PRE-SERVICE TEACHERS' VIEWS ABOUT THEIR COMMUNICATIVE COMPETENCE: AN ANALYSIS OF ESL STUDENTS' GROUP ORAL PRESENTATIONS AT TUMU COLLEGE OF EDUCATION, GHANA

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Abstract:
Oral presentations are a major pedagogical activity recommended by the curriculum designers of the Bachelor of Education programme, which was implemented in 2018 in Ghana. In light of this, students are frequently called upon to work in groups and participate in oral group work. The study sought to find out the views of pre-service teachers of group oral presentations on their communicative competence and to assess the extent to which they exhibit communicative competence during group oral presentations. 112 third-year Bachelor of Education students at Tumu College of Education were purposively selected for the study. The questionnaire survey was responded to through Google Forms. The data was analyzed through SPSS, and the results were tabulated using percentages, mean and standard deviation. The study findings revealed that the group oral presentations created anxiety for students, though they proved to positively impact their language skills. Based on the students' general acknowledgement of its positive impact they strongly endorsed the presentations as an important tool for language learning. The study further indicated that the students had knowledge of communicative competence as they rated themselves high in most competencies except a few areas, such as lack of confidence and not considering the socio-cultural background of colleagues during group presentations, among others. Hence, they needed more interactive instructional strategies that could help them boost their communicative competence.

Keywords: communicative competence, oral presentations, language anxiety, second language learning

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1. Introduction

College of Education students in Ghana are exposed to diverse teaching strategies that are purported to enhance their communicative competence. One such significant instructional approach is group presentations. Group oral presentation in this context refers to what Bell (1995) describes as learner-centered discussion, which follows a learner- centered response. Bell (1995) indicates that group discussions and presentations provide students with the opportunity to own what they learn. The students have the capacity to see themselves as information givers or active learners but not just engaging in passive learning. Papalia (1987) argues that group work on a reading task can boost students' participation and enhance their learning experience. By collaborating with other reflective individuals, students not only acquire knowledge from the reading material but also develop the ability to relate knowledge meaningfully, make culturally-informed observations, and refine their interpretations of the material. Assigning group work activities can also reduce teacher dominance and enable teachers to monitor individual students' progress while still maintaining control of the class. This approach allows students to feel more engaged and preventing them from hiding in the crowd, enabling teachers to provide individualized attention, and identifying areas where students may be struggling.

This approach to language learning, especially in enhancing learners' communicative competence, has been conducted by several authors. Meng (2009) mentioned that group presentations are commonly used by teachers in EFL classrooms as a method of cooperative learning where students work together in discussions and tasks assigned. The students carry out such discussions to gain teamwork skills, knowledge, and competence in speaking. Situmorang (2021) explains that it is an important tool that has become part of the modern approach to teaching at higher levels of education. As a student-centered method, it provides an opportunity for teachers to engage students in order to improve their zeal to work cooperatively and challenge them to increase the quality of the task assigned to them. The literature provided is in line with the objective of the new Bachelor of Education (B.Ed.) curriculum developed in Ghana in 2018 for colleges of education teacher trainees. The course outlines and proformas specifically emphasize group oral presentation as one of the main instructional strategies for facilitating lessons to expose the pre-service teachers to language learning through a series of group presentations. However, due to the challenges that come with the use of the strategy, most tutors ignore it. This is due to the teacher-centered pedagogical practices they are already familiar with. Under these circumstances of switching from the teacher-centered to learner-centered pedagogies, how do pre-service teachers with limited proficiency in English perceive group presentation? What are their struggles in group presentations with group members? This research takes an interest in undercovering the views of ESL pre-service teachers' use of group oral presentations in developing their communicative skills and the extent to which they think they exhibit

communicative competence during group presentations. The study addresses the following research questions:

1) What is the perception of pre-service teachers about their communicative competence using the group oral presentations?
2) To what extent do pre-service teachers exhibit their communicative competence during group oral presentations?

2. Literature Review

This study is situated in the context of the social interaction theory. The most modern theory on language learning is the interactionist approach by Vygotsky (1978), which has pedagogical implications. Its foundation lies in the idea that context and environment have a big impact on the L2 acquisition process. The process of stimulus, cognition, and reaction is also assumed to be mediated by the learners' cognitive systems. The interaction hypothesis, for instance, emphasizes that interaction and changed input, that is, understandable input, are the keystones by which the learner enhances intake, integration, and production. This theory contends that in order to force students to change their output, meaning negotiation in discussion is crucial. This hypothesis has been supported by research findings that indicate a strong correlation between the amount of modified output and increased accuracy in grammatical structures. This theory supports collaborative learning and project-based work, which is relevant to the research on group oral presentation, which involves social interactions.

