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# 研究生学术 英语口语教程

Oral Presentations  
for Academic Purposes



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## Preface

This book, the result of many years of teaching experience and research, is intended to be a guide for anyone wishing to give an oral presentation in academic settings or to speak in public to fellow students, colleagues or other interested groups.

The book provides the essential elements and some tips on preparing and organizing a successful oral presentation in English.

It contains plenty of sample manuscripts (sample audio and visual materials can be downloaded at [www.njupco.com](http://www.njupco.com)), conversation scripts, and sample mock seminars created by Ph.D. students during the 14 years I have taught. I would like to express my sincere thanks to them all and wish them success in every aspect of their lives.

In return, we would ask you the reader and practitioner to send any comments, corrections or questions for this book to [shigulu@126.com](mailto:shigulu@126.com).

This textbook is divided into several units, each one based on a particular point which is important to think about while preparing for and giving an oral presentation. The first unit deals with preparation and planning, the most important stage. The second, third, fourth and fifth one address the structure of the speech and necessary language. The sixth addresses the delivery of oral presentation. It also deals with body language used in the presentation. The seventh speaks about the use of visual aids and how to make the best use of them in the presentation. The eighth unit concerns use of citations and avoiding plagiarism in oral presentations. The ninth addresses speech anxiety. The final one, Unit 10, discusses assessment criteria for oral presentations.

Remember, however, that there are probably several formulae for giving oral presentations in different fields. This is just one.

It is a privilege to recognize the numbers of professors and colleagues, who so generously made it possible for me to begin, proceed with and finish the writing of this textbook.

My sincerest thanks go to Prof. Cong who led the teaching group of Ph.D. students in Nanjing University. She is also one of the few textbook compilers of academic communication for Ph.D. students in China. It is through her constant encouragement and support that I started writing about making effective presentations.

My gratitude also goes to Ms. Dong Ying, the editor of Nanjing University Press, who encouraged and supported me constantly in making this textbook a possible mission.

My heartfelt thanks go to Dr. Nancy Pine at Mount St. Mary's College, Los Angeles, the United States, for her careful reading and editing of the draft during the last summer vacation. Her own rich experiences in academic meetings have also inspired many chapters of this book.

Yang Jin

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Born public speakers do not exist. Yet business, social and personal success depends heavily on a person's ability to communicate. (*Dale Carnegie*)

Remember that through preparation and practice anyone can give a good presentation.



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## How do we make oral presentations?

### *In the academic world*

One important aspect of any research project is dissemination of the findings of that research.

How do we do this?

Oral presentations are a key

part of the academic world.

Oral presentations are given at conferences or seminars, symposiums, or meetings in

the academic world. They are given by scientists. Your presentation must address the other

scientists in the field. It must be original and relevant to them. It must present the

results of your research in a clear and concise way. It must be well organized and

easy to understand. It must be interesting and engaging. It must be well

planned and rehearsed. It must be delivered with confidence and

clarity. It must be a good example of your research and your communication

skills. It must be a good example of your ability to communicate in a professional

setting. It must be a good example of your ability to communicate in a public

setting. It must be a good example of your ability to communicate in a

professional setting. It must be a good example of your ability to communicate

in a professional setting. It must be a good example of your ability to communicate

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# Preparation and Planning



### *In the business world*

Nowadays the importance of doing oral presentations is not only realized in the academic world, but also in a student's future professional life.

When referring to oral presentation skills, Cohen and Jasser (2000) start their article by





## 1.1 Why should we make oral presentations?



### *In the academic world*

An essential aspect of any research project is dissemination of the findings from the study.

This is usually accomplished by publishing the results in a journal article, book, or by giving an oral or poster presentation.

The most common and most rapid way to disseminate new findings is to give a good oral or poster presentation! Like scientific papers, oral presentations at conferences or seminars, symposiums, or meetings are for sharing your research work with other scientists. Your presentation must convince the other scientists that the research is significant, valid and relevant to them. Like papers, the presentations must report the motivation and outcome of the research and include ample evidence to establish the validity of the outcome.

