EFL learners' connection with audience in oral presentations: The significance of frame and person markers

Shu-Hui Yu, Ling Tung University, Taichung, Taiwan

Kate Cadman, University of Adelaide, South Australia

As the English language spreads across the world, especially in its academic forms, more needs to be known about how students of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) understand the conventions of constructing academic oral presentations. In settings where English-speaking criteria for success are not the same as local criteria, how do these students conceptualise making connections with their audience when they structure their English oral presentations? The purpose of the study reported here was to investigate how, and why, EFL learners applied textual and interpersonal markers in different public speech occasions in their academic classrooms. The study participants were students in a tertiary public speaking course in Taiwan. Spoken data are analysed here to locate the patterns of use of frame and person markers, while peer comments, self-evaluations and reflections are employed to gain a better understanding of how students viewed their communicative and 'connecting' goals. Pedagogical implications from the findings can inform teaching in EFL and English for Academic Purposes (EAP) contexts about how students can effectively employ frame markers to organise academic speech, and how these markers may facilitate direct connection with a listening EFL audience.

Introduction

The recent spread of English as a language of academic and professional activity in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) contexts has been widely acknowledged. In Asia, the increasing demand for skills development in English has resulted in teachers of EFL and English for Academic Purposes (EAP) being required to understand their own students' contextualised learning needs in greater detail than ever before. One of the central tasks which is a key requirement of all standard EFL/EAP courses is oral presentation, yet little in-depth research has been conducted on students' spoken texts in EFL contexts. Consequently, to learn more about EFL students' understandings of the roles in their texts of organisational signals and other explicit relational devices (Hyland, 1998) became the overarching objective of this study conducted by teacher/researchers in an academic public speaking course in Taiwan.

EFL presentation and 'metadiscourse'

It is well known that giving oral presentations in English is not a simple matter of learning language and following instructions; rather, it is a skill requiring complex sociolinguistic as well as cognitive understandings, especially for learners of English as an Additional or Foreign Language (EAL/EFL) (Morita, 2000; Adams, 2004). One

particularly difficult challenge for students from diverse academic cultures is to 'connect' with the audience in an English language presentation, yet how to do this is usually covered only very generally (King, 2002; Otoshi & Heffernan, 2008) and without focused textual investigation.

Teaching oral presentation skills is usually based on conventionally accepted criteria. First, students must obviously have command of their content material (field knowledge), and be able to organise their ideas in an appropriately logical sequence (text structure). They also need an adequate level of grammatical competence, and the ability to deliver their talk in a presentation style appropriate for English (paying attention to eye contact, voice quality, body language and so on). If as teachers we restrict our emphasis to these basic elements (as in King, 2002), the 'interpersonal' function of the language itself, that is, the ability of the text to effect 'exchange' and to realise interactive dialogic goals (see Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004), may not receive adequate attention. This dialogic function has been described as "having the right connections"; for linguists, it is the ability to use "language for establishing connections both within the text we are producing and with the context in which we are operating" (Collerson, 1994, p.31).

The detailed mechanisms of this interpersonal function in academic writing are investigated by Ken Hyland (1998), who argues that the "sense of audience is critical" because the perceived truth of the arguments themselves requires the linguistic choices to be persuasive (p.439). Such choices are a feature of what Hyland terms 'metadiscourse', namely, "those aspects of the text which explicitly refer to the organisation of the discourse" and are "the means by which writers reveal both themselves and their communicative purposes" (p.438). He shows how specific markers in this metadiscourse constitute "the central pragmatic construct which allows us to see how writers seek to influence readers' understandings of both the text and their attitude towards its content and its audience" (p.437). While Hyland's focus is on writing, it is clear that his theoretical framework also has direct application for the interpersonal dimension of academic oral presentations.

Hyland's (1998) schema identifies two elements which are particularly relevant here: first, in the textual metadiscourse, he defines "frame markers", which are those "explicit references to text boundaries or elements of schematic text structure, either introducing

shifts in the discourse or preparing for the next step in the argument" (p.442); second, in the interpersonal metadiscourse, he includes "person markers" which involve "person pronouns and possessive adjectives to present both propositional and metadiscursive information" (p.444). Both these types of markers recur frequently in EFL oral presentations and consequently we chose to make students' understanding and use of these markers the focus of this study's investigation.