The current study takes strength from Canale and Swain's (1980) communicative competence theory. The theory highlights four key components. These components will be discussed but with a focus on grammatical competence, also known as linguistic, sociolinguistic competence, and strategic competence. Communicative competence refers to the ability to effectively use language in a meaningful context (Artyushina *et al.*, 2017). The ability to communicate not only covers knowledge of grammar proficiency but encompasses the language users' knowledge of socio-cultural norms and the flair to interpret both verbal and nonverbal cues in context and pragmatics. Communicative competence is the goal of every second language, and as such, they try to align themselves with colleagues who exhibit such. Various studies have explored communicative competence in students' language development. It is significant that the research starts with the author, who started the theory of communicative competence. Chomsky (1965) differentiated the term *competence* from *performance*. He argued that *competence* signifies the internalized linguistic and grammatical knowledge of a language user without any connection to the actual use of language in specific situations, whereas *performance* refers to the practical application of language in a particular social context. However, Hymes (1972) disagreed with Chomsky's exclusion of socio-cultural features from his definition of competence. Hymes proposed the term *communicative competence* to describe a language user's combined grammatical and social knowledge about when and how to use utterances appropriately. Hymes (1972) stated that communicative

competence comprises four types of abilities: 1. The practicality of something in terms of its potential and the resources available for execution. 2. Its suitability is based on the context in which it is applied and assessed. 3. Its actual functioning and the implications it carries. 4. Its level of success or failure. Following this, many scholars took interest in the model and revealed various definitions and categorizations.

First amongst them was Canale and Swain (1980), who classified communicative competence under two paradigms: communicative competence and actual competence. Xue (2013), citing Canale & Swain (1980), indicated that the authors redefined communicative competence as a model of knowledge as consisting of three components: grammatical competence, sociolinguistic competence, and strategic competence. Grammatical competence covers phonology, syntax, knowledge of lexical items and of rules of morphology and sentence-grammatical semantics. Sociolinguistic competence consists of two sets of rules: sociocultural rules and rules of discourse. Sociocultural rules specify the ways in which speakers' utterances are produced and understood appropriately in a specific sociocultural context, and rules of discourse are about *the extent to which appropriate attitude and register or style are conveyed by a particular grammatical form within a given sociocultural context* (Canale & Swain, 1980, p. 30). Strategic competence is *made up of verbal and non-verbal communication strategies that may be called into action to compensate for breakdowns in communication due to performance variables or to insufficient competence* (Canale & Swain, 1980, p. 30). Canale and Swain's model of communicative competence has great influence on L2 teaching and learning. Though their framework is a point of reference for many researchers to date, other researchers like Bachman, and Palmer have developed the concept actually from the inspiration of Canale and Swain. In the 1990s, for instance, Bachman and Palmer put forward the concept *communicative language ability* that *can be described as consisting of both knowledge, or competence, and the capacity form implementing, or executing that competence in appropriate, contextualized communicative language use* (p. 84) and includes three components: language competence, strategic competence, and psychophysiological mechanisms. Bachman and Palmer (1996) expanded the model by proposing a model that covers four components such as grammatical competence, socio-linguistic competence, discourse competence, and strategic competence.

Many ESL students in the colleges of education are confronted with varieties of language problems that retard their communicative competence. Limited vocabulary, poor intonation, poor pronunciation, and errors in sentence construction led to poor language ability. Poor language ability deters students from expressing themselves. Chen (2023) claims most foreign students have language anxiety when interacting with friends due to a lack of confidence.

The socio-cultural background of students has an impact on the way they communicate. According to Yusup and Ahmad (2016), poor parental support in getting students to acquaint themselves with the English language leads to students' low communicative competence. The dialectical relationship between speech behaviour and social behaviours according to Becks (2009), reduces students' competence. She argues

that the social relation that exists between interlocutors determines speech behaviour. She added that power dynamics and social status play a significant role in the style of speech interlocuters use.

