



Evaluating Oral Presentation Performance in a Professional Arabic Language Course: A Rubric-Based Study

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Article Info	Abstract
<i>Article History</i> Date of Submission 29-01-2026 Date of Acceptance 06-05-2026 Date of Publication 15-06-2026	Arabic for Professional Purposes courses increasingly include oral presentations to combine linguistic competence with communication skills, yet empirical research on their assessment remains limited. This study examines patterns in oral presentation performance across linguistic, interactional, and professional dimensions, including relationships among assessment criteria, their association with overall performance, and potential gender differences. Data from 75 undergraduate student oral presentations at the University of Dhaka were evaluated using a five-criterion analytic rubric: Objectivity of Content, ‘Pronunciation and Fluency’, Grammar, Interaction, and Attire. These data were analyzed using Pearson correlation, multiple regression, and an independent-samples t-test. All criteria showed strong, significant intercorrelations. Objectivity of Content, ‘Pronunciation and Fluency’, and Grammar correlated most strongly with overall performance. Regression analysis identified ‘Pronunciation and Fluency’ as the sole significant
<i>Keywords</i> Arabic for professional purposes, Oral presentation assessment, Presentation interaction; Pronunciation and fluency, Rubric-based assessment	

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predictor of Interaction, highlighting fluency's role in audience engagement. No significant gender differences were found. The study advocates for context-appropriate, rubric-based evaluation in underrepresented professional Arabic settings.

Introduction

Oral presentations are widely used in language classrooms as learner-centered activities that improve speaking skills, boost confidence, and increase audience awareness. In professional language courses, oral presentations play an important role in preparing students to communicate effectively in real-world professional environments. As oral communication is recognized as a key outcome of higher education, presentation tasks have become an important way for learners to demonstrate their ability to convey information, ideas, and arguments to an audience.

To evaluate oral presentations in classroom settings, instructors commonly use rubrics. A rubric can be defined as “a coherent set of criteria for students’ work that includes descriptions of levels of performance quality on the criteria” (Brookhart, 2013, p. 4). Rubrics clarify assessment expectations for students, support fair and consistent judgment by instructors, and provide structured feedback that facilitates learning (Allen & Tanner, 2006). In oral presentation assessment, analytic rubrics typically include criteria for content quality, pronunciation and fluency, grammatical accuracy, and audience interaction, where performance is evaluated across levels from lower to higher proficiency.

The undergraduate course Arabic for Professional Purposes at the University of Dhaka includes oral presentations as a topic to combine linguistic competence with professional communication skills. In this course, students are required to deliver presentations in Arabic as non-native speakers. In this study, students’ performance was evaluated based on five criteria: Objectivity of Content, Pronunciation and Fluency, Grammar, Interaction, and Attire (professional appearance).

These criteria were chosen to reflect the linguistic, interactional, and professional aspects of oral presentation skills relevant to the course.

Literature Review

Oral Presentation Performance in Language Education

In language education, oral presentation performance involves multiple dimensions, including linguistic, discourse-related, and interactional competencies. It allows learners to demonstrate content clarity, fluency, grammatical accuracy, and the ability to engage with the audience. Studies show some agreement between teachers' and students' views on what makes an effective presentation. For instance, a survey of Iranian EFL teachers and students by Soureshjani & Ghanbari (2012) found that presentation details and voice quality were the most important factors. Additionally, message transfer, manner of presentation, body language, and feedback also played important roles. In contrast, presentation style and the use of external resources were considered less significant. This emphasizes the combined role of language proficiency and delivery techniques in successful performance.

Assessment of Oral Presentations

Assessing oral presentations in language education often depends on performance-based approaches. Among these, analytic rubrics are preferred because they enable transparent and separate evaluation of various performance aspects, though their practical application outside English language teaching is still limited.

In a qualitative study on learners of Arabic as a Foreign Language, Fauzi & Rahmawati (2025) did a performance-based speaking assessment using criteria such as pronunciation, fluency, coherence, accuracy, and confidence. Their findings suggest that performance-based assessment may better reflect learners' speaking skills than traditional testing methods, which supports the use of rubrics for evaluation. Besides, Al-khresheh (2024) demonstrated the quantitative use of an analytic rubric to assess students' oral presentation skills

before and after an instructional intervention. His criteria included content, lexical resources, pronunciation, fluency and coherence, grammatical range and accuracy, engagement and interaction, and overall presentation skills to enable systematic comparison of performance across assessment stages.

