

The Role of Oral Presentations in Developing Undergraduate Learners' Speaking Skills in Bangladesh

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Abstract

Developing speaking skills is considered an important goal for tertiary-level students in Bangladesh. Learning oral presentation techniques can lead learners to communicative competency, especially speaking competence. This paper explores the role of oral presentations in developing undergraduate EFL (English as a foreign language) learners' speaking skills in selected private universities in Bangladesh. The study followed a quantitative method and collected data from one hundred thirty-five EFL tertiary-level students. The findings show that oral presentations have positive impacts on learners' motivation and enhance their speaking skills. At the same time, the findings also indicate that there are a number of potential factors that hinder the learners' oral delivery which include their lack of motivation, limited vocabulary, anxiety, and fear. The study results have implications for instructional design and delivery at the tertiary level in Bangladesh as well as in other similar contexts.

Keywords: Development; Speaking; Grammatical Mistakes; Oral Presentation; Speaking Skills; Spelling Mistake.

1. Introduction

According to Rivers (as cited in [Leong and Ahmadi, 2017](#)), speaking is used twice in our daily communication compared to reading and writing. Speaking is one of the most practical of the four skills of a language, as people can directly communicate with others by expressing their thoughts and feelings through speaking. Therefore, [Nunan \(1999\)](#) (as cited in [K and Alamelu, 2020](#)) said that learning a foreign language can be measured by how well one can communicate in the target language. Moreover, speaking activities in the classroom increase the learners' motivation and make a language class more interactive and dynamic.

Oral interaction works as a factor in developing learner's target language competence ([Zhang, 2009](#)). It helps to develop the other three skills; reading, writing, and listening. Moreover, while presenting, a student must have to speak spontaneously. Thus it is considered as the most crucial factor in learning a foreign language.

According to the proficiency index, the level of English proficiency in Bangladesh is low level ("[EF EPI 2022 – EF English Proficiency Index – Bangladesh](#)," n.d.). But, the economic condition of this country has been changing towards marketbased global economy ([Dutta and Islam, 2017](#)). In this newly emerged global market based economic environment communication with other people who speak in other languages but can communicate in English is highly needed ([Aliyu, 2017](#); [Zukurnain and Kaur, 2014](#)). Therefore, learners should learn English language properly for maintaining both offline and online communication in all aspects.

It is obvious that presentation in EFL classrooms is very important as it has a positive impact on learner's level of proficiency. Some students feel worried and therefore do not like to speak in English in front of others. In addition, they do not have the opportunity to speak this language outside. Despite this importance, most undergraduate students still face difficulties in delivering good oral presentations. Students often face problems speaking fluently while giving presentations, especially in a second or foreign language. The oral presentation is vital in improving students' communicative competence in the target language.

As discussed above, many language researchers published their works to identify the impact of speaking activities on the capacity to improve communication skills in a second or foreign language. However, only a few

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researchers have conducted studies on class presentations and their impacts on second language learning in classroom situations. Studies in this area in Bangladesh contexts are scarce. For these reasons, the study reported in this paper aimed to focus on the effects of oral presentations in developing English speaking in the tertiary-level context in Bangladesh.

1.1 Types of Oral Presentation

Oral presentation is mainly of two types:

- Group presentation
- Individual presentation / Guided presentation

To motivate the students to work in teams, group presentation is mainly assigned. Though there are challenges performing in a group well but it brings a great success. In addition, individual presentation also helps learners make their innovative ideas for initiating a good communication with the audience.

According to [Suliman \(2022\)](#), oral presentations help the learners to be autonomous. They create an opportunity for the language learners to be confident and active learners. [Girard et al. \(2011\)](#) state that using oral presentations raises learner interest in learning English and push them forward to interact and participate in the classroom. Usually a gap is found in between language learning study and language use. In class context, learners usually get the language theory or study more than the use of the target language. In that case, many research shows that oral presentation fill the gap between the study and use.

In guided presentations teachers will select topics and instruct the presenters to perform the presentation perfectly. Research suggests that guided presentations make student more motivated to communicate each other and practice speaking in real word ([Girard et al., 2011](#)).

