



## EFL students' perceptions of oral presentations: Implications for motivation, language ability and speech anxiety

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### APA Citation:

Gürbüz, C., & Cabaroğlu, N. (2021). EFL students' perceptions of oral presentations: Implications for motivation, language ability and speech anxiety. *Journal of Language and Linguistic Studies*, 17(1), 600-614. Doi: 10.52462/jlls.41

Submission Date: 10/01/2021

Acceptance Date: 16/03/2021

### Abstract

In this study, we investigated preparatory class students' perceptions of oral presentations and their functions in EFL learning and teaching in connection with language ability, speech anxiety, and language learning motivation. Our participants were 29 adult EFL students in two intact classes attending a mandatory English preparatory program at a state university, who performed up to three controlled oral presentations following preliminary instruction. We collected data through pre-and post-student surveys, semi-structured interviews, self-reflection forms, and peer-evaluation forms. The pre-survey results revealed that the participants already held positive perceptions of oral presentations despite perceived difficulties. The post data showed significant changes in a positive direction in four variables, namely unwillingness, experience and perception of oral presentations, and language skills. The findings from the qualitative data also confirmed that the participants had benefited from their supervised oral presentations in terms of overcoming their speaking anxiety and perceived significant improvements in a range of language skills including pronunciation and public speaking.

*Keywords:* oral presentations; language ability; language learning motivation; speaking anxiety; speaking skills

### 1. Introduction

One of the most desirable results of foreign language instruction is to capacitate learners to communicate orally in the target language. Speaking skill, on the other hand, is a challenging language skill to master (Shumin, 2002) as it necessitates linguistic, sociolinguistic, and rhetorical competencies (Nunan & Bailey, 2009). Students who reside in a country where English is not the dominant language do not have enough exposure to spoken English in daily life. A teaching and learning environment where all students speak the same first language, while English is not used outside the classroom, presents some challenges both for the learners and teachers. For many of such non-native speakers of English in particular, the biggest challenge is oral skills development (Gani, Fajrina & Hanifa, 2015).

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Research on speaking skills report a variety of factors that pose a challenge for foreign language learners: poor uptake of vocabulary and lexical insufficiency (Liu & Jackson, 2008), limited exposure to English outside the classroom (Lightbown & Spada, 2006), not being able to understand speaker's accent (Robertson, Line, Jones & Thomas, 2000), teacher-centered classrooms resulting with limited opportunities for practice (Sawir, 2005) and lack of (or narrow) focus on speaking skills (Butler & Iino, 2005). All these factors lead to negative psychological consequences for learners; for example, increased sense of embarrassment about making mistakes (Yanagi & Baker, 2015), lack of confidence to communicate (Juhana, 2012), negative self-efficacy (Muyan & Tunaz, 2017), inhibition and apprehension (Littlewood, 2007) and speaking anxiety (Öztürk & Gürbüz, 2014).

As a result of the challenges faced and their possible negative impacts, EFL students fail to speak up in English. Consequently, they are prone to develop negative perceptions of their language skills and the whole language learning experience (Al-Nouh, Abdul-Kareem, & Taqi, 2015; Bahous, Bacha, & Nabhani, 2011). They also question why they are even learning English when they have almost no means of using it (Littlewood, 1984). Under the given circumstances, students unknowingly put up a barrier between the language input and themselves before they could access it. Krashen (1991) coined this phenomenon as the "affective filter," which is thought to be constituted by low motivation and self-confidence, negative attitude, and anxiety (Al-Jamal & Al-Jamal, 2014).

In order to avoid such an overwhelming scenario, Vygotsky (1980) valued social encounters and interaction in the target language. In parallel with the Vygotskian approach, Littlewood (1984) noted that "the development of communicative skills can only take place if learners have the motivation and opportunity to express their own identity and relate with the people around them" (p. 93). With regards to this idea, research suggests implementing authentic speaking tasks and activities that assure valuable opportunities for expressive social interaction in the target language (Kayi, 2006; Oradee, 2012).

