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## ***Developing Multicriteria Rating Scale for Assessment of Communicative Competence in LSP Oral Presentation<sup>2</sup>***

**Summary:** *This research develops a multicriteria rating scale for the assessment of oral presentations in language for specific purposes (LSP) in order to make the assessment process easier, more objective, and reliable. For this purpose, the prevailing contemporary theoretical models of communicative competence and specific purpose language ability were explored and five different models of multicriteria rating scales were generated. The criteria with the corresponding descriptors were created based on the distinct characteristics of oral communication and public speaking activities. Subsequently, they were the subject of evaluation by 103 foreign language teachers who teach LSP in higher education institutions and vocational secondary schools in Serbia and Croatia. An online survey was used as a data-collection method. The answers were analysed by the quantitative analysis and fuzzy multicriteria decision-making analysis (MCDC) to obtain a favourable model of the scale suitable for the LSP oral presentation assessment. The results show that the Specific Purpose Communicative Competence Scale is the optimal model recommended for evaluating learners' oral performance in the context of foreign LSP classroom. A ready-made rating scale for the LSP oral presentation assessment whose validity and reliability are based on theoretically and empirically investigated grounds represents the main contribu-*

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<sup>2</sup> This research paper is part of a larger project conducted for the purpose of completion of the doctoral dissertation by Vesna Petrović, *Evalvacija i unapređivanje kriterijuma za ocenjivanje usmene prezentacije na engleskom jeziku struke* [Evaluation and improvement of criteria for assessment of oral presentation in English for specific purposes] and defended at the University in Belgrade in 2022 (supervised by prof. dr Ana S. Jovanović).

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*tion of the research. The paper also offers various possibilities for further research, such as testing the obtained scale's validity in practice and comparing it with other assessment instruments.*

**Keywords:** *language for specific purposes (LSP), assessment, rating scale, oral presentation, multicriteria decision-making analysis*

## Introduction

In the context of foreign language education, language assessment represents a considerable part of the entire evaluation process. Purpura (2016, p. 191) defines language assessment as “a systematic procedure for eliciting test and non-test data for the purpose of making inferences or claims about certain language-related characteristics of an individual”. In other words, the activities that are used during assessment serve to initiate a student's language performance that occurs under certain circumstances. A close observation of the elicited performance and its further analysis leads to evaluation. The conclusions reached in the process of evaluation enable the assessors to gain deeper insight into one's language competence.

The aforementioned implies that foreign language (FL) assessment is quite a complex and demanding task for a teacher when in the role of an assessor. It is also a rigorous and responsible process since its results reflect not only the students' performance but the teachers' as well (Janković, 2022, p. 10). Assessment activities comprise almost a quarter, or even a third of the entire teaching practice (Stiggins, 2014, p. 68). This implicates substantial importance of assessment within the whole pedagogic process. According to the documents prescribed by the relevant institutions, such as American Federation of Teachers (AFT) and National Council on Measurement in Education (NCME), a teacher should be equipped with specific knowledge that enables assessment and the analysis of the assessment results, which can help them plan further teaching as well as other curricular activities (Mäkipää & Ouakrim-Soivio, 2019, p. 25). However, empirical research conducted with foreign language teachers in seven different European countries shows that their knowledge

about the traditional assessment procedures prevails (Vogt & Tsagari, 2014, pp. 391-392). Additionally, the same research indicates that teachers lack knowledge about more contemporary, less formal, and alternative assessment methods. Various studies undertaken in different parts of the world also reveal considerable variations in relation to the prevailing practices of foreign language speaking assessment (Bøhn, 2015, p. 8). The results of a qualitative empirical research indicate that teachers as assessors pay attention to different characteristics of students' performances (Yildiz, 2011). They also have different opinions about the most important assessment criteria, so that sometimes even the construct-irrelevant criteria affect the assessment inferences. Bøhn (2015) affirms the previous claim with his study and finds that FL teachers evaluate effort as an assessment criterion even though this parameter has not previously entered the list of construct characteristics; in addition, their assessment approach is holistic. Similarly, a survey conducted with the Japanese teachers has shown a great variety when the assessment procedures are concerned, which, at the same time, causes confusion and even a lack of confidence (Nakatsuhara, 2007, pp. 83-85). This study proves that some teachers either evaluate students' performance without any assessment scales or they create the assessment scales without any descriptors, but instead use numbers to tell the difference among their students' achievements. Bøhn (2015) concludes that solutions for the problems of oral assessment validity would be substantially improved by the introduction of the scales for the assessment of speaking activities. In compliance with the results from the previous discussion, Tagle, Etchegaray, Díaz, Ortiz, Quintana & Ramos (2024) conclude that different evaluative practices, which include both authentic and traditional

assessment instruments, should be used in order to promote communicative competence development. Namely, they conducted the study with 110 secondary school teachers in Chile to show that traditional testing is used even when speaking assessment is concerned leaving rubrics and rating scales behind.

