

## Exploring Reluctance Towards Oral Presentations: An EAR Study of Nepali Secondary Students

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### Abstract

This Exploratory Action Research (EAR) project investigated the issue of why students at a Nepali secondary school were reluctant to give oral presentations in class. The project was carried out at a government-run school involving 42 secondary school (Class 9) students aged 15-16. The intervention involved several stages of exploration and action. Data were collected through a survey questionnaire, focus group discussions, peer observation and the teacher's reflective diary. The exploratory stage revealed that the majority of students were both confused about how a good presentation could be given, and felt anxious about speaking in class. In the action phase, a number of interventions were carried out to improve the quality of the presentations and reduce anxiety levels. Help was provided with content and vocabulary, and useful tips to enhance the effectiveness of oral presentations were supplied. Even though initially the actions carried out by the teacher-researcher did not seem to achieve perceivable results, further help with setting SMART goals, rehearsals in pairs and groups and the friendly atmosphere created in class eventually led to a breakthrough. The EAR project underlines the importance of flexibility in approaching classroom issues. It also highlights the realization that teachers bear responsibility for the performance of their students when they aim at improving their students' presentation skills, which are deemed essential components for success in students' professional lives and their advancement in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

**Keywords:** oral presentations; public speaking anxiety; low confidence; presentation skills; peer feedback

### Introduction and Context

I teach secondary school students aged 15-16 years studying at Gandaki Boarding School. The school is situated in the Pokhara Metropolitan City of Gandaki province in Nepal and offers primary and secondary education to students of diverse socioeconomic backgrounds between the ages of 9 and 18. Apart from the differences in their socioeconomic status, the students also come from varied linguistic and cultural backgrounds. The languages used include Teli, Maithili, Newar, Gurung, but there are many others that are also spoken in the students' own linguistic communities. However, the school offers education in two languages only (English and Nepali) as the medium of instruction. Nepali is the official language of Nepal written in the Devanagari script. English is not officially recognized but is still considered a widely-used dominant language. This implies that my students usually speak at least three languages: their home language, Nepali as the official language of the country, and English for educational and communication purposes.

The school is run under an education trust managed by the Government of Nepal and offers scholarships to underprivileged students based on a merit exam. It collects nominal fees from the day scholars and boarding scholars, who are also selected on a competitive, merit-based exam. Gandaki has a deep-rooted legacy of functioning as an autonomous educational entity and its work is well-regarded nationwide. The school has played a leading role in the Pokhara valley with its outstanding contribution to educating competent and accomplished students. Many Gandakians are accepted to top universities and educational institutions both at national and international level.

### **My Professional Background and Immediate Context**

I have been working at Gandaki Boarding School for over ten years, teaching diverse groups of students, adapting my methods to meet varied learning needs and styles. Since I am an early career researcher, I actively engage in research endeavors including Action Research (AR) projects that focus on improving instructional practices, and following that, assessing their impact on student engagement. I am passionate about discovering new horizons in teaching and learning. I believe in the power of collaboration, often working with colleagues to design and implement evidence-based interventions for improving my performance and that of my students. I am keenly interested in professional development, regularly attending workshops to stay abreast of the latest educational research and trends. My involvement in many professional organizations and online AR groups has given me insights into how to explore classroom issues and focus on prevailing challenges.

Despite the growing need for the inclusion of presentations in teaching-learning activities in general (Thanachitditsaya et al., 2023), in my immediate context of working with Class 9, I could see how my students' interest was waning. I have taught this course for many years, and I often had the impression that many students were uninterested in giving presentation. So, while the issue persisted for some years, the class that I was teaching in 2023 (Class 9 at the time) appeared to be even less interested. I decided to start observing and documenting what I was experiencing more systematically in order to find some solutions to the issue.

### **The Challenge I Faced**

In my class, I found that my students were showing very little interest in presentations, even though these are required to be set for students as part of the internal assessment system and are also perceived as a student-centered activity. The purpose of setting oral presentation tasks is to enhance both language production and performance while also allowing for some level of creativity. However, my students appeared to have lost interest in making presentations and often resorted to feeble explanations as to why they felt they could not perform them. They came up with unconvincing excuses, or wanted to get their presentations over with as quickly as possible. Instead of speaking freely, they read the text without any sign of engagement or interactions with the audience. It seemed to me that they perceived presentations as a burden, and no wonder the students watching these presentations also became distracted and disengaged.

In Nepal, the academic year is divided into three semesters. In the second semester of the academic year in 2023 (July/August/September), I found that the percentage rate of students who seemed to be engaged in presentations and carried them out with some effectiveness had dropped to around 40%. This percentage rate is based on my daily records and the entries in my reflective journal. I found that there were only 16-17 students who displayed genuine

interest in giving presentations. Since I believe that giving successful presentations is an important life skill that would be necessary for success beyond the school's walls, I decided that it was time to explore the issue. My aim was to boost my students' confidence and improve their speaking skills as well. I decided to conduct an EAR project in the third term of the school year (from October to December 2023). During the preparatory period, I also made an attempt to consult some of the relevant research studies related to the issue I was going to explore.

### **Literature Review**

Teaching is a multidimensional process which has undergone profound modality changes in recent years. With the advent of technology and the paradigm shift in education, there have been changes in teaching methods, too. These days student-centered methods are spreading as there is a need to prepare learners for a competitive world by helping them acquire 21<sup>st</sup>-century skills (Suryawanshi et al., 2023), such as problem-solving and communication skills (Rao, 2019; Zaitseva, 2020), which leads us to why presentation skills have acquired such prominence across education systems all over the world in a consistent way (Ekoc, 2020; Zitouni, 2013).