Acknowledged by the relevant literature as an authentic activity (Brooks & Wilson, 2014), oral presentations were found to have a facilitating effect on students' overall language ability and motivation (Girard, Pinar & Trapp, 2011). In line with that, Brooks and Wilson (2014) maintain that oral presentations promote natural and lifelike interactions between peers and provide the necessary exposure to the target language by requiring a wide array of language skills both inside and outside the classroom. The above-specified research also found oral presentations to be learner-oriented, authentic, and motivating. In the given context, this study aims to explore EFL students' perceptions of oral presentations in terms of perceived language ability, language learning motivation, and speaking anxiety.

### *1.1. Literature review*

Oral presentations are organized and practiced speeches by which a speaker presents a topic to an audience (Levin and Topping, 2006). Audiences may be more active or passive depending on the type and function of oral presentations, which places varying levels of stress on speakers (Joughin, 2007). A wide body of literature dealing with the benefits, shortcomings, and uses of oral presentations conclude that using oral presentations in EFL classrooms facilitates students' learning (e.g., Al-Issa & Al-Qubtan, 2010; Brooks & Wilson, 2014; Girard et al., 2011; King, 2002). Oral presentations are learner-oriented and authentic tasks and are therefore considered to be beneficial in that they demand the use of all four language skills and they have positive effects on student motivation (Brooks & Wilson, 2014).

Equally important to the benefits, the problems related to oral presentations have been a subject of debate among researchers. Some of these problems originate from the way oral presentations are

implemented in classrooms, which include flawed scaffolding (Brooks & Wilson, 2014), inadequate teacher or audience feedback (Chuang, 2011), negligence of preliminary instruction (Leichsenring, 2010), and choosing inappropriate or unrelated topics (Meloni & Thompson, 1980). Additionally, due to the nature of the activity, oral presentations may cause anxiety (Joughin, 2007) and nervousness (Alwi & Sidhu, 2013; Chuang, 2009) as they are found to be demanding (Al-Nouh et al., 2015).

As a counteraction to the specified problems, the current literature suggests different methods that promise a better experience of oral presentations such as tips to manage anxiety (King, 2002) through model presentations (Al-Nouh et al., 2015), guided peer evaluation (Patri, 2002), and self-reflection methods (De Grez, Valcke, & Roozen, 2009). Most importantly, providing comprehensive instruction on delivering oral presentations prior to the performance is advised (King, 2002).

Although there is a good deal of research dealing with oral presentations in pedagogical terms, the literature respecting the perspectives of the micro-stakeholders has yet to expand, and a considerable portion of the current research is wholly or primarily concerned with teacher perceptions (Brooks & Wilson, 2014). Although the need for further research on student views of oral presentations was highlighted in the literature (Ercan, Irgil, Sigirli, Ozen & Kan, 2008; Subasi, 2010), research on student perceptions have been scarce. Additionally, most studies on student perceptions of oral presentations adopted a one-dimensional approach for the activity (Chuang, 2011; Enein & Abu, 2011; Kim 2006) or dealt with assessment aspects (Joughin, 1999) such as written assignments (Akindele & Trennepohl, 2014) and peer-evaluation (Girard et al., 2011). The present study addresses the highlighted need to focus on student perceptions and employs a variety of data collection tools and procedures accompanied by guided instruction.

## *1.2. Research questions*

Within this background, the objective of the present study is to discover EFL students' perceptions about the effect of oral presentations on their language skills and language learning motivation. The study also investigates the role of oral presentations as a possible panacea for speech anxiety, reluctance to speak, and unwillingness to participate from the student point of view. With these in mind, the following research questions were addressed by the present study:

1. How do university-level EFL students perceive oral presentations and their contribution to their overall language ability?
2. Does performing oral presentations have any impact on EFL students' language learning motivation?
3. What is the role of oral presentations in remedying speech anxiety and unwillingness to speak in EFL settings?

## **2. Method**

### *2.1. Research design*

In line with our research questions, we designed a mixed-methods study implementing both quantitative and qualitative data collection tools. Table 1 presents a summary of the methods and procedures adopted by the present study.

