The audience is usually more specialized, compared with those who attend a regular speech event. At the workplace, employees might present their proposals, plans, findings of studies about problems in the organization, or solutions to a problem. At university, students usually give oral presentations on a chosen or given topic to a tutorial group and present their views on a topic based on their readings of relevant references; then the rest of the group participate in a discussion of the topic (The Learning Centre - The University of New South Wales, 2010).

In both contexts, giving an oral presentation may involve:

- reading or studying background materials;
- preparing and rehearsing the presentation;
- preparing handouts and visual aids;
- delivering the presentation to the audience;
- leading a group discussion; and
- making conclusions.

There have been different perspectives about what makes a good presentation. Some use real-life standards (Pittenger, Miller, & Mott, 2004), many others use common sense to judge the quality of a presentation (De Grez et al., 2014). Other authors suggested components of a good presentation in line with three stages: (i) organization/preparation, (ii) rehearsal, and (iii) delivery (Bourne, 2007; Griffith Institute for Higher Education, 2004; Mandel, 2000). In the first stage, the presenter needs to select a topic, analyze the need and knowledge level of his or her audience, and make preparations for the presentation (for example, slides or visual aids). Then the presenter would engage in rehearsing the presentation where he or she must be able to reflect on the content and the way the presentation is conducted, in order to make appropriate adjustments. Finally, the presenter needs to activate other soft skills to deliver the presentation interactively with the audience in an authentic setting. For example, in his article, Bourne (2007) proposed that a good presentation should disseminate information logically and clearly to the audience. He proposed 'ten simple rules' as follows:

- Presenters need to know the background and needs of their audience.
- A presentation should be succinct but clear and concise.
- The topic of the presentation must be interesting, important or relevant.
- The content of the presentation content must be focused and memorable to the audience.
- The presentation structure must be logical.
- Presenters should take advantage of his or her strengths to make the presentation more entertaining.
- Presenters should rehearse to deliver the best possible presentation.
- Visuals should be used sparingly, but effectively in a presentation.
- Presenters should record his or her presentation for later review to break bad habits.
- Presenters should provide appropriate acknowledgments to stakeholders.

Mandel (2000) also developed a tool to help individuals self-evaluate the level of their OPS. The items in the tool appear to reflect similar standards for an effective presentation as proposed by Bourne (2007) above. This tool was adopted to use as the instrument for participants to self-assess their achievement of OPS in this study.

Self-regulated learning for OPS in Vietnamese universities

An oral presentation involves a wide range of communication skills, information searching skills, interpersonal skills, and computer skills, among others. Therefore, it may be time-consuming for students to master OPS (Brown & Schmidt, 2009). However, in the current context of Vietnamese higher education, shortage of time in the classroom, students' learning styles, and teachers' pedagogical practice appear to challenge the development of OPS for students.

In recent years, Vietnamese higher education has been under tremendous reforms in all aspects, including the curriculum (Harman, Hayden, & Pham, 2010; Pham, 2011). The reforms aim for many ambitious targets, one of which is improving the quality of the workforce. The curriculum has been restructured, shifting from a year-based to a credit-based training system, which has been observed to reduce teaching time in the classroom compared with the curriculum in the year-based training system (Nguyen & Cao, 2014). At the same time, teachers were encouraged to use a student-centred approach in order to develop academic and work competence for students. However, many teachers have not been able to employ new teaching techniques. They still utilize the traditional method to disseminate knowledge to students so that students are able to pass examinations, rather than focusing on training them in employability skills (Nguyen & Cao, 2014; Pham, 2011; Tran, Le, & Nguyen, 2014). Also, students are expected to be more active in their learning, but it seems that they fail to do so due to their dependent learning habits (Tran, 2013a).

In such a context, without self-regulated learning ability, students would not be able to improve their OPS. Self-regulated learning includes three components: self-observation, self-adjustment and self-reaction (Schunk, 2001; Zimmerman, 2000). Self-observation is the first step in the learning process, which informs and motivates students for a targeted learning goal (Bandura, 1986). The information helps to set realistic performance standards and motivates learners to progress depending on their expectations for outcomes and self-efficacy (De Grez et al., 2014; Schunk, 2001). On the self-adjustment process, many learners change their behaviours by comparing information collected from self-observation with that of the performance goal. If learners perceive that their success/failure was caused by internal factors, then they would start a self-reaction process that makes the behavior more in-line with the performance standards. Motivation will depend on the anticipation of success or failure in the adapted behavior (De Grez et al., 2014).

