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Stepanova Iryna Serhiivna PhD in Philology, Associate Professor, Head of the Department of Foreign Languages, Vinnytsia National Technical University, Vinnytsia, <https://orcid.org/0009-0006-4374-1070>

Nykyporets Svitlana Stepanivna the senior English language lecturer, Vinnytsia National Technical University, Vinnytsia, <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-3546-1734>

FOREIGN LANGUAGE INSTRUCTION AS A MEANS OF DEVELOPING STUDENTS' ACADEMIC PRESENTATION COMPETENCE

Abstract. This article examines foreign language instruction as a practical means of developing second year students' academic presentation competence at Vinnytsia National Technical University (Ukraine). The study was conducted in the realities of Ukrainian higher education during Russia's ongoing war of aggression, where instruction is regularly disrupted by air-raid alerts, hybrid timetables, and occasional power or connectivity instability. Academic presentation competence is conceptualised as an integrated construct that includes technical content accuracy, rhetorical organisation and signposting, academic language use, multimodal slide-to-speech coherence, delivery and interaction, and resilience – the ability to maintain coherence and recover communicatively after interruptions. A four-month instructional model was implemented with 78 students of the Faculty of Power Engineering and Electromechanics and organised as a repeated genre-performance cycle: baseline diagnostic micro-presentations, scaffolded rehearsal tasks (outlining, process explanation, data commentary, limitations framing), structured peer feedback, and a final presentation with an assessed Q&A. The intervention explicitly trained fault-tolerant speaking strategies (restart signals, compressed versions, and time-cut protocols) as a response to the disrupted learning environment. Evidence from anonymised rubric scores, presentation artefacts, and observation notes indicates that students most consistently improved in macro-structuring, audience-oriented framing, slide design alignment, and Q&A management, while language accuracy developed



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more unevenly across proficiency levels. The study argues that resilience-oriented instructional design should be treated as an integral component of academic speaking competence in wartime Ukraine, not as an external constraint. All participation was voluntary, based on informed consent, and all reported results are aggregated and anonymised to ensure confidentiality and non-disclosure of personal data. The article proposes assessment-relevant indicators and pedagogical mechanisms that can be transferred to other technical ESP contexts operating under disruption.

Keywords: academic presentation competence, foreign language instruction, academic speaking, multimodal communication, resilience-oriented pedagogy.

Степанова Ірина Сергіївна кандидат філологічних наук, доцент, завідувач кафедри іноземних мов, Вінницький національний технічний університет, м. Вінниця, <https://orcid.org/0009-0006-4374-1070>.

Никипорець Світлана Степанівна старший викладач кафедри іноземних мов, Вінницький національний технічний університет, м. Вінниця, <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-3546-1734>.

ВИКЛАДАННЯ ІНОЗЕМНИХ МОВ ЯК ЗАСІБ РОЗВИТКУ АКАДЕМІЧНОЇ ПРЕЗЕНТАЦІЙНОЇ КОМПЕТЕНТНОСТІ СТУДЕНТІВ

Анотація. У статті розглянуто іншомовне навчання як практичний засіб розвитку академічної презентаційної компетентності студентів 2 курсу Вінницького національного технічного університету. Дослідження виконано з урахуванням реалій української вищої освіти в умовах триваючої агресії росії, коли навчальний процес регулярно переривається повітряними тривогами, гібридними розкладами та періодичною нестабільністю електропостачання або зв'язку. Академічну презентаційну компетентність концептуалізовано як інтегрований конструкт, що охоплює точність технічного змісту, риторичну організацію та сигнальність викладу, академічне мовне оформлення, мультимодальну узгодженість слайдів і мовлення, подачу та взаємодію, а також стійкість – здатність зберігати зв'язність і відновлювати комунікацію після переривань. Протягом 4 місяців було реалізовано навчальну модель із залученням 78 студентів Факультету електроенергетики та електромеханіки, організовану як цикл повторення: діагностичні мікропрезентації на старті, поетапні тренувальні завдання (планування, пояснення процесу, коментування даних, формулювання обмежень), структурований взаємозворотний зв'язок та підсумкова презентація з оцінюваною сесією запитань-відповідей. Цей підхід спеціально формував «відмовостійкі» стратегії мовлення (сигнали перезапуску,



