

ORIGINAL RESEARCH

Improving persuasive speaking skills using a student-developed template in an online learning environment

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Abstract

Effective persuasive speaking is requisite for successful academic, professional, and social life (Nippold, 2007, in Heilmann et al. 2020). However, there is dearth in literature that recommends an effective rhetorical structure that addresses the most pressing and recurring needs of non-native English public speakers – communication apprehension (Bastida & Yap, 2019) and problems in organizing and outlining ideas in the speech (Lee & Liang, 2012). This explanatory sequential mixed-methods study investigated the effect of a student-developed persuasive speaking template taught in an online class to the persuasive speaking skills of non-native English speakers in a secondary school. Results showed a significant improvement in the participants' persuasive speaking skills before and after they were trained to use the student-developed template as manifested by their careful word choice, formulation of engaging introduction, effective vocal expression and paralanguage, connection with the audience, and lessened communication apprehension. In addition, it was found out that no significant correlation between the online learning environment and the improved skills. The research results revealed that the student-developed template, direct skills instruction, time for research and practice, and teacher's guidance helped improve skills and could form part of an alternative rhetorical pedagogy.

Keywords online persuasive speaking, student-developed rhetorical template

1. Introduction and Literature Review

Speaking is a benchmark of a person's understanding and mastery of a language (Santoso et al., 2018). Nunan (1999) in Farabi et al. (2017) claims that success in language learning is measured in terms of one's ability to converse with another using the target language. One of the many applications of the use of language in speech is public speaking, a skill that is used in a lot of contexts (Li et al., 2016), making it identified as a requirement for a successful academic, professional, and social life (Leopold, 2016; Nippold, 2007 in Heilmann et al., 2020). Since education should prepare students for real-world tasks, there should be primacy in the development of competence in skills necessary for them to be successful in their future endeavors (Byrne et al., 2012; Zekeri, 2004 in Lee & Liang, 2012).

1.1. Public speaking and its challenges

Public speaking can be considered as a 21st century life skill. Defined as the “process of designing and delivering a message to the audience” (Wrench, 2012 in Paradowari, 2017, p. 101), public speaking is used in various contexts making it one of the skills demanded in the workplace (Leopold, 2016) and is necessary to further career development (Zekeri, 2004 as cited in Lee & Liang, 2012). One type of public speaking is persuasive speaking, which highlights the dynamic ability of language to influence a person's mind and decision-making. Nippold (2007, in Heilmann et al., 2020) advocated the development of competence at persuasion to adolescence as it is a requisite for a successful academic, professional, and social life. These are the very reasons why persuasive public speaking skills development is a necessary component of the basic and the tertiary level curricula.

Persuasive public speaking, however, remains to be a challenging task for non-native English public speakers (NNEPS) due to communication apprehension (Bastida & Yap, 2019) and problems in organizing and outlining their ideas (Lee & Liang, 2012). Furthermore, there is a dearth of local literature

that addresses this concern (Del Villar, 2010), especially in public secondary schools.

1.2. Guided oral presentation as a rhetorical pedagogy

Farabi et al. (2017) proposed the use of guided oral presentation (GOP) as a technique in developing public speaking skills. GOP is a scaffolding technique where teachers choose the topic and guide the students in writing and delivering a speech by providing a step-by-step discussion of each section of the speech (Nadia, 2013). It culminates with a short (two to three minutes) performance output of the topic taught (Farabi et al., 2017). Despite the growing number of studies proving the effectiveness of GOP in developing public speaking skills (Al-Issa, 2007; Brooks & Wilson, 2014; Farabi et al., 2017; Nadia, 2013), very few EFL or ESL classes maximize the benefits of its use (Tsou & Huang, 2012).

1.3. Using templates in teaching public speaking

In terms of addressing the second challenge that inhibits the development of public speaking skills, using a template is one effective way to teach organization and outlining that complements GOP. Nikitina (2011) has proven that an outline or a template is an effective tool that allows the clear organization of ideas and proper highlighting of the major points, “bringing together the elements of the speech in a logical sequence” (p. 37).

Two of the most widely used templates for persuasive speaking are the traditional Introduction-Body-Conclusion format and Monroe’s Motivated Speech Sequence (MMSS). Despite these templates’ proven effectiveness (Briggs & Proszek, 2015; Micciche et al., 2000), they present restrictions when used in the context of secondary schools – the traditional template is less meaning-focused (Schnell, 2015) while MMSS is too complex and is commonly used in the tertiary education context (Haugen & Lucas, 2018; Parviz, 2019; Procopio, 2011; Quagliata, 2014).