Reflecting on self-regulated learning theory, Taylor and Toews (1999) identified four key elements that help define the learning environment for OPS development, namely actions, conditions, beliefs and learning from experiences. In the researchers' viewpoints, presenters must have the knowledge of how to make a presentation. Presenters should also possess conditional knowledge that allows them to be aware of a condition under which a presentation strategy would be effective or not. Presenters' beliefs about OPS may influence their self-efficacy as well as deciding the content and goal of the presentation (De Grez et

al., 2014). The last element, learning from experiences, is associated with feedback from teachers and peers, or through self-assessment.

Taylor and Toews' (1999) perspective has implications for students' self-regulated learning for OPS. Students first need to possess adequate knowledge of good presentation skills and knowledge of what may enhance or hinder a good presentation by reading books or other resources. Then they have to translate their understanding into practice, and seek feedback from teachers, peers or self-evaluate their presentation performance against existing standards (van Ginkel, Gulikers, Biemans, & Mulder, 2015). Their progress in OPS may be interfered by their self-efficacy, i.e. belief in their ability to achieve OPS, their beliefs in the importance or relevance of OPS for their study or work, their engagement in practicing OPS, and the quality of feedback for their presentation performance (Ireland, 2016).

Furthermore, Taylor and Toews' (1999) perspective also gives implications for teaching OPS to students using self-regulated learning. Although the current context appears unfavorable for OPS teaching in the classroom, Vietnamese university teachers can still help their students develop OPS. For example, they can provide students with reading material about presentations, give lectures in which they play a role model of expert presenters to students, employ pedagogical practices in which students are required to give presentations on given topics and then evaluate or ask other students to cross-evaluate the presentations. Teachers should also motivate students to engage in developing their OPS by assessing their progress in OPS.

In summary, although the current context of Vietnamese higher education is not very favorable for OPS development, students and teachers can still adopt self-regulated learning to improve students' OPS. However, students' achievement of OPS can result from different factors, such as their prior knowledge, characteristics, beliefs, and engagement in developing such skills. Some of those factors will be discussed in the next section.

Student beliefs, engagement and OPS achievement

Many factors have been identified to be associated with students' learning achievements (Hattie, 2012). Among student-related factors, however, students' beliefs, self-efficacy and engagement appear to have been paid a lot of attention by researchers. For the purpose of this study, the relationship between students' beliefs, engagement, and achievement of a learning goal will be discussed in this section.

Armstrong (1993) defined belief as a dispositional state of mind that persists through time but unnecessarily manifests itself either in consciousness or in behaviour. He also opposed the opinion that perceptions are beliefs because "perceptions are definite events that take place at definite instants and are then over" (Smith, 2001, p.285). Some other authors, including Smith (2001), argued that the relationship between perception and belief is not merely contingent.

Acknowledging the possible difference and relationship between perception and belief, the term 'belief' was selected to represent students' awareness of and confidence in the importance of OPS in this study.

Many studies have found a correlation between people's beliefs and their behaviours (Firmin et al., 2007; Mokhtari, 2014; Paredes et al., 2013; Skamp et al., 2013). For example, Mokhtari (2014) investigated the influence of epistemic beliefs on the general information-seeking behaviour of 290 undergraduate students of different disciplines in Payame Noor University, Iran. The researcher found that students' epistemic beliefs positively affected their general information-seeking behavior. In contrast, Firmin et al. (2007) studied the relationship between students' beliefs about abortion and their volunteering participation for one hour of their time at a local Crisis Pregnancy or Planned Parenthood Centre. The researchers concluded that although students held strong beliefs about abortion, they were reluctant to participate in the activities requested. The findings of these studies suggest that the relationship between people's beliefs and behaviours has yet been determined.

Furthermore, a substantial body of literature on student engagement and their academic achievement has been accumulated in recent decades. There have been different perspectives about student engagement. Chapman (2002) defines student engagement in terms of their cognitive investment in, active participation in, and emotional commitment to their learning. The Australian Council of Research (ACER) proposes that student engagement is their involvement with activities and conditions that could generate high-quality learning. Those definitions provide a general view of student engagement but do not provide elements that enable engagement to occur (Zepke, Leach, & Butler, 2010). Many others develop their viewpoints of student engagement based on student motivations, teacher-student interactions, interactions between learners, institutional policies, socio-political factors, and the role of non-institutional influences such as family, friends, health and employment. In other words, student engagement could be present in behavioural or emotional forms; and it can be driven by students themselves or external agents (Zepke et al., 2010).