Method

The study context

The study was implemented in a tertiary course of *Speech and communication in English*, which is a required final year component of a five-year Associate Bachelor's degree in Taiwan. Its purposes were (1) to equip students with basic knowledge and communication skills in public speaking in English; and (2) to prepare students to present a project report in English. To provide basic concepts and skills for giving presentations, teaching was based on a textbook, *Effective presentations* (Comfort, 1996), and a reference book, *Principles of public speaking* (German, *et al.*, 2006).

The participants were 33 female students whose English proficiency level could be categorised as lower-intermediate, since their TOEIC (Test of English for International Communication) results averagely fell in the range 400, or around IELTS 4. Moreover, although students might have varying experiences in using English in different classes, none of them had given a speech in English in front of a whole class.

The syllabus planning and tasks were designed according to the course purposes and students' English proficiency level. Lessons generally followed the organisation of the textbook, starting from giving general knowledge of the organisation of a typical English presentation, and moving on to useful communication skills and language used in specific sections or elements, such as Introduction, linking, Conclusion, visual aids, body language, and so on. Regarding the speech task design, the lack of knowledge and experience in giving English presentations was clearly an important factor. This fostered a training approach which progressed from simple to complicated tasks, from individual to group work, and also from a topic students were familiar with to a more complicated one.

Data collection and analysis

The qualitative data included both spoken and written forms collected from two presentations. One was an individual presentation entitled "Introducing the Department", a three-minute speech to describe their Department. The other was a group presentation to present a conference observation report. The presentations were audio- and video-recorded, the data transcribed and then checked with the student speakers. Twenty-six speech data sets were collected for Presentation 1, and 10 duo and 4 trios for Presentation 2, making 40 sets in all. In addition, three types of written data were also collected: (1) a self-evaluation of general performance on the two presentations; (2) reflections and comments on using connectors; and (3) a final survey for general reflection and self-evaluation.

To fulfil the research objectives and understand how students' speeches connected with their audiences at textual and interpersonal levels, we investigated all the 40 spoken data sets for the frame markers announcing the Conclusion, and the use of person markers relating to their understanding of audience. First we focused on whether speakers used Conclusion frame markers, and if they did, what types they used. Then, person markers were located in the Introduction and the Conclusion, and these were compared with the audience speakers claimed to be addressing in their written survey. Accordingly, we developed the following categories of data analysis:

Use of concluding frame markers

- Step 1: Whole speech with or without a Conclusion
- Step 2: Conclusion with or without a frame marker
- Step 3: Types of frame connectors used to conclude

Use of person markers for connection with the audience

A. Individual presentations
- Step 1: Speaker/audience relationship in a Conclusion represented by person markers
- Step 2: Speaker/audience relation in the Introduction represented by person markers
- Step 3: Audience claimed by the speaker in the survey
- Step 4: Consistency of connection achieved if the three audiences were compatible

B. Group Presentations
- Step 1: External consistency across speakers in terms of claimed audience found in the survey
- Step 2: Internal consistency in terms of self-positioning represented by consistent person markers in the Introduction and the Conclusion
- Step 3: Consistent connection achieved if external and internal consistency reached

Findings

Use of frame markers to conclude

Patterns of the use of frame markers to conclude were located and categorised in three forms: no Conclusion, no frame markers, and frame marker present. Table 1 displays the patterns in both presentations.

Presentations	No Conclusion	No frame marker	Frame marker present
1. 26 individuals	7 (27%)	2 (8%)	17 (65%)
2. 14 groups	2 (14%)	0	12 (86%)

Table 1: Conclusion frame markers in Presentations 1 & 2

In Presentation 1, a higher percentage of speeches (27%) ended without a concluding section, while in Presentation 2 a much higher percentage of frame markers was used (86%). In fact, except for the two presentations without a Conclusion, all the other 12 groups used frame markers to conclude. Table 2 shows the patterns of using frame markers to signpost the Conclusion.

