

About teaching this skill

Giving a presentation in a foreign language requires linguistic confidence. This enables the speaker to concentrate fully on the content of the presentation, which entails proper **preparation**, **structure** and **delivery**.

Preparation

- a Consider the audience. A real business presentation succeeds when it is given by a well-prepared and committed presenter to an interested audience, i.e. one that wants or needs to hear it. In the classroom presenters either choose their own subject or have it imposed on them, which is no bad thing, as in real life it is more likely that the audience's requirements will dictate the topic of the presentation.
- b Choose appropriate ways of giving key information, e.g. visuals that can easily be copied or hand-outs.
- c A presenter whose English is very weak may need to use a complete script. However, having headings and brief notes on cards as a reminder prevents a monotonous delivery and helps the presenter to focus on the audience. Progressing from reading aloud to expanding notes into full sentences is a threshold language skill which students should be trained in and encouraged to attempt. See *Presenting a product* on page 158.
- d Rehearse, especially the introduction.
- e Master the technology. When using slides, OHP, cassette recorder, computer projector, film or full multi-media show, the presenter should check all equipment beforehand and be confident in its use. It is a good idea to have a back-up available, such as a hand-out or flipchart.

Structure

A logical structure for a presentation would be:

- a Introduction. Thank the audience for attending. Tell them the subject of the presentation, summarise what they are going to learn and tell them how long it will take and what, if anything, they should do at the end. Tell them whether questions will be taken as they arise or only at the end. The introduction should be learned by heart.
- b Reason for the presentation. This is often the statement of a problem.
- c Overview of possible solutions. If the presentation outlines a problem, the presenter should suggest ways of resolving it. If there are alternatives it may be appropriate to show a preference, which should always be supported by facts.
- d Summary. An often-quoted rule is 'Tell them what you're going to say, say it, then tell them what you've just said.' The conclusion should briefly summarise the arguments, reinforcing the main points, thank the audience for their attention and invite questions.

Delivery

- a Speak clearly as if talking to someone at the back of the room. Pausing at key points, or repeating them, will help avoid the message being misunderstood.
- b Be aware of intonation. Native speakers of languages with flat intonation, e.g. Finnish, need to work on sounding enthusiastic. Where to **pause** in the sentence and which words in the sentence to **stress** are two key techniques that can easily be practised.
- c Maintain eye contact with the audience. This will keep their attention and let many language problems pass unnoticed. This is why the OHP is such a useful tool. Avoid talking to the whiteboard or flipchart, or looking down continually at notes.

Assessing a presentation

This involves assessing the delivery as well as the language of the presenter, because:

- a body language and behaviour are inextricably linked with spoken language;
- b confidence with the material and equipment allows better concentration on the performance.

What to assess

These aspects of a presentation should be assessed separately:

| | |
|---|---------------------------|
| Preparation (facts, materials, performance) | Eye contact |
| Clarity of structure | Use of visual aids |
| Pace and fluency | Pronunciation and clarity |
| Intonation | Simplicity of language |
| | Mastery of technical aids |

How to assess

Use assessment forms with a selection of these headings (i.e. those which address the needs of the class), to be used by everyone attending the presentation. An example is given opposite. Students should complete the simple grid and include at least one tip for future improvement.

Useful language for presenters

Starting

Thank you for coming to listen to me this morning, ladies and gentlemen.

In this talk I hope that I'll be able to convince you that...

First, I'm going to deal with...

Then I'll be talking about... That will take about...

After that I'll be happy to answer your questions on...

Sequencing

That's all I have to say about... Now I'll move on to...

So much for... Now I'd like to deal with...

Referring to visuals

As you can see here...

I'd like to draw your attention to these figures, which show...

You'll find the details on page... of the handout/on handout A.

Summarising

We looked at... followed by...

Then I explained the importance of...

Concluding

Thank you for being so attentive.

And now, if anyone has any questions...

Thank you once again for giving up your time.

Language of group presentations

The group should have a Chair, who is responsible for introducing the group and what each member will talk about. During the presentation members should take care to hand over to each other properly:

First, I will say a little about the background... Then Jim will... and finally Anita will...

Now I'd like to hand you over to Jim, who will be talking about/dealing with...

Thank you, Jim. Jim has just told you about... Now it's my task to...

Assessing a presentation

Did the presenter achieve his/her stated aims?

Yes

☐

No

☐

Did you learn what you expected to learn?

Yes

☐

No

☐

From where?

What (s)he
said

☐

Hand-out
flip-chart

☐

OHP

☐

Did the presenter hold your attention

Yes

☐

No

☐

How?

Interesting
content

☐

Clear
explanation

☐

(S)he showed
commitment

☐

Write down any language mistakes you noticed.

