



TEACHING PRESENTATION SKILLS: PRACTICES OF CROATIAN AND ENGLISH TEACHERS

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This study examines how Croatian and English language teachers in primary and secondary schools teach presentation skills as part of contemporary educational practice. It focuses on four core components: nonverbal communication, verbal communication, visual aids, and preparation and structure. Research results show that primary school teachers teach nonverbal communication significantly more often, while no differences were found between school levels or subjects in teaching visual aids, verbal communication, or preparation and structure. Teachers report that students most frequently struggle with creating appropriate visual aids, avoiding excessive text, presenting without reading, and managing anxiety. Although these challenges are recognised, most teachers consider their students generally successful in presenting. The findings highlight the need for systematic support in developing students' presentation competence across educational levels in order to address challenges identified by teachers.

Keywords: presentation skills; nonverbal communication; verbal communication; visual aids; teaching practice; language teachers; primary and secondary education

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Presentations and presentation skills

Presentation skills have become a vital component of modern education and a key factor of competitiveness in today's labour market. Their importance is acknowledged across all educational levels, from primary and secondary schooling to higher education and adult learning. Modern perspectives on presentation skills highlight the role of storytelling, digital technologies, and visual rhetoric in capturing attention and supporting comprehension (Duarte, 2020). In line with these developments, Kišiček and Stanković (2014) argue that while presenting as a communicative practice has long existed, technological advancements have transformed it into a distinct rhetorical form due to the frequent integration of visual materials.

A presentation can be understood as a structured act of verbal and non-verbal communication through which a speaker delivers information, ideas, and opinions to a defined audience, guided by a specific communicative goal. This process typically involves multiple channels of communication as well as visual aids designed to enhance the effectiveness of the message (Lucas, 2021; Reynolds, 2023). Carnegie (2014) similarly defines a presentation as a purposeful message delivered to an audience or a speech intended to inform, inspire, motivate, persuade, or introduce a particular concept. Within both educational and professional settings, presentations function as tools for instruction, persuasion, and reporting, with their effectiveness shaped by message clarity, content relevance, and the degree of audience engagement (Zarefsky, 2019).

Presentation skills encompass a range of verbal, non-verbal, and visual or technical strategies that speakers use to deliver a structured, clear, and persuasive message to a target audience. They include content planning or preparation, logical organisation of the message, the use of visual tools, verbal expressiveness and deliberate control of voice, body language, as well as adapting the presentation to the audience (Lucas, 2021; Reynolds, 2023). According to Popescu (2013), presentation skills involve preparing and organising the presentation, writing and creating visual materials, delivering the presentation, managing stress, and responding to questions after the presentation.

Preparation, as one of the aspects of presentation skills, is consistently identified as a primary predictor of presentation success. Haber

and Lingard (2001) highlight preparation as a particularly important aspect of learning presentation skills. Preparation is often mistakenly equated with preparing visual materials. However, what truly matters is preparing the speech itself, finding relevant information, distinguishing important from unimportant data, and organising this information within the presentation (Fox, 2006). Kapterev (2011) emphasises the importance of prioritising information at the preparation stage, stating that it is impossible to say everything a speaker knows about a topic during a presentation, nor could the audience remember it. Therefore, preparation comprises audience analysis, topic familiarisation, and rehearsal (O’Hair et al., 2020). In the context of preparation for a presentation, rehearsal is of special importance as it reduces anxiety, increases fluency, and enhances cognitive load management (Picanço Marchand et al., 2024), allowing speakers to focus on delivery and interaction during the actual performance. Miškulin Saletović et al. (2016, p. 218) also emphasize the importance of rehearsing the presentation. In their study with undergraduate and graduate students in Communication Management in Croatia, they revealed that participants had limited knowledge and practical experience in presentation skills, yet they expressed a strong desire for both theoretical instruction and hands-on practice in presenting, in their native language as well as in foreign language courses. Haber and Lingard (2001) conclude that students learn presentation skills by trial and error, not through teaching explicit rhetorical models. Fox (2006) recommends practicing presentations and public speeches, emphasizing the importance of speaking, as opposed to reading the presentation or a speech. The importance of speaking, as opposed to reading, is further emphasized by Leinert Novosel (2015) who states that reading might make the presenter feel confident, but it excludes communication techniques which are important when communicating with the audience.

