FROM STAGE FRIGHT TO SPOTLIGHT: THE EVALUATION OF PUBLIC SPEAKING COURSE THROUGH ENGLISH AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE STUDENTS' ORATORY PERFORMANCE (A CASE OF GEORGIAN HIGHER EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTION)

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Abstract. Public speaking skill might not be a new concept for most of the societies around the world, as history keeps many instances of public orators and prominent figures who are recognized for their natural talent to address audiences in a confident and compelling manner. However, not everyone is capable of doing so without proper preparation and sufficient practice. This paper aims to prove that despite the fact that fear of public speaking is acknowledged to be one of the most widespread fears around the world, it is just a matter of hard work, correct guidance and realizing the need of it in one's personal as well as in professional life. The paper discusses the positive impact of public speaking course introduced in one of the Georgian higher educational institutions. A one-semester academic course in public speaking was designed to explain the fundamentals of public speaking, specifically tailored to Georgian students learning English as a foreign language. The research, which was conducted to measure students' public speaking skills, demonstrated significant development. The questionnaire, which included mostly open-ended questions, asked students to evaluate the course.
Both measurement tools made it obvious that the course helped students to become more confident and most importantly overcome the stage fright as well as get deep knowledge about public speaking, learn speech delivery techniques, control verbal as well as body language. So, the students who once experienced stage fright can now be regarded as quite competent public speakers due to the skills they acquired throughout the public speaking course, as evaluated from their own perspective.

Keywords: Public speaking, Stage fright, Higher education, Measurement tools, English as a foreign language, Public speaking skill development

Introduction

Have you ever felt really scared when standing in front of a big audience being obliged to give small talk? If so, this article is written for you to analyze how the fear of public speaking can be beaten after a great deal of practice, especially in an academic setting. The first thing that you have to know is that you are not alone, and you are not the only one who has experienced the fear of public speaking, notwithstanding the fact whether you were prepared for it or not. There are millions of people in the world who are familiar with the same feeling of fear and anxiety, known as "stage fright", which is one of the top fears ever identified.

Studies report that the fear of public speaking is greater than fear of certain phobias including the fear of death (Dwyer & Davidson, 2012; Lucas, 2015; McCroskey, 1976). Public speaking anxiety (PSA) is closely connected to the lack of experience and therefore poor speech preparation (Daly, et al., 2009). That is why it was decided to eradicate the problem by implementing public speaking course at higher educational level, which was and still is a rare thing at higher educational institutions (HEI) in Georgia. It is well-said that if you want to solve a problem you have to start by tackling the core of an issue and search for the problems in the foundation of it. Since students' lack of experience was caused by insufficient speech making practice, the course was designed that would cover all the theoretical or

practical knowledge required to organize a good speech, use nice techniques to grab the audience attention, feel more confident while speaking and control body language.

Previously published articles by the author " The Necessity of English Public Speaking Course at Higher Educational Institutions"; "Public Speaking: Challenges and Benefits"; "The Impact of Deductive, Inductive and Mixed Approaches on EFL students' Public Speaking Skill"; "Public Speaking in Georgian HEIs: Teachers' Perspectives on EFL/Public Speaking Integrated Course implementation" proved the necessity of the public speaking course (PSC) existence and suggested some of the requirements that the course needed to focus on. Even author's Ph.D. research paper "The Impact of Using Authentic Public Speech Samples on English as a Foreign Language Students' Public Speech Quality" was aimed at finding the right ways to investigate the need of improving students' public speaking skill at tertiary level.

Without hesitation, it can be claimed that public speaking skills are highly demanded in the 21st century, in almost every field ranging from business to politics, including leadership (Hackman & Johnson, 2004). According to (O'Hair, Stewart, & Rubenstein, 2014), public speaking skill is the most sought-after quality that companies look for in candidates across all industries. Therefore, students need to be taught how to become good orators, since competent and concise communication about various advances is of significant value not only in educational sector for their high academic performance, but also in their professional or personal development and overall life. Moreover, students themselves feel the significance of public speaking courses in their educational and professional success (Zekeri, 2004). Since every field of work and profession nowadays requires good knowledge of at least one foreign language, and since English as a Foreign Language (EFL) is most widely accepted and taught in all universities around Georgia, the scope of this study primarily focuses on the case of teaching public speaking course to EFL students.

