

## Measuring the Effectiveness of Classroom Presentations and their Impact on Students' Motivation for Fluent Speaking Performance

### Abstract:

Speaking is often believed to be the most paramount language skill. Thus, teachers of Oral Expression in the different universities work very hard to enhance their students' self-expression. One of the most prevailing ways of doing so is via oral presentations. This research paper investigates the influence of this classroom strategy on students' motivation for the course of Oral Expression and its effectiveness in developing their speaking skill. The results of this study, which was conducted on 210 second year students of English in the university of El-Chahid Hamma Lakhdar in El-Oued, and 40 teachers of Oral Expression from different Algerian universities, come to validate the hypotheses we set at its beginning: (a) oral presentations, which are being currently done in most Algerian universities, do not respect the common standards of public speaking and oral presentations. Also, (b) these oral presentations have a demotivating impact on students' desire to attend and participate in the Oral Expression sessions. Besides, (c) they do not improve students' speaking skill significantly. Last, (d) if students were taught an innovative course of oral expression sessions following the Communicative Approach to language teaching; then their motivation to the subject would increase significantly and their speaking skill would improve in general.

**Key Words:** speaking, public speaking, oral expression, oral presentations, motivation.

**ZELLOUMA Ahmed**

Faculty of Letters and Languages  
Department of Foreign Languages  
University of Mentouri  
Constantine

### Introduction :

**Language** is the most significant means of communication in human life. Without language, life would be next to impossible. That is to say, how communication - starting from its simplest forms and ending with its most sophisticated ones - in general would exist if we had no language to help us accomplish these different linguistic tasks? One tends to believe that various everyday tasks would be extremely difficult without this highly sophisticated and archaic means of communication called language.

### ملخص:

غالبا ما يعتقد أن الكلام هو أكثر المهارات اللغوية أهمية. ولهذا فإن معلمي التعبير الشفهي في الجامعات المختلفة يعملون بجد على تعزيز مهارة طلبتهم للتعبير عن ذاتهم. واحدة من أكثر السبل انتشارا للسعي في تحقيق ذلك هي تقديم العروض الشفهية. تستقصى هذه الورقة البحثية تأثير هذه الاستراتيجية على دافع الطلاب في حصص التعبير الشفهي وفعاليتها في تطوير مهاراتهم الكلامية. تأتي نتائج هذه الدراسة التي أجريت على 105 من طلاب السنة الثانية لغة الإنجليزية في جامعة الشهيد حمه لخضر بالوادي و40 من معلمي التعبير الشفهي من الجامعات الجزائرية المختلفة لتؤكد صحة الفرضيات التي وضعناها في بدايتها: (أ) العروض الشفهية التي يتم تطبيقها حاليا في أغلب الجامعات الجزائرية لا تحترم المعايير العامة للخطابة والعروض الشفهية. أيضا (ب) هذه العروض الشفهية لها تأثير مثبط على رغبة الطلاب لحضور حصص التعبير الشفهي والمشاركة فيها كما أنها (ج) لا تحسن من مهارة الكلام لديهم بشكل كبير. أخيرا (د) لو درس الطلبة مقرر من حصص التعبير الشفهي تبعا للنظرية التواصلية للغة لارتفع دافعهم في حصص التعبير الشفهي وتحسنت مهاراتهم الكلامية عموما.

**كلمات مفتاحية:** كلام، الخطابة العامة، تعبير شفهي، عرض شفهي، دافع.

In order to effectively communicate using any language, one has to make sure they master the four known language skills which shape most of our human communicative events: speaking, listening, writing and reading. Speaking, which is often believed to be the most paramount productive skill in everyday language, is also believed to be the most difficult to learn and the hardest to teach as well. Unlike writing where linguistic competence is primarily needed, in speaking, one must have a high level of linguistic competence such as to possess sufficient lexis and accurate grammar. Besides, we also need to fully understand the notion of communicative competence so as to be able to use language both fluently and appropriately.

In order to achieve this objective, teachers of oral expression have designed and applied many classroom strategies to help their students learn and develop their speaking skill. Some of the most common strategies are group discussions, language games, dialogues, role-plays, and many others. Delivering oral presentations is one of the most, if not the most, prevailing strategy. Many Algerian teachers prefer to apply this particular activity with their students. However, we believe that this strategy has more drawbacks than benefits for students, especially on their motivation to take part in the Oral Expression sessions as well as on their speaking performance.

### **1. The Speaking Skill**

Throughout the history of language teaching approaches and methods, the centrality of speaking has changed radically from an item in a syllabus to a skill to be developed in its own right (Johnson & Johnson, 1998). At first, the speaking skill was "*invisible*" and received little conscious attention despite the fact that lessons were conducted orally (Dean, 2004: 126). Language teaching, then, had been concerned with writing and the study of written language because it was the language of literature and scholarship. The teaching of speaking, especially pronunciation, started to receive noticeable attention only after World War 2 (Patel & Jain, 2008) when speaking started to be finally recognized (Pachler & Gaffney, 2001). The lines yet to come discuss the place of the speaking skill throughout the history of language teaching approaches and methods, starting from the Grammar-Translation Method and ending with the Communicative Language Teaching Approach.