Regardless of the dimensions of student engagement, many studies have been conducted to test the relationship between student engagement and academic achievement (Heng, 2014; Milkova et al., 2013; Reyes et al., 2012; Sagayadevan & Jeyaraj, 2012). The results showed mixed findings of such a relationship. For example, Reyes et al. (2012) conducted their study into classroom emotional climate, engagement, and students' academic achievement with the participation of 1,399 students in fifth and sixth grades. The results showed that engagement was a positive mediator between classroom emotional climate and students' achievements. In contrast, Sagayadevan and Jeyaraj (2012) examined the relationship between lecturer-student interaction, emotional engagement and the academic achievements of 140 undergraduate psychology students. They found that students who had a good interaction with their lecturer had higher levels of emotional engagement. However, emotional engagement was not

found to mediate the pathway between lecturer-student interaction and academic outcomes. Still, the researchers concluded that emotional engagement partially mediated lecturer-student interaction and student learning. Meanwhile, Heng (2014) scrutinized the relationship between behavioral engagement and the academic achievement of first year students in a Cambodian university. Again, the findings were mixed. Those spending more time on out-of-class course-related tasks or homework tasks and engaging in class activities appeared to achieve higher results. However, those engaging in out-of-class peer learning and extensive reading did not contribute significantly to their academic achievements. The researcher explained such a difference in effects of student engagement on achievements in terms of students' pre-university academic experiences and geographical origin.

In conclusion, placing OPS on the relationships between student beliefs, engagement, and achievement, if students believe it is important to develop OPS, they might or might not engage in acting out to improve the skills. Thus, the level of their attainment of OPS could be determined by how their beliefs affect their behavioural engagement in developing such skills. Therefore, such relationships between the three variables need to be examined.

Research method

Research questions

The literature indicates that OPS could influence students' learning outcomes and their later work performance significantly; however, the current context of Vietnamese higher education and students' self-regulated learning skills, which are influenced by different factors, signals that students may have many obstacles in improving such skills. This study, therefore, aims to (i) explore students' perceptions of the importance of OPS and their engagement with improving those skills and (ii) to test the relationships between their beliefs, engagement and achievement of those skills. The following questions will be addressed in this study:

- *To what extent do Vietnamese students perceive the importance of OPS for their study and future work?*
- *To what extent do they engage in developing OPS at the university?*
- *To what extent have they achieved OPS?*
- *To what extent do students' beliefs of the importance of OPS, student engagement in developing OPS and their achievement in OPS correlate with each other?*

This study was conducted as a case study in University A, one of the major universities in Vietnam. It has been well known for its many initiatives to renew the curriculum and improve pedagogical practice to produce graduates with better competence and skills. Although findings from a case study is often overlooked, this research method would be the best choice to understand what is occurring in a specific context so that practical lessons can be drawn.

Participants

The participants of this study included 124 female and 79 male undergraduate students enrolling in different disciplines in University A. Among them, 17.2% were attending science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) programs, 17.2% social sciences, 21.7% business, 24.1% agriculture and 19.7% education. The participants were from 18 to 22 years old at the time this study was conducted. The number of participants who were studying in years 1-2 at the university accounted for 48.2%, and years 3-4 were 51.8%.

Research instrument

A paper-based survey was used to collect data for this study. The survey had four sections. Section 1 asked the participants to provide some demographic information. Section 2 required students to express their beliefs about the importance of OPS for academic study and work life. This section also asked students to determine the perceived importance of oral presentation for their studies and future work on a 5-point Likert scale in which 1 denoted '*very unimportant*' and 5 denoted '*very important*'. Section 3 aimed to assess students' engagement in developing OPS. Students were asked to self-report their frequency in conducting five behaviours that could help develop OPS on a 5-point Likert scale in which 1 denoted '*very irregularly*' and 5 denoted '*very regularly*'. The final section asked students to self-assess their achievement level of OPS using a scale developed by Mandel (2000). There is a slight modification between versions of the scale, the researcher chose to use the version with 20 items[1] for this study because it has two items assessing students' anxiety and argumentative skills, which are very relevant with Vietnamese students' characteristics at present.