Structuring the presentation refers to clear message organization, and it derives from rhetorical tradition. Each presentation should have an introduction, body and conclusion considering that well-structured presentations enhance comprehension, retention, and persuasion (Lucas, 2021). While recognizing three basic organizational structures of a presentation, Giallourakis (1986) highlights four different patterns body of a presentation can be structured in: problem-solving pattern,

cause-effect pattern, chronological pattern, and topical pattern. In the context of language education, the competence of structuring a presentation forms part of oral discourse development.

Verbal aspect refers both to the delivery and questions-and-answers session after the presentation. Presentation delivery includes vocal qualities such as articulation, rate, volume, and expressiveness. Empirical research indicates that vocal delivery (including voice quality, speech rate, pitch and intonation) significantly shapes listeners' perceptions of speaker confidence, persuasiveness, intelligibility, and ease of comprehension (Guyer et al., 2021). Thus, vocal variety, as part of delivery, plays an important role in audience engagement and communicative effectiveness. Furthermore, the language of a presentation can be considered a form of public language because we always present in front of a group, and public language should be clear, comprehensible, and acceptable to listeners (Škiljan, 2000). In foreign-language contexts, delivery interacts with linguistic proficiency; speakers must manage speech planning, complexity, and anxiety, which requires a systematic training of linguistic and paralinguistic skills (Goh & Burns, 2012). The question-and-answer segment of a presentation constitutes a unique communicative phase, requiring presenters to listen attentively, respond spontaneously, and engage interactively with the audience. It calls for flexible thinking and the capacity to clarify or justify points in real time (Mardiningrum & Ramadhani, 2022; Streeter & Miller, 2011). Studies show that skills of answering questions after a presentation are rarely taught explicitly, which leaves students unprepared (Arwaea & Soontornwipast, 2022). Yet this competence is central to academic literacy and professional communication.

Nonverbal aspect of presentation skills includes posture, gestures, facial expressions, and eye contact. Although early interpretations of Mehrabian's (1972) findings overstated the dominance of nonverbal elements, contemporary research confirms their essential role in reinforcing meaning, building rapport, and maintaining attention (Knapp et al., 2014). Despite its pedagogical importance, nonverbal communication is often insufficiently addressed in school instruction. Investigating nonverbal communication in English presentations at EFL classroom, Sopyanti et al. (2025) emphasize the importance of integrating nonverbal communication training into EFL curricula and prioritizing both

linguistic proficiency and expressive competence among learners, thus enhancing their overall communicative competence.

Visual aids, particularly slide presentations, constitute a central component of modern oral communication. Poor design, overloaded text, irrelevant images, cluttered graphics, hampers comprehension (Kosslyn, 2010). Kišiček and Stanković (2014) emphasize that presentation aids enhance the content of the presentation, and impact speaker's ability to get the message across. This is further supported by Skidmore et al. (2010) who state that no visual aid can transform poorly organized and disconnected ideas into coherent and convincing ideas. Examining Power Point presentations designed for different audiences, Gross and Harmon (2009) conclude that general audience presentations are best organized as narratives whereas professional audience presentations should be organized by means of argument. Teaching purposeful use of slides is therefore crucial in educational settings.

Presentation skills in education

Within modern educational settings, the development of presentation skills is increasingly recognised as essential for fostering students' overall communicative competence, especially in language classrooms (Brooks & Wilson, 2014). These skills help learners articulate their ideas in a clear, logical, and persuasive way while simultaneously strengthening their oral proficiency, confidence, critical thinking, and social engagement. In primary and secondary education, presentations serve both as learning tools and as assessment formats. They support the development of oral language skills, content understanding, and learner autonomy. Internationally, curricula emphasise oral communication, and the ability to convey ideas clearly to peers and teachers. Presentation tasks foster the ability to synthesise information, structure arguments, and speak for an audience, and these are competencies aligned with broader goals of lifelong learning and active citizenship (European Parliament and Council, 2006).