1.4. The student-developed persuasive speaking template

This lack of an appropriate template for NNEPS in the secondary schools was the primary motivation for this study’s proposal for a student-developed template that is based on the classical patterns of rhetoric, is anchored on the principles of guided oral presentation, and is both specific and meaning-focused. The template followed the principles of guided oral presentation and is student-developed because the students were facilitated to investigate the natural structure of effective persuasive speeches, guided in coming up with a collectively agreed template, and instructed to use that template in drafting and delivering their speeches. The student-developed template is named Rouse, Relate, and Respond (3Rs) to highlight one of the five canons of rhetoric – *memoria*. Doing so facilitates memorization and practice for powerful delivery (Pudewa, 2016). Artistic proofs are

also strategically placed on specific sections of the template for NNEPS to ascertain at which part of the speech the artistic proofs should be used.

Rouse is the introductory section of the speech that contains the following elements: hook (e.g., a striking statement, a question, a quotation, etc., geared to catch the audience’s attention), background information, and thesis statement. The speaker’s aim in this section is to capture the audience’s attention. The speakers may use pathos or ethos as the artistic proofs in this section by focusing on capturing the audience’s emotions to make them identify with the topic or by establishing the speaker’s credibility to speak about the topic.

Relate is the speech body. In this section, the speaker elaborates his or her claims from the thesis statement and provides clear and credible pieces of evidence for them. In this section, logos is highlighted because the speaker presents facts and figures to bolster the truthfulness of the claims presented.

Respond is the speech conclusion. Here, the speaker reiterates his or her main points and gives the audience a call to action. Pathos is the artistic proof that is used in this speech portion by using strategies that appeal to the audiences’ emotions aiming for them to sympathize (or empathize) with the topic – an indication of persuasion.

1.5. Teaching persuasive speaking online

Another challenge is the recent modification in the landscape of public speaking pedagogy. Due to the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, classes were taught through online and modular distance learning (DepEd Order 012, s. 2020). Until the pandemic, use of online distance learning in Philippine high schools had only been a supplementary tool for learning (Enriquez, 2014). Thus, a full-online learning context was new to public high schools in the Philippines – an additional challenge in public speaking instruction. Despite its novelty, online learning is a potential avenue to address issues on limited instruction time and large classes in terms of public speaking (Mahoney et al., 2017; Rodrigues & Vethamani, 2015). It effectively reduces speech anxiety and improves public speaking skills aside from its appeal and convenience to this generation’s digital natives (Mahoney et al., 2017; Westwick et al., 2015; Wolverton & Tanner, 2019). There is therefore a need to explore the viability of an online learning environment in improving persuasive speaking skills of NNEPS.

Given these challenges, this study sought to explore the answers to the following questions:

1. Is there a significant difference in the persuasive speaking skills of students in an online learning environment before and after they undergo training using the Rouse-Relate-Respond (3Rs) guided oral presentation template in terms of structure and organization, content development, delivery, and confidence? In what ways?
2. Is there a correlation between the use of an online learning environment and students’ persuasive speaking skills in terms of structure and

organization, content development, delivery, and confidence?

2. Materials and Methods

2.1. Participants

This study involved eighteen (18) Grade 10 students who were selected considering the following criteria: 1) pre-intermediate to intermediate English proficiency level, 2) high level of communication apprehension, 3) identified to be challenged by the cognitive demands of persuasive speaking based on teacher reports and previous grades, and 4) was previously instructed about and performed a persuasive speech. All these criteria were requisites to answer this study's research questions and were anchored to the characteristics of the participants in similar studies that used guided oral presentation (Al Issa, 2007; Al Issa & Al-qubtan, 2017; Farabi, 2017; Ibrahim & Yusoff, 2012; Mady, 2015).

2.2. Implementation

After retrieving signed parental and school head consent and determining the final participants for the study, the participants were oriented about the training and the pre-test persuasive speech where they would have to deliver a persuasive speech answering the question "Should education continue despite the pandemic?". The participants were given two days to write and practice their persuasive speeches before they attended a live persuasive speech performance. Their delivery was recorded and forwarded to three raters for evaluation. Then, the participants attended seventeen meetings that covered 6 synchronous and 11 asynchronous sessions. Synchronous online teaching sessions, which lasted for an hour, focused on the participants' answers to the asynchronous online learning sessions emphasizing the speech's content and speaker's delivery. On the other hand, asynchronous online learning sessions were self-paced, where the students were given two days to complete the tasks prior to attending the synchronous sessions. Before the student-developed template was created, the lessons covered Kassim et al. (2015) suggested six phases in the speech planning process: topic selection, audience analysis, information research and evaluation, outline development, presentation aid selection, practice and use of delivery strategies. Video exemplars were used to reinforce the concepts taught.