Communication in the present day is of greater importance than ever before. Since in this fast-paced world humanity is inundated with information overload, they need to grasp the necessary information as quickly as possible and get rid of unnecessary one. Hence, the need for communication has never been more crucial and significant (Edmund, 2005).

Let's begin by defining the concept of public speaking. At its core, public speaking involves speaker and audience's communication, wherein specific messages are conveyed in both formal and informal settings, serving various purposes (Schmitz, 2012). The primary objectives of public speaking encompass informing, persuading, and entertaining the audience.

As implied by its name, informative speeches aim to impart knowledge about a subject to a group of individuals. Providing information in informative speech should be taken very cautiously as it is not only delivery of the knowledge but also making it as meaningful and comprehensible as possible (Tucker, et al., 2019).

As for persuasive speech techniques, they are frequently used by politicians aiming at persuading the audience to act or alter their opinion according to their speeches (Harris, 2017).

And the last category of public speaking is special occasion speaking, encompassing a number of speaking events, which might vary from commencement ceremonies to comedy shows. Humour is one of the powerful elements of special occasion speeches, however, should be taken with much care as it can be too sensitive to various audiences (Tucker, et al., 2019).

Public speaking remains akin to the rhetoric practiced in ancient times, where Greek philosophers emphasized the power of persuasion through oratory speech. Since ancient period artistic elements of public speaking ethos, pathos and logos have remained inevitable and essential components of speech making, particularly of persuasive speech (Aristotle, Roberts, Bywater, & Solmsen, 1954).

Public speakers are frequently concerned about the audience's impression of them and their speech, which is why the three above-mentioned aspects: credibility, emotional and logical appeals play a crucial role influencing the audience in the right way. However, there are times when these anxieties become so intense that they cause panic, and as a result, presenters feel extremely agitated and frightened while standing in front of an audience. This syndrome is known as stage fright and is extremely common across the world. (Horwitz, 1988; Hassall, Joyce, Ottewill, Arquero, & Donoso, 2000; Ay, 2010). Public speaking anxiety, known as stage fright, is a subtype of communication apprehension (CA), a psychological state of concern that causes a person's physiological response (Laukka, et al., 2008).   That is why speakers who are afraid of public speaking experience rapid heart beat and breathing, uncontrollable body movement and fidgeting, dry mouth and facial blushing. The

reasons why a person might be feeling stage fright are numerous, starting from personality traits finishing up with insufficient practice in front of the audience (Hayaramae, 2017; Richmond, Wrench, & McCroskey, 2013; Cho, Smits, & Telch, 2004; Shi, Brinthaupt, & McCree, 2015). As the majority of findings prove, this fear is conquerable only if the appropriate treatment is mastered after finding the the main cause of it.

After determining the main cause of the stage fright, appropriate treatment needs to be administered, which is individual and thoroughly depends on the anxiety causing factor. However, when it comes to the educational field, particularly treating the public speaking anxiety, the most efficient treatment is skills training, which is based on frequent practice of the skill that a person feels insecure and later notices the improvement in speech making and therefore raises the self confidence and esteem (Bandura, 1977; Buggey, 1995). This particular treatment is used in the research discussed below, which turned out to be efficient.

Methods of the Research

The aim of this research is to evaluate efficacy of the newly implemented course of public speaking for EFL students in one of the higher educational institutions in Georgia. The evaluation of the course covers the initial and final stages of students' oratory performance, thus with much focus on reducing the stage fright among them. Besides, it includes questionnaire surveys based on some of the Likert-scale questions and some of the open ones in an interview format to assess the effectiveness of the course. Furthermore, the research aims to assess students' performance on public speaking by comparing their speeches with the help of specially devised and modified rubrics. The rubrics and evaluation criteria were used to check how well the students applied all the strategies taught to them during the semester. Students' performances were evaluated three times (when they started the course, during the midcourse, and at the end of it) in order to measure the changes throughout the course.

