

**People's Democratic Republic of Algeria**

**Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research**



**Faculty of Arts and Languages**

**Department of English**

**Investigating the Role of Oral Presentation  
Projects in Enhancing EFL Learners' Oral  
Proficiency.**

**The Case study of Master 1 ALELT Students at Bejaia University.**

A Thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for a degree of  
MASTER OF ARTS in Applied Linguistics and ELT.

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**June 2016**

## **Dedication**

I dedicate this modest work to my Family, my Friends and Colleagues.

Thank you all for your help and support.

## Acknowledgment

I would like, first of all, to thank Allah for giving me strength and motivation to carry out this work.

I would like also to extend my infinite gratefulness for my teacher and Supervisor *Dr. Nadia Ahouari-Idri*. I cannot thank her enough for her valuable guidance and advice. She was a support for me not only for completing this thesis, but during two complete years. Thanks a lot...

I also thank all teachers of Applied Linguistics and English Language Teaching for their unconditioned help and understanding. To them I say, “Thank you very much”.

My Thanks and Appreciations go to my colleague students of Master 2 ALELT.

**THANK YOU ALL FOR YOUR SUPPORT**

## **Abstract**

The essential goal behind learning a foreign language is to be able to use it appropriately for communicative purposes. However, many students still experience failure in acquiring good oral communication in the target language. The present paper attempts to provide a closer look at EFL students' oral communication skills; and explores the importance of developing these skills for better communication proficiency. The purpose of this study is to identify the positive effects of conducting oral presentation projects and the students' attitude towards such projects. The study also sheds light on the most frequent constraints pertaining to oral communication encountered by students of English at Bejaia University. For this, a mixed methodology was employed. We used a questionnaire designed for students (N=40) and an interview with teachers (N=6) to collect data. Results showed that oral presentation projects have a positive impact on students' oral communication performance. The findings also revealed that learners' oral communication is dependent on many factors such as anxiety and teaching strategies. However, in spite of the limitations of the study, we could test our hypothesis and show to what extent oral projects are important in the context of teaching and learning English as a Foreign Language (EFL).

*Key Words:* communicative performance, EFL context, oral presentation projects, Oral Proficiency.

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## **List of Abbreviations**

- **ALELT:** Applied Linguistics and English Language Teaching
- **CA:** Communication Apprehension
- **CC:** Communicative Competence
- **CLT:** Communicative Language Teaching
- **EFL:** English as a Foreign Language
- **ELT:** English Language Teaching
- **L2:** Second Language
- **OP:** Oral Presentation
- **TEFL:** Teaching English as a Foreign Language
- **TL:** Target Language



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# **General Introduction**

## General Introduction

The ability to speak and acquire good oral communication becomes very important in nowadays' technological age. Nevertheless, despite the efforts provided, students do not achieve satisfactory levels of proficiency in foreign languages at the completion of compulsory education. In spite of the necessity and the importance of a good oral communication in EFL learning contexts, some students would not bother themselves to improve their skills. Some others, though their willingness and motivation, they still cannot express themselves and communicate easily using the target language (TL). In order to make improvements, researchers and teachers attempt to implement different methods and practical activities and projects to meet the learners' needs. Among these projects, we find that oral presentations (OPs) are becoming more frequent in EFL classes. Their use aims at helping students of English enhance their speaking and develop their oral communicative performance.

Oral presentation projects are becoming a more important part of language teaching especially in university environment. Despite of this importance, students are still significantly deficient in their ability to deliver good OPs. Thus, competence is more than ever needed inside and outside classroom settings, and students are likely to deal with OPs even after graduation. Nowadays, developing oral presentation competences or skills in EFL contexts becomes an essential goal in higher education. Researchers reveal that students' ability to realize their goals in various situations depends much on their communicative performance.

Oral presentations play a significant role in engaging students communicatively and cognitively in foreign or second language learning process. However, there has not been much work done on needs analysis on OPs (Ming, 2009). Most research has focused on how to be able to prepare and deliver an effective presentation rather than on looking at their effects on developing and improving students' communication skills. Few researchers, indeed, have carried out studies on the role and purpose of presentations in foreign language classrooms (Yuan & Ellis, 2003). In what follows, we will attempt to investigate the role of presentation projects in enhancing the oral communication performance of students of English at Bejaia University. We will also see to what extent OPs are frequent in EFL classes.

## **I. Statement of the Problem and Research Questions**

EFL Students all over the world experience a kind of reluctance and hesitation when it comes to speak in a foreign language. Students of English at Bejaia University are no exception. Most of them are always anxious and reluctant to take part in classroom discussions. It is either because they are not well trained to speak in front of an audience, they do not have the required skills, or simply their oral communication competence is not fully developed. In this context, many EFL teachers complain about the lack of students' involvement and interaction in the classroom. Though the various techniques adopted by the teachers for the sake of helping learners improve their oral communication, most students still suffer from poor oral skills. Because of this, researchers and linguists always suggest and present new ideas and plans in their attempts to develop the communicative performance of EFL students. The present study investigates the problem to know to what extent conducting oral presentation activities can affect or develop the communication skills of EFL students in general and students of English at Bejaia University in particular.

The research questions we attempt to answer by the end of this study are as follows:

1. What is the impact of using oral presentations in EFL classes to enhance one's communicative performance?
2. To what extent the implementation of Oral Presentation projects can improve Students' oral proficiency in English?
3. What is the role of the teacher in helping EFL Learners to acquire the speaking skill of English?
4. What are the different oral communication strategies used by learners?

## **II. Research Hypothesis**

Concerning our hypothesis, we believe that the poor oral communication performance shown by EFL students is due to many factors. These factors are related to the communication difficulties faced by learners in their attempts to use the target language. Therefore, we do believe that using oral presentations in classroom can help remedy this situation. EFL students are motivated and encouraged to speak and communicate their ideas as in real-life situations through the opportunities presented to them. Therefore, language practitioners should design courses based on presentation projects where each student is supposed to present works and

projects individually or collectively. In this regard, the students are given a chance to develop their communication skills; thus, get rid of their speaking constraints.

With that being said, we hypothesize that students of English can see their oral proficiency improved through the use and implementation of oral presentation projects. When such projects are carried out in a regular and proper way, learners are expected to perform well.

### **III. Aims of the Study**

EFL teachers always strive to enhance their learners' abilities to communicate effectively and successfully in various contexts. They are aware that communication-related problems are frequent among language learners; so they try to adopt different methods to overcome this constraint. The main purpose of the present study is to investigate the impact of OPs on students' performance in a class where English is taught as a foreign language. In the end, the study will provide tips and suggestion for teachers of English who are willing to develop or improve their students' communicative proficiency. In short, the essential aims of the study are:

- To show the attitude and perception of Bejaia students of English towards oral presentations and oral communication.
- To show how EFL learners can develop their communication skills through adopting oral presentation assignments.
- Incite and raise awareness among teachers and students as to the importance of good oral communication.
- To demonstrate that oral projects are an effective tool to develop learners' speaking skill.

### **IV. Significance of the Study**

The study is significant since it will provide a clear understanding about oral presentation projects, communication proficiency, and shows in which way the former leads to achieve the latter. In spite of the fact that learners' communication-related problems have been maybe discussed in different contexts, it remains important to do this research, bring our contribution to the subject and tackle the problem in a different way in order to find a

solution. Significant points and issues pertaining to the development of EFL learners' communication skills and competencies will be highlighted and discussed in a clear and simple way. However, our focus will be on students of English at the University of Bejaia since they demonstrated limited oral communication abilities.

## **V. Research Methodology**

Because of the nature of the topic, we used a mixed methodology i.e., both the quantitative and the qualitative methods. The former fits for quantifying and measuring the idea; and the latter is suitable to make a description of the effects of oral presentations on the development of the communicative performance.

## **VI. Data Collection Tools and Instruments**

To collect our data and conduct this study, we used a questionnaire and an interview. First, we opted for the questionnaire because it is anonymous and the participants remain comfortable when answering the questions. It was administered to Master 1 students of English (ALELT) at Bejaia University. Questions were brief and simple to make sure all the students understand; thus provide valid answers. Second, we used the interview to know the teachers' opinion and perception about presentation projects and oral communication in EFL learning contexts.

## **VII. Population and Sample**

The participants in this study were Master 1 Applied Linguistics and English Language Teaching (ALELT) students at Bejaia University, and teachers of English working at the department of English. Since it is not possible to study all the students of English at Bejaia University, we limited our sample to (02) groups (40 subjects). Because of time limits, we assume it is not possible to study a large number of students.

## **VIII. Structure of the Dissertation**

The dissertation is divided into two chapters. The first chapter is devoted to the theoretical part, and it consists of three sections. One is dedicated to the description of oral presentation projects in EFL classes, another one is for oral communicative performance of language learners, and the last one is for the review of literature. The second chapter contains

two sections. The first consists of the description of the study, data analysis and interpretation, and the second one is devoted to the discussion, limitations, implications and suggestions for further research. We end up with a general conclusion to summarize the study.

# **Chapter One**

## **Theoretical Background**



## **Chapter One: Theoretical Background**

### **Introduction**

Developing English learners' oral communication fluency has been a major issue in the educational research. Today, many scholars and language practitioners (Staab, 1992; Celce-Murcia, 2001; Knight and York, 2006) understood that it is important to develop learners' ability to communicate easily and effectively inside and outside the classroom settings. Therefore, they put a lot of efforts to reach a good and successful approach to enhance students' performance in oral communication.

Oral Presentations (OPs) are indeed becoming a very important part of language teaching and learning in the university context (Miles, 2009). However, limited literature has been published regarding OPs in the English language classroom (King, 2002; Ootshi & Heffernan, 2008; Scholnik & Kol, 1999; Webster, 2002). That is, more emphasis and interest should be given to OPs to achieve good oral communication in the target language. Furthermore, we do believe that the traditional methodologies to language teaching failed to form communicatively competent students. Therefore, new approaches such as the Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) which focuses on the communicative competence emerged. The CLT gives emphasis to the communicative aspect of language rather than its grammatical one. In this chapter, we aim at providing a general overview about oral presentation projects and oral communication performance in EFL classes. The chapter is divided into three sections: the first is devoted to oral presentations; the second to oral communication; and the third one is a review of literature.

## Section One: Oral Presentation Projects in EFL Classes

One of the core competences for higher educated professionals is to have the ability to present. Exposing students to oral presentations (OPs) can be an effective method to develop learners' oral language skills. In fact the purpose of OPs goes beyond learners' academic setting to reach their professional one. Students view presentation classes as an opportunity to improve their English ability rather than learning how to give presentations (Miles, 2009). Therefore, it is important for teachers to assign and design presentations in an effective way to meet students' needs for good oral communication. In this section, we attempt to define OPs, different types of OPs, effective presentations, the teacher's role, benefits and constraints related to presentation projects. We will also have a look at the use of visual aids in presentations, and teacher's assessment of student's performance.

### 1. Definition of Oral Presentations

Oral presentation is a speech someone delivers in front of an audience to express his ideas and orally communicate his message. It involves using someone's oral communicative skills and other language competences to explain and inform an audience. De Grez (2009) defined oral presentation competence as *"the combination of knowledge, skills, and attitudes needed to speak in public in order to inform, self-express, to relate and to persuade"* (p. 5). According to Baker (2000, p.115), oral presentation is like a formal conversation, speaking to group as a natural activity. It is part of spoken language; and it doesn't concern the written language.

Oral presentations generally take place in formal and organizational settings with time limits. They should be prepared, structured and guided in order to be interesting and beneficial for both learners and teachers (Melion & Thompson, 1980). Moreover, Mandal (2000) stated that *"Presentations are speech that is usually given in business, technical, professional, or scientific environments"* (p.8). They are to be distinguished from normal or natural speech since they are formal and need preparation and efforts. Mallete and Clare (2001) claimed that OPs are *"(...) the most common method for presenting information and are usually done with a computer and a projector"* (p.161). Likewise Ming (2005) believes they are typically and partly spoken, partly visual form of communication, and they are normally limited in time and occurs in organizational settings.

## **2. Types of Oral Presentations**

Oral presentation projects in EFL classrooms can take different forms, and they can be prepared in different ways depending on many factors such as the teacher's objective and learners' proficiency level. They can be prepared individually or in groups. We distinguish between three types: controlled, guided and free presentations (Al-Issa & Redha, 2010).

### **2.1. Controlled Oral Presentations**

In this kind of presentations, the students generally have a limited knowledge of English. The teacher has to control the student's activities; confine the topic and choose the ones that make the students feel comfortable. The teacher, indeed, should not expect something perfect from the students since they are not even supposed to give long presentations. The aim is to give students an opportunity to gain self-confidence and practice the target language (TL) in context (Al-Issa & Redha, 2010). It is also recommended not to assess the learners' performance; and errors should be expected due to the limited knowledge of the presenters.

### **2.2. Guided Oral Presentations**

The students have already acquired some language background and developed some competences. Therefore, the guided presentation should be relevant for them. They do not need to be totally controlled, but just guided to make sure they use relevant grammatical structures and lexical items (Al-Issa & Redha, 2010). Even at this stage, students are expected to make language errors. The instructor can guide his students to prepare their projects, using PowerPoint and Overhead Projectors (OHP) if such materials are available. *“Research has shown that oral presentations that use visuals are more persuasive, more interesting, more credible, and more professional—i.e., more effective than presentations without such aids”* (Rice University, “Select and Use Visual Aids Effectively,” Para. 1). Besides, memorization can help learners gain confidence and speak more fluently and accurately. Good memorization is *“to learn by heart with deep understanding and proper application in use for communication”* (Duong & Nguyen, 2006, p. 14).

### **2.3. Free Oral Presentations**

In this type of presentations students are expected to have an advanced level of proficiency. They should be given freedom to choose the topic and use the language they wish to use. At this stage, they are able to use complex language and deliver longer presentation as long as they were exposed enough to guided practice. Students gained confidence and are able to tackle wider subjects by collecting data from different sources. Another key feature of free OP is certainly the debate generated once the presentation is over. There is a question-answer process triggered over the topic and students are expected to answer the questions asked either by the teacher or by their peers (Al-Issa & Redha, 2010).

### **3. Arranging Oral Presentations**

Oral presentations can be prepared and arranged in different ways; they can be done individually, in pairs or in groups. Most of the time, it is dependent on the topic, the size of the class and the goals of the teacher. Individual presentations train students to be independent and autonomous whereas group presentations foster collaborative work and promote the values of teamwork. Pair and group work is highly productive; and positively influences interaction and negotiation of meaning (Scholnik & Kol, 1999). It is maybe better, for teachers, to start dealing with group or pair presentation before assigning individual ones. This gives time for students to gain confidence and gain some experience in the matter (Al-Issa & Redha, 2010).

Furthermore, oral presentations can be done spontaneously or in a prepared and arranged manner. On the one hand, the teacher may ask his students to choose a topic and prepare a presentation for the following session, as a part of homework assignment. On the other hand, he can just ask them to deliver a presentation without any prior preparation (Al-Issa & Redha, 2010).

### **4. Effective Oral Presentations**

Oral presentations are much more than a simple way to deliver a message. In order to have an effective and successful presentation, learners have to pay attention to some important elements which, to a large extent, determine their success or failure. An OP should, in no way, be a monologue, but an active dialogue which involves the presenter himself and

the audience (Živković, 2014). Moreover, dividing the presentation into meaningful sections helps the audience to stay focused and easily understand the content (Platow, 2002).

Oral presentations should be well organized and well-structured to be meaningful. To be successful, different elements should be respected. First, there should be planning before starting to write any ideas. *“Fully 90 percent of your success as a speaker will be determined by how well you plan your speech”* (Tracy, 2008, p. 18). That shows the importance of planning as to the success of one’s presentation. Indeed, the planning stage consists of the identification of the audience, the choice of the topic and determining the purpose of the presentation.

Planning is followed by the preparation stage, and a poor preparation of the presentation will cause the presenters to look weak and undermined. Tracy (2008) stated that poor preparation in front of an intelligent and discerning audience downgrades the presenter’s credibility. He claims that a good preparation impresses the listeners and makes them more open and receptive to the content of the message. Students, as suggested by Chivers and Shoolbred (2007) should start by preparing the content of the presentation where they have to decide what to include and what to exclude, choose examples to support and illustrate their ideas, and provide sources and references for further research. They stated that *“the source could be related to the content that you have not been able to include but can be used for further reading and knowledge development* (2007, p.24).

Furthermore, students should know how to shape and structure their work by choosing the relevant arguments and respecting the time allocated for presentation (Živković, 2014). The presentation should be extremely organized so that listeners can easily follow. *“A clear structure usually helps the audience to gain a quick understanding of the content of the presentation.”* (Chivers & Shoolbred, 2007; p. 22). That is, a well-organized work attracts the students’ attention and let them stay focused.

Students should be encouraged to use effective visual aids that support them in conveying the message. They should take into account the effects of such visuals on the audience since this latter relies much on them to understand the content of the presentation. Visuals can be OHP, Laptops, Slides, Boards, Videos and others. King (2002) claims that incorporating technology, makes the presentation more exciting and interesting. On the importance of visual aids, (Turk, 1985) stated that *“Even the simplest visual aid can provide a grasp of the structure and direction of the argument, which will help the listeners to*

*understand and remember*” (cited by Živković, 2014; p.130). This means that the presentation which uses visual aids is more persuasive and more interesting.