2. Purpose of the Study

The aim of this study is to explore the role of oral presentations in developing learner proficiency in speaking in English. In the 21st century, Bangladesh is connected to the global environment through different aspects like business, education, industrial productions and so on. As the global relation is strengthening, the demand for active communication in English with other people is increasing gradually. Keeping this urgent necessity to learn English language skills in mind, a review of the literature in the Bangladesh context was done. It was found that there were very few studies done on the development of English proficiency and the factors that affect it. Therefore, it was felt that this study on the relation between oral presentations and the development of English speaking skills will contribute towards identifying the factors that pose a challenge to developing the English speaking skill in Bangladeshi tertiary education context. The following research questions guided the study:

1. What is the role of oral presentations in developing undergraduate students' English speaking skills?
2. What are the major factors that positively or negatively affect their oral presentations?

3. Literature Review

3.1 The Speaking Skill in EFL/ESL Classrooms

Oral presentations make us confident in speaking and help to speak boldly in public. Many critics admire that oral presentation is very much important for undergraduate students. But some claims that there are some risk factors also in oral presentation. As like, incomplete information, poor speech delivery, low confidence level makes a presentation bad. These include stress, fatigue, and lack of preparation. There have both positive and negative views of the critics but the positive aspects suit much better. [Stadler \(2013\)](#) argues that speaking is an act of communication which requires an active involvement of both the speaker and the listener. According to [Huges \(2011\)](#) (as cited in [Hammad, 2020](#)), speaking requires the knowledge of pragmatic points. This oral process consists of using daily used grammar, cohesive devices, pragmatic roles of expressing thoughts and feelings ([Hammad and Ghali, 2015](#)).

The speaking skill is considered to be a major skill among the second language learners. It is an important criterion of their level of success in learning an L2 as Ur (2000) says "out of all the four skills, listening, speaking, reading and writing, speaking seems the most important, people who speak a language are known as speakers of the language, as if speaking included all other kinds of knowing a target language" (p. 12).

Presentation activity produces a significant effect in improving the student's fluency and accuracy (Zhou, 2005). Oral speech helps the learner learn the order of vocabulary choice and this active process leads them to learn the functional expressions of their feeling and thoughts. Wang (2009) states that a speaker need to focus on three things while making a good communication with others; Mechanics (Grammar and vocabulary), Functions (transaction and interaction) and Social Norms (turn taking and roles of participation).

3.2 Impacts of Presentations

Both the guided and free presentation help the learners to engage in a large community like a class (Al-Issa and Al-qubtan, 2010). Thus, presentation maximizes the active participation of the language learners with confidence. They divided the oral presentation into two types; guided and free. Guided presentations suit intermediate learners whereas free presentation for advance level learners. As the teacher give a soft direction on grammar and context as well as time allocation in guided presentation, it usually makes a class much more interactive and students find fun to participate in the community. This process brings a natural way of communication in the target language (Apple, 2006).

In addition, presentation encourages the learners to present oral works in front of their classmates. Thus it is increasing their confidence and reducing their anxiety as an oral presentation is a real-time interaction as opposed to written skill, where there is no time for processing (Morgan, 2012). Using L2 in presentations, learners can have enjoyable learning environment that allows them to interact with others (Brooks and Wilson, 2014). Using presentation can also improve learners' language proficiency like vocabulary, grammar and pronunciation. Oral presentation in the classroom also helps students other various ways like group presentation helps the students improve their ability to introduce themselves to the others.

Pagkalinawan's (2021) paper on oral presentation on voice thread as a collaborative assessment strategy in enhancing language proficiency and oral communication practices' examines the effects of visual data presentation in enhancing language proficiency, especially communicative practices. Students can record their presentations in their comfort zone without fear of being criticized or judged and then they can submit the recorded file for getting some feedbacks. This process helps them to increase their language proficiency.

4. Methodology

4.1 Research design

The quantitative method is applied to do the framework of this study as this survey is an exploratory study of the role of oral presentations in developing English speaking skills of English undergraduate learners from three universities in Bangladesh.

