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Strategies for ESL Students in Community Colleges to Develop Their Public Speaking Skills

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University of San Francisco

**Strategies for ESL Students in Community Colleges to
Develop Their Public Speaking Skills**

A Field Project Presented to
The Faculty of the School of Education
International and Multicultural Education Department

In Partial Fulfillment
Of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts in Teaching English as a Second Language

by
Cheryl Watkins
December 2014

Strategies for ESL Students in Community Colleges to Develop Their Public Speaking Skills

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MASTER OF ARTS

in

TEACHING ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE

by

Cheryl Watkins

December 2014

UNIVERSITY OF SAN FRANCISCO

Under the guidance and approval of the committee, and approval by all the members, this field project has been accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree.

Approved:

Instructor/Chairperson

Date

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this project was to identify strategies for ESL students in community colleges to develop their public speaking skills. Effective oral communication skills are commonly needed by employees in the workplace at all different levels. The project focused on three key areas: 1) ways to reduce the fear and anxiety associated with public speaking; 2) the role of small groups in planning and presenting oral presentations; and 3) the use of feedback and self-help strategies to improve public speaking skills. The project presented a handbook of strategies in each of these areas for students to use as a resource in developing these skills. With increased self-confidence and strengthened public speaking skills, community college ESL students will be better prepared to succeed in their further education and as employees in the workforce.

CHAPTER I INTRODUCTION

Statement of the Problem

Approximately one-half of all undergraduate students in the US are attending community colleges and about 24% of the students enrolled in community colleges come from immigrant backgrounds. The majority of immigrants who receive certificates or associate degrees do not go on to four-year colleges; thus, the community college is an important venue not only for vocational or technical training, but also for developing skills in English language proficiency. English as a Second Language (ESL) instruction for adults is the fastest growing curriculum at community colleges, with an enrollment of 1.2 million students (Community College Consortium for Immigrant Education) [CCIE], 2014). Therefore, the community college seems to be the ideal setting to meet the needs of the growing number of immigrants who need English language instruction to increase their job opportunities and become more economically independent. This high demand correlates to the existence of 15 million or more adult immigrants who are at a low proficiency level in their English language usage. Many of these adults were at low educational levels when they arrived in the US from their home countries (CCIE, 2014).

The U.S. Census Bureau (2005) compared the educational completions by immigrants who became citizens versus non-citizens. Among the non-citizen immigrant adults 25 years and older, 63% completed only high school. However, 32% of the immigrants who became naturalized citizens completed at least Bachelor's degrees or higher (CCIE, 2014). Where does California fit in relation to other states? In 1970, the Center for Immigration Studies ranked California the seventh most educated work force

for workers who had completed high school. In a follow-up analysis by the Center for Immigration Studies in 2008, California was at the bottom - 50th compared to all other states. This major decline was due to the increase in the number of immigrants who had entered the workforce during this 38 year time period (Camota & Ziegler, 2010).

Excluding the immigrant population, California would have been above the national average. Another measure of the impact of the increase in the number of unskilled immigrants entering the work force is income inequality. In 1970, California ranked 25th in income equality, and by 2008, it had become the sixth most unequal in income disparity. In addition to income inequality, a large percentage of employees with a low level of education had an impact on poverty levels, amount of taxes collected, and accessed social services (Camarota & Zeigler, 2010).

With more than 2.5 million students (mostly part-time) enrolled in more than 100 colleges throughout the state, California's community college system is the largest post-secondary educational system in the world. These colleges offer academic courses for associate degrees and opportunities for transfer to four-year colleges or universities, as well as courses focused on vocational skills, basic skills, ESL, and enrichment (Sengupta & Jepsen, 2006). With language being identified as one of the most significant obstacles to Low English Proficiency (LEP) students' vocational and academic success, the demand for courses and services to enhance ESL development will continue to increase in the future (Kuo, 1999). Community colleges in urban areas like New York City, San Francisco, and Miami have experienced the greatest increase in demand for ESL courses (CCIE, 2014).

Although there does not appear to be a uniform approach to meeting the needs of ESL students at community colleges, three major groups of students seem to emerge: 1) immigrants who arrived to their destination country before adolescence or children of immigrants born in the US (generation 1.5) who are seeking to achieve college-level oral and writing skills; 2) more recently arrived immigrants with varying levels of literacy in their first language; and 3) international students who come from a wide variety of cultures and speak many different native languages. International students generally have highly developed first language skills but may need to improve their English skills to continue their education in a new academic and cultural environment (Frodesen, J., et al., 2006). In a survey of California's community college campuses, 98% of institutional respondents reported they offered ESL classes. The ESL classes and percentages offered, as identified by the community college respondents, were as follows:

Table 1
Kinds of ESL Classes Offered at
California Community Colleges

Listening/speaking	81%
Writing	78%
Reading	73%
Grammar	71%
Multi-skill	59%
Reading/writing	54%
Speaking	27%
Listening	20%

Based on the responses, community colleges offered a wide range of classes at different levels of English proficiency in the different skill areas. In addition, most community

colleges indicated they had a separate ESL department that administered the courses (Frodesen, J., et al., 2006).

Among the various courses offered at the community college level, speaking skills seemed to be an area that could be emphasized even more as a separate course (currently at 27%). Students with different proficiency levels and varying vocational and academic pursuits could benefit from additional opportunities to develop speaking skills. A consortium of organizations –The Conference Board, Corporate Voices for Working Families, the Partnership for 21st Century Skills, and the Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM) –surveyed management and human resource professionals from 431 U.S. based employers to discover what range of skills new entrants into the U.S. workplace of the 21st century needed to be successful (The Conference Board et al., 2006). The researchers listed verbal communication as one of the applied skills most often mentioned. Furthermore, for high school students entering the workforce, 52.2% received a deficient rating and 45.9% received an adequate rating. The study also revealed 21.3% of two-year college graduates were identified as deficient and 75.4% as adequate. Four-year college graduates fared better with 9.8% receiving a deficiency rating, 65.4% receiving an adequate rating, and 24.8% excellent.

In an increasingly global economy, verbal communication is an applied skill that should be developed (The Conference Board et al., 2006). In a study of what former college students found essential to their careers, the respondents identified oral and written communication skills and public speaking among the most essential skills (Zekeri, 2004). Given the increased focus on assisting ESL students to develop speaking

skills at the community college level, it is necessary for them to have increased access to ESL resources. These resources can be supplemental to their course-work or integrated into course-work by instructors. Ultimately, these instructional strategies should be focused on highlighting collaborative learning and developing public speaking skills. By working with their peers in a small group setting, students can give and receive feedback to prepare for speaking in front of a larger group. This mutual support can provide necessary encouragement and reduce the anxiety level of communicating with others.

Purpose of the Project

The purpose of this project is to identify different strategies for ESL students in community colleges to develop their public speaking skills. Based on the review of literature, I determined this project will examine the following areas: 1) ways to reduce the fear and anxiety associated with public speaking; 2) the role of small groups in planning and presenting oral presentations; and 3) the use of feedback and self-help strategies to improve public speaking. The fear and anxiety of public speaking continues to be a common issue for many community college students. The added pressure of having to prepare and present in a second language adds another layer of difficulty for community college ESL students. The objective of this project is to empower these students to identify their areas of improvement in public speaking and develop them through various learning strategies. With increased self-confidence and strengthened public speaking skills, community college ESL students will be better prepared to succeed in their further education and as employees in the workforce.

Theoretical Framework

In the development of public speaking skills, the following theories are considered relevant to the ESL learner: 1) Stephen Krashen's affective filter hypothesis; 2) Lev Vygotsky's zone of proximal development; and 3) cooperative & collaborative learning. The affective filter hypothesis shows how affective factors, such as motivation, self-confidence, and anxiety impact the second language acquisition process either negatively or positively (Krashen, 1982). The zone of proximal development suggests teachers should use cooperative learning exercises and more skilled students to support less skilled students to succeed. Cooperative and collaborative learning theories are related to how members of learning communities can support each other in facilitating a more effective learning process. This section focuses on providing more detailed descriptions of each of the aforementioned theories.

The Affective Filter Hypothesis

Krashen (1982) introduces the affective filter hypothesis as the fifth hypothesis in his monitor model. He defines the affective filter as a screening device in the internal processing system that allows or prohibits the acceptance of new language input. The affective filter hypothesis considers all of the non-linguistic factors such as motivation, self-confidence, and anxiety that can impact second language acquisition. According to Krashen, learners who have a high level of motivation, a positive self-image, and self-confidence are usually more successful in second language acquisition. Learners with a low level of anxiety also tend to be better second language acquirers. Affective factors can impact second language acquisition by preventing information about the second

language to reach the language development centers of the brain. When affective filter variables such as fear or nervousness hinder comprehensible input, language acquisition either does not happen at all or the comprehensible input is reduced. When the affective filter is high, the learner may understand what he/she hears or reads; however, the input does not reach the Language Acquisition Device (LAD). When the learner's filter is low, the individual is not worried about failing to acquire the target language and sees himself/herself as a potential member of the group speaking the target language. (Krashen, 1982).

Krashen's hypothesis has received some criticism. Krashen claims that children lack the affective filter that prevents most adult second language learners from mastering a second language. However, all children do not have the same motivation, anxiety, and self-confidence that he attributes to differences between children and adults in their second language learning. Examples exist of adults who are able to acquire a second language with a nearly native-like proficiency, so what happens to the affective filter as a screening device in these instances? (Latifi, Ketabi, & Mohammadi, 2013).

Zone of Proximal Development

The Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) is a component of sociocultural theory, primarily attributed to the efforts of Len Vygotsky, a Russian psychologist, educator, and philosopher. Vygotsky's learning theories have five main ideas:

- 1) Learning precedes development;
- 2) Language is the main vehicle of thought;
- 3) Mediation is central to learning;

- 4) Social interaction is the basis of learning and development. Learning is a process of apprenticeship and internalization in which skills and knowledge are transformed from the social into the cognitive plane; and
- 5) The Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) is the primary activity space in which learning occurs (Walqui, 2006).

For the purposes of this research project the fifth idea, the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), has been identified as being most relevant for emphasizing scaffolding of social interaction in instruction for ESL students in the development of their public speaking skills.

The term scaffolding refers to a variety of support provided by teachers to facilitate learning by ESL students. The support tools may include simplifying language, visuals and graphics, modeling by the teacher, cooperative learning, and experiential learning (Bradley & Bradley, 2004). The idea behind scaffolding is to remove the support tools once learning has been achieved (Lajoie, 2005). The ZPD is most commonly defined as “the distance between the actual development level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers.” (Lajoie, 2005, p. 542). The ZPD was initially developed by Vygotsky as a research tool for children, especially those with disabilities. His goal was to determine the developmental/ learning capabilities of the children. At the time, available tests only assessed the present mental capacity of the children. The tests were conducted in an

individual, solitary manner. With ZPD, Vygotsky used techniques with more guidance and collaboration to more accurately assess future capabilities.