	Presentation 1	**Presentation 2**
With a frame marker	17 out of 26 signalled with a connector *Types of connectors* o Concluding connector (11), e.g., 'in conclusion' o Summarising connector (3), e.g., 'to sum up' o Others (3), e.g., 'So…', 'Let's stop here'	12 out of 14 signalled with a connector *Types of connectors* o Concluding connectors (9) o Summarising connector (2) o Other (1)—'as a result'
Without a frame marker	9 out of 26 *Patterns of termination* o A brief ending without any signpost followed or preceded by 'Thank you' and its variants o With an abrupt 'Thank you' o Inviting questions and feedback, and thanking the audience	2 out of 14 *Patterns of termination* o With an abrupt 'Thank you' o Thanking and inviting questions

Table 2: Patterns of using frame markers

It was found that the patterns of frame markers resembled each other in respect to concluding markers, summarising markers and other(s). A great majority used concluding markers such as 'in conclusion' and its variants, but only a small proportion used summarising markers. Besides this, presenters tended to use consequence connectors and a variety of different expressions to signal the end.

In those Conclusions without frame markers an observed similarity was that they tended to terminate the speech by thanking the audience. 'Thank you', thus, was prevalently found in the final section. 'Thank you' or its variants were presented in three different forms: preceding a brief ending, an invitation for feedback and questions, or simply 'thank you' after the main body of the speech was completed. Examples without frame markers showed these patterns:

- S08: *Your point of view may well be different, and I'd like to hear from you. Thank you.*
- S21: *I hope my introduction can let you understand more about AFL's faculty. Thank you for your listening.*
- S36: *I appreciate you attention and coming and hope my introduction can let you know more clearly about our department.*

In Presentation 2, more speakers used frame markers to conclude. However, speeches without any Conclusion were found in both presentations, with a noticeably lower percentage in Presentation 2. This means that some students had not developed an overall picture of the complete structure for public speaking. The similar use of optional markers and the fewer cases of summarising markers signified some issues related to these EFL learners' control of frame markers.

Use of person markers

The results showed that these learners used person markers to connect with the audience in three different forms: consistency, partial consistency and inconsistency. In this section, examples are used to display the three different types of speaker–audience relationship. Abbreviations are used here to represent the repeated coding words (**S#**=student number; **I**=Introduction; **C**=Conclusion; **A**= the Audience) identified by the student in the final questionnaire.

Individual presentations

Pedagogically, the individual presentations served as a debut for these novice public speakers. Thus, the topic was restricted to the learning community, the Department. Three subtopics were suggested: facilities, faculty, and student activities.

1. Consistency

Two examples show consistency in audience connection.

Example 1: S37/facilities

I: *Good morning, ladies. My name is Apple. It's an honour to have the opportunity to address such a distinguished audience. Now I'd like to talk to you today about the facilities of Applied Foreign Language in Ling Tung University.*

C: *In conclusion, there are many available facilities to use. So it may be helpful for **you.** Thank you for your attention today.*

A: *People who are **not in LTU***

Example 2: S9/facilities

I: *Good morning, my name is Tiffany Lin. I'd like to talk about the AFL's equipment.*

C: *In conclusion, **our department** use multimedia learning and coach in GEPT to help student to pass through all English tests. Thank you.*

A: ***My classmates***

In Example 1, S37 successfully achieved consistency by greeting the group formally, as she claimed her speech was for an audience unrelated to the University. In Example 2, S9 made a consistent connection by using 'our department' to associate herself with the audience as a member in this class. Thus, both of them used person markers to establish the speaker–audience relationship in the Introduction and solidified it in the Conclusion.

2. Partial consistency

In the second type, the speaker–audience relationship was partially achieved. Examples 3 and 4 show how this occurred.

Example 3: S16/facilities

I: *Good morning everyone. My name is Iris. I'd like to talk today about the AFL's equipment.*

C: *In conclusion, **we** have more equipment to help students on the work and the computer software help **us** to pass the test. I think the AFL department help **us** more. So if **you** want to have more information in English **you** can go to AFL Department. Thank you.*

A: ***Teacher and classmates***

Example 4: S13/facilities

I: *Good morning, ladies. My name is Telsa. I'd like to talk about the AFL's specialty classroom.*

C: *To sum up, AFL have good space and good software for students learning English. **You** can choose the classroom **you** want. **I** think **you** will have a lot interest in English. Thank you.*

A: ***Teacher and classmates***

The partial consistency in Example 3 was developed under the assumption that the informal person marker, 'everyone', can be consistent with the claimed audience,

'teacher and classmates'. However, the suggestion given in *So if you want to have more information in English you can go to AFL Department* abruptly abandoned the relationship established. This obviously made the pronouns, 'you' and 'us', confusing and complex, as the student's imagined audience seemed to shift. Then, in Example 4, S13 maintained a neutral stance with her audience without revealing much of her own identity as a peer learner. However, her commentary suggestion, *You can choose the classroom you want. I think you will have a lot of interest in English,* caused the use of 'you' to be ambiguous and the suggestion invalid.