Furthermore, it is in the introduction that the presenter needs most to attract the attention of the audience by persuading them that his presentation is going to be interesting. He has to introduce and identify the topic using strong introductory statements. The audience should be familiar with the content, the aim and the structure of the presentation from the beginning. According to (King, 2002), *“the teacher should constantly remind students of the importance of using communicative English in their presentations and keeping the audience in mind when they prepare”* (p.405). Therefore, EFL learners should always be trained on how to attract the attention of the audience.

Students should give importance to the introduction and the conclusion of the presentation. They need choose carefully what to say at the opening and what to say when concluding. Dudley-Evans and Maggie, 1998, p. 112) claim that it is in the introduction that students establish credentials, state the purpose and topic, indicate time and outline what is to come. They should conclude by summarizing, making recommendation and calling for action. Besides, a good beginning makes the listeners interested in what the presenter is going to say, but what is essential is the good end which should, according to Dudley-Evans and Maggie, be well planned and practiced. As the formula for public speaking goes *“first, tell the audience what you are going to tell them; then tell them, and then tell them what you have just told them”*. During the conclusion, learners should reinforce the main ideas previously communicated so that to help the audience remember them.

Once the students are done with the planning and preparation stages, they need to have some prior practice before delivering the presentation. They need to practice in a context which is similar to the one of their final presentation with the presence of people and with the use of visual aids. Practice helps students gain confidence and have mastery of the topic. *“Practice isn’t the thing you do once you’re good. It’s the thing you do that makes you good”*.

## **5. The Importance of Designing Effective Oral Presentations**

Oral presentations are significant when they are designed and prepared in an effective way. They are a good example of learner-centeredness. So teaching students how to design successful presentations will not just prepare them for possible future academic careers but also help them function well in their professional setting (Živković, 2014). Nowadays, one of

the significant priorities at the university level is to teach students how to prepare, organize and deliver successful OPs. This latter indeed provide *“a rewarding and stimulating experience both for teachers in developing and facilitating skills, and for students in training themselves to have confident presentations in public”* (King, 2002; p.413). That is, OPs are beneficial for EFL learners as well as for teachers.

To be communicatively competent, students need a lot of practice and guided instruction through implementing OPs in their classrooms. Presentations give students an opportunity to participate in the learning process through demonstrating their ability to communicate ideas, interact with others and convey meaning. Effective presentations are a good means to get the student’s attention, encourage curiosity, and create challenges (King, 2002). They allow students to gain insights, knowledge and language skills through interacting with others; sharing information in a constructive way with structured planning and good organization (Živković, 2014). Indeed, teaching students to design and prepare effective presentations implies developing their insightful and well-trained thinking strategies that can produce clarity in communication. The results are substantive, which means improving the quality of presentation actually improves the quality of thought, and vice versa (Živković, 2014). Moreover, students can gain knowledge not only from the research they make or other students’ performances, but also by observing the other presenters’ strengths and weaknesses to develop better communication and presentation skills (Girard & Trapp, 2011).

## **6. Benefits and Advantages of using Oral Presentation Projects**

Many scholars have written about the benefits of conducting OPs in the language classroom (King, 2002; Kennedy, 2007; Gerard and Trapp, 2011; Auster and Wylie, 2006; etc). According to Girard and Trapp (2011), the potential benefits of students’ oral presentations include:

- Classroom interaction and students’ participation and involvement in language learning
- Increase in students’ motivation and interest in foreign language learning
- Remarkable improvements on presentation skills and communication performance
- Allowing for new perspectives not covered elsewhere.

As far as King (2002) is concerned, she considers that OPs are an opportunity for developing real-world communication and leadership skills. She summarizes the advantages of presentations in the following:

- Allowing for the use of the four language skills in a natural and integrated way.
- Helping to reduce the gap between language study and language use.
- Reinforcing pair and team work and enhancing collaborative work.
- Helping students gather, inquire, organize and construct information.
- Promote active leaning and develop learner's autonomy.

Moreover, OPs allow the students to get involved in the learning process through being active participants and getting engaged in real-world experiences. They also help develop problem-solving skills and critical thinking competence (Gerard & Trapp, 2011).

Furthermore, OPs promote learner-centeredness and the students have direct control of the content and the flow of the classroom (Apple & Kikuchi, 2007). According to Thornbury (2005, p.91), OPs are an authentic way to practice speaking; something that is different from usual speaking drills carried out in classrooms. Students are called to use the target language in a natural way to present and communicate the content of the topic. Besides, according to Hovane (2009), OPs provide students with additional motivation to learn English.

## **7. The Role of the Teacher in Preparing Oral Presentations**

Implementing oral presentation projects in EFL Classrooms is not as easy as we may think. It requires from the teacher much efforts and much time for planning and preparation. In this kind of activities, the teacher is a facilitator rather than a controller, thus, learning becomes learner-centered. This change from teacher-centeredness to learner-centeredness calls the teachers to prepare his learners to be responsible and autonomous in their TL acquisition. The role of the teacher is also to assist them to develop interaction skills, cooperative learning skills, and the use of technology and to create a relevant learning atmosphere (King, 2002). That is to say, he needs to be a guide, a facilitator, an organizer and a supporter. According to Xinaming (2005), "*teachers...still play a key role in the background, as a facilitator, research guides, ultimate references, and source of encouragement.*"(p.120). According to King, the teacher's active role in preparing successful presentations can be seen in the following:



### **7.1. Providing Guidelines**

A well-planned and explicit instruction will help increase students' receptiveness to oral presentations. Teacher should be clear in explaining and listing the desired objectives. According to King (2002):

- The teacher gives assignment forms to organize students and help them share tasks among them.
- He should stress on the time limit of the presentations (e.g. 25 minutes)
- He should clearly explain the grading criteria and his expectations from the presentation.

### **7.2. Grouping and Scheduling Students Presentations**

It is a challenging work when the teacher has a large class, so it is better to plan presentations in groups of 4 or 5 in order to save time and develop cooperative skills and reduce anxiety (King, 2002). The teacher has to cope with this situation and make efforts to familiarize with different cooperative techniques. It is advisable that the teacher gives students freedom to choose the partners to work with.

### **7.3. Selecting Topics and Gathering Information**

In presentation projects, the students are let free to choose the topic they think is the most appropriate for them. The teacher should respect their choice and encourage them to conduct their research. However, low-level students may find some difficulties in dealing with a topic which needs research, so the teacher has to help them to choose a topic and relevant related resources (King 2002).

### **7.4. Handling Technical Problems**

The presenters need to know in advance how to handle the material in order to avoid surprises and panic at the moment of the presentation. Explanations and discussions about technical problems that may occur are necessary to prepare the students to cope with such situations. Students generally focus on the content of the presentation and the performance they deliver forgetting then about technical problems. Such technical issues cause to waste time and disturb the students. Thus affect badly the students' performance (King 2002).

### **7.5. Managing Question-Answer Sessions**

They are generally short sessions designed to help learners have their queries and concerns discussed together with their peers and teacher. This latter helps in identifying possible difficulties that prevent students from providing a successful presentation.

### **7.6. Preparing Peer and Teacher Assessment**

The teacher provides an evaluation form for students to get feedback from their peers. They will have their deficiencies and weak points identified so that they can rectify or improve them. Another assessment is done through the teacher evaluation form which they can use as a reference or guideline (King 2002). Students also are informed in advance about the evaluation criteria to help them know teacher's expectations.

## **8. Feedback and Assessment in Oral Presentations**

### **8.1. Peer Assessment**

Working with the concept of student-centered approach to language learning, students can take part in the learning process through peer assessment activities. Peer assessment has been utilized in oral presentation activities in various educational contexts (Boud, Cohen & Sampson, 1999). In this type of evaluation, the students can get feedback over their oral presentation performance from their colleagues. They have a chance to interact and discuss with their peers to spot their weakest and strongest points pertaining to oral performance. Students can achieve a higher level of learning through interaction with their peers and instructors (Earl, 1986).

Peer assessment allows the students to develop their collaborative skills and their autonomy through practice and cooperative work (Otoshi & Heffernen, 2008). However, it is noticed that the evaluation criteria are generally established by the teacher without taking into account students' ideas. Excluding the students from setting the criteria may lead to a lack of reliability and effectiveness. As they are not supposed to know about the description of the criteria, some students may not succeed in assessing their peers properly. Otoshi and Heffernen claimed that incorporating students' ideas while establishing the criteria for presentations is an important factor in a learner-centered approach. Therefore, allowing the students to participate in designing the assessment criteria will lead to a better and effective performance in oral presentations.

Peer assessment criteria should include four main elements, namely: language, content, delivery and visual aids as shown in (Appendix 3). The teacher may incorporate for example: eye contact, voice, body gestures, time limits and others. Once the students are exposed to a good oral presentation model, they will be able to identify what's missing in a bad presentation (Al-Issa & Redha (2010).

## **8.2. Self-Assessment**

Self-assessment is a process by which learners monitor and evaluate their own presentation performance. It can be achieved, for instance, through videotaping, so that to give self-feedback and find strategies to enhance performance (De Grez, 2009). It refers to students who are involved in judging their own language learning progress (Sambell, McDowell & Brown, 1998). Self-assessment gives an opportunity for students to watch themselves presenting; it helps reduce communication apprehension, and improve students' self-efficacy, self-confidence and oral skills. According to Boud (1995), self-assessment consists of two main elements: *making decisions about the standards of performance, and making judgments about the quality of the performance in relation to the standards*. In this way, students are engaged in the learning process through setting assessment criteria and then judging their performance.

## **8.3. Teacher Assessment**

It is the classical way of evaluating students' target language acquisition. The instructor should set criteria that allow him to assess his learners' oral presentation. Students however need to know about those criteria so that to know what the teacher expects from them to accomplish. The teacher can conduct a formal or informal assessment. In the first one, students are being evaluated to get marks whereas in the second one, they are assessed for the sake of improving their performance and presentation skills (Al-Issa & Redha, 2010). For the purpose, he may use a checklist incorporating various elements such as the appropriate use of visuals, rate of speech, body language, eye contact, fluency and accuracy, natural delivery, question-answer time, etc.

## **9. Visual Aids in Oral Presentations**

Visual aids are considered a key element in successful OPs. Using visuals in a proper way can add strength and interest, and helps get the message across. Ming (2005) claimed that we live in a time when communication is visual and verbal and that visuals are important to

oral communications as well as to written communication. He also asserted that *"The presentation that uses visual aids effectively is more persuasive, more professional, more interesting, and more informative"* (2005, p. 119-120). Visual aids are an important part of OPs because they provide support for both speakers and listeners during the presentation. They help to reduce stress and make the presentation more successful. (Lambert, 2008). They are used to give more details about the topic and help the audience understand what is being said.

Visual aids include boards, flip charts, OHP, PowerPoint, videos, handouts, etc. The choice of the visual depends on the presenter and the purpose of the presentation. The use of technology in students' presentations reveals to be much more interesting than without it. This is claimed by King (2002) who said that with the availability of technology and visuals, presentations are more exciting and interesting than traditional ones. However, she declared that *"the basic rule is to use visual aids to support the presentation, not to dominate it"* (p. 410). That is to say, students need to receive instruction on how to use visuals in an appropriate and rational manner.

Visuals are used to support and reinforce the presentation. However, many students do not necessarily know the reason behind their use. Chivers and Shoolbred (2007) asserted that many students, even professional presenters forget why they have decided to use some kind of visual support in their presentations. Here are some benefits of visuals as suggested by Wilson & Brooks (2014):

- They help cover many points of the content in a short time
- They make the presentation look more clear, professional and interesting.
- They link the different sections of the presentation
- They help show reality when words cannot (maps, photographs, plans...)
- They summarize information through key words, tables and graphs
- They help the audience follow the presentation without getting bored
- They make the subject interesting though it is not really.
- They make the presentation more memorable, thus increase the chances that what is said will be remembered.

## 10.Oral Presentation Constraints and Difficulties

Oral presentations are always considered as difficult and challenging tasks in the EFL classroom. They present many problems to the students as well as to the teachers mainly when they are not well implemented (Meloni & Thompson, 1980). One of the common issues reported by teachers who have been conducting OPs is that they are time consuming activities with little pedagogical value (Ross, 2007); so in order to be effective, presentations need to be properly designed. Many problems can occur as a result of a lack of organization and structure. Sometimes students choose inappropriate and uninteresting topics, something that makes the audience inattentive and disrespectful when listening to the presentation. Poorly prepared talks constitute a real problem for EFL teachers who find themselves in a situation where they do not even know what errors should be addressed. This is in fact what leads the teacher to think that students gain nothing from such presentation assignments (Wilson & Brooks, 2014).

Moreover, when presentation projects are not well guided and well oriented, students will end up uncomfortable and weak in front of the others. This might cause learner's self-confidence to be undermined (Wilson & Brooks 2014). This latter added that the audience gets distracted and bored easily, mainly when the topic is not interesting. The same thing when the presentation is long and full of technical details or simply when things are not well arranged. That is why in some cases the teacher finds himself obliged not only to interrupt the presenter but to cancel the presentation. Even for teachers who believe in the role of oral presentations in developing EFL learner's language abilities will only give one chance, if none at all, in the whole semester for each student because of time constraints. Many students end up the semester without having that chance to get their presentation delivered (Wilson & Brooks 2014).

King (2002) believes that the major problems that lead to students' failure in oral presentations are "*speech anxiety, group boredom and limited presentation skills*" (p. 404). He claims that anxiety and the fear of public speaking prevent students from taking the floor and delivering a strong and successful presentation. King (2002) also held that OPs constitute people's most common phobia than any other cause of anxiety; therefore, most students tend to avoid them. Therefore, it is important for teachers to raise the problem of anxiety and discuss it with students to find a solution. He claimed that "*Anxiety causes performance to deteriorate and actually affects novice speaker's self-esteem*" (p.404). According to the *Book of Lists*, 54 percent of adults rate fear of public speaking ahead of the fear of death. But as the

saying goes, *there is nothing wrong with having butterflies in your stomach. Your goal is to get them to fly in formation* (Cited Tracy, 2008; p.42). Add to that the problem of large classes and the unavailability of appropriate visuals which impede teachers from conducting presentation projects in their classrooms.

To conclude, oral presentation projects in EFL classrooms remain one of the interesting and beneficial activities in the learner-centered approach, though there are sometimes constraints related to their implementation. However, students should be aware of the types of the presentations and the purpose behind each one so that be able to design and deliver successful talks. Besides, there is no secret to an effective presentation provided that learners respect the different stages required, starting from the planning stage up to the delivery of the presentation. This latter, in order to be effective, it should be designed, guided, and assessed in a relevant and most appropriate way. The teacher has a leading role in giving instructions about organizing, preparing, practicing and delivering a presentation.

Presentation projects in EFL environments are more than ever needed to promote learner's autonomy, self-confidence, leadership skills and awareness of the importance of enhancing students' communicative performance. In addition to their academic role, they are integrating almost every professional environment given the significant need for oral communication proficiency.

## **Section Two: Oral Communication in EFL Classes**

The foreign language instruction should focus on enhancing students' oral communication skills (Pittenger, Miller, & Mott, 2004; as cited by Miles, 2009). Though many students have gained a valuable knowledge in areas such as grammar, vocabulary and language structure, we find that most of them lack a significant aspect of language which is communication. Oral communication skills are considered the most difficult skills to be developed among learners; hence the need to introduce them at early stages. This is the view of Chan (2011) who stated that "*Oral communication skills should be introduced and developed early in the undergraduate science curriculum and not delayed until students reach the postgraduate level*" (p.73). That means EFL learners should focus on the development of their oral skills as early as possible to achieve competence.

With the emergence of the Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) in language classrooms, many teachers started to focus on the communicative aspect of language rather than teaching only grammar and structure. Because the communicative approach works on developing students' communicative competence, teachers view it as a relevant approach to improve students' lack of communicative proficiency. Their concern is how to develop learner's ability to use the target language for communicative purposes. In what follows; we will shed some light on oral communication skills, speaking skill, the communicative approach and communicative competence. We will see to what extent it is important to enhance learners' oral communicative performance in the foreign language classroom.

### **1. Communication**

#### **1.1. Definition**

Human communication in general is a means to achieve different personal and social goals. In everyday life, people communicate information, ideas, thoughts and feelings between each other and they usually choose suitable forms to fulfill different functions in given social settings (Celce-Murcia & Olshtain, 2000). Furthermore, Rai (2010) considers that communication is an important aspect of behaviour, thus, human communication is affected by all factors that influence human behaviour. Revell (1979), defined communication as "*An exchange between people, of knowledge, of information, of ideas, of opinions and of feelings*" (p.1). According to Gamble and Gamble (2002) there are seven components for human communication, namely: people, message, channel, noise, context, feedback and effect. For a communication to occur, these components should be present.

## **1.2. Types of Communication**

Different types of communication can be distinguished based on the number of people involved in it, the purpose of communication and the degree of formality (DeSantis, 1999).

### **1.2.1. Intrapersonal communication**

According to DeSantis, it is understood to be the process of understanding information within ourselves. It includes various activities such as problem solving, thinking, planning, conflict resolution, stress, emotion, self-evaluation, etc. Gamble and Gamble (2002) claimed that *“during the intrapersonal communication you think about, talk with, learn about, reason with, and evaluate yourself”* (p.9). That is to say the information is communicated to us before it is transmitted to other people.

### **1.2.2. Interpersonal Communication**

It is the informal exchange of information between two or more people (DeSantis 1999). It is like intrapersonal communication in a way that it helps to share information, solve problems, plan, evaluate and establish relations with other people. Gamble and Gamble (2002) said that *“When you engage in interpersonal communication, you interact with another, learn about him or her and act in ways that help sustain or terminate your relationship”* (p.9). Interpersonal communication takes place in a particular context, and it involves two or more people.