Cooperative and Collaborative Learning

The third theory to be applied in this research project is cooperative and collaborative learning, since they are closely related. As defined by Chou, 2011, cooperative learning pertains to the level of support that members of a group individually receive in order to learn from each other's strengths and weaknesses and achieve a particular goal. This goal is generally teacher-centered and directed. In contrast, collaborative learning (Panitz, 2000) is more of a philosophy that encourages consensus building and cooperation among group members. Collaborative learning is considered to be more student-oriented. The individuals in the group have more control of their actions and how they interact with each other. They learn to respect the abilities and contributions of each member of the learning community.

Jacobs and McCafferty identify the relationship of cooperative learning to second language acquisition and teaching in seven different areas: 1) the input hypothesis, 2) the interaction hypothesis, 3) the output hypothesis, 4) sociocultural theory, 5) content-based instruction, 6) individual differences, and 7) affective factors. Input for second language acquisition includes listening and reading. The output can only be observed through other types of observable interaction (as cited in Chou, 2011). Through cooperative learning students are able to speak and write to create a meaningful output. In the process, learners use their own sociocultural experiences, their individual differences, and affective factors to influence the group dynamics and outcome of the experience.

Cooperative learning can be classified into three types of learning groups: informal cooperative learning groups, formal cooperative learning groups, and cooperative based groups (Tran, 2013). In informal cooperative learning groups, students come together temporarily to work together to achieve a common, shared learning goal. These groups usually last no longer than a single class period. Teachers may use this type of group to help students focus on the task and discuss with another assigned student before and after a lecture. Formal cooperative learning groups last from a single class period up to several weeks. In this group setting, students work together to complete assigned learning tasks and to achieve shared learning goals. Cooperative based groups are more long term, lasting from a semester up to several years. The students commit to support each other to complete assignments and achieve academic progress.

Significance of the Project

The demand for ESL instruction is projected to grow as the percentage of immigrants in the overall U.S. and state-wide population grows. The need for ESL learners to become more proficient in their English skills as they seek vocational training or pursue higher academic levels is of great importance before their entry into the U.S. workforce. The community college is one venue that has the resources in place to accommodate students at varying levels of English proficiency. An important part of English proficiency is the development of oral communication skills. These skills are recognized by both employers and former students as important for new entrants seeking a job and for those wanting to progress in their careers. Oral communication skills are essential in a variety of job settings – professional, technical, or vocational.

The strategies presented in this project will help the community college ESL students to develop self-confidence, reduce their anxiety and fear, and become more self-sufficient in improving their public speaking skills. They will become more adept at giving and receiving feedback and using it to further enhance their skills. These newly acquired skills in public speaking will contribute to more opportunities for success in their academic and career pursuits.

Definition of Terms

Affective Filter: The impact of affective factors such as motivation, self-confidence, and anxiety on the ability of an individual to acquire a second language. A high or strong affective filter prevents language input from reaching the part of the brain that allows language learning. Individuals with a low or weak affective filter will seek and receive more input and thus learn more (Krashen, 1982).

English Language Learners (ELLs): Students who are learning English when it is not their native language.

English as a Second Language (ESL): English learned as a foreign language within the culture of an English-speaking country.

Generation 1.5 Students: Non-native English speakers who are attending postsecondary programs. They received most of their secondary education in the United States, but may still need additional English instruction, especially with writing (Crandall & Sheppard, 2004).

Idea units: An utterance of one or more syllables or words that has one common idea or topic. (De Grez, Valcke, & Roozen, 2009).

International (ESL) Students: Students who come to the United States with a study visa to do intensive English language study (Crandall & Sheppard, 2004).

Language Acquisition Device (LAD): Posited by Noam Chomsky in the 1960s as a device effectively present in the minds of children by which a grammar of their native language is constructed.

Language related episodes (LREs): a sequence of utterances discussing language areas of syntax, grammar, or word usage (Matthews, 2007).

Limited English Proficiency (LEP): An individual who has difficulties in speaking, reading, writing, or understanding the English language.

Scaffolding: Providing contextual supports meaning through the use of simplified language, teacher modeling, visuals and graphics, cooperative learning and hands-on learning

Second Language Learners: Students who are learning a language that they didn't acquire as their primary language.

Self-efficacy: The belief in one's ability to organize and execute the course of action to needed to achieve a desired result (De Grez, Valcke, & Roozen, 2009).

Teaching English as a Second Language (TESL) or Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL): The profession of English language teaching and the formal study of different aspects such as second language acquisition, methods of teaching English, the structure of English, intercultural communication, language assessment, and curriculum and materials design (Crandall & Sheppard, 2004).

CHAPTER II REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Introduction

Among students attending community colleges in the US, 24% come from immigrant backgrounds. Demand for courses focused on English as a Second Language (ESL) instruction has increased significantly in recent decades and is often considered essential for meeting the educational needs of immigrant students. With more than 100 community colleges throughout California, these institutions provide a variety of language enrichment courses to support the needs of ESL students. ESL classes focus on development of a range of skills from reading, writing, grammar, listening, to speaking. This project focuses on speaking skills as an important applied skill for ESL students to achieve higher education and advance in the workforce. Speaking skills are consistently an important applied skill for new entrants into the workplace.

Therefore, the purpose of this research project is to identify different strategies to help ESL students in community colleges to develop their public speaking skills. This review of literature covers three major areas: 1) fear and anxiety associated with public speaking; 2) the role of small groups in planning and delivering oral presentations; and 3) the use of feedback and self-help strategies to improve public speaking skills. Fear and anxiety in public speaking are common for many students. For ESL students, the challenge of completing oral presentations can result in even greater fear and anxiety because of a language barrier. The second key area examines the value of cooperative and collaborative learning techniques in small groups in planning and presenting oral presentations. The third area explores different types of feedback strategies by students

themselves, instructors, peers, tutors or mentors, inside and outside of the classroom. The objective is to empower ESL students to identify areas of improvement in public speaking through various strategies highlighted in this project. With increased self-confidence and newly acquired public speaking skills, ESL students in community colleges will be better prepared to succeed in their future educational pursuits and as employees in the workforce.

Fear and Anxiety Associated with Public Speaking

This section examines the fear of public speaking by posing three different questions. Is public speaking still more feared than death? What are some individual perceptions about public speaking anxiety? What are some sources of speaking anxiety by EFL speakers? All of these questions are answered by examining various related literature (Dwyer & Davidson, 2012; MacInnis, Mackinnon, & MacIntyre, 2010; Subasi, 2010).

Professional speakers, writers, and public speaking instructors have often made the statement that Americans ranked public speaking as their number one fear ahead of death. The suggestion is most people would rather die than speak in public. Dwyer and Davidson (2012), educators from the University of Nebraska's School of Communication, investigated the origin of this commonly held view. Their 2010 study replicated a previous one to see if there had been a change in attitudes among Americans about public speaking. Originally, R. H. Bruskin Associates, a market research firm, conducted a survey 40 years ago using a list of the top 14 fearful situations Americans had. In December 1973, the Speech Communication Association published the detailed

results in *Spectra*. The results appeared in the London *Sunday Times* and also later in *The Book of Lists* under the heading “The Fourteen Worst Human Fears.”

In April 1973, Bruskin Associates surveyed 2,543 adult men and women by telephone. The surveyors read a list of 14 situations and asked each participant to indicate if each item was a fear they had experienced. The surveyors did not ask them to rank their fears from highest to lowest. The list included public speaking among the possible fears. A recent comparative study, conducted in 2010, consisted of 815 college students from a large Midwestern university: 372 were men and 416 were women. The remaining 27 students did not identify their gender. The students were enrolled in a basic communication course. Participants’ educational level ranged from 49.3% who had completed high school; 23.4% college freshmen; 13.5% college sophomores; 7.5% college juniors; 2.5% college seniors; and 1% had a bachelor’s degree or higher.

The survey had three main questions. The survey first asked participants to check items from a list of 14 things (same items as in the Bruskin survey) that made them fearful or anxious. The second survey item asked them to rank their top three fears using the same list. The third survey question focused on public speaking. Instructors asked the students to complete a voluntary online survey on the first day of class.

The results of the study revealed public speaking still ranked as number one among common fears. Participants chose the fear of public speaking at 61.7% in the 2010 survey, compared to 40.6% in the 1973 Bruskin survey. Death ranked third with 43.2% in the 2010 survey, compared to seventh or 18.7% in 1973. The results of the second question, which asked the students to rank their top three fears, public speaking ranked

second (18.4%) right after death which was number one (20%). The third survey question assessed participants' public speaking anxiety compared to their fear of speaking. The results indicated those who had a high level of public speaking anxiety, also tended to rank public speaking as their top fear.

In comparing the two studies, some differences and similarities emerged. In the 1973 survey, researchers contacted men and women from a cross-section of the US. The 2010 survey consisted of all college students from the University of Nebraska, who were preparing to take a public speaking course. The results of the 2010 study were more relevant to my project because it focused on ESL students in a community college setting. However, in both surveys, public speaking was identified as the number one fear when participants chose from the list of 14 common fears. This finding supported the significance of my project.

Whereas the previous study focused on individuals' perceptions of public speaking through a survey, MacInnis et al. (2010) conducted two studies to examine two different perceptions by individuals regarding nervousness in public speaking. The first study evaluated a phenomenon called the "illusion of transparency," a belief by public speakers that their nervousness is more visible to their audience than it really is, and the second one sought to confirm the belief that public speaking anxiety is normal for most people. The first study attempted to replicate a 2003 study by Safitsky and Gilovich, which evaluated the frequency of a speaker's either overestimating or underestimating the audience's perception of his or her anxiety.

Researchers conducted the first study with students who were taking an introductory public speaking course. The students participated in different parts of the study: measurement of the trait of public speaking anxiety (PSA) by 102 participants; completion of speaker surveys of situational and reflected appraisal of PSA by 93 participants; and 66 students completed both the trait and speaker surveys.

Before the testing session, participants self-assessed their fear level for PSA after giving a speech. During the speeches, audience members rated the anxiety level of the speakers. Upon completion of their speeches, the participants measured their own anxiety levels (situational PSA), and they also measured how they thought the audience rated them during their speeches.

The results showed that participants rated their own situational anxiety levels higher than the audience rated them. The speakers' imagined ratings by the audience were also significantly higher than the actual ratings by the audience. Both hypotheses for study one were supported. First, the speakers' own anxiety ratings were higher than the audience's. Second, the speakers' situational PSA and their reflected ratings had a high correlation. Forty-nine percent rated their anxiety higher than the ratings by the audience, with 15% rating their own anxiety and the reflected appraisal the same. However, over one-third of the speakers (36%) thought the audience observed higher PSA than what they actually did.

