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SPEAKING IN EST[1]

This paper deals with the skill of speaking in EST in terms of the activities that can improve students' ability of speaking in English and the strategies followed to achieve that aim. The data used in this paper were collected from Jordan University of Science and Technology where EST courses are taught. Our investigation extended over a considerable span of time as we needed to teach all the devised activities to find out their effects on the students' skill of speaking. The results were impressive in the sense that these activities showed great positive impacts on the students' performance in oral presentations. Finally, different approaches of teaching were suggested to minimize or eliminate the problems associated with group work.

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this study is to demonstrate the effect of group work and/or team work on students' ability in oral presentations in EST classrooms. In fact, all our students were school leavers having recently undertaken the Jordanian General Secondary Certificate Examination in the scientific stream. All the data, examples, frameworks of discussions were taken from our own EST situation at Jordan University of Science and Technology (hereafter JUST). English is the medium of instruction at this university which in turn made it very difficult to avoid the importance of the EST courses offered at JUST. The materials for these courses are usually written locally by the ESP teachers recruited by JUST.

The chief aim of these courses is to enable JUST students to cope with their target situation (subject departments). All the major skills: reading, writing, listening and speaking are equally needed by these students. Nevertheless, the skill of speaking has not been given the right emphasis in our syllabuses. The negligence of speaking in our situation is due to a number of reasons. First, compared with the other major skills, we found it difficult to write EST materials to train oral communication. Second, experience has revealed that some students and even teachers (in our situation) think that to teach speaking is unmanageable and could be a waste of time. Because of these beliefs, we decided to carry out our investigation which brought about useful results in this respect as we will see in the following sections.

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[1] The abbreviations used in this paper are: *EAP*: English for Academic Purposes, *ESP*: English for Specific Purposes, *EST*: English for Science & Technology, *JUST*: Jordan University of Science & Technology, *P*.: Probability, FL: Foreign Language.

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With one or more data, the t test is appropriate to find out the differences and their significance level.

AN OVERVIEW

While much of the literature written on ESP in general and on EST in particular has focused on the skills of reading and writing and sometimes on listening, a number of ESP practitioners and thinkers voiced their worries over the negligence of speaking. Reviewing a number of EST course books, one notices the negligence of speaking in ESP in general, and in EST in particular. For example, the Widdowson series (1979) *Reading and Thinking in English* focuses on the other skills (e.g., reading, writing, etc.) and ignores speaking. Bates/Dudley-Evans (1976) *Nucleus: General Science* emphasizes grammatical structures and reading required in EST and ignores speaking. Adkins/McKean (1983) *Text to Note* concentrates mainly on listening and ignores speaking. Chaplen (1981) and many other course books do the same.

Although speaking activities in ESP/EST have been ignored, a number of needs analyses in different EST situations have proved its importance and necessity in these situations. Moreover, some ESP thinkers and practitioners believe that speaking is crucial in ESP. Thus Robinson (1991) argues:

> "If not a need, speaking is often a want, since in many students' opinions oral proficiency is the best indicator of mastery of a language."   (Robinson 1991: 105)

In addition, James (1988: 112) argues that in ESP it is the speaking that is the "make or break" skill for students. Approximately the same point is also expressed by McKenna (1987: 25-28). In his study of the needs conducted at JUST, Khuwaileh (1992: 230f.) found that speaking is not only a major required skill, but also a want that was put high on the list of the wants of the students involved in that situation. This point seems to show the contradiction between what many ESP/EST theorists imply and what is being carried out by ESP/EST practitioners in their classrooms. A marriage between both sets of people appears to be inevitable in future to serve and meet the requirements and needs of at least JUST students.

This is why we believe that our study is significant in terms of meeting the requirements and wants/preferences of our students. It is worth mentioning that McAlpin (1986: 69) and Tawfiq (1984:85-97) came to the same conclusion about their students. Most importantly, our findings could also be significant for other EST situations similar to that of JUST. These findings may also be revealing to course designers and teachers in other situations who can be guided by what is shown in our situation. Moreover, it is worth mentioning that the emphasis on group work and student-centred approaches to learning is very important as experience has revealed and as Hutchinson/Waters (1987) state. Before we discuss what was involved in our study, we will demonstrate, in the following section, the methods we followed to implement our objective.