**Table 1.** Overall Research Design of the Present Study

|                              |  |
|------------------------------|--|
| <b>Research Design</b>       | Mixed-methods  |
| <b>Sampling Strategy</b>     | Convenience Sampling (for surveys, peer evaluation, and self-reflection forms)<br>Selective/Purposive Sampling (for interviews with students)  |
| <b>Participants</b>          | 29 EFL students in total including; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 6 students selected for the semi-structured interview</li> <li>• 22 students completed the self-reflection form</li> <li>• 1 international student (Malian)</li> </ul>  |
| <b>Procedures</b>            | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pre-survey (1 week)</li> <li>• Guided instruction (3 weeks)</li> <li>• 1st oral presentations (voluntary, 2 weeks)</li> <li>• Self-reflections and peer evaluations (1 week)</li> <li>• 2nd oral presentations (graded, 2 weeks)</li> <li>• Self-reflections and peer evaluations (1 week)</li> <li>• 3rd oral presentations (voluntary, 2 weeks)</li> <li>• Self-reflections and peer evaluations (1 week)</li> <li>• Post-survey (1 week)</li> <li>• Interviews (1 week)</li> </ul> |
| <b>Data Collection Tools</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pre/post-surveys</li> <li>• Self-reflection forms</li> <li>• Peer evaluation forms</li> <li>• Semi-structured interviews</li> </ul>   |
| <b>Data Analysis</b>         | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Paired samples t-test for analysis of survey data</li> <li>• Qualitative analysis for interview data, self-reflection and peer evaluation forms, survey data</li> </ul>   |

## 2.2. Participants and setting

The study was conducted with two intact classes containing 29 (24 male and 5 female) students, who attended a one-year intensive English preparatory program at a state university in Turkey. Their ages ranged between 18 and 23. The classes were formed following a proficiency exam conducted by the School of Foreign Languages, which determined whether the students were proficient enough (B1 or above) to be exempt from the one-year compulsory program. The students whose proficiency levels were below the specified level were placed in elementary-level preparatory English classes, and an integrated-skills textbook was followed for one semester. In the second term, they received skill-based training in addition to the coursebook-led *Main Course*. Oral presentations were a part of the students' formal assessment in both academic terms; however, they were not sufficiently trained on oral

presentations in the first semester. The preliminary instruction and guided oral presentations took place in the second term during the *Listening & Speaking* course.

### 2.3. Guided instruction and classroom procedures

The 3-week oral presentation training basically covered theoretical and practical information about oral presentations. During the course of the preliminary instruction by one of the researchers, a variety of materials and resources were used, including information sheets, study materials, and audio-visuals. An average of 4 hours of class time per week was spent on this training. In the first week, the fundamentals of public speaking and different speech types were introduced. In the second week, techniques and strategies respecting preliminary research, preparation, and speech outlines and rehearsals were taught. In the final week, the keys to a successful speech were emphasized, examples of successful and unsuccessful presentations were both shown and demonstrated, and information was given on evaluation criteria and topic selection. The student participants were then asked to choose a topic of interest from the given list of topics or on their own and ran it by the instructing researcher to collect feedback. Ultimately, the students delivered up to three guided oral presentations. The total number of presentations prepared and delivered by the students throughout the term was 55 (10 students with one presentation each, 12 with two, and 7 with three).

### 2.4. Instruments

#### 2.4.1. Pre- and post-surveys

In order to explore the students' perceptions about language learning and oral presentations, a 5-point Likert survey (from 1 "strongly disagree/not at all" to 5 "strongly agree") was administered to the participants. The survey was conducted in Turkish, except for one international student who was more proficient in English.