First, in the Grammar-Translation Method, reading and writing used to receive "*overwhelming*" importance (Bahatia, 2006: 20). The method focused primarily on the teaching of written texts, accuracy, grammar, vocabulary and translation, but it paid very little attention to speaking, listening and pronunciation (Richards & Rogers, 1986; Brown, 2000; Larsen-Freeman, 2000). For instance, speaking activities were often limited to first or second language sentences or texts, and sometimes, fluency and meaning-focused activities were completely excluded from the syllabus (Rogers, 2007). Then, the Direct Method was created. Its major aim was developing students'

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effective oral communication in the target language (Brown, 2000; Patel & Jain, 2008; Richards et al., 2002). Therefore, the speaking and listening skills were a priority (Rogova, 1975; Bahatia, 2006) and they were started with and worked on right from the beginning with special attention to correct pronunciation (Wilkins, 1990; Patel & Jain, 2008; Brown, 2000; Richards & Rodgers, 2001: 12, as cited in Hall, 2011) whereas writing and reading skills received a back seat and were delayed till after the speaking skill is acquired (Howatt, 2006; Richards et al., 2002). Similar to the Direct Method, the Audio-Lingual Method gave priority to speaking and listening instead of reading and writing (Rivers, 1964: 19-22, as cited in Richards & Rogers, 1986) and, again, it attached a great deal of importance and attention to correct pronunciation (Bygate, 2009: 15, as cited in Hall, 2011). It did so because language was essentially seen as aural-oral. Thus, listening and "*speech [...] [were] primary and [were believed to] constitute the very basis of language*" learning (Kumaravadivelu, 2003: 226).

Later on, the Oral Approach and its offshoot Situational Language Teaching method gave, once again, priority to the spoken form of language. The method encouraged language teachers to begin their teaching materials orally before presenting them in the written form. Situational Language Teaching differed from the Direct Method and Audio-Lingual Method in the sense that it gave equal attention to both accurate pronunciation and grammar, and it considered both of them as very essential in language learning (Richards & Rogers, 1986). After that, the Silent Way was created and which aim was to develop learners' oral/aural proficiency and near-native pronunciation and fluency for self-expression of thoughts and feelings in the target language. It is true that the four skills were worked on right from the beginning, because they were seen to reinforce one another and, hence, develop students' learning, but pronunciation was given the most of attention from the start (Larsen-Freeman, 2000). Then, Community Language Learning came into existence. The method aimed exclusively at developing learners' oral proficiency (Richards & Rogers, 1986). A group of learners were seen as a community who should interact with one another in order to accomplish a common goal. They were also expected to listen attentively, freely express their feelings of joy and frustration, and speak out their ideas and thoughts (Larsen-Freeman, 2000). In the Natural Approach and Total Physical Response, language was viewed as communication (Richards & Rogers, 1986) and its spoken form was prior to its written one (Larsen-Freeman, 2000). A Total Physical Response course, then, was designed for beginning learners so as to enable them to have an intelligible speaking proficiency with native speakers of the target language (Richards & Rogers, 1986). The spoken form of language was, indeed, prior to its written form, but learners should not be forced and not even encouraged to speak until they feel completely ready to do so (Brown, 2000). In a Suggestopedic

classroom, too, speaking and classroom interaction were considered essential. The teacher was advised to initiate interaction with the whole group as well as individual learners right from the start of the course. At first, learners respond to yes-no questions, but at more advanced levels, they can respond *"more appropriately and even initiate interaction themselves"* (Larsen-Freeman, 2000: 73).

In the Communicative Language Teaching approach, the speaking skill went back to take its privileged position, and more. The ultimate objective of the approach is to develop learners' communicative competence via involving them in real and meaningful communicative situations with one another, with the teacher and with users of the target language in order to promote and support language learning (as cited in Richards & Rogers, 1986). The teacher is required to activate and expose learners to the target language as much as possible which can be done, optimally, through initiating interaction with them and encouraging them to interact with one another (Lee & Van Patten, 2003 as cited in Benati, 2009.). Learners, on the other hand, are expected/encouraged to speak and express their ideas and opinions freely, negotiate meaning with one another, try to understand others and make themselves understood even when their knowledge of the target language is incomplete (Larsen-Freeman, 2000). Communicative Language Teaching places such high importance on the creation of communicative environment inside the classroom because it believes that doing as such helps learners build a bridge to use the language outside the walls of their classrooms (Patel & Jain, 2008).

## **2. Public Speaking and Oral Presentations**

Public speaking is the act, art, or process of making *"effective"* speeches in public, i.e. before an audience (The American Heritage, 1992: n.p.). It refers to both formal and informal contexts. In ancient times, the Latin term 'oratory' and Greek word 'rhetoric' which mean *"the art of persuasion, both in speech and writing"* were used to refer to the activity of public speaking (McArthur, 1992: 821). An oral presentation, however, is any type of prepared oral communication where one needs to speak about a given topic for some time before a group of people (Caplin, 2008). From these definitions, it might seem that public speaking is the same as oral presentations as long as they both involve the act of speaking in front of an audience. However, there are some major differences between the two. First, in public speaking, the audience are the public (i.e. everyone). In oral presentations, however, the audience are usually colleagues, partners, classmates, associates, bosses, customers, etc. In addition, in public speaking, the audience do not know the topic of the speech. That is why they come to listen to it. Nevertheless, in presentations, the topic is often known to the listeners. In addition, a public speech takes place in public in contrast to presentations that take place indoors (Caplin, 2008).