Based on De Grez (2009a), it appears that instructional interventions and assessment instruments tend to prioritise content-related aspects of oral presentations. Improvements in delivery (including non-verbal behaviour, vocal delivery) are less consistent, which suggests

that features like preparation, rehearsal, and interactive components (e.g. Q&A) may receive comparatively less systematic attention. Studies also indicate that teachers vary significantly by subject: language teachers tend to focus more on fluency and verbal accuracy, whereas teachers of other subjects (science, social studies) prioritise content mastery (Beebe & Beebe, 2018; Richards, 2006). However, De Grez et al. (2009b) also state that the instructional literature on oral presentation skills is very scarce.

On the other hand, there are studies exploring students' knowledge of presentation skills. Several studies emphasise that students often experience presentation anxiety due to limited instruction on planning, structuring, and rehearsing oral tasks, as well as insufficient feedback on nonverbal communication (Ražnjević Zdrilić & Ivanac, 2016). In EFL contexts, foreign-language anxiety further reduces confidence in oral performance (Goh & Burns, 2012). Rosyadi et al. (2022) studied presentation skills among Applied Foreign Language students, and found that 44% of participants reported high self-confidence, 52% moderate, and 4% low. Key factors contributing to low confidence included insufficient preparation, stage fright, and low self-esteem. Similarly, Belaman et al. (2022) examined 210 undergraduate students and identified both internal factors (e.g., self-confidence, language proficiency) and external factors (e.g., audience size, assessment pressure) as significant contributors to presentation anxiety. The authors highlighted that educators can better support students' oral communication development by recognizing and addressing these factors. Accordingly, Rubin et al. (1997) see presentation practice as a tool to decrease the fear of public speaking.

English as second language and Croatian language course

Language subjects are especially responsible for building presentation skills, as presentation competence aligns with discourse organisation, speaking fluency, and pragmatic knowledge (Richards, 2015). Communicative language teaching (CLT) places oral production at the centre of foreign-language instruction, which directly shapes classroom practices in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) context. Within CLT, language is conceptualised primarily as a tool for communication rather than as a system of rules to be memorised (Littlewood, 2004; Richards,

2006). Consequently, EFL classrooms routinely incorporate interactive tasks such as role-plays, pair and group discussions, problem-solving activities, and structured oral presentations (Goh & Burns, 2012). These tasks are designed to promote fluency, interactional competence, and pragmatic awareness, all of which require students to plan, structure, and deliver spoken content (Bygate, 2018). Presentation tasks, in particular, have been shown to support lexical development, improve organisational skills, and foster confidence in oral production (Goh & Burns, 2012). Through these pedagogical practices, presentation skills become not merely supportive but integral to the process of language acquisition, aligning with theoretical frameworks that emphasise output production as a driver of second-language development (Swain, 2005).

In contrast, rooted in Central and Eastern European educational traditions, empirical analyses of language-and-literature textbooks and classroom practices in Croatian educational context indicate a persistent predominance of reading, literary interpretation, grammar and writing tasks, while communicative/oral language use remains marginal (Visinko, 2006). Although the national curriculum for Croatian language identifies speaking and oral expression as key competencies (Ministry of Science and Education, 2019a), empirical evidence from Croatian classrooms indicates that teaching practices largely emphasize text interpretation and written assignments, while opportunities for extended oral production and creative interaction remain limited (Simel & Gazibara, 2013, p. 203). Oral communication is often operationalised through short answers, teacher-fronted questioning, or interpretive discussions of literary content rather than through systematic training in structured presentations, argumentation, or multimodal communication.

This difference in pedagogical tradition has important theoretical implications. Teachers of foreign languages tend to provide more opportunities for extended oral output and interactive communication, while teachers of national languages often focus on textual analysis and theoretical knowledge (Salmanova, 2025). Whereas English language teaching views speaking as an essential skill equal to reading, writing, and listening, Croatian language teaching often treats speaking as a supporting skill, secondary to the core focus on literature and linguistic heritage. Because structured presentation tasks require explicit instruction in planning, coherence, delivery techniques, nonverbal communi-

cation, and the use of visual supports, subjects that regularly employ such tasks are more likely to foster these competencies (Richards, 2015). Accordingly, it is theoretically reasonable to expect differences between Croatian and English teachers in how intensively they teach presentation-skill components.