This partial consistency did not happen only in connecting with a mixed audience, 'teacher and classmates', but also with a single or uniform audience, as in Example 5.

Example 5: S25/Faculty

I: *Good morning, **everyone**. My name is Polly. The purpose of this talk is to introduce **you** the faculty in AFL department.*

C: *In conclusion, **I** hope that **we** can have more teachers to promote **our** teaching quality so that the level of AFL Department will be higher in the future. It will be an honor to students to have these great faculties. Thank you.*

*A: **The teacher***

In the Conclusion, S25 managed to use the person markers 'I', 'we' and 'our' very persuasively to show her student status; however, the 'everyone' in the greeting disqualified her claimed audience as 'the teacher'.

3. Inconsistency

Inconsistency was located in Example 6 when S6 tried to connect with her audience, the 'teacher'.

Example 6: S6/facilities

I: *Good morning, **ladies**. It's a pleasure to be here with **you** today. My name is Jessy Lin and **I am an Applied Foreign Languages student of Ling Tung University**. What I would like to do today is about the facilities of the Applied Foreign Languages Department at Ling Tung University.*

C: *In short, **you** can make the most of the facilities of the Applied Foreign Languages Department, if **you** want to increase **your** skill of English learning.*

*A: **Teacher***

The inconsistency occurred because the speaker's concluding suggestion to the audience, or 'teacher', is simply not compatible with the use of 'you' and 'your', nor is it reasonable. Moreover, the addressee 'ladies' in the Introduction also contradicted her one-person audience.

These examples in individual presentations show some problems that these EFL learners encountered in relation to audience connection. Consistent connection was achieved when they pictured a unitary audience such as an external audience, or their peers. However, they were not competent in connecting with a coherent audience when they imagined a mixed audience or when they viewed the 'teacher' as the only audience.

Group presentations

The group presentation required the students to report on an international conference presentation they observed. They generally divided the job based on the structure of their presentation, and each member had her specific section. Thus, the Introduction and Conclusion were given by different students. Seven examples can be used here to display patterns similar to those found in Presentation 1. However, more partial consistency examples were located, and fewer had consistent connection.

1. Consistency

Group 1 was the only speech which was consistent in terms of person markers.

> Group 1:
> I: *Good morning, I'm Freda. It's an honor to have the opportunity to address such a distinguished audience. What **we** like to do today is talk about the observation report of **we** went to Ming Chuan University to listen the"2008 International Conference Workshop on TEFL and Applied Linguistics" last month.* (S04)
> A: ***Classmates***
>
> C*: <u>In conclusion</u>, this let **us** learn a good speaker when it is necessary to pay attention the many details in this speech. By this example, **we** usually neglect the body language; **we** should pay more attention on it. Thank you for your listening.* (S39)
> A*: **Classmates***

Group 1 achieved its consistency, first of all, by having a consensual claim on the audience, 'classmates', which could be attributed to external consistency. Secondly, they reached a consistent 'we' voice. This compatible voice of 'we' and 'us' actually made this group a very specific case.

2. Partial consistency

Partial consistency was achieved when one of the preliminary requirements was successfully met—an agreement upon who the audience was or a consensus in the speech on their stance as a group. Five examples explain the pattern.

Group 2:

I: *Good morning, **ladies**. It's a pleasure to be with you today. I'm Fanny. This is Alice. **We** are here today to talk about we went to Ming Chuan University on March 15, 2008. (S35)*

A: ***Teacher***

C: *In conclusion, **we** can know that their pronunciation is better than **us**. On the other hand, their body languages have to do more practice. In particular, they have to pay attention other members who was talking. Thank you for your listening.*

A: ***Teacher***

In fact, Group 2 almost succeeded in coherent connection. One minor factor, which was also found in Presentation 1, was that the greeting 'ladies' indicated that the speech was not intended for one teacher. Similarly, in Groups 3, 4 and 5, members showed they had an identical audience, 'teacher and classmates' or 'classmates and teacher', but they differentiated themselves in positioning-taking.