Summarizing the earlier implications, we could assert that one of the crucial responsibilities of FL teachers is to serve as assessors as they evaluate their students' performances on their own. They mainly validate oral production activities subjectively, either by using the scales prepared by themselves or without any assessment scales (Petrović, 2022, p. 67). If they happen to use any descriptors, they are frequently created in a way that does not allow a reliable assessment of a students' performance. For that particular reason, it may occur that even the characteristics that had not been previously planned to be assessed affect a teacher's decision about a final grade. Finally, it seems that various teachers focus on different aspects of one's performance and often evaluate the same criterion in different ways. Therefore, it is necessary for the assessors to negotiate their meanings in order to reach a greater degree of validity. Teachers also realize the importance of relying on a rating scale with descriptors that would make oral assessment in real-life classroom context easier and more objective. In a previous study, the LSP teachers from Serbia and Croatia expressed a clear need for having a simple and concrete speaking scale (Petrović, 2024, pp. 151, 162). Consequently, the aim of our research is to develop a unique multicriteria scale for assessing students' oral performances in LSP and, more precisely, for assessing oral presentations in English for Specific Purposes (ESP).

Before we explore the scale for communicative competence assessment, it is necessary to define the assessment construct. Defining a construct is probably among the most challenging tasks in FL proficiency assessment (Douglas, 2000, p. 36; Purpura, 2016, pp. 191, 193) due to the complexity of the communicative competence concept. Douglas (2000) warns construct designers to be extremely careful when

choosing which parameters to include into the construct definition, since in the pedagogic context, it is almost impossible to regard them in the same way as they appear and interact in the target language use situation (p. 36). However, if the construct is defined precisely and in accordance with the specific assessment context, the assessment results will enable quality interpretation of the student performance and reaching valid conclusions (Douglas, 2000, p. 371). The assessment construct is operationalised through a rating scale (North, 2003). The rating scale (also called scoring rubric or proficiency scale) is an instrument whose purpose is to direct the assessment process (North, 2003, p. 1). It includes a framework with the scores and criteria that are used for evaluation of one's performance (Chen, 2016, p. 51), together with multiple descriptors with different levels that describe the corresponding skills and abilities (Fairbairn & Dunlea, 2017, p. 7). Clearly, both construct and scale should contain the descriptions of an individual's language proficiency. In order to be valid, a rating scale needs to be both theoretically grounded and context-related (North, 2003).

The previous discussion shows that here is no doubt that a learner's communicative competence is very broad and complex. This is the reason why it is practically impossible to evaluate all its aspects as they appear in real-life context. Therefore, it is necessary to make a careful selection of the communicative competence features that are, at the same time, the construct characteristics relevant to the purpose of the specific assessment process. In other words, concerning the fact that the communicative competence is broader than the construct itself, a scale developer should actually select only the communicative competence features that will compose the construct that is to be assessed in particular situation. For this reason, and for the purpose of developing the precise construct definition in this research, which at the same time denotes the assessment criteria, we proceed to analyse the components of communicative competence and specific purpose language ability

that will serve as the foundation for creating a rating scale for assessing the oral presentation in LSP.

The language user's progress can be measured according to his or her ability to use communicative activities and strategies correctly and appropriately. In other words, language learners are users of language whose proficiency is evaluated based on what they can actually do when using the language (Heyworth 2004, p. 14; Little, 2007, p. 646). As a document created by the group of experts and being submitted to constant revisions and improvements, Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, teaching, assessment (Council of Europe 2001, 2018) provides a reliable starting point for the analysis of the learner's communicative competence. In CEFR, communicative competence is defined as consisting of three basic components with its subcomponents: 1) linguistic (grammatical, lexical, semantic, phonological, orthographic, and orthoepic), 2) pragmatic (discourse, functional, and design) and sociolinguistic competences (pp. 108-130). Communicative competence is realised through communicative activities of reception, production, interaction, and mediation. While these activities are often performed simultaneously in the target language use situation, CEFR (Council of Europe, 2001) provides definitions and explanations for each activity respectively, so that the oral presentation is qualified as a communicative activity of oral production (pp. 57-61). Communicative strategies, in turn, enable successful task completion. A strategy is "any organised, purposeful and regulated line of actions chosen by an individual to carry out a task" (Council of Europe, 2001, p. 10). This further implies that the language learner uses communicative strategies while performing all different kinds of communicative activities.

Considering the fact that our primary interest is in relation to language for specific purposes, we also consider two models that crucially marked the current understanding of communicative competence and specific purpose language ability, respectively: Bachman and Palmer (1996) and Douglas (2000).