Grammatical competence (GC), according to Diaz-Rico and Weed (2019), is the learners' ability to gain knowledge of the codes and conventions of oral and written representation. In line with this the authors imply that GC deals with the knowledge that is necessary for writing and speaking. Several perspectives have been presented in the literature on the relationship between grammatical competence and communicative competence. A learner who possesses linguistic competence is proficient in grammar, sentence construction, parts of speech, meanings, spelling, pronunciation, and other language skills (Majeed & Yassein, 2013; Tuan, 2017). Grammatical or linguistic competence is defined by Diaz-Rico and Weed (2010) as precision and fluency in language production, particularly in the second language, and aiming for proficiency in the target language. According to Aqahtani (2015), a critical tool in language learning is vocabulary knowledge. This is because when a learner is limited in vocabulary knowledge, it impedes communication activities, limits learning opportunities and stifles comprehension.

In another study, Xue (2013) examined the impact of group work on students' communicative competence. The results indicated that students exhibited wrong tenses, and improper use of prepositions, articles, which tremendously affected students grammatical, sociolinguistics and strategic competencies. Conversely, Pushpanathan (2019) conducted a study on assessment of grammatical competencies of first year polytechnic students using frequency analysis and reported that the students demonstrated competence in nouns and other lexical words. The study further found out that students were interested in developing their grammatical competence. The findings are not different from research findings by Al-Khasawneh in 2009 on Arab postgraduate students, which revealed that students had challenges with vocabulary, spell, grammar, and organization of ideas. A study by Algamal *et al.* (2021) revealed that learners from Arab universities faced difficulties in writing compositions due to a lack of knowledge in grammar as most writing challenges were as a result of sentence arrangement, misuse of tenses, misuse of determiners, and adverbs. Further studies show undergraduate students exhibit grammatical competence problems. Salman and Hazem (2022) conducted a study on EFL Iraqi students. The findings revealed multiple grammatical problems faced by the students, which included: the distinction between plural and singular subjects, tenses among others. Cuellar (2013) examined the grammatical competence of Columbian students and reported that the students encountered grammar problems in writing essays and recommended that grammatical strategies should be put in place to ameliorate the problem.

Research carried out on sociolinguistic competence among learners also revealed a positive impact. According to Canale and Swain (1980), as cited in Nguyen (2021), sociolinguistic competence is the ability of a language user to communicate effectively in the culture in which the conversation takes place. According to Ankawi (2020),

sociolinguistic competence is difficult for learners to develop. However, having sociolinguistic competence helps second language learners to be aware of and use appropriate language in specific situations (Abd Rahman *et al.*, (2022); Yang & Rehner, 2015). Strategic competence is the ability to adapt, deal with incomplete information, and maintain communication through paraphrasing, circumlocution, repetition, hesitation, avoidance, and guesswork, as well as changes in registers and styles (Lanka & Bidu, 2017). Following their training in communication methods, Kuen *et al.* (2017) concentrated on the development of Malaysian ESL learners and discovered that they frequently translated literally. The majority of students employed communication techniques to resolve their communication challenges (Rabab'ah, 2015).

In ESL classrooms, the essence of language learning is to bring about effective communicative communication. Hence, the language used must be the standard of the native speaker. It must meet the merits of the register, settings, and the role of the speakers. During group presentations, college education students need to understand and differentiate between formal and informal contexts, styles, and communicative purposes. It is believed that a competent presenter would contribute effectively in terms of ideas and suggestions. Additionally, the presenter should have the ability to complete the task, although it is not necessary in this case as it is a different task between the presenter and the listener/other group members.

Chen (2009) describes oral presentation as a form of public speaking where the speaker uses visual aids to present ideas in a group on English topics. According to Situmorang (2021), group oral presentation is from collaborative, peer learning, community, or cooperative learning. It is considered as both an instructional technique and an assessment technique effective for teaching and learning in language classrooms. Group work, as elucidated by Situmorang (2021), typically involves a number of individuals joining forces to accomplish a common task or assignment. The primary goal of group work is to promote interaction and collaboration among students in order to successfully complete an assigned task or assignment. Oral presentations as forms of instructional technique allow instructors to use spoken words to express their understanding on a given topic. It allows students to research a wide range of knowledge that exposes them to arrays of cognitive and transferable skills. Oral presentations can be done individually or in groups. This research focuses on group oral presentation and its intricacies on college of education students' communicative competence.