4.2 Participants

The researcher selected 135 participants (both male and female) based on convenient sampling from three universities in Bangladesh. All participants were undertaking their undergraduate program in English in the following institutions: IUBAT- International University of Business, Agriculture and Technology, UITS-University of Information Technology and Sciences and UAP- University of Asia Pacific. All the participants had already completed one or more semesters when data were collected. As they were experienced in class contexts and were familiar with the presentation activity, it was deemed a relatively easy task for them to share their perspectives on the impact of oral presentation on developing their speaking skills.

4.3 Instruments

This is a quantitative research survey. For the purposes of studying the major roles of oral presentation and affecting factors of it, a questionnaire was developed. A five point Likert scale was used ranging from 'always' to 'never' and 'strongly agree' to 'strongly disagree'. The responses are rated as always/strongly agree=1, usually/agree=2, often/neutral=3, sometimes/disagree=4, never/strongly disagree=5. It has 17 close ended items to analyze the collected data. I developed a survey instrument drawing on Riadil's (2020) instrument, which investigates the role of presentations. This survey had only close-ended items in 3 sections:

Section A: Personal Information

Section B: Roles of Oral Presentations

Section C: Affecting Factors of Oral Presentation

4.4 Research procedures

To accomplish the purpose of the study, a close ended questionnaire was first distributed among the participants. We selected a group of students (participants) who had already completed the first semester in English at least and this technique made this group a fairly homogenous one. Once they completed the 17 items in the questionnaire form, we collected those from them. This whole process was done in the classroom environment.

4.5 Data analysis procedures

After the completed questionnaires were collected, the data entry was done through SPSS-(Statistical Package for the Social Sciences). The data were then analyzed statistically with the help of SSPS and Microsoft Excel. By using the frequency data, the result was counted as percentages, mean, and standard deviation. Tables, pie charts are used to show the results. This process was mainly based on descriptive analysis.

4.6 Ethical issues

In this research, each student's privacy was protected as their identity is not revealed anywhere in the paper. The participants were assured that their privacy will be strictly maintained. After receiving their consent, the procedure was started.

5. Findings

This section analyzes the data keeping the research questions in mind. Items 1 to 9 seek to answer the first research question analyzing the role of oral presentations in developing English speaking skills. And items 10 to 17 will give light to answer the second question analyzing the learner's attitudes towards the factors affecting oral presentations.

Table 1: Positive Psychological and motivational impact

	Number	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	SD
4. Oral presentation helps me increase my confidence.	135	1.00	5.00	1.38	.863
5. Oral presentation reduces the fear of making mistakes.	135	1.00	5.00	1.90	1.12
6. Oral presentation helps me reduce my timidity and stuttering.	135	1.00	5.00	2.05	1.05

5.1 Impact on psychological and motivational factors

Table 1 shows the level of psychological and motivational impacts that oral presentations have on the learners. In the result, the mean of 1.38 of the item-4 (Oral presentation helps me increase my confidence) means that the majority of the participants consider that oral presentation helps them to increase their confidence level.

This rate is more than half of the target people. Also, the mean of 1.90 of the item-5 indicates that the maximum number of people can reduce their fear of making mistakes through the oral presentation. Most importantly, in terms of motivation, learners usually feel that presentation activity boosts up their motivation level while communicating in English in real world.

5.2: Impact on linguistic proficiency

Table 2 shows the perceived impact of oral presentation on linguistic proficiency of speaking English. Almost 80% of the participants (always) claim that oral presentation always helps them to increase their level of fluency in speaking whereas no learner show their disagreement with this issue.

Table 2: Impact on linguistic proficiency

	Always	Usually	Often	Sometimes	Never	Mean	SD
	%	%	%	%	%		
7. The oral presentation helps me increase my level of fluency in speaking.	80%	14.8%	2.2%	3.0%	0.0%	1.2815	.6539
8. The oral presentation helps me increase my vocabulary level.	62.2%	20.7%	8.9%	5.2%	3.0%	1.6593	1.037
9. The oral presentation helps me do teamwork.	42.2%	20.0%	15.6%	17.8%	4.4%	2.2222	1.285

In addition, more than half of the (62.2%) participants agree that oral presentation increases their vocabulary level. Moreover, 42.2% of them feel that oral presentation always helps them to do their teamwork well.