Data collection and analysis

Data were collected in October and November 2014 on three campuses of the university. Data were entered and analysed using SPSS version 20. First, the Cronbach's alpha was calculated to determine the reliability of the data. For this study, the alpha of the set of five items for student engagement in developing OPS was 0.70 and alpha for the set of 20 items for self-evaluation of level of OPS was 0.93. Item-total correlation coefficients of the 20 items ranged from 0.49 to 0.74, which indicated a good uni-dimensionality of the scale.

Then, descriptive statistics were computed to find answers to the research questions. Qualitative data in section two was analyzed using a content analysis approach to gain extra insights into students' beliefs of the importance of OPS for their university study and future work.

Independent samples T-tests and one-way ANOVA tests were conducted to test whether there were differences in students' beliefs, engagement and achievement of OPS between groups of students of different characteristics. In

[1] This version was available at http://www4.caes.hku.hk/epc/presentation/self_evaluation.htm (accessed 20 October 2014)

addition, Pearson tests were performed to determine the correlations between students' beliefs, engagement and OPS outcomes.

Findings

Students' beliefs of the importance of oral presentation skills

Qualitative data showed that students associated the importance of OPS for their university study in different ways. However, their viewpoints converged in two points: OPS would help them obtain higher scores in defending their undergraduate thesis or reporting (group) assignments (33.40%) and improving confidence and related generic skills (50.70%)

Similarly, students expressed their beliefs about the importance of OPS in the workplace in different ways. Generally, they believed that OPS would be necessary for presenting proposals or reporting assigned tasks (59.10%), persuading customers (17.70%), enhancing promotion opportunities (8.80%) or enhancing employment decisions at job interviews (7.30%).

Furthermore, students were asked to rate the importance of OPS for their university study and for future work on a 5-point Likert scale according to their beliefs. The results in Table 1 showed that students perceived OPS to be very important for both purposes (M = 4.46, SD = 0.63); however, they did not believe that OPS were as important for their study (M = 4.36, SD = 0.68) as for their future work (M = 4.56, SD = 0.58). Students of social sciences rated the importance of OPS the highest (M = 4.67, SD = 0.48) and education (M = 4.30, SD = 0.55) the lowest among the five groups participating in this study.

Discipline	N	Importance for study		Importance for work		Overall	
		M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
STEM	35	4.26	0.56	4.46	0.61	4.36	0.59
Social science	35	4.54	0.56	4.80	0.41	4.67	0.48
Business	44	4.41	0.69	4.52	0.59	4.47	0.64
Agriculture	49	4.39	0.86	4.61	0.64	4.50	0.75
Education	40	4.20	0.56	4.40	0.55	4.30	0.55
Total	**203**	**4.36**	**0.68**	**4.56**	**0.58**	**4.46**	**0.63**

Table 1. Students' perceptions of the importance of oral presentation skills

An independent samples T-test was run to test whether there were differences in beliefs about the importance of OPS for university study and future work between male and female students. The results of the tests showed no statistically significant differences in beliefs about the importance of OPS for university study and future work between male (M = 4.47, SD = 0.49) and female students (M = 4.44, SD = 0.52), $t(201) = 0.36$, $p = 0.75$.

Another independent samples T-test was run to test whether there were differences in beliefs about the importance of OPS for university study and

future work between groups of years 1-2 and years 3-4 students. The results of the tests showed statistically significant differences in beliefs about the importance of OPS for university study and future work between groups of years 1-2 (M = 4.57, SD = 0.48) and years 3-4 students (M = 4.36, SD = 0.51), t(201) = 2.98, p = 0.00. This suggests that students of years 1-2 believed OPS to be more significantly important than students of years 3-4.

Additionally, a one-way ANOVA test was performed to test whether there were differences in beliefs about the importance of OPS for university study and future work between groups of students of different disciplines. The results showed statistically significant differences in beliefs about the importance of OPS for university study and future work at the $p < 0.05$ level between groups of students of different disciplines [F(4,198) = 2.99, p = 0.02]. A Turkey post hoc test indicated that students of education (M = 4.30, SD = 0.49) believed the importance of OPS for their study and future work to be significantly less important than students of social science (M = 4.67, SD = 0.41), p = 0.01.

