

# How to Teach University Students to Make an Attractive TED-like Speech



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By

Ran Fan

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Professor Donna Tatsuki also cared about my personal life in Japan. During my time as a doctoral student, I also had to take on the responsibility of caring for my elementary school-aged son. The financial and time pressures were immense. The sudden outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic made my life even more challenging. Right at that time, professor Donna Tatsuki introduced great job opportunities to me as a teaching assistant in Kobe City University of Foreign Studies and a lecturer in Minadogawa Church in Kobe. I should say without her support, I could hardly imagine I could move on and on to finish this project abroad.

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## PREFACE

As an English instructor at a local Chinese university, I frequently grapple with the definition of my pedagogical objectives. In the contemporary landscape of rapidly advancing technology, the dissemination of language knowledge has evolved beyond the conventional role of primary emphasis--teaching and learning linguistic knowledge--for university language educators. Students now possess the capability to independently engage with language learning through readily available online resources. This prompts a critical examination of the attainable objectives within the framework of our language classrooms.

Fortuitously, the university where I am employed advocates for a pedagogical environment that encourages instructors to innovatively design their own English courses. Consequently, I have undertaken a comprehensive restructuring of the curriculum for the "English Public Speaking" course. The purpose of this course design is to support students in their future employment endeavors, enhancing their communication skills, understanding of different cultures, tolerance, and critical and creative thinking abilities. Within the confines of the classroom, I endeavor to leverage online speech examples, assisting students in orchestrating simulated speech activities. This pedagogical approach serves as a catalyst for students to actively participate in discussions within the context of these activities.

This book compiles some of my experiments, analyses, and reflections from teaching English public speaking. Through my journey along the path of innovation, I have uncovered educational strategies to enhance students' persuasive skills in presentations. Within its pages lies The

CUEPADES Curriculum Development Cycle, born from my teaching experiences in China and refined through global exploration, culminating in practical insights. Drawing on the TED-Talk genre, the book delves into the essentials of delivering effective English presentations and offers valuable educational strategies for a robust curriculum. Grounded in real classroom experiences, it aims to empower educators in shaping future courses. I earnestly hope that the process and outcomes detailed in this revised curriculum can inspire fellow teachers and find application in English language teaching worldwide.

# CHAPTER ONE

## OVERVIEW

### **1.1 Introduction**

Chapter one describes the context and rationale for this research. The chapter begins by introducing the seven-year journey of the writer who was a teacher of an Academic Presentation Course in a local university in China. The chapter will briefly describe some of the problems that emerged while teaching presentation skills and learning about this subject simultaneously and how that led to a sense of urgency to revise the curriculum. In order to conduct a systematic curriculum revision, it was necessary to consider current instructional design frameworks in order to create a suitable curriculum development framework for this research. With this framework in mind, the structure of this book in the subsequent chapters will be outlined.

### **1.2 Research background and context**

From 2009 to 2019, I worked as an English teacher in a local university in China. I was required to teach many courses like pronunciation, listening, advanced intensive reading, news reading and English presentation to English majors. During the long period, I deeply felt that China's English education at universities needed renovation. The previous focus on grammar instruction has shifted to an emphasis on practical communication. To meet these new demands, I made a great effort to re-design the English

Presentation Course, which I had been teaching for nearly seven years, with the expectations of changing it into a career-supporting practical course.

Always as a critic of teacher-centered pedagogy, during the first three years of my teaching the course, I organized student-centered activities. For instance, the students and I watched together some presentations made by celebrities in order to examine their presentation skills. We analyzed the presentation skills through class discussions, then I asked them to use what they had learned in order to make their own speeches on daily life topics such as introducing a book, or a person. Each student was asked to present a five to ten-minute speech in front of the class at the end of the semester. They were informed that the presentation would be regarded as a test and would be evaluated only by the teacher. However, because of the large size of the class (70 students), the evaluation was very time consuming. It could take up to four class hours to get through all of the student presentations which meant fewer classes available for actual instruction. Furthermore, students started complaining about the confusing and (what they felt was) subjective evaluation criteria, even though it had been adapted from an established oral speaking assessment rubric (see Table 1-1).

Through informal conversations with students, I also learned that they did not experience a sense of improvement in their presentation ability. They felt that the course tried to cover too much and yet failed to give them a clear picture of what a good presentation is like. Moreover, as English majors, they felt disappointed that the course did not seem to improve their English communication ability within specific academic fields.

