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## An Investigation into Students' Perceived Views about Effectiveness of Oral Presentation at University Level

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### Abstract

The paper explores Master Level students' views about effectiveness of oral presentation practice.

Students were provided free environment for exploring their views about oral presentation practice. Findings exposed that students did realize the importance of the practice, as oral presentation was helpful for students in developing self-confidence, sense of responsibility, leadership skills, interpersonal skills, communication skill, team work, problem solving ability and in students. Findings depicted problems of students relating to oral presentation like their teachers ignore students' interest in assigning topics, non-sympathetic behavior of teachers, lack of teachers' guidance ,inequality in time allocation for each presentation, unsatisfactory evaluation of oral presentation and second language barriers in oral presentation.

Suggested measures for improvement the situation may be provision of internet and computer facilities at departmental level, provision of short second language courses for students, special instructions can be issues to teachers about facilitating students regarding

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assigning topics, allocating time and guiding students about related resources for oral presentation.

**Keywords:** Oral Presentation; self confidence; communication skill; interpersonal skills; team work; sense of responsibility; real life experiences; master level.

## **Introduction**

Oral presentation practice provide students an opportunity to develop various skills like as leadership, self confidence, interpersonal skills, communication skill, team work, sense of responsibility and relating learning to real life *experiences*.

Oral presentations provide a learning opportunity for students to develop their communication skills” (Rohitha and Rafic 2009).

As Kouzes & Posner, 1990; Bolt, 1996) describe that we are entering the twenty-first century with a dramatic deficit of leaders. They go on to cite Bolt’s (1996) “contention that this deficit is not a deficit of leadership, but a deficit in leadership development”. Sawi and Smith (1997) identify leadership life skills as leadership, teamwork, decision-making, problem solving, reasoning, and communication as well as personal qualities such as responsibility, self-esteem, and integrity.

Scheer (1997) observes that leadership life skills are essential for young people to feel satisfaction and contribute to society.

The most effective form of communication that groups can experience is the controversial strategy known, as dialogue is the foundation upon which cooperative learning is structured (Brooks & Brooks 1993).

In performance tasks, students demonstrate for an audience that they have mastered specific learning objectives ... Accompanying any performance it is customary to provide a narrative statement, written or oral, explaining how the performance illuminate the material being studied (Johnson 2002).

According to Carbone (2009) view presentation practice within classroom environment may be first leap into the public world may pave the way to public speaking. Learning verbal behavior via oral communication to groups is vital as a learning tool.

Derrick (2006) explains that verbal presentation works best with technical support such as a projector, and access to illustrated on-screen presentations.

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Verbal presentation by individual students constituted an opportunity to increase, improve and provide alternate methods of learning in the classroom besides lecture, visual presentations, visiting speakers, and peer review of assignments by one or two peers (Haber 2008).

According to Kitto (2008) the process of explaining to oneself and to others in the actual presentation develops and constructs conceptual and extended knowledge of the topic. “Oral presentations are a common requirement in many courses. They may be short or long, include slides or other visual aids, and be done individually or in a group. In your postgraduate studies, you may have the opportunity to deliver lectures, seminars and tutorials as well, and the more practice you have at any of these, the easier it gets... The major steps in oral presentation are planning, structuring, preparing and presenting” ([www.courseworks.unimelb.edu.au](http://www.courseworks.unimelb.edu.au) retrieved on 12-05-2010).

Researches have shown that oral demonstration on some theme is an effective activity and it develops leadership skills among students as well as it gives students experience of real world. Tony Spink and Phil Clements (1999) suggest that teacher may concentrate on encouraging the disclosure of the real world problems, issues and experiences, which bear directly on the subject of training being undertaken.

An element of performativity pervades all oral expression in the classroom, and turns learning into an active and full-body experience, rather than merely a cognitive activity. Oral activities like role-playing, panel discussions, debates, deliberations, and more employ drama as pedagogy and performance as a means and motivation to learn (retrieved from [www.speaking.pitt.edu/student/argument/index.html](http://www.speaking.pitt.edu/student/argument/index.html) on June 06, 2010).

But researches show that there is need to establish comfortable classroom environment where students' mind are free of every kind of fear. Generally demonstration in front of the teacher and classmates is itself an act of extreme anxiety. It has been observed that sometimes students fall in the class during their demonstration practice and they feel that their breath is going to stop.