### **1.2.3. Public Communication**

It is another way of communicating and delivering a message to a given audience. Gamble and Gamble (2002), stated that *“Through public communication you inform and persuade the members of an audience to hold certain attitudes, values, or beliefs; so that they will think, believe, or act in a particular way”* (p.9). Nowadays, public communication skills need to be developed among EFL learners to make them good orators in a changing and developing society.

### **1.2.4. Written Communication**

Unlike oral communication which is achieved through oral means, written communication is done through different forms of written texts. In comparing with oral communication, scholars believe that the elements of oral communication such as intonation



and facial expressions are not found in written communication; therefore punctuation may be used to compensate for the gap.

### **1.2.5. Oral Communication**

Oral communication is of great importance given its benefits and the role it plays in our daily social life. Richards (2006) believes that oral communication is a very important part of our lives. He considers that its value can be immediately measured and its effect is immediately seen, something which is opposite to written communication.

## **2. Background Knowledge about Oral Communication Skills in EFL Classes**

Oral communication which is also called verbal communication is the interchange of verbal messages or ideas between a sender and a receiver or between a speaker and a listener. It includes listening, understanding and interpretation of the communicated message. According to Byrne (1986), oral communication is

*“A two-way process between a speaker and a listener (or listeners). It involves the productive skill of speaking as well as the receptive skill of understanding (or listening with understanding) (p.8).*

We understand that it is that ability to express one’s thoughts and ideas using oral skills rather than expressing them through written words. It is always related to meaning negotiated between two persons or more, and related also to the context or the setting in which the communication takes place. Both the speaker and the listener are engaged in active roles in this process of communicating the information.

Because we live in a globalization era, students are more than ever called to be proficient in oral communication. They need to be equipped with good oral skills that will enable them to function well in academic as well as in professional settings (Rahman, 2010). Halliday (1978) explains that communication is not just a simple way of exchanging words between different parties but it goes beyond that to be a *“sociological encounter and through exchange of meaning in the communication process, social reality is created, maintained and modified (p.169).* This power of language and communication can be seen also in the works of Austin (1962) on speech act theory. He believes that communication is an instrument of

action. That is communication is more than exchanging words and sentences, but rather a means to achieve goals. A good communication is always dependent on the context and it is embedded in a specific discourse community (Rahman, 2010).

Kelly, Fincham and Beach (2003), as cited by Hargie (2006) have linked the ability to performance when they pointed out that ‘*Communication skills refer to the ability to realize communicative goals while behaving in a socially appropriate manner*’ (p. 11). That is to say, there should always be a context for oral communication to take place; EFL context in our case. Oral communication is a very important aspect in the teaching and learning of English as a foreign language. Staab (1992) claims that oral language is important not only as a vital communication tool that empowers us in our daily lives but also as a valuable way to learn. However, the spoken language in English has been shamefully neglected. Therefore, many teachers strive to develop their learner’s’ oral communication skills through designing effective classroom activities and adopting relevant communicative approaches.

Oral communication is an interactive process which involves an effective transmission of thoughts, ideas, facts and feelings. Students are engaged in communication in order to develop understanding and information for group functioning (Rahman, 2010). It is also exchanging meaning and understanding where meaning is a central element. Rahman (2010) considers that:

*“The two communicative agents involved in the communication process are the sender (S) and the receiver (R). Both the communication agents exert a reciprocal influence on each other through interstimulation and response” (p.3).*

Furthermore, to be successful in enhancing students’ ability to use the Target Language (TL) for communicative purposes, teachers need to take into account some characteristics of oral communication, as supported by Rahman (2010). He claims that “*Oral communication is composed of many elements, which when taken as a whole, result in the success or failure of the interaction.*” (p.3). Indeed, effective oral communication needs to be planned, strategized, practiced and assessed in an authentic setting; it cannot be achieved only through “*reading*”(Chan, 2011). The nature of oral communication is that it cannot happen in an isolated manner. It is always related to the context of occurrence, participants involved, experiences and the purpose of the communication.

Furthermore, According to Staab (1992, p.6), oral communication includes both the speaking and the listening skill. He stated that:

*“Oral communication skills mean both speaking and listening to oral language; both talking and listening are lifelong activities and probably our most important communication tool”* (cited in Qutbi and Ayesha, 2013).

He believes that they are integrated skills and supportive to each other. Indeed, the same view was held by Brown (1994) who claims that the integration of speaking and listening together forms oral communication skills. The listening skill indeed can be developed in an indirect way through integrating it to the speaking skill.

### **3. Speaking Skill in the EFL Classroom**

The aim behind learning a foreign language is certainly to be able to speak it. Speaking is regarded as one of the major skills which need to be developed in the language classroom. However, it was for a long time marginalized in the EFL classrooms (Richard & Rogers, 1986). The classical methods to language teaching used to focus on the grammar and structure rather than the communicative aspect of language. Speaking is an active productive skill where learners are called to produce language to communicate their messages. It is then different from receptive skills which include listening and reading. However, most of teachers find that the teaching of speaking is a challenging task (Brown, 2000; Hedge, 2000). Despite its significant importance, students are still deficient in their use of the target language to communicate. Because of learners' lack of speaking competence, many graduates face problems when they try to communicate in their professional setting. Therefore, speaking needs more attention from teachers and syllabus designers to meet students' needs.

Speaking is defined by the Oxford Pocket dictionary (2009) as *“the action of conveying information or expressing one's thought and feeling in spoken language”*. It is a process of building and sharing meaning through verbal and non-verbal symbols in a variety of contexts. Indeed most linguists tend to explain speaking as an act which performs and produces oral language to convey a message in different situations and in an appropriate context. What makes it a different skill is that it has some specific features we cannot find in other skills such as intonation, stress, the speed of speech, voice tone, etc.

Moreover, Hedge (2000) in his turn, claims that speaking is a process of constructing meaning which involves production, reception and processing of information. In addition, speaking is complex since students need to develop at the same time other knowledge such as vocabulary, grammar, and communicative skills. He then prioritizes speaking over the other skills by supporting that learning to speak effectively and competently in the target language is a priority. He stated that “*speaking is a skill by which they (students) are judged while first impressions are being formed*” (p.261). That is, learners have acquired a foreign language only if they can speak it.

Bygate (2006) considers speaking to be a linguistic activity which consists of several elements like pronunciation, morphology and lexis, grammar and syntax, semantics, discourse, pragmatics and fluency. To teach speaking one has to deal with all these elements, or at least some of them. This is what explains indeed the complexity of the speaking skill and its importance to good oral communication in EFL classes. Previous research concluded that speaking is not about possessing a big amount of words. The problem resides in how the learner is going to use his repertoire of words to communicate with others. Many students have learned much target language vocabulary, but they still cannot use it in a proper way to speak. “*One frustration commonly voiced by learners are that they have spent years studying English, but still cannot speak it*” Thornbury (2005). This is what explains the frustration of many EFL learners who provide a lot of efforts to speak English correctly but they end up their degrees without being able to achieve that.

#### **4. The Importance of Speaking in the EFL Classes**

Mastering the speaking skill is the keystone in the teaching and learning of English as a foreign language (TEFL). Of the four language skills namely: reading, writing, listening and speaking, this latter appears to be of top priority in today’s language classrooms due to the significant role it plays in learners’ mastery of the target language. In our informal talk, when we want to ask someone if he masters a given language, we use the expression “*Do you speak English*”, “*Do you speak Spanish*”, etc, we never say for instance, “*Do you write English*” or “*do you write Spanish*”, etc. This shows that students are first judged on how well they speak a language. People in general and students in particular have learned a foreign language if they have learned how to speak it. Ur (2000) claims that speaking is the most important skill in foreign language learning. He stated:

*“Out of all the four skills, listening, speaking, reading and writing, speaking seems the most important. People who know a language are referred to as speakers of the language, as if speaking included all other kinds of knowing a target language”*(p.12).

Moreover, for effective and successful speaking activities, Ur (2000) believes that some features shall be accounted for. They include time allocated for the task, participation, motivation, and the type of language to be used, speaking inhibition and the use of the native language.

If students master the speaking skill of a given language, they can be considered as speakers of that language as if they master the four skills. This is supported by Celce-Murcia (2001) who claimed that *“The ability to speak a language is synonymous with knowing that language since speech is the most basic means of human communication”* (p.103). Furthermore, the importance of this skill can be explained by its ability to be integrated with the other skills. It can help students to develop their vocabulary, to use the grammatical structures and rules in appropriate context, and to develop writing skills and listening. Indeed, speaking is interrelated with the other skills in a way that practicing one, leads to practice the other.

This view is also supported by Nunan (1991) who stated that *“To most people, mastering the art of speaking is the single most important factors of learning a second or foreign language and success is measured by the ability to carry out a conversation in the language”* (p.39). Because of this, learners should receive appropriate instruction on speaking, and teachers should introduce adequate courses and activities to reach proficiency. Besides, a speaking course should give the students the necessary skills to perform well in different situations. The graduates should find out about the suitable tools needed to develop their ability to express themselves orally in real-life situations (Rahman, 2010).

## **5. Speaking and Oral Communication Constraints in EFL Classes**

Since speaking is a complex oral productive skill, it requires practice and great efforts from both language learners and instructors. The success or failure of learners in developing the speaking skills is to a large extent dependent on many factors. Despite the amount of time and efforts provided, many learners still display a poor speaking performance. Undoubtedly; this lack of oral communication performance is due to many difficulties and constraints.

## **5.1. Lack of Motivation and Interest in the Topic**

Ur (2005) believes that in order to get the students to speak and communicate their ideas freely in the target language, there should be an interesting topic. Furthermore, the discourse needs to have a meaningful purpose. He points out also that it is important to design tasks and activities in contexts which are likely to be useful to learners' life outside the classroom setting. The students are motivated only if they know that what they are learning will be part of their social and professional surroundings. In this context, Littlewood (1984) stated that:

*“In second language learning as in every other of human learning, motivation is the crucial force which determines whether a learner embarks on a task at all, how much energy he devotes to it, and how long he perseveres”* (p.53).

The students are not motivated to speak if the topic is not interesting, hence, the need to allow learners to choose a topic of their interest. Lack of motivation and enthusiasm to speak will impact negatively on students' communicative performance. It is mainly in the teacher-based classroom that students do not have the freedom to choose and suggest topics for discussion.

## **5.2. Anxiety and Communication Apprehension**

Most EFL learners display a poor oral communication performance because of anxiety. This latter is identified as a common problem for most language students. Many competent students prefer not to take part in the classroom interaction because they feel anxious and nervous. Anxiety can affect the learning process and cause the learners to demonstrate poor language output. It can be considered as a kind of troubled feeling that occurs in one's mind. It is a feeling of apprehension and nervousness associated with the arousal of the nervous system (Horwitz, 1986). It is a very complex human reaction that involves psychological and physiological reaction. It can be recognized through the students' state of stress, negative emotions, accelerated heartbeats, sweaty palms, and queasy stomach and so on. Horwitz adds that it is *“a distinct complex of self-perceptions, beliefs, feelings and behaviours related to classroom language learning; arising from the uniqueness of the language learning process”* (p. 125).

Foreign language anxiety is to a large extent accountable for students' uncomfortable experiences in the classroom. McCroskey (1977) believes that a student with high level of apprehension will avoid communication to avoid experiencing fear or anxiety. He defined communication apprehension as *"an individual's level of fear or anxiety associated with either real or anticipated communication with another person or persons"* (p.78). That is, students who experience the fear of speaking in class show a high level of anxiety and apprehension. This affects negatively students' performance in foreign language learning.

According to Horwitz (1986), communication apprehension occurs when one considers his personal knowledge to be, for sure, difficult to communicate and to be clearly hard to be understood by others. As a consequence, Learners who typically have difficulty speaking in front of others are likely to be less able to learn a second language. Moreover, (Ur, 2002) believes that learners are often inhibited when attempting to express themselves in the target language. Therefore, they prefer to remain silent to avoid any trouble.

### **5.3. Uneven Participation and Time Constraint**

Because of time constraints, many students are not given an opportunity to speak and practice their target language communication. Unlike other skills, speaking needs a lot of time to get real practice. In many cases, speaking is monopolized by only few students. Because only one student can talk at a time, some tend to dominate the classroom discussion and others are excluded. It is often noticed that participation is not even among learners, and this is mainly the case of large classes (Ur, 2002).

### **5.4. The use of the Mother Tongue**

Researchers pointed out that many foreign language learners often switch to their mother tongue when trying to speak a foreign language. This shift is due to students' lack of competence in the target language. Since learners are afraid to make mistakes, they prefer to use their native language to feel comfortable and sure about what they say (Ur, 2002). It is a difficult task to convince the students to use only and all the time the target language in the classroom. Besides, most of learners do not make efforts to practice the target language outside the classroom settings.

The influence and overuse of the mother tongue will let the students less exposed to the target language, thus not able to use it properly and appropriately. Johnson and Morrow (1981) stated that *“In most situations, learning will be effective provided that there is extensive exposure to the target language and plenty of opportunities for the learner to use it”* (p.48). Moreover, the learner should have access to situations where the language is used as a natural means of communication (Littlewood, 1984). This latter believes that another significant influence on the learner's proficiency is the quality of the learning opportunities offered by the environment.

### **5.5. Teaching Strategies**

Success or failure in oral communication performance is also dependent on teacher strategies and methodologies in the classroom. In the teacher-centered classroom, the teacher speaks a lot and leaves only a few opportunities to students. Therefore, the strategies and approaches adopted by the teacher are very crucial to the learning process. Tsui (1995) claimed that some teachers consider silence as *“a sign of their own incompetence and inadequacy in fulfilling their roles as imparter of knowledge”* (p. 86). That is, if students do not interact and speak, there should be something wrong with the teacher's competence or method.

In the end, success in developing learners' speaking skills is to a large extent dependent on avoiding such constraints mentioned above. Enhancing oral language fluency can only be done in a relaxed and comfortable environment where students feel good at ease. The teacher should take into account these factors and needs to work on how to eradicate them or at least minimize their effects in a way they will not hamper students' attempts to enhance their oral communication performance.

## **6. Introduction to Communicative Competence**

Communicative competence (CC) has become a central preoccupation in higher education over the last decades. It has brought a remarkable change and an important development in the context of teaching and learning English as a foreign language (Richards, 2006). It caused a shift in teaching methodology from focusing on language structural properties to the focus on meaning comprehension. The concern of foreign language instruction now is promoting real-life communication rather than fostering student's linguistic competence. Since the introduction of the concept by Dell Hymes in 1970's, it has never



ceased to be a subject for discussion and debate, and it has attracted many researchers who most of them view language as a communicative process which takes the CC as its starting point. Savignon (1987) claimed that the term CC can be applied to both written and oral communication in academic and non-academic contexts. In the following, we will provide the definition of the CC, the context of its appearance, its sectors and components, but also its role in enhancing learners' oral communication performance.

### **6.1. Definition and Overview of Communicative Competence**

The concept of communicative competence was first introduced by the American sociolinguist Dell Hymes in the 1970's to show that the knowledge of the grammatical rules of a given language is not enough to speak a language and communicate with it (Rickheit, Hans & Constanze, 2008). It appeared as a counter-movement against the "*Linguistic Competence*" introduced in (1965) by Noam Chomsky. This latter based his theory on an ideal speaker-listener with perfect linguistic knowledge which is supposed to remain unaffected by different factors (cognitive and situational) during performance (Rickheit et al., 2008). Hymes opposed to Chomsky's notions of Competence and Performance and developed the CC. As far as communication is concerned, Hymes (1972) believes that Chomsky's concept is not relevant for the theory of real-life communication. In his article "*On communicative competence*" (1972), he points out that Chomsky's dichotomy is too limited and narrow to describe language behaviour as a whole; it does not also account for social and cultural aspects of communication. Besides, Habermas points out the inadequacy and limitedness of Chomsky's linguistic competence when he stated that "*general semantics cannot be developed sufficiently on the narrow basis of the monological linguistic competence proposed by Chomsky*" (1970, p. 137–138). This implies that it fails to take into account the dimension of communication.

Hymes completely rejected Chomsky's dichotomy of competence and performance. He rather believes the two concepts to be two sides of one coin. "*Performance is the observable part, and competence is the inferred ability to produce the observed performance in the future*" (Rickheit et al., 2008. p.17). Unlike Chomsky, Hymes claims that performance and competence may be influenced by different social, attitudinal and cognitive factors. According to him, Chomsky's dichotomy do not show any reference to the use of language in context, i.e. does not account for appropriateness. Some important factors should be taken into consideration for an effective communication, namely relevance and appropriateness. He

stated that CC “*involves knowing not only the language code but also what to say to whom, and how to say it appropriately in any given situation.* (Cited in Saville-Troike, 2003, p. 18).

Furthermore, Hymes believe that in order to acquire a language, learners should go beyond language rules. He supports that it is “*the aspect of our competence that enables us to convey and interpret messages and negotiate meaning interpersonally within specific contexts*” (Brown, 2007, p.219). He stated that the speaker not only is required to communicate with the target language but to use it effectively in the relevant socio-cultural environment. Thus, it would not be relevant to produce grammatical sentences that are inappropriate to the context of use. With that being said, appropriateness is much more important than correctness. Therefore, to use a language and communicate with it effectively, speakers should account for the appropriateness of language to given contexts (Hymes, 1972, p. 277).