Table 1-1. The Oral Speaking Assessment Rubric (adapted from College English oral speaking evaluation, 2012)

Points	Content
90-100	Good pronunciation and intonation
	Variety of vocabulary and grammar
80-90	Good pronunciation and intonation
	Some mistakes of using vocabulary and grammar
	Variety of vocabulary
70-80	Poor pronunciation
	Lack of vocabulary and grammar
	Communicative misunderstanding
60-70	Poor pronunciation and many pauses
	Many mistakes of using vocabulary and grammar
	Communicative misunderstanding
below 60	Too many mistakes and pauses to complete communication

In the following years, I tried to adjust the course, to meet the demands of the students. For example, in order to increase the classroom efficiency, I designed group activities. Student groups (five to ten students/group) were asked to select the celebrity presentation videos that would serve as performance models, and then they would create a group presentation for the final test. In addition, to motivate students and encourage their autonomous learning, I gave up the conventional oral speaking rubric and invited the students to create a peer assessment rubric and then evaluate other groups' final presentations.

Selecting presentation models among countless videos was a difficult task for us. The presentation length varied a great deal, from several minutes to more than one hour. Some speakers talked too fast and there were no

subtitle or transcription available. Some videos were of poor screen quality. Finally, in 2015, my students and I became aware of the popular TED Talks. My students were very interested in the TED Talks and expressed a strong desire to perform as well as the TED talkers did. Moreover, topics in a wide range of academic fields were available in the TED Talk collection.

In 2017, the university administration encouraged me to turn the presentation course into a flipped classroom (Mok, 2014) in which students would do a large amount of preparatory work outside the classroom and the use the classroom contact time for discussion, performance and socially mediated learning. Since the students had poor script writing ability, I invited two English teachers to work with them to correct their scripts. I also told them to take part in an online course “English Writing” as a supplement into my classroom TED Talk activities. All the efforts were supported by the students. They devoted a lot of time and energy to the course, and overall, the new course was considered to be an improvement over the previous ones.

At the same time, as a teacher, I faced the necessity of implementing the course again, guiding students the true art of public speaking in foreign language, especially English, and training them the practical communicative ability to meet the demand of globalized workplace. I was still not satisfied that the course was as effective as it could be, so I decided that it was time to do a much more detailed and systematic redesign of this course.

### **1.3 Research rationale and aim**

The Academic English Presentation Course is a comprehensive course containing many elements: presentation skills, English language ability, academic knowledge and use of technology. Thus, teaching and learning



such a course effectively is a complicated task. In order to find the right needs analysis framework for a solid curriculum design, this book will take into consideration several famous curriculum design models and develop a customized framework cycle in order to systematically prepare an efficient and effective presentation course.

### ***1.3.1 The ADDIE model***

The ADDIE model is a famous umbrella term used for instructional system design. ADDIE is an acronym for the five phases: Analysis, Design, Development, Implementation and Evaluation. According to Mondale (2003) its origin is unknown, but it was apparent that the ADDIE model of instruction systems design was first applied by the U.S. armed forces in the 1970s (Penney, 2016). People from many fields have used this model as a framework for course design and development.

Hess and Greer (2016) and McGriffin (2000) interpret the ADDIE model as follows: Analysis refers to the process of identifying problem and needs and understanding the learning situation. Design is the process of designing objectives and instructional strategy. Development is the process of developing learning resources and pilot session. Evaluation is the process of interpreting whether the instruction results adequate or not. The ADDIE model is recursive, in the sense that the end of one phase is the starting of the next phase and the cycle never ends (see Figure 1-1).

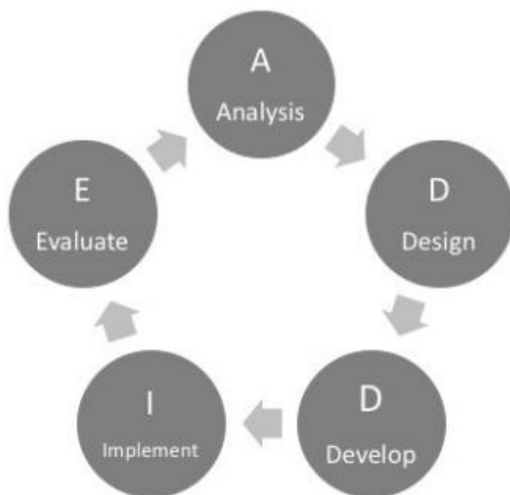


Figure 1-1. The ADDIE Model (adapted from Penney, 2016)