Guided oral presentation was manifested in teaching of the template through the structure of the lesson plan. The first major section of the lesson – Guided Presentation – section served as the discussion of the topic where the teacher guided the students in analyzing the content of the speech models. In the analysis, the students were facilitated in the creation of the student-developed template where the words Rouse (introduction), Relate (body), and Respond (conclusion) (3Rs template) constantly surfaced. It was also the portion where the teacher guided the students in

analyzing the strategy used by speakers of effective persuasive speeches. For instance, in Rouse, students identified the content of the Rouse strategy by coming up with a formula containing its elements that would form as their template (e.g., hook + background information + speaker's personal research + realization + thesis statement). Different Rouse strategies (attention grabbers such as staggering statistics, questions, anecdotes, etc.) were also explored in this section to provide students with different ways to capture the audience's interest. In this section of the lesson, students also identified the artistic proof used. Guided Production, the second section of the lesson, is where the students applied in writing their manuscripts guided by the formula they learned from Guided Presentation. The students were also instructed to share their manuscripts with a peer for evaluation. The third section of the lesson is Guided Practice where students were given time to practice delivering the speech. Once done, the students would upload their work to the assigned LMS where their classmates evaluate their work by writing down comments or suggestions using the PSCR. The teacher likewise prepared a written evaluation of the uploaded video. The comments were then synthesized and given to the students as their reference on how they could improve their speeches.

For the posttest, the participants answered the same question given in the pre-test. After three days, the participants received a Google Meet link where the final live speech delivery took place. Their posttest persuasive speech performance was recorded and sent to the raters for evaluation.

2.3. Research Instruments and Data Analysis

To gather quantitative data that focused on determining the significant difference in the structure and organization, content development, and delivery of the participants' persuasive speeches, their pre- and posttest performances were evaluated using the Public Speaking Competence Rubric (PSCR) (Schreiber et al., 2012 in Mortaji, 2018). Confidence was tested by comparing the pre- and posttest data of the Personal Report of Public Speaking Anxiety (PRPSA) (McCroskey, 2013). Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test, a non-parametric test, was used to test the difference between the two repeated measurements (Laerd Statistics, 2018). Qualitative data from the first research question were gathered from the participants' speech manuscripts and their transcribed answers from the stimulated recall interview. These were then analyzed using conceptual content analysis to identify common themes that surfaced in the interview and the manuscripts. The Survey on Students' Perception about Online Learning (SSPOL) (Platt et al., 2014) was used to answer the second research question that sought to ascertain the correlation between the persuasive speaking skills and the online learning environment. Pearson-Product Moment Correlation was used to analyze the data in this question to determine the strength of the relationship of the participants' persuasive speaking scores and the online learning

environment.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1. The student-developed template's effect to the students' persuasive speaking skills

To answer the first research question, the PSCR ratings of both pre- and posttests were grouped according to the persuasive speaking skills dimensions they tested. For structure and organization, the dimensions are the following: *Uses an effective organizational pattern* (dimension 3), *Locates, synthesizes, and employs compelling supporting materials* (dimension 4), and *Demonstrates a careful choice of words* (dimension 6). The following dimensions are under content development:

Formulates an introduction that orients audience to the topic and speaker (dimension 2), *Develops a conclusion that reinforces the thesis and provides psychological closure* (dimension 5), and *Constructs an effectual persuasive message with credible evidence and sound reasoning* (dimension 11). Delivery has the following dimensions: *Effectively uses vocal expressions and para language to engage the audience* (dimension 7), *Demonstrates nonverbal behavior that supports the verbal message* (dimension 8), and *Successfully adapts the presentation to the audience* (dimension 9). Dimension 1 (topic selection) was not included in the evaluation since the teacher provided the topic for the participants, while dimension 10 (use of visual materials) was not included because delivering an online speech accompanied with a visual aid required using an application – something that is not covered by the training.