In their discussion on communicative competence, Bachman and Palmer (1996, p. 10) use the term communicative language ability. According to these authors, communicative competence includes two basic components, language knowledge and strategic competence. Language knowledge, in turn, consists of organizational knowledge (grammatical and textual) and pragmatic knowledge (functional and sociolinguistic). Strategic competence, on the other hand, represents a group of higher-rank metacognitive strategies: the language learner employs metacognitive strategies in order to activate and use the language knowledge in the form of an appropriate language discourse. Hence, in order to develop communicative competence, the language learner needs to acquire language knowledge, the ability to use that knowledge, as well as the knowledge about the context in which they perform particular language activity (Bachman, 1990, p. 80).

Although Douglas (2000, p. 35) designs his model of the specific purpose language ability on the foundations of Bachman and Palmer's communicative competence, his framework is somewhat simplified, as it leaves out the major distinction between organizational and pragmatic knowledge, while keeping other features of language knowledge almost identical (for further analysis see Petrović, 2022, pp. 44-45). As far as the strategic competence is concerned, only slight differences appear in comparison to Bachman and Palmer (1996) and they mainly refer to the order in which metacognitive strategies are used by the learner when performing a communicative activity. However, Douglas (2000) includes background knowledge as a distinct characteristic of the language for specific purposes communicative competence, so that his model of specific purpose language ability consists of three major components: 1) language knowledge, 2) strategic competence, and 3) background knowledge (pp. 35-36). Hence, according to this author, background knowledge is crucial for the distinction between communicative competence and the specific purpose language ability.



As we have previously pointed out, the aim of this research is to develop a unique rating scale for assessment of oral presentations in LSP which would make assessment procedure easier and more objective. The concise and comprehensive descriptors formulation that could be easily used during the rating process is one of the most challenging tasks in the rating scale construction (Luoma, 2004, p. 60). To overcome this challenge, our rating scale is based on the theoretical models of communicative competence and specific purpose language ability that include features of oral communication in English as a foreign language. In order to create an original rating scale for the assessment of oral presentation in LSP, we designed the methodological framework which posits different models of the newly created rating scales based on the theoretical grounds previously explained as well as the results of the multicriteria analysis that served to obtain the optimal scale model intended for assessment of oral presentation in LSP. Finally, the discussion and the conclusion provide the vital aspects of the obtained solution, together with its most important pedagogical implications and directions for future use.

## Methodology

The completion of this research implied an implementation of a series of strongly related steps toward the design and evaluation of the original rating scale for the assessment of oral presentation in LSP, and more precisely ESP. As a starting point, an analysis of different theoretical models of communicative competence relevant for the features of ESP oral production activities is completed in order to identify the key parameters that define the rating scale criteria. Namely, based on theoretical information, we define the construct of communicative competence for oral presentation in ESP: we identify its key components that function as assessment criteria and we elaborate a list of descriptors for each of the criteria.

In the following step, we submit the rating scale criteria to the evaluation of LSP teachers. On the basis of an original survey, we explore whether the teachers evaluate all the criteria equally within the process of oral presentation assessment or they give priority to different criteria.

The results from the survey enable the following multi criteria decision-making (MCDM) analysis. In other words, the responses from the survey help us define a number of alternatives of the rating scales, which are then submitted to the MCDM analysis in order to decide which model is the most optimal among the range of the offered ones. As Hensen and Devlin (2019) explain, the fuzzy model of MCDM enables calculating the values for each alternative related to the existing criteria. The obtained values are further multiplied by weight coefficients so that the results point out the relative importance of each particular alternative. The following step includes calculating the total sum of all the alternatives in order to rank the derived results. Radojičić and Žižović (1998) further explain that the MCDM of fuzziness can decrease the degree of subjectivity during the decision-making process (p. 77). That way, we actually perform the analysis of vagueness while the coefficients take diverse weight values. In other words, the importance of each particular criterion can be modified in the process of the final decision-making. We may also check to what extent a criterion affects the final alternatives' range, i.e. how much an individual system is liable to changes and how sensitive it is.

### *Criteria and descriptors for LSP oral presentation assessment*

The initial step when designing a rating scale is the development of the relevant criteria and corresponding descriptors. In addition to the previous theoretical analysis of relevant communicative competence models, we completed a survey of the research that focused on the different characteristics of oral communication, and especially, of oral presentation as a specific task (see Luoma, 2004; Richards, 2008;

Fulcher, 2014). In this way, we were able to identify the following key parameters:

- use of fixed phrases and formulaic expressions (appropriate opening, announcement of a topic, introduction of presenters, moving on to the next slide, summarizing and appropriate closing);
- clarity of presentation (overall comprehensibility that relates to speed, intonation, stress, and rhythm);
- effectiveness of presentation (general quality of voice, expressiveness, liveliness, and enthusiasm);
- fluency (automaticity of performance, familiarity with a chosen topic);

- grammar accuracy (word order, tenses, high/low gravity errors);
- meeting the needs of the audience and their management;
- managing eye-contact (paralinguistic features);
- structure and organization of presentation, i.e. logical manner of delivery and use of appropriate vocabulary.