Of course, anxiety affects presentation skills of the students. No doubt demonstration practice is useful for students in their present and future life for developing in them leadership skills. Demonstration and oral presentation may be of various types. As Tamara Burk (Columbia College) and Lee Bowie (Mount Holyoke College) and their views were adapted in October 2003 for Knox College have presented their views on oral presentation. According to them researcher presentation is the kind of oral presentation most familiar in an academic setting. In courses where students are doing research, one or more oral presentations can be used effectively to help students develop their ideas and to give them the opportunity to present their work to others. Some faculty have students do a short

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assignment early on that presents a research proposal, or that is a sample analysis of one aspect of the research topic. Many have students give a presentation at the end of the research, sharing the results with others. Most suited for an upper-level research course, this model is highly adaptable to a wide variety of fields.

The process of learning in the classroom can become significantly richer as students have access to new and different types of information, can manipulate it on the computer through graphic displays or controlled experiments in ways never before possible, and can communicate their results and conclusions in a variety of media to their teacher, students in the next classroom, or students around the world (<http://www.nsba.org/itte> retrieved on March 3, 2010).

In current scenario in teaching-learning process the learner is expected to learn more than mere memorization of facts. Now the learner is engaged in the type of learning experiences through which the learners is actively engaged to get involved in the learning tasks through different kinds of preparing projects, performing activities, writing assignments, oral presentations.

The purpose behind such types of learning activities is to provide learners practical and real life experiences and finally to train and prepare him/her for the society in which he/she has to survive so that he/she proves his/her selves as successful citizen.

Generally at university level oral presentation practice is conducted to measure students' self-confidence and presentation skills. In many universities it is an essential component of assessing techniques and students are required to demonstrate in front of the classmates and the respective teacher on some theme of their own interest and choice or on the theme that is proposed or assigned by their respective teacher.

Teachers assess students' presentation according to their own set criterion. On following pages, there is an example such type of oral evaluation rubric:

Oral Evaluation Rubric, Based on: Iowa State University, 2005. Oral Presentation Rubric, <http://www.educ.iastate.edu/elps/rubricoral.htm>, accessed 19 May 2005.

Criteria	Distinguished	Proficient	Basic	Unacceptable
<b>Organization</b>	<p>-- Extremely well organized.</p> <p>-- <input type="checkbox"/> Introduces the purpose of the presentation clearly and creatively.</p> <p>-- Effectively includes smooth, clever transitions which are succinct but not choppy in order to connect key points</p> <p>-- <input type="checkbox"/> Student presents information in logical, interesting sequence which audience can follow.</p> <p>-- <input type="checkbox"/> Ends with an accurate conclusion showing thoughtful, strong evaluation of the evidence presented.</p>	<p>-- Generally well organized.</p> <p>-- <input type="checkbox"/> Introduces the purpose of the presentation clearly.</p> <p>-- <input type="checkbox"/> Include transitions to connect key points but better transitions from idea to idea are noted.</p> <p>-- <input type="checkbox"/> Most information presented in logical sequence; A few minor points may be confusing</p> <p>-- <input type="checkbox"/> Ends with an summary of main points showing some evaluation of the evidence presented.</p>	<p>-- Somewhat organized.</p> <p>-- <input type="checkbox"/> Introduces the purpose of the presentation</p> <p>-- <input type="checkbox"/> Includes some transitions to connect key points but there is difficulty in following presentation.</p> <p>-- <input type="checkbox"/> Student jumps around topics. Several points are confusing.</p> <p>-- <input type="checkbox"/> Ends with a summary or conclusion; little evidence of evaluating content based on Evidence.</p>	<p>-- Poor or non existent organization.</p> <p>-- <input type="checkbox"/> Does not clearly introduce the purpose of the presentation</p> <p>-- <input type="checkbox"/> Uses ineffective transitions that rarely connect points; cannot understand presentation because there is no sequence for information.</p> <p>-- <input type="checkbox"/> Presentation is choppy and disjointed; no apparent logical order of presentation</p> <p>-- <input type="checkbox"/> Ends without a summary or conclusion.</p>

Students are provided complete schedule for this purpose and they have to demonstrate on dates specified by their respective teacher. It is essential for students to search for and gather information from books, articles, journals, and educational indexes, from Internet or directly

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from community and prepares a small project for demonstration. This mini project is sometimes a theory-based and sometimes it is an empirical research study. They encountered different practical experiences from preparation of demonstration assignment till its presentation. These experiences are conducive for developing leadership skills in students and at the same time they create interest in learning as well.

The process of education aims at developing various skills among students that they need in order to survive as successful citizen of the society. In teaching their respective content, teachers often conduct different learning activities for students to develop such skills. Rohitha and Rafic (2009) observe that a key feature of a high quality learning experience for students in an academic institution is establishing a scholarly culture that includes integration of research into the learning process in which students are encouraged to construct their own meanings and deep understandings of the subject materials. This process makes students engage in critically constructing knowledge and does not merely depend on instructions being provided to them with access to the contents. The learning experience therefore is facilitated by sustained interaction between the faculty and students in the classroom and beyond.