Give at least one constructive tip to help the
presenter improve his/her performance

Language Checklist

The introduction to a presentation

Greeting

Good morning / afternoon ladies and gentlemen.

(Ladies and) Gentlemen ...

Subject

I plan to say a few words about ...

I'm going to talk about ...

The subject of my talk is ...

The theme of my presentation is ...

I'd like to give you an overview of ...

Structure

I've divided my talk into (three) parts.

My talk will be in (three) parts.

I'm going to divide ...

First ...

Second ...

Third ...

In the first part ...

Then in the second part ...

Finally ...

Timing

My talk will take about ten minutes.

The presentation will take about two hours ...

but there'll be a twenty minute break in the middle. We'll stop for lunch at 12 o'clock.

Policy on questions / discussion

Please interrupt if you have any questions.

After my talk there'll be time for a discussion and any questions.

Skills Checklist

Effective presentations – planning and preparation

Audience

- expectations
- technical knowledge
- size
- questions and / or discussion

Speaker's competence

- knowledge
- presentation technique

Content

- what to include
- length / depth (technical detail)
- number of key ideas

Structure

- sequence
 - beginning, middle, end
- repetition, summarising

Delivery

- style
 - formal / informal
 - enthusiasm / confidence
- voice
 - variety / speed
 - pauses
- body language
 - eye contact
 - gesture / movement
 - posture

Visual aids

- type / design / clarity
- relevance

Practice

- tape recorder
- script or notes

Room

- size / seating
- equipment (does it work?)
- sound quality

Language

- simple / clear
- spelling
- sentence length
- structure signals

Language Checklist

Using visuals

Types of visual support

- visual (n.)
- film / video
- picture
- diagram
- chart
- pie chart
 - segment
- table graph
 - x axis / horizontal axis
 - y axis / vertical axis
 - left hand / right hand axis
- line graph
 - solid line
 - dotted line
 - broken line

Equipment

- (slide) projector
 - slides (Br. Eng.)
 - diapositives (Am. Eng.)

overhead projector (OHP)

- transparency (Br. Eng.)
- slide (Am. Eng.)
- flip chart
- whiteboard
- metaplan board

Introducing a visual

- I'd like to show you ...
- Have a look at this ...
- This (graph) shows / represents ...
- Here we can see ...
- Let's look at this ...
- Here you see the trend in ...

Comparisons

- This compares x with y
- Let's compare the ...
- Here you see a comparison between ...

Describing trends

| | | | |
|--------------------|-----------------|----------------------|-----------------|
| to go up | | to go down | |
| to increase | an increase | to decrease | a decrease |
| to rise | a rise | to fall | a fall |
| to climb | a climb | to decline | a decline |
| to improve | an improvement | to deteriorate | a deterioration |
| to recover | a recovery | to get worse | a downturn |
| to get better | an upturn | | |
| to level out | a levelling out | | |
| to stabilise | | | |
| to stay the same | | | |
| to reach a peak | a peak | to reach a low point | |
| to reach a maximum | | to hit bottom | a trough |
| to peak | | | |
| to undulate | an undulation | | |
| to fluctuate | a fluctuation | | |

Describing the speed of change

| | | | |
|---------------|-----------------|--------------------|---------------|
| a dramatic | | | dramatically |
| a marked | | | markedly |
| a significant | increase / fall | to increase / fall | slightly |
| a slight | | | significantly |

Skills Checklist

Using visual supports

Visuals must be:

- well prepared
- well chosen
- clear

Available media

Use media which suit the room and audience size.

- overhead projector (OHP)
 - transparencies / OHTs / slides (Am. Eng.)
- slide projector
 - slides / diapositives (Am. Eng.)
- video / computer graphics / flip chart / whiteboard

Use of visual aids

Combination of OHP and flip chart with pens often good.

First visual should give the title of talk.

Second should show structure of talk – main headings.

Keep text to minimum – never just read text from visuals.

Do not use too many visuals – guide is one per minute.

Use pauses – give audience time to comprehend picture.

Never show a visual until you want to talk about it.

Remove visual once finished talking about it.

Switch off equipment not in use.

Use of colour

For slides, white writing on blue / green is good. Use different colours if colour improves clarity of message (e.g. pie charts).

Use appropriate colour combinations: yellow and pink are weak colours on white backgrounds.

Use of room and machinery

Check equipment in advance.

Check organisation of room, equipment, seating, microphones, etc.

Use a pointer on the screen (not your hand).

Have a good supply of pens.

Check order of your slides / OHTs, etc.

You in relation to your audience

Decide appropriate level of formality, dress accordingly.

Keep eye contact at least 80% of the time.

Use available space.

Move around, unless restricted by a podium.

Use gesture.