In spite of the complexity of the concept, many scholars attempted to provide a more explicit definition of CC. Canal and Swain (1980) see communicative competence as a synthesis of an underlying system of knowledge and skill needed for communication. For Savignon (1987), it is the ability to function in a truly communicative setting. Yule (1996, p.197) asserted that the CC can be defined in terms of three components, “*as the ability to use the L2 accurately, appropriately, and flexibly*’. From this definitions, we can understand that the development of learners’ communicative competence is crucial for good oral communication.

## **6.2. Sectors of Communicative Competence**

Instead of Chomsky’s notions of competence and performance, Hymes (1972, p. 281) stressed that four important questions need to be asked to understand language use and communication (cited in Rickheit et al. 2008).

### **6.2.1. Formal possibility**

It means whether something is formally possible or no. If a given communicative behaviour or utterance obeys to certain grammatical and cultural rules in a formal system, then it is considered formally possible. For example the sentence “*Me go eat later*” is not formally possible because it breaks the rules of the English grammar system. Whereas “*I am going to eat later*” is possible since it obeys to the rules of a formal system.

### **6.2.2. Feasibility**

It means whether something is feasible considering the means of implementation available. *“It is based on psycholinguistic factors such as memory and other cognitive, emotional and behavioural limitations caused by features of the human brain and body in relation to their physical environment”* (Rickheit et al. 2008, p.18). For instance the sentence *“the boy the ball hits white”* is not feasible since it is difficult for the mind to process it.

### **6.2.3. Appropriateness**

Whether something is adequate and successful in relation to the context it is used. The communicative action here is related to the social environment where it takes place. Each communication situation expects a given and specific behaviour which needs to be relevant and appropriate. For example it is not appropriate to call a police officer *“darling”*.

### **6.2.4. Actual performance**

It means whether and to which degree something is done and repeated. It stresses the importance of empirical observation of a given communicative event, and the importance of registering the probability of occurrence. This implies that an utterance that is repeated frequently is likely to be performed well.

## **6.3. Components of Communicative Competence**

There are many models presented by many researchers in the aim of explaining and understanding the CC. The most famous ones are the model of Canal and Swain (1980), the model of Bachman (1987), the model of Savignon (1983) and the model of Celce-Murcia, Dornyei, &Thurrell (1995). However, most of the models claim that the communicative competence is comprised of four main components, namely; the linguistic competence, the sociolinguistic competence, the discourse competence and the strategic competence.

### **6.3.1. The Linguistic Competence**

It is also called the grammatical competence and it refers to the knowledge of the language code which includes grammar, vocabulary, spelling, pronunciation, etc. (Celce-Murcia, Dornyei, &Thurrell, 1995). For Canal and swain (1980), the grammatical competence refers to the knowledge of lexical items and of rules of morphology, syntax, sentence-

grammar semantics and phonology. They claim that this competence is very important for any communicative approach that aims at having communicatively competent learners who can understand and express accurately the literal meaning of utterances.

### **6.3.2. The sociolinguistic competence**

According to Canal and Swain (1980), it includes knowledge of rules and conventions which are necessary for appropriate use of language in sociolinguistic and socio-cultural contexts. *“It is the mastery of socio-cultural code of language use (appropriate application of vocabulary, register, politeness and style in a given situation)”* (Celce-Murcia et al.1995, p.7).

### **6.3.3. The Discourse Competence**

It is the mastery of the rules which allow the combination of form and meaning to achieve a meaningful piece of written or spoken text (Canal & Swain). In other words *“It is the ability to combine language structures into different types of cohesive texts (e.g., political speech, poetry)”* (celce-Murcia et al.1995, p.7).

### **6.3.4. The Strategic Competence**

In the model of Canal and Swain (1980), this competence is made up of the knowledge of verbal and non-verbal communication strategies that are used to compensate for breakdowns in communication caused by the lack of competence in one of the CC components. It is defined by Celce-Murcia et al. (1995) as *“the knowledge of verbal and non-verbal communication strategies which enhance the efficiency of communication and, where necessary, enable the learner to overcome difficulties when communication breakdowns occur* (1995, p.7). In other words, it is the manipulation of language by learners to achieve communicative goals.

The understanding of the CC and its four components when teaching foreign languages is very important to form communicatively competent students. The CC plays a significant role in enhancing learners’ oral communicative skills through adopting and designing relevant curricula that consider the communicative aspect of the target language.

## 7. Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) in Language Classrooms

Communicative language teaching or the communicative approach as called by others has been developed in the 1970's as a response to the limitations and shortcomings of the previous structural approaches to language teaching. These latter did not account for the communication need of a globalized world. This new approach was influenced by the works of Dell Hymes who coined the concept of "*the communicative Competence*". Soon after its appearance, it gained ground and has been spread all over the world to be applied in language classrooms (Richards, 2006).

From the outset, there was no a clear definition of the CLT; there was a substantial debate pertaining to the appropriate way of defining the CLT; and no consensus was reached among researchers (McGroarty, 1984; Markee, 1997, cited in Ansarey, 2012). Nevertheless, it is always referred to as a set of principles and ideas about the goals of language teaching and the roles of teachers and learners in the classroom (Richards, 2006). Harmer (2003) asserted that "*the problem with communicative language teaching (CLT) is that the term has always meant a multitude of different things to different people*" (p. 289); hence its complexity to be clearly defined. Moreover, Spada (2007) expresses a similar view in her review of the CLT: '*What is communicative language teaching? The answer to this question seems to depend on whom you ask*' (p. 272). That means it is not easy to tell exactly what the Communicative Approach is.

The CLT was introduced in the EFL context in order to enhance student's abilities to use English in real-life communication settings. As mentioned above; it is based on the development of CC as a key element and ultimate goal in language teaching (Larsen-Freeman, 2000). The CLT views language as system for the expression of meaning where the main function of language is to permit interaction and communication (Richard, 2006). Besides, Littlewood (1981) stated that the CLT means to pay systematic attention to both functional and structural aspects of language merging this into a communicative view. We understand that the CLT aims at involving learners in realistic communication through conducting relevant activities. Its main function and high priority is to allow for interaction and communication (Ansarey, 2012).

Richards and Rodgers (2001) claimed that the CLT starts with a theory of language as communication, and its goal is to develop learners' communicative competence. They summarized the communicative approach to language teaching as follows:

- 1) Language is a system to express meaning.
- 2) Interaction and communication are the primary functions of language
- 3) The structure of language reflects its functional and communicative uses.
- 4) Grammatical and structural features are not the most important units of language; it is rather categories of functional and communicative meaning.

## **8. Strategic Competence and Oral Communication Strategies**

The strategic competence is one of the most important components of the CC. It is concerned by the use of oral communication strategies to compensate for students' lack of knowledge in a given subject. Since it was developed, it played a significant role in improving learners' oral communication performance in the language classroom. Despite its importance, it is given little attention comparing to the other components of the CC; at least this is the view of Canal and Swain who stated that:

*“With the exception of Savignon (1972) and Stern (1978, 1979), no communicative competence theorists have devoted any detailed attention to communication strategies that speakers employ to handle breakdowns in communication”* (1980, p. 25).

However, they believe that Strategic Competence, along with grammatical competence and sociolinguistic competence constitute a framework for determining the learner's proficiency in oral communication. They added *“we consider such strategies to be an important aspect of communicative competence that must be integrated with other components in an adequate theory of communicative competence”*(Canale & Swain, 1980, p.25). That is, strategic competence should be integrated with other components of the CC in order to achieve communication fluency.

On what concerns Celce-Murcia et al. (1995), they explained the strategic competence as *“the knowledge of verbal and non-verbal communication strategies which enhance the efficiency of communication and, where necessary, enable the learner to overcome difficulties when communication breakdowns occur”* (1995, p.7). In other words, it refers to the ability to get one's meaning across successfully to communicative partners, especially when problems

arise in the communication process. To be brief, it may be said to be the manipulation of language for communicative needs. Canal and Swain claim that it is a *“verbal and non-verbal communication strategies that may be called into action to compensate for breakdowns in communication due to performance variables or to insufficient competence”*(p. 30). The strategic competence is then activated when learners would like to express messages which their linguistic resources do not allow them to.

Nowadays, being good and effective at oral communication is more than ever necessary for language learners. Communication is considered to be the ultimate goal behind learning a second or foreign language. Bygate asserted that people:

*“(...) need to become competent in using strategies in order to overcome limitations due to a lack of competence in any of the other components integrating the proposed communicative competence framework”*(2006, p. 151).

Indeed, we often notice how many students possess a good knowledge of grammar and a wide range of vocabulary but get stuck and are unable to carry out their communicative intent. For examples, during oral language exams such students may even fail and their teachers often cannot understand how that could happen to their best students. Otherwise, how can we explain the success of some learners in communicating effectively using just few words (hundreds) knowing that they have a limited knowledge of the target language? (Dörnyei &Thurrell, 1991). How do they do it, they rely on what? In fact they rely *on their ability to communicate with restriction*, that is to say using communication strategies (Savignon, 1983, p.43; cited in Alireza, 2011). It is in this context that communication strategies may play a significant role in improving EFL Learners’ oral communication despite lack of linguistic competence in the TL.

The term communication strategies in language learning was first coined by Selinker (1972). With the development and spreading of the CLT in 1980’s, researchers started to focus on the use of communication strategies in foreign language classes (Littlemore, 2001; cited in Alireza, 2011). It is believed that the use of specific strategies enables language learners to compensate for their target language deficiencies and improve their communicative fluency (e.g., Færch & Kasper 1983, 1986; Tarone & Yule, 1989; Willems, 1987; Dörnyei &Thurrell, 1991, 1994; cited in Alireza, 2011). Moreover, Maleki (2010) asserted that communication strategies help in conveying unknown language between communication partners and assist in maintaining conversational flow (p. 642).

The communication strategies which are used by learners are divided by Corder (1981) into two types namely: Message Adjustment Strategies and Resources Expansion Strategies (cited by Dörnyei &Thurrell, 1991). Other researchers have used different words for the two types: Reduction or Avoidance Strategies and Achievement Strategies.

### **8.1. Reduction or Avoidance Strategies**

They consist of adapting one's message to one's resource-as the old slogan goes '*Language learners should say what they can, and not what they want to.*' These strategies involve either a slight alteration or a reduction of the message. Message adjustment is, in fact, a kind of risk avoidance, which is clearly expressed in the following typical learner statement: '*I know how far I can go and what I shouldn't even try*'. Reduction strategies, however can affect the content by avoiding the topic, abandoning the message and replacing the meaning (Dörnyei &Thurrell, 1991).

### **8.2. Achievement Strategies:**

In achievement strategies, learners generally risk failure and attempt to remain in the conversation and conveying their messages by compensating somehow for their deficiencies. The strategies they use can be either '*Co-operative or Non-co-operative*'. The former include the learner's appeal for help to his/her interlocutor. This can take a direct form (e.g. questions like '*what do you call? sorry...*') or can be indirect (e.g. by means of a pause, eye gaze, rising intonation, etc.). The latter do not call for the communication partner's assistance - the learner tries to overcome the problem relying just on his or her own resources (Dörnyei &Thurrell, 1991). Such strategies include:

- Paraphrase or circumlocution (e.g. 'small fast military plane' for 'fighter'),
- Approximation (e.g. 'ship' for 'sailing boat'),
- Generalization or All-Purpose words (e.g. *thing* or *stuff* ;),
- Non-linguistic means (e.g. mime, gesture, facial expression, or sound imitation),
- Borrowed or invented words (e.g. 'auto' for 'car'),
- Word-coinage (e.g. vegetarianist for vegetarian),
- Literal translation (e.g. casepopulari becomes popular houses),
- Code switching
- Foreignizing



- Time-Gaining Strategies (use of Linguistics Fillers):help the learner to remain in the conversation and to gain time to think. These strategies include the use of *Fillers or Hesitation Devices*-using filling words or gambits to fill pauses and to gain time to think such as ‘*Well, I see, I mean, as a matter of fact, let me think, actually, you know, ah, um, etc.*’

On the Teachability of the communication strategies, Taron & Yule (1989) claim that there are few materials available at present which teach learners how to use communication strategies when problems are encountered in the process of transmitting information.(Cited in Dörnyei &Thurrell, 1991). That means more efforts need to be provided so that to integrate communication strategies in the EFL classroom.

Throughout this section; we attempted to give an overview of oral communication in EFL classes. We touched many aspects of students’ oral performance in the classroom. We dealt with the speaking skill, its nature and factors affecting it. Besides, we have seen the importance of implementing the CLT in the language classroom, and its role in developing learners’ CC. In the end, we tackled the students’ strategic competence and the various oral communication strategies used by learners often to compensate for their deficiencies in grammatical competence. The studies allowed to see to what extent good oral communication is important as to the success of learning a foreign language.

### Section Three: Previous Studies

This literature review aims at bringing together the most relevant works yet done pertaining to oral presentations and oral communication performance in EFL Classrooms. However, limited literature has been yet published about oral presentations (King, 2002; Ootshi & Heffernan, 2008; Scholnik & Kol, 1999; Webster, 2002); and there has not been much work done on needs analysis in presentation classes. In fact most research has focused more on what makes a good presentation or on language output such as Task planning and the effects it can have on students' accuracy (Yuan & Ellis, 2003). Having the students give oral presentations in front of the class is one of the most popular activities in student –centered classrooms (King, 2002; Truong & Storch, 2007).

Most studies in the field indicate that oral presentations improve language accuracy and fluency, and strengthen learner's confidence (Piccinini, 2010). Researchers like Meloni and Thompson (1980, p. 503) believe that oral presentations have many advantages in a way they help students gain practice in choosing and narrowing the topic, collecting information from different sources, organizing and expressing the main idea, preparing visual aids, working within time limits and speaking easily in front of people. They stated that:

*“The oral report gives the adult student the opportunity to establish an identity as an individual with an interesting background and special knowledge. This leads to a more integrated and spirited class and markedly raises class interest”* (p. 510).

Furthermore, oral presentations are also beneficial for teachers (Al-Issa & Al-Qubtan, 2010). Thornbury and Meddings (2009, p. 24) believe that listening to students stimulates teacher's interest in students. It makes teachers realize that students are not empty vessels waiting to be filled with knowledge. Moreover, oral presentations provide *“a rewarding and stimulating experience both for teachers in developing facilitating skills and for students in training themselves to have confident presentations in public”* (King, 2002; p.413). This latter also claimed that presentations fill the gap between language use and language learning, and make use in an integrated manner all the four language skills. They represent an opportunity for developing real-world communications as well as leadership skills (King, 2002).

Chen (2011) claims that conducting oral presentation projects in EFL contexts is an effective way to get the students fully involved in the teaching and learning process. He also

stresses the importance of giving academic presentations around the world given the role English plays in our day. Learning how to present makes the students gain more than improved oral communication. Kennedy (2007) focuses on the fact that in-class debates are a means for students to cultivate both critical thinking and oral communication skills. Auster and Wylie (2006) suggest that an active learning approach to classroom management will enable students to hone their presentation skills by encouraging both formal and informal presentations on class topics.

According to Wilson and Brooks (2014), oral presentations are one activity that teachers can use to give their students a chance they need to communicate with their peers using English. They add that oral presentations are communicative activities which provide students with an enjoyable way of using English to communicate with their classmates. Therefore, students' motivation to learn English gets increased. Likewise, Thornbury (2005) believes that presentations can contribute to improve students' English language abilities. However, despite the benefits of using oral presentations, very few students are actually given a chance to conduct a presentation in their L2 classes.

Indeed, numerous researchers have made clear the benefits of relying on oral presentations in the language classroom. Girard, Pinar and Trapp (2011) for example, found that, along with helping their students improve their communication and presentation skills, using oral presentations allowed their students to interact and participate more in the classroom. They increased their students' interest in learning English. (King, 2002) believes they help bridge the gap between language study and language use. In addition, presentation projects are believed to be an authentic way of practicing English rather than simple speaking drills. This is important since speaking tasks that have no relation with real-life language use are "*poor preparation for autonomy*" (Thornbury, 2005, p. 91). Wilson and Brooks (2014) consider these presentations to be closer to real-language. They give language learners an opportunity to develop skills such as critical thinking, research skills and communicative skills. Finally, presentations are useful not only because of how they can be used to improve students' communicative abilities and motivation, but also because of the benefits they can provide for the students in the future.

One of the main advantages of using oral presentations in the classroom is that they are learner-centered. They are the few times in the language classroom when the students have direct control of both the content and the flow of the classroom (Apple & Kikuchi, 2007). Furthermore, oral presentations help students function well in their professional

environment. Though employers are not looking particularly to hire employees who can present in English; those skills learned in English are transferable to their first language (Pittenger, 2004; cited in Wilson & Brooks).

Miles (2009) in his article entitled "*Oral presentations for English proficiency purposes*" confirmed that students essentially focused on improving their oral communication by studying how to give oral presentations. The findings showed that the students' purpose behind studying oral presentations is to improve their English and speaking, gain confidence in speaking and challenge themselves to speak more. Moreover, research indicates that communication anxiety can be reduced by carrying out and practicing oral presentations (Rubin, Rubin, & Jordan, 1997).

In her study the "*importance of oral presentations for university students*", Zivkovich (2014) claimed that students need a lot of opportunities to practice language in situations which encourage them to communicate their ideas, needs and opinions. She adds that for successful oral communication, students need in-depth instruction and practice where the best practice is oral presentations. The findings of the study revealed that students improve their organizational skills by creating oral presentations. They believe that effective presentations will highlight their leadership which is important in building a successful career. All in all, Zivkovich's study showed that students have a very positive attitude towards oral presentations in the classroom. They agree that conducting presentations helps them learn English better and practice their speaking skills.