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Chivers and Shoolbred (2007) cited the following points as some of the most remarkable advantages of students' oral presentations:

- ❖ They enable learners to better use their body language, voice and visual aids.
- ❖ They prepare learners for the workplace and professional life: teaching, business, etc.
- ❖ They increase self-confidence to speak in front of an audience, and build a stronger personality.
- ❖ Oral presentations are an opportunity for learners to develop communication and presentation skills and knowledge at the same time.
- ❖ Group presentations are often motivating and enjoyable. So, many students claim to have enjoyed presenting and report feelings of pleasure and achievement.
- ❖ Some students can speak better than they write. Thus, they earn better marks in oral presentations than in written assignments due to their speaking skills.
- ❖ Many students prefer to work in groups rather than to work individually. Thus, teachers use presentations to develop teamwork and project management skills.
- ❖ Group presentations are an opportunity for learners to build a better social life by making new friends with classmates and creating a sense of belonging to a group.
- ❖ It has been shown that people remember information better from new or unusual sources. Therefore, many students are willing to learn and remember the content of their own presentations and those of their peers rather than their teacher or lecturer.

Despite these numerous advantages of oral presentations, Chivers and Shoolbred (2007) counted below a number of common problems and disadvantages which arise when working on an oral presentation:

- ❖ Many students feel anxious about speaking to a small group, let alone speaking to a large one.
- ❖ Many students cannot use visual aids skillfully and properly, especially computer-related aids.
- ❖ In group presentations, there are often conflicts about who is or are the decision maker(s) in the group.
- ❖ Often, students suffer from lack of ideas and information for their presentations, especially when presenting in large groups of four and above.
- ❖ Just as there are students who prefer to work in groups, there are many others (such as shy, anxious or embarrassed students) who enjoy individual work.

- ❖ It often happens that group presentations seem fragmented and disjointed due to students' different skills and presentation styles, absence of rehearsal, and other reasons.
- ❖ Some students can be over eager or greedy so that they want to take a huge and significant part(s) in a presentation and leave only little or unimportant parts for the other members.
- ❖ Many students learn only from the presentations they make but not from those of their peers. Therefore, they often complain that "*there is no point attending the other presentations!*" (p. 6)
- ❖ It often happens that one or two students in a group presentation find themselves doing all the work due to the other members' laziness. This makes group presentations more stressful than individual work.
- ❖ Most students avoid presentations because they have little knowledge about the topics to be presented. Sometimes, however, they find too much information that they get confused as what to include and what to leave out.
- ❖ They can demoralize and demotivate learners and make them feel let down by some irresponsible, unethical or difficult team members. These feelings of disappointment, anger and frustration tend to last long after the event is over. This is especially true when the presentation is marked and all members share the same mark.

### **3. Motivation in Language Learning**

Motivation is basic to everything we do. We need it in order to start anything, from the simplest actions and everyday habits like eating or playing to more sophisticated actions like working (Strongman, 2006). In learning contexts, generally speaking, it is believed and widely accepted that motivation is crucial for successful learning. In other words, in order to succeed at doing something, one must have the desire to do it. Without motivation, we are doomed to fail (Harmer, 2001). Stating the obvious, one cannot and will not learn unless he/she is motivated (Rogers, 2007). Therefore, it can be said that we need some degree of motivation to succeed at learning a language. According to Dörnyei (2005), motivation is one of the two most important factors determining language learning success (as cited in Hall, 2011).

Patel and Jain (2008) mentioned other points that make motivation of such high importance, which are that:

- ❖ It makes teaching and learning effective.
- ❖ It activates learners' creativity and innovation.
- ❖ It inspires students to "*prove*" their goals and objectives (p. 42).
- ❖ It creates a positive teaching/learning atmosphere in class.
- ❖ It encourages students' self-studies and autonomous learning.
- ❖ It provides learners with the necessary encouragement for learning.

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- ❖ It inspires learners to identify themselves, become active, regular and organized.

According to Harmer (2001), there are three ways the teacher can directly affect continuous participation. First, there is goal setting. Motivation is closely linked to goal achievement both in the short and long terms. Short-term goals are close to learners' day-to-day reality. These are set to be achieved in a short period of time, for example a couple days, few weeks or months. It is easier for learners to focus on accomplishing a goal by the end of the week rather than by the end of the year. Long-term goals, on the other hand, are set to be accomplished in extended periods of time. These may include passing an exam at the end of a course, future job or travel opportunities. Second, there is learning environment. Teachers can modify the physical setting and emotional atmosphere of their classes. Both of these can profoundly affect learners' initial and continuing motivation to learn. Learners' first impression of their classroom (attractive, clear and tidy) has been shown to have a positive impact on their motivation to learn, and vice versa. More importantly is the emotional atmosphere of the classroom. It is believed that teachers need to pay much attention to how they handle learners, especially while giving feedback. It must be always expressed in a supportive manner regardless of the learner's participation or answer. Third, there is learning activities, and this is a main point in this study. These activities need to be designed in a way which interests learners, and they need to be diversified so as to ensure the continuity of their interest. This also applies for the use of teaching materials and visual aids which can help arouse and engage more learners in a lesson.

