Presentations in English:
Find your voice as a presenter

Erica J. Williams
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Reviewed by Sally Ashton-Hay

With estimates of more than thirty million given each day, presentations have become an integral part of modern society. They can signify the difference between gaining or losing a job, or being successful or unsuccessful at university and a future career. *Presentations in English*, combining a 128-page book and DVD, is an innovative and complete course aimed specifically at non-native speakers of English. It follows seven flexible steps for building and improving intermediate to advanced level skills as well as instilling greater confidence in making presentations in English.

The main aim is to assist non-native speakers to find their own voice and individual presentation style. Students are encouraged to ‘examine, analyse, experiment, take risks, have fun, accept, reject and finally, to find what works’ for them. Besides the standard fare of transition signals, language exercises and presentation tasks found in most texts, there are some differences that distinguish this as a quality resource.

The book is organized with each of the seven training steps as stand-alone chapters. Steps 1 - 3 provide the basics of presentations, Steps 4 – 6 build on techniques, and Step 7 is devoted to question answering strategies. ‘Lay Solid Foundations’ is step one and covers an audience attention curve graph; useful phrases and grammar, structure and signposting and delivery tips (such as pausing). There’s also a speaking task, peer feedback forms, ‘Find Your Voice’ activities and focus questions for a reflective log. The DVD offers examples with evaluations from audience members.

Each consecutive chapter deftly builds on and consolidates previous work but could also be useful to pinpoint specific areas. Subsequent steps are: 2) Connect with your Audience; 3) Use Visuals to Connect (this chapter has a great section on numbers, trends and explaining graphs and timelines); 4) Top up your Techniques; 5) Be Positive and Dramatic; 6) Love Your Audience…Not Everyone is Like You; and step 7) Questions are a Big Opportunity, Aren’t They? The text includes a 29-page answer key for the language exercises and transcripts for each student speaker. The layout is clear and user-friendly with chapter highlights shaded in blue to focus attention. The book also has a companion web link with additional teacher resources.
notes and other business communication materials to enhance or extend the
text.

One of the distinctions is that the DVD features authentic international
students, rather than actors, to demonstrate the cumulative skills depicted in
the course steps. Four students from Thailand, Ukraine, China and Mexico
test the various approaches, making errors and showing improvement while
travelling along the skills-training journey. Their talks are original and cover
everything from recycling to mathematical genetics, with some of the student
presentations at postgraduate and PhD level. When I trialed these materials,
my own students found the international speakers engaging because they
made familiar mistakes; however, we all wondered how two of the ‘non-
natives’ could have such incongruously perfect British accents.

Peer review feedback forms are another value-adding innovation included for
each step of the presentation course journey. The peer review sheets focus
on the specifics in every phase such as: ‘Did you hear any of the Yale 12
power words?’ or ‘Do the presenters use any ‘love your audience’ activities or
language?’ The peer review process is designed to be used along with the
DVD presenters and with individual class member presentations. These
triggers encourage a keener awareness of skill-building, critical thinking and
the process of learning for non-native English speakers.

A third bonus is the currency of topics which are skillfully embedded
throughout the presentation chapters. These include story-telling with
metaphors, the use of mantras, representational systems such as VAKOG
(visual, auditory, kinesthetic, olfactory and gustatory), multiple intelligences
and personality types. One of the most constructive benefits is the ‘Find Your
Voice’ activities which hone in and cultivate individual learner development by
balancing the practical tasks with personal reflection. For example, students
are encouraged to prepare and present an item which addresses a different
multiple intelligence or to find a metaphor/analogy to describe an aspect of
the student’s work or area of study. Such activities have the potential to
challenge creativity, build confidence and create a dynamic community of
learners.

*Presentations in English* is recommended as a valuable resource for any
teachers of presentation skills. Williams is obviously an accomplished trainer
with expertise to offer, especially in assisting non-native English speakers to
improve their skills and knowledge, gain confidence and find their own voice
in making presentations. Her message to trainers continually resonates with
the main aim of the book: ‘Authentic presenters are congruent: their voices,
language and bodies are in harmony with the message they are giving. Help
your learners to find this authentic voice.’

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When you're practising your presentation, always try to decide which words, phrases, and paragraphs would have the most impact on your audience and put gentle emphasis on that. Mind you, this should be natural and free-flowing. The cadence of your voice should be smooth, so unnecessary emphasis or fluctuations in tone would ruin your purpose. 2. Volume. When giving a presentation, you always need to mind your volume. That’s not to say that you should speak softly all the time – the key here is to make your voice audible to everyone in your audience. If you have a larger audience, speak loudly.

Learn how to make a good presentation even more effective with our top tips, drawing on expert advice from around the world. This page draws on published advice from expert presenters around the world, which will help to take your presentations from merely ‘good’ to ‘great’. By bringing together advice from a wide range of people, the aim is to cover a whole range of areas. Whether you are an experienced presenter, or just starting out, there should be ideas here to help you to improve.

Finding The Story Behind Your Presentation. To effectively tell a story, focus on using at least one of the two most basic storytelling mechanics in your presentation: Focusing On Characters. People have stories; things, data, and objects do not. Enhance PowerPoint presentations with multimedia. Add multimedia, including audio (such as voice-over narration), video, and quizzes and surveys, without leaving PowerPoint. Import prerecorded audio into a presentation and synchronize the audio with PowerPoint slide animations. Publish your presentation. Publish your presentations so that users can view them. Adobe Presenter offers the following features: View presentations in the interactive Adobe Presenter viewer. Integrate Adobe Presenter content with learning management systems (LMS). Adobe Presenter creates SCORM and AICC compliant content.