The current study investigates the effects of oral presentations on students' oral communication in the classroom. It seeks at looking at EFL learners' oral language performance and how can oral presentations contribute to its development. Besides, the study aims at determining factors affecting learners' oral communication. However, the study at hand is different from the previous ones since the setting is different (Algerian context). Moreover, the population of this study is different so it may lead to different findings.

## **Conclusion**

The elements discussed in the three previous sections contributed to shed light on learners' performance and competence in oral communication. The different studies mentioned revealed that successful oral communication requires from the students to be equipped with important skills such as speaking and presentation skills. They revealed also that EFL students' poor oral language ability is dependent on many constraints and difficulties. However, we understood that good oral communicative performance is always linked to the teaching methodologies and the activities designed in the classroom. Oral presentations projects are among those activities that promote learners' oral communication, and develop their oral language skills.

## **Chapter Two**

### **Filed Work: Research Design, Methodology and Findings**

## **Introduction**

This study is conducted to investigate the effects of using oral presentation projects in EFL classes to develop learner's oral communication performance at Bejaia University. Because of the nature of the subject, we opted for the mixed methodology (qualitative and quantitative methods) to better investigate the topic. In order to carry out the research and test the hypothesis, two data collection tools were used namely: a questionnaire designed for Master one Applied Linguistics and English Language Teaching (ALELT) students at Bejaia University; and an interview designed for teachers of English at Bejaia University. We will investigate the impact of OPs on oral communication performance from the students' and teachers' perspectives. In what follows, we will describe the population and the sample of the study, analyze and interpret the findings of both the questionnaire and the interview. By the end, we will be able to answer the research questions and confirm our hypothesis.

## **Section One: Description of the Study, Data Analysis and Interpretation**

### **1. Research Methodology**

In order to achieve our objective which consists of showing the impact of oral presentation projects on EFL learners' oral communication performance, we have opted for a mixed methodology, i.e. the quantitative and qualitative methods. This latter is an appropriate method to collect relevant data in relation to our study. It allows us to measure the data in terms of quality and quantity, and then represent it in tables and graphs. In this methodology, we used different tools and instruments namely students' questionnaire and teachers' interview.

### **2. Instruments and Procedure for Data Collection**

We used two tools to gather our data: a questionnaire and an interview. The first is a questionnaire designed for Master 1 Applied linguistics students at the University of Bejaia. We used it because we believe it is an effective means which permits to get information about student's preferences, beliefs, behaviour and evaluations. The questionnaire is rich and anonymous and participants feel comfortable when answering the questions. It gives us valid and reliable data; and students answer according to their own experiences and real situations that best reflect their opinions. The Questionnaire is easy to administer, that makes it a frequent tool for data collection.

The second tool used to collect the data is the teachers' interview. This latter is conducted with 6 teachers working at the department of English at Bejaia University. A series of questions were asked in the aim of getting the teachers' opinions and beliefs about oral presentations and oral communication. It is complementary to the questionnaire. Through it, we wanted to get precise data that was not collected through the questionnaire. It helps to know things from the teachers' perspectives.

### **3. Participants**

In order to carry out the research we chose Master 1 Applied linguistics and English Language Teaching (ALELT) students at Bejaia University as a sample. The number of students is (n=40) represented in two groups (group 1 and group 2). The choice of the sample



was in relation to our research subject. Given the fact that Master 1 students are frequently asked to prepare and deliver oral presentations during the whole academic year, they would be a good sample for the study. We will attempt to measure and see to what extent their oral communication performance is improved through the use of presentation projects. Moreover, the choice of Master students is justified since, at this level, they are supposed to be familiar with oral presentations.

Furthermore, we have conducted an interview via e-mail with (06) teachers working in the Department of English at Bejaia University. The teachers' years of experience vary between 4 and 15. The aim was to get in-depth data from different teachers about oral presentations and oral communication in their classes. The interviewees shared some of their experiences in class to enrich and support our data collection. The interview comes to complete the questionnaire and gather the missing data which are necessary for the research.

## **4. Students' Questionnaire**

### **4.1. Description of the Questionnaire**

The questionnaire is designed to allow the students to better understand the questions, thus, provide appropriate answers. It starts by a small introduction where we can see the aim and the topic of the research. It consists of (33) statements represented in (04) sections. The first part is devoted to General and Background Information. It contains (04) statements and information about gender and age of the participants. The second section is about *Oral Presentation Projects* and has (13) statements grouped in one table. The students have 5 possibilities of answers; from "*Highly Agree*" to "*Highly Disagree*". The third part is about *Oral communication in EFL classes*. It has as well (13) statements grouped in one table with (05) possibilities of answers. The last part consists of *General Suggestions* for students who have something to add, a remark or a comment.

All the Questions are in the form of statements. No "*Yes/No*" or '*direct questions*' included. No technical and difficult words were used to avoid misunderstanding and false interpretations. All the questions were answered according to the Likert scale comprising 05 options ("HA" for Highly Agree, "A" for Agree, "NAD" for Neither Agree Nor Disagree, "D" for Disagree, "HD" for Highly Disagree).

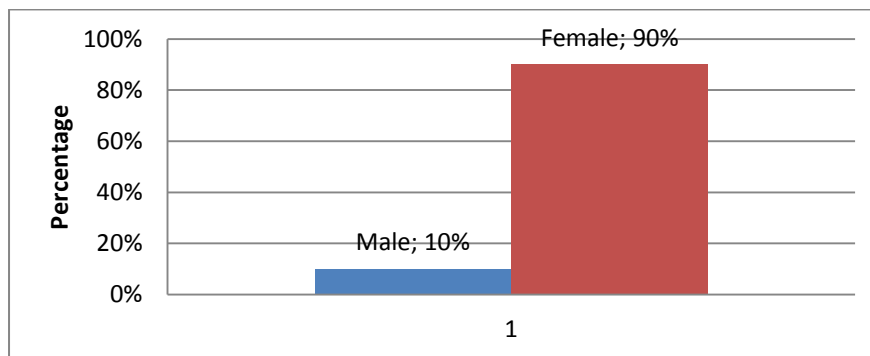
## 4.2. Administration of the Questionnaire

The questionnaire was administered in the classroom with the presence of the teacher. It took us two sessions to distribute the questionnaire and make sure all the students were present. We were also there to make sure everything is clear and to avoid any false interpretation of the questions. The copies were collected immediately after the students had answered the questions to make sure all copies are returned back. All the students had enough time to read and answer the questions.

## 4.3. Analysis and Interpretation of Students' Questionnaire

### 4.3.1 General Background of the Sample

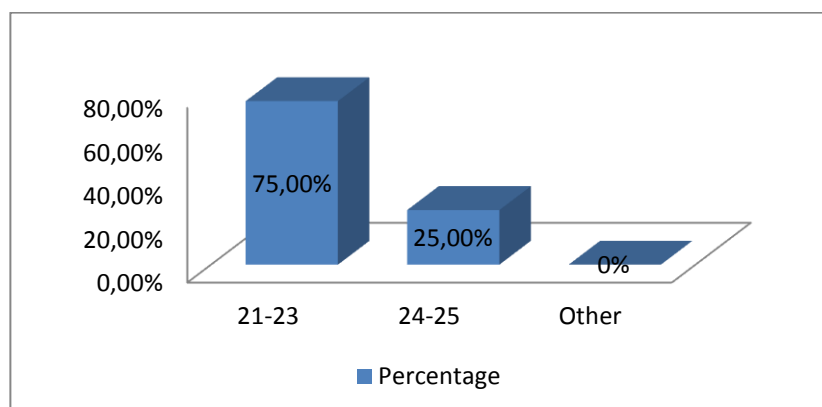
#### Item 01 : Gender Distribution



**Figure 01: Students' Gender Distribution**

This chart shows that most of the participants are females. Out of 40 participants, there are 36 females, i.e. 90 % of the whole sample. The remaining are males; they only represent 10% of the sample (04 students).

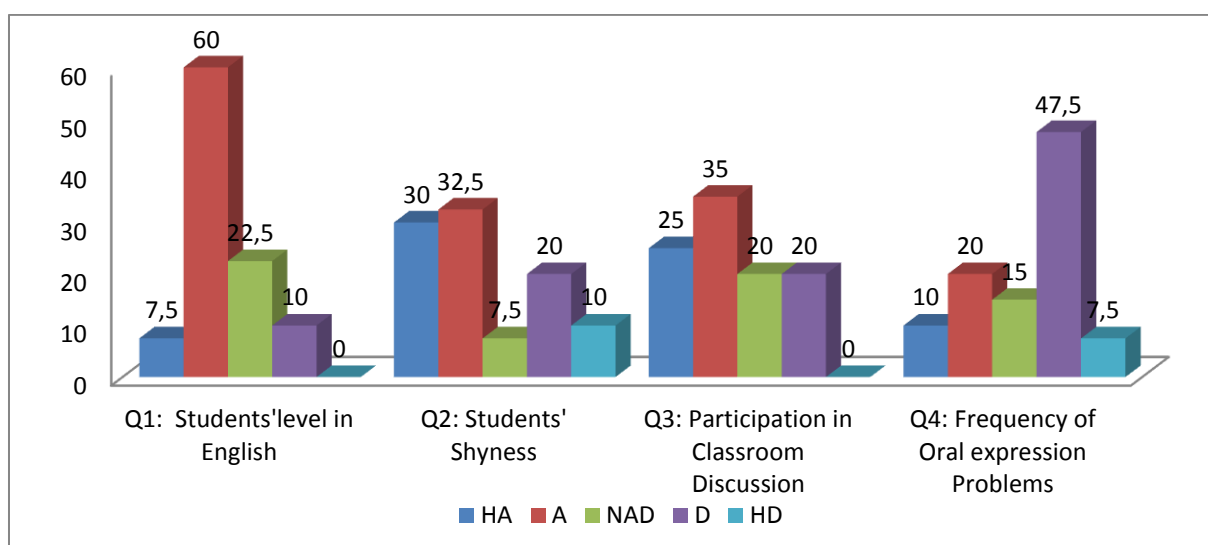
#### Item 2: Students' Age Distribution



**Figure 02: Students' Age Distribution**

According to the results shown in figure 02, we notice diversity in the age of the participants. We can see that the majority of students (30) have an age ranging from 21 to 23 years old. They represent 75% of the whole sample. The rest have their age varies from 24 to 25 years old, making 25% of the total participants. This shows that most of the students are relatively young. This might be explained by the fact that most of them have started their primary education early, or at least they did not experience failure previously.

### **Item 03: Students' Level and Attitude in the Classroom**



**Figure 03: Students' Level and Attitude in the Classroom**

In figure 03, we have grouped four questions related to the students' level in English, their involvement in classroom discussion, their shyness and the frequency of oral expression problems. According to the results, we notice that the majority of the participants believe they have a good level in English. They are 24 students out of 40 representing 60% of the whole sample. 09 students are neutral (22.5%); whereas, 07 (17.5%) students confirmed they do not have a good level in English. Though 60% of the participants believe they are good in English, it remains insufficient when we know that the students spent 4 years studying English at university and they are about to graduate. This can be interpreted as a lack of efforts and indifference of learners (interested only in marks); but also maybe the teaching methods and strategies adopted by teachers.

The analysis of the participants' shyness in the classroom shows that a high number of students acknowledge they are shy learners. This is clearly shown in students' responses. We have 62.5% of participants agree; that is to say 25 students out of 40 consider themselves shy

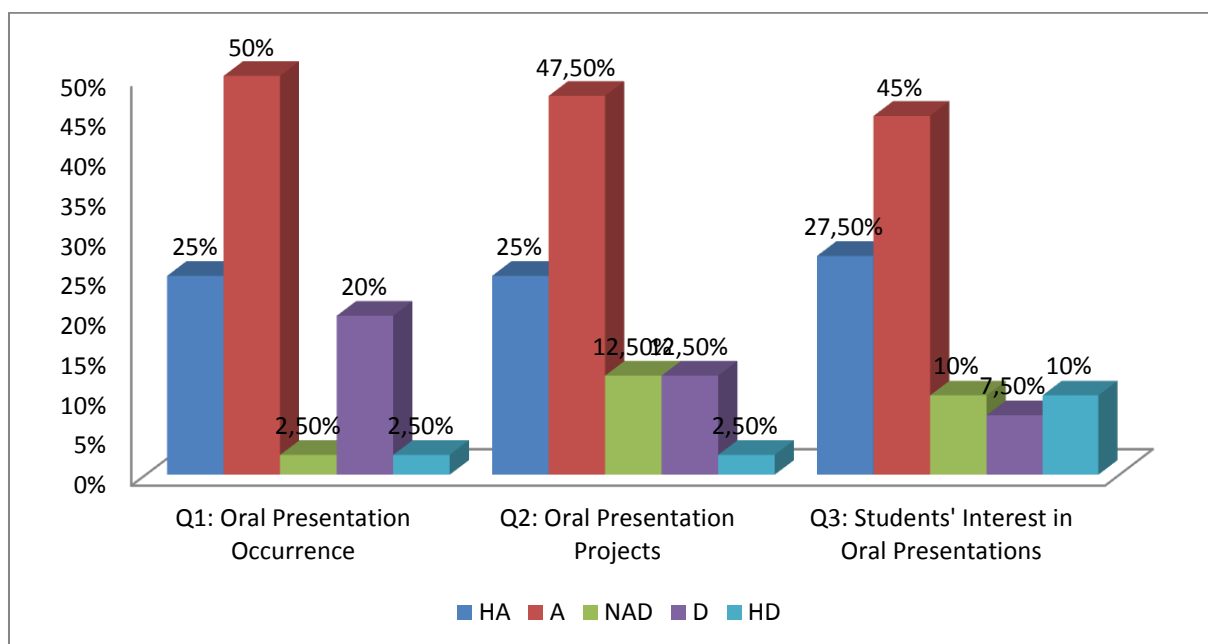
learners. 30% (12 students) confirm that they are not shy in the classroom. This explains that even Master students suffer from shyness when they are rather supposed to be familiar with the language, and feeling relaxed since they are advanced learners. We believe that this shyness is either natural or generated by inappropriate learning conditions. This can be interpreted as a lack of efforts from learners, but also from teachers to help their learners get rid of their shyness and; thus foster learning. It is not normal since most of students are likely to be future teachers.

As far as students' participation in classroom discussion is concerned, we notice that 35% stated that they often take part in the classroom debates (14 students = 'agree'), whereas 25% strongly agreed (10 students). This confirms that 60% (24) of students are active learners in the classroom. We also notice that 20% (08 students) stated they do not take part in classroom discussion; whereas the same number of participants is neutral; they neither agree nor disagree. Though many students are not engaged in the classroom, 60% is a good indicator that there is a good learning environment in class; and the majority of students are active. This can be interpreted as the interest of students to learn English through getting involved. However, we assume nobody should be excluded from the classroom interaction. That is, teachers need provide more efforts to give a chance to all students to practice their interaction skills.

In the end, the frequency of oral expression problems among students was investigated. The findings showed that more than half of participants do not agree with the statement '*I often have a problem expressing myself orally*'. 22 students out of 40 (55%) confirm that they do not have any problem while expressing themselves orally. We notice 30% (20 students) stated that they often face such problems. 20% responded with 'Agree' while 10% responded with '*Highly agree*'. The rest of the students are neutral or indifferent. This result can be considered negative since half of students still face difficulties in expressing themselves. At this level (Master 1), learners are supposed to be fluent in English. The findings can be interpreted as a lack of opportunities given to students to speak and express themselves in the target language. Moreover, this may be caused by students' oral communication constraints such as inhibition and shyness.

### 4.3.2. Oral Presentations in EFL Classes

#### Item 1, 2 & 3: Students' Practice and Interest in Oral Presentations



**Figure 04: Students' Practice and Interest in Oral Presentations**

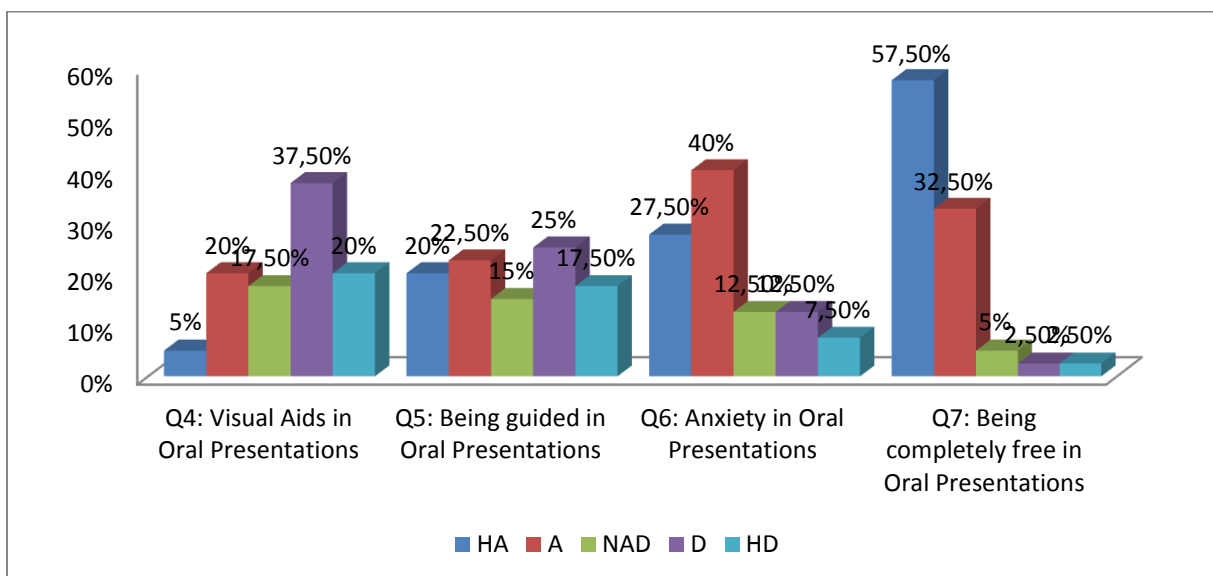
The above figure groups three questions pertaining to oral presentations. They consist of oral presentation occurrence, oral presentation projects in classrooms and students' interest. As shown in the first statement '*I have already given many oral presentations*', we notice that 75% of the questioned students have already dealt with oral presentations. 20 students (50%) answered with '*Agree*' and 10 (25%) answered with '*Highly Agree*'. That is to say 30 (75%) students out of 40 have already given oral presentations. This high percentage is expected since Master 1 students give many presentations as course requirements. 22.5% (9 students out of 40) did not have a chance to give many oral presentations. This is a considerable number since applied linguistics students are so far supposed to have delivered many presentations during four academic years. The findings mean that students are aware about the importance of presentation projects as to the development of their oral language skills.