On the other hand, presentations are different from research papers in many ways. For example, presentations have a more focused audience that comes to listen with a more specific purpose. Audiences are more likely to interact with presenters. As a result, presentations have a much different language style than that of research papers. In addition, oral presentations involve more complicated interaction, including speech production and non-verbal communication.

Yet much less attention is paid to teaching those skills necessary to develop a good oral or poster presentation although writing a good journal article is on the curricula of many graduate courses.

As it is described by some educators, much education for Chinese students has been in Mandarin Chinese, which is also the official language used outside the classroom. For many of them, exposure to English has been relatively limited. As a result, they feel uncomfortable and uneasy when speaking English in front of their peers, let alone making presentations in international academic settings. After graduation, when they step into the professional world, they are surprised to find that their employers are highly critical of their communication competence.

### *In the business world*

Nowadays the importance of doing oral presentations is not only realized in the academic world, but also in a student's future professional life.

When referring to oral presentation skills, Cohen and Jensen (2000) start their article by



saying, “It’s on every job description that’s ever been written by a biotechnology company: ‘Candidate must have excellent oral and written communication skills’” [italicized by writers]. They continue by stating that “the value of presentation [italicized by writers] skills is oftentimes overlooked” (Para. 1). Cohen and Jensen consider oral presentation skills “one of the best ‘career enhancers’ that ... [one] can add to ... [one’s] collection of marketable qualities” (Para. 3).

The skill of making oral presentations is critical for personal and career advancement. For example, in business situations a working professional may often be required to make one during a company or department meeting. One of the most common cases is when your boss assigns you a certain project or task which you need to explain to the department or even the entire organization. This requires a clear presentation to briefly convey relevant requirements, plans and concerns. Sometimes, you may be asked to present to the company management business reviews monthly, quarterly, or annually.

Usually in a sales or marketing company, business review presentations report the total sales of the employees for the given period. Also, you may have to do a presentation if you want to make a proposal or new plans for product promotions.

Even in the job-interview process, some organizations require the applicant to do a demo for a specific position. The demo will serve as an assessment tool for the organization to decide whether or not to hire the applicant.

As a matter of fact, it is widely acknowledged that skills needed to be learned in oral presentations can also be used in a variety of other settings, such as preparing a seminar in graduate school, preparing talks for international conferences, or organizing a dissertation defense. They can also be applied in conducting a job interview, product launchings, project application defense, selling products and services, and so on.

In the business world, there are already many books dealing with oral presentation skills. However, it is often found that these are geared toward native speakers. Public speaking manuals can provide some basic guidelines, but we feel that we need to focus on the needs of students in China.

The very purpose of a presentation, no matter whether in academia or in the business world, is to talk the audience into agreeing with its message. This comes directly from your own efforts and skills.

## 1.2 A piece of advice from an experienced scholar

Professionals need to know the importance of making a good presentation. Basically, you should make use of the opportunity it gives you to demonstrate that you are a mature



professional. It is not easy to be speaking before a group of professionals. This also explains why presentation skills are important.

Making presentations should not be regarded as an obligation; it is a talent and a skill. You can carry the skill with you in whatever career path you take and it is one of the skills that will take you one step up the ladder of success in your career.

However, let's first hear a piece of advice from an experienced scholar.

Dr. Liu Chao is a well-known doctor of endocrinology as well as a professor in Nanjing Medical University. As an experienced researcher, he completely understands the importance of making oral presentations. However, once he attended a presentation that he found quite disappointing, and he noted down his feelings in his Sinablog. Read the following talk given by him and think about the questions that follow.

#### 演讲要对听众负责!

周一下午,医院专门为医院职能部门领导、科室主任与护士长举办了一场原本很受欢迎的讲座,因为其名称为“医院中层干部的执行力”。

但是,一个小时的讲座结束后,大家基本上都是很失望的反应。原因并不在于所讲授的内容,而在于演讲者的态度与水平。首先,演讲者没有了解我们这样的医院中层干部所具有的基本功,在他眼里,我们是什么都不懂的门外汉,所以,他结束的时候讲:这只是一次“启蒙课”。

再者,演讲者作为香港 Ailibi 医院管理研究中心的主任,其做幻灯的技巧实在不敢恭维,就是最简单的标点的半角与全角等小毛病也是处处可见。

第三,演讲者的演讲水平也让人失望透顶,他不断强调时间短暂,但作为一个著名的管理公司的领袖式人物,在演讲时,完全应该根据演讲的时间去整理与准备幻灯的张数、幻灯内容的排列等,而这位先生竟然把幻灯排列得乱七八糟,整个演讲显得一点逻辑都没有,让听众在云里雾里浪费了宝贵的一个多小时!

