

ENGLISH FOR ORAL PRESENTATION SKILLS FOR FINAL YEAR UNDERGRADUATES: AN ESP TEACHING PERSPECTIVE

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Abstract. *The purpose of this paper is to highlight the importance of oral presentation skills/public speaking for fresh graduates of all disciplines and emphasize developing online materials to cater the needs of the students on a large scale worldwide using the platform of technology in the field of English language teaching. An ESP course has been developed online in this study in the form of a blog called “English for Oral Presentation Skills” providing course view and outline, course objectives, learning outcomes and activities to be conducted by the teacher. The focus of this study is to provide students with language used in different stages of the presentation which include language for introduction, transitional language, language for conclusion and the language for Q & A session. It also includes general language implications to be considered while teaching English for oral presentation skills. It also highlights the information on different types of presentations and the structure of presentations. The overall course includes the assessment criteria as well, in order to make sure whether the students are able to present with proper language skills. Hence, this study is a successful attempt in providing large audience with the skills of public speaking using technology in language teaching.*

Key words: *ESP, oral, presentation, perspective, skills*

1. INTRODUCTION

Communication is a dynamic interactive process involving effective transmission of facts, ideas, thoughts, feelings and values. According to Rahman (2010, p.2), “With the globalization, calls have been made for graduates to be proficient in oral communication skills so that they can function effectively in the academic and professional setting.” He explains that communication is a dynamic interactive process that involves the effective transmission of facts, ideas, thoughts, feelings and values. There are several elements of oral communication of which one needs to be aware in order to learn how to use them to his/her advantage. Apart from the language used for communication, there are several other elements which the speaker should learn to communicate effectively. Mojibur (2010, p.3) mentioned those skills as “The Skills are *eye contact, body language, style, understanding the audience, adapting to the audience, active and reflexive listening, politeness, precision, conciseness, etc.*”

The focus of study is on *oral presentation skills*, specifically as it comes under the umbrella of oral communication skills which is also being highlighted by Mojibur (2010, p.2) who said that “Oral communication covers a wide area, ranging from formal presentations to participation in teams and meetings”. He clearly says that formal presentations or participation in any meetings in an official or academic setting requires effective communication skills which highlight the importance of language. The language is the most important tool for communication, but more important is knowing how to use the language effectively. The materials for *oral presentation skills* focus mainly on the *language for introduction, transitional language and language for conclusion* which will make clear for the students to know *how* to use the language even if they only *know* the language. It gives an insight to the important expressions and phrases to be used during different stages of the presentation whether presenting in conferences in front of large audience or in a meeting room in front of executives which highlights the point by Mojibur (2010, p.2) that “it is not passive and does not just happen; we actively and consciously engage in communication in order to develop information and understanding required for effective group functioning.”

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Framework of Materials and Methods in ELT, according to Macdonough & Shaw (1993), starts from the view that materials and methods for ELT cannot be seen in isolation but are embedded with the specific needs of the learners. This is represented in the figure below:

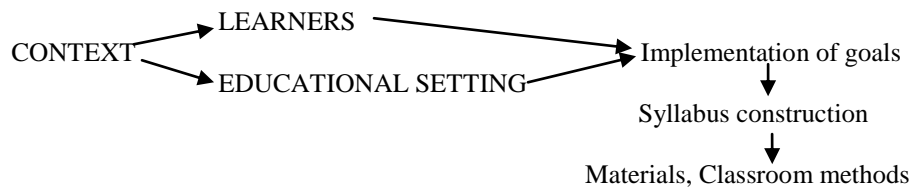


Fig. 1 Adopted from Materials and Methods in ELT, 1993, p. 5

As shown in Fig. 1 above, for effective materials and classroom methods an important step for implementing the goals is ‘syllabus construction’. Without syllabus construction, the materials could not be designed. Therefore, materials for *Oral presentation skills* also include important information about presentations which students should know about in order to understand the materials and the skills to acquire. Richards and Rodgers (1986) have also proposed a useful framework for the comparison of language teaching methods which illustrates the place of the syllabus in program planning. In Richards’ words (1985, p.11), “Planning a successful language program involves consideration of factors that go beyond mere content and presentation of teaching materials”.

3. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

A skill is the ability to engage in specific behaviors including overt behavior and cognitive activities to accomplish specific tasks. Skills are learned from training and experience (Jeanne D. Maes, Teresa G. Weldy, Marjorie L. Icenogle, 1997, p.67-68). “Soft skills refer to the cluster of personality traits, social graces, facility with language, personal habits, friendliness, and optimism that mark people to varying degrees”, Mintzberg (1973). He proposed ten managerial roles, five of which clearly represent communication capabilities: liaison, monitor, disseminator, spokesperson and negotiator. Alexander, Jernigan and Henwood (1991) suggested that the five roles identified by Mintzberg are dependent on the communication skills. Studies show that the acquisition of graduates with suitably strong communication skills represents a particular and ongoing concern to accountancy employers (Courtis & Zaid, 2002; McLaren, 1990; Zaid & Abraham, 1994). The industry of finance and accounting is huge and in order to stand out from others, the companies need employees with strong communication skills who are able to represent their company on any educational and functional ground in the most impressive and effective way.

Teaching communication in the disciplines, however, has to acknowledge the difficulty in transferring those skills from the classroom to the workplace: Thomas (1995) criticizes the real-world applicability of the texts and approaches used to teach business communication in higher education; similarly, D’Aloisio (2006) argues for the need to relate university learning to the specific communication competencies required in corporate work settings. Halliday (1978, p. 169) explains, communication is more than merely an exchange of words between parties; it is a “sociological encounter” (Halliday, 1978, p.139), and through exchange of meanings in the communication process, social reality is “created, maintained and modified” (Halliday, p. 169).

4. MATERIALS DESIGN FOR SPEAKING SKILLS

The material developed for oral presentation skills focuses on speaking skills for the students whose primary focus is on tasks which are interactive and that are mediated and performed through language and sharing information by the students. The tasks are designed in such a way so as to give the students opportunity to use the language actively which will help them in gaining confidence for speaking publicly. Also highlighted by Macdonough & Shaw (1993, p.76) is that in recent teaching materials a lot of attention has been paid to designing activities which focus on tasks that are mediated through language or involve the negotiation and sharing of information by the participants. They commented that the idea behind this thinking is that learners should be provided with the opportunity to actively use the language that they know in meaningful activities.

The *current trends*, explained by Macdonough and Shaw (1993), in materials and methods for English language teaching traces the sources and development of the trends. The following are the main trends or themes that have recurred with reference to classroom context:

- a. There has been a significant shift towards more communicative views of both language and behavior.
- b. Incorporation of analytic framework into teaching materials which includes sentence grammar, paragraph structure and longer texts.

- c. The acceptance and adoption of a variety of classroom management techniques designed to allow for more realistic practice of language in use.
- d. Syllabuses and materials are based on several organizing principles linked together in quite complex ways.
- e. Research into the characteristics of language skills has contributed to gradual changes in the materials used for teaching reading and listening as well as writing and speaking skills.
- f. Methodology has also been affected by increased understanding of differences in learning styles. (p. 293-294)

As the current trends highlight that there has been a significant shift to communicative views of both language and behavior, it gives the purpose to choose *Oral presentation skills* which focuses on the communication skills for the students. The current trends to material design are incorporated in this material as it focuses on more realistic practice in language use than the traditional one. The material and syllabus developed are based on organizing principles of communication skills and presentation skills are taken in to consideration which are important to individual success, business success, time management, leadership, public image and opinion. These skills will help the students to develop presentation skills and help them with their career in future.

4.1. Characteristics of language used

Brown and Yule (1983, p.13) have shown that spoken communications are essentially ‘transactional’ or ‘interactional’, where ‘transactional’ is said to be that which contains factual or propositional information and spoken language is used to establish and maintain social roles. This is termed interactional communication, the language focused in the material is also transactional and interactive. The language used in the material will help the non-natives who need to learn and practice the language for interactive communication. As Brown and Yule also highlighted that: “it is a skill which non-native speakers may need to learn and practice at length.” As Brown and Yule (1983, p.25) examined the various forms of language which are most frequently used by speakers of the language which are incomplete sentences, very little subordination (subordinate clauses etc.), very few passives, not many explicit logical connectors (moreover, however), topic comment structure, replacing/refining expressions, frequent reference to things outside the “text”, the use of generalized vocabulary, repetition of the same syntactic form, the use of pauses and fillers. The material developed intends to minimize the use of such forms and reinforce the use of logical connectors, subordinate clauses, use of pauses and fillers, use of more active expressions than passive expressions, use of different syntactic forms for different stages in the presentation which are essential for effective and good presentation.

5. INSIGHT INTO THE MATERIAL

5.1. Course view

English for Oral Presentation Skills is an ESP online course for which the materials are designed to cater for the needs of the students who are currently in the final year of their under graduation and are on the verge of getting graduated. They mostly belong to upper intermediate and advanced level.

Table 1 Course view

Overall course view	
Students	Final year undergraduate students of all disciplines
Level	University level; Upper intermediate/Advanced
Skill	Oral communication/presentation skills
Duration	3 hours

The material is developed for the final year undergraduate students by keeping in consideration that these students will have to give presentations during their final year in the university and later at their work place. Companies require effective communication skills, especially presentation skills, where candidates are required to present their plan for the development for the company or for marketing purpose and so on.