The ADDIE model has been applied to design the courses of different subjects and the results are fruitful. Arkun and Akkoyunlu (2008) developed a multimedia learning environment in the mathematics course of fourth grade primary classes according to the ADDIE model. By carrying out all the five steps, they emphasized the needs of computer-based multimedia learning environment to train individual students. The students positively responded to the enjoyable learning environment, successfully used what they have learned and made their own self-evaluations. Hess and Greer (2016) used the model to integrated e-learning best practices in teaching and learning into an online literacy course. They concluded that the model was helpful for librarians to develop instructional interactions, engage students and assess intentionally.

### 1.3.2 The Five-Year development cycle

Another similar needs analysis cycle, called The Five-Year Development Cycle (Curriculum Development Cycle, 2015) was introduced by Institute of Progressive Education and Learning. The multiyear process is mainly used by K-12 directors, but may have relevance to this book. As noted previously, the revision of the Academic Presentation Course is not a one semester task. It took the writer approximately five years to modify classroom activities, choose suitable speech models, gather the student's performances and responses and design evaluation. The experimental path of this book is more or less similar with the Five-Year Development Cycle as it “allows for systematic research, evaluations, revisions, implementation and refinement” (n.p.). In the sample curriculum development cycle provided (Curriculum Development Cycle, 2015), the review and evaluation of the existing curriculum starts in the first year. New curriculum and instructional materials are developed in the second year. A pilot implementation program is launched in the third year. Data are collected and surveys are done in the fourth year. In the fifth year, the implementation of the updated curriculum is evaluated, which coincides with the launch of the next cycle (see Figure 1-2).

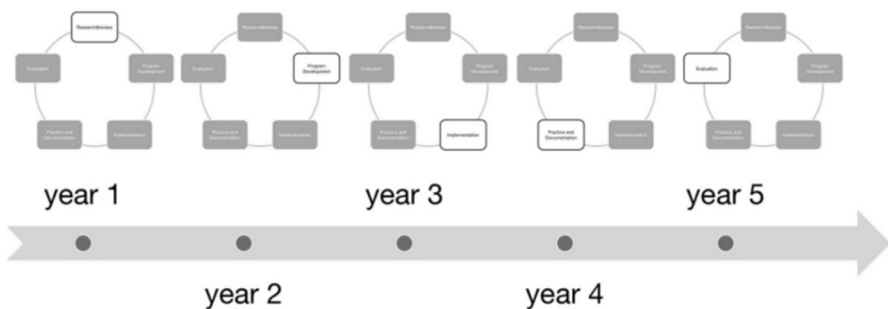


Figure 1-2. The Five-Year Development Cycle (adapted from Curriculum Development Cycle, 2015)

### ***1.3.3 Kern's Six-Step approach***

The Six-Step Approach (Kern, 1998), variously called Kern's Six-Step Curriculum or Framework or Model or Cycle, was designed for medical education. This cycle starts from problem identification. Then the targeted needs are assessed, goals and objectives are set. The fourth step is developing educational strategies, followed by the fifth step implementation. Evaluation and feedback are the last step (Kern & Thomas & Howard & Bass, 1998) (see Figure 1-3).

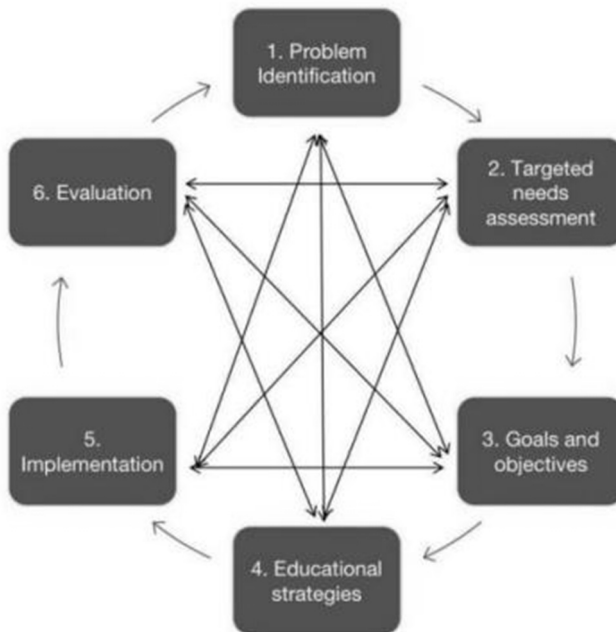


Figure 1-3. Six-Step Curriculum Framework (adapted from Kern, 1998)

The research on the utilization of the framework proves the effective implementation of the curricula of health education (Sweet & Palazzi,

2015). Although this approach echoes the ADDIE very much it adds a problem identification component. The importance of a problem identification component is that in some cases the curriculum revision cycle requires more than incremental adjustments of materials and procedures. In some cases, there may be serious deficiencies in knowledge about the instructional context, the learners themselves, or the knowledge domain. Thus, a time and space to investigate some seriously underarticulated aspect will be useful.