Study two attempted to answer the question of whether or not people believe that it is normal to have a high level of PSA. The participants in study two were 183 university students. Ninety percent of the students were ages 18-21. Over one-half (60%)

were female. The remainder were male (33.9%) or did not identify their gender (6.1%). The majority of the students (73.8%) had never taken an introductory communication course. Participants completed a survey in which they identified the PSA level of an average person (scale of 1-10). They also rated their own PSA level using the same scale. Additionally, they rated the percentage of people they thought were extremely nervous in speaking before a group, compared to the percentage that experienced no anxiety.

The study two results supported the researchers' first hypothesis that an extremely anxious speaker was more common (50.6%) than an extremely calm one (22.7%). The second hypothesis that an extremely anxious person was normal was also supported. A typical person received a mean rating of 6.87 (using 6.0 as a theoretical midpoint). The third hypothesis that the average person's anxiety level was higher than their own was also supported. Participants rated 88.5% of the typical person's anxiety as 6.0 or higher, compared to only 65% of their own anxiety levels as being 6.0 or higher.

The conclusions from study one supported the illusion of transparency phenomenon that nervousness is more apparent to others than it really is, when speakers delivered a public speech to an audience. Nevertheless, 36% of the speakers thought that the audience would rate them as being more nervous. The researchers' assertion in study two that public speaking anxiety was typical was supported by the study results. More participants than not experienced high levels of public speaking anxiety.

However, there were limitations to the studies. The first group of students was taking a public speaking class, whereas the second group was not. The two studies did not compare the age or sex of the speakers. MacInnis et al. did not make an effort to see

how the illusion of transparency correlated to the general perception that everyone experiences high anxiety in public speaking. In terms of applicability to my project with ESL students in a community college setting, neither study addressed how to identify strategies to reduce student anxiety in public speaking situations.

Although the previous study involved native English speakers in a university setting in Canada, the next study (Subaşı, 2010) took place at a university setting in Turkey with EFL students in the second term of their academic year. The study included 55 college freshmen, ages 17 to 19, with 36 female participants and 19 males. All participants were native Turkish speakers. The study consisted of three primary research questions: 1) What was the relationship of a student's anxiety level and his or her fear of negative evaluation?; 2) What was the relationship between a student's anxiety level and his or her own opinions about his or her ability to speak English?; and 3) Do both of these combined factors, fear of negative evaluation and one's opinion about his or her speaking ability, contribute to the student's anxiety level?

The researchers conducting the study used a survey with 55 multiple choice questions. The study was divided into five parts to identify the possible sources of the students' foreign language anxiety. These parts and their associated measurements were as follows:

- 1) The fear of receiving a negative evaluation (FNE) was measured on a scale of 1 to 5 (from not at all characteristic to extremely characteristic);
- 2) The student's level of anxiety in the foreign language classroom (FLCAS) consisted of 20 items applying a scale of 1 to 5 (from strongly disagree to

strongly agree);

- 3) The student's ability to perform 15 different oral classroom tasks (SR-CDS) using a scale of 1 to 3 (from with great difficulty or not at all to quite easily);
- 4) The student rated his or her current level of speaking proficiency in English if evaluated by a native speaker (SR-CL). The four areas of proficiency being measured included pronunciation, fluency, grammatical accuracy, and overall speaking ability. The scale ranged from 1 to 5, with 1 being poor and 5 being very good; and
- 5) Based on the survey results, researchers conducted an interview with the most anxious students as reflected in the poor grades they received in speaking classes.

The participants completed the survey during class with a time limit of 25 minutes. The only personal information required in the survey was the gender. Fifteen of the students were selected for the questionnaire component of the study, which took 10-15 minutes. During the interview, the researchers asked participants to identify the reasons for their anxiety in oral speaking to determine the main sources for its existence.

The results of the study for the first question showed that the student's level of fear of negative evaluation translated into an increased anxiety level in the classroom. The second question results showed that the higher a student rated his or her abilities the lower his or her anxieties in the classroom. Additionally, the findings showed negative relationships for three of the scales that the researchers used as self-measurements: SR-CDS, SR-CL, and SR-EPE. Among the three models used for self-rating of English

abilities, the combination of the FNE, SR-CL, and SR-CDS appeared to be the best predictor. The 15 students who participated in the interview part of the study offered further insight to explain their poor performance. Students who felt they did not have the necessary skills to succeed in speaking experienced a higher level of speaking anxiety. The students who had high expectations for themselves and were unable to fulfill those expectations as a consequence suffered more from speaking anxiety. Students also commented on their disinterest in the subjects and activities found in their speaking textbooks. The negative way the teacher responded to the students when they made a mistake further fueled their anxiety levels. This included using a harsh tone of voice or interrupting the student to make corrections during his or her efforts to speak.

Some implications for this study are teachers should identify positive ways to help students and thus lower their anxiety levels. Modifications of activities and materials that will be more engaging and tied to the students own interests would potentially reduce their speaking anxiety and encourage them to speak more. One limitation of this study is that it focused on the student's self-perception of his or her performance. A more objective measure of his or her performance by the teacher or their peers could offer a different evaluation assessment of the student's speaking abilities. The expectation of an EFL student to be able to speak with native-like proficiency is unrealistic; therefore, the researchers' use of native speakers as evaluators of their abilities appears to have been a questionable component of the study.

All three articles identified public speaking as a common fear that affects many people. Each of the articles involved college students as the participants in different

studies, although none of the studies were with ESL students in a community college setting. The value of the three articles is that they confirm that fear and anxiety are real problems, which supports the need to identify strategies for ESL students to control their anxiety levels during public speaking.

The Role of Small Groups in Planning and Delivering Oral Presentations

The previous section highlighted fear and anxiety in public speaking. This section examines how small groups can be used to help students in planning and delivering their oral presentations. Cooperative and collaborative learning are important in examining the role of small groups in planning and delivering oral presentations. A basic premise in cooperative learning is students learn best through collaboration in small groups to complete assigned tasks both inside and outside of the classroom. In working in small groups, students develop interpersonal skills, learn how to work with others, manage their time, practice oral communication skills, and share knowledge and understanding of the subject (Kagesten & Engelbrecht, 2007). This section discusses three different studies of small groups (Chou, 2011; Tuan & Neomy, 2007; Kagesten & Engelbrecht, 2007).

The purpose of the first study was to investigate how different learning strategies can be used in cooperative and individual learning. The study also identified the benefits cooperative learning offered to students who were seeking to improve their speaking abilities in English. The study group consisted of 52 third-year French major college students in Taiwan enrolled in a Professional English Course. The course covered a wide-range of topics including computer technology, medicine, law, space exploration, sports, and the environment. One of the course requirements was to give oral presentations.

Students had to read articles and research themes in the course book to prepare their presentations (Chou, 2011). The researcher used interviews, questionnaires, and oral assessments to collect and analyze the data.

The data collection took place in two stages. In the first stage, students gave presentations in groups. Students formed twelve groups, with four to six members in each group. Each group gave two presentations during the semester. Each student had to complete a questionnaire about learning strategies as applied in a cooperative learning setting. The second stage took place during the second semester. The same participants had to give two individual presentations. After completing their presentations, they had to complete a questionnaire similar to the one from the first semester. The context changed from cooperative learning to individual learning. Both sets of presentations were six to seven minutes. In addition, the researcher developed a language performance scale to evaluate the group and individual oral presentations. Criteria included organization, content, fluency, pronunciation, and vocabulary. One of the teachers rated the students' presentations. The results of the study compared the five major categories of strategies: 1) Metacognitive Strategies, 2) Cognitive Strategies, 3) Communication Strategies, and 4) Retrieval and Rehearsal Strategies

Metacognitive strategies included efficiency, connecting ideas, organization, understanding knowledge, and the learning process. For each of these areas, the percentage of students using metacognitive strategies was significantly higher in the individual presentations. For the group presentations, although the group chose the main topic, each student chose their own sub-topics. This impacted creating an integrated

presentation. The majority of students (82.7%) also felt the individual presentations afforded them a greater opportunity to improve their oral proficiency in English.

Cognitive strategies included writing new words, pronunciation, note-taking, skimming, scanning, and summarizing. The research indicated no significant difference between the individual and group presentations. The students used cognitive strategies extensively in both types of presentations. The students needed to collect and prepare data for their presentations as an essential step in both individual and group presentations.

Communication strategies during their presentations included the use of gestures, new words, synonyms, unfinished messages, and use of their native language (L1). Students tended to use these strategies less frequently in their individual presentations, compared to their group presentations. Retrieval and rehearsal strategies included memorization, use of cues to help remember, and time spent rehearsing. Students found it easier to memorize and retrieve information with the use of visual aids in the group presentations compared to their individual ones. Only 34.6 % of the students found it easy to retrieve information in their individual presentations. With so much information to prepare, they could not remember it all. Students used rehearsal techniques more frequently in individual presentations compared to the group presentations. For group presentations, students found it difficult to find a convenient time when everyone could meet. A majority of the students (86.5%) thought rehearsal helped them to learn more English and to speak more fluently during their presentations.

In addition to strategies, the researcher measured the students' language performance during their presentations in the areas of organization, content, fluency,

pronunciation, and vocabulary. Two-thirds of the student groups had more difficulty in summarizing main points and drawing conclusions during their group presentations. For the individual presentations students had more organized and connected content, with clearer introductions and conclusions. Most students presented fluent presentations, although in the individual ones they paused more frequently to find correct grammar and vocabulary. Students experienced similar difficulties in both presentations in their pronunciation and use of vocabulary due to the high level of technical content and new vocabulary. In the students' self-assessment, they identified content and fluency as the most challenging components of their presentations.

The researcher found differences between the individual and group performance in the various strategies they used. Students used metacognitive, retrieval, and rehearsal strategies more frequently in the individual presentations. On the other hand, they used communication strategies more often in the group presentations. These different strategies had an impact on the outcome of their language performance. Although the individual presentations allowed for a more complete learning experience, cooperative learning in the group presentations gave the students more professional knowledge to develop their linguistic skills and to prepare and deliver a presentation.

Some limitations of the study were the small homogeneous group (52 third-year French majors enrolled in an English class). The students knew each other prior to the study and had some influence in their choice of group. Circumstances do not often allow for this to happen in most college settings. This was in an EFL college setting in Taiwan, so all speakers shared the same first language, facilitating communication with each

other. Also, the students had extensive language experience in their own L1, Chinese, as well as being second language learners of both French and English.

In terms of applicability to my project, ESL students in a community college setting will likely be quite diverse in backgrounds, ages, languages, cultures, and speaking abilities. This results in even greater challenges in the development of strategies for these ESL students to develop their speaking skills. The study provided an excellent framework, by offering a balanced approach from the perspectives of the researcher, the student, and the teacher as participants in the study. Chou looked at a number of different learning strategies that pointed out the complexities of becoming an effective, competent public speaker in a second language. The researcher clearly laid out and presented the relative advantages and disadvantages of cooperative learning. This study also highlighted many useful ideas for developing my project and using cooperative learning activities to enhance learning by ESL students in a community college.