Key Components of Oral Presentation Performance

Key components of oral presentation performance include both linguistic and nonlinguistic dimensions. Previous studies consistently identify pronunciation and fluency as central components. Empirical evidence from Al-khresheh (2024) shows that fluency and coherence can improve significantly through continuous presentation practice, while grammatical accuracy and lexical control also enhance overall presentation quality.

A qualitative case study of English teachers by Ranganathan & Al-Khulaidi (2025) identified pronunciation, fluency, grammar, and vocabulary as common linguistic criteria for assessment. Beyond these linguistic competencies, interactional and paralinguistic elements—such as body language, voice quality, energy, and preparation—also impact effectiveness. However, as they observed, these nonlinguistic criteria are applied less consistently and are often viewed as subjective. This finding highlights the importance of clearly defined criteria to assess interactional and delivery-related aspects of oral presentations.

Research Gap and Relevance to the Present Study

Interest in assessing oral presentations in EFL and AFL contexts has increased. However, most empirical research has focused on English language courses or general academic presentations. Quantitative research on Arabic oral presentation performance remains limited. This gap is particularly noticeable in Bangladesh, where Arabic is taught as a foreign language with academic, religious, and professional importance. To date, no study has systematically examined students' oral presentation performance based on specific criteria.

This study addresses this gap. It provides a quantitative, multidimensional assessment of oral presentation performance. It also offers context-specific empirical evidence in an underexplored area of Arabic language education research.

Rationale of the Study

Oral presentations are widely used in higher education to develop students' communication skills, confidence, and audience engagement. In language programs, they reflect key aspects of speaking competence such as fluency, grammatical accuracy, and interactional competence. However, in professional language contexts, effective performance extends beyond linguistic accuracy to align with professional norms and expectations. This creates a need for assessment approaches that capture both linguistic and contextual dimensions of communication.

The present study is motivated by the limited use of empirically grounded, rubric-based quantitative assessment in Arabic for Professional Purposes courses, especially in Bangladesh. Though analytic rubrics are widely recommended in language education for evaluating speaking performance, their systematic application in professional Arabic contexts remains underexplored. By implementing a structured analytic rubric in a classroom setting, this study aims to provide a more robust basis for evaluating professional Arabic oral communication. Here, core assessment criteria such as Objectivity of Content, Pronunciation and Fluency, Grammar, and Interaction form the core focus of the assessment framework. Simultaneously, Attire serves as a complementary dimension that reflects awareness of professional norms. Prior research (Sotak et al., 2023; Furnham et al., 2013) indicates that clothing “influences perceptions” of “credibility”, “competence”, and “ethicality” in professional settings, which supports its inclusion as a secondary factor.

Accordingly, the study is justified on three grounds: (1) it addresses an empirical gap by examining Arabic oral presentation performance within an underrepresented national context; (2) it examines the relationships among linguistic, delivery-related, and professional

dimensions of presentation performance; and (3) it empirically examines professional appearance as a context-sensitive assessment criterion within a rubric-based evaluative framework.

Research Questions

This study was guided by the following research questions:

- Q1. What are the relationships among the assessment criteria used to evaluate students' oral presentation performance?
- Q2. To what extent does each assessment criterion relate to students' overall oral presentation performance?
- Q3. Is there a significant difference in oral presentation performance based on gender?

Objectives of the Study

The objectives of this study were to:

- (1) examine the relationships among the assessment criteria used to evaluate oral presentation performance;
- (2) analyze the extent to which each criterion relates to overall oral presentation performance, with particular attention to professional appearance in relation to linguistic and performance-based measures; and
- (3) investigate whether oral presentation performance differs by gender.

Methodology

Context and Participants

Each course in the Bachelor of Arts (BA) in Arabic program at the Department of Arabic, University of Dhaka, is taught by two instructors, each responsible for different topics. In this case, the first author taught *Arabic for Professional Purposes* and was responsible for the presentation component of the syllabus. The presentations were

held at the Department of Arabic, University of Dhaka, in October 2023 during the seventh semester.

The total enrollment in the course was 140 students, including 107 males and 33 females. All participants were native speakers of Bangla, and Arabic was studied within the course as a non-native language for professional purposes. Participation in the presentation task was voluntary; 75 students chose to participate. Among them, 67 were male and 8 were female, with an age range of 22-24 years.