Le Hoai (2021) is only one of the authors who highlight the importance of students' oral presentations because accomplishing them successfully is perceived as a useful life skill. For this very reason, they need to be integrated into classroom activities and become part of the internal assessment system. Scholars recognize the importance of classroom oral presentations (Barrett et al., 2021). Ding et al., (2021) underline that oral presentations are meant to prepare students of all classes, especially secondary level 9-12 for every stage of life, therefore, they should be included in teaching-learning activities. Stressing the usefulness of oral presentations, Salem (2019) states that it contributes to students' language improvement as well as other skills, such as proper communication style, clarity of voice in delivery and applying the right gestures. Likewise, Barrett et al. (2021) stress the role of oral presentations in preparing students for problem-solving, decision-making, and developing qualities that the 21<sup>st</sup> century requires of them.

Accordingly, the education policy of Nepal emphasizes making use of student-centered methods of teaching (Poudel & Choi, 2022), such as setting presentation tasks to prepare learners for lifelong learning (MOEST, Education Policy of Nepal, 2019). Nevertheless, studies carried out recently, for example, by Flick et al. (2023) found that students often struggle with giving presentations, even though they are expected to accomplish this type of activity on a regular basis. From the students' perspective, giving presentations can lead to a heightened level of anxiety (Bodie, 2010; Fadlan, 2020) or stage fright (Bippus & Daly, 1999; Egea Galera, 2024). The fear of presenting or speaking in public is a well-known phenomenon and is often referred to as Social Anxiety Disorder (SAD). It hinders speaking in front of an audience and impedes full interaction among students (Grieve et al., 2021). Hussein (2021) stresses the challenges and high-levels of anxiety brought about by oral presentations. Rahman and Pane (2023) also studied the challenges students face when needing to give presentations. They found that students are usually anxious about giving presentations and feel that they lack the confidence needed to present in front of the whole class (or a larger audience).

However, I was keen on looking at other factors that might have an effect on how secondary students perform when giving presentations. Is it just anxiety and lack of confidence or are there other reasons that students are ready to identify? I was hoping that pinpointing and

dealing with the issues might lead to solutions in my own context and could provide insights for language teachers and educators in other secondary-school institutions as well.

## **Initial Exploration**

### **Classroom Observation**

Dikilitaş and Comoglu (2022) argue that in the case of EAR projects, beside the perspectives of other stakeholders (students, parents, school management, etc.) that of the teacher constitutes a unique set of data. For this reason, I was keen on observing my students and gathering information related to how I thought they performed when giving presentations. Once again, I could see that they were not able to make their presentations interactive, failed to make proper eye contact, and were found reading the text prepared rather than speaking freely to deliver the content. Most of the presentations were poorly organized and the students looked nervous, stumbling over words and sometimes forgetting to deliver key information. I wondered if the reason was that they did not like the *models* of presentation that they were given beforehand.

The structure of presentations that they were supplied with was icebreaking, greetings, opening the floor, free content delivery, and the use of checklists of the content or the books they had consulted, if required. However, the presentations did not meet the requirements, so it is perhaps no wonder that the rest of the students were not listening and could not provide feedback to their peers.

### **Seeking Support**

In the course of looking for ways to improve the quality of my students' presentations, as a first step, I contacted one of my language teacher friends, Indra, who is also in my AR learning group on an online platform. It was Indra who encouraged me to carry out not an AR, but an EAR project. Second, my school also offered a three-credit course to learn AR and signed an agreement with Kathmandu University School of Education for the project. I then got to learn more about practitioner research from our course facilitator, Basu Prasad Subedi. I realized that among the various forms of classroom research, EAR is a type of practice-based research that aims at solving classroom issues through exploration and possible action. Smith and Rebolledo (2018) argue that "EAR is an effective way to address and cope with genuine issues in the classroom since it enables teachers to gain a better understanding of their classroom contexts and develop appropriate ways of teaching" (p. 4). So, I decided to explore the reasons behind the low interest of my students in making oral presentations. I also wanted to develop the understanding of my classroom setting and improve my practice through an EAR intervention.

### **Designing the EAR Project**

I defined the objectives of the EAR project presented here as follows:

- To explore why students are reluctant to do oral presentations
- To implement actions to make presentations more engaging
- To develop effective presentation skills

I was convinced that my students at Gandaki Boarding School had the basic skills required for presentations and that those skills could be improved so that the students could reach the standards of other privately-run schools in the province. I also felt that I can create the conditions for improvement because I had been their teacher in Class 8 and I knew all of them rather well individually and could see their potential.

It needs to be mentioned that even before embarking on a properly set up EAR cycle, I felt that I needed to act before starting the exploratory phase. This is a feeling that I think many teachers share. Smith and Rebolledo (2018) make a mention of this reaction that is probably typical of people working in education. The authors call this “immediately leaping into action (p. 20) and caution against it:

[...] sometimes, taking a decision too quickly and without exploring the situation further, can involve incorrect assumptions or simply assumptions which may be based on signs and intuition instead of reasons why this situation is happening, as can be explored through the collection of data. (p. 20)

I felt that the changes I was going to introduce immediately would “cause no harm” while they could result in some improvement in the short term. However, in the coming months, I learnt that the exploratory phase was extremely valuable and could lead to realizations that might have been “blind spots” before.

### **Stage 1: Immediate Action**

As a first set of changes, I adopted the following measures:

- providing more time for the preparation of presentations,
- allowing students to choose the topic freely,
- letting students choose their delivery style,
- providing space for them to learn using group support,
- offering short mentoring sessions with me,
- consulting YouTube channels as models of presentations during their internet classes,
- I also praised the ones who were able to make the best presentation with compliments and asked them to assist those who were struggling when preparing them.