The next study was conducted in an EFL college classroom in Vietnam. While the previous study (Chou, 2011) looked at both planning and preparation of both group and individual presentations by somewhat highly-skilled third-year college students majoring in French, this more modest study specifically focused on pre-task group planning in a mixed-skills college classroom in Vietnam and its impact on post-planning individual performance in oral presentations (Tuan & Neomy, 2007). The researchers used a much smaller sample of students (22 students compared to 52 students in the previous study). This study with Vietnamese students did not include their perceptions of working in a group setting as part of the research methodology compared to the previous study.

The Tuan and Neomy study took place in an EFL classroom at a college in Hanoi, Vietnam. The study focused on a 90-minute weekly session for developing the learners' speaking skills over a 12 week period. The research questions of the study addressed the actions of the groups during the pre-planning phase and how the individual presentations benefitted from the group planning.

Twenty-two students from one EFL class were the subjects of the study, all males, ranging from 20 to 23 years of age. All students were starting their second year in college with proficiency levels ranging from 5-9 on a 10 point scale. The researchers conducted the study during an entire 12 week semester. Students received a random assignment to a group of five students, and the teacher gave the students the topic for each session. Two students from each group, randomly chosen, gave a two-minute oral presentation on the topic after the discussion period. Researchers audio-recorded both group planning and oral presentations. Researchers recorded only one group per session. The teacher allowed the students to take notes during the planning, until the time came for them to present individually. Researchers transcribed recordings of four group planning sessions and presentations by eight students (two per group). Groups varied in proficiency levels. Group I was relatively high. Group II was mid-range. Group III had a relatively low proficiency. Group V had a mixture of proficiency levels. Group IV was not included, due to frequent absences by its group members.

Researchers transcribed the data for the group discussions and individual presentations into episodes – a spoken word, sentence, or turn. They identified two types of episodes: language related episodes (LREs), a sequence of utterances discussing

language areas of syntax, grammar, word usage, or idea units. Researchers received assistance from an experienced teacher from the college to code the LREs and idea units of each group. Researchers reviewed group talk data and compared it with individual presentations for common idea units. They used a similar procedure to match the LREs in the group transcript with those in the individual presentations.

The research showed variations among the groups for both idea units and LREs. Groups I and V had the highest number of idea units per minute – 6.6 and 6.5 respectively. Group II had 6.3 and Group III had the lowest with 4.3. Group I was the highest proficiency group, and Group V was mixed-proficiency. Group III had the lowest proficiency of the four groups which explains their low numbers. The number of LREs among groups varied widely: Group V, the mixed-proficiency group had a total of 14 LREs, 12 associated with word choice and idea expression and the other two for mechanics that dealt with pronunciation. Groups I and III only had three combined, all lexically-based.

The results of the individual presentations showed that over 90% of the ideas from the Group V presenters originated from the pre-task group planning. In total, more than 50% of the four combined groups' idea units came from the group planning sessions. The lowest presentation scores came from Group I, Speaker 2 (41.7%) and Group III, Speaker 1 (51.6%). Group 5 was the only group that showed any LREs matching, with five out of the 14 being used in the two individual presentations.

The findings showed the groups focused more on content rather than the language of the presentations that followed. The researchers offered several explanations. Previous

studies on planning indicate that generally language learners focus more on meaning than form. The presentations were for practice only, and the teacher was not grading their performance. They did not receive any particular guidance about what to focus on during their planning. The lower proficiency groups probably did not have the skills to focus on language skills. Group V, the mixed-proficiency group, which had the most language interaction, came up with and clarified more ideas, asked more questions, and encouraged each other during their planning sessions. Although this study showed the mixed-proficiency group benefitted the most from small group planning, all other groups showed positive results, as well. Language teachers should be encouraged to implement small group planning as an integral part of their curriculum.

The small sample size makes it impossible to generalize the results. The researchers used the proficiency ratings for the students from the prior year which may have affected the reliability of the results. This study focused on the planning and group interaction rather than fluency, accuracy, and quality of the language during the presentations. Also, this study did not analyze the affective factors that may have influenced the dynamics and interaction within each group. For my own research project, the setting is quite different for ESL students attending a community college in the US. This EFL group in Vietnam had a shared language and culture, to facilitate learning in a group setting. Nevertheless, this study confirmed the value of using mixed groups in a cooperative learning situation and as a more general sheltering technique to aid students in the delivery of an individual oral presentation.

The third study on group planning moved from an EFL college setting in a language classroom in Vietnam to a college setting in a mathematics classroom in Sweden. This study involved peer learning in which students used oral presentations to solve math problems and explain the theoretical background in mathematics. This article showed how oral presentations could be used as a method for learning and assessing. The focus on peer learning applied a more collaborative learning approach with the teacher as observer and evaluator, and the students as leaders in the learning experience. Unlike the previous two studies, the college class was taught in the students' L1, Swedish, rather than English.

Kagestan and Engelbrecht (2007) conducted their study at the Linköping University in Sweden. The study participants were first year engineering students enrolled in a mathematics class. The teachers assigned the students to groups of four to five students each. The teacher assigned the entire class around 10 problems to be completed prior to the lecture period, and each group received two to three problems they had to prepare and present before the class. The group presentation lasted about 20 minutes, with 5-10 minutes for class discussion. After class, the teacher provided private feedback to the group of students. The teacher evaluated the presentations and assigned the students a grade. The presentations consisted of five different learning opportunities: 1) preparing the presentation, 2) presenting the math teaching, 3) listening by the rest of the class to the presenters, 4) discussion by all students, and 5) feedback provided by the teacher to the group outside of class.

The researchers divided the study into three different stages. In stage one, the researchers surveyed students and teachers to share their past experiences with the presentation format of the mathematics class which had been used for several earlier semesters. Students completed a questionnaire, and the researchers interviewed each of the teachers. The researchers then shared the results with the students and teachers. Stage one included 98 students and nine teachers. The researchers then developed three different guides - one for the teachers, an information guide for students, and a presentation guide for students to be used in future classes.

Stage two followed the same format as stage one. Students completed a questionnaire, and researchers interviewed the teachers. A total of 132 students completed the questionnaire, and the researchers interviewed five teachers. For stage three, Kagestan and Engelbrecht conducted a more qualitative study. They selected six students to interview individually and get their opinions about whether they saw the presentations as a learning experience or as an assessment tool for the teacher. They also asked the students to identify which part of the presentation experience was the most productive.

The results of stage one included the following comments from the students: They enjoyed the experience, but they asked for more help with presentation skills. Students' comments about their teachers during the presentations ranged from their being supportive, showing empathy, motivating the students, and providing a learning environment. Other students felt the teachers interfered too often, only offered negative

comments, or did not provide enough feedback. The majority of students (76%) considered the presentations to be an effective assessment tool.

In stage two the researchers incorporated some of the students' suggestions into the guides to help the students and the teachers. As a result, 80% of the teachers received positive comments from their students in the second survey. In the area of feedback, 85% of the students were satisfied with their teachers' feedback, compared to only 31% in stage one. Students' opinions were similar in both surveys. In stage two, students gave the following responses: happy about presentations (45%); stimulated (57%); nervous (59%); challenging (65%). They found 66% of the other students' presentations to be interesting, 49% informative, and 29% boring. The students rated the assessment component of the presentations as 90% positive after stage two, compared to 76% after stage one. For stage three, students offered generally favorable opinions about their experiences with the presentation process.

Overall, the students found the group's preparation for the presentations as the most helpful to their learning. Kagestan and Engelbrecht also found the feedback session afterwards with the teacher to be helpful. The actual presentation itself was not found to as helpful as listening to the other students' presentations.

A limitation of this study was that it was a specialized part of academic learning in engineering and other technical areas. Since the classes were conducted in Swedish, there was no use of a second language as a component of the learning experience. The main application for my research study with ESL students is further confirmation of the value of collaboration and working in groups. The study did not address the composition

of the groups but from the comments from students interviewed in stage three, the academically stronger students helped the other students to learn and understand the mathematical concepts. As in the previous study, the value of mixed-level groups seemed to be reinforced to facilitate successful outcomes for all students regardless of the academic setting.

The research for this section on the role of small groups in the planning and delivering of oral presentations showed that small groups offer many positive benefits for second language learners. In the planning and preparation stages for an oral presentation, students employed a variety of metacognitive, cognitive, communication, retrieval, and rehearsal learning strategies (Chou, 2011). These various strategies highlighted some of the complexities of becoming an effective public speaker for the ESL student. Through cooperative learning in group presentations, students gained more professional knowledge to develop their linguistic skills and to prepare and to deliver an oral presentation. Without direction and guidance in working in small groups, students tended to spend more time on developing content, compared to language and presentation skills. In forming groups for planning purposes, mixed-proficiency groups tended to provide a more beneficial learning experience for language learners (Tuan & Neomy, 2007). Use of cooperative learning in small groups could also be valuable for students who are learning complex mathematics and technical data. Students learned from each other and developed skills in sharing knowledge and explaining mathematical concepts to others (Kagesten & Engelbrecht, 2007).

All three of these studies supported the value of collaborative learning in small groups. Students learned from each other, helped each other in preparing their presentations, generated and shared ideas, and provided valuable feedback resulting in more effective oral presentations. Some drawbacks of collaborative learning as observed in one or more of the articles are the extra time involved in organizing and coordinating group interaction – inside and outside of the classroom setting, the difficulty of keeping the group together due to absences or scheduling conflicts, and the dynamics of the group itself – how well the members get along with each other and contribute equally in the achievement of the tasks. In spite of these limitations, the research in the use of collaborative and peer learning supports the importance of my research project in developing strategies for ESL students in community colleges to improve their public speaking skills.

The Use of Feedback and Self-help Strategies to Improve Public Speaking Skills

The literature in this section examines different types of feedback and self-help strategies that speakers use to improve their public speaking skills. Feedback for public speakers may come from many different sources including self-assessment, teachers, tutors, peers, and mentors. The literature emphasizes the value of students becoming more autonomous in their learning by setting goals and assuming greater responsibility for their own learning. The section includes the following five articles: (De Grez, Valcke, & Roozen, 2009; DiBartolo & Molina, 2010; Hincks & Edund, 2009;

Bhattacharyya, Patil, & Sargunan, 2010; Langan, Shuker, Cullen, Penney, Preziosi, & Wheeler, 2008).

The first article analyzed goal-setting, self-reflection and personal characteristics of freshman university students in Belgium. Participants in the study were enrolled in a psychology class and were all seeking Bachelor of Arts in Business Administration. The article suggested that students used their first language, French, in class. The course required students to prepare and deliver three oral presentations. The research participants included 101 students, 70 males and 31 females (De Grez et al., 2009). Students also completed two questionnaires that focused on various student characteristics and background information. Researchers developed other instruments to assess the quality of the oral presentations. Researchers used the following measurement instruments for student characteristics and the student learning process:

1. The goal orientation measurement PALS (Patterns of Adaptive Learning Survey) measured subscales with five or six items of goal orientation (task goal, performance approach, and performance avoidance);
2. The domain – specific learning conceptions that was originally used for social work students was redesigned to create a questionnaire for oral presentations. The scale included 27 items to assess four different learning conceptions that included the constructivist, the text-based, the model-based, and the pragmatic;
3. A scale for self-efficacy measured the strength of students' beliefs in their abilities in different aspects of public speaking, in content, delivery, and

overall self-evaluation. The students' questionnaire included 10 items that they rated on a scale of 1 to 10 (1 –I cannot do this at all. 10- I am absolutely sure I can do this); and

4. Researchers asked students to rate various aspects of their own learning process for each of their three oral presentations (using a 5-point Likert scale). This ranged from the time they spent preparing for the presentation; any outside assistance that they sought; and how they felt about their progress.