Different researches conducted in area and researcher's own interest in the area persuade the researcher to conduct a research study about finding out master level students perceptions about the effectiveness and problems associated with oral presentation practice in their course. The researcher was aware about the fact that it was going to be a unique research, as the research did not find a single research that was conducted in Pakistani master level students about effectiveness and problems of oral presentation practice.

### **Statement of the problem**

Developing leadership skills among students is one of the major objectives of education, especially at university level that is the most recommended and given values in everywhere. Generally teachers adopt various techniques and activities to achieve this objective of education. Oral demonstration practice is one of such activities designed to develop leadership skills among master level students. Therefore the problem under exploration was to assess from students' perceptions about effectiveness of oral practice of students in developing leadership skills among them and at the same time to explore the role of oral practice in promoting research culture within the university premises.

### **Objectives of the Study**

The research study was designed to achieve following objectives:

- to explore students perceptions about effectiveness of oral presentation;

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- to find out students' perceptions about problems they face during preparation of oral presentation;
- to explore students' perceptions about effectiveness of oral presentation in developing team work;
- to investigate students' perceptions about effectiveness of oral presentation in developing sense of responsibility;
- to measure students' perceptions about effectiveness of presentation oral in developing emotional intelligence;
- to explore students' perceptions about problems they face during preparation and demonstration of oral presentation;

### **Research Questions**

The present study was conducted to find answer to the following questions:

- What is the effectiveness of oral presentation practice according to students' perceptions at master level?
- What specific problems (if any) students face during preparing and presenting their oral presentation?
- What are students' perceptions for improvement (if any) regarding oral presentation practice?

### **Delimitations of the Study**

As the researcher had some financial and time constraints, so the study was delimited to the following factors:

1. Using convenient sampling technique and collecting data for the study only from students of 3<sup>rd</sup> semester 2009 Master of Arts (Education) of Education Department of the National University of Modern Languages (NUML) Islamabad, Pakistan;
2. Exploring students perceptions only about oral presentation practice that is assessed at various phases of the course completion at Master level in NUML;
3. Discovering students' perception only about the effectiveness of oral presentation and problems associated with it.

### **Procedure of the Study**

It was a descriptive type research but in this descriptive type the research brought a sort of innovation in the sense that she did not provided any kind of questionnaire to sample students rather she asked them to write freely about the points that had been asked at the paper sheet. The reason for not providing them questionnaire was that the researcher really want to explore the in-depth realities based on students own thinking and words. Population

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of the study was all master level students of National University Modern Languages Islamabad. Sample for the study was collected from all students of Master of Arts (M.A) education of 3<sup>rd</sup> semester 2009.

The researcher got permission from the Head of Education Department of NUML. When the head granted permission, the researcher started her research work and visited Master in Arts (M.A.) Education 3<sup>rd</sup> semester class and told sample students the objectives of the study for getting their views about oral presentation practice and asked for their cooperation. Data for the study was collected based on students' perceptions about the effectiveness of oral presentation. The students were assured that the views they were going to express about the said activity would not be disclosed to any one and they would be used for research purposes only and they were advised not to write their names anywhere in the paper but just write down their perceptions only. The students were happy to listen to this and were excited to express their views in written form without disclosing their names. The students were provided free time for freethinking and calm classroom environment. The researcher provided them with a piece of paper of equal size to each student and asked them to write their views on a paper about:

- a. The effectiveness of oral presentation in learning new skills
- b. Problems that they face in preparing their oral presentation
- c. Suggestions for improving the oral presentation practice at master level
- d. How they perceive oral presentation practice

It was an innovative study in the sense that instead of giving students' questionnaire or opinionnaire of any type developed by the researcher or any ready-made questionnaire, the researcher wanted to find out the inner heart situation as students really feel and perceive it. The sample students took approximately thirty (30) minutes to complete their thoughtful writing. Then the students handed over their papers to the researcher.

### **Data Analysis and Major Findings**

Students produced their thoughts about effectiveness of oral presentation on pieces of papers and then the researcher summarized their thoughts and put them under following statements that arose from students' own perceptions. The result of each statement has been found out and written in the next column.

The following were the facts that arose from students 'perceived views about effectiveness of oral presentation practice/activity in developing leadership related skills like self confidence, interpersonal skills, communication skill, team work skills, sense of responsibility, real life experiences and emotional intelligence.