Group 3

I: *Good morning, **ladies. I** am Tammy. It's a pleasure to be with you today. **We are Group 7**. We are here today to understand the presenter's behaved in Ming Chuan University.* (S12)

A: ***Teacher and classmates***

C: *As a result, this is a successful report, especially the question time. But if they can control the time, they will be better. If **I** were them, **I** will design the format of the PPT. And **I** will have more reference to the audience. **We** are very glad to attend the discourse.* (S28)

A*: **Teacher and classmates***

Group 4:

I: *Good morning, **we are Group 4.** It's an honor to have the opportunity to address such a distinguished audience. **I'd** like to talk to you today about going to speech experience.* (S24)

A*: **Teacher and my classmates***

C: *And conclusion, **I** like join other people presentation. It's good experience. If **I** have a chance **I** would like join different topic. **I** can learn a lot from other people. **I** learn how to answer the questions **I** would be more confident. Thank you for your listening.* (S20)

A*: **Teacher and my classmates***

Group 5:

I: *Good morning, ladies. It's a pleasure to be with you today. My name is Vicky. This is Rebecca. **We** will talk about the observation.* (S7)

A: ***Classmates and teacher***

C: *To summary, in her presentation she did find except her eye contact. If her prepare enough she will be better and I'll suggest her present without paper will be more confident. Thank you.* (S27)

A: ***Classmates and teacher***

These three groups reached an agreement in relation to audience, but conflicted with each other in positioning. Although 'I' and 'we' were used in all the groups, the concluding speakers tended to use an 'I' voice, especially Group 4; however, the introductory speakers tended to talk in a 'we'-oriented voice. This different voice-taking was also presented in Group 6, but in an opposite manner.

> Group 6:
> I: *Good morning, **I** am Jane. It's my honor to be here with you today. Now, **I** would like to talk about language, body language, visual aids and question time, these four parts.* (S26)
> A*: **Internal audience***
>
> C: *Let's sum up the advantage and disadvantage before going on. Dr. Yang had the advantage of good delivery. **We** have to learn these skills as she did, especially varied the pitch. Many Chinese student can speak English fluency but have no pitch. It will only let listener can't hear your point, but feel boring. Have good pronunciation will let audience easy to understand and want to listen what you say. However, Dr Yang had the disadvantage of poor introduction. But **we** are already learned this part from school.* (S40)
> A: ***Classmates.***

In this group, different from the speakers in Groups 3 to 5 in which a randomly mixed voice of 'I' and 'we' was still observed, the two speakers here took a genuinely contradictory voice, 'I' in the Introduction, and 'we' in the Conclusion.

3. Inconsistency

Inconsistent connection was observed when a conflict occurred between the claimed audience and position-taking. Group 7 made this inconsistency a critical issue. First of all, the speakers conflicted with each other in terms of audience, where this was 'teacher' for S6, but 'students' for S25. Secondly, the group used a mixed voice of 'I' and 'we' in the Introduction, but displayed a strong 'I' voice in the Conclusion. Moreover, 'you' and 'your' were used in the Conclusion, which was seldom found in other groups. Unfortunately, the 'you' or 'your' made the claimed audience, the teacher, illogical. In this specific oral context, it is clear that the 'you' referred to her peers rather than the teacher.

> Group 7
> C: *In conclusion, if **you** want to have a better presentation, **I** think **you** should have confident and positive with eye contact and use visual aids easy and clearly. I think **you** have more facial expressions to emphasise **your** feeling. Let the audience know what **you** mean and **you** have to use if **you** use **your** visual aids easy and clearly, **I** think the presentation will be well. If **you** do*

*above tips what I suggest, I think **you** will be a good speaker and it will be a nice presentation*. (S6)

A: ***Teacher.***

I: *Good morning, everyone. **I** am Polly and this is Jessy. **I'**d like to talk today what **we** listened on March 14th. The purpose of the talk is to explain what **we** learned and observed from speech.* (S25)

A: ***The students***

Clearly, these examples not only indicate that perfectly consistent connections seemed not an easy task for these EFL learners, but also raise some significant issues related to these aspects of public speaking.

Discussion

These findings in students' employment of frame markers and person markers clearly show that, first of all, EFL learners need knowledge of conventional ways of constructing a speech in English. Also, they need to know how to use frame markers to help their planning and prepare the audience to follow the speech organisation. Moreover, critical issues related to EFL learners' use of frame markers and person markers were explicitly located in the data.