### **4. The Study**

One of the most prevailing strategies used by Algerian teachers of Oral Expression in teaching speaking is oral presentations. It is believed that such a technique prepares students to effectively and fluently communicate in real-life contexts. It is thought that it equips students with the necessary skills and techniques to successfully perform in any oral intercourse. Nevertheless, on the basis of our five-year, or so, learning experience in the university, five-year teaching experience and from our deep and critical observation of what has long been taking place in different educational institutions, one tends to form a solid belief that this strategy is not functioning well, if at all, especially when it comes to students' motivation. Students clearly seem to lose, gradually, their motivation and interest in the subject of Oral Expression throughout the period of their studies. Also, it is believed that this practice does not enhance their speaking performance. This happens in an obvious manner in classes where oral presentations are the sole or most frequently practiced activity.

#### 4.1. Research Methodology

Based on the observations cited above, one is aiming through this research at investigating if the oral presentations being practiced respect the common standards of public speaking. Moreover, this study aims at measuring the influence of oral presentations on students' motivation to the subject of Oral Expression, and also measuring the effectiveness of this classroom strategy in developing students' speaking skill. Besides, it attempts to test the effectiveness of an alternative course in achieving the same two objectives: motivating students and developing their speaking skill. In this study, one attempts to answer four questions: (a) do the oral presentations, which are currently being practiced, respect the common standards of public speaking? (b) To which extent do they motivate students' towards the subject of Oral Expression? (c) Do these presentations actually improve their speaking skill?(d) Would teaching students an innovative oral expression course following the Communicative Approach further increase students' motivation to the subject of oral expression? In addition, (e) would it improve their speaking skill in general and enhance their fluency in particular? In the light of the questions cited here, we hypothesize that (a) oral presentations, which are being currently done in most Algerian universities, do not respect the standards of public speaking and oral presentations. Also, (b) oral presentations, which are being currently done in most Algerian universities, have a negative impact on students' motivation to the subject of Oral Expression, and that (c) they do not improve their speaking skill. However, (d) if students were taught an innovative course of oral expression sessions following the Communicative Approach to language teaching; then their motivation to the subject would increase significantly, and their speaking skill would improve in general.

A questionnaire was submitted to 40 teachers who currently teach or once taught Oral Expression in 10 Algerian universities during the academic year 2016-2017. This research tool aims at uncovering some facts as how those teachers apply and deal with their students' oral presentations. Teachers' questionnaire consists of ten (10) questions. Questions of personal information were not used because they have no value in this investigation. Question one aims at knowing the degree of effectiveness of some classroom speaking activities in developing students' speaking abilities. The second question is used to figure out the frequency of application of those activities in the oral expression sessions. Question three tries to find out the amount of time teachers devote to oral presentations. The fourth question tries to know teachers' beliefs concerning the sufficiency of that amount of time in developing students' speaking skill. In the fifth question, teachers state their opinions regarding the effectiveness of oral presentations in improving students' speaking skill. In the sixth question, teachers say if their students use public speaking techniques (body language, voice and visual aids) properly on the stage. In the seventh



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question, they declare whether or not they provide their students with information or training about the necessary techniques to present on the stage. In the eighth question, teachers state what they think could be the influence of an alternative course of speaking activities on students' speaking skill. In the last two questions, teachers first state how motivated students are in a session which uses oral presentations only, then they answer the same question about the sessions where other speaking activities are applied.

There were 210 students studying in second year in the department of English in Hamma Lakhdar University, South-east Algeria in the academy year 2017-2018. We have tested all of them, but we have distributed a questionnaire to only a half of them: the experimental group. The two main reasons for choosing this level is that these students have already studied Oral Expression in their first year. In addition, most of them have declared, in advance, that they had practiced oral presentations in that subject. This questionnaire aims at obtaining some information concerning oral presentations but from learners' angle this time. Students' questionnaire consists of twelve (12) questions. Question one is asked to know students' favorite classroom speaking activity. Question two aims at knowing which of those activities is the most frequently applied in the Oral Expression sessions. The third question is asked to know whether or not the routine of oral presentations cause students' to feel bored during the sessions. Question four intends to find out how much time students get to present on stage per year. In question five, students express what they think of that amount of time in terms of its sufficiency in developing their speaking skill. The sixth question intends to find out whether or not students like to work in group presentations, and to which extent. In the seventh question, students are required to mention which problems they face when working in group presentations. Then, in the eighth question, they state how those problems affect their motivation for oral presentations. In the ninth question, students rank the level of interest they have for oral presentations as a classroom activity in general. In the tenth question, students mention if they prefer to practice other activities instead of oral presentations. In the last two questions, students state how they find their motivation and speaking skill after the alternative course was applied.

A pre-test was used to evaluate all students' speaking skill before the application of the two courses which lasted for an academic year, 25 sessions to be exact. In the control group sessions, only oral presentations were practiced. The experimental group, however, was subjected to an intermediate phase where the suggested course was applied. Then, a post-test was used to evaluate, again, their speaking performance after the courses. Results of the control group were compared to that of the experimental group to see which method made a significant difference in the level of students' speaking skill.

## 4.2. Analysis and Interpretation of the Results

### 4.2.1. The Teachers' Questionnaire

In the first question, it was found that group discussions, language games and dialogues (30%, 23% and 25% respectively) are believed to be the most effective classroom activities in improving learners' speaking skill. Nevertheless, role-plays and oral presentations are the least effective strategies to achieve that goal (05% and 13% respectively). The reason behind such order can be due to the fact that the first three activities often involve students in spontaneous production of language, whereas role-plays and oral presentations demand the repetition of already prepared and memorized utterances.