The complexity of aspects that all come into play when describing oral performance in LSP in English as a foreign language is synthesized in Table 1.

*Table 1. Communicative competence construct with the corresponding criteria for assessment of oral presentation in LSP.*

Communicative competence components	Construct components/ criteria
Grammatical knowledge/ Linguistic competence	Clarity of presentation Fluency Vocabulary Grammar accuracy
Textual knowledge/ Discourse competence	Structure and organisation of presentation
Sociolinguistic knowledge/ Sociolinguistic competence	Use of appropriate register Use of appropriate style
Functional knowledge/ Functional competence	Handling follow-up questions
Strategies	Topic complexity appropriate for student's level of LSP proficiency Planning and preparation Audio-visual aids Alignment of thematic content with supporting visual material Alignment of visual materials' delivery with the context of entire presentation Topic appropriacy relevant to the interest of audience Effectiveness of presentation Managing eye-contact Time-management
Contextual knowledge	Appropriacy of topic Background knowledge

The overview in Table 1 shows that the LSP oral presentation construct for assessment in our research context is based on the total number of 19 criteria categorized according to six components: 1) grammatical knowledge, i.e. linguistic competence, 2) textual knowledge, i.e. discursive knowledge, 3) sociolinguistic knowledge, i.e. sociolinguistic competence, 4) functional knowledge, i.e. functional competence, 5) strategies and 6) contextual knowledge. As we have already mentioned, the criteria actually represent the components of communicative competence we intend to evaluate during a student's

delivery. We also optimise the criteria by defining the reliable descriptors.

Iberri-Shea (2017) highlights the importance of developing a specific rating scale intended for oral production activities assessment and therefore, in her study, defines the descriptors that explain different assessment criteria (pp. 11-14). Also, when defining the descriptors in our research we consider the proficiency levels that describe public speaking activities as given in CEFR. The criteria with the descriptors are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Rating scale criteria with descriptors.

Criterion	Descriptor
	Language knowledge
Clarity of presentation	A student talks loud enough, at appropriate speed, with appropriate intonation and rhythm.
Fluency	A student talks fluently, spontaneously and without hesitation.
Vocabulary	A student uses vocabulary that is in line with a specific ESP topic.
Use of appropriate register	A student uses appropriate register that is in line with a specific ESP topic.
Use of appropriate style	A student adapts their delivery style to suit appropriate level of formality.
Grammar accuracy	A student mostly uses language constructions correctly (e.g. tenses, sequence of tenses) with an appropriate word order. Occasional errors do not impede communication.
	Presentation content and structure
Appropriacy of topic	Chosen topic is relevant for specific LSP area.
Background knowledge	A student shows appropriate subject knowledge.
Structure and organisation of presentation	A student's presentation is clear and well-structured. It includes appropriate presentation elements, such as an introduction main points and a relevant conclusion. There is a suitable range of expressions and fixed phrases to introduce the topic in a logical manner, as well as to introduce their team members or a new presentation point. The student's interaction with other team members is appropriate, including proper ending of the presentation and inviting audience members to ask questions and participate.
Audio-visual aids	A student uses appropriate software for visual presentation of the text, such as images, animations, or clips.
Alignment of thematic content with supporting visual material	Oral presentation is in line with visual aids used in slides. Material is effortlessly delivered and is straightforward to follow.
Alignment of visual materials' delivery with the context of entire presentation	Visual materials' delivery is in line with oral presentation material and pace.

	Presentation strategies
Topic complexity appropriate for student's level of LSP proficiency	A student chooses a topic that is compatible with their level of LSP proficiency.
Topic appropriacy relevant to the interest of audience	A student has delivered a presentation relevant to audience interest.
Planning and preparation	A student has prepared a straightforward presentation and has shown the ability to work as a team member.
Effectiveness of presentation	A student presents effectively, persuasively, and enthusiastically using appropriate non-verbal presentation skills (e.g. gestures or miming).
Managing eye-contact	A student manages to keep eye-contact with the audience in order to check whether they are being understood, whether the topic is of interest, or whether they have lost the audiences' attention.
Handling follow-up questions	A student mostly gives appropriate answers or comments in response to the audience.
Time management	A student keeps within an appropriate time frame.

