

# Overcoming Foreign Language Anxiety (FLA)

## (Part 3: Oral Presentation with PREP Framework)

### 外国語不安の克服 (3)

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#### **Abstract**

This article expands on the previous study focused on overcoming foreign language anxiety (FLA) by exploring practical and effective strategies to help students reduce their anxiety. The primary goal of this research is to empower students by encouraging them to explore various practical learning methods that can enhance their confidence in using English. The paper advocates for implementing the PREP Framework in teaching activities related to oral presentations, highlighting the effectiveness of these strategies. Insights were gathered during the autumn semester 2024, focusing on a small group of preparatory-level students. This group comprised four undergraduates who completed three oral presentations on different topics. The observations, including student reactions and performance evaluations, revealed students' challenges in foreign language classes. These challenges encompass issues such as pronunciation difficulties, struggles with grammar rules, navigating cultural differences, and dealing with speaking anxiety and stage fright. This study proposes the PREP Framework to help students effectively manage these challenges during their oral presentations, enhancing their overall language learning experience..

*Keywords: Oral Presentation, language anxiety, PREP Framework*

本論文は、外国語不安（FLA）を克服するためのこれまでの研究を発展させ、英語に対する学生の不安を軽減するために実践的かつ効果的な方法を探るものである。本研究の主な目的は、学生に自信を持たせ、英語を使用する際の自信を高めるのに役立つ多様な学習方法を探求するよう促すことである。本論文では、口頭発表を含む指導活動において PREP フレームワークの活用を提唱している。本研究は、2024 年秋学期に得られた知見を提示し、準備課程レベルの少人数の学生グループに焦点を当てている。観察対象となったグループは学部生 4 名で構成されており、プレゼンテーションスキルに関する通常の授業に加え、さまざまなテーマについて 3 回の口頭発表を行った。学生の反応やパフォーマンス評価を含む観察結果から、外国語の授業で学生が直面する課題が浮き彫りになった。これらの課題には、発音の難しさや文法規則の習得、文化的な違いの理解、さらにはスピーキングに対する不安や人前で話すことへの恐怖心などが含まれる。本研究では、口頭発表の際にこれらの課題に効果的に対処できるよう PREP フレームワークを活用することを提案し、学生の言語学習体験の向上を目指している。

## **Background**

University graduates, in addition to their academic knowledge, have the opportunity to develop diverse skills that are highly valued in the workforce. While job requirements can vary across different fields, certain skills are universally sought after by employers. Numerous studies emphasize the importance of essential skills such as teamwork, communication, problem-solving, time management, critical thinking, and self-development, which are applicable across all industries. Practical communication skills are particularly important, as they play a key role in every sector. These skills encompass both written communication and effective presentation abilities. Graduates are assessed on their capacity to express ideas clearly and concisely, as well as their ability to listen and respond accurately and promptly. To address the needs of the job market and produce graduates with strong communication skills, universities often implement various strategies, activities, subjects, and courses to train undergraduates. This support and guidance from universities ensure that graduates are well-equipped with the communication skills necessary for success in the workforce.

Currently, many educators prioritize student-centered teaching, where students are the focus and actively engage in the learning process. Teacher Talking Time (TTT) is minimized, with the teacher taking on the role of a facilitator in the classroom (Gulo et al., 2023). This approach aims to help students practice their communication skills and build the self-confidence needed to effectively express their ideas and opinions. It also aligns with the university's emphasis on active learning methods. In addition to traditional lectures, it is essential for students to connect with their learning through critical thinking, discussions, research, and creative activities. Many courses require oral presentations to evaluate students' communication skills. To successfully pass a course, each student must complete at least one project per semester. Some of the common activities in foreign language classes include discussions, debates, pair work, group work, oral presentations, and role-playing.

According to Nowreyah, Muneera, and Hanan (2015), with the advancement of technology in today's society, the ability to deliver oral presentations remains a significant advantage in higher education and future careers. While language proficiency has traditionally been assessed through writing, this approach has evolved with current developments; now, proficiency in foreign languages is often evaluated through oral presentations.

## **Oral presentation**

Oral presentation is the act of delivering prepared information within a set time frame. Delivering an oral presentation requires speaking in front of an audience, whether a large or small group. Oral presentations are usually conducted in groups, in pairs or individually. The students are given a theme, must find materials, and prepare their presentations using PowerPoint or other tools such as posters

and graphs. In today's digital age, technology plays a significant role in enhancing oral presentations. Students can use tools like PowerPoint to create visually appealing slides, or they can incorporate videos and interactive elements to make their presentations more engaging. Unlike speech competitions, an oral presentation's primary goal is not to win but to effectively communicate the information. It is often accompanied by audiovisual tools such as Microsoft PowerPoint or posters, which help visually reinforce the spoken information (Munby, 2011).