Hence, the material will help the students in two ways:

1. Adding information on language aspect to their previous knowledge to speaking/presentation skills.
2. Give a full understanding of Oral Presentation Skills.

5.2. Course objectives

Planning for teaching requires a careful consideration of objectives. Dulcie Abraham (1987) explained that one of the categories for English language teaching is:

Course objective: It specifies the goals of a course and is usually obtained in the English language syllabus for a particular level. (p.13-14)

Table 2 Course objectives

Trait	Verbal skills
One hour	Objective: <i>Developing verbal skills to start a presentation.</i> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To know the structure of the presentation and use the language accordingly. 2. Adopting the sub-skills under introduction. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Addressing the audience b. Introduce yourself c. Introduce your topic d. Techniques for attention grabbing introduction
One hour	Objective: <i>Developing language skills between the introduction & conclusion</i> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Transitional Language or signposting 2. Key points of the main body
One hour	Objective: <i>Developing language skills for conclusion and questions and answers session</i> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Language of conclusion 2. Handling questions/Survival Language

5.3. Learning outcomes

Learning objectives are clear statements that describe the competences that students should possess upon completion of a course (Simon and Taylor, 2009; Anderson et al., 2001; Harder, 2002; Kennedy et al., 2006). According to Hoodless (1998), “The material made available to learners in any learning environment should also be used to determine what kind of learning outcomes are set and how they are assessed.” (Cited in Moussouri, 2002, p.7) The learning outcomes are shown in Table 3.

Table 3 Learning outcomes

Learning outcomes	
LO 1	The students will be able to choose the right phrases and expressions to begin the presentation, i.e. make an effective introduction.
LO 2	The students will be able to use transitional language and get aware of the key points between introduction and conclusion.
LO 3	The students will be able to use language of conclusion and the survival language.

5.4. Insight into the blog

Social Media Language Learning (SMLL) links interactive social media channels to language learning which enables students to develop communication and language skills. The material produced stems from the above idea of social media language learning (SMLL) in the form of blog. Steven Thorne (2009) has reported to observe that blogs used within language classrooms produce encouraging written production. This idea is also to encourage the students to share their views which may be in the form of additional information to the topic or doubt. “A blog is an online platform that people can use to express issues related to their lives and different viewpoints they may have. Blogs help with language learning. Blogs help to develop vocabulary, increase reading speed, develop proper use of grammar and enhanced reading comprehension.” (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Social_Media_Language_Learning#cite_note-murray-2). The blog titled “Oral Presentation Skills” includes information about types of presentation, presentation structures, language for different stages (introduction, transitional or signposting and language for conclusion), the language for question and answer session and the language implications alongside attached with the materials for practicing and acquiring presentation skills which are divided into 7 tabs in a navigation/menu bar which lead to different pages where each page includes information and content of the topic. Lauren, a blog designer, highlights that adding pages (a navigation bar or menu bar) is a great way to organize your blog to make important information easily accessible to your readers. These navigation bars are customized to give your blog a unique and professional look. Hyperlinks within the texts lead to different pages, videos and pictures are uploaded related to the context of the topic for each page. According to Wright (1976, p.1) many media and many styles of visual presentation are useful to the language learner. A recent large-scale survey by Canning-Wilson (2000) reveals that students like learning language through the use of video, which is often used to mean quite different things in language teaching. A hyper polyglot, Richard Simcott, says: “I would tend to find a book for a language that works for me and then I would try to find additional materials that interest me, like TV, DVDs, music and websites.” Michael Erard (2012) studied hyper-polyglots (multi-lingual speakers) in his

book *Babel No More*, saying they use a variety of methods for language pedagogy. He explains: “They use a mix, with a focus on accomplishing tasks, whether it’s communicative tasks or translation tasks.” Hence, the exercises developed also contain different sets of videos and pictures to perform that activity effectively. Being a rich and valuable resource, video is well-liked by both students and teachers (Hemei, 1997, p.45). Also, River (1981, p.399) claims that it clearly contributes to the understanding of another culture by providing vicarious contact with speakers of the language, through both audio and visual means. The videos are totally related and authentic as they are taken from YouTube, uploaded by well-known institutions like Harvard, Cambridge, presentationexpressions.com, which contain authentic information on language input and application of the language in presentation skills which may help them to perform better. “A great advantage of video is that it provides authentic language input as movies and TV programs are made for native speakers, so in that sense video provides authentic language input”, (Katchen, 2002, p.68). The activities or materials provided in the blog are in the form of social interactive activities which pays more attention in maintaining and establishing social relationships, according to Littlewood (1981). He makes a distinction between what he calls ‘functional communicative activities’ (which include problem solving, questionnaires and describe and draw activities), and ‘social interaction activities’ (such as stimulations and role plays) which pays more attention in maintaining and establishing the social relationships. (p. 162-168) The material aims to help the students to use the skill - ‘skill using’ according to Rivers and Temperley (1978). This shows the authenticity of the material as there are different levels of authenticity in the materials depending on whether they are concerned with what Rivers and Temperley (1978, p.4) call ‘skill getting’ or ‘skill using’. The address of the blog is <http://languageskillsoralprsn.blogspot.com/>.