### ***1.3.4 The instructional cycle of the book***

All the previously described development models, inspired a hybrid diagram called CUEPADES for this project (see Figure 1-4). The five-year development cycle inspired the starting place (previous classroom use combined with evaluation). The Kern model introduces the problem identification component and the ADDIE model adds the flow of the development cycle.

In the context of this project, six steps are involved. The first step is CU (Classroom Use) in which the background and implementation of a course in China is described. The second step is E (Evaluation). In this section an analysis of student-constructed peer-evaluation rubrics will be examined in order to ascertain their awareness of what constitutes a successful presentation. This will be accomplished by comparing their rubrics with a rubric extracted via a meta-analysis of many teachers developed presentation rubrics. The differences between the student rubrics and the idealized teacher rubrics will be instrumental in the third step, which is P (Problem Identification). Based on the detailed investigation on what has been done in the past from teacher and student perspectives, the problem identification step will highlight the missing fundamentals for a successful presentation. Among these missing fundamentals are things like the

selection of a model presentation (TED Talks) and knowledge of how this presentation genre operates. This is directly connected to the fourth step, A (Analysis), which seeks to establish the genre characteristics of a three to six-minute TED Talk model (structure, moves, linguistic choices). This model will be used as a standard to compare with the student's presentations in order to realize what pedagogical objectives should be focused on for future teaching and learning. The last two steps are D (Design) and ES (Educational Strategies). The research in each of these steps aims to find the educational strategies that will address the student deficiencies in the design of a revised curriculum.

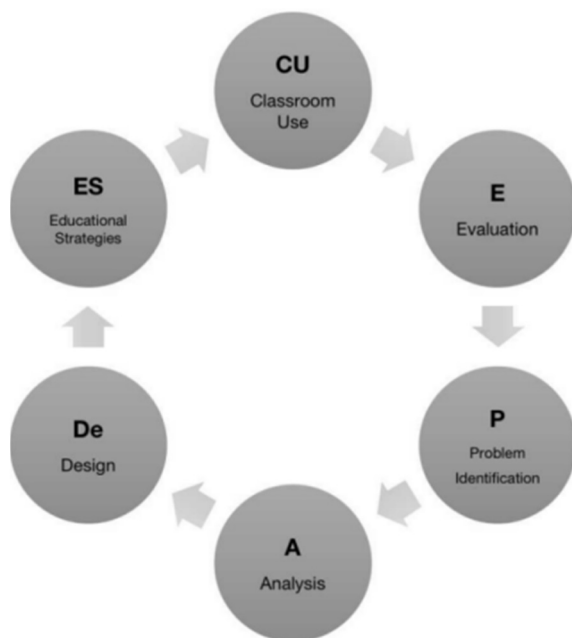


Figure 1-4. The CUEPADES Curriculum Development Cycle (adapted from the ADDIE model (Penney, 2016) and Kern model (Kern, 1998))

It also should be noted that the cycle is as recursive as the ADDIE model. The decision not to write step numbers like Kern's model is predicated on the belief that a teacher can start anywhere in the cycle corresponding to the specific needs of the educational context.

## **1.4 Value and originality of the research**

Teachers are often assigned by the administration to teach a new course without being provided enough time to prepare for it. Their knowledge may not be sufficient to support them to design the new course efficiently. In this condition, they depend much on the previous knowledge and experiences. However, thinking about the ever-changing society and demands of every student generation, the first version of curriculum should be reflected and evaluated, then the second implementing version is designed and carried out. Then the second wave of reflection and evaluation follows, the third version is created. The cycle circulates.

However, it is common that in China teachers take in charge of several courses and are difficult to design one course patiently. Also, the teacher-centered classroom culture makes them ignore the student needs and value too much on the examination result. They either have no impetus or no scientific guidance to follow the cycle.