Presentation skills in the Croatian curriculum

In the Croatian educational context, the development of presentation skills is embedded within the outcomes and competencies outlined in the national curriculum, particularly within the Croatian Language Curriculum and the Foreign Language Curriculum for primary and secondary education. The 2019 curricular reform placed strong emphasis on communicative competence as one of the key domains of linguistic and educational development (Ministry of Science and Education, 2019a). According to the Croatian Language Curriculum (Ministry of Science and Education, 2019a), students are expected to acquire the ability to express themselves clearly and purposefully in oral communication, which includes preparing and delivering various forms of spoken texts, engaging in structured dialogue, and employing multimodal strategies when presenting information. Although the curriculum does not explicitly label “presentation skills” as a separate teaching area, it integrates these competencies into broader domains such as speaking, listening, and critical interaction.

Within primary education, the curriculum (Ministry of Science and Education, 2019a) prescribes gradual progression from simple oral expression toward more complex forms of public speaking. Students are encouraged to prepare short oral presentations, participate in discussions, and demonstrate the ability to structure and support their ideas with relevant information. The curriculum also highlights the role of nonverbal communication, instructing teachers to foster students’ awareness of posture, eye contact, voice quality, and clarity of articulation, which indirectly reflects established models of presentation delivery.

In secondary education, the curricular expectations expand toward more systematically organized presentations, requiring students to plan, structure, and deliver longer and thematically demanding oral texts. Students are encouraged to use digital tools such as PowerPoint,

multimedia, and visual organizers, consistent with international recommendations on integrating ICT skills into communicative instruction (Ministry of Science and Education, 2019a). The curriculum also anticipates students' participation in debates, public speaking activities, and classroom discussions, reinforcing the idea that presentation skills are integral to academic literacy and active citizenship.

Foreign language curricula, including the English Language Curriculum, similarly emphasize communicative competence as a central learning outcome (Ministry of Science and Education, 2019b). Oral production (presentations, descriptions, narratives or argumentation) is recognized as a key component of language proficiency. The curriculum explicitly emphasizes preparing and delivering presentations using both verbal and nonverbal dimensions of communication, as well as responding to questions from peers and teachers, which corresponds to the “questions and answers” aspect of presentation skills. These competencies are aligned with the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (Council of Europe, 2018), which highlights productive skills, interaction, and mediation as essential components of language learning.

Overall, the Croatian curriculum (Ministry of Science and Education, 2019a) conceptually supports the systematic development of presentation skills, although these skills are dispersed across curricular domains rather than consolidated as a standalone learning area. The curricular outcomes nonetheless cover all key elements typically discussed in presentation skills theory: preparation, structuring, delivery, visual and digital support, interaction with the audience, and nonverbal communication. This alignment suggests that Croatian teachers of both Croatian and English languages are formally expected to cultivate presentation competence throughout the primary and secondary schooling.

Research aim and hypothesis

Starting from the assumption that presentation skills are an inseparable part of contemporary educational practice, and that the development of this ability in school carries equal cognitive, communicative, and educational dimensions, the aim of this study was to investigate how teachers shape and implement the teaching of presentation skills. The research focused on the ways in which presentation skills appear

in everyday pedagogical practice and the components of this practice which are genuinely present in the school context.

The primary intention of the study was to describe and understand teachers' perspectives: how teachers assess their own practice and which dimensions they consider worth emphasising. Special attention was given to differences that may emerge between subjects and educational levels. The research also included teachers' assessment as regards to what their students struggle with the most while presenting. Teachers of Croatian and English, as those who work daily with speech and language, represent a particularly interesting group for investigation, because their instructional setting includes developing students' ability to argue, interpret, and present publicly. On the other hand, differences between primary- and secondary-school contexts may indicate developmental aspects of teaching, what is recognised in education as an educational need at a younger versus an older age.

In accordance with the stated aim, we formulated the hypotheses to be examined in this study:

- There is a statistically significant difference in the teaching of non-verbal communication with regard to the school level.
- There is a statistically significant difference in the teaching of visual aids for presentations with regard to the school level.
- There is a statistically significant difference in the teaching of non-verbal communication with regard to the subject.
- There is a statistically significant difference in the teaching of visual aids for presentations with regard to the subject.
- There is a statistically significant difference between primary and secondary school teachers in the frequency of teaching verbal communication.
- There is a statistically significant difference between primary and secondary school teachers in the frequency of teaching preparation and structure of presentations.
- There is a statistically significant difference between English and Croatian teachers in the frequency of teaching verbal communication.
- There is a statistically significant difference between English and Croatian teachers in the frequency of teaching preparation and structure of presentations.