стислий варіант повідомлення та протокол скорочення часу) як відповідь на умови перерваного навчання. Дані, отримані на основі знеособлених рубрикаторних оцінок, презентаційних артефактів і нотаток спостереження, свідчать про найбільш послідовний прогрес студентів у макроструктуруванні, орієнтації на аудиторію, узгодженні дизайну слайдів із мовленням та веденні сесії запитань-відповідей, тоді як мовна точність розвивалася більш нерівномірно залежно від рівня володіння мовою. Обґрунтовано, що стійкісно орієнтований дизайн навчання має розглядатися як складова академічної усної компетентності в умовах воєнного часу в Україні, а не як зовнішнє обмеження. Участь була добровільною та здійснювалася на основі інформованої згоди, а всі результати подано в агрегованому й анонімізованому вигляді для забезпечення конфіденційності та нерозголошення персональних даних. Стаття пропонує оцінювальні індикатори та педагогічні механізми, які можуть бути перенесені на інші технічні ESP контексти, що функціонують в умовах переривань.

Ключові слова: академічна презентаційна компетентність, іншомовне навчання, академічне мовлення, мультимодальна комунікація, стійкісно орієнтована педагогіка.

In contemporary technical higher education, academic communication has become inseparable from professional credibility. For engineering students, the ability to present ideas clearly is not an optional "soft skill", but a practical competence that supports learning, teamwork, and future employability. Presentations structure technical thinking: they force students to formulate a problem, justify design choices, interpret data, and explain limitations. In the foreign language classroom, this competence gains an additional dimension, because students must perform these cognitively demanding tasks through a second language while also managing audience engagement, visual support, and discipline-specific terminology. For Ukrainian technical universities, where many graduates interact with international partners, participate in joint projects, and follow global standards of documentation and reporting, academic presentation competence in English functions as a gateway to academic mobility and professional integration.

The urgency of this issue has been sharpened by Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine. Since 2022, Ukrainian higher education has operated under conditions that resemble a complex engineering system exposed to constant external disturbances. Air-raid alerts interrupt lessons and examinations; electricity outages and unstable connectivity reshape schedules; students and teachers regularly switch between classroom, shelter, and online formats; many learners combine study with volunteering, part-time work, or family responsibilities intensified by wartime pressures. In such a context, communication is not merely a pedagogical objective, but also a mechanism of resilience. When the educational environment becomes unpredictable, well-



developed presentation competence acts like a reliable protocol in a disrupted network: it helps speakers keep the message coherent despite interruptions, compress complex content into essential points, and maintain interaction with the audience even when time is limited or the format changes abruptly.

This wartime reality has also altered the communicative landscape of Ukrainian technical education. Students are increasingly exposed to public communication tasks that extend beyond the traditional classroom presentation. They may need to pitch student projects to internal university committees, speak at volunteer or community initiatives, explain technical solutions in interdisciplinary teams, or communicate basic engineering ideas to non-specialist audiences in high-stakes situations. These experiences highlight a central pedagogical challenge: technical students can possess strong analytical abilities [1] while still struggling to verbalise reasoning, defend choices, and align their message with academic conventions in English. The foreign language classroom, therefore, becomes a site where linguistic development intersects with professional identity formation, critical thinking, and social responsibility.

Within this broader context, the present article considers foreign language instruction as a means of developing students' academic presentation competence at Vinnytsia National Technical University, focusing on second year students. This cohort is pedagogically significant. In many technical programmes, the second year represents a transition from introductory coursework toward more specialised subjects, laboratory routines, and project-oriented tasks. Students begin to accumulate sufficient disciplinary content to speak meaningfully about processes, systems, measurements, and design decisions, yet they often lack confidence in academic public speaking, especially in a foreign language. At the same time, second year learners are typically still forming stable learning strategies and can benefit from structured support that integrates language, content, and performance skills before habits become entrenched.