We investigated whether teachers often ask their students to prepare oral presentations; the majority of participants confirm they have been very often asked by their teachers to deliver OPs. 47.5% representing 19 students replied with '*agree*' and 25% representing 10 students *strongly agree*. That makes 29 students (72.5%) claiming that OPs are often conducted in the classroom. It is something positive and encouraging to know that

presentations are frequently used in the classroom. For those who disagree, we notice a percentage of 15%. They are 6 to believe that their teachers do not ask them quite often to deliver presentations. For those who neither agree nor disagree, their percentage does not exceed 12.5%, i.e. 05 students. The result can be seen as the teachers' positive attitude towards OPs and their willingness to give a chance to students to practice the target language as in real-life situations. It is a remarkable shift from the classical methodologies (teacher-centeredness) to new ones where learning is dictated by learners' needs.

On the question whether students like to deal with OP assignments, results show that the majority of participants (29 students / 72.5%) like to deal with OPs in the classroom. However, only few students do not like to be given OP assignments (07 students/ 17.5%) where (10%) highly disagree. That means they absolutely hate dealing with this kind of assignments. 10% (04 students) still cannot make up their minds about OPs. The high number of students who like presentations may be explained by the students' increasing awareness about the role of oral projects in learning English. It is an indicator that EFL students have changed their perceptions towards delivering presentations. They are no more afraid to stand in front of an audience and give a talk. For those students (17.5%) who still do not like oral presentations, it is probably that their opinion is related to stage fright, shyness, negative evaluation, etc. It is up to the teacher to explain and work to get rid of students' problems pertaining to OPs.

**Item 4, 5, 6, & 7: Students' Preferences in Oral Presentations**



**Figure 05: Students' Preferences in Oral Presentations**

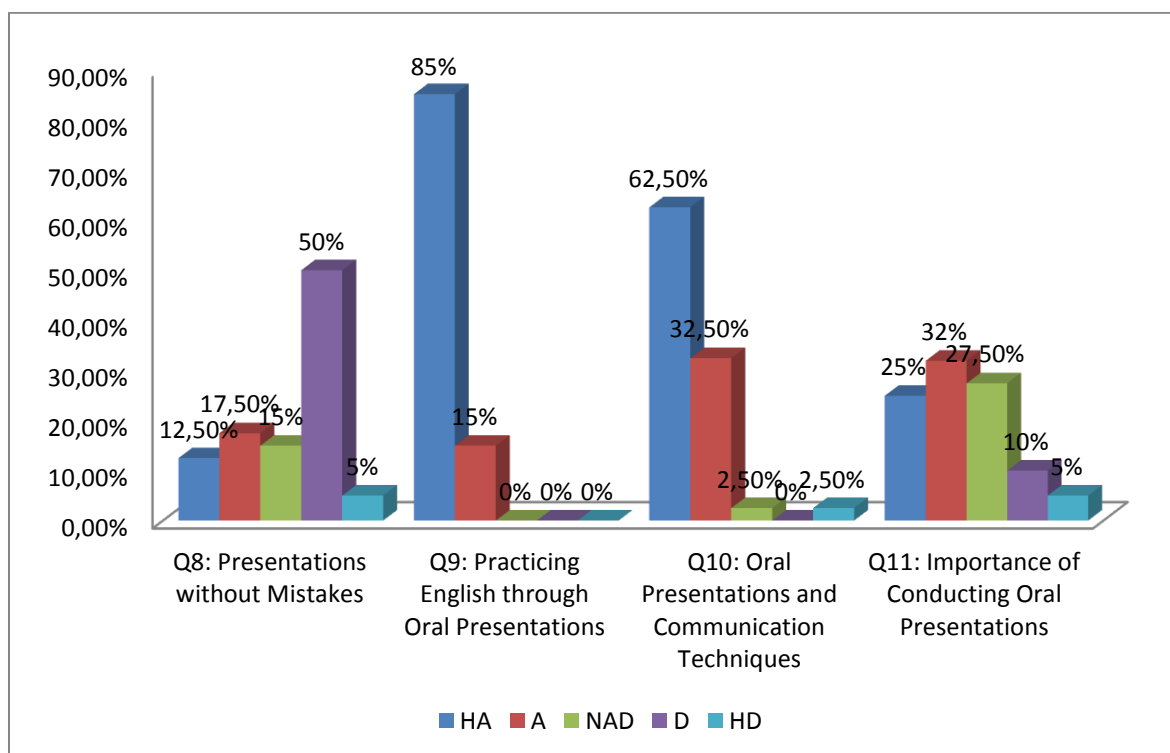
The data analysis shows that a high percentage of participants do not use visual aids in OPs. 37.5% (15 students) responded with '*Disagree*' and 20% (08 students) *highly disagree* with the use of visuals. This makes a percentage of 57.5% representing 23 students out of 40. Add to that the number of students who are indifferent (17.5% =07 students). There are only a small number of students who confirm they generally use visuals during their presentations (25%). This low percentage of students using visuals may be explained by the fact that many students are not familiar with the use of technology in learning, and some visuals are not always available in the classroom. This can be interpreted as a lack of motivation to integrate visual aids in learning.

In question 05, we notice that the percentage of students who prefer to be guided and those who do not want to be guided during OP projects are the same. We have 42.5% (17 students) stated they like to be guided by the teacher against 42.5% who do not. The rest are undecided (15% /06 students). This shows that the students' opinions are divergent on the matter. Each student has his preferences that can be related to personal factors.

Being asked whether they feel anxious or worried when they have to deal with OPs, the majority of learners confirm they do. They are 67.5% representing 27 students to answer either with *agree* or *highly agree*; they are still not at ease regarding OPs. This is an important number comparing to the students who showed an opposite opinion. This latter are making only 20% of the whole (08 students) to say that they do not agree with the question. We also notice that 12.5% (05 students) are undecided. The results mean that Master 1 students still experience anxiety when it comes to oral presentations. This can be interpreted as a lack of practice, experience, opportunities and other emotional problems such as stress.

In the last question, whether participants prefer to be completely free in OPs, an overwhelming majority claims that they like to be free. 57.5% (23 students) strongly agree and 32.5% (13 students) simply agree. That is making a total of 36 students (90%) who like to be completely free during their oral projects. This is against only a small number of students who do not agree (02 / 5%). This percentage explains that students prefer to be completely free; they are maybe bothered by teacher interruptions and feedback during their presentations. This implies they have an experience in oral presentations; thus they know what their preferences are. They do not like being stopped and assessed or maybe take part in the debate generated by teachers and peers' questions, even it is necessary to boost their exchange and interaction skills.

### **Item 08, 9, 10 & 11: Students' Opinion and Role of Oral Presentations**



**Figure 06: Students' Opinion and Role of Oral Presentations**

Being questioned about their ability to give oral presentations without speaking and pronunciation mistakes, most students confirm that they disagree. They are 55% (22 students) to believe that they cannot deliver a presentation without making speaking and pronunciation mistakes. For those who disagree, they represent 30% (12 students). 15% (06 students) have a neutral position. These results show that still, at this level (Master1), many students make mistakes in speaking and pronunciation. They are rather supposed to be fluent. This is interpreted as the students' deficiencies in oral skills and the lack of emphasis on accuracy and fluency in the target language. We can say that still there is a lot to do to improve learners' pronunciation and speaking. Teachers have an important role in correcting pronunciation mistakes occurring during presentations.

The analysis of the question whether oral presentations are a chance to practice English, all the students without exception confirm that OPs help them practice the language. We notice that 85% (34 students) strongly agree and 15% (06 students) agree as well. That makes 100% of the sample (40 students out of 40). This demonstrates the role of presentation

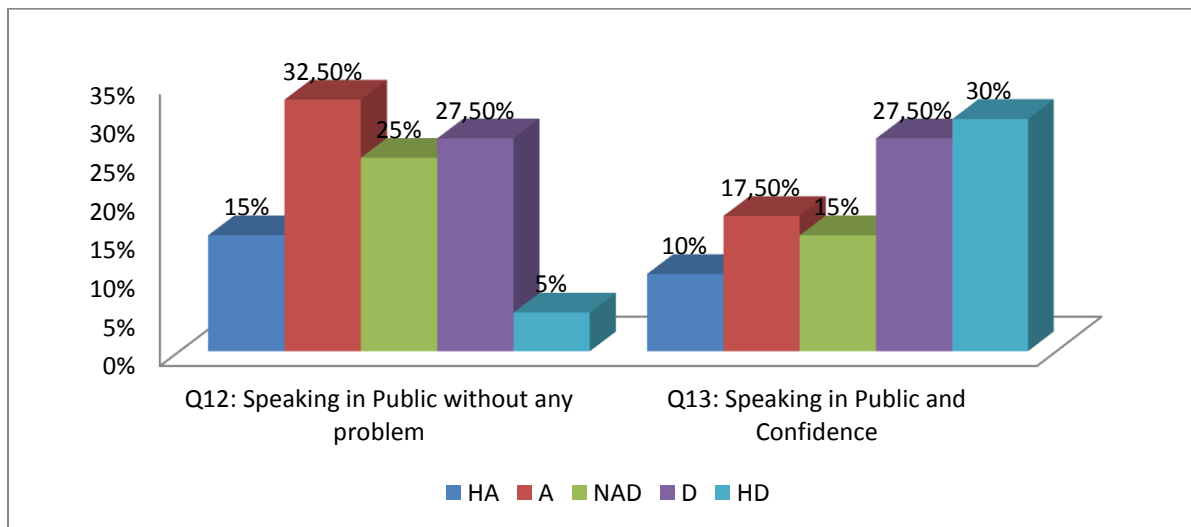


projects in practicing and improving students' English language. It proves once more the positive effect of presentations on learning in general, and oral performance in particular.

In item 10, we notice that almost all participants agree that OPs favor the use of some communication techniques. They are 62.5% (25 students) who strongly agree, and 32.5% (13 students) who agree. That makes the total of students 38 (95%). These results show that students are aware of the different oral communication techniques they use during their presentation projects.

On the importance of conducting OPs, whether it is stressed by the teachers, students' answers are varied. We notice that 55% agree and 15% do not agree. Results also show that 27.5% representing 11 students are undecided. They are either indifferent to the question or do not know what to answer. The findings mean that teachers should do more efforts to raise learners' awareness and encourage them to carry out oral projects.

**Item 12&13: Oral Presentations and Public Speaking**



**Figure 07: Oral Presentations and Public Speaking**

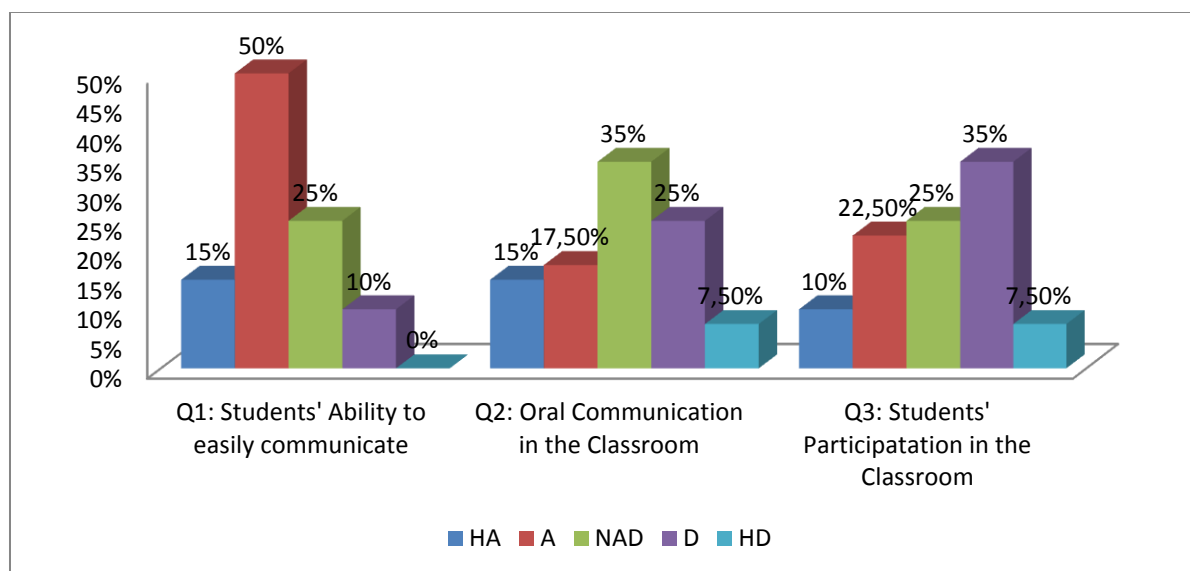
In item 12, students were asked if they can speak in public easily and without any problem. 32.5% (13 students) showed that they can do it and 15% (06 students) highly agreed. That is to say 47.5% of participants confirm they can speak in public without any problem. We also notice that 25% (08) are neutral while 32.5% disagree. If students can speak in public, this means that they can deal with oral presentations.

The analysis of item 13 shows that the majority of students do not agree with our question concerning their hesitation to speak in public as being related to a lack of confidence.

This is clearly expressed through their answers with 57.5%. They believe that lack of confidence has nothing to do with their hesitation to speak in public. However, 27.5% (11) claim they are reluctant to speak in public because they lack confidence. In the same time, there are 15% (06) participants who are undecided. We notice that the answers are varied. That is, some students suffer from lack of confidence, others no. Besides, many students did not express their opinion. They perhaps do not relate their problem of speaking in public to confidence.

### 4.3.3. Oral Communication in EFL Classes

#### Item 01, 2 & 3: Students' Oral Communication and Participation in Classroom



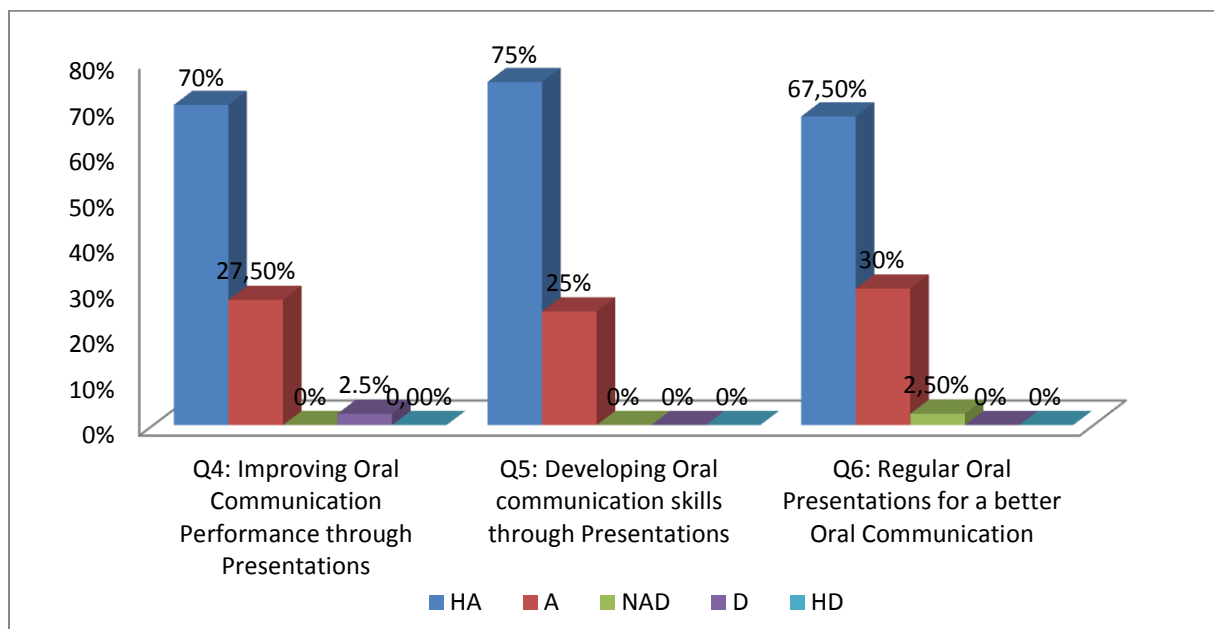
**Figure 08: Students' Oral Communication and Participation in Classroom.**

Reading through figure 08, we notice that the majority of the participants claim they can communicate easily in English. They are 50% (20 students) to answer with 'Agree' and 15% (06 students) who strongly agree. In all, they are 26 out of 40 students who confirm they can easily communicate using English. 25% representing 10 students neither agree nor disagree. This high percentage of students who confirm they can speak easily maybe explained by the quality of studies they received during the past years. It can also be explained by their strong motivation to speak and have a good command of the English language.