SAMPLES AND METHODS

As mentioned above, EST courses are taught at JUST to enable JUST students to cope with their target situation. In the final EST course, students are required to work on a project/term paper where a number of skills are intended to be involved and practised (e.g., reading and writing). In the first few weeks of the second semester 1992/1993, we dealt with a variety of skills useful for collecting data/information and students were guided and helped to select suitable scientific topics to write about. They were also taught how to organize their data. The language which students needed was also elaborated (e.g., means of comparison and contrast, classification, definition, etc.).

To serve the purpose of this study, we chose randomly two groups of EST students at JUST; each of which comprises fifty students who all study medicine, engineering, agriculture and nursing. The two groups which included males and females aged from eighteen to twenty years have a very strong motivation towards their scientific studies and English. Group A was a control group where we did not teach any activites, skills, strategies, etc. pertinent to speaking. Group B was the experimental group where we adjusted our teaching to concentrate on speaking activities, skills, etc. that are believed to influence the improvement of students' ability in speaking and presentations. That is to say, we put much emphasis on the activities and presentation strategies that intend to maximize students' level of speaking with confidence. The adjustment of our teaching extended over twelve weeks. In weeks fourteen and fifteen, both groups were required to present their projects. Each student was given ten minutes to present his/her project to the rest of the class and be ready to answer questions raised by the audience to show his/her ability in responding spontaneously using English as a means of communication while we observed and graded their performance.

A number of criteria/standards were set up to be considered in the grading system and to guide our marking scheme. Below is a list of problem areas (criteria) intended to improve students' ability in the above mentioned skills and to be considered the basis of our grading system. During the presentations and discussions, we put a tick next to each criterion met by the speaker.

1. A good start? E.g., does he/she start by an introductory statement/general framework to cover the topic he/she will be covering and guide his audience smoothly to the core of the topic?
2. Does he/she run out of words/ideas? E.g., long stopping, hesitation, etc.
3. Does he/she manage to make a presentation without reading? E.g., is it really a presentation based on notes, not a text?
4. Does he/she manage to keep the attention of his audience?
5. Nervousness: Does he/she manage to control his nervousness?
6. Sound and intonation: Is it too high, too low?

7. Interpretation and explanation: E.g., does he/she manage to interpret his non-verbal data properly (e.g., graphs, pie charts, tables, histograms)?
8. General appearance: Does he/she use his facial expressions and head to help him/her to convey the message properly?
9. English: Is it good enough? E.g., level of grammar, vocabulary, etc.
10. Use of frames of speech, speaking fillers, signal words and concluding words and expressions: Does he/she use them? If yes, properly? E.g., *right. okay, well, we mean …, that is to say, the point is …, finally, lastly, to sum up, to recap*, etc.

In fact, some of these criteria are behavioural (e.g., items 4, 5 and 8, etc.) and many others are linguistic ones (e.g., 2, 3, 9, 10, etc.). We mixed both types of criteria because it is very difficult to separate them in speaking/presentation situations as such.

All the activities, exercises, etc. were designed in such a way that group work was appropriate or even required. For example, they did not consist of independent pieces of work which can be carried out by individuals with little or no group decision required. The minimum number of each group was two students; and the maximum was five. In the classroom of the experimental group, there were two dimensions for practising speaking: product and process. First, the discussion and argumentation that took place during group work is the process. Second, in most cases, each group was instructed to choose a speaker, spokesman or spokeswoman to present the group's viewpoint or speaking product. Much emphasis was put on this issue to ensure group discussion and agrumentation as stated earlier. Students were given the choice of choosing the members of their group which is also a lesson in classroom democracy. This democracy was necessary in our situation as all our students were adults. Therefore, minimizing the role of the teacher and maximizing the role played by students in this situation and in many similar situations were very workable in our EST environment and these techniques are highly recommendable as experience has revealed and as Singleton (1989) and Lee (1992) note.

