

# Oral Presentation on VoiceThread: A Collaborative Assessment Strategy in Enhancing Language Proficiency and Oral Communication Practices

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## ABSTRACT

This paper focuses on using VoiceThread in teaching Filipino as a second language at the University of Hawaii at Manoa. VoiceThread is a creative tech-based collaboration tool with video, audio, and text commenting. In this study, students utilized VoiceThread in their three oral presentations. The study's primary purpose was to investigate how VoiceThread's use enhances language proficiency and oral presentation skills of second language learners of Filipino. It also explored other valuable benefits of using VoiceThread in student engagement, motivation, and quality of learning experience in second language classrooms. Participants consisted of forty-five students of Beginning Filipino courses and one teacher of Filipino language. Data were collected from the video-recorded oral presentations on VoiceThread, participants' responses to the assessment survey instruments, interviews, personal notes or journals, observation, and other sources. Audio-recorded interviews were transcribed, while numerical figures were calculated. Results were analyzed and interpreted intelligibly. This study's findings present valuable insights into the use of technology in promoting collaborative, engaging, dynamic, and stimulating language learning and teaching.

**Keywords:** *Filipino language, Voice Thread, language assessment, technology-based learning and teaching.*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Successful language learning includes engaging and sustaining attention, participating actively, maintaining high motivation levels, and completing assigned tasks. However, many second/foreign language learners struggle in these areas. Hence, selecting instructional strategies is often a challenge for most language teachers. Methods used in teaching need to keep changing and evolving to make the classroom a dynamic and motivational environment. It should increase language engagement, motivation, and learner independence [2]. However, if traditional learning methods are not engaging and motivating, teachers should consider other alternative means. They can use technology in teaching and transform the traditional speaking class into a fun, friendly, and more exciting [6]. They can capture students' attention through individualized, creative, and tech-based learning methods [9].

Integrating technology in the classroom becomes an exciting approach to language learning. Technology has

now become part of language learning throughout the world at different levels [12]. Employing innovative technological tools can promote student engagement, motivation and ultimately increase the students' quality of learning experience [2]. They can make teaching and learning more meaningful and fun.

One technological tool that can enhance student engagement, collaboration, and motivation is VoiceThread [5]. VoiceThread is an online communication tool that allows students to navigate slides and leave comments through text, voice, an audio file, or webcam, and they can make their comments private or public. VoiceThread is easily accessible and applicable to all courses and grade levels. Students can use VoiceThread to participate and collaborate in many ways at their own pace [2].

Due to VoiceThread's various features, many language teachers use it as an alternative for oral presentations in the classroom. Students can record their presentations in their comfort zones, without fear of

being criticized or judged. They can revise and rerecord presentations until they are delighted with their work. This process of recording, listening, revising, and rerecording oral presentations can increase language proficiency.

VoiceThread can also use as an assessment strategy for enhancing listening skills and oral presentation practices. Students can assess their presentations or ask someone, such as peers, mentors, or teachers, to evaluate their presentations. Teaching language with VoiceThread makes language learners more engaging, motivating, and creative. Also, it provides students an excellent opportunity for self-expression and creativity [14].

This study investigates how VoiceThread's use enhances language proficiency and oral presentation practices of Filipino courses' second language learners. It also explores VoiceThread's educational benefits regarding student engagement, motivation, and quality of learning experience in the second language classroom.

There have been dozens of research studies describing the usefulness of VoiceThread in the classroom. However, not many of these studies focus on using VoiceThread in second/foreign language classrooms and its impact on language learning. Among those studies, four have found some similarities with the current research.

Rowan and Salehi [14] have proven VoiceThread's usefulness in enhancing learning at the University of Minnesota. Since teachers and students got licensed to use VoiceThread in the classroom, this tool becomes well used for teaching and learning. They use VoiceThread in many classroom activities, such as online presentations, peer assessments, and collaborative work. Students find VoiceThread accessible and provide peer feedback opportunities. Rowan and Salehi also presented various benefits of using this tool at the University of Minnesota community.

Negash and Powell's [13] conducted another exciting study on VoiceThread's use in an American literature classroom. They created a giant PowerPoint with every reading assignment posted on VoiceThread. The students' main task was to comment extensively, focusing on their insights and intellectual thought on five reading materials with five well-developed sentences. They also need to share their comments with their peers and respond to at least ten people with two or more sentences. Findings revealed that the online discussion using VoiceThread was a great success, based on the vast number of students' responses, ideas generated, and the depth of engagement and participation.