At the start of the academic year, the researchers gathered background information about the students. Students received a theoretical introduction to communication, effective non-verbal behavior and oral presentations. Students were then randomly assigned to one of four groups: 1) general presentation goal and no self-reflection; 2) general presentation goal and self-reflection; 3) personal specific presentation goal setting and no self-reflection; and 4) personal specific presentation goal setting and self-reflection.

Each of the students participated in three sessions that researchers videotaped and monitored. Each presentation was three minutes in length. The size of the audience varied. Students gave a presentation to high school students about two different topics: the choice of courses during the last two years of high school and the college program in business administration. Depending on the group assignment, prior to the presentation the researcher asked the student to focus on the general presentation and how to improve it or asked the student to choose a specific set of objectives from a list that was provided. For

the self-reflection variable, the researcher asked the students in those two groups to look at the video recording after the presentation and evaluate what went well, what did not go so well, and why, and what did they learn that could be helpful in the next presentation. For the students in the two groups without self-reflection, the researcher did not pose these type or questions. The students received additional assessment on their first and third presentations by a group of six experienced faculty members who had a background in language education. The faculty members did not assess their own students and did not know about the research questions.

For Hypothesis one: the impact of the instructional intervention, all students showed significant improvement in the period between the first and last presentations. The least improvement occurred in the areas of eye contact and vocal delivery. Research findings showed that instructions at the beginning seemed to help students especially with content and delivery of their presentations. The students who received the benefit of self-reflection, unexpectedly, did not perform better than the students in the other groups. Students who had the topic about the college program in business scored higher than those who talked about the high school classes- especially when the college topic was given last.

Hypothesis two predicted goal setting, self-reflection, and specific student characteristics are significant predictors of oral presentation skills. The results showed that self-efficacy was the most important predictor of a successful oral presentation. The students' pre-test self-efficacy beliefs were a more accurate predictor for performance at

the pre-test level, but not for the post-test levels. Researchers thought that the students may have changed their self-efficacy beliefs after delivering their first presentation.

De Grez et al. identified several limitations of their study. They had no control over questions that students asked during the study. The prior experience of some students in giving oral presentations was not identified in the study. This could have impacted their level of self-efficacy prior to their participation in the study and the outcome at the end. The total study time was only three hours. As a consequence, this short time frame did not allow for any significant improvement in such areas as vocal variety or eye contact.

De Grez et al. offered several recommendations. The researchers suggested that educators should encourage students to set goals to develop their abilities in oral presentations. Instruction and feedback should emphasize the importance of internalizing success. Feedback via video recording of presentations seemed to stimulate students' self-reflection, thus researchers thought that more study in this area would be useful. This study provided useful suggestions in helping students to identify specific areas to focus on in preparing their oral presentations. As they become more aware of their strengths and weaknesses as a speaker, through self-reflection and goal setting, they have more control over the outcome, rather than being totally dependent on their teachers or peers to receive feedback. This process could lead to their becoming more confident speakers by applying these strategies, one of the primary objectives of my project.

While the previous study focused more broadly on students' use of self-reflection and personal learning strategies to acquire public speaking skills, DiBartolo and Molina

(2010) explored and offered a self-directed exercise, a cognitive model of speech anxiety, to help college students reduce their anxiety levels. Public Speaking Anxiety (PSA) has been identified as the anxiety that arises as a result of an individual's anticipation of receiving a negative evaluation from an audience. PSA can evolve into a phobia. A phobia is distinguished from a fear by the level of intensity and the impact on a person's life. At the phobia level, an individual will avoid any public speaking situation (Dwyer & Davidson, 2012). Many college-level public speaking courses offer skills-based curricula to help students develop their skills. The rationale is with the proper skills and preparation students will overcome their anxiety and fears. Although this approach has moderate success, it tends to have a minimal impact on reducing anxiety levels. Even students who have experience in giving presentations have anxiety about their performance, such as forgetting key points and being judged and humiliated by the audience. To counter this negative self-talk before a presentation, the researchers, from Smith College's Psychology Department, identified an exercise to minimize the fear factor.

Before the presentation instructors provided the students (first year college students in a psychology class) with a form to complete a written exercise. Instructors explained to the students that most anxiety was related to worry about something negative happening during the presentation. The exercise involved the students identifying their worst fears and assigning a probability of their actually occurring. This could include running out of things to say or the audience's laughing at them during the presentation. Students based their predictions on occurrences from the past. They also

predicted how they would respond if their worst fear were to come true. Additionally, they compared the possible outcome to other terrible events that had really happened to them in the past. For example, if the person forgot something, they would pause until they found their place.

First-year college students who used this exercise in a psychology class before some of their presentations (Molina & DiBartolo as cited in DiBartolo & Molina, 2010) showed significantly less fear of negative outcomes compared to students in another psychology class who did not participate in the activity. The reduction in anxiety continued during and after the presentation. The students found this model to be helpful in the preparation and delivery of their speeches, as well.

Based on the positive outcome that students experienced, the researchers recommended this exercise be used in conjunction with a skills-based approach to speech preparation in a variety of class settings. Since the students completed the exercise outside of class, it would not interfere with the normal curriculum. This exercise predicted more accurately a reduction in the level of the students' anxiety than the amount of time students spent planning and preparing a presentation. The outcome seemed to be mostly subjective and based on the students' perception of the usefulness of the exercise. For my own research project, this exercise tool would seem to be worth using to help ESL students reduce their anxiety before and during an oral presentation. It seems to align well with the goal-setting and self-reflection strategies discussed in the previous article.

Whereas the two previous studies involved the use of cognitive skills to help students develop their presentation skills and to reduce their anxiety levels, the next study investigated the use of technology to help ESL learners to improve their pitch variation through auditory and visual feedback in delivering oral presentations. The researchers, Hincks and Edlund (2009), chose a group of 14 Chinese engineering students enrolled in Intermediate and Advanced English classes at a large technical university in Sweden to participate in the study. The purpose of the study was to determine if students who received online visual feedback on the presence and quantity of their pitch variation would lead to a permanent change in the level of pitch variation in their speaking. The control group received only auditory feedback, whereas the test group also received visual feedback.

Hincks and Edlund tested the following hypotheses: 1) Visual feedback will result in a greater increase in pitch variation compared to audio feedback alone; 2) Participants who receive the visual feedback will be able to produce a variation in pitch that will result in a new way of speaking; 3) Participants in the visual feedback group will be more pleased with their training outcome compared to the control group.

The study began with each student giving a five-minute presentation that was recorded into a computer and also videotaped. These audio recordings were used to prepare individualized training materials for each student. A set of utterances was chosen to represent contrastive movement in pitch spoken by each student. The researcher, a native American English speaker, also recorded her voice as a model of comparison to the flatter patterns of each student.

Researchers then randomly assigned each student to either the control or test group. The students completed three hours of one-half hour sessions over a four-week period. Training took place in a private language lab where students practiced their ten utterances between 20 and 30 times. Test group students received feedback via a meter that measured in green bars the level of their pitch variation. The absence of pitch generated yellow lights, as a signal to the test group participants. In contrast, the control group only listened to recordings of their utterances without the additional feedback. The students then gave a second speech on a different topic. The same type of feedback as before was given to each group. After completing the training, students gave a third ten-minute presentation that was audio- recorded. Additionally, researchers asked students to complete a questionnaire about how they felt about the training. The last part of the study assessed the impact of the training on the students' naturalness in speaking. Evaluators compared the first and second speeches in the areas of naturalness, liveliness, pronunciation, and intelligibility.

Results showed that the test group experienced the most improvement in pitch variation, although both groups showed lasting results after the training was over. The conclusion of the study was that this type of feedback could be a useful tool for practicing and developing oral presentation skills. The tool has application not only for Chinese speakers, who have a more monotone vocal quality and would provide the greatest challenge in improving their vocal pitch but for other non-native English speakers as well. This tool seemed to be useful for ESL speakers who were trying to develop their public speaking skills in the area of pitch variation. Greater variation in pitch would lead

to increased clarity in their delivery allowing for greater comprehension by the audience resulting in a more attentive audience. A limitation of the study was the cost of providing this type of tool in all classroom settings and the added teacher resources and time required to support its use.

The purpose of the next study in this section was to get feedback from Engineering students and working professionals to identify important qualities that created an effective technical presentation compared to the previous articles' focus on how the ESL student can use technology to receive visual and auditory feedback to enhance his/her oral communication skills. The methodologies included a quantitative approach using a questionnaire as well as a qualitative method of interviewing the participants. A combination of observation by researchers, assessment by teachers, and student questionnaires was used to elicit results (Bhattacharyya et al., 2010).

Bhattacharyya et al., who were educators and language communication teachers from Malaysia and Australia, conducted a two-phase study. The first stage was a survey questionnaire completed by 130 engineering students in their final year of study at a technical university in Malaysia. Researchers used quantitative analysis to identify the students' perceptions of the most important factors required to prepare and deliver an effective oral presentation. The questionnaire included 25 items. Responses were given on a scale ranging from 1 to 7, with 1 being strongly disagree, 7 being strongly agree and 4 as the neutral point.

The second phase of the study, the qualitative component, was based on information derived from the quantitative survey in the previous phase. This second

phase consisted of interviews with both academicians and professionals in the engineering community as well as a sample group from the 130 engineering students. In its entirety, the group consisted of three academicians, four students, and three engineering professionals. All participating academicians and professionals had some type of experience or involvement in technical presentations. As part of their requirements, all students had taken several language proficiency courses. In using members of these groups, the researchers received different opinions and ideas about the skills engineers needed to give effective presentations. The researchers conducted semi-structured interviews with open-ended questions in order to minimize their influence in the responses from the participants. The interviews with the students lasted 30 to 60 minutes and the ones with the engineers lasted 40 minutes to one-and-a-half hours. The researchers audio-taped interviews conducted in person, all in English.

The quantitative survey questionnaire feedback from the students identified the following factors as skills and qualities needed to deliver effective technical presentations: audience receptivity, technical competency, and language proficiency. In the qualitative interview phase, the major findings were summarized in four major areas as follows: 1) Technical Competency: knowledge of technical terms and content; 2) Effective Delivery Skills: the ability to deliver a variety of technical presentations (such as feasibility reports, standards and practices, ad-hoc presentations, project implementation procedures) to different types of audiences; 3) Information Technology Competency: the ability to use technology to enhance visually impactful presentations; and 4) Cultural Awareness: in presenting to different audiences, a common occurrence,

choose examples that are culturally relevant to add interest and impact to the presentation.