Despite the fact that HEIs in Georgia and particularly the one where the above-mentioned course was implemented provide subjects in which making a presentation is an important criterion for students' academic performance and assessment, public speaking course as a separate subject in which students would master oratory strategies and guidelines is not common. In majority of cases, students' inability or unwillingness to work on public speaking skills autonomously necessitated the creation of this course at tertiary level, where students would study all the essentials for speech making starting from careful and precise planning finishing with confident speech making during one academic semester.

Designing the course was not easy. It started with proving the need of this course for university students by interviews and close observation of their presentational skills. Afterwards, a survey was conducted among 200 randomly selected students from the entire university. They represented various fields and faculties in order to determine the importance and the need of the course for diverse faculties. However, at an early stage of its development the course was decided to be launched for one specific faculty that needed it most.

 The preliminary study was designed to figure out students' reaction and attitude towards a new course, which to our amazement showed the best results possible. Students' readiness for taking the course was obvious based on their responses, where they noted the problems and challenges that they had been suffering from, such as lack of field knowledge, low level of confidence when talking in front of a group of people, stress and anxiety when making a speech, not having frequent practice and therefore lack of good experience in public speaking. However, the vast majority (89 %) of students analyzed the need of this skill in 21st century due to their future career demands and requirements in various fields. The major interest for the course from students' side was caused by the language (English language) in which the course was later delivered. It would be wrong to say that in 21st century students experience major difficulties acquiring foreign language, especially such international and worldwide applied language as English, however one thing is language acquisition, and another is utilizing it correctly- the way it is needed for one's future and career development. Therefore, when announcing that the course would be in English language, the vast majority of students (87%) approved the necessity of its existence in their curriculum. It is also noteworthy that administration and academic personnel, who are in charge of curriculum design including the dean of the faculty where the course was later accomplished, all agreed to implement the course once they saw the need of it and

readiness from students' side. Consequently, the researcher was given an opportunity to teach a public speaking course to EFL students on one the faculties.

The course was launched at the beginning of 2023 academic year and lasted for one semester. The lectures were conducted once a week for two academic hours within 15 weeks of period and involved mid-term as well as final exams in the format of public speaking   performance. The course was optional and as mentioned above launched in one of the faculties' (faculty of humanities and social sciences) curriculum at an initial stage. 12 junior students selected the subject, as later stated because of its practical value and importance for their future.

Before starting the course, the syllabus was outlined which included all of the details, from learning outcomes and skills to the rubrics and assessment criteria that were necessary throughout the course to meet the course objectives. The syllabus involved various types of deductive and inductive teaching methods such as introducing new concepts in the subject via subtly created power point presentations per lecture, so called demonstrational method, analyzing cases of various speeches from educational representatives as well as from the field of politics, that helped students to critically analyze the information given. Furthermore, it implied peer to peer assessments that enhanced students' critical and analytical thinking skills, discussions and debates around specific topic on seminars, and last and most important element of the course was mastering public speaking skill during seminars where students were given the possibility to try out different types of speeches starting from informative, persuasive and special occasion ones finishing with impromptu, manuscript, memorized and extemporaneous categories.

The course was designed based on the most recent and internationally acclaimed literature with tried and tested methods in it. Besides, the reader which was created be the researcher and her assistant[1], involved all those modern methods and strategies necessary for good public speaking performance, which enabled the students to analyze the information in an easy way that was specifically tailored to their needs and demands. Needles to say, there are lots of interesting articles, books , guidebooks and pieces of writing around the topic but when it comes to teaching the subject the most important aspect of good delivery is assembling all those essential details to ease the flow. Therefore, the reader was created that included full nine chapters, each one accompanied by critical questions for students to analyze after reading and comprehending the unit, and specific activities that asked students to perform, to role play or evaluate and assess some case studies. Speaking of the contents of the reader, it has to be mentioned that it involved all the necessary specificities for a one-semester-course defining it as the foundation for qualified public speaking.