Students' engagement in self-developing oral presentation skills

Students were asked to self-assess the extent to which they engaged in conducting five activities to develop their OPS on a 5-point Likert scale. Mean scores presented in Table 2 showed that students mostly learned and developed OPS by observing their friends' or teachers' modeling of oral presentations. Students did not read books regularly to gain knowledge about the skills or attend workshops on OPS coordinated by the Youth Union or Student Association (YUSA). Students seemed to engage in activities that helped improve the skills with friends, who gave them feedback, more often than doing it alone and then self-evaluating their performance. Overall, their self-engagement to improving OPS was at an average level (M = 3.33, SD = 1.05).

Activities		**M**	**SD**
1.	Read books to gain more insights into oral presentation skills	3.12	1.09
2.	Observe teachers or friends to pick up good practice	4.23	0.86
3.	Attend workshops on OPS organized by the YUSA	3.06	1.05
4.	Practice oral presentation with peers and ask them for feedback	3.31	1.09
5.	Practice oral presentations at home and self-evaluate	2.95	1.19
	Overall	**3.33**	**1.05**

Table 2. Student behavioural engagement in developing oral presentation skills

High standard deviations in Table 2 signify that there were differences in students' responses about their engagement in developing OPS. Therefore, four independent samples T-tests were conducted to determine the differences in levels of engagement in developing OPS between groups of (i) male and female students, (ii) students of years 1-2 and years 3-4, (iii) students with different perceptions of the importance of OPS for their university study and (iv) students with different perceptions of the importance of OPS for their future work.

- Results of the first independent samples T-test suggested no statistically significant differences in levels of engagement in developing OPS between students of years 1-2 (M = 3.37, SD = 0.73) and years 3-4 (M = 3.21, SD = 0.74), t(201) = 1.59, p = 0.11.
- Results of the second independent samples T-test suggested no statistically significant differences in levels of engagement in developing OPS between male students (M = 3.33, SD = 0.77) and female students (M = 3.26, SD = 0.72), t(201) = 0.69, p = 0.49.
- However, results of the third independent samples T-test indicated that there were statistically significant differences in levels of engagement in developing OPS between groups of students who perceived OPS to be important (M = 3.08, SD = 0.69) and those who perceived OPS to be very important for their university study (M = 3.55, SD = 0.70); t(201) = -4.79, p = 0.00. This suggests that students who believed OPS to be important for their university study engaged more deeply into developing such skills.
- Similarly, results of the fourth independent samples T-test showed statistically significant differences in levels of engagement in developing OPS between groups of students who perceived that OPS were fair or important (M = 3.23, SD = 0.72) and those who perceived that OPS were very important for their future work (M = 3.40, SD = 0.74); t(201) = -2.52, p = 0.01. This suggests that students who believed OPS to be important for their future work engaged more deeply into developing such skills.

In addition, a one-way ANOVA test was conducted to test whether there were statistically significant differences in levels of engagement in developing OPS between students of different disciplines. The results of the one-way ANOVA test indicated no statistically significant differences in the level of engagement in developing OPS between groups of students of different disciplines (p = 0.25).

Students' self-evaluation of their oral presentation skills

Following Mandel's suggestion for result calculation and interpretation, the researcher added the score that students gave for each of the 20 items in the tool. Students who scored from 80-100 were considered to have achieved a '*very good*' level of OPS, from 60 to below 80 '*good*', from 40 to below 60 '*average*', from 30 to below 40 '*bad*' and from 20 to below 30 '*very bad*'. The results indicated that 59% of the participants ranked their OPS as '*very good*' and 29% as '*good*' (29%). Only 11% and 1% reported that their OPS were at '*average*' and '*bad*' levels respectively.

The researcher continued to analyze the participants' responses for each of the 20 items in the tool. Table 3 presents mean scores of items in the scale in smallest to largest values. On a 5-point Likert scale, all of the mean scores fell between the 3.4 to 4.2 range, indicating that students participating in this study had achieved a good level of OPS.

Most of the top ten items with highest mean scores were associated with the students' ability of organization for a presentation (content of the presentation, techniques to be used, rehearsal and self-adjustment, among others). Most of the

top ten items with lowest mean scores were related to the students' ability to handle their real presentation (their tone, persuasiveness, keeping contact with audience, anxiety control, among others). This suggests that while students were good at preparing the presentation, they could not have delivered it very well.