5.3 Negative impacts of oral presentation

Table 3 presents data that focus on the psychological factors that make hindrance while giving presentation in English. This table reveals the possible level of psychological negative impacts learners usually face while giving presentation. In table no 3, the mean (1.86) of item 10 also indicates that majority students agreed that they feel so worried while giving presentation as they become afraid of getting low marks. Then, the means of the items 11 to 14 show that the factor affecting their speaking ability is the lack of confidence during their presentation.

5.4 Linguistic factors

Linguistic factor of presentation is an important one among other factors. Participants must have acquired a certain level of linguistic proficiency before delivering a fluent presentation. When there is a lack in this acquiring the certain level of proficiency, this affects the speech delivery.

Fig. 1 shows that 34.81% of the participants agree that grammar is an affecting factor for them when they give presentation because a great number of them feel very worried about grammar errors and this wariness directly affects the fluent delivery of their presentation. In addition, a good number of the participants are in neutral position

as they are not sure whether grammar makes any hindrance or not. Importantly, only 3.7% people opposed strongly with the item.

Thinking about a good pronunciation makes learners nervous and thus it affects learners' presentation. Fig. 2 illustrates that the majority (36.30%) of the learners agree that their tension over good pronunciation hampers a fluent delivery of presentation. Moreover, 22.22% of the participants show their strong agreement that they face a speech difficulty as they feel worried about good pronunciation while giving presentation.

Fig. 3 shows that 31.85% of the participants agree that they feel worried about their vocabulary and also 21.48% participants strongly agree with the term. So, it can be assumed that majority learners have a similar problem with vocabulary and word order, or they cannot process the vocabulary in the right time of speaking.

Table 3: Negative impacts

	Number	Mean	SD
10. I feel worried if I don't get a good mark on the presentation.	135	1.86	.86
11. I can feel my heart pounding while giving my presentation.	135	1.98	.94
12. I feel I have no confidence in thinking that others can do better.	135	2.91	1.05
13. I feel shy to make eye contact with the audience while giving a presentation.	135	2.75	1.18
14. I feel less motivated while giving the presentation.	135	3.03	1.10