There is a large scale of literature on the perception of group presentation approach to students' communicative competence. The literature highlights both the strengths and weaknesses of students' communicative competence. Research conducted by Brock (2012) reveals the difficulties that English as a Second Language (ESL) learners encounter in terms of grammatical accuracy and fluency during presentations. These learners may struggle with intricate sentence structures, correct verb tenses, and maintaining a consistent rhythm in their speech, which can negatively impact their clarity and fluency. Related research conducted by Xue (2013) posits that students engage in more meaning-negotiating conversations in small groups compared to traditional,

teacher-centered whole-class settings. This suggests that collaborative group work enhances the quality of student discourse by providing increased opportunities for language practice. Ghaith (2003) in another study also underscores the positive influence of small group cooperative methods on students' English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learning outcome. By comparing the academic achievement of 665 seventh-grade students in English between group work and whole-class methods, he concluded that students in small groups made significantly greater improvements on both the test and the listening comprehension scale. These results suggest that the communicative approach involved in group work promotes second language acquisition.

Additionally, Sugino's (1994) study of six Japanese learners of English found that group work enhances students' language use. The study's results showed that students produced more words and communication units during content-focused tasks than during form-focused tasks. The literature supports the notion that group work is a beneficial approach to language learning among Asian students.

Another study by Atmane (2016) on EFL lecturers of undergraduate students at the University of Bejaia revealed that oral presentations have a positive impact as students acquire vocabulary and improve speaking tremendously. Similar findings were reported by Kondo (2010) in their study of second-year students at Kosen, who demonstrated a positive attitude towards group activities compared to individual tasks. In their research, Daba *et al.* (2016) examined the perceptions of second-year biology students at Bule Hora University regarding group assignments. The findings indicated that these students held a favourable perspective of group work, as they expressed a preference for working in groups over completing individual assignments or participating in classroom tests. Similar conclusions were reached by Kondo (2010) in her study of second-year students at Kosen, who demonstrated a positive attitude towards group activities compared to individual tasks. Wahyuningsih (2018) claims that group work significantly improves critical thinking skills, enhances self-confidence and self-esteem, and invariably develops students' social skills. In contrast, Holmes (2004) commentated that research on Asian students has revealed that students' lack of interest in group presentations increased because of a lack of adequate language such as grammar, pronunciation, and syntax on one hand, poor learning experience and lack of interpersonal communication skills.

Another study by Chikh and Dich (2016) espoused the effects of oral presentations on students' communicative competence when they carried out a study on EFL students and teachers at Tlemeen University. The findings showed that oral presentation had a positive effect on interactions and cooperation among peers. Hoai (2021) conducted a study on using group oral presentation as a formative assessment in teaching English to 53 Vietnamese EFL students. The findings revealed that over 80% of students exhibited anxiety during oral presentations. 80% exhibited a lack of confidence, and the majority agreed that group oral presentation improved their speaking and communicative skills.

3. Methodology

This study employed a quantitative approach that involved administering a questionnaire as its main tool on pre-service teachers. A total of 325 third-year pre-service teachers comprising 213 early-grade students and 112 primary education students who studied English Language Curriculum Studies in the first semester served the target population. Purposive sampling was used to select all the 112 B.Ed. primary education students. This is because it is the group of students that are accessible to the researchers. Another reason is that group and individual oral presentations are key instructional activities clearly stated in the B.Ed. programme for colleges of education. The 2018 B.Ed. curriculum also emphasized that college tutors employ presentation activities at all levels of teaching the pre-service teachers. Hence, the decision was made to use these pre-service teachers to participate in the survey. The questionnaire items are 13 closed-ended items to address the perception of pre-service teachers on group oral presentations. The second set of 26 items was developed to address pre-service teachers' perception of the extent to which they exhibit communicative competence during group oral presentations. The questionnaire was adapted from Daba *et al.* (2016). The five Likert Scale format was employed. The questionnaire items were structured based on Canale and Swain (1980) components of communicative competence as linguistic competence, sociolinguistic competence, and strategic competence. Items on linguistic competence cover vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation. Sociolinguistic competence covers social functions such as maintaining relationships, interacting with other people, giving feedback, self-expression, expressing emotions and cultural awareness, while strategic competence covers gestures, paraphrasing, and filling gaps. The observation guide took the format of the questionnaire with some additions to address the extent to which pre-service teachers exhibited communicative competence during group oral presentations. Data analysis was done through SPSS using frequencies, percentages, mean and standard deviation.