Table 1. Pre-Test vs. Posttest Comparison of the Raters' Scores

	Wilcoxon Signed Rank Statistic			P-value
	Rater A	Rater B	Rater C	
Overall Pre vs. Post	-85.5	-85.5	-85.5	<0.0001*
Structure and Organization				
Dimension 3	-76.5	-76.5	-76.5	<0.0001*
Dimension 4	-85.5	-76.5	-85.5	<0.0001*
Dimension 6	-76.5	-85.5	-76.5	<0.0001*
Content Development				
Dimension 2	-76.5	-85.5	-76.5	<0.0001*
Dimension 5	-76.5	-76.5	-76.5	<0.0001*
Dimension 11	-85.5	-76.5	-85.5	<0.0001*
Delivery				
Dimension 7	-85.5	-68	-85.5	<0.0001*
Dimension 8	-85.5	-60	-85.5	<0.0001*
Dimension 9	-76.5	-76.5	-76.5	<0.0001*

Note: *Significant at the < 0.05 level.

Table 1 shows that in the overall pre-test posttest ratings given by the raters, the p-value of the Wilcoxon Signed Rank Statistic was less than .05. Furthermore, the negative results show that there is an increase in the evaluated persuasive speaking skills from the pre-test to the posttest. Therefore, it can be concluded that there is a significant difference between the pre-test and the posttest ratings of the participants. In addition, negative

value of the statistics means that the ratings given in the posttest by all the raters were significantly higher than the ratings given in the pre-test.

Specific dimensions with the greatest persuasive speaking skill improvement were also explored through the computation of the mean scores of the raters' evaluation. Table 2 presents the mean scores of the pre-test and posttest ratings made by the raters.

Table 2. Pre-Test and Posttest Mean Scores of the Raters

Dimensions	Pre-test				Posttest			
	Rater A	Rater B	Rater C	Average	Rater A	Rater B	Rater C	Average
2	2.33	2.11	2.00	2.15	3.78	3.89	3.80	3.82
3	2.06	2.22	2.40	2.22	3.61	3.94	3.90	3.82
4	2.11	2.33	2.40	2.28	3.83	3.89	3.80	3.84
5	2.22	2.17	2.10	2.16	3.78	3.83	3.80	3.80
6	2.06	2.06	2.20	2.11	3.89	3.83	3.90	3.87
7	2.17	2.33	2.30	2.27	3.61	3.67	4.00	3.76
8	1.83	1.94	2.20	1.99	3.78	3.61	3.90	3.76
9	2.00	2.11	2.20	2.10	3.67	3.72	3.90	3.76
11	2.28	2.33	2.20	2.27	3.67	3.83	3.90	3.80
Mean of the Total Score	19.06	19.61	19.94		33.61	34.22	34.94	

The mean scores revealed that the participants

improved most in demonstrating a careful choice of

words (dimension 3 – 3.87) for structure and organization and formulating an introduction that orients audience to the topic and speaker (dimension 2 – 3.82) for content development. All three dimensions had the same mean scores for delivery (dimensions 7-9 – 3.76) which measured effective use of vocal expression and paralanguage, nonverbal behavior that supports the verbal message, and successful adaptation of the presentation to the audience, respectively.

Confidence was measured by comparing the pre- and posttest results of the PRPSA.

Table 3. Results of the Pre-Test and Posttest Scores of the PRPSA

Participant	Pre-test	Interpretation	Posttest	Interpretation
A	140	High	90	Low
B	150	High	100	Moderate
C	143	High	90	Low
D	137	High	118	Moderate
E	137	High	85	Low
F	143	High	104	Moderate
G	135	High	120	Moderate
H	145	High	81	Low
I	145	High	102	Moderate
J	133	High	113	Moderate
K	143	High	109	Moderate
L	155	High	130	Moderate
M	137	High	99	Moderate
N	131	High	86	Low
O	131	High	113	Moderate
P	140	High	96	Low
Q	135	High	112	Moderate
R	135	High	105	Moderate

Table 3 shows that prior to the training, all the participants were categorized to have high communication apprehension. It can be suggested that there was an improvement as the participants had moderate to lower communication apprehension after undergoing training.

Table 4 shows the result of the comparison of the PRPSA's pre- and posttest data.

Table 4. Comparison of the PRPSA's Pre-test and Posttest Scores

	Wilcoxon Signed Rank Statistic	P-value
Pre-test vs. Post-test	85.5	<0.0001*

Note: *Significant at the < 0.05 level.

The pre-test and posttest PRPSA scores of students were tested using the Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test to check if there is a significant change in their public speaking apprehension scores. Per table 4, the p-value is less than .05, and Wilcoxon Signed Rank Statistic has a positive value. This means that the pre-test and posttest PRPSA scores are significantly different. Since the value of the statistics is positive, this means that the pre-test scores are significantly higher than the post-test PRPSA scores. This result shows a significant decline in the participants' communication apprehension and a significant

difference in their confidence before and after undergoing training.