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As shown in Table 2, the criteria are divided into three different groups: 1) language knowledge criteria, 2) presentation content and structure criteria and 3) strategies criteria. The language knowledge criteria contain: 1) clarity of presentation, 2) fluency, 3) vocabulary, 4) use of appropriate register, 5) use of appropriate style, and 6) grammar accuracy. The second criteria group relates to the structure and content of presentation and observes: 1) appropriacy of topic, 2) background knowledge, 3) structure and organisation of presentation, 4) audio-visual aids, 5) alignment of thematic content with supporting visual material, and 6) alignment of visual materials' delivery with the context of entire presentation. The third group encompasses the parameters that are related to the presentation strategies, i.e., 1) topic appropriacy relevant to a student's level of LSP proficiency, 2) topic appropriacy relevant to the interest of audience, 3) planning and preparation, 4) effectiveness of presentation, 5) managing eye-contact, 6) handling follow-up questions, and 7) time-management.

### ***Research instrument and sample***

Starting from the established rating scale with descriptors, presented in the previous segment, we set out to explore teachers' attitudes about each in-

dividual scale's criterion importance. More precisely, we designed a survey with the established rating scale (Table 2) and the teachers were asked to rate suggested criteria using Likert scale (ranging from 1 – not important at all to 5 – very important) in order to show how much each of the criteria affected the evaluation of their students' oral presentations.

We used online environment for data collection: an anonymous Google form survey was created in Serbian and disseminated to teachers of languages for specific purposes (LSP) in higher education institutions and vocational secondary schools all around Serbia and Croatia. The Google form link was sent to the Language for Specific Purposes Centre, the Association for Foreign Languages and Literatures of Serbia, and the Serbian Association for the Study of English. The survey was also posted on the Association for Foreign Languages and Literatures of Serbia's Facebook page and LSP Teachers at Higher Education Institutions in Croatia's Facebook page. The entire data-collection process lasted for two and a half months, from November 2021 until the mid of December 2022, for a total of 103 responses.



## Results

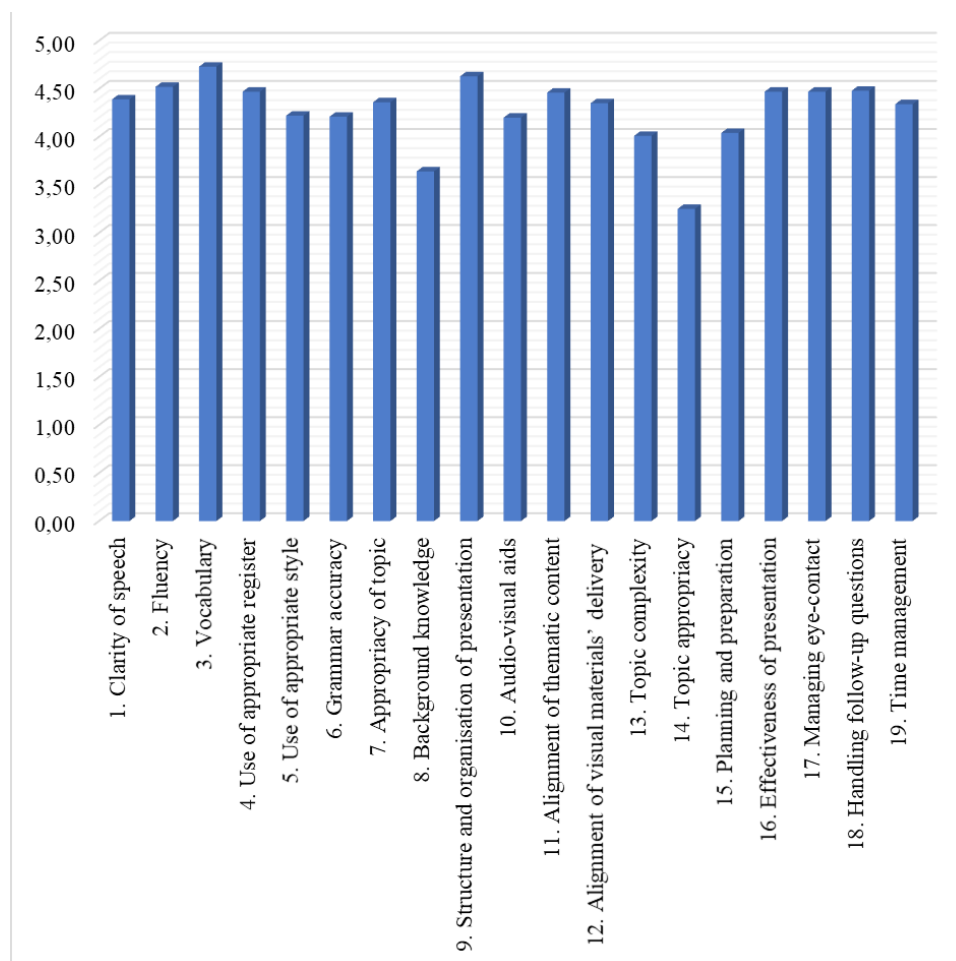
The data from the survey were submitted to the descriptive analysis which shows the mean values of the grades the teachers' used to assess suggested criteria (see Appendix 1). We expected that the teachers' evaluation would help us discern several criteria that they considered particularly important for oral presentations' assessment. However, it turned out that the mean values for each particular criterion were approximately equal (see Figure 1), which implies that the teachers do not give priority to any of the distinct criteria and that all the param-

eters, according to their opinions, affect the assessment of students' performances almost in the same measure. These results would further imply that our rating scale should have contained all of 19 assessment criteria. Therefore, in order to avoid possible confusion and overload that could arise when a nineteen-criteria-scale is used for oral presentation assessment, we set out to design an optimal rating scale with a reduced number of criteria as presented in the following section.