4. Data Analysis and Presentation

4.1 Pre-Service Teachers' Perception of Group Oral Presentations

Table 1: Perception pre-service teachers on group
oral presentation on communicative competence

Items	1 Strongly Agree (%)	2 Agree (%)	3 Undecided (%)	4 Disagree (%)	5 Strongly Disagree (%)	Mean	SD
1. Group oral presentations increase /improves my speaking skills	63.3	28.4	1.8	0.9	1.8	1.44	0.759
2. I get divergent ideas from peers through oral group presentation	44.0	47.7	2.8	3.7	0.9	1.69	0.781
3. Group oral presentation help work collaborative with my peers	50.5	40.4	3.7	2.8	2.8	1.67	0.893
4. I get deeper understanding of the content	25.7	55.0	11.9	5.5	1.8	2.03	0.876
5. I lack confidence in in speaking during group oral presentation	45.0	45.9	4.6	1.8	1.8	1.68	0.808
6. I need regular group oral presentation to improve my communications kills	55.0	36.7	2.8	2.8	2.8	1.61	0.891
7. I learn new vocabulary and presentation styles	45.0	47.7	5.5	0.9	0.9	1.62	0.637
8. I learn turn-taking skills and manage interruptions	25.7	51.4	13.8	5.5	2.8	2.07	0.934
9. I develop leadership skills through group oral presentations	45.0	45.9	4.6	1.8	1.8	1.68	0.808
10. Group oral presentations help develop trust a rapport	25.7	51.4	12.8	7.3	1.8	2.07	0.924
11. Group oral presentation enhances my problem-solving skills	20.2	52.3	19.3	6.4	1.8	2.17	0.891
12. I prefer group oral presentations than other types of learning instructions	26.6	40.4	17.4	10.1	5.5	2.28	1.129
13. I prefer group oral presentation to individual activities	29.4	39.4	11.9	11.0	7.3	2.27	1.212

Note: Mean values 1-2.5 means Agree; mean values of 2.51-3.5 means Undecided; 3.51-5 means Disagree

Every ESL learner's dream is to have good speaking/oral communication skills. This is indicated in the responses of the participants, with a mean value of 1.44, who admitted that group oral presentation improved their speaking skills, which implied that their engagement with their tutors in presentations yielded positive results. Divergent ideas in any learning environment enhance broader knowledge as responses with a mean value of 1.69 and a standard deviation value of 0.781 agreed that they got divergent ideas through active group oral presentation. Though these trainees started the first year with group oral presentations, most respondents admitted they lacked confidence speaking

during group presentations, with a mean value of 1.68. This implies that more work needs to be done to improve their communication skills and overcome language anxiety and nervousness. This is also evident in their response to item 6, which stated that they needed regular oral presentations to improve their oral communication skills. Participants' responses to items 8 and 10, with a mean value of 2.07, suggest that the participants acknowledged that group presentation developed their skills in turn-taking and in building rapport. Primarily, teacher trainees are expected to have adequate vocabulary and problem-solving skills. Based on the results from their responses with mean values of 1.62 and 2.17, there was an indication that when the college of education tutors engaged student teachers in group oral presentations, their skills would be developed. In response to statements 11 and 12 on their preference for group presentations and other types of assignments, the respondents said they preferred group presentations to other instructional strategies. Generally, most of the pre-service teachers demonstrated some knowledge and positive perception of oral group presentations in their studies. This finding is in line with Bower *et al.* (2013), who also assessed 164 preservice teachers' presentation capabilities.

4.2 Students' Communicative Competence during Group Presentations
The analysis of grammatical competence is grouped into four components: lexical, semantic, syntactic, and phonological competence.

The participants were asked to rate the level of their linguistic competence during the group presentations. The mean value of 2.18 indicates that they had some knowledge and ability to use common expressions. This implies that a good number of the students acknowledged that they had knowledge of common expressions. Their responses to item 2, with a mean value of 1.9 and a standard deviation of 0.808, showed that they agreed that they had knowledge and ability to use lexical sets of open class words (verbs, nouns, adverbs, and adjectives).