In the second question, however, results indicate that the three most effective speaking activities, according to teachers' belief, are in fact the least applied ones in their classrooms (12.5%, 07.5% and 12.5% respectively). In contrast, it is found that the least fruitful ones (role-plays and oral presentations) are the most frequently practiced (30% and 32.5% respectively). We believe the reason behind this paradoxical situation is due to the extreme difficulty of application of group discussions, language games, dialogues and similar activities with large groups like the ones often found in the Algerian universities, especially that these activities often require a small number of students in each group. Therefore, teachers find it next to impossible to apply and perfectly manage all groups in the classroom. However, activities like role-plays and oral presentations are much easier to handle on the part of the teacher as they can involve up to five or six members all performing together. Besides, we believe that these activities require less preparation by the teacher, and this is why many teachers prefer to avoid the problems and exhaustion found in the first group of activities and go for the second group instead.

The third question results show that oral presentations are the number one speaking activity in the oral expression sessions as it gets the lion's share of the course's time. This is what the collected data show. More than a half of the teachers (52.5%) devote a half of their sessions for this activity, and a quarter of them (25%) devote most of the course for it. Besides, 10% of teachers use only oral presentations with no other substitute or companion practice. However, only a minority of teachers (12.5%) use oral presentation for little time. Therefore, it is safe to say that oral presentations are indeed the most prevailing activity in the speaking classes.

In the fourth question, only one out of the forty teachers thinks oral presentations provide enough time for students to work on and develop their speaking skill. Third of the teachers (33%) believe it is not really a sufficient amount of time, while the rest vast majority 65% believe it is not enough at all. Therefore, it can be said that most teachers are on the same page with us concerning this issue.

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In fact, the fifth question is indeed the most important and sensitive one as it directly asks about the usefulness and functionality of this classroom practice in achieving a common objective among all teachers of oral expression: developing students' speaking skill. However, results come to show some rather negative information. Very few teachers (10%) believe in the complete use of this strategy in enhancing students' speaking abilities. Also, a half of them have doubts and said that this form of public speaking *somewhat* helps achieve the goal. The last group of teachers (40%) were sure to say that this strategy is *not effective* and it does not help students work on and develop their speaking skill. Therefore, it can be said that, according to most teachers' opinions which are based on experience, oral presentations are a classroom practice that does not improve students' speaking skill to the desired level. In best cases, it enhances it only to a very limited extent.

Results of the sixth question show that what is found a natural instinct or skill for some people is found difficult to use for some others. In the sixth question, it is found that only very few students (07%) use their body language effectively as well as visual aids properly in their speeches. However, the vast majority of them seem to face varying degrees of problems and obstacles with that. A percentage of 18% of them fail completely to use their facial expressions, gestures and aids to deliver a decent presentation. The other 75% are said to succeed only to a *somewhat* limited extent.

The answers to the seventh questions explain why so many students fail to use their body language and visual aids properly and effectively. The reason is that 75% of teachers do not teach nor do they train students on that. Also, the ones who said they do, have crossed the verb train and replaced it with *advise* instead. Therefore, we strongly believe that telling students verbally what is supposed to happen is not the best thing to do as most of them fail to perform well. Instead, they must be trained on how to perform on the stage.

Applying other speaking activities instead of oral presentations would improve students' speaking skill, the vast majority of teachers (90%) believe so. However, the results show that only very few teachers (10%) are uncertain of the potential effectiveness of the alternative activities. The reason of these results is believed to be due to the fact that teachers see the application of different activities would help students develop their speaking abilities, but the general conditions found in the university classrooms (especially the number of students and the absence of proper means) make it very hard to practice anything rather than oral presentations as they are the easiest thing to do.

When it comes to students' motivation during a course of oral expression sessions that exclusively applies oral presentations, only very few teachers (07.5%) find their students highly motivated to attend, present and participate. However, the great majority of teachers (62.5%) see a limited extent of

motivation in students to do so. Besides, about a third of teachers (30%) see that this strategy does not arouse their students' desire to do any of the above.

In the last question, the results have come in opposite direction to those of the previous one. There is a minority of teachers (02.5%) who find their students demotivated towards alternative speaking activities. Besides, there are many teachers (42.5%) who generally notice a slight amount of motivation among their students while practicing those activities. However, more than a half of the teachers (55%) observe a high level of motivation among students when they change from oral presentations to different speaking activities.

#### **4.2.2. The Students' Questionnaire**

In the first question, results show that oral presentations (08%) and group discussions (13%) are the least preferable classroom activities. The reason is believed to be due to the fact that students spent most, if not all, of the first year oral expression sessions delivering presentations which are usually followed by whole group discussions. Also, it can be because students found little or no improvement in their speaking skill while and after practicing them.

In their answers to the second question, students' least favorite speaking activity (oral presentations) was the most frequently practiced one previously, indeed. About two thirds of the students (62%) said that. In contrast, their most preferable activities (role-plays, dialogues and language games) were practiced by small minorities 15%, 07% and 11% respectively. These results, too, are in fact consistent with teachers' answers to the same question. Teachers have said that they devote either all, most or at least a half of the course for oral presentations.

In the third question, only a small minority of students (11%) are highly motivated to attend a number of continuous presentations without feeling demotivated or bored. However, a larger number of students (38%) are only *somewhat* motivated to attend such sessions, and approximately a half of the students (51%) said that attending several presentation does make them loose interest in the session, indeed.