Here is a brief overview of the contents that were offered to the students of this course through the reader. Chapter 1 mainly focused on public speaking as an essential skill in today's world, starting from ancient period up to the modern day. Chapter 2 illustrated the models and guidelines for ethical speaking from various perspectives. Chapter 3 outlined the necessary procedures for speech making, starting from preparation up to organization and delivery. Chapter 4 focused on audience and its importance in speech making. Chapter 5 involved all of the nuances and details of organizing the introductory and conclusive parts for different types of speeches with all the strategies on how to engage listeners in the speech and arouse their curiosity throughout the whole speech. Chapter 6 covered the hidden details of a good speaker with all the vocal varieties and body language on the stage that play pivotal role in good public speaking delivery. Chapter 7 highlighted various tools and ways of preparing good visual side for public speeches with the help of numerous methods. Chapter 8 illustrated the significance and need of informative speeches and the strategies necessary for a good delivery. Chapter 9 highlighted the challenges faced by persuasive speakers and suggested guidelines on how to organize well structured persuasive speeches.

Moreover, the students were provided with additional reading material and asked to carry out their own research on some aspects of public speaking to enhance their autonomous working abilities and develop their academic skills. They successfully managed to share their findings based on the literature or internet sources during lecture/seminars by encouraging each other to critically evaluate the results.

As mentioned above, students had the possibility to try out different types of public speaking on various topics. It has to be noted that, at the beginning of the course, the students were given a total freedom in choosing a topic and structuring their speeches based on their previous knowledge in order

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to have solid basis for comparing their first speech to their upcoming ones. Each student (in total twelve of them), made a public speech, which they had prepared in advance. Later on, during the course all of them had a chance to try out impromptu speeches, which they liked a lot despite the challenges of this type of public speech. Moreover, in their evaluative forms some of them even noted that it would have been better if they had more trials of impromptu speech making. Throughout the course students practiced public speech making at every seminar which dramatically improved their speaking as well as public speaking abilities. Besides, in the middle of the course students were given an assignment to prepare informative and at the end of the semester they were asked to prepare persuasive speeches, which enabled us to assess each student's performance and development of public speaking throughout the semester. As a result, by applying public speaking assessment rubric, it was possible to calculate students' scores and finally to evaluate their progress. The pre- test (pre-course), while -test (while-course) and post-test (post- course) results are discussed below in the results and discussion section.

As for the rubrics for assessing students' public speaking performance, Public Speaking Competence Rubric (PSCR) (Schreiber, Paul, & Shibley, 2012) was chosen as it is considered to be the most reliable and accurate measurement tool for determining the public speaking skill level. The PSCR contains nine most essential observable elements and two additional ones, accompanied by 0-5 scale system of assessment criteria based on which students were evaluated. The researcher and her assistant examined the rubric on several occasions within the field of study before using it in the abovementioned course to check how effectively the criteria and measurement system can be utilized in Georgian context and reality. Consequently, it proved to be a highly valuable tool and therefore was applied.

Results and Discussion

As mentioned above, all twelve students made a public speech at a pre-course, while-course and post-course stages to represent their public speaking skills before and after practice. The raw scores were calculated and analyzed with the help of the PSCR rubric, and the results were revealed through statistical measurements of Mean, Median, Mode, Std, deviation to illustrate the difference between the three stages throughout the course. To analyze the gained data statistically SPSS 16.0. was applied. Below, Table 1 represents the raw scores gained by the students at three different stages of the course.