**Table 2.** The Variables for Perceptions of Oral Presentations and Language Learning Experience

| Category   | Item Number | Item Size |
|--|-------------|-----------|
| Anxiety  | 1-15        | 15        |
| Unwillingness  | 16-28       | 13        |
| Motivation   | 29-38       | 10        |
| Perception of oral presentations                     | 39-53       | 15        |
| Self-perception                                      | 54-65       | 12        |
| Perception of a general language learning experience | 66-70       | 5         |
| Perceived language skills                            | 71          | 1         |
| Experience of oral presentations                     | 72 and 73   | 2         |

The Student Perceptions Survey was developed by compiling the following scales and making necessary modifications for the research context: FLCAS (Foreign Language Anxiety Scale) by Horwitz, Horwitz, and Cope. (1986); UTC (Unwillingness to Communicate Scale) by Burgoon (1976); and Language Class Risktaking, Language Class Sociability, Language Class Discomfort, Strength of Motivation and Attitude toward the Language Class Scales by Ely (1986). Ultimately, the reliability of the questionnaire was ensured by a pilot administration. The final version of the questionnaire used in this study has high to excellent internal consistency ( $\alpha = 0.94$ ).

#### 2.4.2. *Self-reflection forms*

Participants were asked to fill out a self-reflection form (Appendix A) after each oral performance in order to: explore their perceptions about their presentation skills, language ability, and deliveries; have them notice and solve the problems in preparation and delivery, and identify the possible changes in their perceptions from one delivery to another. The forms included seven open-ended questions related to the steps of performing an oral presentation as well as the participants' perceived self-efficacy. Twenty-two student participants consented to fill the self-reflection forms for their guided deliveries. After each oral presentation, the self-reflection forms were handed out to the students and were returned to the instructing researcher mostly within a day.

#### 2.4.3. *Peer evaluation forms*

Since oral presentations are about observing in the audience as much as going on stage, peer evaluation forms (in English) were delivered to each student participant for each speaker. The goal was to encourage the student participants to reflect on their peers' oral performance and recognize the merits of the task. Another purpose was to teach them how to make use of peer feedback, appreciate comments and use their feedback to improve their performance. Additionally, it was aimed to create a functioning supportive classroom environment in which learners could socialize, have fun and build stronger bonds. After each presentation ended, the participants symbolically graded their peers by completing a criterion-based checklist, which contained descriptors for speech content, pronunciation, body language, vocabulary, grammar, and so on. They also wrote down personal comments and submitted the forms to the speaker.

#### 2.4.4. *Semi-structured interviews*

The semi-structured interview was used to gather information about the participants' educational history and their perceptions of oral presentations in respect to perceived language skills, language learning motivation, and speech anxiety. In addition, the interview data also revealed how the participants perceived their overall class performance both before and after the guided oral presentations.

The interviews were conducted with six student participants. There were two criteria in the selection of the interviewees: the number of total deliveries – all interviewees were selected from the participants who presented at least one voluntary oral presentation in addition to the graded one – and full participation in all prior research procedures. The interviews were made in English, except for the Malian participant who preferred English. During the interviews, we asked six open-ended questions to our participants.

### 2.5. *Data collection procedures*

The process of data collection began with the conduct of the pre-survey, then a three-week instruction on oral presentations was given. The participants were handed a list of topics containing different kinds of public speaking (e.g., informative, procedural, persuasive, and special occasion speeches) with brief explanations for each type and topic. Following a week of preparation, the first presentations were delivered voluntarily, and the self-reflection and peer evaluation forms were given. For the second and graded oral presentations, the same procedures were followed, except that the peer evaluation forms were not given. Following the announcement of the scores, eight more students were asked to give a last non-graded oral presentation, and the same steps were repeated once again. Once the presentations had been completed, the post-survey was administered, and the appointments for the interviews were made. Marking the end of the data collection procedures, semi-structured interviews were conducted with six student participants.

## 2.6. Data analysis

As indicated earlier, data collection instruments employed in this study provided both qualitative and quantitative data. The quantitative data were analyzed by performing descriptive analyses and a paired-samples t-test on statistical analysis software, hence the significance scores for the changes in the participants' perceptions were obtained. The qualitative data derived from the student survey, self-reflection forms, peer evaluation forms, and student interviews were coded and categorized according to the steps defined in Creswell and Poth (2018).