Hout [7] also investigated the effects of using VoiceThread in her English courses. She assigned the

students to talk in English, hear each other speak the language, and learn from each other through shared conversations on relevant topics on VoiceThread. The results showed that with the use of VoiceThread, class participation has increased a lot. The students gained more confidence in their oral communication and improved their listening comprehension skills. Most students expressed enjoyment in using VoiceThread, and they find VoiceThread as a great tool to make every classroom meeting an exciting experience.

Dunn [3] made a comparative study on VoiceThread's effect on third-year high school students' anxiety and oral proficiency in studying Spanish as a foreign language. The treatment group used VoiceThread to practice speaking, while the control group used traditional language laboratory methods to practice speaking. Dunn used the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) to measure anxiety levels, and the Performance Assessment for Language Students (PALS), a level-three speaking analytical grading rubric, to measure oral proficiency. Results for the FLCAS appeared no significant difference between the control and treatment groups. However, there was a substantial difference between task completion, comprehensibility, level of discourse, and fluency. Overall, the study proved that VoiceThread is an excellent online learning tool to help students complete their assigned tasks, increase comprehension, and improve their oral communication skills. It also showed that using VoiceThread in the classroom can minimize or decimate students' stress and anxiety, resulting in better learning.

Credited are given to the four studies presented earlier for providing foundation of knowledge on this paper's topic, the use of VoiceThread in the classroom. VoiceThread has been in existence for more than a decade now. Ben Papell and Steve Muth founded VoiceThread in December 2005 as online communication, and officially launched in October 2007. Unfortunately, this tool seemed not getting much popularity among young people than Facebook, Twitter, and other social media sites. It is also not widely used in the academe, and thus, many are not aware of several benefits it brings to education.

The works of Rowan and Salehi [14] Negash and Powell [13] Hout [7], and Dunn [3] explore how teachers can use VoiceThread to engage and motivate students, enhance communication skills, introduce topics, curate research, and information, develop unit portfolios, and many more. The current study may contribute to the findings of their previous works. It may also identify specific gaps in the earlier studies, leading to a further investigation in future research.

Certain similarities have shown between the current research study and the four previous works. Rowan and Salehi's study proves that VoiceThread is a great tool to enhance learning. Similarly, recent research aimed to know how VoiceThread can increase students' second language learning and Filipino students' benefits. Negash and Powell's study shows that using VoiceThread brings

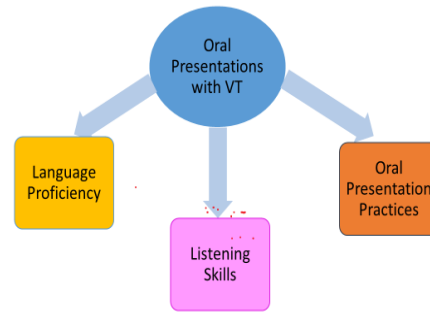
excellent success in increasing student engagement and depth of participation. In comparison, the current research investigates how oral presentations on VoiceThread can increase Beginning Filipino students' language engagement and active participation and collaboration. Both Hout and the current research focus on developing students' confidence in speaking and improving their listening comprehension using VoiceThread. On the other hand, Dunn's investigated the effect of VT on anxiety and oral proficiency. The current research also seeks to prove how VoiceThread reduces stress and builds confidence in delivering oral presentations among students of Beginning Filipino courses.

**2. METHOD**

This research study is a descriptive analysis of VoiceThread's use in enhancing language proficiency and students' oral presentation practices at the beginning of Filipino courses. It specifically seeks to answer the following questions:

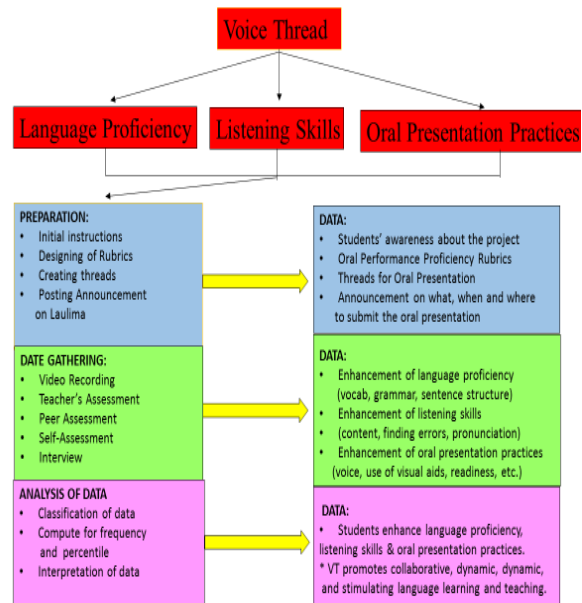
- a) Does VoiceThread help improve the students' language proficiency in vocabulary, grammar, fluency, and pronunciation?
- b) Does VoiceThread help improve students' oral presentation practices in terms of physical appearance, eye contact, enthusiasm, voice quality, use of visual materials, and preparedness?
- c) How do students view VoiceThread in terms of language engagement, motivation, and quality of learning experience?