Oral presentation skills	M	SD
1. I analyze the values, needs and constraints of my audience.	3.48	1.11
2. My gestures are natural and not constrained by anxiety.	3.61	1.02
3. I arrange seating (if appropriate) and check audio-visual equipment in advance of the presentation.	3.66	1.21
4. My voice is strong and clear and is not a monotone.	3.74	1.16
5. I maintain good eye contact with the audience at all times.	3.79	1.13
6. I prepare answers to anticipated questions, and practice responding to them.	3.92	1.15
7. I develop an introduction that catches audience's attention and still provides the necessary background information.	3.94	1.06
8. If my presentation is persuasive, arguments are used that are logical and that support my assertions.	3.97	1.03
9. My notes contain only 'key words' so I avoid read up from a manuscript or technical paper.	3.98	0.93
10. I use anxiety to fuel the enthusiasm of my presentation, not hold me back.	3.98	1.00
11. I communicate ideas with enthusiasm.	4.02	0.92
12. The visual aids I use are carefully prepared, simple, easy to read, and have impact.	4.03	0.97
13. I ensure the benefits suggested to my audience are clear and compelling.	4.04	0.92
14. The number of visual aids will enhance, not detract, from my presentation.	4.05	0.91
15. I rehearse so there is a minimum focus on notes and maximum attention paid to my audience.	4.06	0.97
16. I incorporate both a preview and review of the main ideas as my presentation is organized.	4.07	1.02
17. I determine some basic objectives before planning a presentation.	4.09	1.18
18. I write down some main ideas first, in order to build a presentation around them.	4.13	0.96
19. My presentations are rehearsed standing up and using visual aids.	4.14	0.94
20. My conclusion refers back to the introduction and, if appropriate, contains a call-to-action statement.	4.17	0.83
Overall	**3.94**	**1.02**

Table 3. Results of students' self-evaluation of their oral presentation skills (items from (Mandel, 2000))

Table 3 also shows high standard deviations in students' responses for their OPS achievement levels. This suggests that the achievements of OPS levels between students vary greatly. Therefore, the researcher conducted two one-way ANOVA tests to determine whether or not there were significant differences in students' OPS achievement levels between students of different disciplines and between students of different levels of engagement in improving OPS.

- The results of the first one-way ANOVA test indicated that there were no statistically significant differences in students' OPS achievement levels between students of different disciplines ($p = 0.08$).
- The results of the second one-way ANOVA test indicated statistically significant differences in OPS achievement levels between students of different levels of engagement at the $p < 0.05$ level [$F(2,200) = 16.88$, $p = 0.00$]. A Turkey post hoc test revealed that OPS achievement levels of students with high levels of engagement ($M = 4.17$, $SD = 0.55$) were significantly higher than those of average ($M = 3.74$, $SD = 0.69$) and low levels of engagement ($M = 3.48$, $SD = 0.58$). This indicates that the level of student engagement could affect their OPS achievement levels.

In addition, three independent samples T-tests were conducted to test whether there were differences in the achievement of OPS (i) between students in years 1-2 and years 3-4, between students of different beliefs of the importance of OPS for their university study, and between students of different perceptions of the importance of OPS for their future work.

- The results of the first independent samples T-test showed no statistically significant difference in OPS achievement levels between students of years 1-2 ($M = 3.95$, $SD = 0.68$) and years 3-4 ($M = 3.94$, $SD = 0.65$); $t(201) = 0.12$, $p = 0.91$.
- The second independent samples T-test results showed that there were statistically significant differences in OPS achievement levels between groups of students who believed OPS to be very important ($M = 3.84$, $SD = 0.65$) and those who perceived OPS to be important for their university study ($M = 4.08$, $SD = 0.67$); $t(201) = -2.52$, $p = 0.12$. This suggests that students attained a high level of OPS if they perceived that OPS were important for their study.
- The third independent samples T-test results showed that there was a statistically significant difference in OPS achievement levels between students who perceived OPS to be fair or important ($M = 3.78$, $SD = 0.69$) and students who perceived OPS to be very important for their future work ($M = 4.05$, $SD = 0.63$); $t(-2.84) = 201$, $p = 0.01$. This suggests that students attained a high level of OPS if they perceived that OPS were important for their future work.