> "In the first few sessions, we taped some of the students' discussions, debates, argumentations, etc. during their group work. The recorded groups were reassured that they were not going to be marked so that we could have realistic and spontaneous talks. The recording purpose was to improve students' ability in speaking by letting them listen again to the recorded materials and by our constructive criticism and discussion for all the class of common mistakes and speaking shortages of the group recorded."
>
> (Singleton 1989: 151)

> "Finally, after student graded presentations, the results of both groups were compared and contrasted with respect to the afore-mentioned criteria. That was possible because towards the end of the semester (weeks 13 & 14), students were required to present their project in both groups (the experimental and the control groups) as mentioned earlier in this section. After calculating the average of performance, the t test was applied to measure the statistical significance. The statistical probability of occurrence was set before applying the t test and the value of $P < .05$ was accepted as the critical value which indicates the statistical significance."
>
> (Lee 1992: 9)

This stage was followed by interviewing 30 students from the experimental group and the control one; fifteen from each (30% of the whole sample). They were interviewed by the researcher to talk about their feelings towards the presentation and the problem areas they encountered shortly before and during their presentations. The purpose of having the interviewees' responses is to enhance our findings on the one hand, and to try to encourage them to pinpoint any other areas neglected by the researcher so that they could be considered by other researchers.

DISCUSSION AND INTERPRETATION

As mentioned above, the major aim of this experiment was to improve students' ability in speaking in order to help them to catch up and cope with their target situations. The methods and criteria discussed in the previous section were followed precisely in connection with group B (the experimental group), while these methods were not applied in the control group (group A).

In general, the performance of group B was far better than that of group A. Looking at the tables of grades in Appendix I, it can be clearly seen that the average of group B is much higher (8.2 out of ten) than that of group A (4.7 out of 10). These results seem to be reliable as the significance level of the t test is 0.000 which means that the results are highly significant under the critical value of 5 (P < .05). In addition, while 18 students failed in group A, nobody failed in group B. The discrepancy in the performance of each group demonstrates the efficiency of the methods followed in relation to the teaching of group B. On top of that, the students' confidence while speaking to an audience in English developed considerably. That is to say, the improvement is due to the frequent speaking exercises and useful guidance carried out in the classroom of group B. The low average of group A is explained by the absence of speaking exercises and perhaps the right guidance by a teacher. This finding is in agreement with Jordan's (1990: 47) argument who notes that class activities are very helpful in improving students' confidence and ability in speaking. Besides, Khuwaileh (1992: 243-249) found statistically high correlation coefficients between the problem of EST student lack of confidence and their speaking and presentation skills and ability.

Speaking with confidence was clearly noticed in the performance of group B, whereas the members of group A were shaky and hesitant during their presentations. This means that this group found it difficult to speak in English while facing an audience. Surprisingly, as shown in Appendix I, two students obtained 9 and 8.5 out of 10 in group A (the control group) though our methods were not applied in their classroom as stated above. A plausible explanation for this phenomenon is that those two students were originally very good ones even before they joined JUST. Probably they were graduates from private schools where the quality of education is very high (see the notes of Bermamet/Zash (1985: 2790f.) regarding

education in Jordanian private schools) due to the availability of good teachers who can be in some cases native speakers of English. Another explanation for this issue could be the individual differences that can be found in any classroom. While some students are very confident in nature, many others could be shaky and less confident when it comes to speaking in a foreign language to an audience (see also Skehan 1989).