Academic presentation competence in this study is understood as an integrated construct that includes several interrelated components. Linguistically, it requires control of discipline-relevant lexis, grammar patterns typical of technical explanation, and pragmatic choices that support clarity and politeness. Rhetorically, it involves the ability to build an argument, sequence information logically, signal transitions, and articulate claims with appropriate degrees of certainty. Multimodally, it includes the design and use of slides, graphs, and diagrams as meaning-making resources rather than decoration. Interactionally, it presupposes audience awareness, delivery skills, and the capacity to manage questions. Finally, in the wartime Ukrainian context, academic presentation competence includes adaptive capacity: the ability to adjust to time constraints, unexpected breaks, hybrid audiences, and varying levels of technical access.

An important analogy can be drawn from engineering itself. Modern systems are designed with redundancy, error detection, and recovery procedures to ensure stable



operation under stress. Similarly, effective academic presenters develop communicative redundancy and recovery strategies: they restate key points, highlight essential data, anticipate misunderstandings, and re-establish coherence after an interruption. In a classroom interrupted by an air-raid alert, a student who can return to the central message, reframe the problem, and continue without losing the audience demonstrates not only language proficiency, but also professional maturity. Foreign language instruction can intentionally cultivate these capabilities by combining linguistic scaffolding with performance-oriented tasks, rehearsal cycles, peer feedback, and reflective practice.

Despite the practical importance of presentation skills, technical students often experience a mismatch between what they know and what they can communicate, particularly in English. They may rely on memorised phrases, reproduce slide text verbatim, overload visuals, or avoid questions. These patterns are intensified when learners are anxious, fatigued, or studying under unstable conditions. The wartime environment, therefore, calls for instructional approaches that are realistic, psychologically supportive, and methodologically precise. It is not sufficient to demand "better presentations" without offering a structured pathway that respects cognitive load, language level, and the constraints of disrupted learning.

Recent EAP and ESP research increasingly conceptualises student academic presentations as a multimodal genre in which meaning is co-produced through speech, slides, gesture, and audience-oriented interaction, rather than through linguistic accuracy alone. Harrison's 2024 study of gesture in English oral presentations, for example, shows [2] how embodied actions function as key resources for navigation and coherence, with direct implications for what instructors should explicitly model and assess. At the level of defining "effectiveness", Zareva's survey of contemporary presentation guidebooks identifies [3] a relatively stable set of core principles in Anglophone academic culture but also reports that language-use recommendations are frequently shallow and weakly evidence-based. This observation motivates a shift from prescriptive advice toward empirically grounded, teachable descriptors of academic speaking and presentational discourse. In discipline-specific settings, Burhan-Horasanlı's 2024 case study in *English for Specific Purposes* demonstrates [4] how conference-presentation preparation in an engineering research team socialises novices through corrective feedback into expected ways of shaping slide language and performing orally, linking micro-level choices with disciplinary values. Complementing this socialisation lens, Yin, Fan, Jin, and Stapleton (2024) argue [5] that critical thinking remains underrepresented in EAP speaking constructs and therefore propose an assessment framework that treats critical thinking as integral to academic oral performance. Research on digitally mediated academic communication further expands the construct: Huang and Xia (2024) analyse [6] student knowledge-dissemination videos and identify recurring weaknesses in ideational clarity and



intermodal coherence despite strengths in interpersonal meaning-making. Taken together, these studies suggest that effective instruction must integrate multimodal design and delivery, discipline-shaped discourse expectations, and explicit assessment constructs, rather than treating them as separate curricular strands. However, the literature still provides limited evidence on how such integrated academic presentation competence can be developed with early undergraduates in technical universities who are simultaneously mastering foundational disciplinary concepts and academic English routines. For Ukrainian higher education operating under Russia's ongoing war of aggression, an additional underexplored dimension is resilience-oriented instructional design, namely how to sustain iterative rehearsal, peer feedback, and assessment continuity when learning is repeatedly disrupted, and this is the gap to which the present article is devoted.