## 3. Results

### 3.1. Pre-surveys

Based on the participant students' earlier experiences of oral presentations, the pre-survey results show that they were most satisfied with their general *experience of oral presentations* ( $M = 3.15$ ,  $SD = 0.76$ ). However, their *perceived language skills* were rated the lowest ( $M = 2.2$ ,  $SD = 0.42$ ). They also stated that they were moderately unwilling to learn English ( $M = 3.02$ ,  $SD = 0.61$ ). As regards the open-ended section in the pre-survey, the qualitative analysis of the item demonstrates that three main factors contribute to students' satisfaction with oral presentations: *preliminary instruction, teacher guidance, and perceived improvements in linguistic and metalinguistic abilities*. On the other hand, some students reported having negative perceptions of oral presentations, which stemmed from a variety of sources including *negative self-perception, poor performance, demanding and complicated nature of oral presentations, and negative beliefs about general language learning*. Notably, the participants held their past teachers responsible for their unsatisfactory experiences of oral presentations (34.5%,  $N = 10$ ).

### 3.2. Post-surveys

Our participants responded to the same items for the post-survey as in the pre-survey. The analysis of the post-survey data reveals that the participants considered their *experience of oral presentations* most satisfactory ( $M = 3.93$ ,  $SD = 0.55$ ), and they were still most self-conscious about their language skills ( $M = 2.39$ ,  $SD = 0.46$ ). Based on the findings derived from the open-ended item in the post-survey, the participants found oral presentations fun, authentic, challenging, communicative, and individual. Additionally, they reported that they held more positive self-perceptions and observed improvement in their language skills after the oral presentations. They also added that they found teacher guidance and preliminary instruction useful.

Overall, all 29 participants perceived a better experience with their guided presentations than their past deliveries, and 86.2% of them ( $N = 25$ ) gave completely positive remarks about the activity after their controlled presentations. As to the perceived downsides, the written comments indicate that a small number of students (13.7%,  $N = 4$ ) considered the activity overwhelming when it overlapped with other examinations and assignments.

### 3.3. Changes in participants' perceptions: comparison of pre-and post-survey findings

After the pre-and post-surveys were analyzed individually, a paired samples t-test was performed. The significance of the changes in the participants' perceptions for the aforementioned variables is demonstrated in Table 3.

**Table 3.** Comparison of the pre-and post-survey results

| Variable   | Pre |      | Post |      | SD   | t     | df | p           |
|--|-----|------|------|------|------|-------|----|-------------|
|  | N   | M    | N    | M    |      |       |    |             |
| Anxiety  | 29  | 2.69 | 29   | 2.45 | 0.54 | 1.87  | 28 | 0.07        |
| Unwillingness                                    | 29  | 3.02 | 29   | 2.76 | 0.53 | 2.14  | 28 | <b>0.04</b> |
| Lack of motivation                               | 29  | 2.53 | 29   | 2.41 | 0.72 | 0.99  | 28 | 0.33        |
| Negative perception of oral presentations        | 29  | 2.75 | 29   | 2.43 | 0.43 | 3.74  | 28 | <b>.001</b> |
| Negative self-perception                         | 29  | 2.92 | 29   | 2.75 | 0.51 | 0.52  | 28 | 0.61        |
| Negative perception of general language learning | 29  | 2.92 | 29   | 2.86 | 0.60 | 0.19  | 28 | 0.85        |
| Perceived language skills                        | 29  | 2.20 | 29   | 2.39 | 0.33 | -3.23 | 28 | <b>.003</b> |
| Experience of oral presentations                 | 29  | 3.15 | 29   | 3.93 | 0.83 | -5.03 | 28 | <b>.000</b> |

Although changes in the positive direction are evident for all variables, statistically significant differences are valid for *unwillingness* ( $t(28) = 2.14$ ,  $p = 0.04$ ), *negative perception of oral presentations* ( $t(28) = 3.74$ ,  $p = 0.01$ ), *perceived language skills* ( $t(28) = -3.23$ ,  $p = 0.03$ ), and *experience of oral presentations* ( $t(28) = -5.03$ ,  $p = 0.00$ ). Table 4 below shows, on an item-by-item basis, the significance scores for the sub-variables that determine the perceived *experience of oral presentations*.