Apart from these two students, most of the students in group A showed a lack of behavioural and linguistic techniques and strategies for good presentations. For example, in this group, most of the students failed to keep the attention of their audience. Their presentations seemed to be *readings* (e.g., they were not talking on the basis of prepared notes, they were rather reading from a written text). An explanation of their failure to keep the attention of their audience is that the listeners suffered boredom due to the lack of interaction between them and the presenter/speaker. This boredom was obvious from the expression on the faces of the listeners. It might be due to the ignorance of the speaker to look equally at the different sides of the classroom. Some presenters did not even dare to look once at their audience. They kept reading from their notes, or, even worse, from their texts. Perhaps another reason can be added in this context. It is the frequency of giving presentations or seminars both in ESP classrooms and their subject and/or laboratory sessions. That is to say, as most of them were fresh students (school leavers), it is plausible to say that it was the first time they did presentations as English syllabuses in Jordanian schools do not emphasize group work and speaking.

On the other hand, during their presentations, most of the students in group B kept successfully the attention of their audience. For instance, they looked in all the directions in the classroom, for instance. Moreover, those students were commenting on their notes, not reading from written texts. They also seemed to wander freely from their notes to a reasonable extent. Accordingly, their audience's attention was kept most of the time, if not all the time. The researcher also took field notes concerning the performance and products of both the experimental group and the control one. A handful of people were even noticed to nod to show their interest in the speaker presentation (using their heads, movements of their hands and their facial expressions). This can be explained by the maximum interaction between the speakers and their audience.

As far as the criterion of *good start* is concerned, most of the speakers of the experimental group (group B) started by appropriate statement(s) that drew the attention of their audience. Moreover, their statements were very general and included general frameworks of their presentations. As noticed by the researcher, the audience were guided smoothly and gradually to the *core or heart* of the speakers' topics so that the speakers succeeded in focusing the attention of their audience. The satisfaction of the audience could be noticed from their faces. Perhaps this point also reflects the good organization of the speakers of this group. For example, many of them started by statements like the following:

Right what I am going to try to do today is to talk about diabetic people … am … I will start first by defining this disease, then I will talk about the complications that take place if patients do not treat themselves at the right time … finally I will talk about the prevention of this disease …

Another student started by:

I am going to present a talk about the use of computers by JUST students … After telling you about the different types of computers I will tell you about the different programmes you can use in computers …

Moreover, these students used frames of speech (e.g., well, right, so far so good, etc.) which made their presentations clearer than those of group A who did not use these techniques. This divided their presentations into clearcut blocks which could be easily noticed and understood by the listeners.

On the other hand, the vast majority of students (in group A: the control group) failed to focus the attention of their audience as most of them started by talking about the *core or heart* of their topics. As a result, the shock was obvious on the faces of their audience. That is to say, their presentations were not well-organized: even at the beginning of their talks, they started by very specific and technical statements. Some of their introductory starts are cited below:

Smoking is very bad because it causes bronchitis Also the price of cigarettes is so high …

Not only did this student not start by a logical and smooth introductory (general) statement, he also started by talking about bronchitis (a disease) which was not clear to many people in the classroom. Another student in this group started by:

Blood coagulation is the cause of heart attack and diseases of arteries …

Here again the student started by specific introductory statements as above. In both cases, one may note the absence of addressing the audience directly. For example, in these two quotations and in most presentations of the other students of this group, no speaker addressed the audience directly, e.g. by using the pronouns *we*, *you* etc. The presenters were only informing indirectly and ignoring their audience without establishing any sort of interaction between them and their audience. Of course, the obvious reason for that is that they were not taught these strategies. But what is more important is that their school curricula of English did not put any emphasis on the speaking skill.

Moreover, the presentations of these students were boring as opposed to the presentations of the other students in group B. As noticed, the boredom was due to a number of reasons relevant to the criteria/standards stated earlier under *Samples and Methods*. E.g., it happened with more than half the presenters of group A that unexpected stoppings and hesitations took place many times and frequently. Accordingly, in many cases, the present-

ers used to run out of words and/or ideas they intended to cover. Some of them admitted this during their presentations. This stage was followed by the stage of nervousness on the behalf of the speakers. Many of them felt nervous to go on and as a result, their behaviour became different from their behaviour at the beginning. In fact, this situation brought about boring silences, particularly because the silence was sudden and could not have been expected by the audience. In most cases, it took place during rising intonation, not during the falling intonation. This practice made the silence so noticeable, as the listeners do not usually expect stopping during rising intonation since their attention is occupied at that moment.