Students' answers to the fourth question show that throughout an entire academic year, about a half of the students (45%) got less than 15 minutes of presentation time. Besides, throughout the same period, more than a third of the students (35%) presented for less than a half of an hour. The longest period is one hour per year, and it was presented by only 02% of students. In short, the longer the duration is, the less students to present that duration are, and vice versa.

Less than a quarter of students (20%) think that the amount of time they go on stage to deliver their speeches is enough to develop their speaking abilities. Nevertheless, similar to teachers' opinions, many students believe that that duration is not really sufficient to enhance their speaking skill to the desired level. Also, more than a half of the students (53%) find those 15 minutes or so

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not adequate at all to make a difference, a positive one, in the way they speak. Therefore, it can be fairly said that the general opinion of both teachers and students is that the amount of time oral presentations provide is not enough to enhance students' speaking skill.

Question six reveals another negative impact of oral presentations on students' motivation. Only few students (17%) like to work in groups so as to prepare and deliver presentations. However, many students (42%) only *somewhat* like the idea. That is, they would rather not engage in such a group work activity if they had the choice. A similar percentage of students (41%) completely dislike this type of cooperative work. The reasons for these results lie in the answers to the questions yet to come.

In the process of working on and delivering oral presentations, students encounter many problems. The most common problem is anxiety. The great majority of students (76%) suffer from stress before and during their presentations. The second main issue students have is with time management. Here, more than a half of students (56%) find little time for proper preparation of a decent speech. Also, almost an equal number of students (54%) have problems with resources. They find themselves either desperate for some information or drowned in too much of it. Among the other common problems are: dealing with difficult members, feeling uncomfortable working in groups; finding oneself doing most or all the work, having conflicts about who is/are the leader(s) of the group, and having problems with using visual aids.

Question number eight uncovers the consequences of all those problems on students' motivation to prepare and present again. Here, a logical consequence of the problems discussed above is to have a negative influence on students' motivation towards standing on the stage. About a half of the students (49%) felt demotivated after going through all or some of those obstacles so as to deliver their oral presentations. Also, a large number of students, about a third (29%), said that these problems did not affect them. But this does not necessarily mean that their motivation was high in the first place. Perhaps they had a negative attitude about presentations already. The last group of students are a small number of students (22%) who are determined learners and eager to overcome all obstacles in order to fulfil their objectives. These students felt motivated even after going through those problems to deliver their presentations and perhaps they wanted to do it again too.

In the ninth question, we tried to summarize some of what is discussed above and make students evaluate their experience with oral presentations, especially how motivating they find them. Here, the results obtained are alarming. Only very few students (09%) find oral presentations a source of a great deal of motivation to attend the speaking class. Also, a small number of students (20%) are *very much* motivated to take part in the oral expression session because of this activity. However, about a third of students (28%) find

a slight degree of motivation to attend and participate in the class because of it. Besides, almost a half of the students (43%) are *not motivated* and they feel no desire whatsoever to come witness other colleagues deliver their presentations.

In fact, we believe that these results are very much expected because of the different negative points this strategy has and which we have gone through in the discussion of the questions above, both in teachers' questionnaire and that of students. For instance, oral presentations are among the least effective speaking activities in developing students' speaking skill; yet it is the most frequently applied one. Besides, they provide very little time for individuals to go on the stage to present. Therefore, it is not enough time to help them develop their speaking skill. Not only that, but they also involve many problems during the preparation phase and presentation one. All these issues and more, logically, lead students to be demotivated towards the speaking session, especially a session that uses a great deal of presentations.

In the tenth question, when it comes to students' motivation towards oral presentation, the great majority of them (86%) prefer(ed) to practice alternative activities instead. We believe the main reasons are that they got bored with it, or that they found little use in developing their speaking skill that way. However, few students (14%) said that they did not wish to try other activities as they enjoyed the presentations they delivered or attended.

In the eleventh question, the great majority of students (77%) said that their motivation increased when they were subjected to the alternative course (yet to be described). Only some students (16%) said that the course did not affect their motivation, which does not necessarily mean it was low in the first place, and only 07% said that their motivation decreased.

The final question reveals that, similar to the previous question, only very few students (06%) see that their speaking abilities degraded after the course. Also, some students (20%) think that their level remained the same as before. However, most students (74%) believe that their speaking skill improved after they have been subjected to the intermediate phase. It is important to mention that students' self-assessment of their speaking skill after the course cannot be taken for granted. It can only be taken as a sign of development, but the actual statistics of the test will either confirm or deny this pre-assumption.

#### **4.2.3. Students' Test**

For the two groups: control and experimental, students' test took place in two parts: a pre-test and a post-test. First, the pre-test took place in the very first session with the students. They took turns to make the test which was in the form of one-to-one conversations with the teacher about everyday topics. For instance, students were asked to introduce themselves; talk about their favorite high school subjects or teachers; their most memorable moments in high school; what they expected university life to be like and how they found it; the best and worst things about studying English in the university, their

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future dreams and goals, and so on. Here, in the assessment of students' speech, we concentrated on five elements: vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation, fluency and appropriateness.

The post-test, on the other hand, took place at the end of the same academic year. Like in the pre-test, students took turns to answer some questions in the form of a short discussion with the teacher. Similarly, here too, students talked about some everyday topics like their families and friends; their favorite movies, movie stars, singers, actors, etc.; their happiest or saddest moments in life; their life-changing decisions; their greatest accomplishments and so on.