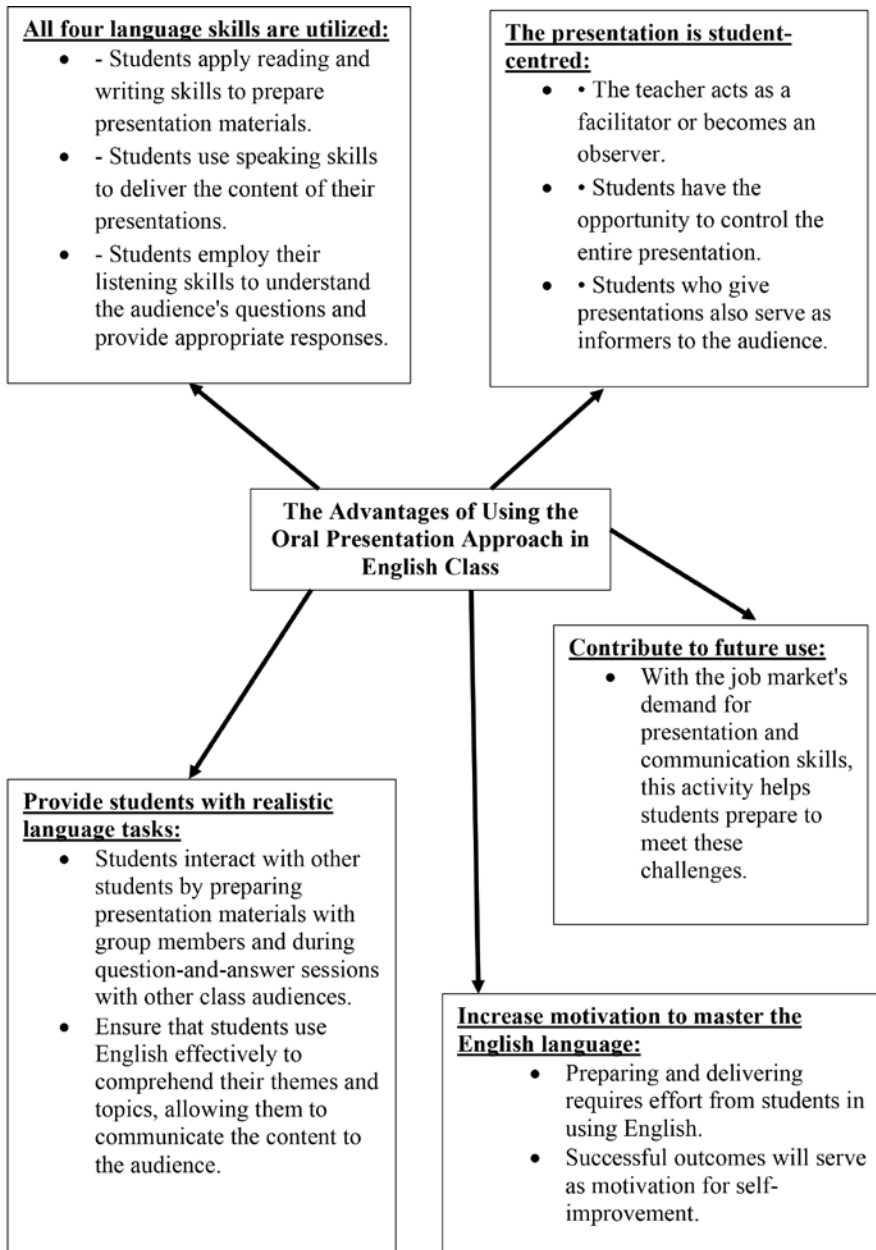
Many students feel unprepared for giving presentations due to their limited experience in speaking English. The lack of regular practice in oral communication contributes to feelings of awkwardness, shyness, and nervousness when presenting in front of larger audiences (Brooks & Wilson, 2014). This highlights the urgent need for improved communication training. Students often experience stress during oral presentations, worrying about making mistakes and facing criticism (Adam, 2020).

According to a study by Brooks and Wilson (2014), most Japanese secondary school students did not have the opportunity to practice speaking English. At that time, teachers focused on preparing students for entrance exams, emphasising mastery of vocabulary and grammar rules. Additionally, large class sizes limited the opportunity for oral communication activities in English. Nowadays, there is a greater emphasis on students' verbal communication skills in English. The new curriculum has embraced many elements of oral communication, and significant changes have occurred at the school level, including the introduction of Assistant Language Teachers (ALTs). These ALTs, foreign teachers who support English classes, are crucial in providing students with direct exposure to native English speakers. Their presence fosters students' desire to communicate in English, encouraging and motivating them to improve their verbal communication skills.