In relation to frame markers, when compared to concluding markers, relatively fewer summarising connectors were employed. This paucity can be related to some commonly shared concerns among some learners (11 out of the 33) aggregated on the uncertainty of how, where and when to use them. The following quotations demonstrate the shared confusion.

- S36: *I am not confident in using 'to sum up, in brief, in short' because I don't know how to use them, and I am afraid I may use them incorrectly in a wrong place at a wrong time*.
- S39: *I have no confidence in using summarising connectors. I don't know how to use them*.
- S40: *I don't know how and when to use it*.
- S19: *I seldom use them so I don't know how to use them.*
- S12: *It's not easy to remember. It is similar to concluding connectors. I get confused and mix them up*.

Moreover, form accuracy was another issue that they were concerned about. The use of 'to summary' and 'to conclusion' might provide evidence for why they took form accuracy as a critical factor, and these form problems were not incidental but frequent. This may also suggest that: (1) accuracy may sometimes be sacrificed for achieving

fluency; and (2) form accuracy could be an aspect requiring particular attention in teaching. In addition, in several cases without frame markers, speakers appealed to 'thank you' to mark the ending or even for terminating the whole speech, which may correspond to the use of 'thank you' in academic presentations (Swales, 1990). It may also mean that a few learners naturally employed 'thank you' as a concluding frame marker to avoid grammar issues.

Similarly, the use of person markers in connecting with the audience proclaimed issues relating to two aspects: audience, and positioning and presentation forms. First, with respect to imagined audience, the failure to construct a consistent speaker–audience relationship may be attributed to a lack of audience awareness, which in turn accounted for the uncertainty of who the speech was directed to. The data showed it was relatively easier to achieve consistency for an imagined external audience or a homogeneous audience. In other words, a clear, unitary audience, either in reality or in imagination, could help achieve consistent audience representation and connection, whereas a mixed audience could pose a problem, as also noted by one student.

> S18: …*actually I don't know who were my audience. But I think only the teacher has listen my presentation.*

This reflective viewpoint confirmed that an audience mixed with peers and the teacher was problematic for students to position themselves and the audience coherently. Thus, the multiple roles required of students and teacher in a classroom context were noticeably challenging for these learners. In giving a presentation, the roles of peer and student sometimes surpassed the role of speaker. This may explain why students forsook the established role of speaker, or the confusion between individual and group. For some students, a topic related to a learning community they were affiliated with may induce them to shift between the speaker role and community role, and this instability was reflected in their confused use of personal markers. The failure to stick to clear boundaries seemed to result in the abandoning of their original audience. This uncertainty not only made the speaker fall into the dilemma of confused role(s), but also resulted in disconnection from the audience. This clearly suggests that drawing attention specifically to this function may strengthen their control of effective speaker/listener exchange.

The second issue emerging from the speeches was related to self-positioning and the presentation form. Examples of ambiguous self-positioning were found in both types of

presentation. Self-positioning in an individual presentation was relatively easier than in a group presentation, but there were still marked disconnections between Introductions and Conclusions. In individual presentations, the inconsistency may be associated with the ambiguity of the speaker's personal role in the learning community. When the community role overpowered the speaker role, they aligned themselves with their classmates or vice versa. The inconsistency in person markers was somehow a personal choice of self-alignment, either intentionally or unintentionally. However, in group presentations, it often came from the lack of a constant view of what constitutes the group. The Introduction speaker and the Conclusion speaker often used different voices. Instead of the appropriate 'we' voice, a strong 'I' voice was heard, especially in Conclusions. This inconsistent voice may be because students viewed the group presentations as two or three individual presentations, and were especially focused on their own contribution. In those cases, the 'I' voice overpowered the 'we' voice.

Thus, several critical issues stood out from these EFL learners' use of frame markers and person markers. Students' lack of knowledge of frame markers disabled the audience from following the presentation structure, and interpersonally inconsistent self-positioning and pronoun referents resulted in ambiguous speaker roles, and insecure speaker–audience relationships. Clearly, these EFL learners need to know how to use frame markers and person markers more appropriately in order to understand the importance of audience connection in public speaking. They also need to know how to achieve consistent inter-connection between the speakers. In particular, the dialogic or interactional nature of language use needs to be reinforced (Linell, 1998; Vygotsky, 1934/1986), so students can master how to achieve consistent speaker–audience relationships in different forms of presentations.