Over and above these immediate solutions, I provided support by offering to clarify issues, give feedback, run follow-up sessions and compile guidelines (see Xu et al., 2021). However, even though I tried everything listed above, the students’ presentations did not improve. I still found my students not taking the task seriously enough, arriving for presentations without preparation, and reading instead of making an attempt to speak freely. When reflecting on my responsibilities as a teacher, I knew I was committed to investigating the root causes of the issue through the principles of EAR.

At the time when I was trying to identify the research questions, I had to face my own feelings of self-doubt. Namely, I was doubting my own performance and was wondering why my students were so disengaged and unable to give better quality presentations. As I have mentioned before, I decided to ask for help. I contacted my friend in my MPhil class with whom I work online in AR mentoring projects, too, and shared the problem. She had been my

research companion and learning companion since 2020. I explained to Indra that I knew I was not overloading my students and I provided only limited and easy topics for the presentation. However, I was not sure whether my students' liked presentations or perceived them as a burden or if there were some other reasons behind their apparent reluctance to make oral presentations in my classes. I consulted colleagues who taught at other schools and shared my experience with them. I came to learn that students were not showing interest in doing oral presentations in their classes either. As a next step, I decided to consider the issue by asking my students about their experiences related to giving presentations so that I could understand their perspectives better and find answers to the research questions that were set out as follows:

### **Research Questions**

1. How do my students feel about doing oral presentations in class?
2. What are the factors that contribute to the reluctance of my students to give oral presentations?
3. Do they have enough time and confidence and content preparation to do oral presentations?
4. What kind of support do my students expect from their teacher and peers?

### **Methodology**

The present EAR project employed a mixed methods research design as I gathered both quantitative and qualitative data. I used convenience sampling, namely, I used the 42 students of my Class 9 because they were the participants whom I was targeting and they were also available for the purposes of the research project. Students in Class 9 to Class 12 are considered as seniors at our school, and improving their presentations skills is treated as a pedagogical priority. Furthermore, I taught this group in Class 8 and felt that I had established good rapport with them. I was also going to carry on with the same students in Class 10, so investing in developing their presentation skills appeared to be a move that I expected would benefit everyone involved in the long run, too.

I used a Google form questionnaire designed in English to explore my students' concerns with both open-ended and closed-ended questions (see Appendix 1). The questionnaire was developed in English, because after 9 years of formal English classes, the exam results showed that most of the students were at B2 level according to CEFR (Council of Europe, 2001). I sent the forms to all 42 students of Class 9 and 29 students (69%) sent back their responses. In some cases I only received 28 responses to some of the questions. The filling in of the questionnaire was a voluntary task and the responses were provided anonymously.

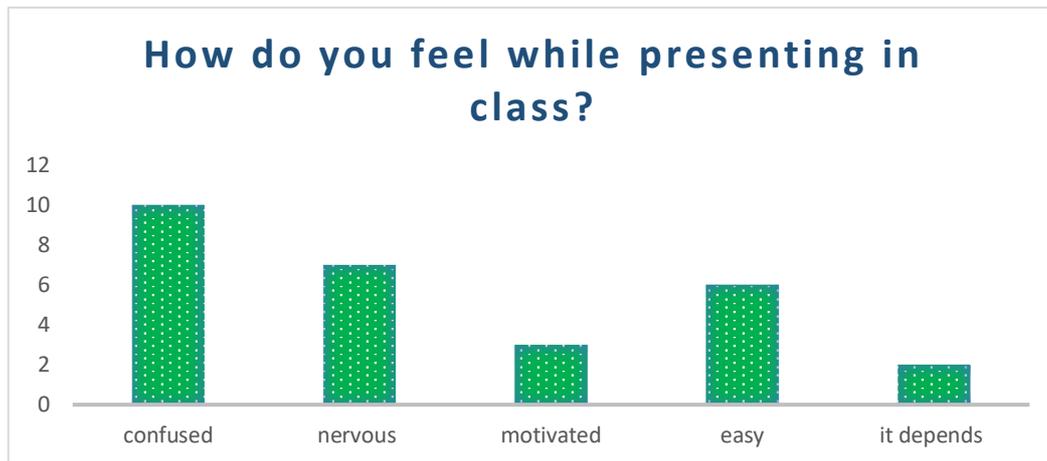
I also conducted a focus group discussion with seven students to explore the problem more deeply. I recorded their responses in Nepali because I hoped students would be more prepared to share their views openly, without the language barrier that English might have meant for them. My students' level of Nepali is around C1 level (Council of Europe, 2001), which is not surprising, since Nepali is the commonly used language after their mother tongue. The discussion touched on their dislike for presentations, the difficulties they encountered, and the role teachers should play in teaching presentation skills. Later I translated the discussion into English, and analyzed the content thematically.

Furthermore, I kept the records of their presentations in a dedicated file. I also requested my colleagues teaching at my school and those teaching at other institutions to provide feedback on

my students' improvement in presentation skills. I kept a reflective journal and used my daily observations to investigate the real causes behind their lack of interest in making classroom presentations. Here is one quote from my reflective journal: “students were found lazy in doing presentation on 9 September while presenting the topic editorial, they are found using unfair means” (journal entry from September 2023). The parents whom I often consulted also told me that their children were hesitant when they had to speak in public and asked me to set my students more presentation-type tasks. I gathered data from all possible sources, such as my reflective journal, the reflective notes of students, observation notes, and suggestions from colleagues. I transcribed, coded, categorized and developed different themes for interpretation following the thematic analysis of the findings. I aimed at aligning the data with the research questions following the recommendations of EAR and thematic analysis (Allwright, 2005; Braun & Clarke, 2006).