Participants in this study are 45 students in the first-year Filipino language courses at the University of Hawaii at Manoa. Most students are of Filipino descent but born and raised in the United States. The survey did not include personal information about the participants



**Figure 1.** Oral presentation with VT enhances languages proficiency, listening comprehension skills, and oral presentation practices.

Figure 1 demonstrates the relationships of students' oral presentations with the enhancement of their language proficiency, listening skills, and oral presentation practices. Students Learning Outcomes (SLOs) in Filipino 100 level courses at the University of Hawaii at Manoa indicate that students should have increased language proficiency, listening comprehension skills, and oral presentation practices after completing the course.



**Figure 1.** Research design in analyzing oral presentations with VoiceThread as a collaborative strategy assessment in enhancing language proficiency and oral presentation practices.

Figure 1 illustrates the process of conducting the study. The paradigm shows three essential stages in the research process.

The first stage is preparation. It consists of providing students detailed information about the three oral presentation assignments on VoiceThread, designing language proficiency and oral presentation

survey/rubrics, creating VoiceThread assignments, and posting assignments on Lulima. It is a course management and collaborative resources tool supported for enhanced/full online teaching and collaborative projects at the University of Hawaii. Students have one week to complete each oral presentation on VoiceThread.

The second stage is gathering of data. It presents the sources of data and the procedures of data collections. The primary sources of data collection are video-recorded oral presentations on VoiceThread, assessment survey instruments, interviews, personal notes or journals, observation, and other sources. The assessment instrument comprises 5-scaled Likert items describing students' language proficiency and oral presentation practices. Students' language proficiency entails vocabulary, grammar, fluency, and pronunciation. Similarly, oral presentation skills describe the students' physical appearance, eye contact, enthusiasm, voice, visual materials, and preparedness when delivering their speeches. Each category is scored from one to five, one as inferior/poor, two as needs improvement, three as average, four as good, and five as very good or excellent. Moreover, the last part of the assessment tool is an open-ended question generating the participants' thoughts about the benefits of using VoiceThread in the classroom. A copy of the assessment instrument can be found in Index A, on the last page of this paper

There are seven tasks of which the teacher and students need to accomplish in data gathering. OP stands for oral presentation and VT for VoiceThread.

**a) Task 1: Video Recording for OP1**

In OP1, students record themselves showing pictures of two persons, objects, and places. Their task is to use appropriate adjectives to describe and compare the two persons, objects, and places in the pictures.

**b) Task 2: Assessment 1**

The teacher views each student's oral presentations, and then gives written feedback, scores presentation using the Oral Performance and Language Proficiency Assessment Survey/Rubrics, and posts them on VoiceThread. The teacher presents and discusses general feedback on students' OP1 in class. Teacher and students participate collaboratively during the feedbacking session. The teacher provides suggestions for improvement during the discussion. Students also answer the same survey instrument individually for self-assessment purposes.

**c) Task 3: Video-Recording for OP2**

Task 3 follows the same procedures as in Task 1. In OP2, students make a poster of what people should do in some critical places, such as school, streets, community,

and others, using at least ten verbs in Filipino, and construct positive and negative command sentences.

**d) Task 4: Assessment 2**

Task 4 follows the same procedures as in Assessment 1. In addition, each student evaluates one particular classmate's OP2 using the same assessment survey/rubric tool. Students share their evaluations with their peers during feedbacking session in class.

**e) Task 5: Video-Recording for OP3**

Task 5 follows the same procedures as in Task 1. In OP3, students demonstrate how to do a particular activity, such as cooking a dish, playing a musical instrument, driving a vehicle, dancing, and others, using vocabulary words or phrases related to giving directions.

**f) Task 6: Assessment 3**

Task 6 involves teacher and students' self-assessment using the same survey tool. Also, students write their thoughts about VoiceThread's use in language engagement, motivation, and quality of learning experience. The teacher discusses overall feedback on students' oral presentations in class.