When comes to the university setting, students are encouraged to take an active role in their education, embracing the principles of student-centered learning. The oral presentation approach is a widely used technique in active learning that allows students to take control of preparing their presentation materials. They organize their ideas and present the results of their research while engaging in a question-and-answer session with the audience. This approach not only allows students to actively engage in acquiring knowledge but also fosters the development of essential skills.

Being able to conduct presentations in English can give students a significant advantage in their careers, providing a competitive edge and fostering ambition for professional growth. In English language classes, regular oral presentations provide a platform for students to overcome nervousness and improve their communication abilities in the target language. This method effectively helps students master essential language skills, including reading, writing, listening, and speaking. Students can better prepare for the workforce through consistent training and opportunities to present publicly, where strong oral communication and presentation skills are crucial.

Brooks and Wilson (2014) in their study have explained the benefits of using oral presentation in English classes; the following is a summary of the benefits of oral presentation presented;



In the previous study by Munby (2011), the importance of using oral presentations in foreign language classes is significant because they enhance overall student skills;

- a) It develops English-speaking skills because it provides students with the opportunity to practise using the language to speak and to enhance their abilities progressively.
- b) It promotes student autonomy and empowerment by providing opportunities for students to control their preparation of presentation materials both verbally and visually, which can boost their self-confidence. M. Suliman (2022) supports this, arguing that oral presentations enhance students' language skills and independence.
- c) It recognizes individual differences and multiple intelligences. Oral presentations allow for measuring each student's abilities and identifying their strengths.
- d) It also measures a student's performance over a semester. Students' presentation skills, organization, and preparation, are evaluated in real time.

According to a previous study by M. Suliman (2022), the oral presentation approach can increase student motivation. Students are allowed to practice their language skills and explain or teach their classmates about something. When this activity is well-controlled, students can see the results of their successful work, which fosters a sense of accomplishment and further increases their motivation. This, in turn, boosts their self-confidence, self-esteem, and autonomy. The autonomy they gain in preparing material for presentation, whether independently or in a group, empowers them and gives them a sense of control over their learning. Oral presentations can foster student autonomy by encouraging them to develop their own learning identities, and it's crucial to respect and support their choices in this process (M. Suliman, 2022).

### **Observation: Challenges Associated with the Use of the Presentation Approach at Beginner Levels**

Feeling nervous when speaking in front of a large audience is a common experience, and this anxiety can increase when using a foreign language. For language learners, presenting in another language poses a unique challenge. Numerous studies indicate that anxiety related to using a foreign language significantly impacts students' performance during oral presentations. This experience is shared among both undergraduate and graduate students, as highlighted by Nowreya, Muneera, and Hanan (2015). Adam's (2020) study on the development of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) speaking performance in Japan emphasizes the strong influence of Japanese culture. Japanese students often face challenges with oral fluency due to cognitive, linguistic, and emotional factors. They display varying levels of vocal behavior and may choose to remain silent—an inclination deeply rooted in their cultural background, which encompasses societal norms, communication styles, and language use patterns.

This behavior can vary based on language proficiency. For beginner-level students, delivering a presentation can be particularly complex and challenging. Adam (2020) notes that in a classroom with both advanced and beginner groups, the advanced group tends to set the pace for learning. In contrast, beginner students may opt for silence due to the stress of speaking in front of others. This stress is a significant psychological factor that can either motivate or hinder an individual's actions.

This observation note is a collaborative effort aimed at identifying effective strategies to reduce

foreign language anxiety among students. The group consists of four students with elementary English proficiency, making them a significant observation cohort for this study. During the most recent fall semester of 2024, this communication class identified the following obstacles related to the presentation approach:

**Students do not have the experience to give a presentation.**

- In recent years, high school graduates have developed relatively good computer skills, and they do not feel awkward using computer applications such as Microsoft PowerPoint to prepare presentation materials.
- However, the majority of students do not have sufficient experience or training in giving presentations at the university teaching level.
- This lack of experience is often evident in the nervousness and presentation style of students, who may resort to reading notes and avoiding eye contact. Understanding the impact of this nervousness on their performance is crucial for educators and administrators.
- The entire presentation time allocated was used to read long notes while showing their prepared presentation slides. This not only limits the amount of information they can convey but also makes the presentation less engaging for the audience.