Unlike this group, group B presentations were far better than anticipated concerning this issue. For example, during their presentations, silence was not common or was filled with speaking devices (fillers). Put differently, hesitations and stoppings while presenting were not frequent and when they occurred, although rarely, speaking fillers like: *I mean ..., that is to say, my point is ..., the thing is ...,* etc. were used. It was also noticed that some of these students used other strategies apart from those mentioned above. When silence was noticed, shortly after 7-10 seconds, students recapped briefly what was already mentioned. Consequently, remedial statements were used. Some of them are quoted below:

> *am ... r ... right ... maybe I talked a lot ... so I will repeat quickly what the main points are ...*

Another student stated:

> *ah ... oh! ... [putting his left hand on his head] ... well well so far I discussed the causes heart failure and then I discussed its treatment and prognosis ... now ... here it is ... I will talk about the diet that helps to avoid heart failure ...*

It is interesting to notice that the students who used these strategies or statements as such overcame the problem of running out of words and/or ideas they wanted to realize. An explanation for this creativity is that students found themselves in a critical situation being speakers to an audience and, simultaneously, forgetting what they intended to say. Accordingly, they found it appropriate to compensate what was forgotten with something to say (even repetitious statements) to fill the silence. Their techniques were very appropriate.

As mentioned earlier, it was noticed that the quality of the presentations of group B was highly different from that of group A. They were really presentation-like. While many students in group A were in most cases reading from already constructed sentences or written texts, the students of group B were commenting on notes. This was very obvious as they were really speaking, not reading. For example, many of them started a sentence and after a very short while and before they completed it, they made up their mind and started another. While this was the case with this group, the students of group A seemed to confine themselves to the sentences written in front of them (in their texts). An explanation for the ap-

propriateness of the techniques of group B could be that they started to speak with confidence. To decide to change the words and content of a sentence already started could mean that the speaker is confident enough to find other words, whereas in the case of group A, the presenters did not dare to deviate from the texts or notes they had. On the contrary, they stuck to their notes or sentences. Perhaps there is also a connection between this fact and the boredom dealt with above. In other words, reading, not presenting, could also be another source of boredom and loss of interest in the topic on the part of the audience.

Another point worth mentioning in this context is the general appearance (including the use of facial expressions, head, etc. as mentioned above) that can help the presenter to create a smooth channel of communication with his/her audience to convey the message properly. These issues were very convincing and at the same time very crucial in order to make the listeners alert most of the time, as noticed during the presentations of group B. However, it was not the case with group A.

Surprisingly, three female students from group B failed to use these strategies. During their presentations, these three students were just looking to the ground, trying to avoid looking at the audience by all means. While no clearcut justification is available to explain this phenomenon apart from being shy, an explanation is the fact that co-education at JUST is the first situation where female students are in direct contact with male ones. The vast majority of Jordanian public schools does not apply co-education. Therefore, students were fresh ones on the one hand, and perhaps religiously conservative on the other hand. Maybe they found it difficult to look directly at the audience, especially to look at male listeners. It is worth mentioning here that the social role of woman in Jordan in particular, and in the Middle East and the Islamic World in general, is not an active one. Limitations of space and time prevent us from pursuing this point (but see Sunderland 1992: 81-91; Thomas 1990: 138; and Sutherland 1981: 38).

Because it was a must for all students to have non-verbal data in their projects, we included the criterion of figure interpretation and explanation in our list. Here again the products of the students in group B were clear, indicative and reflective, whereas the products of group A were not. For example, in group B, students started by an introductory statement informing the audience about the purpose/function of the figures they had (e.g., graphs, histograms, pie charts, tables, flow charts, etc.). This statement was followed by another statement about the general trends of these figures (e.g., peaks and troughs) followed by stating their opinions and their justifications. The students of group A went, on the other hand, directly into details without covering the points mentioned above. It is worth reiterating here that in group B, students were taught how to present, viz. orally, figure interpretation in *general*.