Table 1. Students' raw scores at three different stages (pre-course, while-course and post-course stages)

Student's code	Pre- course score	While-course score	Post-course score
001	17	27	34
002	19	26	34
003	18	27	34
004	19	28	35
005	18	29	35
006	20	28	35
007	19	27	35
008	18	26	35
009	17	26	36
010	18	27	35
011	19	28	35
012	19	27	33

Table 2 represents the summary of central results statistics: Mean, Median, Mode, Std, deviation.

Table 2. The summary of central results statistics

	Pre- course result	**While**-course result	**Post**-course result
Mean	18.4	27.2	34.7
Median	18.5	27	35
Mode	19	27	35
Std. Deviation	0.27	0.28	0.23

According to tables 1 and 2, it is vivid that the students' performance and their results increased over time from pre-course stage to post-course stage. It is visible not only based on the raw scores given in table 1, where rubric assessment results illustrate an increase in each student's case, but also according to central results statistics table 2. The results from table 2 can be interpreted as follows: since mean, median and mode are quite close to each other within each separate stage they are considered to be reliable (pre-course stage: mean =18.4; median =18.5; mode= 19; while-course stage: mean=27.2; mode=27; median=27; post-course stage: mean=34.7; median=35 mode=35). As for the differences between the mean scores from pre-course stage to while-course stage, it changed from 18.4 to 27. 2. Then from 27.2 it increased to 34.7 at a post-course stage, indicating that the gained scores and students' overall performance quality improved. The same happened in median and mode's cases. Mode has increased from pre-course stage to while course stage, from 18.5 to 27 and later at post-course stage it reached 35. And the last, mode experienced the same changes from pre-course stage-19 it increased to while-course stage -27 and at a post-course stage it got the same result as the median 35. As for the standard deviation which is 0.27 at pre-test stage, 0.28 at while test stage and 0.23 at post test stage proves the reliability of the central results statistics as they all are <1.

To summarize the aforementioned statistical data, it can be concluded that one semester working on public speaking skill proved to be beneficial since it integrated theoretical knowledge around the most vital aspects about oratory with students' practical experience in terms of production. Therefore, participants' knowledge and experience in public speaking which was at a lower level at the beginning of the course significantly increased by the end of the course demonstrating the efficiency of the strategies and practice involved in it throughout the semester.

Moreover, the efficacy of the course was corroborated by the students' course evaluation. For this purpose, the questionnaire was devised which covered 12 items with 5 open and 7 closed-ended questions to check participants' level of satisfaction of the course they covered. The questionnaire aimed at measuring the efficiency of the course based on students' responses. All 12 students completed the survey and rated the course from their own perspectives. Below is a full description and assessment of each questionnaire item based on students' evaluations.

*Question #1. "How satisfied are you with the course? (1-least satisfied to 10- most satisfied)".*

The vast majority of respondents 92% (11 students) assessed the course as "most satisfied" and chose the rating score 10 out of 10 -point-Likert scale; 2 % (1 student) assessed it as "satisfied" and gave rating score 9.

As a result, the first question demonstrates participants' positive feedback regarding the course and are quite satisfied. Figure 1 below shows the students' responses visually.

Figure 1. Visual illustration of students' responses to question #1.

1. How satisfied are you with the course? (1-least satisfied to 10- most satisfied)
12 responses
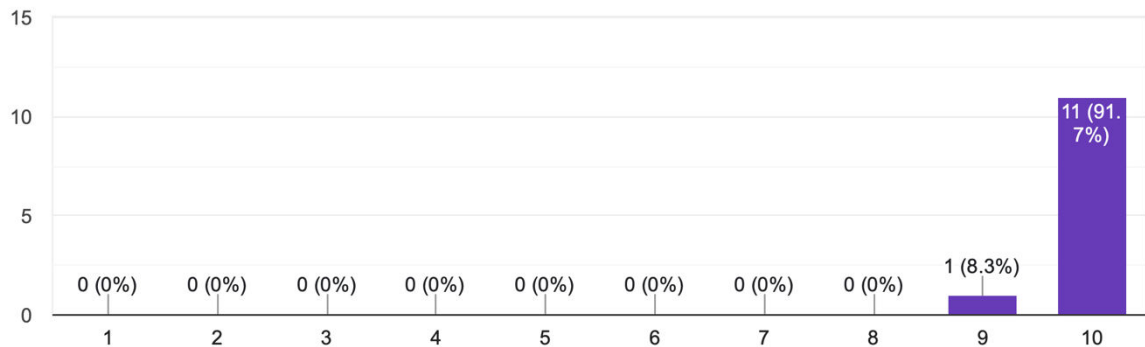
Question # 2.   "What was the thing that you liked about the course? Please answer the question by giving a short description".