Research Design

This classroom-based study employed a descriptive–comparative, observational, cross-sectional design to evaluate students’ performance in oral presentations. The design allows for a systematic description and comparison of students’ performance across multiple assessment criteria without manipulating variables or introducing instructional interventions. The study was observational in nature, as the instructor (first author) rated students’ performance during regular class sessions rather than under experimental conditions. It was cross-sectional, since all data were collected within a single semester of the course. The unit of analysis was the individual student presentation.

Students’ performance was evaluated using a structured rubric, as described in the following section, which provided the framework for analyzing variation across criteria and examining relationships among them.

Instrument: Rubric and Scoring

Presentations were evaluated in real time by the instructor (first author), who was familiar with the course objectives and rubric descriptors, using a five-level analytic rubric (1 = Poor to 5 = Excellent) across five criteria:

- 1. Objectivity of Content** — focus, relevance, and conciseness of content.

2. **Pronunciation & Fluency** — clarity of articulation, flow, and smoothness of delivery.
3. **Grammar** — accuracy and appropriateness of syntactic structures.
4. **Interaction** — ability to engage the audience, maintain attention, and respond to their questions effectively.
5. **Attire (Professional Appearance)** — formal or at least semi-formal, clean dress appropriate for a professional presentation context.

Rubric Descriptors

- **5 (Excellent):** fully focused and relevant content; highly fluent and natural delivery; grammar nearly free from error; highly engaging interaction; formal or semi-formal and clean attire.
- **4 (Very Good):** minor lapses in focus; occasional hesitations; minor grammatical slips; generally engaging interaction; semi-formal and clean attire with minor lapses.
- **3 (Good):** generally relevant content with some unnecessary detail; noticeable hesitations that do not disrupt communication; grammatical errors present but not obscuring meaning; limited interaction; generally appropriate attire.
- **2 (Fair):** partially irrelevant content; frequent hesitations or mispronunciations; grammatical errors that sometimes affect clarity; minimal interaction; casual or somewhat untidy attire inconsistent with professional presentation norms.
- **1 (Poor):** off-topic or disorganized content; halting and unclear delivery; constant grammatical errors that hinder meaning; no audience engagement; inappropriate or distracting attire.

A total score for each student was calculated as the arithmetic mean of the five criteria, with all criteria weighted equally (range: 5.00–25.00).

Procedure for Conducting Oral Presentations

The instructor (first author) had announced the presentation guidelines one week before the presentation activity began and

provided three topics for students to prepare. At the time of presentation, each student picked one of the three topics through a lottery, which ensured that the topics were randomly assigned. Presentations were conducted across eight regular class sessions. The instructor (first author) observed each presentation in real time and immediately rated performance on all five criteria using a standardized score sheet.

Data Handling and Preparation

Scores recorded during the presentations were transferred from paper-based score sheets into a spreadsheet with one row per student and separate columns for the five assessment criteria. The dataset was checked for data entry errors and missing values.

To prepare the data, each student's overall performance score was calculated as the arithmetic mean of the five criterion scores (range: 5.00–25.00). The data were then organized by student and gender and prepared for subsequent descriptive and comparative statistical analyses.

Data Analysis

Data were analyzed using IBM SPSS Statistics (version 27). First, Pearson product-moment correlation coefficients were used to examine associations among the five assessment criteria. A regression analysis was then conducted to further explore the relationships among the criteria. Finally, a t-test was conducted to assess the effect of gender on performance. All statistical analyses were performed at a significance level of $\alpha = .05$.

Ethical Considerations

The study involved a normal course activity and did not expose students to any risks beyond standard classroom practice. Participation in the presentations was voluntary, and students who chose not to

participate faced no disadvantage. No recordings were made. Scores were recorded on paper sheets with class roll numbers and gender only. No names or other identifying details were collected. Data were later anonymized for analysis and reporting. The ethical principles of fairness, transparency, and respect for students were maintained consistently throughout the process.

Results

Table 1. Pearson correlations among assessment criteria and overall performance

	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Objectivity of Content	1					
2. Pronunciation & Fluency	.67**	1				
3. Grammar	.61**	.67**	1			
4. Interaction	.44**	.53**	.42**	1		
5. Attire	.53**	.35**	.36**	.28*	1	
6. Overall Performance	.86**	.84**	.83**	.66**	.66**	1

Note. $p < .05$ (*), $p < .01$ (**).

Table 1 presents the Pearson product–moment correlations among the five assessment criteria and overall performance. Strong and statistically significant positive correlations were observed among all criteria. All correlations were significant at the .01 level, except for the association between Attire and Interaction, which was significant at the .05 level.