### Findings from the Exploratory Phase

Based on the responses, I was able to identify some of the causes of the students' reluctance to present in front of the whole class. Figure 1 shows how students felt while presenting in front of the teacher and their peers.



**Figure 1.**  
**Students' feelings during presentations (28 responses for this question)**

Figure 1 shows that 10 students felt confused and seven were nervous while presenting. However, six students found that presentations were easy, three students were even motivated by this task while two students chose the category “it depends”.

From the survey results, I was also able to deduce the following challenges: most of the students believed that they have neither self-confidence nor sufficient vocabulary; some referred to peer pressure and bullying, an inadequate timeframe, and content requirements as their major concerns. Others mentioned that they didn't know how to deliver in the classroom and perceived their performance inefficient. Yet again, others revealed that they had a fear of making mistakes and needed the teachers' extra support; they also expected teachers to be more available and more involved in their presentations.

The survey revealed several critical insights into students' attitudes towards oral presentations. A notable majority expressed feelings of anxiety and nervousness, frequently

exacerbated by the fear of negative evaluation. Participants indicated that their motivation to excel was significantly influenced by prior public speaking experiences, suggesting a cycle of avoidance stemming from negative encounters. Additionally, students' self-perception of their speaking abilities played a pivotal role in their willingness to engage. Those who considered themselves competent speakers demonstrated greater enthusiasm, while those lacking confidence exhibited clear reluctance. This highlights the necessity of fostering positive self-image among students.

These findings resonate with existing literature that identifies communication apprehension as a substantial barrier to participation in oral presentations. McCroskey (1977) posited that individuals with high communication apprehension tend to avoid speaking situations, badly affecting their academic performance and self-confidence. Similarly, Tian (2019) found that anxiety can hinder effective communication, creating difficulties in students' ability to articulate their ideas. The motivational aspects are further underscored by Ucar and Sungur (2017), who emphasized self-efficacy as a determinant of motivation. Students confident in their capabilities are more inclined to tackle challenging tasks, such as oral presentations. The survey findings echo this notion, indicating that bolstering students' self-efficacy could serve as a vital intervention point for educators.

Here are some of the responses that the students gave me in the open-ended section of the questionnaire.

**Table 1.**  
**Responses related to challenges and recommendations by the students**

<b>What are the reasons for hesitating to do presentations in class?</b>	<b>What are your expectations from your teacher?</b>
Lack of confidence	Make pairs for doing presentations maybe? encourage everyone
Fear of being judged	Building students' confidence
Fear of teachers, and speaking in front of the class	They should be made more comfortable
Fear of making mistakes	Encourage them and punish those who tease their friends for making mistakes
Lack or low level of confidence, fear of making mistake, etc.	Ask if the student is ready or not The teacher can give us the content
Lack of content and vocabulary	Create an environment where everyone feels comfortable to ask questions and neither the teacher nor the students get impatient or frustrated
Not being prepared sometimes	Give more time
Do not know how to start and feeling anxious	Make it fun with enough time to finish Share ideas on how to do a presentation properly

Presentations in class can evoke significant anxiety among students due to various psychological barriers. A principal reason for this hesitation is a lack of confidence, which aligns with Bandura's (2001) social cognitive theory, emphasizing the role of self-efficacy in performance. Students often fear being judged by peers and teachers, which can inhibit their willingness to engage in public speaking (Zimmerman & Schunk, 2012). This fear is compounded by the anxiety of making mistakes, leading to an avoidance of situations where they may be subjected to ridicule (Benight & Bandura, 2004). Therefore, it is crucial for educators to foster a supportive environment that encourages risk-taking without the fear of negative repercussions.

The following excerpts were gleaned from the focus group discussions (held in Nepali but translated into English by myself). The reflections were sorted into four themes following the norms of thematic analysis as discussed by Braun & Clarke (2006).

### **Confidence Issues and Poor Vocabulary**

The excerpts from the participants reveal profound challenges related to pronunciation and self-confidence, which are critical factors influencing their willingness to engage in public speaking.

- **Participant A:** *"It is very difficult to utter some words, I get all red when I go from ... it challenging in fact...."*
- **Participant B:** *"I am poor at pronunciation, so I do hesitate to present in class."*
- **Participant C:** *"I forget all pronunciation and accent when I go for presentation."*

These excerpts reflect a common struggle among students who face anxiety related to their pronunciation abilities. The fear of mispronouncing words or speaking with an accent can significantly hinder their confidence and engagement in academic settings. The phenomenon of pronunciation anxiety is well-documented in the literature. According to Liu (2024), pronunciation anxiety can hinder learners' willingness to communicate and participate in speaking activities, which ultimately affects their language development. The participants' experiences resonate with findings from this study, as they express feelings of embarrassment and hesitation when speaking in front of peers.

Furthermore, the emotional responses described by the participants, such as blushing and feeling overwhelmed, align with the concept of "communication apprehension" articulated by McCroskey (1977). This apprehension can stem from a fear of negative evaluation by peers, contributing to a cycle of anxiety that inhibits students' ability to express themselves effectively. Participant B's acknowledgment of poor pronunciation serves as a critical reminder of the importance of pronunciation instruction in language learning contexts.

### **Peer Pressure and Bullying**

The narratives shared by participants highlight significant challenges arising from bullying and unconstructive feedback, which inhibit their confidence and performance.