**Students are not familiar with the use of English.**

- The students in this observation class face challenges in using English effectively. Their proficiency levels are relatively low due to a lack of language practice opportunities.
- Additionally, it is understandable that they have not yet had the experience of delivering a speech in front of fluent English speakers.
- To support their growth in this area, creating more opportunities for practice and engagement in English-speaking environments would be beneficial.

**Students lack a sufficient level of English to deliver a speech effectively.**

- Their pronunciation of words is also weak and requires more frequent reinforcement.
- The use of language in preparing presentation scripts is notably inadequate.
- When encountering unfamiliar words, students tend to stop reading their scripts and often rely on the teacher for assistance with pronunciation.
- Teaching phonology presents a significant challenge for EFL (English as a Foreign Language) educators. This is because English does not belong to the phonetic language group; in English, the pronunciation of words often does not align with their spelling. Furthermore, words that share the same spelling can sometimes have different pronunciations (Adam, 2020).

**Students struggle to create effective presentation materials (PPT).**

- While students are familiar with using PowerPoint, the slides they produce often contain numerous mistakes and fail to meet standards.
- This indicates a lack of training in developing quality presentation materials.

**Many students feel nervous when it comes to communicating in public.**

- Poor body language, such as hiding behind a monitor or using a large A4 paper to cover their face, is common when someone feels shy and uncertain about themselves.
- If this behavior continues, it can lead to severe anxiety and further diminish a person's self-confidence.

**Students are unprepared to answer questions from the teacher or other students.**

- When a question is asked, students cannot respond effectively because the presentation materials were not adequately prepared.

**Lack of two-way communication from listeners.**

- During question-and-answer sessions, audience members rarely ask questions, suggesting that the explanation may not have been well understood.

**Using the first language for communication.**

- Students tend to use Japanese when required to give further explanations or when required to answer questions from the teacher.
- Students often use their first language to communicate with classmates, and when the teacher also uses the first language, students feel more comfortable engaging in that language (Adam, 2020).

**Using a smart phone to read presentation notes**

- Many students use smart phones to read presentation notes from the beginning to the end of their presentation.

The previous observation concluded that the presentation approach used in the communication English class was unsuccessful in meeting the teaching goal of improving students' accuracy in English. Instead, due to the lack of preparation and other variables, this method appears to heighten students' anxiety levels regarding foreign language use.

**Suggestion: Applying the PREP Framework to Presentation Approach**

The PREP framework is an effective tool to teach students how to structure their ideas and opinions. Despite being a simple four-step process, the framework benefits students learning English as a second language.

The following is a summary of the PREP framework from the previous study, Overcoming Foreign Language: Part 2, (2024).

### The PREP framework;



<p>Step 1: Point</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Answering the question "What"</li> <li>• Say what you think</li> <li>• For example, point of an idea, point of view, proposition, claim, suggestion, decision, feeling, stance, statement and others</li> </ul>	<p>Step 3: Example / Illustration</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reinforce by presenting examples, experience, knowledge or facts, data, statistics</li> <li>• Can also involve imagination or assumptions</li> </ul>
<p>Step 2: Reason</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Answering the "Why" question</li> <li>• • Say why you think so</li> <li>• • For example, giving reasons or reasons why the stance/decision/view or statement was made</li> </ul>	<p>Step 4: Point</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• State the main point (position/decision/thought) again as a conclusion</li> </ul>

This study aims to measure the effectiveness of using the PREP framework for presentation preparation to overcome students' difficulties in preparing and delivering presentations in English. In the introduction process, students are introduced to the PREP framework, a simple technique to convey thoughts, views, and ideas and to respond. However, unlike previous studies on the Impromptu Speech approach, which requires a quick and immediate response,

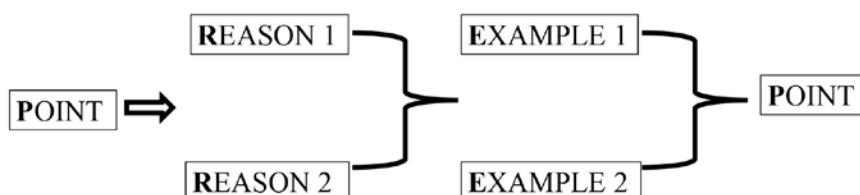
The presentation approach allows students a certain period to prepare the explanation outline or content better. The explanation (E) in the presentation is also different from that in the Impromptu Speech, where the outline of the responses tends to be shorter.



For the presentation approach, the PREP framework is expanded from the basic.