Factors influencing students' achievement of OPS

This section revisits the relationship between students' belief, engagement and their learning outcomes using OPS as the focus of analysis. The researcher calculated Pearson's r-values to determine the correlation between students'

perceptions of the importance of OPS, their self-efficacy, their self-engagement in practicing the skills, and their achievement of the skills (Figure 1). The results showed that:

- There was a positive correlation between students' beliefs of the importance of OPS and their level of self-engagement in developing OPS, r = 0.28, n = 203, p = 0.00. The r-value suggested that the relationship between the two variables was weak (Coolidge, 2013).
- There was a positive correlation between students' beliefs of the importance of OPS and their achievement of OPS, r = 0.19, n = 203, p = 0.00. The r-value indicated that the relationship between the two variables was weak (Coolidge, 2013).
- There was a positive correlation between students' levels of self-engagement and their achievement of OPS, r = 0.49, n = 203, p = 0.00. The r-value suggested a moderate relationship between the two variables (Coolidge, 2013).

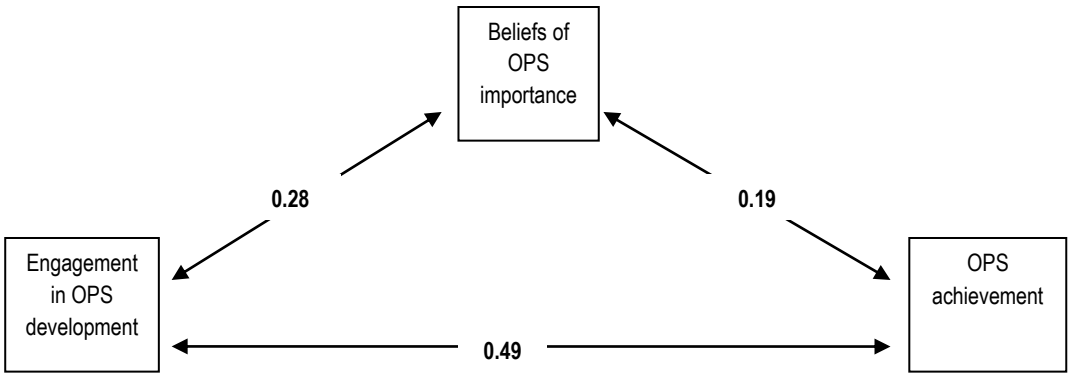

Figure 1. Correlations between student beliefs, engagement and achievement of OPS

Discussion, recommendations and conclusion

The first purpose of this study was to explore students' perceptions of the importance of OPS for their study and future work, their engagement in developing OPS and their achievement of OPS. The results showed that students had a high awareness of the importance of OPS for their university study and future work. It is not surprising to find that students of social sciences rated the importance of OPS the highest among groups of students because in social sciences, oral presentations seem to be one of the key measures to disseminate knowledge of social issues that they concern. However, it was surprising to find that students of education scored the importance of OPS the lowest among the student groups while teaching could be the profession that requires using oral presentations most frequently. This could be because students of education associated presentations with the use of PowerPoint presentation, a common practice in University A, which may not be the only way to conduct effective teaching activities. Therefore, it is recommended that future research should look into students' conceptualization of OPS and how their conceptions may influence their beliefs and engagement in developing the skills.

Students of years 1-2 rated the importance of OPS for their study and future work significantly higher than students of years 3-4. However, although self-rated higher, behavioural engagement (M = 4.57, SD = 0.49) and achievement of students years 1-2 (M = 3.95, SD = 0.69) did not vary significantly compared with those of students of years 3-4 (M = 4.36, SD = 0.51 and M = 3.94, SD = 0.65 respectively). This finding is not surprising, because in Vietnam, high-school students have virtually no opportunities to make oral presentations. Due to a very crowded curriculum and pressure for passing exams (Le & Barnard, 2009), students are often taught for tests rather than for true knowledge and personal development. Therefore, when entering university, particularly University A, which was under a student-centred pedagogical reform, students are expected to engage in constructing knowledge under their teachers' guidance. They start to give presentations and lead group discussions in the class. Without much prior experience in OPS, students years 1-2 could think that OPS were important for their study and engaged in developing those skills. Meanwhile, students in years 3-4 have become used to these skills, so they might disregard and disengage in improving the skills compared with students in years 1-2. In addition, the mean score of OPS achievement levels of both groups were almost equal. Although there could be subjectivity in their self-assessment, this suggests that OPS will take sufficient time and practice to build. Therefore, it is recommended that teachers and students should provide and look for more opportunities respectively to develop these skills throughout the program at the university.