In using a mixture of quantitative and qualitative methods, the researchers experienced some limitations in asking more in-depth questions. The quantitative input was validated primarily from reliability tests of the questions in the study and use of prior literature. Also, the experience and capabilities of the researchers would influence their effectiveness in integrating the quantitative and qualitative results of the study. In terms of applicability to my research project, the qualitative results provided insight into the skills needed to deliver an effective technical presentation in the workplace and the need to be able to appeal to different audiences and cultures. Input from different viewpoints provides a connection between academic and professional settings to facilitate appropriate training to develop the necessary presentation skills.

The previous Bhattacharyya et al. study focused on identifying the oral presentation skills needed by fifth-year engineers in Malaysia transitioning from an academic environment to a professional one; whereas the next study (Langan et al., 2006) compared peer, self, and tutor-based assessment of students' performance on oral presentations. An important aspect of oral presentations is to receive feedback about how you came across to your audience, as well as your own self-perception of your performance. The student participants were from two United Kingdom (UK) universities enrolled in two field resident courses in Spain. Most students were pursuing degrees in biology or environmental studies. The study took place over two consecutive years with 41 students in the first year followed by 19 students the second year. Eleven tutors

participated in each of the two years. Two of the tutors were female and eight tutors participated in both years of the study (Langan et al., 2008).

On the last day of each course, the students presented a five minute presentation summarizing each of their individual research projects. Tutors, selected peers, and the students themselves evaluated their presentations. Prior to the actual presentation, students received training on the format of the presentation, the assessment criteria, the completion of marking sheets, and explanation of the peer and self-assessment concept. The assessment criteria used to mark the presentations, as cited in Langan et al., was as follows: presentation and content were valued at 40% each and structure was at 20%. The assessors received identifying statements to mark different scoring thresholds. The presentations were organized by common topics, with six or seven students in each group the first year. The second year the session was reduced to four students per group. For each session the chair and the presenters did not participate in peer assessment. When all presentations had been completed, the students completed a self-assessment form similar to the one given to their peers.

The quantitative study measured three areas: 1) various student attributes (gender, university affiliation, student participation in developing assessment criteria, and the hours of sleep before the presentation); 2) convergence of the three assessments among self, peer, and tutor scores awarded; and 3) the presentation's quality and its impact on the variability in the scores given by the three groups. Results of the study produced some differences in the first area based on learner attributes. By gender, male students graded themselves closer to the tutors; whereas, females' scores varied between the two

universities and they generally graded themselves lower than the tutors' scores. The males marked other males higher than they did the females. All students who had less sleep received lower scores from both peers and tutors. Sleep level had no significant impact on the self-assessed scores. Students who participated in the first year's creation of assessment criteria tended to receive slightly lower scores from their peers and the tutors.

In the second area of convergence between self, peer, and tutor, significant differences emerged. Students tended to give higher marks to their peers compared to the tutors' marks. Most students and females, in particular, tended to give themselves lower scores compared to their tutors. The tutors' range of scores was twice that of the students' scores to their peers. In comparison, the self-assessed scores had a wider range than the tutors' scores. In the third area of variability of scores based on the standard of the presentation, tutors marks were more variable for the lower scoring students. The students' self-assessment did not correlate with the level of disagreement among tutors; however for peer assessment there was a greater discrepancy between students who graded themselves higher compared to those who rated themselves at the lower end of the scale.

As a component of the study during the first year, two of the tutors interviewed four random groups of three students the day after the presentations. Students admitted feeling more at ease assessing their peers than themselves. A suggestion was to have a practice assessment in advance, perhaps on a mock presentation that their tutor gave, to give them more confidence. One-third of the students felt that they would have paid

closer attention to the presentations had they not been doing the peer assessments simultaneously. Other students felt that it was more difficult to assess technical material with which they were unfamiliar. In spite of these critical observations, all students considered the assessment of their peers and themselves to have been a worthwhile activity.

Based on this research study on assessment, several conclusions can be drawn. The incongruity in assessment by students of themselves and their peers showed that this was a challenging activity even with some level of advanced training. The number of factors considered in the assessment may have influenced the outcome (gender, university affiliation, lack of sleep, participation in developing the criteria). The issue of gender in which females undervalued their performance, compared to males who rated themselves and their peers higher than females indicated a level of gender-bias in assessment. Another interesting observation was low-achieving students tended to assess themselves higher compared to higher achieving students. This suggests a high level of confidence or a lack of understanding of the assessment process.

As pointed out by students during the post-assessment interviews, students could have benefitted by more training and practice in self and peer assessment. This should prove beneficial to students of both genders and at all levels of achievement. As an application to my own project, the use of assessment seems to be a worthwhile skill to develop with training inside and outside of the classroom. The application of self and/or peer assessment by audio and or videotaping each other's presentation, for example, would create additional opportunities to practice this valuable skill. This would be

especially useful in the area of self-assessment in delivery techniques – voice, gestures, and body language. How does a person reasonably self-assess his or her delivery without the benefit of audio and visual images? This study did not address this particular area. The students in the subject study appeared to all be from the UK, all native English speakers and sharing common a cultural background. The elimination of gender bias would prove more challenging with ESL students, considering the wide differences in cultural backgrounds and experiences that shape one's opinions.

The literature on the use of feedback and self-help strategies to improve public speaking skills offered some varied and interesting ideas for application in my field project for ESL students in community colleges. The study on goal-setting and self-reflection provided an effective method for students to become more aware of their strengths and weaknesses in oral presentations and to develop strategies to become less dependent on their teachers and peers for feedback. The cognitive exercise for reducing anxiety also provided a self-directed tool for students to use independently before and after an oral presentation. The use of technology by Chinese students studying English in Sweden to promote pitch variation through oral and visual feedback resulted in increased clarity in their delivery allowing for greater comprehension by the audience. The quantitative and qualitative mixed-study involving engineering students, academicians, and engineering professionals provided insight into the types of skills that would be needed by new engineers entering the workplace. The final study centered on the similarities and differences in evaluations of oral presentations using self, peer, and tutor assessors. Each of these articles supported the need for ESL students to develop their

public speaking skills to achieve academic success and apply these learned skills in a workplace setting.

Summary

The population of ESL students attending community colleges encompasses a diversity of ages, backgrounds, cultures, and proficiency levels in English. A common need is for these students to develop skills in oral presentations as they complete vocational training and are about to enter the workplace or for application in their continued education at a four-year college. The literature identified the fear and anxiety of public speaking as common to most people even in their native language. This anxiety and fear are even more of a challenge for individuals who are English language learners and dread receiving a negative evaluation. The recognition of speaking before a group as a common problem confirms the need for students to develop strategies to control their anxiety levels before and during this activity. The research on the role of small groups in planning and delivering identified a number of benefits. Students were able to help and learn from each other. They acquired more professional knowledge and developed linguistic skills to prepare and deliver their presentations. In planning and preparing their presentations, they used a variety of metacognitive, cognitive, communication, retrieval, and rehearsal strategies. An important component of public speaking is to receive feedback through self-assessment and evaluation from others (peers, mentors, and teachers). As students gain self-confidence and greater English proficiency, they can assume more responsibility for their own learning and become more receptive to feedback from others.

Some limitations of the research need to be addressed. Although none of the studies in the articles used ESL students in community colleges, all of the research participants were university students, ranging from freshman to senior years of study. The articles were evenly divided between students in an EFL or EFL setting and students in classes where they used their native languages (English, Swedish, or French). Most of the student participants in the studies had common cultures and native languages, which wouldn't be the experience in a community college setting. In spite of these limitations, overall the research supported the need for ESL students in community colleges to develop their public speaking skills and provided a variety of approaches and strategies for my field project.

CHAPTER III THE PROJECT AND ITS DEVELOPMENT

Brief Description of the Project

The project was designed to provide various strategies for ESL student in community colleges to develop their public speaking skills. The emphasis is on the student assuming responsibility for his or her learning. This handbook is thus primarily for students, although teachers may find some ideas that they can incorporate into the classroom. The strategies are organized in the same three categories that were explored in the review of literature: 1) the reduction of fear and anxiety with public speaking; 2) the role of small groups in planning and delivering oral presentations; and 3) the use of feedback and self-help strategies to improve public speaking. Each strategy provides a description of the strategy, how the student may use it, and examples and or a demonstration of activities that the student may do independently or with others. The target users for this handbook are High-Intermediate to Advanced level ESL students in community college. The planning and delivering of effective presentation requires the ability to integrate the four major skill areas of Listening, Speaking, Reading and Writing. Most of the planning, preparation, and rehearsal will occur outside of the classroom setting allowing the student to take responsibility for his or her learning. Less experienced ESL students will require more guidance and use of controlled and sheltered activities.

Development of the Project

The idea for this project started with my personal experience in learning to overcome a fear of public speaking. The primary barrier was learning to find my own

voice. During my childhood, adult authority figures taught girls to be quiet, polite, almost to the point of being invisible to those around them. In college I waited until my senior year to take the dreaded, yet required, public speaking course. I somehow got through it enduring much agony and pain in the process and experiencing a genuine sense of relief when the class ended. After entering the workforce a few years later, I realized that I needed effective oral communications skills in order to progress in my job. At a women's leadership conference, I first learned about Toastmasters International, an organization that focused on the development of communication and leadership skills. I decided to take a necessary first step and attended my first Toastmasters club meeting upon the invitation and support of a co-worker who was already a member.

I still remember my first speech, The Icebreaker, a four to six minute talk about myself. I got through it and afterwards received a kind and encouraging evaluation from an experienced Toastmaster. I was so nervous I clutched the sides of the lectern and I spoke so softly everyone had to strain their ears to hear me. Our club president and founder, Ben Nelson, told me about an eight-week Speechcraft workshop that he was giving. It was in a small group setting with the objective to help you overcome your fear of speaking before a group. I decided to sign up. One of the role playing exercises that Ben had me do, turned out to be a life-changing experience. I had to play the role of Tarzan, the tree-swinging and chest-pounding king of the jungle. After pounding my chest and shouting out the Tarzan yell, I felt a real sense of relief, in performing this silly yet powerful act. I soon started to gain confidence in speaking up and out not only in Toastmasters, but in other areas of my personal and professional life. I used my newly

acquired confidence to mentor and help other new Toastmasters members. Many of these members had English as a second language. I helped them to organize and prepare their speeches and corrected their grammar, but most importantly, I encouraged them to find their own voices and become confident, enthusiastic public speakers. I have applied these same techniques in my role as an ESL teacher. For ESL students, in spite of language, cultural, and other barriers, they too can find strategies to develop public speaking skills needed to help them achieve their educational, career, and personal goals. This project was designed to provide them with some strategies to become more independent and on a path to achieve these goals.