Table 2a: Lexical / Vocabulary and Syntactic Competence

Items	1 Strongly Agree (%)	2 Agree (%)	3 Undecided (%)	4 Disagree (%)	5 Strongly Disagree %	Mean	SD
1. I have knowledge and ability to use common expressions (sentence formulas, idioms, common phrases, phrasal verbs, collocations)	18.3	55.0	16.5	5.5	2.8	2.18	0.899
2. I have knowledge and ability to use lexical sets of open-class words (nouns, verbs, adjectives, adverbs)	31.2	53.2	8.3	6.4	0.9	1.9	0.808
3. I have knowledge and ability to use articles, prepositions, and personal and other grammatical elements belonging to closed-class words.	20.2	53.2	19.3	3.7	2.8	2.15	0.884
4. I have the ability to correctly combine elements into meaningful sentences.	33.0	57.8	5.5	0.9	2.8	1.83	0.803
5. I have the ability to understand and express the meaning of formed sentences.	32.1	57.8	4.6	4.6	0.9	1.84	0.784
6. I have the ability to organize words in sentences based on syntactic rules.	26.6	48.6	18.3	5.5	1.0	2.03	0.826

Note: Mean values 1-2.5 means Agree; mean values of 2.51-3.5 means Undecided; 3.51-5 means Disagree)

Again, the participants agreed (M=2.15, SD=0.884) that they had knowledge and ability to use grammatical elements that belong to closed-ended words such as (pronouns, determiners, and prepositions) belonging to the closed word classes. This implies that in terms of minor word classes, the participants thought that they had some amount of knowledge. Still, under linguistics competence, the participants demonstrated adequate knowledge of grammar. Their responses to item 6 (M=2.03, SD=0.826) showed that the participants had the ability to organize words in sentences based on syntactic rules. They again agreed that (M=1.83, SD=0.803) they had the ability to correctly combine elements into meaningful sentences and understand the meaning of formed sentences. Generally, the participants considered themselves linguistically competent. This finding is in contrast with the findings of Ochigbo and Ochanya (2019), who studied the linguistic competence of some secondary school students in Nigeria. Their finding revealed that the students were generally weak in question tags, phrasal verbs, subject-verb agreement, modal meanings, subjunctive mood, tense backshift, personal pronoun objective case, correlative conjunction, and compound noun plurals.

Table 2b: Grammatical Competence in Terms of Semantics and Phonology

Items	1 Strongly Agree (%)	2 Agree (%)	3 Undecided (%)	4 Disagree (%)	5 Strongly Disagree (%)	Mean	SD
7. I have the ability to recognize the relationship of words with the context, interlexical relations	21.1	55.0	13.8	6.5	1.8	2.11	0.883
8. I have the ability to recognize logical relations (e.g. implicature, presupposition)	18.3	44.0	23.9	8.3	2.8	2.31	0.97
9. I have the ability to recognize and use phonemes and their distinctive features (e.g. nasality, pronunciation of "th", etc.)	24.8	50.5	15.6	6.4	2.7	2.04	0.827
10. I have the ability to use English segments and supra-segmental features in speech.	15.6	51.4	22.0	8.3	0.9	2.26	0.862
11. I use a mixture of simple, compound, and complex sentences.	26.6	50.5	14.7	1.8	3.7	2.03	0.92
12. I use sentence inversions to emphasize an important point.	22.9	45.9	19.3	7.3	1.8	2.17	0.941
13. I observe pacing to allow the audience to understand my message	25.7	52.3	14.7	4.6	0.9	2.01	0.83
14. I use appropriate verb tenses in group oral presentation	25.7	56.0	11.9	3.7	0.9	1.96	0.788
15. I have challenges using prepositions appropriately.	33.0	45.0	15.6	3.7	0.9	1.93	0.855
16. I avoid faulty fillers (errh, uum) in presenting ideas to group members.	26.6	41.3	15.6	14.7	1.8	2.19	1.001

Note: Mean values 1-2.5 means Agree; mean values of 2.51-3.5 means Undecided; 3.51-5 means Disagree.