- **Participant A:** *“It’s very annoying to see peers giving nonsense tips and feedback, they keep on shouting and yelling for no reason whenever I start presenting, it’s an awkward moment....”*
- **Participant B:** *“I hate my peers’ yells and screeches.”*
- **Participant C:** *“I would have presented well if no bullying and nonsense feedback had occurred.”*

These statements reflect the emotional distress caused by negative peer interactions, which can significantly deter students from participating in presentations. The feelings of annoyance, frustration, and fear of bullying expressed by the participants underscore a critical need for educators to address the role of peer dynamics in the classroom.

Participant C’s comment illustrates how bullying can directly influence students’ performance. Research has shown that bullying creates a hostile learning environment that can lead to decreased academic performance and increased absenteeism (Juvonen et al., 2003). The fear of being bullied while presenting may lead students to avoid speaking opportunities altogether, thereby stunting their personal and academic growth.

### **No Efficacy of the Presentation Skills**

The theme of presentation efficacy highlights the challenges faced by individuals who lack confidence and a clear understanding of how to effectively present their ideas. Many students express feelings of inadequacy, often stating, *“I don’t know the way I should follow while presenting”; I do it at random.*” This sentiment is further echoed by those who feel that they are not naturally inclined to present, as one participant remarked, *“I am not born to present; I don’t know how. I simply do it for the sake of doing it.”* Such expressions underscore the need for structured guidance and support to enhance students’ presentation skills and self-efficacy.

In light of these factors, it is essential for educators to foster a supportive classroom environment that encourages constructive feedback and collaborative learning. By doing so, teachers can mitigate the adverse effects of anxiety and peer interactions, ultimately enhancing students’ confidence and performance in oral presentations (Schunk, 2020). Such supportive practices are vital for developing students’ communication skills, which are essential for their academic and professional success.

### **Teacher Support**

The findings illustrate a pronounced need for teacher support in alleviating students’ anxieties surrounding presentations. One participant’s statement, *“I always think that I will make mistakes and I lose confidence whenever I go in front of all,”* underscores the pervasive fear of failure that can hinder effective communication (Liu, 2024). This fear is often exacerbated by a lack of preparation and clear guidance. Research suggests that when educators offer explicit instruction and resources, students are more likely to feel prepared and confident, thereby enhancing their overall presentation performance (Hattie & Timperley, 2007). Furthermore, a supportive learning environment that includes constructive feedback can significantly reduce anxiety and improve self-efficacy, enabling students to embrace public speaking opportunities more fully (Schunk, 2020). In conclusion, the critical role of teacher support in fostering presentation skills is essential for empowering students to overcome their fears and engage effectively in public speaking.

## My Plan and Further Action

After learning about the main causes hindering my students from making better quality presentations, I decided to change the way students were preparing for their presentations. Before the intervention, they needed to give their presentation individually, now I encouraged them to first work in groups and then in pairs. I found that this setup made students more confident. I supported them whenever they needed my help. I also did one demo session on how to start a presentation, for which I consulted different sources including other teachers' reflective journals (Messiou, 2019), which supplied rich ideas.

### Stage 2: Actions Adopted for Change

After realizing the main causes of my students' problems with doing presentations (through Stage 1, above), I kept an account of all the issues and started providing some tips as listed below in Table 2.

**Table 2.**  
**Initial tips provided to make presentations more effective**

- 
1. Know your audience
  2. Rehearse well
  3. Use a simple delivery style
  4. Don't be afraid of making mistakes
  5. Use a catchy topic
  6. Start with an ice breaker
  7. Be in charge during the presentation, stay focused throughout
  8. Keep eye contact
  9. Use appropriate gestures and body language
- 

I asked each of the students to follow these tips for further presentations. However, following these tips did not make much noticeable difference in the quality of my students' presentations. I went back to my colleagues for further presentation tips.

## Peer Suggestions

The presentation tips provided by my colleagues included:

- Colleague A “to move from simple to complex in the content part” .... I added this point, and I told my students that they should not overcomplicate the content part either.
- Another tip I got from Colleague B is “please be more friendly to avoid the fear of public speaking...” I also realized that having more intimacy and openness with friends and peers can reduce the fear of facing the audience. Following these tips resulted in slight improvements but I still felt that they were not as effective as I would have expected.

### Stage 3: Asking the Students

I began having interactions with the students again to discuss their problems. I started working on the vocabulary of the given topic before assigning my students to prepare a presentation. I helped my students to have a conceptual understanding of difficult terminologies and content

before assigning presentations. For example, if they had to present on the topic of social security, I made the meaning and its need in society very clear conceptually. I started organizing quizzes and crosschecking strategies before they presented the assigned task. I further provided them with enough time for preparation and requested them to have rehearsals whenever they were free in class in front of their friends inside and outside the classroom and even in front of the mirror assuming that they would become confident when delivering their presentation (Ekoç, 2020).

I introduced them to SMART objectives (Specific, Measurable Appropriate, Related and Time-bound) for the purposes of their presentations (Day & Tosey, 2011; Lawlor & Hornyak, 2012). I further encouraged the rest of the students to provide feedback on their peers' presentations constructively by providing a check-list and requesting to evaluate their friends. I used the same rubric / check list (see Appendix 3) for the evaluation of the presentations.

### **Stage 4: Breakthrough**

While doing all this, I discovered that there was a change in my students' attitude because they started finding great joy in the new-style assignments. They were found to have more interest in doing presentations and were found busy most of the time in the preparatory stages of the presentation. I could only praise them for their enthusiasm and courage. I could notice the passion for improvement and becoming the best presenter. It gave me a sense of contentment and I was further motivated to carry on with great joy. I reflected on all my strategies and it seemed that I was, finally, able to help my students after applying various actions and plans in the different stages as shown in Table 3.