### Rating scale models

In order to create an optimal rating scale for the assessment of oral presentations in LSP, a fuzzy multicriteria decision-making (MCDM) analysis was conducted. Five different scales' models were made, each containing 9 criteria. The models include the scales that are based on: 1) strategic competence, 2) language knowledge, 3) content and structure of presentation, 4) specific purpose communicative competence, and 5) intuitive model of the researcher. Importantly, an additional effort was invested in the selection of the criteria so that each of them could be included into one of the scales' models at least once. Each scale model, as well as the principle of choosing the criteria that feature particular scale are explained more thoroughly below. Fol-

Figure 1. Mean values of teachers' grades for oral presentation assessment criteria (adapted from Petrović, 2022: 99).



lowing this, fuzzy MCDM analysis was conducted in order to find an optimal rating scale model with the belonging criteria.

Model 1, or the Strategic Competence Scale, contains 9 criteria (see Table 3). It includes seven criteria that make presentation strategies. Since the descriptive analysis showed that all the criteria were rated almost equally in the survey, the other criteria of Model 1 were chosen on the basis of the greatest number of the best scores (5). Additionally, the eighth parameter is the language knowledge criterion that scored with the best grades, while the ninth belongs to the content and structure group (see Appendix 1).

Table 3. Model 1: Strategic Competence Scale.

Criteria Group	Criteria
Presentation strategies	Topic complexity appropriate for student's level of LSP proficiency
	Topic appropriacy relevant to the interest of audience
	Planning and preparation
	Effectiveness of presentation
	Managing eye-contact
	Handling follow-up questions
	Time management
Language knowledge	Vocabulary
Presentation content and structure	Structure and organisation of presentation

Table 4 represents Model 2 or the Language Knowledge Scale. It contains six language knowledge criteria. The seventh criterion belongs to the presentation content and structure group (see Table 2) and is selected on the basis of the greatest number of the highest survey scores (see Appendix 1). The following two parameters were selected on the same principle and describe the strategies that the students use while presenting.

Table 4. Model 2: Language Knowledge Scale.

Criteria Group	Criteria
Language knowledge	Clarity of presentation
	Fluency
	Vocabulary
	Use of appropriate register
	Use of appropriate style
	Grammar accuracy
Presentation content and structure	Structure and organisation of presentation
Presentation strategies	Managing eye-contact
	Effectiveness of presentation

Table 5 illustrates the third scale Model 3 that consists of six criteria describing presentation content and structure parameters. The next two criteria, selected as the most prominent ones with the greatest number of the highest scores (see Appendix 1), refer to language knowledge. The ninth criterion was chosen as the most influential in the presentation strategies category according to the grades of the research respondents.

Table 5. Model 3: Presentation Content and Structure Scale.

Criteria Group	Criteria
Presentation content and structure	Appropriacy of topic
	Background knowledge
	Structure and organisation of presentation
	Audio-visual aids
	Alignment of thematic content with supporting visual material
	Alignment of visual materials' delivery with the context of entire presentation
Language knowledge	Vocabulary
	Fluency
Presentation strategies	Managing eye-contact

Model 4 or the Specific Purpose Communicative Competence Scale contains three criteria that describe LSP communicative competence. These were the teachers' options selected as the most influential ones (see Appendix 1). They refer to topic, vocabulary and register appropriate for particular LSP field. Then, the two most prominent criteria from the other two groups were also selected as the most suitable to describe learners' communicative competence when delivering oral presentations. Model 4 is presented in Table 6.

*Table 6. Model 4: Specific Purpose Communicative Competence Scale.*

Criteria Group	Criteria
Language knowledge	Clarity of presentation
	Vocabulary
	Fluency
	Use of appropriate register
Content and structure of presentation	Structure and organisation of presentation
	Appropriacy of topic
	Alignment of thematic content with supporting visual material
	Managing eye-contact
Presentation strategies	Effectiveness of presentation

Finally, Model 5 is the Intuitive Scale model of the researcher, presented in Table 7. The principle of selecting criteria was based on equal proportion of the parameters belonging to the three different groups of criteria, i.e. the language knowledge criteria, the content and structure of presentation criteria, and the presenting strategies criteria in equal proportion: 3:3:3. Also, the principle of the greatest number of the highest scores was not followed for this particular model. Besides equal proportion, the researcher considered the selected criteria particularly important for describing communicative competence of learners when delivering oral presentations in LSP.