The Project

The project in its entirety can be found in the Appendix.

CHAPTER IV CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusions

With an enrollment of over 1.2 million students in the US, English as a Second Language (ESL) courses are the fastest growing subject in community colleges. The community college thus seems to be the ideal setting to meet the needs of the growing number of immigrants who need English language instruction to increase their job opportunities and become more economically independent. Among the various courses offered at community colleges, speaking skills seem to be an area that should be emphasized. Effective oral communication skills are commonly needed by employees in the workplace at all different levels. This project has identified different strategies for ESL students in community colleges to develop their public speaking skills. The project focused on three key areas: 1) ways to reduce the fear and anxiety associated with public speaking; 2) the role of small groups in planning and presenting oral presentations; and 3) the use of feedback and self-help strategies to improve public speaking skills. The project presented a handbook of strategies for students to use as a resource in developing these skills.

Recommendations

As a future ESL teacher in a community college, I plan to share the recommendations in the handbook with students, other teachers, and administrators. As an ESL teacher, I plan to emphasize listening and speaking as integral skills in helping ESL students become more competent communicators. The handbook could be added as a tool available to ESL students in the student resource center. The focus of the project

was to empower students to assume greater responsibility for their learning. The development of public speaking skills requires hard work and motivation on the part of the ESL student. The handbook is not intended to replace the role of the teacher as a facilitator in helping students develop skills needed to plan, organize, research, and deliver an effective oral presentation. Students should seek other resources within the community college and beyond.

Toastmasters International provides a network of clubs worldwide that provides a safe and supportive environment for its members to develop their communication and leadership skills. It offers an ongoing venue for its members to practice their speaking skills and to receive positive, constructive feedback from fellow members, and gain valuable self-confidence. The Toastmasters club offers collaborative learning at its best. The contact information to find a club is www.toastmasters.org or (949) 858-8255. ESL students are encouraged to consider Toastmasters as an option to further develop their oral communication skills.

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APPENDIX

Strategies for ESL Students in Community Colleges
to Develop Their Public Speaking Skills: A Handbook for Students

**Strategies for
ESL Students
in Community
Colleges to
Develop Their
Public
Speaking
Skills:
A Handbook for
Students**



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Introduction

One of the most challenging language skills for ESL students to develop is speaking. Preparing a speech and delivering it in front of a group may at first seem overwhelming for ESL students. The planning and presentation of an oral presentation is primarily the responsibility of the student. Most of the work is typically done outside of class. The teacher serves as a facilitator and evaluator of the presentation, and the student is expected to work independently or with other students in a small group. This may be a new experience for many ESL students.

Purpose of the Handbook

The purpose of the handbook is to provide a resource for students to help them to plan, prepare, deliver, and evaluate an oral presentation. This handbook presents some strategies for ESL students in community colleges to develop their public speaking skills.

Intended Users

The target users for this handbook are primarily High Intermediate through Advanced level ESL students in community colleges. The strategies may be used in any of their courses that require oral presentations individually, in pairs, or in small groups.

How to Use the Handbook

The handbook is not intended to be read from cover to cover. It is to be used as a resource to help students based on their own skill and comfort levels and individual needs.

Organization of Handbook

This handbook is organized into three main sections.

Section 1 – Strategies for Controlling Fear and Anxiety in Public Speaking

Section 2 – Strategies for Small Groups in Planning and Developing Oral Presentations

Section 3 – Strategies for Feedback and Self-help in Oral Presentations

Within each section, the user will find individual strategies, with examples, suggestions, activities, or tools depending on the strategy. Each section can build upon the next or work together, depending on the speaker's needs. If you master some techniques to deal with your most basic fears, you can move forward to try more challenging strategies.

Section 1 – Strategies for Controlling Fear and Anxiety in Public Speaking

Fear and anxiety in public speaking are common experiences by many people, not just ESL students. Other descriptive terms are stage fright, panic, nervousness, and butterflies in the stomach. Whatever term you use to describe it, there are some ways that you can control it. For new speakers, developing strategies to control nervousness and anxiety are a priority.

Acknowledging the fear is an important step for a new speaker to move forward in learning to overcome the fear.

This section is organized as follows:

1.1 Strategies for Handling Physical Signs of Fear and Anxiety Before a Speech

1.2 Strategies to Plan and Prepare for Your Speech Ahead of Time

1.3 Strategies for What to Do During Your Speech

1.4 Strategies for What to Do After Your Speech

1.1 Strategies for Handling Physical Signs of Fear and Anxiety Before a Speech

As the time approaches to give a speech, you may experience some of these physical signs of anxiety:

Physical Signs of Anxiety

Stomach in knots

Heart pounding

Palms sweating

Difficulty breathing

Trembling hands or shaking knees

Feeling faint

Your inner voice may be saying:

“What can I do? I think I’m going to die!”

Try a few of the following!

A. A Breathing Exercise to Relax



Photo from Google Images

1. Abdominal Breathing Technique (Shakeshaft, 2012)

- a. Hold one hand on the chest.**
- b. Place the other one on the belly.**
- c. Take a deep breath through the nose.**
- d. Make sure that the diaphragm inflates with enough air to allow for a stretch in the lungs.**
- e. Do 6-10 deep breaths per minute for 10 minutes.**

Benefits: Lowered heart rate and blood pressure

B. A Walk, Yoga, or Other Light Exercise Before the Speech

- √ Take a short walk.
- √ Go up or down a few flights of stairs.
- √ Do your favorite yoga stretches.
- √ Do some other stretches like head rolls or shoulder shrugs.

C. Meditation

Sit upright with both feet on the floor. Close your eyes. Repeat silently or out loud positive thoughts about your speech.

“I will smile at the audience.”

“I will stay calm during my speech.”

D. Listen or Sing along to Your Favorite Music

Listen to music to relieve your anxiety. Choose what you enjoy most—opera, jazz, nature sounds or something more lively—whatever will calm your nerves.

E. Find Something to Make You Laugh



Photo from Google Images

It's hard to remain stressed when you're laughing. Read your favorite comic strip. Watch your favorite sit com the night before your speech.

F. Get a Good Night's Rest the Night before Your Speech

After trying some or all of the previous suggestions, drink your favorite night-time tea and you should be ready to sleep peacefully.

1.2 Strategies to Plan & Prepare for Your Speech

A Checklist of Things to Do Before Your Speech

- ✓ **Check out the room**
- ✓ **Prepare 3"x5" note cards**
- ✓ **Prepare audio visuals and handout materials**
- ✓ **Choose comfortable clothes to wear**
- ✓ **Prepare and practice your speech**

✓ Check out the room:

Become familiar with the room layout.

A few questions to ask:

Where you will be speaking?

Is it a different room from your regular classroom?

Where are the electrical outlets and the lighting switches?

How is the seating arranged?

What audio visual equipment is in the room?

What do you need to bring with you?

Where will you stand during the speech?

✓ Prepare 3"x5" note cards:

Check with your teacher to make sure you can use notes.

If so, write down the key points of your speech on your note cards. You don't want to use full sheets of paper that can get lost or out of order. You don't want to be tempted to read you entire speech and lose your place during the speech.

✓ **Choose comfortable clothes to wear:**

Don't wear clothes that are tight and uncomfortable.

Bring an extra shirt or top to change into. You might spill something or start to perspire before the speech.

✓ **Prepare and Practice Your Speech:**

Thoughtful preparation will help to reduce your anxiety.

Use a mirror to practice your speech.

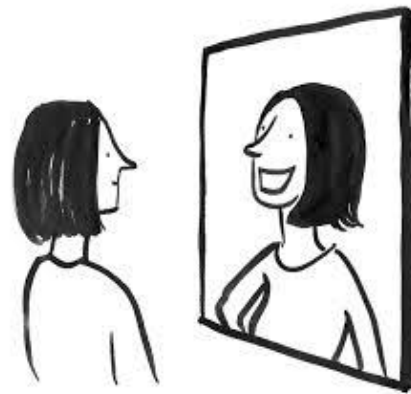


Photo from Google Images

Try using good gestures and body language.



Photo from Google Images

1.3 Strategies for What to Do During Your Speech

A. Have water close to your speaking area

If you start to cough or your mouth gets dry during your speech, stop and take a few sips of water.

B. Maintain good eye contact

with the audience

To connect with your audience, it is important to maintain good eye contact. Find a few



Photo from Google Images

friendly faces on different areas of the room to focus on during the speech – left, right, and middle.

Here are a few other tips:

1. Eye contact should last for just a few seconds at each area of the room.
2. Don't stare at your audience. This makes them feel uncomfortable.
3. Don't look away from your audience – at the

floor, at the ceiling, or to your sides.

4. Look at your note cards only briefly.

5. Never turn your back to the audience.

C. Focus your attention on the audience

Focus your nervous energy on the

audience and the delivery of your message.

Show excitement and enthusiasm. The audience will recognize and appreciate it and pay attention to what you are saying.

D. If you lose your train of thought....

√ Pause.

√ Take a sip of water.

√ Glance at your notes.

√ Take a deep breath.

√ Continue where you left off.

If you forget a point, just move on to the next one. The audience won't know unless you tell them. The audience appreciates a pause. It allows them more time to take notes or reflect on your previous points.

1.4 Strategies for What to Do After Your Speech

A. Relax and be proud of your accomplishment in getting through your speech.

B. Think about your next opportunity to speak.

Your confidence will grow with each successive speech.

Section 2 – Strategies for Small Groups in Planning and Developing Oral Presentations

For ESL students in community colleges, a small group provides an ideal setting to develop the needed skills to plan and develop an oral presentation. A small group lets you know you're not alone. This section discusses the following:

2.1 Strategies to Build Relationships in Small Groups

2.2 Strategies for Building Skills in Small Groups

2.1 Strategies to Build Relationships in Small Groups

A. Ice Breaker Group Activities (adapted from Ferlazzo & Sypnieski, 2012)

Activity 1:

Two Truths and a Lie

Each student writes on an index card his or her two truths and a lie. Group members try to guess what is true and what is not about each other.

Example:

I have sky-dived from an airplane.

I was born in Alaska.

I am an electrician.

Activity 2 – “I Am Project”

Each person creates a list of 10 things about himself or herself to share with the rest of the group. It can be presented in the form of a poster, a poem, a song, a story, a PowerPoint presentation, or other format.

Here’s a list of ideas to get started:

In my free time, I like to _____.

I am sad when _____.

I am afraid when _____.

I am happy when _____.

I am excited when _____.

I am disappointed when _____.

In five years, I hope to _____.

I am upset when _____.

I am thankful for _____.

I am proud of _____.

B. Assign each member a role for each group activity

- Group Leader
- Recorder or Secretary
- Timer
- Observer
- Reporter

Each person should feel valued as a member of the group. You can change roles for different activities and assignments.

C. Establish clear ground rules for group discussions and decision-making

- Each member's ideas and opinions are respected.
- Members try to reach consensus (everyone agrees).
- The majority rules if there are differences in opinion.
- The minority opinion is heard.