The purpose of this article is to justify and describe an instructional focus on academic presentation competence within foreign language education for second year technical students at Vinnytsia National Technical University. The introduction frames the problem through the realities of modern Ukraine, where the continuity of education is maintained through adaptability, professional solidarity, and a persistent orientation toward international standards. In this setting, developing academic presentation competence [7] through foreign language instruction is not merely a curricular enhancement. It is a practical investment in the communicative resilience of future engineers, who must be able to represent Ukrainian expertise clearly and responsibly in academic and professional environments, even when the context demands the same qualities that engineers value in their designs: reliability, clarity, and fault tolerance.

The general problem addressed in this article is the insufficient formation of academic presentation competence among second year technical students, particularly when such competence must be realised in a foreign language and under conditions of disrupted learning. In Ukrainian technical universities, English courses are still often perceived as primarily linguistic, while presentation skills are treated as auxiliary or deferred to later years, which creates a gap between communicative demands and instructional priorities. This gap becomes especially visible [8] when students are required to present laboratory results, project proposals, or research mini-studies in English, because they must simultaneously manage terminology, academic register, rhetorical structure, and multimodal design. Under wartime conditions, this challenge is amplified by irregular schedules, hybrid formats, limited rehearsal time, and heightened stress, all of which increase cognitive load and weaken performance stability.

From a scientific perspective, the problem is connected with the broader task of operationalising competence-based education in foreign language instruction for specific purposes, where measurable outcomes must reflect authentic academic and professional communication. It is also linked to the research agenda on integrated skills



development, since presentation competence emerges at the intersection of language proficiency, discourse organisation, public speaking, and visual literacy. In practical terms, Ukrainian engineering students increasingly participate in international programmes, online conferences, and cross-border collaborations, where presentation quality directly affects academic mobility and institutional visibility. At the national level, strengthening English-medium academic communication supports Ukraine's integration into European educational and research spaces and contributes to the sustainable development [9] of human capital during wartime recovery. For Vinnytsia National Technical University, the task is strategic: to prepare students who can communicate technical ideas convincingly, defend decisions with evidence, and maintain academic integrity in English across face-to-face and online settings. Therefore, the formulation of the problem in this study is grounded in both scientific priorities and urgent practical needs, namely the design of foreign language instruction that systematically develops academic presentation competence as a resilient, transferable, and professionally relevant outcome.

The objective of this article is to substantiate and describe a pedagogically grounded approach to developing second year technical students' academic presentation competence through foreign language instruction at Vinnytsia National Technical University. The article also aims to identify practical instructional mechanisms and assessment-relevant indicators that support stable presentation performance in English under the disrupted learning conditions caused by Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine.

Presentation of the main material of the study

The instructional model was implemented within foreign language instruction for second year students at Vinnytsia National Technical University in a context shaped by hybrid timetables, air-raid interruptions, and periodic power or connectivity instability. The core methodological assumption was that academic presentation competence in a technical university cannot be developed through language practice alone; it requires a deliberately sequenced integration of (a) discipline-grounded content selection, (b) academic discourse moves, (c) multimodal slide design, (d) delivery and interaction, and (e) resilience strategies for disrupted learning. The study treated presentations as an assessable genre and used a repeated performance cycle: baseline diagnostic micro-presentation, scaffolded rehearsal tasks, and a final presentation with a structured Q&A segment. Data sources were designed to be feasible under wartime constraints: rubric scores, slide artefacts, peer feedback forms, and teacher observation notes, with all student materials anonymised and reported in aggregate. The intervention prioritised "fault-tolerant" communication: students rehearsed how to compress a message, re-enter the narrative after interruption, and maintain coherence when speaking time is shortened. This is analogous to engineering redundancy: a good presenter, like a reliable system, contains built-in recovery procedures and re-synchronisation signals.

Table 1.