Finally, we will deal with the quality of English in the presentations of both groups. In fact, the level of English used by both groups in terms of vocabulary, grammar and pronunciation is to some extent different. Whereas it was good and sometimes seemed very good

in the case of group B, it was satisfactory and sometimes less satisfactory in the case of group A. Of course, there were some pronunciation and grammatical mistakes, and sometimes inappropriateness in vocabulary use in case of group B, but the important point is that these mistakes were more serious in the case of the presentations of group A than in group B. Here again a number of potential explanations for this phenomenon can be stated. First, perhaps the students of group A were not relaxed during their presentations. They were nervous as it was the first time for them to do these activities. And we all know that a relaxed student/learner speaks better than a nervous one. Accordingly, this feeling could negatively affect the quality of their English. Second, our concentration on the criteria mentioned above, the frequency of doing these activities and the continuously constructive feedback and comments could also have helped group B a lot.

UNEXPECTED PITFALLS

As the researcher took field notes and kept a diary to note any interesting point or observation during the process of conducting this research, the following problem areas were noticed during the different phases of carrying out the research. We state these problems to show the change in our approach of teaching and the kind of adjustment we made to other researchers of this area.

1. During group or team work in the classroom of group B, a few students used Arabic instead of English, which was against the purpose and hypothesis of the whole research. Our approach to tackling this problem was to encourage them to use English. The researcher paid much attention to those students. For example, we sat, sometimes, with them and reassured them that it is not a disaster to make mistakes in their FL in front of their teacher or colleagues. We also made statements like: This is the best group because they speak always in English not in Arabic. It is worth mentioning that this change of our approach was successful in practice.

2. The frequent group work of group B resulted in noisy atmospheres in our classroom. This internal problem brought into effect another external problem. It was the complaints of our neighbouring teachers who were scientists teaching scientific theoretical classes. In fact, their complaints and sometimes protests were valid as our class was in most cases in total classroom democracy in using English orally as a means of communication. Our change of approach was that we changed our classroom to another unoccupied room. Not only did this change solve the problem, but it also maximized the level of classroom democracy.

3. It has been noticed that some students, particularly the females among them, preferred to work in small groups (only pairs) not in large groups (e.g., fours/fives). At the beginning we thought it was a problem, but later on, we found that it was a positive practice. Our argument is that although pair work may imply that only these two students can be

involved in discussion or speaking interaction, this also could help in developing the students' ability to speak better, since the smaller the groups, the better the results. Small groups, as we observed, or pair work interaction allowed in our case more interaction and more turns for each of the students, and a greater variety of turns which is in agreement with the chief objective of our research. The other side of the coin is that we observed that good students tended to group together and therefore a vital source of knowledge and experience was lost for many of the students, particularly the weak ones. Our adjustment of teaching was to convince them democratically to sometimes accept our redistribution.

4. We also noticed that argumentation, during the presentation, could take place over sensitive issues or topics. While argumentation should be welcome in a research as this as it develops students' ability in spontaneous speaking interaction, it put us sometimes in a critical position when it was about highly sensitive issues. For example, one of the speakers was dealing with the topic *Alcohol* (he was a Christian). And another student was dealing with *Bad Habits and Addiction*, in general (he was a muslim). The first speaker dealt with the Christian viewpoint over the issue of alcohol in some parts of his presentation. Later, the muslim student dealt also with this issue from the islamic point of view. Whether the latter student responded instantly to the former's viewpoint or not, we do not know. Perhaps the latter student added the islamic viewpoint after he was stimulated by the former speaker's viewpoint or it could be that the latter speaker had originally that part in his notes of presentation. Thus, nervous argumentation and frequent interruptions took place in our classroom of group B. Our change of approach was to prevent them from talking about issues as these. As they had already chosen their topics, we adjusted our instruction by asking them to focus on scientific arguments or viewpoints towards the issue of alcohol. We were guided by Halliday's and Cooke's article *An Ecological Approach to ESP* (1983) where they noted that ESP may not be used easily in all environments. Adjustments and adaptations are needed to develop ESP successfully. As a result, hot and nervous discussions were avoided. Of course, as mentioned above, hot discussions help in improving students' spontaneous ability in speaking, but about such a topic they could be devastating to student-student relationships and even to the student-teacher relationship, especially if a teacher takes a biased position in connection with this issue. It may also develop enmity among groups in the class.