Firstly, concerning the control group (those who practiced oral presentations), statistically speaking, measuring the effectiveness of oral presentations in developing their speaking skill takes the form of a paired T-test or what is often called dependent T-test. In this, the average performance (i.e. the mean) of students in the pre-test is compared to that of the post-test to check whether or not there has been a significant improvement in subjects' performance to either confirm or deny the hypothesis.

- ❖ H0:  $\mu_d = 0$  (the null hypothesis: the mean of the pre-test is equal to the mean of post-test. That is, there is zero difference between the two means. In other words, there is no significant difference between students' performance in the pre-test and post-test).
- ❖ H1:  $\mu_d \neq 0$  (the alternative hypothesis: there is a significant difference between the two means.)

Subjects	Pre-test Mean	Post-test Mean	Difference (D)	D <sup>2</sup>
105	$\bar{X}_1 = 10.69$	$\bar{X}_2 = 10.71$	$D = 0.02 \sum$	$\sum D^2 = 831.5$

**Table:** Statistical Results of the Test of the Control Group

We have the T-test formula below which is used to calculate the  $T_{stat}$

$$T_{stat} = \frac{\sum D}{\sqrt{\frac{(N \sum D^2) - (\sum D)^2}{N-1}}}$$

By taking the values obtained and inputting them in the formula, we find:

$$T_{stat} = \frac{2}{\sqrt{\frac{(105 \times 831.5) - (2)^2}{105-1}}} = \frac{2}{\sqrt{\frac{87307.5-4}{104}}} = \frac{2}{\sqrt{\frac{87303.5}{104}}} = \frac{2}{\sqrt{839.4567307692}} = \frac{2}{28.9733796919} = 0.069$$

Based on the information provided, the chosen significance level  $\alpha = 0.01$ , and the degree of freedom is  $Df = 104$ . Hence, it is found that the critical value for this test  $T_{crit} = 2.626$

Since it is observed that  $T_{stat} = 0.069$  is very much less than  $T_{crit} = 2.626$ ; also using the P-value approach, we find that  $p = 0.945$  is much greater than  $\alpha = 0.01$ . Therefore, we do not reject  $H_0$  (The Null Hypothesis) but reject  $H_1$  (the Alternative Hypothesis) instead. Consequently, we shall conclude that there is no significant difference between the two means. In other words, oral presentations do not improve students' speaking skill to a significant level.

Secondly, regarding the experimental group students' performance in the test (pre-test and post-test) is presented in the form of statistics which are compared and then analyzed to either confirm or deny the following hypotheses we set in this experiment:

- ❖  $H_0$ :  $\mu_d = 0$  (the null hypothesis: the mean of the pre-test is equal to the mean of posttest. That is, there is no difference between the two means. In other words, there is no significant difference between students' performance in the pre-test and post-test and our suggested course has not improved students' speaking skill).
- ❖  $H_1$ :  $\mu_d \neq 0$  (the alternative hypothesis: there is a significant difference between the two means. That is, the suggested course has actually enhanced students' level).

Subjects	Pre-test Mean	Post-test Mean	Difference (D)	D <sup>2</sup>
105	$\bar{X}_1 = 13.19$	$\bar{X}_2 = 14.24$	<b>D = 111</b> $\Sigma$	<b><math>\Sigma D^2 = 965</math></b>

**Table:** Statistical Results of the Test of the Experimental Group

By substituting the elements in the table in the following formula, we

find:

$$T_{stat} = \frac{\Sigma D}{\sqrt{\frac{(N \Sigma D^2) - (\Sigma D)^2}{N-1}}} = \frac{111}{\sqrt{\frac{(105 \times 965) - (111)^2}{105-1}}} = \frac{111}{\sqrt{\frac{101325 - 12321}{104}}} = \frac{111}{\sqrt{\frac{89004}{104}}} = \frac{111}{\sqrt{855.8076923077}} = \frac{111}{29.2541910212} = 3.79$$

$T_{stat} = 3.79$

In our experiment, the critical value for  $\alpha = 0.01$  and a degree of freedom  $Df = 104$ . Therefore, we find  $T_{crit} = 2.626$ . Here, the observed value  $T_{stat} = 3.79$  is much greater than  $T_{crit} = 2.626$ . Also, following the P-value approach, we find that  $p = 0.000253$  very much smaller than  $\alpha = 0.01$ . Therefore, we reject  $H_0$  (The Null Hypothesis) and accept  $H_1$  (the Alternative hypothesis) instead. Consequently, we shall state that there is indeed a significant difference between the two means. In other words, the suggested course has remarkably enhanced students' speaking skill.

Last, in order to check whether or not the difference between means of the two groups (who have practiced oral presentations and those who practiced the suggested course) is statistically significant and that it has occurred because of random chance in sample selection, we conduct an independent samples T-test.