The PRPSA mean scores were also computed to show which aspects of confidence showed the greatest improvement. It was found out that the greatest improvement in the participants' confidence was having a feeling that they have had a pleasant experience right after giving the speech (statement 4) and that they had lesser inhibitions with the thought of giving a speech, although a healthy amount of fear is still there (statement 6). This supports Dwyer and Davidson's (2012) and Bastida and Yapó's (2019) finding that acknowledging public speaking as a pleasant experience is a good sign of overcoming communication apprehension.

To amplify how the training contributed to the improvement of the participants' persuasive speaking skills, stimulated recall interviews were conducted. This was done to consolidate and verify the quantitative results with the lived experiences of the participants. From the analyzed interview data, four identified themes surfaced as to which components of the training affected the participants' persuasive speaking skills: 1) use of the template, 2) direct instruction of skills, 3) time for research and practice, and 4) teacher's guidance. Regarding the use of the templates, most of the participants mentioned how identifying the elements of a section of the speech exemplars, creating a formula using the elements, and following that formula as the most effective means that improved structure and organization. In terms of direct instructions of skills, the participants cited the use of outline and video exemplars to be effective in supplementing direct instruction. Analyzing the video exemplars allowed them to observe what makes a good speech and how it should be delivered. This gave them an idea of the possible ways they can use in writing and delivering an effective speech. The participants' recognition of the use of time for research and practice to be influential in the improvement of their persuasive speaking skills supports research findings that found out how giving students ample time for research and practice results in a positive public speaking outcome (Al Issa & Al-qubtan, 2017; Kelsen, 2019; Lata & Luhach, 2014; Tuan & Mai, 2015). More specifically, the participants' answer on the use of time is similar to Pearson's (2010) findings that overall writing preparation and practice time correlated significantly with higher speech grades. In terms of the teacher's role, the consolidated themes in the interview reveal that the teacher's guidance weighed more to the participants than the online learning environment used. This supports the research finding that the teacher has control of enhancing the quality of instruction, specifically by increasing student knowledge, improving performance/skills, and lowering communication apprehension (Mahoney et al., 2017).

Another method qualitative data was gathered was by analyzing the pre- and posttest manuscripts of the participants. In terms of the use of effective organizational pattern, there was an improvement in the

organizational pattern, a discernible thesis statement, and an effective attention-getter being evident. These were either rarely or never noted in the pre-test persuasive speech manuscripts. In terms of the use of compelling supporting materials, the posttest manuscripts manifested the use of appropriate materials for all the key points. Furthermore, the materials used were varied and credible. Lastly, a slight improvement in language use and grammar was noted.

Aside from having a longer and more complex-structured sentences, the posttest paragraph show improvement in the use of an attention getter at the beginning, an inclusion of a credible piece of evidence, an effort to empathize with the audience, and a clear presentation of the speaker's arguments.

The first two sub-dimensions analyzed confirm literature findings on the positive effect of the use of principles of guided oral presentation (Bankowski, 2010; Brooks & Wilson, 2014; Farabi et al., 2017; Herbein et al., 2018; Mahoney et al., 2017; Nadia, 2013) and the teaching of a template (Brundage et al, 2010; Pearson, 2010; Santoso et al., 2018) in developing students' organizational skills and effective use of compelling materials. This result implies that a combination of an intentional and explicit instruction of skills and use of video exemplars, matched with the guided instruction using a meaning-focused and detailed template, is a potent solution to the cognitively demanding task NNEPS face in writing their persuasive speeches (Lee & Liang, 2012). It is worth noting that there is a slight improvement in the area of language use even if it was not part of the skills being developed in training. This result supports the findings that one of the advantages of using guided oral presentation is how it connects language study and language use (Nadia, 2017).

A common error, however, in the area of structure and organization that requires attention is language use. While Farabi, et al (2017) placed less emphasis on the improvement of language while using GOP, there should be heightened emphasis in this area as language is the primary vehicle for the presentation of the message. The following are examples of common language errors in the participants' manuscripts, specifically in subject-verb agreement, sentence fragments, and word choice.

Content development was evaluated in three areas – an introduction that effectively orients the audience to the topic and speaker, a conclusion that restates the thesis and provides psychological closure, and an effective persuasive message with credible evidence and sound reasoning. Generally, the participants' scores significantly improved from deficient to basic during the pre-test to proficient and advanced in the posttest. Analysis of the posttest manuscript revealed that the participants did better in capturing the audience's attention, establishing their credibility to talk about the topic, and providing a strong and effective call to action. Apparent use of artistic proofs was also seen.