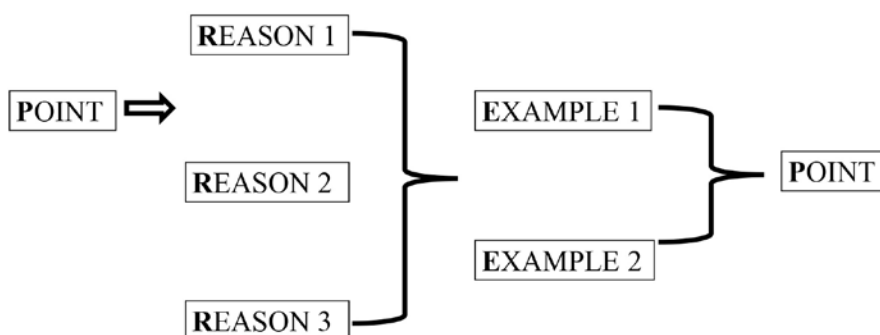


To the extensive form as follows,



For the PREP framework in its extensive form, students are required to provide multiple explanations for their reasons and to give more than one example for each point. With sufficient preparation time, students are expected to create their presentation scripts independently.

The PREP framework is a flexible tool that can be adapted based on the significance of each point. Below are examples of other framework designs:



### The Preparation

This study suggests using the PREP framework to assist students in drafting their oral presentation scripts. The lecture should be divided into two main parts: preparation and application. Initially, the focus should be on helping students prepare their scripts with the PREP framework. In the second stage, students will present their work. This approach can support students who find it challenging to use English during presentations. Student-driven themes or topics, student input into the preparation of materials, opportunities to solve problems can increase students' willingness to communicate in class (Stojchevska & Popovikj, 2019).

According to the findings from the study by Gürbüz and Cabaroğlu (2021), the success of oral presentations largely depends on providing students with basic and preliminary instructions. This preparation not only equips students for their presentations but also helps to reduce anxiety and nervousness. This highlights the crucial role of language teachers in guiding their students through the preparation process, which requires patience and a thoughtful approach. Although preparing students may take time, it is essential to allow them to plan effectively for their oral presentations. Therefore, administrators and teachers should allocate sufficient class time for these presentations to achieve better outcomes and alleviate speaking anxiety (Gürbüz & Cabaroğlu, 2021).

Fluency is the primary objective in teaching speaking, and it evaluates an individual's proficiency in a foreign language (Adam, 2020). Students should be introduced to micro-skills and macro-skills before they take the presentation stage. Students may become insecure about their abilities if this preparation is ineffective (Brooks & Wilson, 2014). Research indicates that micro-skills include essential language components, such as vocabulary and grammar, which are crucial for a successful oral presentation. When students master these micro-skills, they enhance their presentation abilities and improve their communication skills for future interactions. According to Brooks and Wilson (2014), when students perceive that the knowledge gained through lectures applies to their future, such as in a workplace setting, they become more motivated to prepare and practice for their presentations. Students should also learn more subjective presentation skills, including gestures, body language, and effective use of presentation tools. A study by Nowreya, Muneera, and Hanan (2015), which aimed to explore students' perceptions of oral presentations through 3 aspects, namely personal traits, presentation skills and the effect of audience and instructor, found that students' anxiety, lack of preparation, and presentation skills significantly affect their oral presentation performance. The study revealed that students' concerns about making mistakes, being evaluated, and the instructor's presence are notably high. As educators, it's crucial to address these issues and help students overcome their fears. While students perceive personal traits as the main obstacle to delivering a good presentation, instructors see a lack of presentation skills as the primary reason for students' subpar performance, highlighting their crucial role in students' success.

## **Conclusion**

Giving an oral presentation can be intimidating and may heighten anxiety levels. Speaking in front of a large audience requires a great deal of self-confidence and mastery of the language used for communication. Nevertheless, oral presentations are crucial for assessing a person's proficiency in a foreign language and are also significant in the workplace. The ability to speak multiple languages, communicate effectively, and deliver a compelling oral presentation can enhance a graduate's value in the job market. These skills not only help individuals succeed but also contribute to their ongoing advancement in their chosen fields. The continuation of this collaborative study on overcoming foreign language anxiety seeks to see the effectiveness of the PREP framework on oral presentations, a common source of fear for undergraduate foreign language students. The observation results highlight the

importance of preparation in helping students develop a solid foundation before giving oral presentations with confidence. This paper outlines the design of the PREP framework, which has been adapted from the basic design for writing presentation scripts. The study will continue in the upcoming year of 2025 and will implement the PREP framework proposed in this paper to foreign language students at the preparatory level. The process and results of the study will be discussed in the following paper, Overcoming Foreign Language Anxiety, Part 4.

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