Instructional sequence for developing academic presentation competence

Module	Presentation competence focus	Language focus (EAP/ESP)	Task and artefact	Wartime adaptation (fault tolerance)
1. Diagnostic baseline	Topic selection and audience framing	Defining terms, purpose statements	2-3 minute micro-presentation + 1 slide	"Restart script" rehearsal: how to resume after an alert
2. Structuring meaning	Macro-structure and signalling	Sequencers, signposting, scope limitation	Outline + slide storyboard	"Compressed version" (90 seconds) prepared as backup
3. Explaining technical process	Clarity and precision in explanation	Process verbs, passive/agent choice, cause-effect	Process explanation with diagram	Offline-first slides (no embedded online media)
4. Data commentary	Interpreting visuals and justifying choices	Quantifiers, trend language, hedging for limits	One chart + commentary paragraph	Rehearsal in low-bandwidth mode (camera off, audio only)
5. Argument and critical stance	Claim-evidence-warrant; limitations	Stance markers, cautious claims, citing sources orally	5 minute presentation + limitations slide	"Time cut protocol": what to drop first without losing logic
6. Interaction	Q&A management and professional politeness	Clarification, reformulation, concession	Q&A script bank + peer feedback	"Interrupted Q&A": how to park a question and return later

Source: created by author.

The sequence operationalised the principle that performance quality improves when the student repeatedly produces the genre under controlled constraints and receives targeted feedback on a stable set of criteria. The wartime adaptations were not peripheral; they were treated as part of competence, because in Ukraine the ability to communicate [10] under disruption is a real academic and professional requirement, not a theoretical scenario.



Table 2.
Analytic rubric for academic presentation competence (1-5 scale)

Criterion	1 (emerging)	3 (developing)	5 (competent)
Content (technical accuracy and relevance)	Content is vague or not technical; key terms misused	Content is mostly accurate; some gaps or weak relevance	Accurate, relevant, clearly scoped; terms used appropriately
Structure (rhetorical organisation and signalling)	No clear stages; hard to follow	Basic structure; transitions sometimes unclear	Strong macro-structure; clear signposting; coherent flow
Language (academic register and intelligibility)	Frequent errors obscure meaning; informal register	Meaning generally clear; occasional register mismatch	Clear, discipline-appropriate register; errors do not distract
Slides (multimodal coherence)	Text-heavy; visuals unclear or decorative	Mixed quality; some visuals support meaning	Slides amplify speech; visuals are readable, purposeful, aligned
Delivery and interaction	Reading; low audience orientation; weak pacing	Partial audience engagement; uneven pacing	Controlled pacing; audience awareness; effective emphasis and eye-line
Resilience (adaptation under disruption)	Cannot resume after interruption; loses thread	Can resume with prompts; partial coherence preserved	Uses restart signals; compresses message; maintains coherence under constraints

Source: created by author.

This rubric justified the measurement of presentation competence as a multi-component construct: it avoids reducing academic speaking to grammar alone and makes visible the multimodal and interactional nature of performance. In a wartime context, "resilience" is included as a criterion because stable communication under interruption is part of authentic academic functioning.

Example 1. Opening move with scope and purpose (before vs after)

Before (typical student pattern): *"Today I will tell about electric motors. Electric motors are very important. This presentation is about different motors."*

After (target academic move): *"This presentation explains why induction motors remain the default choice for many industrial drives. I will focus on two parameters – efficiency and starting torque – and briefly show how these constraints influence motor selection for variable-load systems."*

The revised version demonstrates audience framing, explicit scope, and a purpose statement that narrows the topic to a defensible academic unit, which improves both coherence and assessment validity.



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Example 2. Data commentary that links a visual to a claim and a limitation

The slide element is a simple line graph of efficiency versus load (30%-100%).

Spoken commentary (modelled and rehearsed): *"As load increases from 30% to 80%, efficiency rises steadily, which suggests that partial-load operation is a key source of losses. However, this graph does not include temperature effects, so the trend should be interpreted as a simplified estimate rather than a full performance map."*

Students were trained to avoid "reading the chart" and instead produce the academic sequence: describe trend – interpret – qualify. This is the point where many technical presentations fail, because interpretation and limitation statements are not automatised.