Most of the analyzed manuscripts show how the speaker led the audience back to the thesis statement.

There is also a presence of credible pieces of evidence that were used to present two varying ideas on the topic which then concluded with the interpretation of the data they presented and eventually supported what the speakers believe in.

These results are supported by literature findings that proved the positive effect of the use of principles of guided oral presentation (Al Issa & Al-qubtan, 2017; Santoso et al., 2018) through a template (Pearson, 2010) in the content development of a persuasive speech. Similar to structure and organization, the positive effect in content development was due to the explicit instruction of skills, especially by using a formula that the students identified and should follow in order to come up with each section of the speech. Guiding the students in looking for credible sources, however, should be emphasized in content development as the participants tend to gravitate on easily found yet questionable sources.

Delivery was evaluated in three areas – use of vocal expression and paralanguage that engage the audience, use of nonverbal behavior that supports the verbal message, and an adaptation of the presentation to the audience. Generally, the participants' scores significantly improved from deficient to basic during the pre-test to basic to advance on the posttest. Analysis of the posttest speech delivery revealed that the participants did better in using a variety of vocal expressions suited to their topic, relying less on their notes and projecting a confident stance, and establishing a common ground in order for the audience to relate to their message.

The result in the analysis support literature findings on the positive effect of the use of principles of guided oral presentation (Farabi et al, 2017; Gibbons, 2007 in Garbatti & Mady, 2015; Kassim, et al., 2015; Lata & Luhach, 2014; Mahoney et al., 2017; Mundy, 2014; Nation & Newton, 2009 in Tuan & Mai, 2015; Santoso et al., 2018; Westwick, et al., 2015) through a template (Pearson, 2010) in the delivery of a persuasive speech. The common denominator among the research findings in a guided oral presentation that affected delivery is practice. Garbatti & Mady (2015) recommended the use of practice through task repetition and rehearsal. This research integrated practice by providing the same instruction at the end of the teaching of each major section of the speech, and that is for the students to practice with a peer and share comments on how their delivery could be improved. In terms of the use of the template, the students were able to identify and apply which delivery strategies were appropriate in each section of the speech (Pearson, 2010) as they learned when they should use a certain tone of voice or a certain gesture if they had to capture the audience's attention, relate the message to the audience, establish credible sources, or delivering a call to action used (Kassim et al., 2015). In the area of evaluation, guiding them with the use of the rubric for grading provided practice on how to evaluate their peers (Tuan & Mai, 2015). This result implies that principles of guided oral presentation, especially

practice, and the use of templates could influence how students deliver a message.

3.2. Online instruction using the student-developed template

To answer the second research question, the participants answered the Survey on Students' Perception about Online Learning (SSPOL) (Platt, Raile, & Yu, 2014) which was administered to the participants after their posttest speech delivery. The instrument was divided into five dimensions of the online learning environment – general equivalence,

comparative flexibility, comparative level of instruction, comparative knowledge gained, and comparative ease. Prior to answering the instrument, the participants were instructed that the context of their answers should be the persuasive speaking class's online learning environment and not their other online classes.

Table 5 presents the result of the correlation between the aspects of online learning and the persuasive speaking skills tested.

Table 5. Correlation between Persuasive Speaking Skills and Online Learning

	General Equivalence	Comparative Flexibility	Comparative Level of Interaction	Comparative Knowledge Gained	Comparative Ease	Total
Structure and Organization	-.10	-.11	-.52*	-.26	-.37	-.23
Content Development	-.03	-.21	-.65**	-.45	-.28	-.21
Delivery	-.26	-.29	-.59**	-.33	-.41	-.41
Confidence	-.16	-.20	-.13	.19	-.20	-.17

* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

The result of the correlation analysis showed that in all dimensions of online learning, only the comparative level of interaction significantly showed a negative moderate relationship to structure and organization ($r = -.52$, $n = 18$, $p < .05$), content development ($r = -.66$, $n = 18$, $p < .01$), and delivery ($r = -.59$, $n = 18$, $p < .01$). This means that the participants perceived that despite the limited interaction in the online learning environment, there was still a development in their persuasive speaking skills in terms of structure and organization, content development, and delivery. Scores in the rest of the dimensions showed that there is an insignificant negative moderate to negligible correlation between the online learning dimensions and persuasive speaking skills tested, meaning that the dimensions were not perceived to have affected the participants' improved persuasive speaking skills.