一个演讲者,无论在什么样的环境下,无论你的听众是谁,都应该很认真地对待演讲的内容与将要面临的听众,不认真准备而匆忙走上讲台,其实也是对别人的不负责,是对自己高尚工作的亵渎。

(Source: [http://blog.sina.com.cn/s/blog\\_4aff6f4601000cyc.html](http://blog.sina.com.cn/s/blog_4aff6f4601000cyc.html))



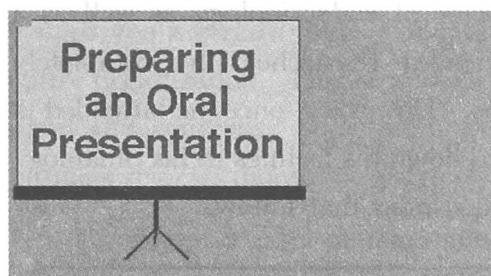
#### Discuss

1. What do you think an effective presentation should be like?
2. What are some of the criticisms Dr. Liu made about the talk he listened to?
3. What do you think are the responsibility of a speaker to his audience and to his research work?
4. What do you think of the advice given by Dr. Liu?



5. Think of one recent presentation you have attended. What are some of the merits of that presentation? Was there any room for improvement? What are some of the shortcomings that needed to be corrected?
6. Think about the past presentations you have made. Is there any room for improvement?

### 1.3 Essential elements you should consider before preparing a presentation



Mark Twain once observed that, “it usually takes me more than 3 weeks to prepare a good impromptu speech.” You need to plan carefully and prepare your oral presentation whenever you are asked to speak. Time invested in planning will pay off as you develop, rehearse and finally deliver a speech.

First, a student in the academic setting needs to understand that scientific papers differ from oral presentations in at least three ways:

- presentations are more limited in space and time;
- presentations impose a different prosodic and thus pragmatic feature to the audience; and
- presentations normally incorporate a certain level of interaction between the presenter and the audience.

These three differences affect the selection of a presentation’s content. Unless they are recorded or broadcast, presentations have a more clearly defined audience than papers: They are addressed to the people in the conference room right there at the moment of the conference. The audience are more homogeneous than those of the papers. Papers can be forwarded in unpredictable ways and may be read many years from now, so they should be lasting and largely self-contained. In contrast, presentations can have more specific purposes. For example, a presentation at a conference normally aims to present recent advances, whereas a presentation at a Ph. D. symposium aims to inform other Ph. D. students (in other fields) of one student’s line of research.

Given these differences between a scientific paper and an on-the-spot presentation, an effective one must be based on careful, thorough and well-organized preparation so that the presenter appears comfortable and at ease. Many people have expressed their views on the necessary elements in making preparations for a presentation. Guark(2000) emphasized that an awareness of the audience’s background—their needs and wants—and clarity of purpose, are crucial elements for consideration in the planning process. Andeweg *et al.* (1998) noted the importance of attracting and holding the audience’s attention as a key feature of the introduction.



In fact, for non-native English speakers, many people assume that a good command of English is all that you need to make a good presentation. Rarely do they notice that even a native speaker of English can have difficulty in presenting effectively. In other words, language proficiency should not be regarded as the only requirement; preparation and planning, good organization, body language and visual aids are equally important. Morita (2000) found the native vs. non-native distinction did not influence the success or failure of a presentation.

All in all, the success of a presentation should go beyond only language proficiency. This section introduces several elements other than language skills a speaker needs to be aware of before the presentation.

The presenter may have to take the following elements into account for a good presentation: knowledge of audience, information about the place of the oral presentation, the equipment used in the presentation, time (including when and how long the presenter is allowed to talk), whether it is necessary to have an assistant, some other essential things such as clothes, body positions in the talk and so on.