**g) Task 7: Interview**

The teacher invites some selected students for an interview for additional data relevant to the topic of this research.

The third stage is data analysis. All responses are compiled into a data sheet. The mean and standard deviation for language proficiency and oral presentation practices are calculated. Likewise, recorded interviews are transcribed, and responses to open-ended questions in the survey are summarized and categorized based on similarities. Overall findings are analyzed and interpreted.

**4. RESULTS**

**4.1 Language Proficiency**

**Table 1.** Students' self-assessment on OPs on VT

Category	OP 1 (N: 45)		OP 2 (N:45)		OP 3 (N:45)	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Vocabulary	3.93	0.86	3.86	0.84	4.35	0.64
Grammar	3.93	0.83	3.91	0.82	4.04	0.94
Fluency	3.60	0.93	3.48	0.98	3.97	0.94

Pronunciation	3.73	0.88	3.75	0.85	4.15	0.79
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Based on the data presented in Table 1, most students rated all categories in language proficiency with an average mean close to four (M= 3.60, M=3.73, M=3.86, M=3.75, M=3.86, and M=3.93) in both OP1 and OP2, and beyond four in vocabulary (M=3.35), grammar (M=4.04), and pronunciation (M=4.15) in OP3. It shows that students believe that they have a good vocabulary, grammar, fluency, and pronunciation in the Filipino language. The OP3 results show an increase in the students' vocabulary, grammar, fluency, and pronunciation. Among the four categories, vocabulary (M=4.35, SD=0.64) and pronunciation (M=4.15, SD=0.79) have shown a more significant increase.

**Table 2.** Teacher assessment on students' OPs on VT

Category	OP 1 (N: 45)		OP 2 (N:45)		OP 3 (N:45)	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Vocabulary	4.22	0.79	4.38	0.75	4.67	0.52
Grammar	3.36	0.86	3.53	0.87	4.04	0.71
Fluency	2.91	1.04	3.62	0.98	3.89	0.78
Pronunciation	3.33	0.80	3.64	0.88	3.98	0.81

Table 2 indicates that the teacher believes that students have a useful vocabulary, as shown in OP1 (M=4.22, SD=.079) and OP2 (M=3.38, SD=0.75), and it was enhanced more in OP3 (M=4.67, SD=0.52). It also shows that the teacher agrees that most students have performed well in their oral presentations using correct grammar and sentence structures, good flow of speech, and correct pronunciation.

Overall, most students have successfully used a variety of vocabulary and phrases that are required by their teacher for the three oral presentations. The students used appropriate adjectives in describing and comparing two people, objects, and places. They also provided correct words and phrases related to requesting something, giving positive and negative commands, and following directions. It also evident that they used a variety of sentence structures with only occasional grammatical errors. They also communicated directly with the audience and no direct reading from the prepared notes, and they pronounced the words correctly and with proper intonation.

The significant increase in students' language proficiency in OP3 may be attributed to the written feedback given by the teachers for each of students' OP1 and OP2 and to the feedbacking sessions in class. Another factor could be the opportunity to rehearse the presentation several times on VoiceThread before it was published. This speech rehearsal can build confidence,

creativity, and fluency. It can also minimize stress and anxiety in delivering a speech because they can record their presentation alone at their most comfortable place.

**4.2 Oral Presentation Practices/Skills**

**Table 3.** Students' self-assessment on their OPs on VT

Category	OP 1 (N: 45)		OP 2 (N:45)		OP 3 (N:45)	
	Mean	Std. Dev.	Mean	Std. Dev.	Mean	Std. Dev.
Physical Appearance	4.17	0.93	4.31	0.76	4.26	0.83
Eye Contact	3.91	1.01	3.91	0.97	3.95	0.90
Enthusiasm	3.88	0.97	3.84	0.90	4.04	0.90
Voice	3.97	0.90	3.97	0.91	4.04	0.83
Visual Aids	3.71	0.81	4.08	0.76	4.11	0.78
Preparedness	3.79	1.19	3.77	0.87	3.86	0.74

Table 3 describes the students' self-assessment on their three oral presentations on VoiceThread using the assessment survey instrument for oral presentation practices.

There is a very slight difference in students' oral performance between OP1 and OP2. Most students believe that they deliver their oral presentations well in the OP3 in all categories, such as physical appearance (M=4.26, SD=0.83), eye contact (M=3.95, SD=0.90), enthusiasm (M=4.04, SD=0.90), voice (M=4.04, SD=0.83), visual aids (M=4.11, SD=0.78), and preparedness (M=3.86, SD=0.74).