*Table 7. Model 5: Intuitive Scale.*

Criteria Group	Criteria
Language knowledge	Clarity of presentation
	Fluency
	Use of appropriate register
Content and structure of presentation	Background knowledge
	Structure and organisation of presentation
	Alignment of visual materials' delivery with the context of entire presentation
	Planning and preparation
Presentation strategies	Effectiveness of presentation
	Managing eye-contact

### ***Multicriteria decision-making analysis***

As previously announced, fuzzy multicriteria decision-making (MCDM) analysis enables selecting the optimal solution among multiple possible ones. This paper presents the fuzzy MCDC application according to 3 criteria (C): C1 – language knowledge, C2 – content and structure of presentation, and C3 – presenting strategies. In our research, we assigned C1, C2 and C3 to 5 different scales models which represent the alternatives. We started calculation by assigning equal weight coefficients to the criteria C1, C2 and C3, i.e. each of them had equal importance and proportion. Further on, we conducted the sensitivity test by assigning different weight coefficients to different criteria. This enabled us to reach the conclusion which scale model was the most optimal for assessment of LSP oral presentation. Table 8 presents the range of the alternatives optimal for assessment of LSP oral presentations obtained by the MCDC analysis.

Table 8. MCDC results with the criteria having equal weight coefficients.

M	C1	C2	C3	Total sum
M1	.118348	.128702	0	.24705
M2	0	.103645	.093962	.197606
M3	.11834	.001139	.093962	.213449
M4	.06986	.099848	.093962	.259795
M5	.030651	0	.051448	.0821
Level of significance	.33%	.33%	.33%	

Note. M- Model of the scale for LSP oral presentation; M1 - Strategic Competence Scale; M2 - Language Knowledge Scale; M3 - Content and Structure of Presentation Scale; M4 - Specific Purpose Communicative Competence Scale; M5 - Intuitive Scale; C1 - Language knowledge; C2 - Content and structure of presentation; C3 - Presenting strategies.

The MCDC analysis assesses the hierarchy of the generated rating scale models, ranging from the most optimal to the least optimal alternatives designed for evaluating LSP oral presentations, i.e.,  $M4 > M1 > M3 > M2 > M5$ . Thus, Model 4, or the Specific Purpose Communicative Competence Scale appears as the optimal option for the LSP oral presentation assessment. Model 1 scale based on the presentation strategies is right behind. Model 3, which is related to the content and structure of the presentation, is very close in rank to Model 1 and Model 3. However, Model 2 scale based on the language knowledge and Model 5 (or the Intuitive Scale) represent slightly less optimal choices comparing to the aforementioned alternatives. These calculations were also confirmed by deeper analyses that were conducted to test the sensitivity of the results obtained by equal coefficients application. In other words, all further evaluations singled out Model 4 as the first or the second option concerning the level of significance, whereas the other models did not prove such sensitivity.

## Discussion

The previous chapters explain the generation process of the rating scale criteria for the LSP oral presentation assessment. Starting from the relevant theoretical models, we defined the construct of spe-

cific purpose communicative competence necessary for the LSP oral presentation. On the basis of this theoretical investigation, we identified the relevant criteria with the corresponding descriptors that were then submitted to the evaluation from the part of the professional community of teachers of languages for specific purposes. The mean values obtained by descriptive analysis of the teachers' answers were then used to create five alternative models of the rating scale criteria that were subsequently submitted to the fuzzy MCDC analysis. This analysis helped us reach the conclusion that the Specific Purpose Communicative Competence Scale is the optimal alternative for the LSP oral presentations assessment (see Appendix 2).

However, it is significant to point out that these analyses do not exclude the other alternatives or scales models. On the contrary, they actually present the hierarchy of the alternatives within the continuum ranging from the most applicable to the least applicable one. It is also of utmost importance to highlight the fact that there are slight differences among the alternatives that represent Model 4, Model 1, Model 3, and Model 2. This leads us to conclude that they all could be used in the assessment process, since they all contain the assessment construct based on the prevailing communicative competence models as shown earlier in the paper. The only significant difference in the values

obtained by the MCDC analysis appears in Model 5, or the Intuitive model of the researcher. This, again, does not mean that it cannot be applied in the assessment process, but that it appears as less optimal choice than the previous four models.

Finally, since the results from the survey suggest that the research participants tend to evaluate all the criteria with same or similar importance, the teachers could use the criteria to suit their own assessment processes. More precisely, they could evaluate criteria using either grades or points to reach the final conclusion about their learners' communicative competence in LSP.