### **Know the requirements**

Are you being asked to read your entire research paper, or should you summarize it?

Will you present to people who have already read your paper?

What are the minimum and maximum time limits?

Do you know how many people you will present to?

Where will you give the presentation?

What is the level of formality that is required?

Will you present to a group of peers or to a panel of academics?



### **Audience**

Who is the audience? What age groups are they?

What are their educational and cultural backgrounds?

How many people will there be in the audience?

What are their positions in the organization or research institution?

What background knowledge do they have about your topic?

Do they have any particular interests?

How are you going to involve them in your presentation?





### Tips:

When you analyze your audience, you may need to pay attention to not only their professional background, but also their personal traits. Your audience will pay attention to some things because they are members of a department or class; they'll show particular responses to other things because they have different likings, dislikings and orientations. You have to keep both kinds of information in mind. Your analysis will suggest what you should say or write, what you should not say, and the tone you should use.

Most conferences and symposia audience will be composed of both specialists and non-specialists. The specialists will be highly knowledgeable in your field and will be able to give you feedback on the specific details of your project. The non-specialists will not necessarily be informed about the technical aspects of your field, but they will be intellectually curious and well-educated, and they will be interested in the bigger-picture aspects of your project.

If you fail to consider your audience, you may find that your audience may show a variety of feelings and responses as listed below:

- Alienated—if the presenter offends their value system;
- Insulted—if the presenter fails to acknowledge their existing knowledge and experience;
- Confused—if the presenter wrongly assumes the knowledge level of the audience;
- Bored—if the presenter fails to meet the needs of the audience;
- Frustrated—if the audience is ignored and is not given the chance to communicate with the presenter.

(Source: <http://www.brunel.ac.uk/learnhigher/giving-oral-presentations/considering-your-audience.html>)

### Place

Check beforehand, if you can, the place where you are going to make your presentation.

Where will the presentation take place? How do you get there?

How big is the room?

Do you know the seating arrangement of the room?

When is it open? If it is not open at the time when you get there, do you know whom to turn to for the key?



### Equipment

What equipment is there in the room? What equipment do you need?

Does the equipment work? If it does not, do you know how to find a technician?

Do you want to use your own laptop in the presentation? If for technical reasons, you





cannot use yours, do you have a flash disk on hand with the presentation in it?

Are you going to need a black or whiteboard? Do you need an eraser?



Have you got chalk and / or a felt tip pen?

Do you need an overhead projector or a screen? Are they in place?

Is there a podium? Where are you going to put your notes /papers?

Can the information be seen?

Can you present the information and not get in the way of audience?

Do you need a laser pointer?

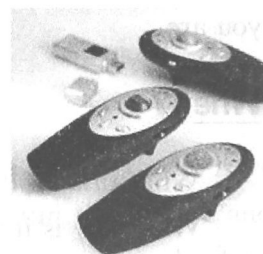
Will you need to dim the lights or draw the curtains? Who can help you do that?

Are you going to need handouts or any other documents? How many? Is there anybody helping you distribute the handouts?

Do you need a microphone? How do you turn on and off the microphone? How to adjust its volume?

Is there a laser pointer?

If you have to play an audio or video material, do you know how to get the sound and image to work effectively?



If you have technical problems before the presentation, do you know where to find audio-visual technician or session chair?

(Please refer to Exercise 1 for practice.)



### Tips:

Before the day of your presentation, you should figure out the details of the equipment in the room where you are going to make the oral presentation. You need to know how to operate the equipment. If you use PowerPoint, please have a backup copy on a disk in case of emergency.

This may not usually happen. But sometimes it is on the safe side to make print duplicates of your slides in case there is a problem with electricity.

Remember it will take a little time to set up your laptop and to get the audio-visual equipment working properly. Usually the time will also be accounted for in your talk. In the US, however, it is suggested that speakers get to the presentation room early enough to make sure it is working.

In spite of the advanced development of Internet service in the world, please do not expect Network connection to work in any room where you are going to make the oral presentation. If you want to show web site information, prepare offline copies on a disk. Even if the location DOES seem to have Internet connection, you had better work offline in case of a slow connection.