According to the data, students are somewhat confident about their ability to identify connections between words and their context, as shown in their responses to Item 7. The mean value of 2.11 means the students agreed they could recognize interlexical relations in context. Like the responses to Item 7, the mean value of 2.31 suggests that students were somewhat confident in their ability to recognize logical relations, as shown in their responses to Item 8. This implies they could recognize the relationship of words within context and recognize logical relations in context. In terms of the ability to recognize and use phonemes, as shown in their responses to Item 9, the students agreed that they could recognise phonemes and their distinctive features. Their responses to item 10 also showed that they could use English segments and supra-segmental features in speech. Similarly, when it comes to the ability to use simple, compound, and complex sentences, as shown in Item 11, with a mean value of 2.03, they indicated that they could use different sentence structures. Regarding responses to Item 12, with a mean value of 2.17, the students indicated that they could use sentence inversions to emphasize important points. With regards to using pacing to aid audience understanding, as shown in Item 13, with the mean value of 2.01, the students indicated they observed pacing to allow the audience to understand their message. As for the use of appropriate verb tenses in presentations, as shown in Item 14, with a mean value of 1.96, the students agreed that they could use appropriate verb tenses in group oral presentations. However, the respondents admitted that they had challenges using prepositions appropriately. This is shown in their responses to item 15, with a mean value of 1.93 and a standard deviation of 0.855. Lastly, when it comes to avoiding fillers, as shown in Item 16, with a mean score of 2.19, the students indicated they were somewhat confident in their ability to avoid fillers in their speech. The results revealed a generally positive trend, as the mean values fell between 1.93 and 2.31. This indicates that students had a basic level of competence in using different language skills. However, studies have shown that linguistic competence has no significant relationship to the speaking or oral performance of students and that students who have low linguistic competence are still able to attain average or even high performance in speaking or oral presentations (Quines, 2023).

4.3 Sociolinguistic Competence

Table 3a evaluates what the participants think about their level of sociolinguistic competence during oral group presentations. It was found out that the students had a moderate level of confidence in their ability to adapt to language situations, as shown in Item 17) with a mean value of 2.08. Additionally, the students indicated that they did not use jargon and slang in the presentations, as shown in Item 18 with a mean value of 1.84. The results again show that the students saw themselves as making grammatically correct sentences with the appropriate vocabulary, having the ability to vary their language to suit the context, and having the ability to understand the context in terms of the participants' roles and the information they exchanged as shown in Items 19, 20, and 21 with the mean values of 1.9, 2.01, and 2.11 respectively.

Table 3a: Sociolinguistic competence in terms of linguistic awareness

Items	1 Strongly Agree (%)	2 Agree (%)	3 Undecided (%)	4 Disagree (%)	5 Strongly Disagree (%)	Mean	SD
17. I am able to adapt to language situations.	23.9	53.2	12.8	6.4	3.7	2.02	0.808
18. I do not use jargon or slang because group presentation is an academic exercise.	44.0	36.7	7.3	3.7	4.6	1.84	0.818
19. I make grammatically correct sentences with the appropriate vocabulary.	29.4	49.5	13.8	1.8	0.1	1.9	0.782
20. I have the ability to vary my language to suit the context.	25.7	56.0	10.0	2.8	3.7	2.01	0.906
21. I have the ability to understand the context in terms of the participants' roles and the information they exchange.	22.0	56.0	8.3	5.5	4.6	2.11	0.984
22. I use standard or accepted pronunciation forms.	27.5	50.5	14.7	3.7	0.9	1.97	0.822
23. I use cohesive devices effectively during group presentation.	19.3	51.4	18.3	7.3	0.9	2.17	0.867

Note: Mean values 1-2.5 means Agree; mean values of 2.51-3.5 means Undecided; 3.51-5 means Disagree

Lastly, the students considered themselves as using standard or accepted pronunciation forms and using cohesive devices effectively during the group presentations, as shown in Items 22 and 23 with the mean values of 1.97 and 2.17, respectively. These findings contrast with the findings of Bui *et al.* (2022), who revealed that students of Tay Do University of Vietnam usually make some mistakes in vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation in their presentations. The data from the present study suggests a generally positive outlook on student abilities. This means that the students exhibited sociolinguistic competence in terms of linguistic awareness. Scores across all assessed skills fell around *Agree* on the scale, indicating a good level of confidence. However, this indication of *Agree* rather than *Strongly Agree* suggests that there may be room for further development in these areas.