**Table 4.** Teacher assessment on students' OPs on VT

Category	OP 1 (N: 45)		OP 2 (N:45)		OP 3 (N:45)	
	Mean	Std. Dev.	Mean	Std. Dev.	Mean	Std. Dev.
Physical Appearance	3.77	0.99	4.51	0.63	4.73	0.50
Eye Contact	2.55	1.12	3.75	1.07	4.16	0.88
Enthusiasm	3.06	0.94	3.78	1.11	4.13	0.89
Voice	3.20	0.97	3.98	1.01	4.29	0.79
Visual Aids	3.13	1.18	4.09	1.06	4.64	0.61
Preparedness	3.29	0.76	3.89	0.91	4.40	0.78

Table 4 indicates the summary results of teacher assessment on students' oral performance during three oral presentations.

The students have shown less engagement (eye contact: M=2.55, SD=1.12) with the audience in OP1.

They spent more time reading from their notes rather than looking at the audience. However, it shows an improvement connecting with their audience as they deliver their OP2 (eye contact:  $M=3.75$ ,  $SD=1.07$ ) and OP3 (eye contact:  $M=4.16$ ,  $SD=0.88$ ). Similarly, some students did not provide appropriate visual aids and used them correctly during OP1 (visual aids:  $M= 3.13$ ,  $SD=1.18$ ). Students have shown a significant improvement in their visual materials during OP2 ( $M= 4.09$ ,  $SD=1.06$ ) and OP3 ( $M=4.64$ ,  $SD=0.61$ ). It is interesting to note that students' oral presentation skills have increased as they move to OP2 and OP3. The OP3 results prove that most students have prepared a lot for their last oral presentation.

Overall results of participants' responses show that there was a significant improvement of students' oral presentations from OP1 to OP2 and from OP2 to OP3. These results are clear indications that students delivered their oral presentation in proper grooming, neat, and well-presentable. They made their speech engaging by not focusing much on their notes. They also spoke in a normal and relaxed tone, but with enthusiasm. They likewise used appropriate and engaging visual materials for their presentation, and they appeared entirely prepared by rehearsing their speech on VoiceThread, before they published it.

### ***4.3 Summary Results of Students' Feedback on the Use of VoiceThread***

Students provided forty-three positive feedback on the usefulness of VT in the classroom. They are categorized into twelve main ideas.

- a) It reviews the quality of work before submitting it.
- b) It checks contact speech habits and review content to ensure not to skip essential points.
- c) It is a perfect way for students to communicate and practice their pronunciation and fluency.
- d) It less stress, can redo project until satisfied, shy students have an easier opportunity in speaking.
- e) It engages students in a fun and easy way through speaking a different language
- f) It makes students orally practice Tagalog/Filipino out loud for others to listen.
- g) It is useful for speaking new vocabulary words.
- h) It is a motivating and interesting tool to deliver presentations
- i) Feedback from peer review is very useful.
- j) Learning from a different classroom setting
- k) It is a great platform to use technology to practice the language.
- l) It does not limit students to the classroom setting. It can be taken everywhere. It is an online class extension.

However, students gave only two negative feedback:

- a) It doesn't increase quality of learning if unable to

read notes. We are still learning the basic and their pronunciation.

- b) Online presentations lower motivation, it can do any time before deadline.
- c) Doing oral presentations in class is better and more motivational.

## **5. DISCUSSION**

The overall results of Tables 1 and 2 on Language Proficiency are clear indications that most students in the Beginning Filipino can use appropriate vocabulary words and phrases in describing person, objects, and places, making requests, giving positive and negative commands, and following directions. The students can also construct various sentence structures with fewer errors, pronounce words correctly, and have no direct reading from their notes.

This study confirms that VoiceThread is a handy tool for enhancing the language proficiency of students. However, teachers' and students' feedback is also a significant factor in improving language proficiency. Also, VoiceThread is only an online communication tool and cannot use to practice spontaneous conversations [10] Thus, the teacher cannot solely rely on VoiceThread for students speaking activities. Students may consider using other tech-based tools or may still use the traditional students' role-play or other classroom activities to increase their language proficiency.

On the other hand, the summary results of both students and teacher responses in Tables 3 and 4 show that students' presentational skills have been improving from OP2 to OP3. This improvement in students' oral presentation may also result from the teacher's written feedback on their previous oral presentations on VoiceThread.