In addition, the findings indicated that Vietnamese students did not appear to engage with developing OPS very much (M = 3.33, SD = 1.05). They tended to acquire the skills mostly though observing teachers' modeling of OPS in the classroom. They seemed not to engage in building up knowledge about oral presentations and self-practicing to improve the skills. This finding is consistent with findings in recent studies that Vietnamese students are dependent learners (Tran, 2013a) and do not like to read books (Trung & Toan, 2014). In addition, students did not seem to engage in self-evaluating the presentation by themselves. This could be the result of not reading about how to make a good presentation against which they could conduct self-evaluation. It could also be due to a lack of self-reflection or self-evaluation ability in students who have been taught in a teacher-centred approach. All of these pointed out that while observational learning may trigger students' awareness of the importance and cater them to develop OPS by imitation; their self-directed learning ability would be more conducive to the development of these skills.

The study also found that overall students have achieved a good level of OPS (M = 3.94, SD = 1.02). However, generated by students' self-evaluation, this result may be higher than their actual level of OPS and does not mean that they will perform at that level in reality, because there may be some inconsistencies between the students' self-perceived competence and their actual performance (Alwi & Sidhu, 2013). In addition, the results showed that students lacked interpersonal skills in delivering their presentations in front of the audience. As discussed in the Literature Review, a successful presentation requires students'

combination of different soft skills and knowledge of a given topic. As such, students need time and regular practice to master such a soft skill as OPS. Unfortunately, due to a shortage of time and large class sizes in the university, students do not have many opportunities to make presentations in front of the class. However, students can still self-improve OPS and interpersonal skills by observing their friends' presentations in class or attending more extra-curricular activities on their own. Teachers can also help create more opportunities to engage students with developing OPS and interpersonal skills. They do not need to require each group of students to take turns presenting their assignments formally in front of the whole class, which may consume a lot of time. They could allow one group to present their assignment to another group, and many groups could do this simultaneously. This could help reduce students' anxiety and improve their confidence in giving presentations.

The second purpose of this study was to test the correlation between the three factors: students' beliefs, levels of engagement and levels of achievement of OPS. Pearson test results indicated a weak positive correlation between students' beliefs in the importance of OPS and their level of engagement in developing OPS ($r = 0.28$). Similarly, Pearson test results suggested that the students' beliefs in the importance of OPS and their level of engagement in developing OPS had a positive correlation with their level of achievement of OPS ($r = 0.19$ and 0.49 respectively). The coefficient of determination r^2 suggested that students' beliefs of the importance of OPS could only explain 3.61% of the variance in students' achievement of such skills, but that of student engagement could explain 24.01% of the variance in students' achievement of OPS. Referring to the interpretation framework proposed by Cohen (1988), this means that students' beliefs and engagement had a small and moderate effect, respectively, on their level of attaining OPS skills (in fact, student engagement was almost a large effect, if r^2 was greater than 25%). On the one hand, the results suggest that students' high levels of beliefs may not be transferred into engagement with developing a skill, in this case, OPS. On the other hand, the findings complement previous studies that student engagement could enhance students' achievement of a learning goal. Therefore, should the university and teachers want to improve their students' OPS, they would need to have some interventions to increase student engagement in developing OPS for themselves. For example, teachers should start to evaluate students' OPS as an integral part of assessment of their subjects. This initiative would significantly raise the level of student engagement because assessment could have wash-back effects on students' learning and engagement (Rust, 2002).

In conclusion, despite reporting very strong beliefs about the importance of OPS for their study and future work and moderately high achievement level of those skills, students participating in this study did not engage much in developing the skills for themselves. The analysis showed that it could be due to students' lack of self-regulated learning ability. The results also suggest that students were good at preparation, but appeared inexperienced when delivering their presentations, most likely because of a lack of interpersonal skills. In addition, this study found moderate positive correlations between students' engagement

and their OPS achievement. For this reason, it is recommended that the university and teachers need to inform students about the importance of OPS for their study and future work, improve their self-regulated learning skills, provide them with knowledge and opportunities to practice presenting orally – both in and after class – so that they would become engaged with improving and become more confident in using those skills.

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