It is worth noting that the tool used in this study measured the participants' perception of their experiences in both online learning and face-to-face instruction, specifically in public speaking instruction. In the context of the study, a correlation study could have been conducted by comparing the post-speech delivery results of two classes: one that underwent training using the 3Rs template in an online learning environment and another that underwent a similar training but in a face-to-face environment. However, this could not be done because the study was limited to online learning, the teaching mode used in the country at the time the study was undertaken.

4. Conclusion

This study explored the use of a student-developed

template – Rouse-Relate-Respond (3Rs) guided oral presentation template – in improving students' persuasive speaking skills. The study confirms the findings of several researchers who also used principles of guided oral presentation (Abdullah et al., 2015; Al Issa & Al-qubtan, 2010; Bankowski, 2010; Brooks & Wilson, 2014; Farabi et al., 2017; Gibbons, 2007 in Garbatti & Mady, 2015; Herbein et al., 201; Kiuahara et al., 2012; Mahoney et al., 2017; Mundy, 2014; Nadia, 2013; Nation & Newton, 2009 in Tuan & Mai, 2015; Westwick, 2015) and encouraged the use of a student-developed template (Brundage et al., 2010; Pearson, 2010; Santoso et al., 2018).

In terms of structure and organization, the 3Rs guided oral presentation template can help students come up with persuasive speeches that have better organizational pattern, more discernible thesis statement, more appropriate and credible supporting materials (Bankowski, 2010), and more complete, accurate, and qualitatively better outputs (Kiuahara et al., 2012).

In terms of content development, use of the template can aid in effectively starting and ending the speech, using transitions, looking for credible materials (Santoso et al., 2018), capturing the audience's attention, establishing their credibility to talk about the topic, providing a strong and effective call to action, and appropriately using the artistic proofs.

The template can guide NNEPS in using a variety of expressions suited to their topic, relying less on their notes and projecting a confident stance, and establishing a common ground in order for the audience to relate to their message (Abdullah et al., 2015).

Lastly, the template can be effective in reducing communication apprehension as it helped reduce fear of the thought of giving a speech and the anxiety that

comes before and during speech presentation (Hashemi & Abbasi, 2013; Ibrahim & Yusoff, 2012; Kedrowicz & Taylor, 2016; Li et al., 2016; Mahoney et al., 2017).

Therefore, following the procedures adopted in this study could help NNEPS, particularly in government secondary schools, to learn how to have a structured and organized persuasive speech with appropriate content, effective delivery, and a healthy attitude toward the task. All these show that teaching persuasive speaking skills using guided oral presentation and the 3Rs template is effective.

The Rouse-Relate-Respond (3Rs) template is a feasible alternative in teaching and improving persuasive speaking skills. This study as well as previous research findings prove the effectiveness of using a template (Brundage et al., 2010) that is meaning-focused (Schnell, 2015). The participants identified the 3Rs template as the primary factor that affected their structure and organization, and content development. As there is a direct relationship between structure and organization and content development, this confirms Brundage et al.'s (2010), Pearson's (2010), and Santoso et al.'s (2018) findings that the use of a template makes a speech more logical and organized. Lee and Liang (2012) recommended the use of a template in teaching persuasive speaking skills as it helps NNEPS in overcoming the complex cognitive process of writing and delivering a speech, which include structure and organization and content development. Similarly, the use of the 3Rs template positively affected the participants' confidence. As the participants acknowledged how the structure, organization, and content of their speech were developed, their confidence in delivering the speech was also developed knowing that the speech they would deliver was meaningful and well-planned (Hashemi & Abbasi, 2013). Therefore, using the 3Rs template should be an alternative in teaching persuasive speaking.

Effective persuasive speaking pedagogy puts premium on direct instruction of identified challenged skills. According to the participants, direct instruction of skills was the second most important element of the training that was instrumental in the improvement of their persuasive speaking skills. This supports previous research findings on the use of direct instruction which promotes the development of public speaking skills (Herbein et al., 2018) and reduces communication apprehension (Kelsen, 2019) resulting in better speech delivery. Moreover, both studies suggested that teaching a specific skill allows students to acknowledge what they can do, thus developing self-efficacy. Students with higher self-efficacy levels in English Public Speaking (EPS) are better public speakers (Ardasheva et al., 2020). Using explicit instruction that directly addresses the challenges of NNEPS prove to be an effective strategy in improving persuasive speaking skills.