The opinions expressed by the students were versatile, some of them highlighting the aspects they noticed improving in their public speaking performance, such as: increased level of the confidence, ability to detect the mistakes they were making themselves by observing others' performances, gained knowledge about the art of public speaking, improvement in their mannerism and articulation when making a speech in front of the audience, enjoyment that they took out of the course because of its practical value and character, developed strategies for organizing the speeches. Some of them put an emphasis on the course and its positive sides: the informativeness of the subject, writing assignments and topics for discussion, contents of the course they covered, the method of explanation and the structure of presenting the aspects of public speaking, thought-provoking activities and cases they discussed during the seminars, the environment and friendly atmosphere as well as positive attitude from the audience and the tutors (the researcher and her assistant).

Question # 3. "What was the thing that you disliked about the course? Please answer the question by giving a short description".

Most comments were positive and they had difficulty in naming something that they did not like about the course. The only thing that a minority of students complained about was the duration of the course, meaning that it should last for two semesters instead of one in order to have practice for a longer period of time. The responses to this question might lead to adding one more semester to the course and teaching it for two academic semesters.

Question # 4. "How has your public speaking level improved since taking the course?"

Question 4 had four possible options that students had to choose from. They were able to choose only one option:

- Option 1: It has not improved at all.
- Option 2: It has improved but a little bit.
- Option 3: It has reasonably improved.
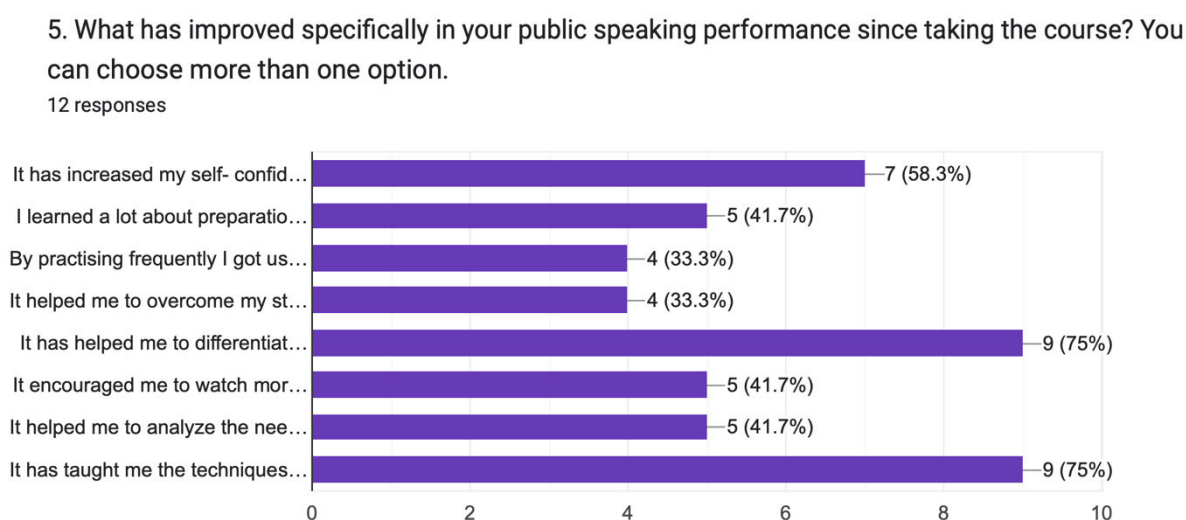- Option 4: It has dramatically improved.