Methodology

Sample

A total of 57 teachers of English or Croatian who teach in primary or secondary schools participated in the study. The sample was formed through convenience sampling, based on the voluntary consent of participants following an invitation sent to schools and professional networks. Because participation was voluntary and based on convenience sampling, the sample cannot be considered representative of all Croatian and English language teachers. Consequently, the findings should be interpreted as indicative of the participating teachers' perspectives rather than as generalizable to the wider teacher population.

The participants differ in terms of their work context. Approximately half are primary school teachers (30 teachers), while the other half teach in secondary schools (27 teachers). Since language instruction carries a strong educational and communicative component, the sample includes an equal distribution of Croatian (29 teachers) and English language teachers (28 teachers). These subjects are particularly interesting because they shape and assess speech and interpretation, precisely the areas where public speaking and presentation skills appear in their most distinct form.

Instrument

For the purposes of the study, a survey instrument was constructed with the aim of capturing teachers' reflections and self-assessments regarding the teaching of presentation skills. The questionnaire was designed to provide insight into the methodological approaches teachers employ, as well as the frequency and presence of various aspects of presentation skills in teaching practice.

The questionnaire was developed specifically for the purposes of this study and the items were designed to reflect four dimensions that are consistently identified in the literature as central components of presentation competence: nonverbal communication, verbal communication, visual aids, and presentation preparation and structure (Lucas, 2021; Reynolds, 2023). Given the exploratory nature of the study and the relatively small sample size, the instrument was not subjected to

extensive psychometric validation. Instead, emphasis was placed on ensuring content relevance and alignment with the research aims. The questionnaire was reviewed by all three authors to ensure content relevance, clarity of wording, and alignment with the research aims.

The questionnaire consisted of two content-related sections. The first section collected basic contextual information about the participants (the subject they teach, the school level). The intention of this section was to enable the analysis of differences between groups, rather than to create a demographic profile of the participants. Since the aim of the study was to describe and understand the characteristics of educational practice, the data were collected at the level of the school and subject, rather than on the basis of individual personal attributes.

The second part of the instrument focused on specific instructional procedures related to presentation skills. Four aspects were examined, which the literature most frequently highlights as fundamental components of public speaking in the educational context: nonverbal communication, verbal communication, the technical aspects of preparing presentations (visual aids), and the preparation and structuring of content prior to delivery. Each dimension was operationalised through a separate item or items, and participants indicated the extent to which they teach these components in their practice (yes/no, never/sometimes/often).

The questionnaire was available in electronic format (Google Forms). The link to the questionnaire was distributed to teachers through school email lists and professional networks. In the introductory section, participants were informed about the purpose of the study, assured of anonymity, and notified of their ability to leave the questionnaire at any time. Completing the questionnaire took approximately 10 minutes on average.

Data analysis

The data were analysed using SPSS. In the first step, descriptive statistics were used to show the extent to which individual dimensions of presentation skills are present in teachers' practice. This provided an overall insight into what is commonly done in schools and what appears only occasionally.

In the second step, potential differences between groups were examined. For variables indicating the presence or absence of instruction (nonverbal communication and visual aids in presentations), the chi-square test was used. For variables indicating the frequency of instruction (verbal communication and preparation/structuring), the Mann-Whitney test was applied.

Responses to the open-ended question were analysed using a basic thematic analysis approach. First, all responses were read several times to achieve familiarity with the data. Recurring ideas and challenges mentioned by participants were then identified and grouped into broader categories. Through this process, four themes emerged: difficulties related to visual aids, presentation delivery, preparation and content selection, and presentation anxiety. These themes were subsequently used to organise and interpret the qualitative findings.

Results and discussion

The following table (Table 1) presents an overview of the percentage of teachers who teach nonverbal communication and preparing visual aids for presentations with respect to the school level.