Example 3. Q&A management with clarification and controlled stance

Question: *"Why did you choose this method and not a cheaper alternative?"*

Answer (trained response): *"Thank you – to clarify, the main selection criterion was reliability under unstable power conditions. A cheaper option exists, but it introduces higher failure risk during voltage fluctuations, so in this context we prioritised stability over initial cost. If you want, I can show the trade-off table after the session."*

In such a way the answer models professional politeness, clarifies the premise, states a criterion, and offers evidence follow-up. This directly supports academic presentation competence as a communicative performance rather than a memorised script.

Example 4. Resuming after an interruption (air-raid alert scenario)

Restart signal (rehearsed formula): *"Before the interruption, we established the main constraint – limited power availability. Returning to that point, the key implication is that the system must tolerate short outages without data loss, which is why the buffering mechanism is central."*

Students learned a simple re-synchronisation technique that restores coherence for the audience and reduces speaker anxiety. In Ukrainian wartime teaching, this is not a hypothetical skill; it is a recurring operational need.

The competence growth expected from this model is justified by the mechanism of repeated genre performance under targeted constraints: students produce a baseline artefact, receive feedback aligned with stable criteria, and then re-perform with explicit rehearsal of weak components. Improvements typically appear [11] first in structure and signposting because these are highly teachable and quickly internalised through templates, whereas language accuracy develops more slowly and is moderated by individual proficiency. Slide design and data commentary improve when students are required to align visuals with one spoken claim per slide, which reduces cognitive overload and discourages text dumping. Delivery and interaction improve when Q&A is trained as a scripted repertoire of moves (clarify, answer, qualify, offer follow-up) rather than treated as spontaneous improvisation. Finally, resilience improves [12]



when interruption management is explicitly practised as part of the competence construct, enabling students to maintain coherence and professionalism under disruptions typical for Ukraine during russia's war of aggression.

Conclusions

This study confirms that foreign language instruction can serve as a practical and methodologically justified means of developing second year technical students' academic presentation competence when it is organised as an integrated, repeated performance cycle rather than as isolated speaking exercises. Across the four-month intervention with 78 students of the Faculty of Power Engineering and Electromechanics at Vinnytsia National Technical University, the most pedagogically responsive components of competence were those that were explicitly scaffolded and rehearsed: macro-structure and signposting, audience-oriented framing, slide-to-speech alignment, and Q&A management. Language accuracy and lexical range improved more unevenly, which is consistent with the slower developmental trajectory of general proficiency compared to genre-specific presentational routines; however, students demonstrated clearer control of academic moves such as defining scope, interpreting visuals, and stating limitations. A distinctive contribution of the study is the operationalisation of resilience as an assessable component of presentation competence, reflecting the real conditions of Ukrainian higher education under russia's war of aggression, where interruptions and rapid format shifts are recurrent. The wartime-adapted "fault-tolerant" strategies (restart signals, compressed versions, and time-cut protocols) functioned as communication recovery procedures that helped students preserve coherence and professionalism under disruption. Importantly, all findings were derived from anonymised, aggregated data; individual identities and personal data were not disclosed, and participation and publication were based on informed consent with confidentiality safeguards.

Prospects for further exploration

Further research should validate the proposed analytic rubric (including the resilience criterion) through psychometric procedures such as inter-rater reliability, internal consistency, and construct validation across additional cohorts and technical specialisations. A quasi-experimental design (comparison group or staggered implementation) would allow stronger causal claims about which instructional mechanisms produce the largest gains and under what conditions. Longitudinal tracking is also warranted to determine whether competence developed in the foreign language classroom transfers to disciplinary settings, such as laboratory reporting, capstone project defence, and participation in student research conferences. Given the multimodal nature of presentations, future work should include fine-grained analysis of spoken discourse, slide design choices, gesture, and audience interaction to identify the micro-level features that distinguish higher-quality technical presentations in English. It is also prospective to examine how baseline English proficiency, anxiety, and wartime

stress indicators moderate learning outcomes, and to test trauma-informed, workload-sensitive scaffolding that preserves rigour while reducing cognitive overload. Finally, applied development studies could create and evaluate a compact digital toolkit (offline-first slide templates, Q&A scripts, and low-bandwidth rehearsal protocols) tailored to Ukrainian technical universities, ensuring that academic presentation competence remains teachable and assessable even under persistent disruption.

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