The majority of students 75% (9 students) chose option 3 and the minority 25 % (3 students) chose option 4. None of them chose options 1 and 2, which proves a great deal of change in students' public speaking performance and their satisfaction about these positive changes.

Question # 5. "What has improved specifically in your public speaking performance since taking the course?

Question 5 had eight possible options that students had to choose from. They were able to choose more than one option.

- Option 1. It has increased my self- confidence level.
- Option 2. I learned a lot about preparation procedures before public speaking.
- Option 3. By practising frequently, I got used to standing in front of the audience.
- Option 4. It helped me to overcome my stage fright (fear of public speaking)
- Option 5. It has helped me to differentiate between different types of speeches and learned how to   build a good one.
- Option 6. It encouraged me to watch more public speaking videos and learn more about it.
- Option 7. It helped me to analyze the need for public speaking skills in my future career.
- Option 8. It has taught me the techniques of how to behave on the stage when speaking in front of the audience.

Figure 2. Visual illustration of students' responses to question # 5.

5. What has improved specifically in your public speaking performance since taking the course? You can choose more than one option.

12 responses

The visual representation of question # 5 in figure 2 above demonstrates students' preferences over options 5 and 8 since the majority of students 75 % (9 students) chose them. As for option 1, it was chosen by 58 % (7 students). Almost 42 % (5 students) chose options 2, 6 and 7. And options 3 and 4 were chosen by 33.3 % (4 students). As a result, it can be deduced that all the provided options in question 5 worked favorably and minimum 4 students selected each option which emphasizes the effectiveness and improved abilities in students' public speaking performance.

Question # 6. "What was your public speaking level before starting the course?"
The question had three options and students had to choose one.

- Option 1. Not good
- Option 2. Normal (but I was still nervous about it)
- Option 3. Quite good

The majority of students 75 % (9 students) chose option 2, whereas 17 % (2 students) chose option 1 and only 8% (1 students) chose option 3. Consequently, the students who felt normal or bad about their public speaking level benefited from the course vividly as the above-mentioned questions and responses proved them. However, seemingly the student who felt quite confident about his/her abilities also improved his/her public speaking level since there are no negative or skeptical comments in responses.

Question # 7. "Is there anything that you would like to add to the course? If yes please give a little explanation to your answer, if not still give an argument why not?"
Out of the responses students provided the majority were positive, highlighting the idea that the course covered absolutely all the necessary aspects and nothing more was there to be added. However, there were two things that are worth mentioning as they can be added to the upcoming course in public

speaking. One of them was about the issue of having an assessment at every seminar and since the points gained by the students might have an impact on their academic performance, missing the seminars due to their working schedule was a bit challenging for them. So, their suggestion implied having more unassessed seminars so that the ones who could not attend every lecture/seminar would not lose points in that part. And the second, which can be implemented in the course, implied having more impromptu speech practice that they had only twice throughout the semester, since they liked the challenge of it and wished it was more frequent. However, they mentioned that they understood the duration of the course and the necessity of covering a lot of things within the allotted time.

Question # 8. "Do you think this course will help university students to master their public speaking skills?" This question took 100% approval from all students stating that it has helped them a lot and it would help other students as well in the future.

Question # 9. "Where do you think you will use the skills and techniques mastered during the course in the future?" This question had four options and students had to choose only one:

- Option 1. In my future career, as my future job requires good public speaking skills.
- Option 2. In my everyday life.
- Option 3. In my academic life, on next stages of my studies
- Option 4. Everywhere (all three above mentioned)

Figure 3. Visual illustration of students' responses to question # 9.