**Table 4.** Statistical comparison of the survey items under *the experience of oral presentations*

| Experience of Oral Presentations<br>Item     | Pre |      | Post |      | SD   | t     | df | p           |
|--|-----|------|------|------|------|-------|----|-------------|
|  | N   | M    | N    | M    |      |       |    |             |
| Instruction before oral presentations        | 29  | 3.36 | 29   | 4.24 | 1.05 | -4.61 | 28 | <b>.001</b> |
| Teacher guidance during the process          | 29  | 2.48 | 29   | 4.58 | 1.36 | -5.05 | 28 | <b>.001</b> |
| Feedback from your classmates                | 29  | 3.13 | 29   | 3.57 | 1.61 | -2.07 | 28 | <b>.05</b>  |
| The effort you put in the activity           | 29  | 3.00 | 29   | 3.86 | 0.95 | -1.37 | 28 | .18         |
| General satisfaction with oral presentations | 29  | 3.00 | 29   | 3.82 | 1.36 | -3.42 | 28 | <b>.002</b> |

As is seen, the student participants reported significantly more positive perceptions of *preliminary instruction* ( $t(28) = -4.61$ ,  $p = 0.00$ ), *teacher guidance* ( $t(28) = -5.05$ ,  $p = 0.00$ ), and *peer-feedback* ( $t(28) = -2.07$ ,  $p = 0.05$ ) after their guided oral presentations. Furthermore, their *general satisfaction with oral presentations* has become significantly higher ( $t(28) = -3.43$ ,  $p = 0.02$ ).

### 3.4. Semi-structured Interviews

Analysis of the interviews with six participants showed the full extent of the changes in the students' perceptions of oral presentations as well as their perceived language skills, language learning motivation, and speaking anxiety. Upon being asked about their general views of oral presentations, all six interviewees gave positive remarks about oral presentations based on their most recent experiences. Overall, the interviewees defined the activity as extraordinary, professional, and encouraging. Interviewee 3 described the whole process as "*an experience like no one [in the class] has ever*



experienced before.” As for the problems she had with her deliveries, “*It gets easier over time.*”, she remarked.

The participants also noted that they had negative experiences with oral presentations in the past. Three interviewees disclosed that they had “*felt lost and alienated*” in their past experiences of oral presentations “*due to lack of instruction and teacher guidance*” and the “*strict rules*” set to prevent reading from notes. This shows once again that teachers are the most crucial agents of satisfaction with oral presentations as the pre-survey results suggested.

With regards to speaking anxiety, half of the respondents admitted suffering from a lack of confidence before their guided oral presentations, which caused unwillingness to attend the course. Nevertheless, more than half of the interviewees mentioned that they perceived a noteworthy improvement in their self-confidence thanks to their guided deliveries. More specifically, *Interviewee 1* emphasized that he could “*handle oral presentations with ease*” thereafter. Similarly, *Interviewee 2* stated, “*Now that I feel confident and at ease, I can comfortably tell when I don’t know something.*”

Concerning language learning motivation, five participants stated that they benefited from their guided oral presentations to overcome their unwillingness to learn and speak English. Disclosing that he lost his timidity, *Interviewee 4* admitted not having any desire to come to school before his oral presentations: “*Now I want to come [to school] just for this, [oral presentations].*” In line with that, *Interviewee 6* said he “*would rather have a full week of oral presentations than a week of regular English instruction.*”

After the delivery of the guided oral presentations, our participants expressed a variety of linguistic gains as well. The most commonly mentioned improvements in language skills are *pronunciation* ( $N = 4$ ), *fluency* ( $N = 3$ ), *ability to think in English* ( $N = 2$ ), *general listening ability* ( $N = 3$ ), and *vocabulary* ( $N = 3$ ). Highlighting the correlation between language skills development and self-confidence, *Interviewee 2* stated: “*Now I have the utmost confidence to speak. I have finally started to think in English.*”