STUDENTS' VIEWS REPRESENTED IN THE SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEWS

As mentioned above, 30 students or presenters (15 from each group) were randomly chosen and interviewed to investigate their perceptions and feelings about the activity of presentation. It is worth mentioning that having the perceptions of ESP students in such a research is very significant as all our students are adults and adult learners need to be consulted

about their *wants/preferences* if we intend to meet their aspirations. Moreover, adult students usually know what they say and this is why we decided to consult them. The interviewees were both males and females.

Their responses were tape-recorded and then transcribed. All the interviews were semistructured to ensure the follow up of any crucial point by the researcher on the one hand, and to avoid any deviation from the objective of these interviews on the other hand. A number of key questions were raised by the interviewer who reassured the interviewees about the high confidentiality of their responses. For example, the interviews were started by asking simple and general questions like: *Have you enjoyed your presentation? Why? During your presentation or shortly before, have you felt nervous? If yes, why? Could you state the problem areas you faced while doing your presentation?* There were also many other questions and each interview was concluded by an open ended question to give the interviewees the opportunity to say freely whatever they wanted to reveal or state.

In general, their responses were very revealing in the sense that most of the interviewees' responses were open and frank as each one was sitting alone with the interviewer. Except one, all the interviewed students of group B stated that they enjoyed it, whereas 9 of the interviewed students of group A indicated they did not enjoy it. One of the female students of group A stated that she did not enjoy it because:

> *This is the first time I speak to people especially boys ... I felt shy ... do you know doctor ... did you notice that I made many mistakes ... I felt shy only because I was shy ... look When I speak with my friend in English I don't make mistakes ... as here.*

Moreover, approximately the same response, but in different words, was voiced by another female student. A male student nearly echoed the point by saying:

> *The problem for me is that I am not used to talk to people in this way and there is another problem I can't find the expressions that I want to put in my sentence.*

The rest of these students mentioned another set of problems. For example, 2 male students demonstrated that they were worried about their appearance in front of female students. Following up this point, the interviewer found that they were really worried about their physical appearance. As a result, they felt nervous and this may justify or explain why they did not enjoy it. 2 students of this group said that they were worried about their English pronunciation and how to speak at a high rate of speed because as they noted, speaking at a high rate of speed indicates that they are good speakers of English.

Concerning the remaining 2 students of this group, they said *yes* and *no*, simultaneously, in response to the same question. As they indicated, it is *yes* because that activity gave them the chance to show their ideas to listening people. At the same time, it is *no* because at the very beginning of their presentation they felt embarrassed. As they stated, the first three minutes were difficult for them due to their embarrassment. One of these students stated:

I said no because the students in the classroom are very clever and most of them are from Amman [Amman is the capital of Jordan and private schools (e.g., British, American and many other private schools) are available where the graduates of these schools are mostly better than those coming from public schools, villages and remote areas].

From the above discussion and quotations, it seems that the students of group A found it difficult to speak in English with confidence. Both male and female students demonstrated indirectly the need to develop their confidence while speaking in English. It could also be noted that this problem area is more serious in the case of female students. The lack of emphasis on speaking skills (including group work), sub-skills, etc. in our ESP situation seems to be the reason behind the problems encountered by the students of this group (group A). We are saying this because not only the performance and grades of group B were high in contrast with group A, but their responses in the interviews echoed this hypothesis

As mentioned above, 14 (of group B) indicated that they enjoyed the activity for a variety of reasons as cited below by one of them:

No I wasn't nervous and I felt happy to do it because you know ... I did it many times ... and I was talking about my own ideas and thoughts and every one was listening to my talk ... also don't forget it gave me some courage and important lines [guidance/ guidelines] I will stick to them when I do presentations in future ... I also recommend to have other presentations.