9. Where do you think you will use the skills and techniques mastered during the course in the future?

12 responses

- In my future career, as my future job requires good public speaking skills
- In my everyday life
- In my academic life , on next stages of my studies
- Everywhere (all three above mentioned)
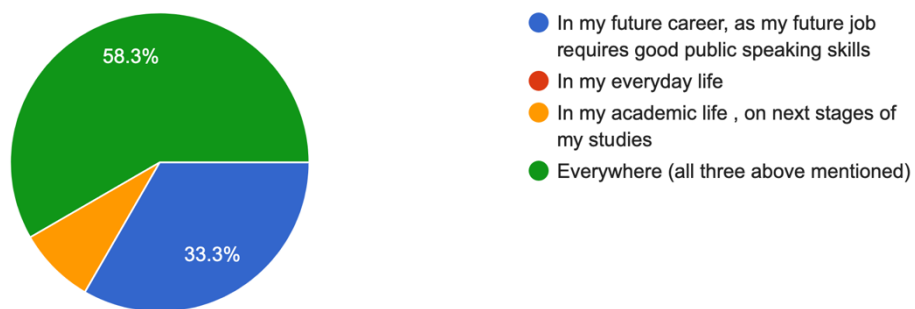
The majority of students 58.3% (7 students) chose option 4, meaning that students feel the need of public speaking skill in every aspect of their life not only in academic field. As for option 1 it was chosen by 33.3% (4 students) and option 3 was chosen by 8.3% (1 student).

Question #10. "Do you think this course should be taught to" and it had 4 options:

- Option 1. Freshmen
- Option 2. Sophomores
- Option 3. Juniors
- Option 4. Seniors

The responses about these questions varied greatly, but the majority chose option 2 with 50 % (6 students) and the second half was divided into three options: option 3 - 25%(3 students); option 1- 17% (2 students); and option 4- 8.3% (1 student).

Question #11. "Give a short explanation of your answer to question # 10 above and tell us why you have chosen that specific answer, provide rationale".

The responses that students provided are very logical and profound. The majority- 50% who chose the course to be taught to sophomores had a rational explanation that on the second year of studies at higher educational institution they feel much more mature unlike on the first year of university and therefore it would be much more logical to teach them the course of public speaking. Moreover, freshmen are much busier studying the basic subjects and might not analyze the depth and need of this course. However, there were some who focused on teaching the course to juniors and seniors since this

course seemed to be much more interesting and vital in their future profession than other courses on offer so it should be obligatory not an optional one for their faculty in the future. And still 2 students claimed that teaching this course to freshmen will give them more confidence in other subjects and it should be considered as the foundation for their future success in various fields.

Question # 12. "Your overall comment about the course" this question asked students to summarize their thoughts and opinion over the course. Based on questions and students' responses analyzed above, it would be logical to mention overall positive evaluation of public speaking course from their perspective. However, some responses need to be highlighted, such as some of them mentioned how grateful they are for the course as it helped them to identify their strengths and weaknesses that had been unnoticed before, or how they need to work more to achieve better result, or how their confidence level increased and despite the fact that they were quite skeptical of overcoming the stage fright, admitted that it is possible if one tries hard and practices a lot.

Conclusion

To conclude, it can be stated that above-mentioned comments and questionnaire responses, accompanied by the results gained in pre-course, while-course and post-course stages prove the efficiency of the course and demonstrate students' improvement of public speaking skill as well as satisfaction with the knowledge and gratitude for the practice they received throughout the semester. Since the final result in terms of public speaking performance and its comparison to the pre-course stage results reveal much better outcome, it can be claimed that implemented public speaking course was a successful and efficient tool in increasing students' public speaking level. Furthermore, these findings can be strengthened with a similar study and its results carried out in several HEIs around the USA, proving that basic communication skills course had a positive and effective impact on students' level of communication as well as reducing students' self-reported communication apprehension, which they suffered from before taking the course (Rose & Rancer, 1993).

To summarize all of the afore-mentioned and discussed, it can be confidently claimed that practice in academic environment particularly under constant observation and assessment had a positive impact on students' public speaking skill development and therefore dramatically increased their public speech performances.

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