Overall performance demonstrated particularly strong correlations with Objectivity of Content, Pronunciation and Fluency, and Grammar, indicating that these criteria were closely aligned with the composite performance score. Interaction and Attire were also significantly correlated with overall performance, though with comparatively lower coefficients.

Table 2. Multiple regression model predicting interaction from assessment criteria

<i>Model</i>	<i>R</i>	<i>R</i> ²	Adjusted <i>R</i> ²	SE	<i>F</i>	Sig.	Durbin-Watson
1	.549	.301	.261	.57	7.55	<.001	1.87

Note. Predictors included Objectivity of Content, Pronunciation and Fluency, Grammar, and Attire. The dependent variable was Interaction.

To further explore the relationships among the assessment criteria, a multiple regression analysis was conducted with Interaction as the dependent variable and Objectivity of Content, Pronunciation and Fluency, Grammar, and Attire as predictors. As shown in Table 2, the model yielded a multiple correlation coefficient of $R = .549$ and an R^2 value of .301, indicating that approximately 30.1% of the variance in Interaction scores was accounted for by the four predictors. The adjusted R^2 value (.261) suggested a modest reduction, reflecting model generalizability. The overall model was statistically significant, $F(4, 70) = 7.55, p < .001$.

Table 3. Regression coefficients for predictors of interaction

Predictors	Unstandardized β	SE	Standardized β	<i>t</i>	Sig.
Objectivity of Content	.076	.115	.101	.654	.515
Pronunciation & Fluency	.330	.127	.394	2.60	.011
Grammar	.049	.091	.075	.532	.596
Attire	.044	.095	.055	.464	.644

As shown in Table 3, the regression coefficients indicated that ‘Pronunciation and Fluency’ was the only predictor that made a statistically significant unique contribution to Interaction ($\beta = .394, p = .011$). The remaining predictors—Objectivity of Content, Grammar, and Attire—did not reach statistical significance. This finding suggests that, within this assessment framework, students’ Pronunciation and Fluency were most strongly associated with their ability to engage the audience during oral presentations.

Table 4. Descriptive statistics and independent-samples *t*-test results for gender differences in overall performance

				Levene's Test		t-test		
Gender	<i>N</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>F</i>	Sig.	<i>t</i>	<i>df</i>	Sig.
Male	67	11.910	3.401	1.973	.164	.029	73	.977
Female	8	11.875	1.885					

Note. Dependent Variable: Overall performance.

Table 4 presents descriptive statistics and the results of an independent-samples *t*-test examining gender differences in overall oral presentation performance. Male students ($M = 11.91$, $SD = 3.40$) and female students ($M = 11.88$, $SD = 1.89$) demonstrated very similar mean performance scores. Levene's test for equality of variances was not significant ($F = 1.97$, $p = .164$), indicating that the assumption of equal variances was met. The *t*-test revealed no statistically significant difference between male and female students' performance, $t(73) = .03$, $p = .977$.

Discussion

This study examined students' oral presentation performance in an Arabic for Professional Purposes course. It focused on relationships among assessment criteria, their association with overall performance, and potential gender differences. Here, the findings confirm that oral presentation performance is multidimensional. They also offer practical insights for teaching, practicing, and assessing professional Arabic presentations.

Strong correlations were found among Objectivity of Content, 'Pronunciation and Fluency', Grammar, Interaction, and Attire. This indicates that effective oral presentations are not the result of isolated abilities but the combination of linguistic competence, communicative delivery, and professional awareness. From a pedagogical perspective, this indicates that presentation skills should not be treated as optional. Instead, instructors should integrate them into comprehensive instructional sequences. These sequences should combine content planning, language practice, and performance rehearsal. The

particularly strong association between Objectivity of Content and overall performance highlights the importance of guiding students toward purposeful structure, relevant content, and professional audience awareness, beyond linguistic form alone.

Interaction and Attire showed comparatively weaker correlations with overall performance. However, both were still significantly related to the composite score. This indicates that they function as supportive dimensions of effective presentations. In classroom settings, interaction reflects students' ability to hold audience attention, manage turn-taking, and respond to questions. These are important skills in professional communication. Though Attire is not a linguistic dimension, it signals students' awareness of professional norms and expectations. These findings suggest that instructors should clearly address interactional strategies and professional presentation norms with students rather than assuming that such competencies will naturally develop.