Table 1. Descriptive Presentation of the Results

	Primary school	Secondary school
Nonverbal communication	90%	67%
Visual aids	57%	63%

To test the hypothesis *There is a statistically significant difference in the teaching of nonverbal communication with regard to school level*, a chi-square test was conducted. The results indicated a statistically significant difference between primary and secondary school teachers, $\chi^2(1) = 4.07$, $p = .044$, $\phi = .27$. Nonverbal communication was taught by 89.7% of primary school teachers and 67.9% of secondary school teachers. Younger students are more active, less aware of their nonverbal communication, and typically require more explicit guidance in basic communication behaviours, such as posture, eye contact, gesture use, and voice control, because these skills are still developing and form

part of broader socialisation processes (McCafferty & Stam, 2008). The results of this research, therefore align with both Curriculum for Croatian Language in primary education and the findings by Faella et al. (2025), which indicate that embodied learning is applicable and useful at the early education stage (preschool and primary school) as it has positive effects on motivation, body awareness and cognitive engagement. Furthermore, Kožić et al. (2013) studied nonverbal behaviour of primary school teachers and showed that the teachers apply gestures, mimics, movement and other nonverbal channels to manage the class, explain the content and motivate students. Primary teachers also tend to adopt more holistic and multimodal instructional approaches, integrating movement, expression, and classroom interaction into everyday learning (Cameron, 2001). As a result, nonverbal communication naturally becomes a more visible part of their teaching practice. In contrast, secondary education places greater emphasis on disciplinary content and academic performance, and students are often presumed to have already acquired basic nonverbal competencies, so teachers may see less need for explicit instruction.

To test the hypothesis *There is a statistically significant difference in the teaching of visual aids for presentations with regard to school level*, a chi-square test was conducted. No statistically significant difference was found between primary and secondary school teachers in the teaching of visual aids for presentations (e.g., PowerPoint), $\chi^2(1) = 0.49$, $p = .483$, $\phi = .09$. These results indicate that teaching visual aids is equally represented in both primary and secondary school education. However, it may be assumed that the choice of the visual tools used in primary and secondary school will differ, moving from simple posters in primary school to more complex PowerPoint and Prezi designs which require knowledge of both design and digital tools as indicated in the Curriculum for Croatian Language (Ministry of Science and Education, 2019a).

Furthermore, the percentage of teachers who teach nonverbal communication and visual aids for presentations was examined with regard to the subject they teach (Table 2).

Table 2. Descriptive Presentation of the Results

	English Language	Croatian Language
Nonverbal communication	71%	86%
Visual aids	54%	66%

To test the hypothesis *There is a statistically significant difference in the teaching of nonverbal communication with regard to the subject*, we used the chi-square test. The difference in the teaching of nonverbal communication between English and Croatian teachers was not statistically significant, $\chi^2(1) = 1.87$, $p = .171$, $\phi = .18$. The results indicate that English and Croatian language teachers reported teaching nonverbal communication with similar frequency, and no statistically significant differences were observed between the two groups. 78.9% of the teachers who participated in this research reported teaching nonverbal communication, indicating that they are aware of the importance of nonverbal communication and of the fact that nonverbal cues tend to override verbal cues when messages are ambiguous or contradictory (Knapp et al., 2014).

To test the hypothesis *There is a statistically significant difference in the teaching of visual aids for presentations with regard to the subject taught*, a chi-square test was conducted. English and Croatian language teachers did not differ significantly in their teaching of visual aids for presentations (e.g., PowerPoint), $\chi^2(1) = 0.85$, $p = .358$, $\phi = .12$. The comparable emphasis implies that visual communication is perceived as a transversal skill that all students should develop, regardless of subject area.

The following table (Table 3) presents an overview of the percentage of the frequency of teaching verbal communication and presentation preparation and structure with respect to the school level.

Table 3. Descriptive Presentation of the Results

	Primary school			Secondary school		
	Never	Sometimes	Often	Never	Sometimes	Often
Verbal communication	10%	30%	60%	7%	52%	41%
Presentation preparation and structure	10%	17%	73%	11%	33%	46%

To analyse the hypothesis *There is a statistically significant difference between primary and secondary school teachers in the frequency of teaching verbal communication*, the Mann-Whitney test was used, which showed that primary and secondary school teachers do not differ in the frequency of teaching verbal communication ($U = 354.00$, $p = .354$).

To analyse the hypothesis *There is a statistically significant difference between primary and secondary school teachers in the frequency of teaching preparation and structure of presentations*, the Mann-Whitney test was again applied. No statistically significant difference was found between primary and secondary school teachers, $U = 350.00$, $p = .289$. Although primary school teachers have a slightly higher rank (30.93 vs. 27.00), the difference is not sufficient to be statistically significant.