The feedbacking sessions in class and peer evaluation gave additional support for the students' increase in their presentational skills. VoiceThread is a great tool to enhance oral production skills because students can see and hear their presentations. By doing so, they can identify pronunciation errors, discard unnecessary movements, improve their voice tone, and strengthen the positive qualities in their performance. The opportunity to rehearse and deliver speeches in the absence of a physical audience can reduce stress and anxiety [3]. It has been proven in various studies that stress and anxiety hinder a person from expressing his thoughts clearly and accurately. However, if a person gets used to always hiding under his computer when delivering speeches, he would be deprived of learning some social skills that he may need when working out in the field. Thus, every teacher should plan all learning activities and

assignments carefully. VoiceThread may be useful in some activities, but the teacher should also consider using other resources, learning modes, and venue for oral presentations.

Generally, VoiceThread provides more benefits than disadvantages in the classroom. As shown in their written feedback and interviews, students see the usefulness of this technology in enhancing their language proficiency and presentational skills. They also find it very useful in increasing language engagement, motivation, and quality of their learning experience in the classroom. This result corroborates Negash and Powell's work [10] and other previous studies on the effect of VoiceThread on students' learning. However, some students believe that live oral presentations in the classroom are more motivating than online recorded presentations on VoiceThread. Adding a little stress on learning can make some students perform well.

## 5. CONCLUSION

This study presented empirical evidence that VoiceThread can be a useful learning tool in enhancing students' language proficiency and oral presentation skills. However, VoiceThread is only a communication tool, and it cannot use to practice conversations. Thus, teachers should plan all students' learning activities and assignments and consider using other learning resources to increase students' language proficiency and oral presentation practices. The teacher and students' feedback are also helpful in improving language proficiency and oral presentational skills.

Using technology, specifically VoiceThread, enables students to assess their work in a more meaningful and exciting way, become better aware of their work quality, and accept feedback more willingly. Teachers can also evaluate the student's knowledge more accurately and objectively.

A potential limitation of this study is the small size of participants with 45 students and one teacher. Larger sample sizes of participants involved in future research may elucidate more data on VoiceThread's benefits in the classroom. A study on VoiceThread's use in enhancing listening and reading comprehension skills may be another interesting topic to investigate in future studies.

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## APPENDIX A

### ORAL PERFORMANCE AND LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY ASSESSMENT SURVEY

Which of the following that applies to you? Write the number 1, 2, 3, 4, or 5 on the blanks of each category. Below is the meaning of these numbers:

- 1 Strongly disagree /Poor
- 2 Disagree/ Needs Improvement
- 3 Average
- 4 Agree
- 5 Strongly Agree/ VeryGood

#### ***PART 1: LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY – This entails vocabulary or correct use of words and phrases, correct grammar and structure.***

\_\_\_\_\_1. VOCABULARY: Uses a variety of vocabulary and expressions especially on giving positive or negative commands.

\_\_\_\_\_2. GRAMMAR: Uses of variety of structures with only occasional grammatical errors. Examples are the correct aspect form of verbs or tenses.

\_\_\_\_\_3. FLUENCY: Presenter is firm control of the presentation and communicates directly with the

audience with little or no direct reading from prepared notes.

\_\_\_\_\_4. PRONUNCIATION: Pronunciation and intonation are almost always very clear and accurate.

#### ***PART 2: ORAL PRESENTATION PRACTICES – This part entails the way you orally presented your topic.***

\_\_\_\_\_1. PHYSICAL APPEARANCE. Shows proper grooming, neat, clean and presentable.

\_\_\_\_\_2. EYE CONTACT. Establishes and holds eye contact with audience before, and after the presentation.

\_\_\_\_\_3. ENTHUSIASM: Generates and displays a strong interest and enthusiasm.

\_\_\_\_\_4. VOICE: Normal and relaxed tone. Use of fluid speech and inflection (modulation) maintains the interest of the audience. Loud enough to hear what the presenter is saying.

\_\_\_\_\_5. VISUAL AIDS: Knows how to use the visual aids properly; Visual aids are related to the topic of presentation; done with creativity.

\_\_\_\_\_6. PREPAREDNESS: Student is completely prepared and has obviously rehearsed.

#### ***PART 3: Benefits of VT in Language Learning***

What do you think are the benefits or advantages about the use of VoiceThread in language learning? Does it increase language engagement, motivation, and quality of learning experience? (You can write the back of this paper)

### BIODATA

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