Regarding peer observation, all respondents noted “*surprising*” improvements in their classmates’ class performance. Summing up the remarkable changes in them, *Interviewee 3* articulated:

*Those who could not speak [English] before we’re able to speak while those who could not listen [to English] could listen.*

Similarly, *Interviewee 2* declared that some of his friends had been too hesitant or unwilling to join class discussions but eventually started speaking up. Raising the bar to the next level, *Interviewee 5* affirmed that even the other teachers who had presumably given up on them started to call on them during the lessons.

Lastly, the participants gave completely positive comments about peer evaluation. They were particularly pleased with the appreciation shown by their classmates. For example, *Interviewee 1* remarked upon much tighter bonds with his classmates owing to the exchange of emotions and ideas as they interacted more. Thanks to their improved communication, he was “*more eager to come to the class, to see [his] friends.*” Finally, participants also explained how much they benefited from peer evaluation, for it enabled them to become aware of their mistakes and take the task more seriously.

To sum up, our data demonstrate perceived improvements in a range of language skills and areas such as fluency, pronunciation, vocabulary, listening, language learning strategies, the ability to think in the target language, and public speaking.

### 3.5. Self-reflection forms

Twenty-two consenting participants filled out self-reflection forms after each of their deliveries. Our data revealed the perceived problems as *anxiety* (50%,  $N = 11$ ), *pronunciation* (45.5%,  $N = 10$ ), *time management* (13.6%,  $N = 3$ ), *lack of eye contact* (9%,  $N = 2$ ), and *weak body language* (9%,  $N = 2$ ). On the other hand, *having fun* (27.3%,  $N = 6$ ), *learning new things* (18.2%,  $N = 4$ ), and *overcoming nervousness* (13.6%,  $N = 4$ ) were among the major perceived benefits of performing on stage.

The respondents perceived certain improvements in a variety of areas in the post-delivery period as well. Among the most repeated are *building confidence* (36.4%,  $N = 8$ ), *better public speaking skills* (22.7%,  $N = 5$ ), and *overcoming stage fright* (18.2%,  $N = 4$ ). The results also indicate that all respondents with three oral deliveries perceived less speech anxiety and discomfort. Furthermore, five out of seven respondents with two guided oral deliveries admitted feeling significantly better on stage during their final presentations. Last but not least, 80% of the participants with at least two oral deliveries did not perceive the weaknesses they mentioned in their previous forms any longer.

### 3.6. Peer Evaluation Forms

The peer evaluation forms contributed to our study as a tool for self-awareness and learning rather than data collection. Although the data from the peer evaluation forms is very limited in content, it is revealed that the students developed an understanding of the evaluation criteria and the presenters took their peers' feedback seriously. Additionally, our participants not only provided accurate and realistic feedback to their peers but also encouraged them by giving praises, making jokes, and drawing emojis.

## 4. Conclusions and Discussion

Through this study, it was aimed to explore EFL students' perceptions of oral presentations in the language class, as well as the perceived influence on language skills, motivation, and speaking anxiety. Based on the data obtained from the pre-and post-surveys, semi-structured student interviews, and self-reflection forms, the present study concludes that the preparatory class students who participated in this study hold markedly positive perceptions of oral presentations. Even before their guided deliveries, the participants rated their experiences of oral presentations the highest although they admitted having serious problems with their past learning experiences. Moreover, after their controlled deliveries, they were significantly more pleased with guided instruction and peer feedback. On the downside, some students found oral presentations overdemanding, especially when they had other assignments and examinations that needed attention. In that respect, the present study provides evidence for both types of research that suggests the integration of four skills in one complex activity can enhance learning (Joughin, 2007) and may create a burden for some learners (Zappa-Holman, 2007).