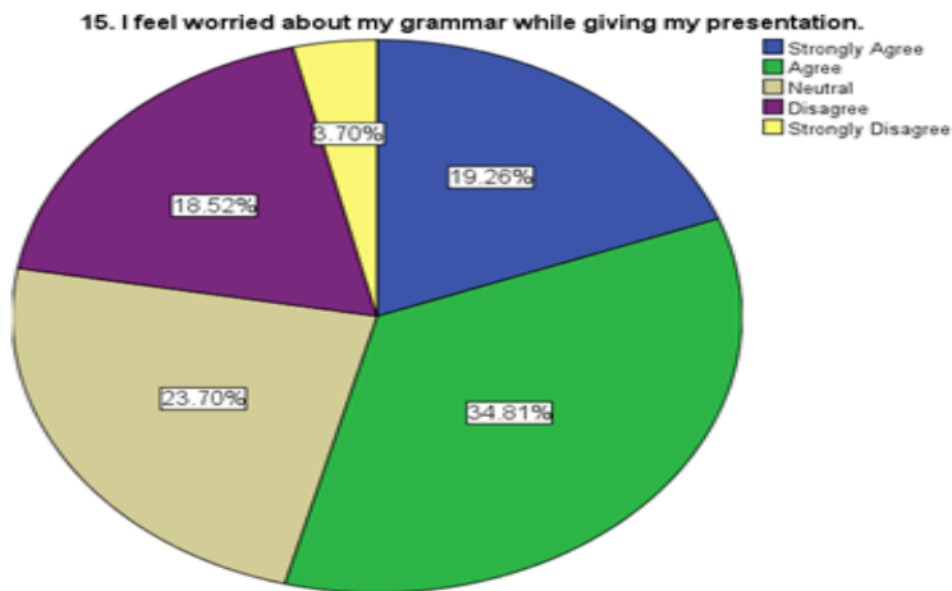


Fig. 1: Grammatical error

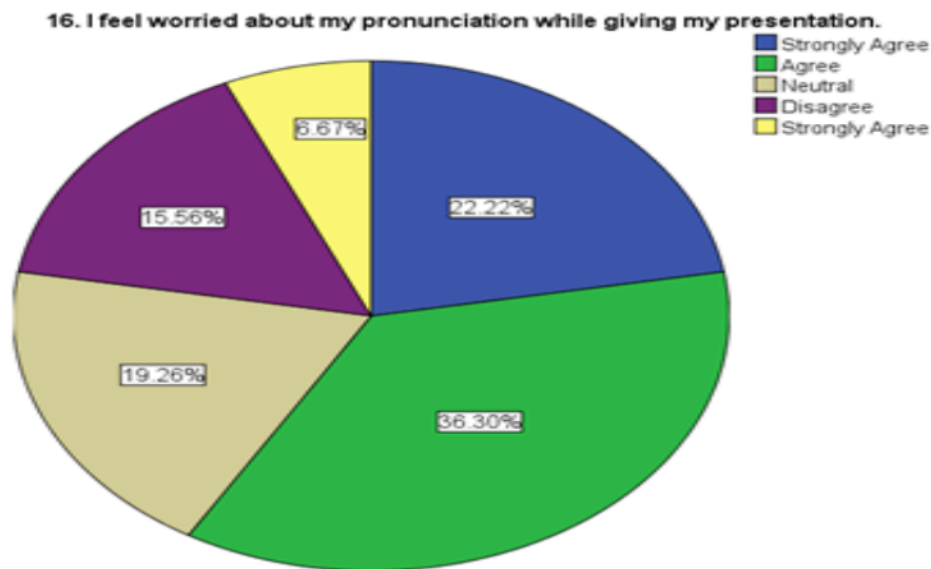


Fig. 2: Pronunciation error

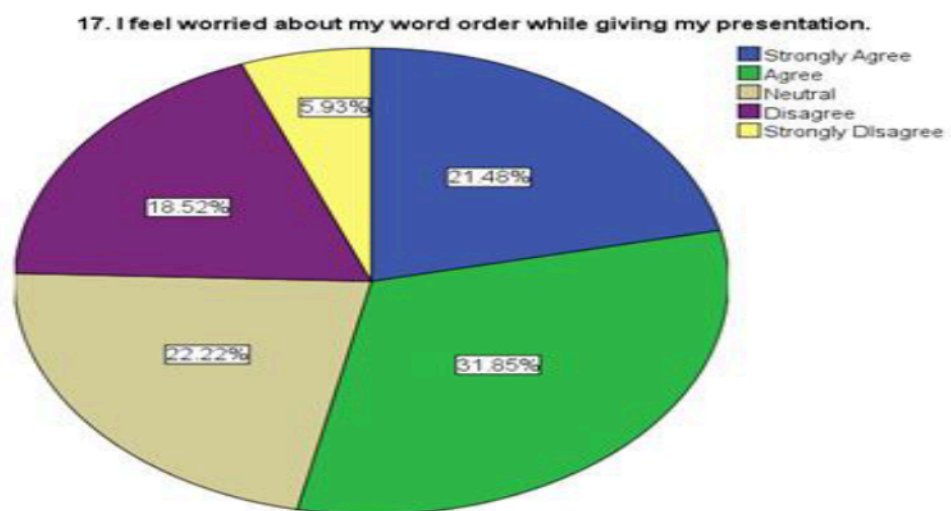


Fig. 3: Vocabulary / Word order

6. Discussion

In the findings part, all the tables and diagrams analyzed the data systematically to give the answer to the research questions. The majority of the participants agree that oral presentation helps them develop their speaking skills. Data shows that a good number of the learners get benefited from their presentation activity. Their psychological preparedness and motivation were increased in participating presentation activity. In terms of psychological factor,

more than 80% participants agree, oral presentation develops their confidence level. Oral presentation helps them become more confident in speaking in public reducing fear of making mistakes. Majority believes that presentation skills increase their level of fluency of English speaking along with the level of vocabulary too. The results of the present study find similarity with the study of Dekdouk (2013) who investigated the effects of oral presentations on developing students' communicative competence.