### **Data Analysis and Major Findings as Depicted from Students' Perceptions**

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Sr. No.	No. of Students	Percentage	Effectiveness of Oral Presentation	Results
1	28	19%	Oral presentation was effective in that it made me the central person and everyone was listening me and accepting my ideas.	Oral presentation is effective for developing leadership skills in students.
2	28	20%	Oral presentation gave me the courage to talk to other and convince them through my ideas.	Oral presentation is effective for developing leadership and self-confidence in students.
3	28	19%	Oral presentation provides me opportunity to interact with other. I easily manage work with students who are really different from me.	Oral presentation is effective for providing training interpersonal skills in students
4	28	23%	Oral presentation trained me in communication skills and I come to know how to interact with others and how to answer and satisfy participants' queries.	Oral presentation is effective for providing training in communication skill in students
5	28	18%	Sometimes I had to work in group while preparing my oral presentation so I had to take care of groups' interests and provided me chance to present my knowledge and share my views with other classmates through questioning answer session	Oral presentation is effective for teamwork training, it develops collaborative skills in students.
6	28	22%	I had to complete all tasks relating to my presentation on due time	Oral presentation is effective in creating sense of responsibility in students
7	28	20%	Everything regarding my presentation I had to do and manage personally and this thing made me a responsible person	Oral presentation is effective in creating sense of responsibility in students
8	28	28%	It provided me practical training in preparing and presenting my presentation. It was really a real life related experience for me as in natural classroom environment through learning by doing it broke monotonous things of daily class routine and brought variety in classroom environment.	Learning is related to real life experiences through oral presentation practices and it creates interest for students in learning.
9	28	26%	During oral presentation I sometimes had to control my emotions and had to listen against my views.	Oral presentation is effective for developing emotional intelligence among students.

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As Nelson and Low, (2003) describes that emotionally intelligent students are skilled in interpersonal communication, self-management, goal achievement, and demonstrate personal responsibility in completing assignments and working effectively.

For example if a person can impress other people from his/her ideas this thing can develop self- confidence then he/she can communicate with others in effective way. If s/he can communicate effectively with other, s/he has good relationship with other. S/he can understand his/her own and others feelings and can use his own or others feelings in creating good environment. If s/he has regards for others feelings and emotions and understands them then s/he can work successfully in a team and can take on the responsibility of his/her role and of course when she/he takes on responsibility of performing some task then s/he will do his/her best to achieve his goals.

### **Suggestions for further Improvement**

Followings were some suggestions that depict students' views regarding their problems. Suitable measures can improve the situation:

1. There is need that teachers provide students practical training for demonstration skills.
2. Teachers' encouragement can motivate students for better performance. If some weakness are found the teacher may guide students in correct directions for improvement.
3. As medium of oral presentation is English therefore some students have problems in spoken English due to their previous educational background. Therefore the teacher may make arrangement to minimize spoken English problems of students in daily class. Or s/he can make arrangement for make up classes with the help of English teacher.
4. Some students do have lack of confidence due to their personal problems and social background, educational background and they feel shy in their oral presentation. The teacher may provide them individualized counseling and may encourage them through different motivational techniques.
5. Sometimes students suffer a lot due to lack of guidance and support in preparation of their oral assignment. So the teacher may provide them complete guidance and support in preparation of their demonstration. The best thing that teachers can do in this reference in that they may assign themes for oral presentation according to students' interest and choice. So that the practice may become a charming activity for them.
6. They face difficulties in searching material relating to their topics, and often are unable to use computer or Internet as in some students' residence this facility is not available. Provision of computer, printer and Internet facility at departmental level within the university premises can minimize students' difficulties. For this purpose special funds may asked from university authority or to agencies like UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific Cultural Organization), JICA (Japan International Cooperation Agency) interested in the development of education in Pakistan.

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7. Student is the person who is on the pathway of learning. S/He may have shortcomings of her/his personality and knowledge. Therefore it is inhumane to make ridicule of them. Ridiculous behavior of teachers can discourage students' and can affect negatively on their learning process.
8. Mostly teachers do not show interest in observing students' oral presentation and generally they do not explain students what they want from students in their oral presentation. Students are discouraged from such behavior of teachers as they have invested a lot of labor, time and money in preparing their demonstration. Teachers may appreciate students' demonstration by encouraging them through encouraging remarks. The teacher can assign equal time for presentation so that students' self esteem is not hurt and can make the classroom environment friendly. This behavior of teacher will motivate students to do good in future as well. Even, when presentation is not according to specific standards then students may be encouraged through such remarks that correct and guide them for improvement.
9. Often students are unable to locate and select relevant material related to their theme. Sometimes students suffer difficulty due to unavailability of projectors. Arrangement may be made for provision of projector in every class especially during demonstration practice. Before demonstration on the rostrum it is better that students may get their material of presentation checked from their teachers to make it sure that valid information are being provided in demonstration.
10. Educational institutions should provide technical assistance and should facilitate students for preparation and presentation of their work assignment.
11. There may be arranged English spoken courses as zero semester in order to improve students spoken power in second languages.

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