THE IMPORTANCE OF GIVING ORAL PRESENTATIONS IN ENGLISH (ESP)

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Situation – Undergraduate students of the UNG:

- Requirement: 10-minute oral presentations (ESP classes – “Practical English Sessions”)
- Students allowed/encouraged to choose the topics
- Target audience: fellow students + teacher
- Assessed with numerical (points) and descriptive criteria
Reasons for introducing oral presentations into ESP syllabi:

- EFFECTIVE ESP LEARNING
  - Developing EFL speaking skills, overall fluency, ESP vocabulary

- Wider frame:
  - developing presentation skills (+ self-confidence)
  - developing cross-cultural communication skills (specific needs of the students living in a border-area)
  - CLIL
  - favourable effect on group dynamics

- EFFECTIVE LEARNING MOTIVATION
MOTIVATING TASK:

- active participation of learners
- personalised
- an end-product (projects, etc.)
- interesting (relevant content, creativity etc.)
- not too demanding/too easy
Undergraduate students of the UNG (Engineering and Management, Slovene Studies, Cultural History)

**Aims:**
- discuss students’ perception of the role of oral presentations in ESP
- assess the efficiency of the existing teaching methods
- establish new guidelines for the future

**Group 1** (had presentations) = 41 students;
**Group 2** (no such requirement) = 25 students
Total: 72
Structure of questionnaires

• Section 1: general opinion about oral presentations at ESP classes
• Section 2: opinion on the specific advantages of oral presentations in ESP
• Sections 3 and 4: students’ previous experience in giving presentations in English
• Section 5: students’ views on the existing assessment methods
Section 1: What do you think about the fact that you didn’t have to prepare an oral presentation at the English practical sessions?

- **GROUP 2**

  - I was glad I didn't have to do it. (52%)
  - It's a pity I didn't have the chance to do it (24%).
  - I can't decide whether it was an advantage or a disadvantage (12%).
  - I don't care (12%).

*Reason: 53.85% of these claim they were too busy in that period.*

* Some restructuring of various courses is planned for the 2010’2011 academic year.
Section 1: What do you think about the fact that you had to prepare an oral presentation at the English practical sessions?

- **GROUP 1**

  - I was glad I had the opportunity to do it (68.10%)
  - I didn't like it at all (6.38%).
  - I can't decide whether it was an advantage or a disadvantage (21.28%).
  - I don't care (4.26%).

Reasons: See next slide.
Group 1: The main reason for appreciating the opportunity to prepare the presentation:

- because I can get some practice in giving presentations in English which will help me later (during my studies/career) – **50%**
  
  (16.67% - Group 2)

- because I can improve my English language skills this way - **31.25%**
  
  (50% - Group 2)

- because I can learn more about the chose topic - **9.38%**
  
  (0% - Group 2)

- because I’m not that good in talking in front of the audience and in this way I can get some practice and hopefully improve - **6.25%** (16.67% - Group 2)

- because I enjoy talking in front of the audience – **3.13%** (16.67% - Group 2)

- because it’s a good way to earn a better final grade in this course – **0%**
  
  (0 % - Group 2)

- other – **0%** (0% - Group 2)
Section 2:

- No major differences between the two groups. Students totally/quite agree agree that delivering oral presentations helps you:
  - improve your grammar
  - improve your general/ESP vocabulary
  - learn about an ESP topic in an effective way
  - present an ESP topic to general/specific audience in an efficient way
  - overcome the fear of speaking in front of an audience

- Difference: “Listening to/watching a presentation is boring.” – 16 % (Group 2); 0% (Group 1).
Sections 3 & 4:

- Percentage of students who did not have any previous experience in preparing/delivering oral presentations in English:
  - Group 1: 57.45% (!)
  - Group 2: 39.13%

- Further research needed to examine primary/secondary school practices
Students of both groups like the combination of descriptive and numerical criteria (points or %). 48.93% students in Group 1 would not assess the performance with a grade (on a 5-10 grading scale system). The corresponding no. of students from Group 2 is 48%.

Students’ achievements are incorporated into their final grades.

Students agree with the fact that spontaneity needs to be one of the assessment criteria.
Many advantages of introducing oral presentations into the syllabi of undergraduate students

Developing fluency in EFL/ESP

More effective presenting of ESP topics to the audience and other aims, including developing the ability of cross-cultural communication (specific needs in our region)

Possible changes in assessment methods, planned attempts to make oral ESP presentations a part of a larger project (57.44% students from Group 1 and 44% in Group 2 think this is a good idea).

Help future students learn how to prepare and deliver the presentations (avoiding typical mistakes)

Further research on a wider population should be performed