The frequency of teaching verbal communication and presentation preparation and structure with respect to the subject taught is examined below (Table 4).

Table 4. Descriptive Presentation of the Results

	English Language			Croatian Language		
	Never	Sometimes	Often	Never	Sometimes	Often
Verbal communication	11%	32%	57%	7%	45%	48%
Presentation preparation and structure	11%	29%	60%	10%	21%	69%

To analyse the hypothesis *There is a statistically significant difference between English and Croatian teachers in the frequency of teaching verbal communication*, the Mann-Whitney test was used. English and Croatian teachers do not differ in how often they teach verbal communication, $U = 394.00$, $p = .831$. The average ranks are almost identical (28.59 and 29.43), confirming that the frequency of teaching this skill is similar in both subjects. Verbal aspect or the delivery of the presentation requires linguistic and paralinguistic skills. Paralinguistic skills, such as proper accents and intonation, are taught both in native and foreign language. This is especially prominent in EFL classes as student’s delivery of a presentation is significantly affected by their lan-

guage proficiency (Goh & Burns, 2012). However, it seems that there are no differences in these terms.

A similar result was obtained for the teaching of presentation preparation and structuring. The Mann-Whitney test did not show a significant difference between subjects in the teaching of presentations preparation and structuring ($U = 375.50$, $p = .564$), meaning that the hypothesis *There is a statistically significant difference between English and Croatian teachers in the frequency of teaching preparation and structure of presentations* was not confirmed.

The results obtained in this research did not reveal statistically significant differences between Croatian and English teachers or between primary and secondary school teachers in the reported frequency of teaching presentation preparation, structure, and delivery. This suggests that these elements of presentation competence are viewed as core components of instruction across subjects and educational levels, rather than being tied to a specific language or school stage. In other words, all groups of teachers appear to recognise the importance of helping students organise their ideas, design coherent presentations, and perform confidently in front of an audience. The comparable frequency of instruction may also reflect shared curricular expectations and a growing emphasis on communication skills as transversal competencies throughout compulsory education (Ministry of Science and Education, 2019a; Ministry of Science and Education, 2019b).

Furthermore, to gain a deeper understanding of the difficulties students encounter during presentations, the questionnaire included an open-ended question. The answers were analysed thematically and grouped into four recurring themes: visual aids, presentation delivery, preparation and content selection, and presentation anxiety. The first issue mentioned referred to developing visual aids as teachers noted that students tended to include an excessive amount of text in visual aids. Furthermore, teachers state that students often copy information and struggle to summarise it, resulting in slides and presentations that are overcrowded and overly textual, which in turn makes the comprehension more difficult for their audience (Kosslyn, 2010). An excessive amount of text in visual aids leads to the second most frequently mentioned issue, and that is the presentation delivery as students showed the tendency to read directly from the slides instead of speaking inde-

pendently. This may be the result of a presenter feeling more confident and less anxious when reading (Leinert Novosel, 2015). Other issues related to verbal communication or presentation delivery included language errors, insufficient sentence fluency, and static delivery, with occasional remarks about deviations from standard language norms. It is interesting to note that although the researches find question-and-answers session challenging (Mardiningrum & Ramadhani, 2022) and rarely explicitly taught (Arwaea & Soontornwipast, 2022), teachers failed to mention it as a verbal presentation aspect their students struggle with. They rather highlighted insecurity and fear of public speaking, indicating the emotional dimension of presenting. Insecurity and fear of presenting are strongly linked to preparation (Picanço Marchand et al., 2024) and preparation is the final issue teachers mentioned. Teachers report that students have difficulty distinguishing essential from non-essential information and presenting key points clearly.

Although these difficulties are clearly recognised, the quantitative results show that most teachers assess their students as generally successful in presenting: 84% of participants report that students present without major difficulties, while 16% estimate that problems occur more frequently. This tension between “successful task completion” and “quality of performance” suggests that students do present, but often with limitations in content selection, language, and confidence. These responses confirm that teaching presentation skills involves more than technical preparation: it encompasses content organisation, language, and self-confidence, and represents an area in which schools can act systematically.