6. Conclusion

This study investigated how a class of tertiary EFL learners in Taiwan used frame markers and person markers in two different forms of oral presentation. The findings indicated that these EFL learners were often confused with the use of frame markers to inform stage development. Further, the predominantly partial and overlapping imaginative constructs of speaker and audience resulted in inconsistent use of referential pronouns and disconnected audience relationships.

These findings lead us to consider the serious implications for teaching EFL learners

public speaking skills. First of all, at the text level, we need to reinforce the importance of structural coherence in a speech. We can incorporate specific teaching focuses such as: (1) the use of frame markers to signpost a coherent and well-organised speech structure in relation to its content; (2) options for making an Introduction and summary and Conclusion to frame the speech and organise it coherently; and (3) effective enhancements of linguistic strategies for signalling the different elements.

Secondly, at the interpersonal level, we need to develop a sense of audience engagement, that is, the social-interactional nature of public speaking, whether in a classroom or in a real-world context, as individual or group work. Also, we need to include a focus on appropriate pronouns and person markers for specific contexts, so novice speakers can position themselves consistently from beginning to end to achieve a coherent speaker–audience relationship.

Thirdly, at the pedagogic level, it is important that we reduce the level of artificiality in classroom presentations and authenticate them by incorporating into teaching the concepts of imagined audience and target audience. We need to involve a variety of audiences to help learners increase their audience awareness. Hence, we suggest inviting unexpected or specially chosen audiences with different profiles, or even integrating oral presentations into larger-scale, task-based learning for authentic public contexts such as community activities or conferences.

Finally, we also need to be mindful of the personal level. Clearly, we should aim to inspire learners' imaginations by engaging students in a wider range of learning experiences, perhaps considering options such as:

- focused, personal self-reflection as a step in learners' positioning of themselves as the 'speaker' in their presentation;
- discourse analysis of famous or successful speeches, and EFL learners' own speeches, in terms of frame markers and audience connection;
- students' real-life experiences and student-initiated activities.

In all these ways, inexperienced and hesitant EFL presenters may be offered stimulating as well as specific, practical contexts for realising socio-linguistic competence in public speaking.

References

Adams, K. (2004). Modelling success: Enhancing international postgraduate research students' self-efficacy for research seminar presentations, *Higher Education*

Research and Development 23(20), pp. 115-130.

Collerson, J. (1994). *English grammar: A functional approach.* Newtown, NSW: PETA.

Comfort, J. (1996). *Effective presentations*. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.

German, K.M., Gronbeck, B.E., Ehninger, D., and Monroe, A.H. (2006). *Principles of public speaking* (16th ed.). MySpeechLab Series. Needham Heights, MA: Allyn & Bacon.

Halliday, M.A.K., & Matthiessen, C. (2004). *An introduction to functional grammar* (3rd ed.). London: Arnold.

Hyland, K. (1998). The pragmatics of academic metadiscourse. *Journal of Pragmatics 30*, pp. 437-455.

King, J. (2002). Preparing EFL learners for oral presentations. *The Internet TESL Journal 3*(3). Accessed at http://iteslj.org/Lessons/King-PublicSpeaking.html on 03/11/2008.

Linell, P. (1998). *Approaching dialogue: Talk, interaction and contexts in dialogic perspectives.* IMPACT Studies in Language and Society. Amsterdam: Benjamins.

Morita, N. (2000). Discourse socialization through oral classroom activities in a TESL graduate program. *TESOL Quarterly 34*(2), pp. 279-310.

Otoshi, J. and Heffernan, N. (2008). Factors predicting effective oral presentations in EFL classrooms. *Asian EFL Journal 10*(1). Accessed at www.asian-efl-journal.com/March_08_jo.php on 03/11/2008.

Swales, J. (1990). *Genre analysis: English in academic and research settings.* Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

Vygotsky, L. (1934/1986). *Thought and language*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Shu-Hui Yu is an Associate Professor in the Department of Applied Foreign Languages, Ling Tung University, Taichung, Taiwan. She received her PhD from the University of Adelaide, Australia. Her current research interests include ELT and pragmatics, particularly as related to tertiary EFL learners' language use in different speech genres.

Kate Cadman is Adjunct Senior Lecturer in the School of Social Sciences at the University of Adelaide. She has taught English language, literature and Applied Linguistics in Australia, the UK and Asia. Her teaching and research interests focus on critical pedagogy in Humanities and Social Science research contexts, especially skills for developing theses and research articles for publication in the global academy.