Students feel worried about their word delivery, pronunciations, and grammatical mistakes while presentation. It is certain that 34% students are afraid of their grammar mistakes during presentation. Another finding of this study shows that low confidence affects learners speaking skill in reverse. People having low confidence do not want to speak in oral presentation. The findings of the study are a bit against with Nadia's (2013) study who explored the role of students' oral presentations in enhancing speaking confidence.

Moreover, the fear of grammar error makes a hindrance in speaking English. Majority believes that while they make comparison between their pronunciation with the native's one, they feel an obstruction in speaking English fluently. This finding has made a line to Mridha and Muniruzzaman (2020) who worked on the phobia for speaking on the part of students reduces their ability. Thus, there is an absence of spontaneity for natural communication.

7. Limitations

This study has a few limitations. This survey would have yielded better insights if a small scale interview could have been added. Some data were collected through Google-form as it was not convenient to visit all the campuses of selected universities. Problems were also faced during data collection from the students. Since they were from different batches and their skill in English was not the same, they might have faced problems while filling out the questionnaire form. However, keeping potential problems in mind, we had briefed them before distribution of the questionnaire. Moreover, this paper does not focus on the affective factors of real life communication. So, a further study can be done on this issue.

8. Conclusion and Recommendation

The results of this study show that oral presentation plays an important role in developing tertiary-level learners' speaking skills. The majority of the learners agreed that oral presentations are beneficial for the development of their speaking skills. At the same time, a small number of the participants feel worried while giving oral presentations about their word delivery, grammatical mistakes and pronunciation. As this study did not focus on the gender based differences in oral presentation, a further study can be done on this topic too.

As this paper analyses the role of oral presentations in developing the speaking skills of undergraduate level students of Bangladesh, both the teachers and the students can be benefitted in understanding the role of oral presentations. The teachers can understand the role of psychological factors of students during the presentation. And students can learn how presentations can facilitate improvement of their speaking skill in English.

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Appendix

The Role of Oral Presentation in Developing Undergraduate Learners' Speaking Skills in Bangladesh

Dear participants:

We are carrying out a research on the role of oral presentation in developing undergraduate learners' speaking skill. This study can be beneficial for teachers as well as students studying in English at the university level in Bangladesh as it will help them to understand both the roles of presentation and the factors affecting oral presentation also. Thank you for giving us your valuable time to fill in this questionnaire. Your answer will be entirely anonymous. If you have any questions about this questionnaire, you can ask us or send us an email.

Part (A) Personal Information

1. Participant's gender? (Put a tick mark)

A) Male

B) Female

2. Write the name of your university:

3. Mention your current semester:

	<u>Part (B) Roles Of Oral Presentation:</u>	Always	Usually	Often	Sometimes	Never
4.	Oral presentation helps me increase my confidence.					
5.	Oral presentation reduces the fear of making mistakes.					
6.	Oral presentation helps me reduce my timidity and stuttering.					
7.	Oral presentation helps me increase my level of fluency in speaking.					
8.	Oral presentation helps me increase my vocabulary level.					
9.	The oral presentation helps me do teamwork.					

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	<u>Part (C)Factors affecting the oral presentation:</u>	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
10.	I feel worried if I don't get a good mark on the presentation.					
11.	I can feel my heart pounding while giving my presentation.					
12.	I feel I have no confidence in thinking that others can do better.					
13.	I feel shy to make eye contact with the audience while giving a presentation.					
14.	I feel less motivated while giving the presentation.					
15.	I feel worried about my grammar while giving my presentation					
16.	I feel worried about my pronunciation while giving my presentation.					
17.	I feel worried about my word order when giving my presentation.					