Conclusion

This study examined the teaching of presentation skills, such as presentation preparation and structure, visual aids, verbal and nonverbal communication by Croatian and English teachers across primary and secondary schools. The results indicate that both Croatian and English teachers, across primary and secondary schools, place substantial emphasis on teaching presentation preparation, structure, and verbal communication which includes delivery and question-and-answer sessions. No statistically significant differences were found between subjects or

school levels in these areas, suggesting that these are considered a core, transversal competences throughout compulsory education. In contrast, nonverbal communication is taught more frequently in primary school, highlighting the developmental need to guide younger students explicitly in posture, eye contact and gesture, which remain foundational for effective communication and socialisation. The teaching of visual aids appears equally represented across school levels, although teachers report that students often struggle with excessive text and overreliance on slides, which can compromise independent delivery and audience comprehension. Overall, while teachers perceive their students as generally successful presenters, challenges remain in content selection, visual design, language use, and self-confidence.

Several limitations should be considered when interpreting the findings of this study. First, the study was conducted on a relatively small convenience sample of 57 teachers. While the sample provided valuable insights into teachers' perspectives on presentation skills instruction, the limited number of participants may have reduced the likelihood of detecting smaller differences between groups. Consequently, the absence of statistically significant differences should not be interpreted as evidence of similarity or equivalence between groups. The findings should be interpreted with caution and should not be generalised beyond similar educational contexts. Second, the data were based exclusively on teachers' self-reports. As a result, the findings reflect teachers' perceptions of their instructional practices rather than direct observations of classroom behaviour. Future studies could complement teacher reports with classroom observations, student perspectives, or analyses of teaching materials in order to provide a more comprehensive understanding of how presentation skills are taught in practice. Finally, the questionnaire was developed specifically for this study and did not undergo extensive psychometric validation. Although the instrument was grounded in the relevant literature and aligned with the study objectives, the results should be interpreted as exploratory and descriptive in nature.

Nevertheless, the obtained results point to several directions for further research. Empirical studies focusing on students' own use and creation of visual aids could provide more nuanced insights into how technical aspect of presentation skills develops across educational lev-

els. Longitudinal research could examine how early instruction in non-verbal communication influences presentation competence and confidence in secondary education. Additionally, interventions designed to improve content selection, visual clarity, and delivery may help address persistent challenges identified by teachers. Finally, integrating embodied learning approaches that combine verbal, visual, and nonverbal modalities may enhance engagement, comprehension, and overall presentation quality, offering a comprehensive strategy for developing students' communicative competence across school stages.

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POUČAVANJE PREZENTACIJSKIH VJEŠTINA: PRAKSE NASTAVNIKA HRVATSKOGA I ENGLESKOGA JEZIKA

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Ovim se istraživanjem ispituje koje prezentacijske vještine nastavnici hrvatskoga i engleskoga jezika u osnovnim i srednjim školama poučavaju unutar suvremene obrazovne prakse. Istraživanje je usmjereno na četiri temeljna aspekta prezentacijskih vještina: neverbalnu komunikaciju, verbalnu komunikaciju, vizualna pomagala te pripremu i organizaciju prezentacije. Rezultati istraživanja pokazuju da nastavnici u osnovnim školama znatno češće poučavaju neverbalnu komunikaciju od nastavnika u srednjim školama. Razlike između razina obrazovanja i nastavnih predmeta u odnosu na poučavanje vizualnih pomagala, verbalne komunikacije te pripreme i organizacije prezentacije nisu utvrđene. Nastavnici navode da se učenici najčešće suočavaju s poteškoćama u izradi odgovarajućih

vizualnih pomagala, procjeni količine teksta, izlaganju bez čitanja te sa strahom od javnog nastupa. Unatoč navedenim poteškoćama, većina nastavnika smatra da učenici uspješno prezentiraju tijekom nastave jezika. Dobiveni rezultati upućuju na potrebu za sustavnim razvojem prezentacijskih vještina kod učenika na svim razinama obrazovanja s ciljem odgovaranja na izazove koje su nastavnici identificirali.

Ključne riječi: *prezentacijske vještine; neverbalna komunikacija; verbalna komunikacija; vizualna pomagala; podučavanje; nastavnici jezika; osnovno i srednje obrazovanje*