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Subject s	Treatment 1	Difference (X - $\bar{X}_1$ )	(X - $\bar{X}_1$ ) <sup>2</sup>	Treatment 2	Difference (X - $\bar{X}_2$ )	(X - $\bar{X}_2$ ) <sup>2</sup>
210	$\bar{X}_1 = 10.71$	$\sum D = 0.45$	$\sum D^2 = 768.93$	$\bar{X}_2 = 14.25$	$\sum D = -0.25$	$\sum D^2 = 841.56$
			3			6

**Table:** Statistical Results of the Control Group and Experimental Group in the Post-test

In order to find the value of  $T_{stat}$  and Df (Degree of freedom), we follow the procedures below:

$$S_x^2 = \frac{\sum(X - \bar{X})}{N-1} = \frac{768.93}{105-1} = \frac{768.93}{104} = 7.39$$

$$S_y^2 = \frac{\sum(Y - \bar{Y})}{N-1} = \frac{841.56}{105-1} = \frac{841.56}{104} = 8.09$$

By looking at the variances we got, we find them not exactly the same. However, we need to check if they are equal or unequal using the F-test.

$$F_{stat} = \frac{High S^2}{Low S^2} = \frac{8.09}{1047.39} = 1.094$$

Referring to the  $F_{crit}$ , we find that  $F_{stat} = 1.094$  is less than  $F_{crit} = 2.601$ . Therefore, our variances are considered equal, which leads us to set up our hypotheses  $H_0$  and  $H_1$

- ❖  $H_0: u_d = 0$  (the null hypothesis: the mean of the first group is equal to the mean of second one. In other words, there is no significant difference between the performance of students who practiced oral presentations and those who practiced the alternative suggested course.).
- ❖  $H_1: U_d \neq 0$  (the alternative hypothesis: there is a significant difference between the two means and that differences is not because of random chance of sample selection, but due to the treatment).

Before calculating the  $T_{stat}$ , we should first calculate the pool variance

$S_p^2$  as follows:

$$S_p^2 = \frac{(N-1)S_x^2 + (N-1)S_y^2}{2N-2} = \frac{(105-1) \times 7.39 + (105-1) \times 8.09}{105 + 105 - 2} = \frac{104 \times 7.39 + 104 \times 8.09}{208}$$

$$= \frac{768.56 + 841.36}{208}$$

$$= \frac{1609.92}{208}$$

$$S_p^2 = 7.74$$

By substituting the entities found above in the  $T_{stat}$  below, we find that:

$$T_{stat} = \frac{(\bar{X} - \bar{Y})}{\sqrt{\left(\frac{S_p^2}{N_1}\right) + \left(\frac{S_p^2}{N_2}\right)}} = \frac{(10.71 - 14.25)}{\sqrt{\left(\frac{7.74}{105}\right) + \left(\frac{7.74}{105}\right)}} = \frac{-3}{\sqrt{0.0737142857 + 0.0737142857}} = \frac{-3}{\sqrt{0.1474285714}} = \frac{-3}{0.383964284}$$

$$T_{stat} = -9.219$$

Here, we find that the absolute calculated  $T_{\text{stat}} = 9.219$  is very much greater than the critical value  $T_{\text{crit}} = 2.601$ . Besides, the value of  $p < 0.001$  which is much less than  $\alpha = 0.01$ . Therefore, we reject the null hypothesis  $H_0$  and accept the alternative hypothesis  $H_1$ . In other words, the difference between the means of the two groups is indeed statistically significant, and that difference is not due to random chance of sample selection but rather because of the effects of the treatment.

#### **4.2.4. Pedagogical Implementations**

From the results of the research tools discussed above, we can synthesize the following:

- ❖ Most students do not receive the necessary information and training about common public speaking standards. As a result, their performances are poor on the stage.
- ❖ Oral presentations are not only the least effective activity in developing students' speaking skill, but they are also the least desired one by students. However, it is the most prevailing classroom activity as it takes all, most or at least a half of the course.
- ❖ Most students get less than 30 minutes per year of presentation time. This short duration is insufficient to develop their speaking skill, especially with absence/lack of other auxiliary classroom speaking activities.
- ❖ Oral presentations involve students in many problems and conflicts that negatively affect their motivation towards the activity in particular and the speaking class in general. Not only that, but they also bore students out of the session, which often makes them feel a strong desire to practice other activities instead.
- ❖ In contrast with presentations-only classes, students are highly motivated to attend and participate in classes in which other speaking activities are applied.
- ❖ Based on the statistics presented above, it was found that students' performance did not improve significantly, if at all, after practicing oral presentations for an entire academic year. However, we found that the alternative course we specifically designed to meet the needs of the experimental group of students has actually enhanced their speaking skill to a remarkable level. This has been proven true using a third test that has shown a statistically significant difference between the performances of the two groups in the post-test.

Based on the findings of this study, students' oral presentations have a negative impact on students' motivation to the subject of oral expression. More importantly, these oral presentations, under the current conditions, do not improve students' speaking skill. Implementing an innovative course of speaking activities based on learners' needs can both motivate them and

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improve their speaking abilities. Therefore, it can be said that our set of hypotheses are valid.

This research has shown, paradoxically, that the most effective speaking activities are the least practiced ones, and vice versa. Therefore, teachers should take the risk of implementing new activities and diversifying the content of their sessions. Indeed, there are many effective activities which can be used in parallel with oral presentations or even substitute them and obtain better results both in terms of speaking performance and the motivation and psychology of students.

### **Conclusion**

Oral presentations are a classroom speaking activity which dominates the scene in most of the Oral Expression sessions. However, through our research, it has become evident that such an activity has some severe negative drawbacks. It makes learners face many issues, get bored of the session, and aspire practicing different activities. However, their deepest impact is on students' motivation towards the session and their speaking performance. Therefore, we strongly suggest giving students' the chance of practicing a variety of alternative speaking activities which can both motivate and benefit them at the same time.

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