**Table 3.**  
**Different strategies adopted for improving students' presentation**

<b>Very first strategies adopted</b>	<b>Effectiveness</b>	<b>Second stage of action and strategies</b>	<b>Effectiveness observed</b>	<b>Third stage of strategies</b>	<b>Effectiveness Observed</b>
To be simple in delivery	Minimal	Colleague A "simple to complex ..."	Slightly Better	Check list of presentations	Good
Knowing the audience	Minimal	Colleague B, "friendly presentation"	Slightly better	SMART model of presentation	Good
Use of right gestures	Minimal	Colleague C "Precise presentation"	Slightly better	Constructive feedback provided by friends Presentations in group and in pairs	Good

## **Discussion of the Final Findings After Intervention**

### **Student Reflections on the Process**

At the end of the whole process, I requested my students to reflect on their journey of presenting in class based on their very first to the last presentation they did in class by calling

them up in class and sharing their reflections in a plenary held in the Information and Communication lab, where there was enough space for the students to spread out. It was worth listening to them. Many of the students were now happy to do presentations after having participated in the intervention detailed above.

The students' reflections revealed a marked transformation in their attitudes towards presentations, which were previously perceived as daunting tasks. The positive shift in their perceptions can be attributed to a structured intervention that emphasized preparation, collaboration, and supportive feedback. Notably, the comments reflect an increase in confidence and enjoyment associated with the presentation process. This aligns with the principles of social constructivism, which posits that learning is fundamentally a social process, facilitated through interaction and collaboration among peers (Vygotsky & Cole, 2018).

### **Social Interaction in Class**

Social constructivism, as articulated by Vygotsky and Cole (2018), suggests that knowledge is co-constructed through social interactions. The students' feedback underscores this theory, as many expressed that working in pairs and engaging in group presentations enhanced their confidence and understanding of presentation skills. For instance, one student noted, *"Working in pairs was fun as I didn't have to worry about all the stuff and being interactive is worth remembering."* This statement highlights the collaborative nature of learning, where students can support one another, thereby reducing anxiety associated with public speaking.

Moreover, the use of ice-breaking tips, which were particularly appreciated by the students, exemplifies how educators can create a psychologically safe environment conducive to learning. By implementing strategies that foster interaction and reduce apprehension, educators can effectively address the reluctance students often feel in multilingual classrooms, where language barriers can exacerbate anxiety.

### **Learning-Conducive Classroom Environment**

The progress observed during the practice sessions of my EAR project was both rewarding and enlightening. The palpable enthusiasm among students, evidenced by their improved clarity of speech and accelerated pace, was reflected in their assessment grades. This transformation aligns with the findings of Reyes et al. (2012), which highlight the critical role of a supportive learning environment in fostering student engagement and performance. The implementation of peer feedback emerged as a pivotal strategy, enabling students to learn collaboratively and gain confidence in articulating their ideas effectively (Gielen et al., 2010).

### **Implications of the Study**

The findings from the exploration of reluctance towards oral presentations among Nepali secondary students underscore the necessity for targeted interventions within the classroom. To cultivate confidence and competence in oral communication skills, educators must consider implementing the following practical recommendations in Nepali classroom settings:

1. **Curriculum Integration:** Oral presentation skills should be systematically integrated into the curriculum across various subjects by incorporating regular opportunities for students to engage in presentations.

2. **Skill Development Workshops:** Schools should organize workshops focused on developing public speaking skills, including techniques for effective communication, body language, and managing anxiety.
3. **Peer Support Systems:** Establishing peer mentoring programs can foster a supportive environment where students feel comfortable practicing their presentation skills. Pairing less confident students with their peers who exhibit stronger communication abilities can enhance learning through collaboration and encouragement. So due focus should be given to peer learning and collaborative tasks.
4. **Feedback Mechanisms:** Implementing constructive feedback mechanisms is vital. So, it's imperative for educators to provide specific, actionable feedback to students after their presentations, focusing on strengths and areas for improvement, which can aid in building their skills progressively.

By adopting these recommendations, educators and school administrators can create a more conducive learning environment that empowers students to overcome their reluctance towards oral presentations, thereby enhancing their overall educational experience.

### **Limitation of this Exploratory Action Research**

This EAR project is bound by the following limitations.

1. **Generalizability:** The findings of this study may not be applicable to other classrooms or educational contexts due to the unique characteristics of the specific setting studied. This is because the Nepali classroom context can be different from other countries' classroom contexts.
2. **Sample Size:** This study used the method of convenience sampling. The use of limited sample sizes can affect the reliability of results and their applicability to broader populations.
3. **Methodological Constraints:** Research designs may limit the ability to establish causal relationships. This study has adopted a mixed method design by integrating a student survey, focused group discussion interviews, reflective notes, and colleagues' and parents' suggestions for triangulation.
4. **Self-Reported Data:** This study used the self-reported data of the students. Reliance on surveys or interviews can introduce bias, as participants may not accurately report their experiences or perceptions.

### **Personal Reflections**

As for my own personal reflection, firstly, I am happy to know now that my exploration has worked and my students are progressing. I realized that the rehearsal and presentation tips have worked. Secondly, I also learnt that peers' constructive feedback also laid a strong foundation for improvement. Thirdly, it turned out that pair and group discussions were one of the best strategies to make my students confident.

Ultimately, I found that, even though I was trying to do my best by taking action early on and without triangulating my data, it was EAR that has led to a real breakthrough in the improvement of the presentations and also changed the students' attitude to a great extent. Something that they tried to avoid at all costs has become an enjoyable activity. I realized that EAR is a type of classroom research that can lead to finding solutions to classroom problems.

I learned many things, and EAR has doubled my potential. It's worth understanding that it is not just the students that are to be held responsible for making mistakes and doing things imperfectly. It is part of the role of teachers as educators to help students accomplish the tasks set up in a way that leads to continuous improvement. This research project has been very useful in helping me to recognize my students' and my own potential, and to carry out such tasks with great zeal in the future, too.