Language Checklist

Structure (2) The main body

Signalling different parts in a presentation:

Ending the introduction

So that concludes the introduction.

That's all for the introduction.

Beginning the main body

Now let's move to the first part of my talk,
which is about ...

So, first ... To begin with ...

Listing

There are three things to consider. First ...

Second ... Third ...

There are two kinds of ... The first is ... The
second is ...

We can see four advantages and two
disadvantages. First, advantages.

One is ... Another is ... A third advantage is
... Finally ...

On the other hand, the two disadvantages.

First ... Second ...

Linking: Ending parts within the main body

That completes / concludes ...

That's all (I want to say for now) on ...

Linking: Beginning a new part

Let's move to (the next part which is) ...

So now we come to ...

Now I want to describe ...

Sequencing

There are (seven) different stages to the
process

First / then / next / after that / then (x) /
after x there's y, last ...

There are two steps involved.

The first step is ... The second step is ...

There are four stages to the project.

At the beginning, later, then, finally ...

I'll describe the development of the idea.

First the background, then the present
situation, and then the prospects for the
future.

Skills Checklist

Structure (2) The main body

Organisation of presentation

- Logical progression of ideas and/or parts of presentation.
- Clear development.
- Sequential description of processes.
- Chronological order of events,
i.e. background present future.

Topic

| Main parts | Sections | Subsections |
|------------|----------|-------------|
| A | i | a. |
| | | b. |
| | ii. | |
| B | i. | a. |
| | | b. |
| | ii. | |
| C | iii. | a. |
| | | b. |
| | | c. |
| C | i. | a. |
| | | b. |
| | ii. | |

Internal structure of the main body of a complex presentation

Signalling the structure

- Use listing techniques.
- Link different parts.
- Use sequencing language.

Signalling the structure ...

- makes the organisation of the talk clear
- helps the audience to follow
- helps you to follow the development of your talk.

Language Checklist

The end of the presentation

Ending the main body of the presentation

Right, that ends (the third part of) my talk.

That's all I want to say for now on ...

Beginning the summary and/or conclusion

I'd like to end by emphasising the main point(s).

I'd like to finish with ...

- a summary of the main points.
- some observations based on what I've said.
- some conclusions / recommendations.
- a brief conclusion.

Concluding

There are two conclusions / recommendations.

What we need is ...

I think we have to ...

I think we have seen that we should ...

Inviting questions and/or introducing discussion

That concludes (the formal part of) my talk.

(Thanks for listening) ... Now I'd like to invite your comments.

Now we have (half an hour) for questions and discussion.

Right. Now, any questions or comments?

So, now I'd be very interested to hear your comments.

Handling questions

Understood but difficult or impossible to answer

That's a difficult question to answer in a few words.

- It could be ...
- In my experience ...
- I would say ...
- I don't think I'm the right person to answer that. Perhaps (Mr Holmes) can help ...
- I don't have much experience in that field ...

Understood but irrelevant or impossible to answer in the time available

I'm afraid that's outside the scope of my talk / this session. If I were you I'd discuss that with ...

I'll have to come to that later, perhaps during the break as we're short of time.

Not understood

Sorry, I'm not sure I've understood. Could you repeat?

Are you asking if ... ?

Do you mean ... ?

I didn't catch (the last part of) your question.

If I have understood you correctly, you mean ... ? Is that right?

Checking that your answer is sufficient

Does that answer your question?

Is that okay?

Skills Checklist

Structure (3) Ending the presentation

A summary

- Restates main point(s).
- Restates what the audience must understand and remember.
- Contains no new information.
- Is short.

A conclusion

- States the logical consequences of what has been said.
- Often contains recommendations.
- May contain new and important information.
- Is short.

Questions

- Inviting questions implies that the audience are less expert than the speaker.
- Beware of the 'nightmare scenario' – total silence! Have one or two prepared questions to ask the audience.
- Keep control of the meeting.

Discussion

- Inviting discussion gives the impression that the audience have useful experience, so is often more 'diplomatic'.
- You still need to control the discussion.

Inviting discussion and questions

- Often the best solution.
- Keep control, limit long contributions, watch the time.

Handling questions

- Listen very carefully.
- Ask for repetition or clarification if necessary.
- Paraphrase the question to check you understand it.
- Give yourself time to think – perhaps by paraphrasing the question.
- Check that the question is relevant. If not, don't answer if you don't want to.
- Refer questioner to another person if you can't answer.
- Suggest you'll answer a question later if you prefer.
- Check that the questioner is happy with your answer: eye contact and a pause is often sufficient.
- Keep control.
- Don't allow one or two people to dominate.
- Be polite.
- Signal when time is running out – 'Time for one last question'.
- At the end, thank the audience.