Table 3b: Sociolinguistic competence in terms of socio-cultural awareness

Items	1 Strongly Agree (%)	2 Agree (%)	3 Undecided (%)	4 Disagree (%)	5 Strongly Disagree (%)	Mean	SD
24. During group presentations I do not interrupt my colleagues when they are presenting or speaking.	41.3	40.4	8.3	6.4	1.8	1.85	0.96
25. I observe appropriate pauses before sharing my thoughts.	31.2	49.5	9.2	6.4	0.9	1.93	0.876
26. I address my colleagues with respect during group presentations.	46.8	39.4	6.4	2.8	1.8	1.7	0.864
27. I use non-verbal cues in my presentation.	21.1	50.5	17.4	6.4	1.8	2.15	0.903
28. I respond to my colleague's questions.	38.5	45.9	8.3	2.8	1.8	1.8	0.855
29. I pay attention to every group member's opinion.	50.5	39.4	5.5	2.8	1.8	1.6	0.725
30. I consider the cultural background of my colleagues.	45.9	42.2	5.5	2.8	0.9	1.6	0.789
31. I have ability to combine language structures in order to achieve interrelatedness	27.5	46.8	15.6	4.6	3.7	2.08	0.982
32. I have the ability to use language for conversation (starting, maintaining and ending conversations)	28.4	52.3	11.9	3.7	0.9	1.93	0.808
33. I have the ability to be flexible in terms of adapting what is said to the way in which it is said to a situation and the speakers.	25.7	56.9	7.3	5.5	1.8	1.98	0.862

Note: Mean values 1-2.5 means Agree; mean values of 2.51-3.5 means Undecided; 3.51-5 means Disagree; Mean of means: 1.86.

As shown in Table 3b above, the students indicated that they had sociolinguistic competence in terms of socio-cultural awareness with the *mean of means* value of 1.86. According to the participants, they did not interrupt one another during the presentations, they addressed one another with respect during the presentations, they showed respect to different opinions, they respected the cultural background of their

colleagues, and they were flexible in terms of adapting what was said to the way in which it was said to situations and the speakers.

Table 4: Strategic competence

Items	1 Strongly Agree (%)	2 Agree (%)	3 Undecided (%)	4 Disagree (%)	5 Strongly Disagree (%)	Mean	SD
34. I have the ability to initiate communication.	33.0	46.8	11.9	5.5	2.8	1.9	0.827
35. I have the ability to use verbal and non-verbal communication strategies when there is a stop in communication.	29.4	52.3	11.9	3.7	0.9	1.93	0.809
36. I have the ability to react quickly when the topic of the conversation changes	36.7	47.2	10.1	5.5	0.5	1.95	0.773
37. I have the ability to convey the main ideas to speakers	30.3	54.1	7.3	3.7	1.8	1.9	0.839
38. I have the ability to initiate communication.	29.4	53.2	9.2	4.6	1.8	1.94	0.867
39. I have the ability to use verbal and non-verbal communication strategies when there is a stop in communication.	26.6	46.8	14.7	7.3	1.8	2.08	0.947
40. I have the ability to react quickly when the topic of the conversation changes.	26.6	57.8	10.1	3.7	1.8	2.0	0.82
41. I have the ability to convey the main ideas to speakers.	27.5	53.2	13.8	3.7	1.8	1.93	0.756
42. I always rephrase my ideas to clarify complex information.	33.9	50.5	11.0	0.9	0.9	1.81	0.745
43. I asked questions to ensure the audience was paying attention.	29.4	46.8	13.8	5.5	1.8	2.01	0.921
44. I manage the flow of discussion efficiently.	28.4	49.5	10.1	6.4	2.8	2.03	0.961

Note: (Mean values 1-2.5 means Agree; mean values of 2.51-3.5 means Undecided; 3.51-5 means Disagree; Mean of means: 1.95

The purpose of assessing the students' strategic competence was to ascertain whether being students of higher learning they possessed knowledge of verbal and non-verbal communication strategies and whether they could overcome difficulties when there was a break in communication. The *mean of means* value of 1.95 shows that the students considered themselves strategically competent as far as the oral group presentations were concerned. The results show that the students could use verbal and non-verbal communication strategies when there is a stop in communication, they could react quickly when the topic of the conversation changed, they could rephrase their ideas to clarify complex information, and they could manage the flow of discussions efficiently.

5. Conclusion

Evidence from the study suggests that group oral presentations in diverse ways support students' communicative competence. The students acknowledged that group oral presentations improved their speaking and interactions. The college of education students had a positive perception towards group oral presentations as a way of enhancing their communicative competence. It also became evident from the data that college of education students demonstrated a high level of knowledge and understanding in terms of lexis, semantics, and syntax. However, they exhibited limited awareness in terms of phonological knowledge, as they demonstrated poor pronunciation of words. However, they considered themselves socio-linguistically and strategically competent in the oral group presentations. The study contributes to knowledge in the area of using oral presentations to enhance ESL learners' communicative competence.

Conflict of Interest Statement
The authors have no conflicts of interest to declare.

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