### Conclusion

The present EAR account aimed at describing the exploratory and action phases of a piece of classroom research which investigated students' reluctance to present in front of their peers and their teacher. While perceived as an essential 21<sup>st</sup> century skill for effective communication, presentations in an additional language are fraught with challenges. Students have linguistic, social, and psychological barriers to surmount and, therefore, there needs to be a multipronged approach to overcome these obstacles. As a result of the exploratory phase of the project, I realized that problems do not really always come from the students' side. They are the result of our far too high expectations of them and our failure to understand their problems. We need to be interested in finding solutions to their problems and doing justice to them. Instead of blaming students for not being able to perform well, we must explore what has hindered them from doing well.

The report emphasizes that even though teachers might be inclined to act fast and resort to actions that might potentially be considered helpful, the study underlines the importance of spending a sufficient amount of time on the exploratory phase. This can help identify issues that have either been misinterpreted or constitute "blind spots" for language teachers, and educators in general. The investigation of the research problem led to a realization that both AR and EAR are iterative processes, and breakthrough can only be achieved after the careful investigation of the underlying causes and the implementation of targeted and well-designed activities that can alleviate the burden of oral presentations and can create a classroom climate that is conducive to learning – including that of the teacher. In order to do better, all of us involved in these projects, namely, student, parents, myself as the teacher and my colleagues, needed to reflect on our practice to achieve improvement.

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### About the Author

**Laxmi Sharma** is a Ph.D. scholar at Kathmandu University, holding an M.Phil. in Educational Leadership and a Master's in English Literature. With 14 years of experience as a secondary-level teacher, her research interests include exploratory action research, the flipped classroom, digital leadership, artificial intelligence, and teacher research. Laxmi is dedicated to enhancing educational practices and is passionate about exploring innovative teaching methods to improve student learning outcomes. Her commitment to research reflects her desire to foster effective teaching strategies in today's evolving educational landscape. Email: [9819140173angel@gmail.com](mailto:9819140173angel@gmail.com)

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### **Declaration of Possible Conflict of Interest**

I hereby declare that the above work is my original work. I have no conflicts of interest to declare. There is no financial interest to report.

### **Appendices**

## Appendix 1 A google form Questionnaire in the exploratory phase

Laxmi Sharma

23/2/2025, 10:48 PM

### Laxmi Sharma

Dear Students,

I would like to request you all to participate in this simple survey for my research work on " Nepalese students' reluctance to do a presentation in the classroom. " This form is designed to determine the effectiveness of presentation in classroom teaching. All collected data will be used only for research purposes only by the first person. No information about the respondents will be disclosed.

Laxmi Sharma

Teacher

Gandaki Boarding school ,Pokhara

---

\* Indicates required question

#### 1. Do you like to do presentation?

Mark only one oval.

Yes

No

#### 2. How do you feel while presenting in class?

Mark only one oval.

Motivated

Easy

Cnfidnt

Confused

Other: \_\_\_\_\_

Laxmi Sharma

23/2/2025, 10:48 PM

3. **Why do you hesitate to present in class?**

Mark only one oval.

- Fear of making mistake
- Lack of preparation
- Peer pressure
- Lack of confidence
- Do not know how to start
- Lack of Vocabulary and content
- Others
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

4. **How do you feel when teacher present in classroom?**

Mark only one oval.

- Motivated to present
- Frustrated to present
- Feels like presenting
- Others
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

[https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1M7QeRf8waDM8Gp\\_J88LsdHL\\_3NlaoPEXc0hsorTY4/printform](https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1M7QeRf8waDM8Gp_J88LsdHL_3NlaoPEXc0hsorTY4/printform)

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Laxmi Sharma

23/2/2025, 10:48 PM

3. **Why do you hesitate to present in class?**

Mark only one oval.

- Fear of making mistake
- Lack of preparation
- Peer pressure
- Lack of confidence
- Do not know how to start
- Lack of Vocabulary and content
- Others
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

4. **How do you feel when teacher present in classroom?**

Mark only one oval.

- Motivated to present
- Frustrated to present
- Feels like presenting
- Others
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

[https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1M7QeRf8waDM8Gp\\_J88LsdHL\\_3NlaoPEXc1hsortfY4/printform](https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1M7QeRf8waDM8Gp_J88LsdHL_3NlaoPEXc1hsortfY4/printform)

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Laoni Sharma

23/2/2025, 10:43 PM

5. **How do you feel when your friends are presenting in class?**

Mark only one oval.

- Amazed
- Motivated
- can not explain
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

6. **What sorts of presentation do you like?**

Mark only one oval.

- Pair presentation
- Free presentation
- Others
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

7. **What are the reason for hesitating to do presentation in class?**

\_\_\_\_\_

8. **What should your teacher do to in doing presentation?**

\_\_\_\_\_

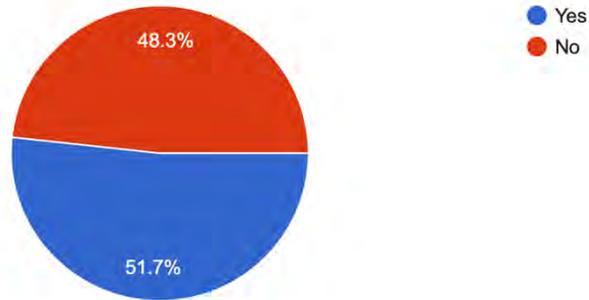
Untitled Form

## Appendix 2

Google form questionnaire responses (Some students did not answer all the questions).