5.4.1. Technical limitations

The blog created has some technical limitations. They are as follows:

1. The terms ‘previous lesson’ and ‘next lesson’ could not be aligned in the same line, but are put up in different lines.
2. The drop down menu under language skills could not be lined or defined clearly as the arrangement of java script allows this as maximum clarity of the menus.

5.5. Assessment

The student’s assessment will be done according to the rubric which is being adopted and adapted from Oral communication skills rubric, Winona State University. They created an oral communication skills rubric whose intended outcome is to observe whether the student will use clear and concise communication in oral form. The language area was inserted as a change, since the focus is on language expressions used.

Rationale for the rubric: This rubric is chosen for the assessment because it clearly shows the criteria the students need to fulfill and will be assessed on. This will give a clear assessment of where the student actually stands in delivering presentations using proper language expressions and phrases. It also makes easier for the teachers to assess the students and help them to identify their problem area.

Table 4 Assessment criteria

Performance area	Rating=4	Rating=3	Rating=2	Rating=1	Score
Organization	Presenter follows Logical sequence and provides explanations/elaboration.	Presenter follows logical sequence, but fails to elaborate.	Presenter does not follow logical sequence (jumps around in presentation)	There is no logical sequence of information.	
Language	Presenter has used all the expressions and correct phrases to introduce himself, start the presentation, used transitional expressions and concluded perfectly.	Presenter starts with good introductory expressions, tries to use transitional expressions and uses some conclusive expressions.	Presenter mixes up the expressions and uses repetitive expressions in all stages. Skips transitional expressions and conclude by 'thank you'.	Presenter do not use any language expressions and focuses only on the content. Reads the content in hurry in order to finish.	
Delivery	Presenter speaks clearly and loud enough for all in audience to hear, makes no grammatical errors, and pronounces all terms correctly and precisely.	Presenter speaks clearly and loud enough to be heard by most in audience, makes relatively few grammatical errors, and pronounces most terms correctly.	Presenter's voice is relatively clear, but too low to be heard by those in the back of the room. Presenter makes several major grammatical errors, and mispronounces some terms.	Presenter mumbles, mispronounces terms, and makes serious and persistent grammatical errors throughout presentation. Presenter speaks too quietly to be heard by many in audience.	
					Total=

6. CONCLUSION

The flow of the process is being considered in developing the material which shows that the students should have speaking skills which can help them to develop oral presentation skills. The pre-conceived knowledge of speaking skills will help the students to adopt the expressions for oral presentation skills and enable them to use appropriate words to explain procedures and actions in presentation. To this knowledge, the ability to use worded phrases in simple and continuous tenses will be added which will take them to the next step where the students are able to use connectors and transitional language and show the relationship between the events. Consequently, the student will be able to present with the use of correct language expressions in any given situation. Any learning takes place through a process and cannot be directly acquired where the background or the previous knowledge related to the specific skill plays an important role. Fig. 2 below shows the hierarchy or the flow of process which helps the students to learn step by step.

Therefore, the aim for developing the material is to help students to deliver effective presentations using the correct language expressions and phrases given any situation, which may be a conference, an official meeting, academic purpose or even in the class.

The Figure below explains the learning hierarchy of oral presentation language skills.

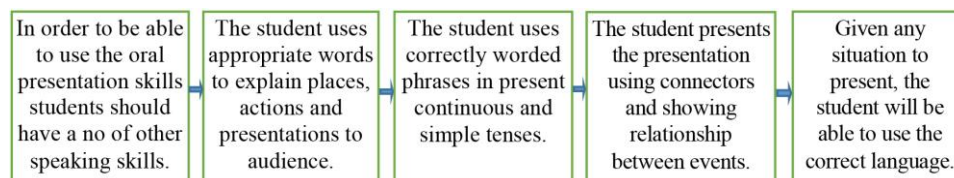


Fig. 2 Hierarchy of speaking skills
(Adapted from Dulcie Abraham (1987, p.107))

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