2.2 Strategies for Building Skills in Small Groups

A. Brainstorm Ideas for Speech Topics

The purpose of brainstorming is to generate a number of ideas and suggestions. One person facilitates to organize the discussion. The recorder or secretary writes ideas on a white board, a flip chart, or a projector visible to everyone in the group.

Free-Form Brainstorming:

Participants share their ideas as they occur in the Group (Murphy).

Round Robin Brainstorming :

Everyone takes a turn to share an idea. The session ends when all participants run out of ideas (Murphy).

B. Discussion of Ideas

Group members discuss different ideas to narrow the choices. A preferred choice by all may

emerge during the discussion. Each member expresses a first or second choice until the group agrees on the final topic.

C. Research the topic, develop an outline for presentation, and make assignments

These activities may occur outside of the group meetings with guidance from your teacher.

D. Have group meetings to discuss and practice the presentation

The group should meet to make sure that all areas are covered, nothing is duplicated, and the ideas fit together to create an organized, cohesive presentation. Rehearse your parts as a group. Help each other with content, word usage, pronunciation, and delivery.

E. Other group activities

The small group is an ideal setting to practice speaking and delivery skills in a relaxed, informal setting. The possibilities are endless. A few suggestions are mentioned here.

1. **Charades:** Charades is a game that will help develop the use of appropriate gestures and body language. You act out different scenarios without speaking and the rest of the team members try to guess the theme. This requires careful staging and setting rules and symbols for different gestures and facial expressions in advance. You can choose different themes such as sports, cooking, TV shows.
2. **Impromptu Speaking:** Learning to speak without preparing a topic ahead of time helps you to learn to think on your feet. You have to organize your thoughts and ideas quickly. It's a one to two minute speech with an opening, a body, and a conclusion. The group leader can write down a number of topics and put them into a grab bag. Each person pulls a random topic from the bag. Keep the topics general. Examples are cars, water, ice cream, trees, ants, shoes, bridges. Another variation is to fill the bag with small, common items – a ball, safety pin, pencil, toothbrush, plastic spoon, paper clip. You

can describe the item and talk about unusual ways to use it.

Section 3 – Strategies for Feedback and Self-help in Oral Presentations

Fear of negative evaluation is a major obstacle for ESL students to overcome. Once you have given a speech, however, it is important to receive feedback from others in order to improve your skills. Good public speaking skills require hard work and develop over time. Even professional speakers continue to practice, receive feedback, and strive to improve their skills with each successive speech. As a speaker, you can implement self-help strategies to develop your oral presentation skills. This demands commitment and motivation on your part. This section is organized as follows:

- 3.1 Strategies for Feedback from Others
- 3.2 Self-help Strategies

3.1 Strategies for Feedback from Others

A. Get Feedback Before Your Speech

Seek help with your speech during the planning, preparation, and rehearsal stages of your speech.

Sources of help:

- Peers
- Tutors
- Mentors
- Teachers
- Small group members
- Student resource center at your college

Benefits of feedback:

- Reduces your anxiety level
- Improves your speech quality
- Provides a positive learning experience
- Helps with your delivery

B. Get Feedback After Your Speech

In most classes you will routinely receive feedback from your teacher and perhaps your classmates after you speech. Table A1 provides a sample evaluation form (adapted from Palmer, 2011). You can use this as a guide in preparing your speech and to evaluate your peers. You improve your speaking skills by learning to give and receive feedback. This helps you to recognize the qualities that create an effective presentation.

Table A1 – A Sample Speech Evaluation Form

Presenter(s)_____		Topic_____
Evaluator_____		Date_____
Speech Category	Rating (1-3)	Comments/Suggestions
Organization (Clear, logical)		
Opening (Got audience's attention)		
Vocal quality (Clear, audible, varied pitch, not monotonous)		
Eye contact (Looked at audience)		
Speaking Rate (Not too fast, used pauses effectively)		
Content (Showed research and preparation, original)		
Gestures (Meaningful use of hands and facial expressions, body language helped message)		
Visual aids - if used (Clear, easy to see, helped with the message)		
Conclusion (Strong and evident)		

Rating Scale: 3 - Excellent 2 – Good 1 – Could improve

3.2 Strategies for Self-help

A. Assess Your Own Anxiety: A Cognitive Exercise

The following cognitive exercise in Table A2 may be used to address negative thoughts before and after a speech to reduce your anxiety level (adapted from Di Bartolo & Molina, 2010).

Table A2 – A Cognitive Assessment of Student Anxiety

Question	Student Response
<p>Initial Anxiety and Most Feared Prediction</p> <p>Please rate how anxious you are feeling about the upcoming speech using a scale of 0-100.</p> <p>What are you most afraid might happen during your speech?</p>	
<p>Questions Targeting Probability Estimation</p> <p>Try to estimate the likelihood of your expectation coming true in the speech you are about to give.</p> <p>Let's look at the evidence. Try to estimate the number of previous speeches that you've given that were at least as long as your upcoming speech.</p> <p>In how many of those speeches did your worst fear actually occur?</p> <p>Think about the past evidence from past speeches. How strongly do you feel that your feared outcome will actually happen in your upcoming speech?</p>	
<p>Questions Targeting Catastrophizing</p> <p>Imagine your expectation does come true. How horrible would that be?</p> <p>Now, let's put this speech in perspective. Compare how horrible it would be if your expectation came true compared to other unpleasant events in your life. (For example, if you failed a course?)</p> <p>How well do you think you could actually cope if your expectation happened in the upcoming speech?</p>	
<p>Coping Thought and Revised Anxiety Rating</p> <p>Think of a coping thought that you can use during the speech to help you remember what you've worked on here. Even if your most feared prediction were to occur, what could you tell yourself to help cope?</p> <p>Rate how anxious you are feeling now about the upcoming speech?</p>	

Note: The scale for numeric responses: 0 means not at all and 100 means extremely.

B. Complete the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS)

The Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) is a common tool used by researchers to measure a student's anxiety level in the classroom. You can use it to measure the changes in your confidence level when you give a speech at different time intervals of a course (beginning, middle, and end). The scale is presented in Table A3 (adapted from Liu, 2007).

Table A3 – Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale
(FLCAS) Adapted for Speaking

Statement	Response
1. I never feel quite sure of myself when I'm speaking English in my class.	SD D N A SA
2. I start to panic when I have to speak without preparation in English class.	SD D N A SA
3. In English class, I sometimes get so nervous I forget things I know.	SD D N A SA
4. I would not be nervous speaking English with native speakers.	SD D N A SA
5. Even if I'm well prepared for English class, I feel anxious about it.	SD D N A SA
6. I always feel that the other students speak English better than I do.	SD D N A SA
7. I get nervous when I don't understand every word the English teacher says.	SD D N A SA
8. I feel overwhelmed by the number of words I have to learn in English class.	SD D N A SA
9. I feel more nervous speaking English in pairs than in groups.	SD D N A SA
10. I am afraid that the other students will laugh at me when I speak English.	SD D N A SA
12. I feel more tense and nervous in English class than in my other classes.	SD D N A SA
11. I feel confident and relaxed when giving presentations in front of the class.	SD D N A SA

Note: SD = Strongly disagree D = Disagree N = Neither agree nor disagree A = Agree SA = Strongly agree

C. Keep a Personal Journal

Keep a personal journal of your thoughts before and after you give a speech. An alternative is to do an audio recording on your cell phone.

What to include:

1. Write your own assessment of how you did.
2. Highlight the feedback that you receive from others.
3. Highlight your strengths.
4. List one or two areas you still need to work on (such as eye contact or speaking louder).

Why keep a journal?

1. You maintain an ongoing record of your progress.
2. You can record personal stories to share in future speeches, such as:
 - * What personal challenges have I overcome?
 - * What lessons have I learned in life to encourage or inspire others?
 - * What incidents in my life may be funny or interesting to share?

D. Use ESL Dictionaries and On-line Resources

A good ESL dictionary is an essential tool to help you with pronunciation, expand your vocabulary, and learn the context for use of different English words and phrases. Many come with CD's and additional on-line resources. You can listen to native speakers pronounce words, record and play back your own voice and compare it to the native speaker. You can create your own personal dictionary of words, synonyms, and antonyms to build your vocabulary. Two suggestions are *Heinle's Newbury House Dictionary of American English* (2004) and *Collin's Cobuild Advanced Learner's Dictionary* (2006).

E. Read and Listen to Excellent Speakers

Read and listen to recordings of excellent speakers to get examples of the qualities of a memorable speech. One good example is Martin Luther King's "I Have a Dream" speech. An excerpt from his speech follows:

Excerpt from Martin Luther King's "I Have a Dream
Speech – Delivered from the steps of the Lincoln Memorial,
Washington, D.C.
August 28, 1963

This will be the day when all of God's children will be able to sing with a new meaning, "My country, 'tis of thee, sweet land of liberty, of thee I sing. Land where my fathers died, land of the pilgrim's pride, from every mountainside, let freedom ring." And if America is to be a great nation, this must become true. So let freedom ring from the prodigious hilltops of New Hampshire. Let freedom ring from the mighty mountains of New York. Let freedom ring from the heightening Alleghenies of Pennsylvania! Let freedom ring from the snowcapped Rockies of Colorado! Let freedom ring from the curvaceous peaks of California! But not only that; let freedom ring from Stone Mountain of Georgia! Let freedom ring from Lookout Mountain of Tennessee! Let freedom ring from every hill and every molehill of Mississippi. From every mountainside, let freedom ring.

When we let freedom ring, when we let it ring from every village and every hamlet, from every state and every city, we will be able to speed up that day when all of God's children, black men and white men, Jews and Gentiles, Protestants and Catholics, will be able to join hands and sing in the words of the old Negro spiritual, "Free at last! free at last! thank God Almighty, we are free at last!"

Excerpt from <http://www.famous-speeches-and-speech-topics.info/martin-luther-king-speeches/martin-luther-king-speech-i-have-a-dream.htm>

Analyze the qualities of the speech:

1. The repetition of key phrases
2. Use of descriptive words
3. The content of the message
4. The impact of his delivery

5. The speed and pacing of his words

You can listen to the “I Had a Dream” speech from

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jw1R_JBuHEQ.

E. Use of an On-Line Tool to Record and Evaluate

Your Speech

An on-line software tool **Virtual-I Presenter (ViP)**

V2.0 records both video and presentation slides at the same time. You can use this tool to practice your presentation and send it to others to receive feedback on your content and delivery. The software is free and available from <http://www.virtual-i-presenter.net/>.

F. Be Yourself

Develop your own personal style of speaking. Each person is unique. You have your own personality, background, and experiences to share with the audience. An audience appreciates a speaker who is natural and sincere in his or her delivery. Use your strengths as a speaker. Do you have a pleasant speaking voice? Does humor come easily for you? Are you a gifted storyteller? Do you have a warm, friendly

manner to engage your audience? Remember to just be yourself.

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