This book records my teaching experience of exploring an efficient course design to improve student's presentation ability. At the same time, some scientific methods of constructing an evaluation rubric and analyzing presentation models like TED Talks are introduced. The research attempts to enlighten the teachers to develop their courses in the future.

Moreover, in the field of presentation teaching and learning, very little research has been done on the creation of an instructional cycle although we know the importance of following such a cycle in our pedagogy. Also,

few meta-analyses of evaluation rubrics, or curriculum development models have been done to understand the relations between needs analyses and successful learning comprehensively. This book creates the CUEPADES cycle and makes all of its analyses on the basis of real classroom teaching and learning, so it can be regarded as a verified practical guide for teachers to carry out their classroom practices.

### **1.5 Outline of the book**

The book consists of eight chapters. This chapter (Chapter one) states the significance, purposes and structure of the book and endeavors to explain the context and rationale of creating an instruction development cycle of the Academic English Presentation Course. Chapters two to seven represent components of the cycle, and take the form of six distinct thesis-within-thesis structures, each with their own literature review, research questions, methodologies, results and discussions. Chapter eight will provide an executive summary of all of the previous chapters and will make connections among the studies, and suggest future research. The next paragraphs will preview the topics of chapters two to seven.

The second chapter describes the background of the English presentation course in China. It introduces the rationale behind the course as it was designed originally and details some of the procedures followed for the training of student's academic English presentation ability in China. Five separate presentation syllabi were the basis of a meta-analysis to determine the common features of such courses in China. The student performance data that was collected forms the basis of the needs-analysis described in Chapter three.

The third chapter analyses a student-constructed assessment rubric and compares it to a composite rubric that was derived from a meta-analysis of ideal teacher rubrics. The factors significant to the delivery of a successful



presentation (but ignored by students) are detected and discussed. The idealized teacher rubric, with special consideration of areas not present in student rubrics will be used in the fourth chapter.

The fourth chapter identifies the deficiencies in student presentations through direct assessment and evaluation of a set of video-taped efforts. The idealized teacher rubric implemented to identify the various problem areas that weaken the overall product. The specific problem areas identified in this chapter will be combined with the findings of Chapter five which is a genre analysis of TED Talks, and provides the model which will inform the pedagogical target. Thus, Chapters four and five will inform the construction of a revised syllabus (Chapter six) that will properly address student needs and enable them to reach the newly specified target.

In the fifth chapter, the globally popular TED Talks have been selected as positive role models for students to emulate when preparing a successful presentation. However, in order to use TED Talks as a model it is necessary to truly understand the genre. This requires a total genre analysis to determine its persuasive characteristics. Things like discourse move structure, lexical choices and the use of classical rhetoric (ethos, logo, pathos) will be examined to distill the essence of good TED Talks.

Chapter six is concerned with setting concrete pedagogical goals and objectives. To do that it is necessary to combine the finding of Chapters three and five. Therefore, after the characteristics of TED Talks are discerned, the idealized presentation rubric created in Chapter three will be revised to incorporate them. The revised rubric forms the basis of a re-analysis of the student video-taped presentations (including TED Talk characteristics, lexical choices and rhetorical moves) to make an even finer tuned set of pedagogical goals for the revised presentation course.

The seventh chapter provides the educational strategies that are connected to each of the pedagogical goals and objectives defined in Chapter six. Special attention is paid to Aristotle's logos, ethos and pathos, as well as story-telling skills during this design phase. The sequence of activities in the refined syllabus will integrate story telling skills, rhetorical strategies and TED Talk discourse move structures in a series of scaffolded activities.

As mentioned earlier, Chapter eight will summarize the main substantive results, will offer recommendations for future research.

## CHAPTER TWO

### CLASSROOM USE

This chapter describes the background of the English presentation course in China. It introduces the rationale behind the course as it was designed originally and details some of the procedures followed for the training of student's academic English presentation ability in China. In order to have a state-of-the-art picture of the teaching of presentation at that time, five separate presentation syllabi will form the basis of a meta-analysis to determine the common features of such courses in China.

As mentioned in Chapter one, a hybrid diagram called CUEPADES has been designed for this book. The starting point for this curriculum development cycle will be the course that was delivered to students in China in 2017. Thus, the scene opens in the component called "Classroom Use" and describes the procedure that had been assembled for training students to develop their academic English presentation ability in a local university in China (see Figure 2-1 for a reminder of the development cycle created in Chapter one). As part of the detailed description of the teaching strategies that had been implemented for classroom use, this chapter will answer a number of important background questions related to English presentations as they were envisioned in the program at that time. These questions include:

- What are the reasons that the Chinese administration wanted the university to hold this class?