Item 2 shows a high percentage of students who cannot confirm if they agree or disagree whether the teacher invites them to communicate or no. They are 35% representing

14 students. Besides, 32.5% (13 students) disagree and 32.5% others agree. The findings in item 3 show almost the same results as in item 02. We notice that 25% (10 students) cannot confirm that they are rarely invited to take part in the classroom discussion. 35% disagree whereas 07.5% strongly disagree. 32.5% (13 students) claim that they are seldom invited to speak or participate. According to these results, we can say that students' responses are varied and to some extent close. We see that there is no absolute majority noted in any option. This can be explained by the fact that only some students are given a chance to participate; others feel they are not concerned. It may also mean that students lack motivation and self-confidence when they have to use the target language in the classroom. We may understand that some students are marginalized in the classroom.

**Item 04, 5 & 6: Enhancing Oral Communication through Oral Presentations**



**Figure 09: Enhancing Oral Communication through Oral Presentations**

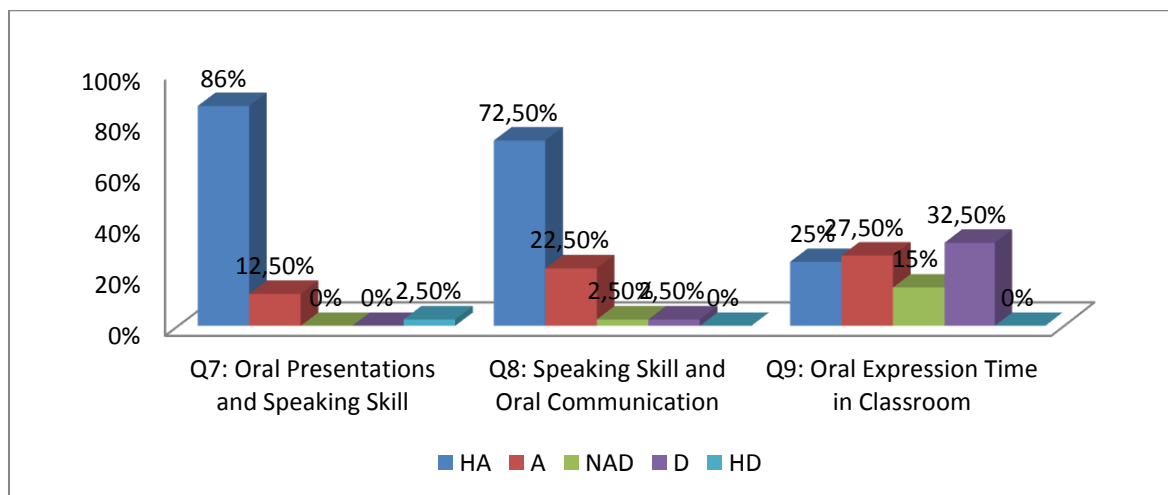
The analysis of the above chart reveals that an absolute majority of the participants strongly agree that their oral communication performance can be improved through the use of OPs. They are 70% (28 students) who highly agree and 27.5% (11 students) who 'agree'. That is to say, 97.5% (39 out of 40) claim OPs can improve their oral communication. This percentage can be explained by the awareness of Master students as to the importance of oral presentations and their impact on one's oral communication. It may be also explained by the experience gained through the years pertaining to oral presentations. This confirms our

hypothesis as to the effects of using oral projects to enhance learner’s communicative performance.

Nearly the same findings are shown in question 5 pertaining to the development of oral communication skills through oral presentations activities. 75% representing 30 students strongly agree, and 25% representing 10 students agree. That makes it 100% (40 out of 40) to claim that oral presentation activities help them develop their communication skills. As mentioned above, this total agreement can be interpreted as the role oral presentations played on the development of master 1 Applied Linguistics students’ oral communication during 4 years of studies. It is most probably the regular use of oral activities, and the positive experiences of students that let them claim that their communication skills can be developed through such activities.

The same result for question 6, where all the students except 1 confirm that in order to communicate well, oral presentations should be conducted regularly in the classroom. This opinion is clearly illustrated in the student’s responses: 67.5% (27 students) strongly agree, and 30% (12 students) agree.

**Item 07, 8 & 9: Speaking Skill and Oral Communication**



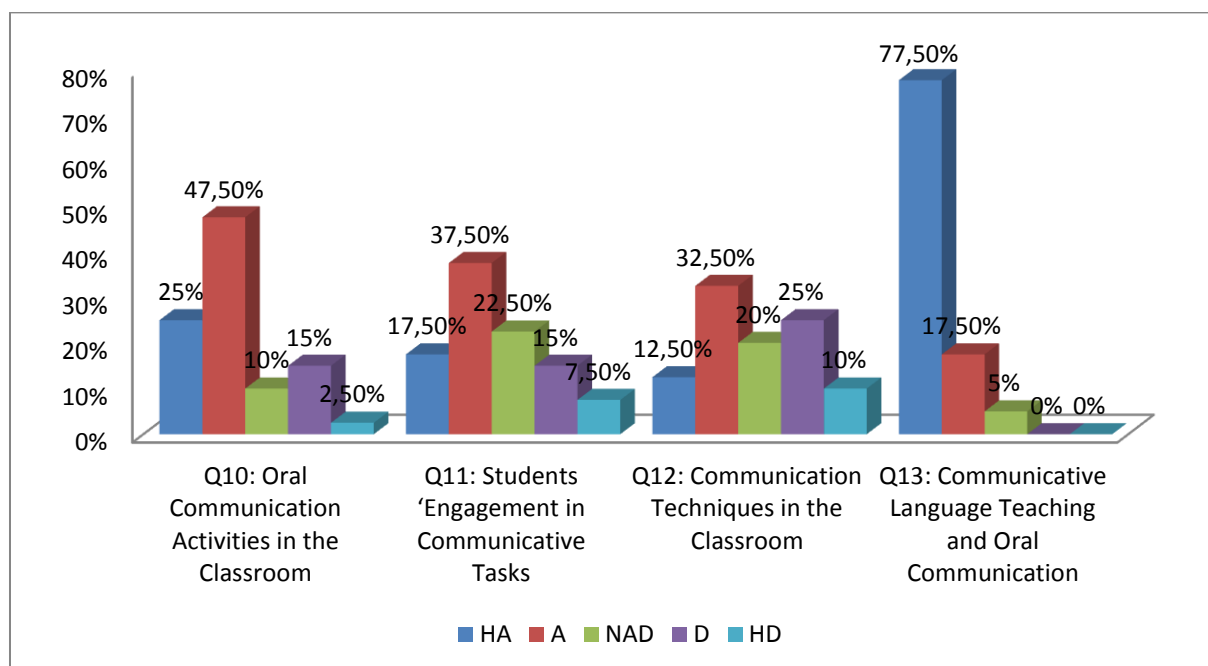
**Figure 10: Speaking Skill and Oral Communication**

The analysis of the results in figure 10 shows that the high majority of participants agree that oral presentation projects are an effective way to practice speaking. We notice that 86% (34 students) strongly agree and 12.5% (05 students) agree. This might be interpreted as the role OPs played on the improvement of the speaking skill of these students. This explains that students used oral presentation projects as a tool to develop their speaking.

Question 8 shows that almost all the participants agree that developing learners' speaking skill leads to good oral communication. They are 95% representing 38 students out of 40. The results imply that if students have developed their speaking skill, they can be communicatively competent inside and outside classroom. That is to say speaking is the most fundamental thing towards acquiring good oral communicative performance in the target language.

In item 09, we investigated whether students are given enough time to express their thoughts and ideas in the classroom. We notice more than half of participants (52.5%, 21 students) believe they are given enough time to express themselves. 15% are neutral, whereas 32.5% representing 13 students do not agree. These findings may be explained by the fact that teachers do not give a chance to all students, but rather to just a particular group of students. In other words, the time allocated for oral expression is monopolized by some students, others are less involved. This can also be seen as a consequence of time shortage in the classroom (not enough time to give a chance to all students).

**Item 10, 11, 12 & 13: Oral Communication Activities, Techniques and the CLT.**



**Figure 11: Oral Communication Activities, Techniques and the CLT.**

Question 10 was asked to know whether oral communication activities are sometimes carried out in the classroom. We notice a high percentage of students (72.5%, 29 students) claiming that such activities are conducted in the classroom. We got almost the same

answers regarding item 11 where participants were asked if they get engaged in communicative tasks. 22 participants who represent 55% answered with ‘agree or highly agree’. The rest is divided between those who disagree and those who are neutral. From these findings, we understand that most of students have an increasing interest in oral communication. They are aware that good oral communication is the secret of succeeding in learning a foreign language. The students have succeeded in learning a language if they can speak it well. They know it is important to conduct activities and communicative tasks so that to enhance their competence in oral communication.

The above chart also illustrates the students’ opinions regarding communication technique and strategies in the language classroom. Only 45% (18 out of 40) agree. 35% representing 14 students showed their disagreement; whereas 20% (08 students) neither agree nor disagree. This can be explained by the student’s ignorance about techniques and strategies of communication because they are not discussed and explained by the teacher. Little or no attention given to this aspect makes the student forget about the existence of such techniques or strategies that may help them better communicate in the classroom. This can be related to the development of the students’ strategic competence which is an important component of the communicative competence essential for a good oral communication.

The last item illustrates the importance of using the Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) to enhance students’ oral performance. 95% representing 38 students admit that it (the Communicative Approach) contribute to the development of oral communication skills. This overwhelming majority explains that students acknowledge the role of the communicative approach in developing the students’ competence in oral communication. This high percentage shows that the implementation of such methodology has had a positive impact on students’ oral performance. It is important to highlight the fact that communicative language teaching which is based on the communicative competence gives much attention to the communicative aspect of language rather than its grammatical or linguistic one.

#### **4.3.4. Analysis of General Suggestions**

22 students out of 40 (55%) of the whole sample have included some suggestions, remarks and comments concerning oral presentations and communication performance.

We notice that 07 students out of 22 confirm that oral presentation projects are helpful for developing English language skills. They are a chance to practice students’ speaking skills

and test their abilities. 03 students suggest that teachers should conduct more communicative tasks and activities in order to enhance learners' oral communication performance. 02 students claim that teachers need to work to create good atmosphere and better learning conditions to allow for a better oral performance. Whereas 03 others see that teachers should often invite students to engage and participate in oral presentation sessions to improve their language output. 03 students believe that oral presentations should be conducted regularly to achieve communicative purposes. 07 students suggested that teachers have to give them more opportunities to speak and encourage them to express themselves freely and confidently in the classroom. Only 1 student stressed the necessity of developing learner's productive skills to develop the communicative competence. Another one believes that oral presentations should be done with visual aids and other necessary materials. 1 student suggested that the department of English need consider adding or extending some modules such as Oral Expression and Phonetics until Master 1 level. In the end, a student remarked that the level of some teachers do not allow for an interesting debate and discussion in the classroom.

***The implications of the findings:***

1. Oral presentations should be conducted with visual aids.
2. Teachers need to conduct more communicative tasks and activities in order to help develop learners' oral communication.
3. Teachers should create good atmosphere and better conditions for better learning.
4. Teachers should regularly invite students to take part and get engaged in classroom communication.
5. Teachers should give learners more opportunities to practice speaking.
6. Oral presentation projects should be implemented regularly.
7. Encourage and motivate students to be self-confident and anxiety free.
8. Add or extend some modules such as phonetics and oral expressions up till Master 1 level.

## **5. Teachers' Interview**

### **5.1. Description of the Interview**

The interview consists of 8 short questions asked for teachers of English working at the department of English, Bejaia University. The choice of the teachers was done at random and the questions were generally simple and not asked in the students' questionnaire. The goal

is to collect as much data as possible in order to compensate for what we could not achieve through the students' questionnaire.

## **5.2. Analysis and Interpretation of Teachers' Interview**

The analysis of the interview, carried out with 06 teachers in the Department of English at Bejaia University, shows that teachers' number of years in teaching varies between 4 and 15 years. This means that some teachers have a long experience in teaching whereas others have started teaching recently. Both categories will be beneficial for our investigation.

### **Theme 1: Teachers' Perception about Oral Presentations**

The first question being asked to the interviewed teachers was about their perception of their students' performance in oral presentations. Most of the teachers confirmed that students' performances differ from one student to another. They are 4 teachers out of 6 to claim that students' performances are different from one to another; and it is generally difficult to generalize one's perception on the whole group. It is dependent on students' abilities, personality and language proficiency. There are good performers, students with capacities but face other problems such as anxiety and fear of the stage and audience, and there are students who suffer a lack of knowledge in English. That is what was stated by *Interviewee 3*:

*"...This depends on the students' personality on the one hand and his/her language proficiency on the other. Risk-takers perform naturally without caring about errors. This makes their speech natural and the presentation successful. Students who experience fear or stage fright perform less effectively".*

Moreover, some students are fluent, self-confident, spontaneous and natural; others lack confidence and delivery skills as stated by the *first interviewee*:

*"I think that some students are really good when using English while others have all the capacities to do so but they face difficulties in transmitting their knowledge especially when facing the audience".*

However, one teacher confirmed that his students' performance in oral projects is very good and that they express themselves with confidence even with mistakes. Another one thinks that the majority of learners do not have any oral skills; they just read instead of presenting their works.



## **Theme 2: the Role of the Teacher in Oral Presentations**

Questioned about their roles during oral presentations, 3 teachers out of 6 confirmed that they act as a guide, a monitor, a supporter and facilitator trying to give the presenter the freedom to express himself. This is seen in the answer provided by *interviewee 5* who stated that “*The teacher should delegate autonomy, facilitate, support, organize, and guide students’ learning*”. Besides, 02 teachers stated that their roles consist of encouraging and motivating the students to carry on the presentation. They also intervene to organize, correct, summarize and clarify ambiguous issues. Another teacher claimed that his role is a guide (before the project), tutor (during preparation), observer and insider (during presentation) and an evaluator (after the presentation).

## **Theme 3: Communication Strategies and Oral Presentation Performance**

According to the answers provided by the interviewed teachers, we notice that the students resort to different strategies to achieve their objectives while delivering oral presentations. 02 teachers out of 6 said that some students use code switching and skip to their native language to compensate for a lack or deficiency in the target language. Some others just skip the content and try to talk about other things. Other students are good performers so they take most of the presentation time to cover for their peers’ unsuccessful performance. This is confirmed by *interviewee 03* by saying that

*“...the good speaker takes most of the speech compared to the less effective speakers. This is done generally on purpose as agreed by the group members”.*

Furthermore, one teacher summarized the strategies as the following:

- Brainstorming ideas and using visual cues to maintain the flow of the talk,
- Reducing the message, using simple familiar language and speaking clearly and loudly,
- Using gestures and facial expressions, and paying attention to teacher and peers’ reaction
- Trying to impress the audience by using American English.
- Negotiating with peers and using verbal and non-verbal strategies to compensate for weakness in communication due to a lack in grammatical or sociolinguistic competence.

In addition, one teacher said that those strategies consist of illustrating, explaining, picturing and drawing. Another one confirmed that students rely on their written supports to keep the flow of the talk.

#### **Theme 4: Students' Difficulties in Oral Presentations and Oral Communication**

Questioned on their students' difficulties pertaining to oral presentations and oral communication, the interviewees gave various answers. 02 teachers out of 6 said that the presenters depend so much on their written supports (PPT, handouts...); they cannot be spontaneous and sound natural. They cannot simply provide a natural speech. Thus, when they forget a detail for instance they show hesitation and reluctance. 04 teachers believe that most of students suffer from anxiety and shyness; something that affects badly their performances. *Interviewee 4* stated:

*"Maybe some of them feel shy during presentations; thus, they lose words. Also, some of them rely totally on the PPT and can't deliver the presentation directly".*

Moreover, 03 teachers stressed that the fear of the audience, the fear of making mistakes and the fear of failure are recurrent problems among students. Lack of confidence, as mentioned by 03 teachers, is just another problem which most students of English suffer from. 02 teachers focused on the problem of planning, organizing the talk and respecting the time allocated for the presentation. 01 teacher adds that the students' negative attitudes towards the projects and students' lack of experience, practice and opportunities are frequent constraints among EFL learners. Other difficulties as highlighted by *interviewee 05* are summarized in the following:

- Cultural barriers and differences,
- Pronunciation, fluency and accuracy problems,
- Psychological factors
- Language and linguistic ability
- Misunderstanding of the topic
- Lack of interest and motivation
- Lack of attention from teachers.

## **Theme 5: Oral Presentation Projects and Communicative Competence / Skills**

The positive impact of oral presentation projects on the students' communicative skills is illustrated in the teachers' answers. We notice that 05 teachers agreed that the use of oral presentation projects, when conducted properly and effectively, enhance learners' communicative competence and skills. We notice that these teachers put some conditions to the success of oral presentations. One said that these presentations are beneficial when they are followed by discussions and debate over the presented topic. Another one claimed that the students need to be interested and motivated to the use of oral projects as a means to achieve their communicative purposes. Through the response provided by *interviewee 5*, we can measure the effect of oral projects on learner's skills. S/he stated that:

*“Learners will gain experience of spontaneous interaction. It also helps students in working in team as well as individuals in order to use language purposefully and cooperatively.... Finally, this will make the student understand the communicative knowledge and integrate language skills. But the main impact on students' oral communicative skills may be: interaction, participation, functions of language and differentiation”.*

However, 01 teacher out of 6 does not totally share this opinion. He believes that in order to be communicatively competent one requires other competences such as the linguistic, sociolinguistic, cultural and intercultural competences. For him oral presentation projects are not enough to develop one's communicative competence.