As much as oral presentations could be daunting for some students, there are some other merits that the participants deemed worthy of high praise. Oral presentations were found to be professional, encouraging, student-centered, and communicative as implied by other research as well (Brooks & Wilson, 2014; King, 2002). In support of the given conclusion, Kim (2006) regarded formal oral presentations as very important for academic success since they required a range of skills that were needed in academic life. Parallel to that, oral presentations might be a solution for the integration and equal distribution of the four skills as this is often problematic in EFL settings (Al-Issa and Al-Qubtan, 2010).

With regards to perceived language ability, the present study maintains that oral presentations could be utterly helpful to improve students' language skills. Although there is limited knowledge in

the literature to compare these findings, the specified findings are in line with the research marking the benefits of oral presentations to language skills (Al-Issa & Al-Qubtan, 2010; Brooks & Wilson, 2014; Girard et al., 2011).

The findings from both quantitative and qualitative data show a major change in perceived unwillingness as well. As the pre-test implied, the student participants were unwilling to communicate in English before their guided oral presentations and had all-around negative perceptions of their foreign language experiences. After the oral presentations, there has been a significant decrease in their unwillingness as the pre-and post-survey results demonstrate.

Finally, another concern of our study was the role of oral presentations in minimizing anxiety and lack of motivation in EFL settings. Overall, both qualitative and quantitative data indicate changes in the positive direction, although not all of them are statistically meaningful. The qualitative data also suggest substantial changes in the participants' perceived anxiety and motivation in a positive direction. On the other hand, the t-test results signify a statistically insignificant difference for the two variables.

To expatiate on the changes in perceived language learning motivation, data from the pre-and post-surveys and student interviews revealed that our participants considered oral presentations highly motivating due to the appreciation and positive and constructive feedback provided by peers. In line with this, Brooks and Wilson (2014) noted an increase in motivation as one possible benefit of oral presentations, for they break the monotony of language learning and thus motivate both students and teachers (Kim 2002).

Although the overall change in perceived anxiety was shown to be insignificant by the t-test, the qualitative data revealed meaningful differences at the individual level. The participants who had priorly felt alienated, lost, and unconfident reported having gradually overcome these problems after the oral presentations.

Moreover, data from participants with three guided deliveries revealed a decrease in stage fright, nervousness, anxiety, and discomfort when speaking. In this regard, the findings of this study align well with research that underpins the possibility of a gradually decreasing level of stage fright and anxiety (Al-Issa & Al-Qubtan, 2010; King, 2002) while upholding the possibility that oral performances can be anxiety-inducing (Enein & Abu, 2011).

As evidenced by our findings, the success of oral presentations depends highly on preliminary instruction, not only because it prepares learners for their deliveries, but because it minimizes anxiety and nervousness. The first step to achieving this is for teachers to receive training on oral skills development, and they must provide students with guidance along the way. Secondly, language instructors and education planners must bear in mind that students learn oral presentations by trial and error, which demands time and multiple attempts (Magin & Helmore, 2001). Hence, language teachers must be patient with their students and should not come to too early conclusions about the activity. Last, of all, this lengthy process makes good timing and planning of oral presentations a necessity. Administrators and teachers must spare enough class time for oral presentations to get better results and reduce speaking anxiety.

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## Appendix A. Self-reflection form

Congratulations on making it this far! Now is the time to remember the experiences you had in your public speaking. If you recorded yourself while rehearsing and/or delivering your oral presentation, please watch your recordings before you start answering the questions. Be sure to check your classmates' comments on the peer evaluation forms and your instructor's feedback on your speech as well. If you are ready, please answer the following based on the preparation and delivery of your speech.

1. How did I prepare for my oral presentation? (e.g. doing research, preparing outlines, rehearsals)
2. What actually happened as I was delivering my presentation? (How did I feel? Was my performance any different than my rehearsals? How? How did I react or adapt to the unexpected during my speech?)
3. What has worked for me so far to be a more strategic speaker and what has not? (What did I learn from this experience? Did I also have fun?)
4. How am I going to do better next time? What things will I change and keep?
5. This oral presentation has contributed to my .....
6. These are my strengths when I speak: .....
7. I might need some work on my .....

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