- What did the teachers want students to learn regarding presentation skills?
- What were the common components of the teaching plans?

The answers to these questions will serve as input for the Design phase which will be described in Chapter six.

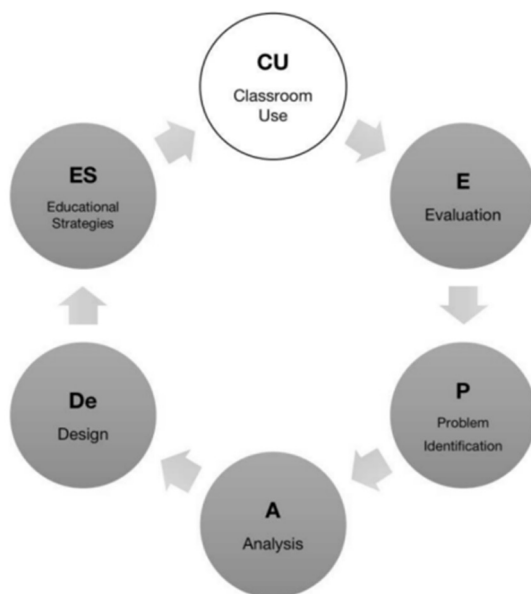


Figure 2-1 The Curriculum Development Cycle

As mentioned earlier, the research in this chapter analyzed five existing syllabi to find the similarities among components. This will provide an understanding of the approaches common at that time. This chapter was written based on the writer's presentation at the JALT (The Japan Association for Language Teaching) International Conference held in 2020.

## **2.1 Literature review**

### ***2.1.1 Government policy of the English Presentation Course***

Public speaking skills offer a means to pass a job interview or give a successful presentation at work. Therefore, speech-making or public-speaking could be seen as an important aspect of life skill training. Nevertheless, people rarely acquire these skills. Teodosijevic and Novakovic (2017) claim that young people can hardly expect to grow up with the ability to do public speaking because neither their parents nor their inexperienced teachers are likely to be successful public speakers themselves.

China's English presentation skills course for university students originated from the public speaking course in US. The course was given various names like the English Presentation course, the English Presentation and Debate course or the English Public Speaking course. Therefore, in this book, Presentation, Public Speech, and Public Speaking, are used interchangeably. The different course names are unified as English Presentation Course.

In 2000, the Chinese Ministry of Education issued an English education policy instructing universities and colleges to pursue the goal of cultivating students' competence of foreign language as well as bridging the cultural gap so that they could produce graduates who were capable of applying foreign language to foreign affairs, education, technology, and so on (Peng, 2008). From that time, the English presentation course started its role of developing and cultivating of students' academic and intercultural comprehensions on various subjects. It gradually became a popular course in many Chinese universities. More than 200 universities have opened the course as elective or compulsory (Wang, 2014). In 2017, government designated the course to increase university students academic English ability and academic communication ability (University English Education

Guideline, 2017). The demand of teaching and learning presentation skills as well as academic knowledge has been clarified.

### ***2.1.2 Teachers' expectations for the English Presentation Course***

Chinese university teachers expected the English Presentation Course to reform the traditional English teaching by adding more contemporary and communicative components. Thus, the course attempted to realize many purposes.

First and primarily, the course was seen as a way to improve students' English language ability. In order to train students to have intelligible pronunciation, some teachers carried out student presentation activities during the first 10 minutes of each class (Lu, 2019). Some teachers required students to listen to and read the latest news and then rewrite the news into a presentation script format. In this way, teachers believed the basic four skills (listening, reading, speaking, writing) could be improved simultaneously (Zhang, 2011).

Another expectation for the course was to cultivate students' communicative ability. Some teachers divided students into groups and required students to prepare presentations by team work. The teachers assumed that the course, when presented in this way, improved the communication between teachers and students, students and students (Lu, 2019; Zhang, 2011). Moreover, some teachers thought that students could learn presentation strategies by doing different speech types (introductory speech, informative speech, persuasive speech) (Zhang, 2011). In addition, some teachers asserted the English Presentation Course should teach students cross-cultural communication, which could help students simultaneously understand Chinese and foreign culture (Wang, 2014; Zhang, 2011).