In addition, 3 students indicated approximately the same viewpoint as they all repeated that the activity was very useful for them. They also noted that it was useful in the sense that their future presentations would be much better than even this one. That is to say, they believe that having the experience of presenting in the ESP classroom would help in their target situation presentations (in their subject departments).

Another set of students (4) demonstrated the difficulty they faced in the early stages of the semester (the earlier classroom presentations intended for practice). One of them stated:

This one yes ... I mean our final presentation but if you ask me about the presentations we were doing before two months I will say that at the beginning I was nervous and this is why I didn't enjoy it at that time ... but because you asked us to do presentations many times it became normal.

In short, the students of this group seemed to be keen to do this activity. An explanation for this statement is that they have noticed and felt the benefit and fruitful results of their frequent presentations, even the short ones they used to do during the 12 weeks of this semester. Moreover, their responses are very realistic as their viewpoints are indirectly supported by their grades. In other words, their grades and speaking production were very good. Even the single student of this group (B) who said that he did not enjoy it noted that:

No because ... the problem is ... I mean I faced a problem at the beginning of my presentation I felt nervous but later it became normal second I was afraid that some students ... my friends were going to make me laugh and so I won't be able to finish my talk ... but I prevented myself from laughing and I think it was okay.

One may notice that the student's two problems are not serious ones. That is to say, not all students are overwhelmed by these problems on the one hand, and the problems themselves can be overcome by a little bit of toughness on the behalf of the teacher.

CONCLUSION

As stated above, the paper attempts to show the effect of group work on students' ability of oral presentation. We have noticed that there is a strong association and positive correlation between EST group work activities and students' capability of speaking at least in our local ESP situation at JUST. Nevertheless, it is worth mentioning that the paper does not attempt to provide a comprehensive coverage of this area, nor does it try to provide answers to the many associated problems (e.g., how to develop the confidence of female students while speaking, particularly at Arab Universities). This point could provide material for thought about further work.

At this stage, there are two points to remember. First, the teacher's role in this area is essential. The teacher's guidance and intervention at the right time to ensure smooth and co-operative running of group work is quite necessary. Second, it can be noticed that the more we improve the effectiveness of an individual to work in groups, the better the results will be.

APPENDIX

Group A:
Students' Grades Based on their Presentation

1. 6	11. 5	21. 6	31. 5	41. 8.5
2. 5	12. 4	22. 4	32. 4	42. 3
3. 4	13. 5	23. 4	33. 4	43. 0
4. 6	14. 3	24. 5	34. 6	44. 5
5. 3	15. 4	25. 3	35. 6	45. 5
6. 4	16. 7	26. 4	36. 4	46. 6
7. 5	17. 9	27. 5	37. 5	47. 5
8. 4	18. 6	28. 5	38. 3	48. 3
9. 3	19. 4	29. 7	39. 5	49. 5
10. 5	20. 3	30. 5	40. 5	50. 5

Group B:
Students' Grades Based on their Final Presentation

1. 8	11. 6	21. 9	31. 7	41. 8
2. 7	12. 9	22. 9	32. 8	42. 9
3. 9	13. 8	23. 8	33. 7	43. 8
4. 7	14. 6	24. 9	34. 7	44. 10
5. 8	15. 6	25. 10	35. 8	45. 9
6. 9	16. 9	26. 9	36. 9	46. 9
7. 7	17. 6	27. 8	37. 8	47. 7
8. 9	18. 9	28. 8	38. 9	48. 8
9. 8	19. 8	29. 7	39. 9	49. 9
10. 7	20. 7	30. 10	40. 10	50. 10

*t test significance level is: 0.0000

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