Oral presentations are seen by all the teachers as an effective tool to develop their learners' communicative skills. They believe they help learners face their fears and shyness through public speaking practice. That's why EFL teachers tend to implement them in their classes. We can see this in the answer of *interviewee 3* who clearly said

*“I personally share this view. In my master classes, I use projects in all sessions and whatever is the subject I teach. I ask them write, send projects and perform them”.*

Furthermore, oral presentations make use of the language skills and give opportunities for students to get engaged in communicative tasks. This is supported by the answer of *interviewee 5* who said:

*“...they are student-centered and they require the use of all four language skills. They provide students with realistic language tasks. They have value outside the language classroom...”*

## **Section Two: Discussion, Limitations, Implications and Suggestions for Further Research**

### **1. Discussion of the Results**

In this section, we discuss the results of the questionnaire and interview, and relate them to our hypothesis.

As mentioned previously, the questionnaire is divided into 4 parts. The first part was devoted to know the general information about the participants such as opinions, attitudes and their level. The findings revealed that the majority of the students think they have a good level in English and they can express themselves orally. Most of them often take part in the discussion occurring in their classrooms even when they feel shy. This means learners are motivated and willing to learn English. Here comes the role of the teacher to help less active students to get rid of their shyness and become more engaged in classroom discussions (see King (2002), Rubin, Rubin, & Jordan (1997), Wardrope and Baylers (1994).

In the second part of the questionnaire, the questions were aimed at finding about the students' perceptions, preferences, opinions, interests and role of oral presentation projects in the EFL learning context. After analyzing the data, we came to many conclusions. First of all, we understand that the majority of students have a positive attitude towards oral projects (Zivkovich, 2014). They have already given many presentations and they confirm they like to do that. This shows the degree of awareness among these students. They can see the benefits and effects of conducting oral presentations over the development of their language output. This comes to confirm the stated hypothesis which suggests that the use of oral projects in EFL classes is crucial for a good and effective oral communication. Second of all, we concluded that students have preferences in oral presentations. That is they do not like to be guided or interrupted by the teacher. That means they easily lose concentration and get disturbed by the teacher's comments and evaluation.

The findings also revealed that many students do not use visual aids in their presentations, though they are important to the effectiveness of their work. This is either due to the unavailability of appropriate material or students' unfamiliarity with the use of technology. Therefore, there should be more efforts to integrate visuals in oral presentation projects (Wardrope & Baylers, 1994). Third of all, we deduce that all students practice well their English through oral projects; even they make some speaking-related mistakes.

The data drawn from the analysis of part three imply that oral communication in EFL classes is an important issue for both teachers and learners. Though many students confirm they are communicative, still there is a lot to do from the teachers. They should work to include everybody in classroom discussions. As confirmed by the results, oral presentations constitute an effective tool to enhance and develop learners' communicative performance. Most students claim they have seen their communication skills develop as a result of using presentations frequently. It is also found that there is a strong relation between the speaking skill and oral projects. This latter contribute, in a remarkable way, to improve learners' speaking skills; thus, oral communication as a whole (King, 2002; Miles, 2009).

Furthermore, the Findings revealed that the use of the CLT in the classroom helps to form communicatively competent students (Richards & Rodgers, 2001). Since this approach focuses on the communicative aspect of language rather than its form, it helps in developing learners' oral skills. This is seen clearly in the participants' responses. Besides, it helps to develop the communicative competence of EFL learners (Richards, 2006). On the use of oral communication strategies in the classroom, the results show that many students seem to be not interested. This indicates that the issue is not tackled in the classroom, and little or no attention is given to the development of learners' strategic competence (Canal & Swain, 1980).

Regarding the teachers' interview, the analysis of the results shows that the perception of the teachers towards oral presentations is different from one to another. However, Most of teachers agree that it is not easy to generalize their perception on all students. This is because students' level and oral performance are different. That is to say, we can find students with good oral abilities, students with limited skills, and others who display a poor oral communication. Indeed many factors can affect the students' performance in oral communication. That is, it is up to the teacher to help eliminate these factors. Moreover, the findings revealed that most of the time, learners need to be guided, supported, assisted and encouraged to conduct oral presentations. Therefore, the teacher, to some extent determines the success or failure in learners' presentations.

Through teachers' responses, we notice that EFL learners generally tend to use many strategies to perform their oral presentations. Each student uses his own strategies to compensate for his deficiency of linguistic knowledge. Moreover, learners encounter many difficulties related to oral communication in the classroom; most of them are related to

anxiety and shyness. *Interviewee 5* reported an experience that marked his life in oral communication and s/he best illustrated one of the common constraints pertaining to oral communication in EFL classes; lack of teacher attention to his students.

All in all, teachers showed complete agreement as to the development of learners' competence and skills in oral communication through the opportunities provided via oral presentations projects.

In a nutshell, the results seem to indicate that Applied Linguistics' students at Bejaia University have a positive attitude towards oral presentation projects. This latter seems to be an effective tool, if well implemented, to enhance students' oral skill, communicative competence and communicative performance. These results are in fact consistent with prior studies (see Chen, 2011; Kennedy, 2007; King, 2002; Thornbury, 2005; Wilson and Brooks, 2014). However, the findings showed that students expect more efforts and dedication from their teachers. It is up to the teachers and learners to collaborate to find solutions to the encountered problems to reach oral language fluency.

## **2. Limitations of the Study**

One limitation of this study is time. Because the research is about oral presentation projects in EFL classes, we should have included classroom observation to collect more reliable data. Because of time constraint, we only used a questionnaire and an interview. Furthermore, another limitation is that almost half of the participants did not write something in the final open question. This would have allowed us to have all the participants' suggestions and comments.

Another limitation is that it is difficult to generalize the results obtained from this investigation. This is because the sample of the study is Master 1 applied linguistics students and this option has only two groups (40 students). Therefore, it is difficult to generalize on the whole students at Bejaia University. Yet, it is still possible to conclude that the results are consistent with the previous literature published as to the idea that oral projects have a positive impact on students' oral language skills and performance.

### 3. Implications and Suggestions

The study described in this paper aimed at looking closely to what extent oral presentations can enhance Master 1 Applied Linguistic students' performance in oral communication. Based on the findings of this study, several suggestions can be provided for language teaching. Teachers need to rely on oral projects and implement them in all subjects to achieve communicative purposes. They need to provide meaningful opportunities for students to communicate in real-life situations, so that they can develop their abilities for oral communication. EFL teachers should focus more on the principles of the communicative language Teaching (CLT) in order to meet the students' communicative needs and develop their communicative competence. Likewise, they should allow more time to speak and take part in classroom activities in order to develop learners' oral skills. This latter should be given more priority and emphasis since they are the most difficult skills to be acquired. Hedge (2000), stressed this importance by saying that speaking is a skill by which students are judged while first impressions are being made. Thus, the students have learned a language if they can speak it well. According to Nunan (1991), “ *to most people, mastering the art of speaking is the single most important factor of learning a second or foreign language and success is measured by the ability to carry out a conversation in the language* ” (p. 39). Therefore, we believe it is high time EFL teachers at Bejaia university give more practical opportunities for learners to develop the communicative aspect of English rather than its structure and form.

Indeed, the results obtained imply that students are still dependent on their teacher. They always need the instructor to motivate and encourage them to carry out a particular task. This is shown in the respondents' answers. That is why it is recommended that EFL teachers should regularly motivate their learners to be active in the classroom by participating and carrying out projects. Moreover, teachers need to raise students' awareness to the importance and interest of developing learners' communicative performance to succeed in language learning. They should also do efforts to identify learners' psychological problems such as stress, fear, shyness and anxiety to allow for better language learning. Though many students deal with oral presentations, the quality of the work remains, in most cases, poor and do not reach the set objectives. It is in this context that the teacher should intervene and guide the students to produce high quality presentations.



#### **4. Suggestion for Further Research**

The interest and importance of oral presentation projects to enhance ones' oral communication in EFL classes should encourage researchers to conduct in-depth investigations pertaining to this topic. The obtained results from our study show the necessity and usefulness of such projects in foreign language learning in general and oral performance particularly. One of the topics that could be suggested for further research works can be the investigation of the role and importance of oral presentation projects in business firms, and their impact on employees' oral performance. This topic is worth to be conducted to show that students will need oral communication competence not only inside the classroom, but even outside, i.e. the professional setting. This will probably stimulate and incite students to focus more on such projects.

## **Conclusion**

In the current study, the investigation revealed that the effects of using oral presentation projects in EFL learning context help to develop learners' communicative performance. Through the questionnaire designed for students and teachers' interview, we have been able to verify and prove that our hypothesis is valid. We have been able to answer the research questions asked in the beginning to see to what extent oral presentations might be efficient in helping students of English in Bejaia communicate appropriately and effectively in classroom settings. The findings of the study clearly revealed the perception of students towards oral presentations and their enthusiasm and willingness to have more opportunities to put their oral skills into practice. Furthermore, the students revealed their wish as to having appropriate and better learning conditions so that to boost their oral competence.

The investigation work let us know that Master 1 EFL students at Bejaia University still have many difficulties and problems pertaining to oral communication. Therefore, more efforts should be provided from both teachers and learners to tackle learners' constraints to achieve oral communication fluency. Besides, the study confirmed that students need to be given more time and freedom to practice their speaking skill, thus, enhance their oral communicative performance.

# **General Conclusion**

## General Conclusion

The current study was conducted to investigate the development of EFL students' oral communicative performance through the use of oral presentation projects. Our main objective was to confirm and verify the hypothesis as to whether oral projects are an effective means that can be used to enhance learners' oral communication skills. In order to achieve the set objective, we relied on the quantitative and qualitative methods through the use of students' questionnaire and teachers' interview. The dissertation is comprised of two chapters.

The first chapter represents the theoretical part of the dissertation and a review of the related literature. We have started describing oral presentations in EFL classes, their importance, advantages and role in foreign language learning. We reported the main studies and contributions related to the presentation projects. Then, we moved to the second variable which is oral communication skills among EFL learners. We dealt with oral language skills, speaking constraints and oral communication strategies. It is important to know the opinion of different scholars pertaining to oral communication in the language classroom.

The second chapter is rather devoted to the field work, data analysis and the discussion of the results. The analysis of the findings obtained from the teachers' interview and students' questionnaire revealed that oral presentations favor the development of ones' oral language skills. Though the difficulties and constraints, we notice there is a positive attitude towards presentations. Most students confirmed that there is a cause and effect relationship between the speaking skill and presentation activities. That is why students are asking for more opportunities and enough time to conduct oral assignments to enhance their oral performance. We also conclude that many students complain about the lack of dedication, from teachers, to develop oral proficiency. Furthermore, all the participants without exception claimed that they practice their English through giving presentations. This is compatible with the view of many researchers such as Thornbury (2005) who claims that oral presentations are an authentic way to practice speaking. This is indeed what justifies the urgent necessity to use oral projects in all subjects as a tool to promote oral communication proficiency.

Moreover, the results showed that learners agree that the communicative language teaching (CLT) is an appropriate approach to practice speaking and develop competence in oral communication. This explains that the adoption of communicative approaches in foreign language teaching has come out with considerable improvements in the acquisition of oral competencies. Nonetheless, the progress achieved by the students is still uneven. We can see

that in the responses provided by the interviewed teachers where most of them claimed they cannot generalize their perception on students' oral presentation competence because the level is different from one student to another. The interview results also revealed the different oral communication constraints encountered by students. Most teachers agreed that learners are affected mainly by anxiety, shyness and the lack of confidence. Add to that other problems pertaining to a lack of spontaneity, the fear of the audience, fear of making mistakes and poor English. In addition to these findings, 05 teachers confirmed that oral presentations have a positive impact on students' oral communication performance.

The results and findings of this investigation would be a good motivation for foreign language teachers and students to put more emphasis on the communicative aspect of the target language rather than the grammatical one. It would be interesting if Bejaia students understand that oral language proficiency constitute a key element in measuring one's success in foreign language acquisition. Furthermore, oral skills are likely to be used in future academic works as well as in professional settings. Therefore, further research can focus on the role of oral presentations in enhancing employees' oral skills; thus enhancing performance and productivity in the company. That is why we ask this question: to what extent oral presentation skills are beneficial in the business environment?

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# **Appendices**

# Appendices

## Appendix 1: Students' Questionnaire

### Students' Questionnaire

*Dear Students,*

We are conducting a research for the fulfillment of a master degree in Applied Linguistics and English Language Teaching (ALELT). This Questionnaire is designed to support our investigation on “**The Effects of Using Oral Presentation Projects, in EFL Context, to Enhance Learners' Oral Proficiency**”. Thus, you are kindly asked to answer the following questions by selecting the answer which best reflects your opinion.

*Your contribution is appreciated.*

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Tick the appropriate answer from 1. Highly Agree (HA) to 5. Highly Disagree (HD)

1. **Highly Agree : HA**
2. **Agree : A**
3. **Neither Agree nor Disagree : NAD**
4. **Disagree : D**
5. **Highly Disagree : HD**

### 1/ GENERAL INFORMATION

1. **Gender:** Male  Female
2. **Age:** 21-23  24-25  Other

Item	Statement / Question	HA	A	NAD	D	HD
1	I have a good level in English					
2	I am a shy learner					
3	I often take part in classroom discussion					
4	I often have a problem expressing myself orally					

## 2/ ORAL PRESENTATION PROJECTS

Item	Statement / Question	HA	A	NAD	D	HD
1	I have already given many Oral Presentations					
2	My teachers often ask me to prepare oral presentation projects					
3	I like dealing with Oral presentations assignments					
4	I generally use Visual Aids while presenting my work					
5	In an oral Presentation work, I like to be guided					
6	I feel anxious/worried when I have to deal with an Oral Presentation					
7	I would like to be completely free when I am asked to give an oral presentation					
8	I can give a presentation without any speaking and pronunciation mistakes					
9	Oral presentations give me a chance to practice my English					
10	Oral presentations favor the use of some communication techniques					
11	The importance of conducting Oral presentation projects is often stressed by my teachers					
12	I can speak in public without any problem					
13	I hesitate when I have to speak in public because I lack confidence					

## 3/ ORAL COMMUNICATION IN EFL CLASSES

Item	Statement / Question	HA	A	NAD	D	HD
1	I can communicate easily in English					
2	My teachers regularly invite me to communicate in the classroom					
3	My teachers rarely invite me to participate the classroom					
4	My oral communication performance can be improved through Oral Presentations					
5	Oral Presentations activities help me to develop my communication skills					
6	To communicate well, Oral Presentations should be conducted regularly in the classroom					
7	Oral Presentations is an effective way to practice speaking					
8	Developing learners' speaking skills leads to good oral communication					
9	I am generally given enough time to express my ideas in the classroom					
10	Oral communication activities are sometimes conducted in the classroom					
11	I regularly get engaged in communicative tasks					



12	Different communication techniques are discussed in the classroom					
13	The use of Communicative Language Teaching might develop student's oral communication abilities.					

**4/. GENERAL SUGGESTIONS**

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*Thank You for Your Cooperation*

## **Appendix 2: Teachers' Interview**

### **Teachers' Interview**

*Dear Teachers,*

This interview questions aim at collecting information about the effects of using oral presentation projects in EFL Classrooms to enhance and develop learners' oral communication performance. We would be very grateful if you answer the following questions which will help us in our research for the fulfillment of Master degree in Applied Linguistics and English Language Teaching (AL ELT). Your point of view is very important.

*Thank you for your contribution!*

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1. How long have you been teaching English?
2. Based on your experience as a teacher of English, how do you perceive your students' performance in oral presentations? Please explain.
3. Most literature in the field of oral communication shows that oral presentations in EFL classroom have a positive impact on students' oral communicative skills. What is your comment on the matter?
4. Many students encounter many difficulties when dealing with oral presentation assignments. Can you name some of them?
5. Generally, what is your role during an oral presentation session? Please provide as many details as possible.
6. Many approaches to foreign language teaching stress the fact that conducting oral presentation projects in EFL classrooms helps to form communicatively competent students. Comment!
7. What oral communication strategies are generally used by your students when presenting their works? Can you name some difficulties pertaining to oral communication?
8. Would you tell an experience that marked your life as a teacher in relation to oral communication in EFL classes?

*Thank you for your collaboration*

### Appendix 3: Assessment Form for Judging Speech Quality:

Eye-contact	rapport with, and sense of the audience
Voice	show confidence; appropriateness of pace; volume; and articulation
English	clear pronunciation ; appropriate use of vocabulary good structures/register; conciseness; and clarity of expressions
Originality of Content	good choice of topic; clear objective/ purpose statement; and unique ideas about the chosen topic
Clarity	good connection of ideas; appropriate use of signal words; well structured; clear conclusions
PowerPoint	Attractive; appropriate use of paragraphing, headings, numbering, spacing, and illustrations.
Body Langage	appropriate gestures to keep audience's attention
Time Management	Management of the allocated time of oral presentation

From "*Factors Predicting Effective Oral Presentations in EFL Classrooms*", by Junko Otoshi & Neil Heffernen, 2008.