Do you like to do presentation?

29 responses



How do you feel while presenting in class?

28 responses



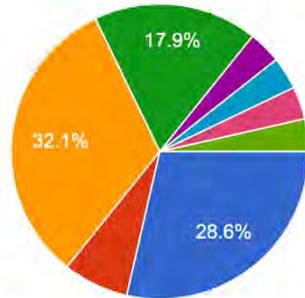
Why do you hesitate to present in class?

29 responses



### How do you feel when teacher present in classroom?

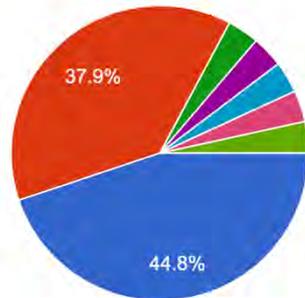
28 responses



- Motivated to present
- Frustrated to present
- Feels like presenting
- Others
- I would not want to present it myself after seeing the teacher present.
- "Feels like presenting" Bad English. Also "Others" and "Other" should be the sa...
- I'm afraid
- Good to see and listen

### What sorts of presentation do you like?

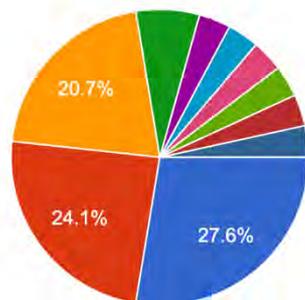
29 responses



- Pair presentation
- Free presentation
- Others
- "Others" and "Other" should be the same option.
- Presenting voluntarily , if u have knowledge about the topic and have s...
- Both
- I don't want to present.im afraid.
- I prefer not to present

### How do you feel when your friends are presenting in class?

29 responses

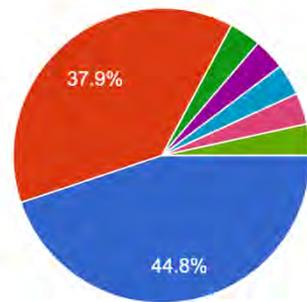


- Amazed
- Motivated
- ean not explain
- depends on the presentation
- If the presentation is good, I fell very a...
- It's not "ean not explain" it's "can not e...
- Most of them are like same(hesitating...

1/2 ▼

### What sorts of presentation do you like?

29 responses



- Pair presentation
- Free presentation
- Others
- "Others" and "Other" should be the same option.
- Presenting voluntarily, if u have knowledge about the topic and have s...
- Both
- I don't want to present.im afraid.
- I prefer not to present

### What is the reason for hesitating to do presentation in class? 21 responses

lack of confidence

Scared of making mistakes, fear of getting judged

I feel like IF i can present the full content or not. it's better not to involve if you can't give 100% of it and there are others too to

Afraid to be in front of everyone, lack of confidence, fear of making mistakes

Well, especially in my class (that is 9 "B"), there are many judgmental people who judge your every move. I feel scared that something will go wrong when I'm presenting in front of the classroom and I will get judged. That is the main reason why I don't want to do presentation. People just laugh on me!

some reasons for hesitating to do presentation in classrooms: no confidence, doesn't feel comfortable, feels like everyone is judging you, doesn't feel free to talk, language

Nothing

Fix your English please.

Do not know how to start

Sometimes fear of public speaking like presenting for internal marks

I don't hesitate

Anxiety

The main reason behind hesitating to do presentation in class is lack of content and vocabulary. There is no idea how to do presentation, what type of content to share and lack of vocabulary. Lack of preparation is also the reason behind this. And another problem is also the judging people besides us.

Not being prepared sometimes

Fear of doing mistake, Fear of teachers and mass

Lack of confidence

The class and friends often make fun of us

My friends try to make fun of me when i am presenting

it would be because pf my lack of confidence and the fear of making a blunder and embarrassing myself infront of my classmates

**What should your teacher do to in doing presentation? 18 responses**

Encourage everyone

Share idea how to do presentation properly

Presentations should be more comfortable

Make pairs for doing presentation maybe?

Building students confidence

Give more time

Shouldn't disturbed in between, not making fun afterwards, everyone has knowledge about

Different things so better to choose or give opportunity to person who have the knowledge about the topic (it's not possible always but as much as possible)

Make an environment where everyone feels easy to ask questions and not angry

Encourage them and punish those who tease their friends for presenting

Ask the student is ready or not

Teacher can give us the content. Can discuss and explore the content.

Teach students how to do presentation. Give some ideas. Can give us the preparation time.

Make the student feel free for presenting by being friendly with them.

Make it fun and longlisting

Teacher should make the presentation very creative. The content should be engaging and interesting, students should be free for the presentation etc.

Not make presentation a compulsion

He/she should help presenting, give motivations.

I'm not sure

They should be confident so that we can be motivated and confident while presenting something

### Appendix 3

Feedback rubric for the teacher and students' peers

<b>Criteria</b>	<b>Exemplary (4)</b>	<b>Proficient (3)</b>	<b>Basic (2)</b>	<b>Needs Improvement (1)</b>
Content knowledge delivered	Demonstrates good understanding; confidently presents	Shows good understanding; answers most questions accurately	Shows some understanding; struggles with questions	Lacks understanding; cannot answer questions
Organizations of ideas displayed	Ideas are logically organized; smooth transitions between points	Ideas are mostly organized; some transitions present	Ideas are somewhat organized; transitions are unclear	Ideas are disorganized; lacks clear transitions.
Presentation skills displayed	Speaks clearly with excellent eye contact and body language is fine	Speaks clearly; good eye contact and body language is observed	Occasionally unclear; limited eye contact and gesture	Difficult to get; poor eye contact and gestures