Adequate time for research and practice is an essential component of persuasive speaking pedagogy. According to Tuan and Mai (2015), adequate time for

the writing and practice of speech delivery is a key factor to a successful performance. Similarly, Pearson (2010) correlated higher speech grades to the overall writing preparation and practice time because allocating time for rehearsal helps reduce anxiety and enhance presentation performance (Kelsen, 2019). Providing ample time for research and practice during public speaking pedagogy can help improve students' overall performance.

In the context of persuasive speaking pedagogy, the role of the teacher in guiding the students is indispensable. This research confirms the findings of Mahoney et al. (2017) regarding the role of the teacher in guiding the students as the teacher is in control of enhancing the quality of instruction, specifically by increasing student knowledge, improving performance or skills, and lowering communication apprehension. It should also be mentioned that in this study, the teacher followed the principles of GOP in teaching the lessons. Therefore, the findings of this research support previous research findings on the effectiveness of GOP in improving public speaking skills as it guides individuals to effectively structure their presentation (Tom et al., 2013) and choose and develop a topic (Li et al., 2016). Because of the reduced cognitive work for the students (Brooks & Wilson, 2014), they were able to focus more on delivering their speeches, which is manifested in their confident speech delivery.

There are specific principles used in the training that positively affected the persuasive speaking skills of the participants. This study confirms that the following principles contributed to the improvement of the participants' persuasive speaking skills: using video exemplars (Abdullah et al., 2015), breaking down the major sections of the speech (Brooks & Wilson, 2014), identifying the elements of an effective persuasive speech and creating a formula out of it (Herrick, 2017), using explicit instruction of paralinguistic skills (Abdullah et al., 2015), using a meaning-focused template (Nikitina, 2011), using targeted feedback giving (Montazeri & Salimi, 2019), employing self-efficacy training (Herbein et al., 2018), having shorter delivery time (Farabi et al., 2017), and providing time for task repetition and rehearsal (Ibrahim & Yusoff, 2012).

The online learning mode of delivery, by itself, is not sufficient to develop the persuasive speaking skills of the participants. Contrary to research findings that suggested pure online public speaking pedagogy (Butler, 2014; Westwick et al., 2015; Westwick et al., 2018), this study revealed that no particular aspect of the online learning environment contributed to the participants' improved persuasive speaking skills. While there are studies that support the participants' agreement on the flexibility of online classes in terms of the availability of materials (Lai & Hong, 2017), freedom in learning (Balakrishnan & Puteh, 2014), and its effectiveness as a venue for self-directed learning (Mahoney et al., 2017; Wu & Huang, 2010), these aspects were not enough to affect the persuasive speaking skills of the participants. This may have been

the reason why most studies that used online learning almost always partnered it with face-to-face instruction. It should be established that the studies that used pure online learning were conducted in the tertiary context with participants who were previously exposed to said environment. Online learning should be supported with other avenues for learning.

The Rouse-Relate-Respond (3Rs) guided oral presentation template can be used regardless of the modality. The result of the perception survey revealed that the participants recognized that it was not the online learning environment, but the strategy used that was the primary contributor to the improvement of their skills. This result challenges previous research findings pertaining to improvement of public speaking skills in a purely online learning environment (Westwick et al., 2015; Westwick et al., 2018; Wolverton & Tanner, 2019). This result provides an avenue to explore how the Rouse-Relate-Respond (3Rs) guided oral presentation template would impact persuasive speaking skills if used in blended learning or pure face-to-face classes. It should also be highlighted that the instrument used solicited opinion-based data. There might be a different result if more evidence-based data were used.

Persuasive public speaking can be taught notwithstanding modality. While the current study disconfirms studies that show the effectiveness of pure online learning for public speaking instruction (Butler, 2014; Westwick et al., 2015; Westwick et al., 2018), it implies that the training should be tested in other viable learning platforms for public speaking pedagogy. It should be emphasized, however, that Butler recognized that there is no significant difference in terms of the learning gain scores, students' attitude, and instructor's perceived presence regardless of the instructor modality. His findings indicated that learning gains and instructor presence could be achieved notwithstanding modality or added activities. Similarly, Westwick et al. (2015) posited that while not similar to face-to-face instruction, online public speaking instruction could be an alternative, specifically if it has the same potency to reduce communication apprehension in public speaking and improve public speaking competence. The researchers suggested incorporating effective materials, skills training, and cognitive restructuring to be part of the online training. In this study, the exemplars are the materials used, the use of guided oral presentation is the primary skills training strategy, and the 3Rs template is the cognitive restructuring tool as it provided a different approach in the teaching of persuasive speaking from the usual Intro-Body-Conclusion template. Exploring other effective modalities in teaching persuasive speaking is necessary.

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Conflict of interests

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author.

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