The regression analysis provides insight into pedagogical considerations related to fluency and interaction. 'Pronunciation and Fluency' was the only criterion that uniquely predicted Interaction, indicating that students who spoke more smoothly and confidently were better able to engage their audience. Limited fluency may reduce interaction, even when content knowledge is strong. In professional Arabic classrooms, where students often prepare presentations thoroughly yet struggle with spontaneous speech, insufficient fluency may hinder audience engagement, responsiveness, and confidence. This finding highlights the pedagogical importance of fluency-focused activities such as repeated short presentations, guided rehearsals, and interactive speaking exercises. These activities prioritize flow and automaticity rather than accuracy alone.

The absence of a statistically significant gender difference in overall performance suggests that male and female students performed similarly within this instructional setting. From a teaching perspective, this finding supports the use of consistent performance expectations, assessment criteria, and instructional support for all students regardless

of gender. However, because of the imbalance in group sizes, this result should be viewed with caution and should not be taken as evidence of overall gender neutrality in presentation performance.

Limitations

The study has several limitations along with its contributions, which should be acknowledged. First, the sample was taken from a single course at a single institution, which limits the generalizability of the findings to other Arabic language programs or educational settings. Second, participation in the presentation task was voluntary, which raises the possibility of self-selection bias, as more confident or motivated students may have chosen to participate. Third, the assessment relied on ratings done by a single instructor. Although the use of a structured analytic rubric supports consistency, the lack of inter-rater reliability analysis limits the ability to assess scoring objectivity. Fourth, the gender comparison was limited by a substantial imbalance in group sizes, particularly the small number of female participants, which decreases statistical power. Lastly, the study focused on performance outcomes at a single point in time and did not examine changes in presentation skills over time.

Implications

The findings of this study have several implications for teaching and assessment in professional Arabic language courses. First, the strong associations between linguistic criteria and overall performance highlight the continued importance of pronunciation and fluency, and grammatical accuracy in professional oral communication. Instructors may prioritize activities that improve both fluent, accurate speech and the organization of content.

Second, the observed association between ‘Pronunciation and Fluency’ and Interaction suggests the importance of including instructional activities that promote spontaneous speech and audience engagement in low-stress environments. Such activities might involve short impromptu presentations, discussions, and simulated professional interactions, which may help students develop more

confidence and communicative flexibility.

Third, including Attire as an assessment criterion draws attention to the broader communication norms of professional contexts. Discussing professional presentation norms explicitly may help students understand how linguistic performance and professional appearance jointly shape audience perceptions. A rubric-based approach can help clarify how these expectations are incorporated into classroom assessment.

Recommendations

Based on the findings and limitations of the study, several recommendations can be made here. Future research should replicate this study across multiple institutions and professional Arabic courses to enhance generalizability. Involving multiple raters and conducting inter-rater reliability analysis would enhance the methodological rigor of such a rubric-based assessment.

Further research could also use longitudinal designs to examine how students' oral presentation skills develop over time and how continuous exposure to presentation tasks influences their linguistic and interactional competence. Future research may also explore alternative modeling approaches to better understand the relative impacts of various assessment criteria, such as analyzing overall performance as a dependent variable.

From a pedagogical perspective, instructors are encouraged to use analytic rubrics not only for grading but also as formative tools to support student preparation and self-reflection. Providing rubric descriptors in advance and giving specific feedback may help learners focus on both linguistic accuracy and presenting professionally.

Conclusion

This study used a rubric-based quantitative approach to examine students' oral presentation performance in an Arabic for Professional

Purposes course in Bangladesh. The findings show that oral presentation performance is a multidimensional model that interconnects linguistic, interactional, and professional dimensions. Core linguistic criteria—particularly Pronunciation and Fluency—had a strong correlation with overall performance and played a key role in engaging the audience.

The absence of significant gender differences indicates that performance outcomes in this context were not influenced by gender, though this result should be interpreted cautiously because of sample limitations. By including Attire as a context-specific criterion, the study extends existing research and highlights the relevance of professional norms in evaluating oral communication.

All findings, limitations, and implications of this study highlight the importance of using a context-appropriate, rubric-based approach when evaluating oral presentations in professional Arabic language courses. Overall, the study offers empirical evidence from an underrepresented context and provides practical insights for teaching, assessment, and curriculum development in professional Arabic language education. Additionally, it highlights the usefulness of analytic rubrics in helping students prepare for professional communication.

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