## Conclusion

There is no doubt that assessment represents a considerable segment of teaching practice. The research conducted in this domain shows that teachers predominantly use traditional testing, or summative assessment, to evaluate their students' performances. For this reason, foreign language teachers would significantly benefit from utilising alternative assessment, or performance assessment in their classrooms. This particularly refers to the assessment of oral production activities since it represents quite a challenging and demanding process. Therefore, defining precise and comprehensive criteria for oral performances assessment would substantially simplify rating process while making it more objective and reliable. The previous arguments highlight the reasons for designing original rating scale with precisely defined criteria and corresponding descriptors, as presented in this paper, that has the potential to facilitate the assessment process by making it more efficient while also increasing its objectivity and reliability.

We believe that an important contribution of this paper lies in the fact that all scales models generated in this research contain the criteria and the descriptors based on the communicative competence models which have thoroughly been examined in theoretical and empirical research for more than two decades. Secondly, we took into consideration the opinions and assessment practices of the statistically valid number of teachers who assess LSP oral presentations in higher education institutions and vocational secondary schools throughout Serbia and Croatia. Thirdly, we applied a fuzzy multicriteria decision-making analysis in our linguistic research to obtain the necessary results in social sciences and humanities, which presents a considerable innovation since this statistic procedure is quite rare in the field of linguistics and its disciplines.

We believe that teachers can benefit from using this multicriteria scale when assessing oral presentations since it contains carefully designed assessment construct, which creates the opportunity for all the performances to be evaluated on the basis of the same criteria without possible construct irrelevant parameters' impact. The advantage of the scale is also in the possibility to introduce the rating criteria to learners prior to the task preparation and assessment. Accordingly, the students can adapt their metacognitive strategies to meet the requirements of the task during planning and preparation phases. The results also offer a platform for future research: possible potentials lie in the fact that the created models show different levels of suitability for oral presentation assessment, so it would be interesting to investigate performances of each particular scale model in different teaching contexts.



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## APPENDICES

### Appendix 1. Results of the survey. Summary and mean values.

Rating scale criteria Survey			
Survey question:	Likert scale answers	Number of teachers' answers	Mean value
On the Likert scale ranging from 1 to 5 circle a number to evaluate how much each of the criteria influence the achievement of an individual learner when they deliver oral presentation in LSP.			
1. Clarity of speech: a student talks loud enough, at appropriate speed, with appropriate intonation and rhythm.	1	1	4.39
	2	0	
	3	14	
	4	31	
	5	51	
2. Fluency: a student speaks fluently, spontaneously, and without hesitation.	1	1	4.52
	2	0	
	3	12	
	4	21	
	5	69	
3. Vocabulary: a student uses vocabulary that is in line with a specific LSP topic.	1	1	4.73
	2	1	
	3	3	
	4	15	
	5	83	
4. Use of appropriate register: a student uses appropriate register that is in line with a specific LSP topic.	1	1	4.47
	2	1	
	3	9	
	4	30	
	5	62	
5. Use of appropriate style: a student adapts their delivery style to suit appropriate level of formality.	1	1	4.22
	2	2	
	3	16	
	4	38	
	5	46	
6. Grammar accuracy: a student mostly uses language constructions correctly (e.g. tenses, sequence of tenses) with an appropriate word order. Occasional errors do not impede communication.	1	1	4.21
	2	3	
	3	18	
	4	32	
	5	49	

Content and structure of presentation			
7. Appropriacy of topic: the chosen topic is relevant for specific LSP area.	1	2	4.36
	2	3	
	3	13	
	4	23	
	5	62	
8. Background knowledge: a student shows appropriate subject knowledge.	1	4	3.64
	2	10	
	3	28	
	4	38	
	5	23	
9. Structure and organization of the presentation: a student's presentation is clear and well-structured. It includes appropriate presentation elements, such as an introduction main points and a relevant conclusion. There is a suitable range of expressions and fixed phrases to introduce the topic in a logical manner, as well as to introduce their team members or a new presentation point. The student's interaction with other team members is appropriate, including the proper ending of the presentation and inviting the audience members to ask questions and participate.	1	1	4.63
	2	1	
	3	6	
	4	19	
	5	76	
10. Audio-visual aids: a student uses appropriate software for the visual presentation of the text, such as images, animations or clips.	1	1	4.20
	2	4	
	3	15	
	4	37	
	5	46	
11. Alignment of thematic content with supporting visual material: oral presentation is in line with visual aids used in the slides. Material is effortlessly delivered and is straightforward to follow.	1	1	4.46
	2	1	
	3	11	
	4	27	
	5	63	
12. Alignment of visual materials' delivery with the context of entire presentation: delivery of visual materials is in line with the oral presentation material and pace.	1	2	4.35
	2	2	
	3	10	
	4	33	
	5	56	

Presentation strategies			
13. Topic complexity appropriate for student's level of LSP proficiency: a student chooses a topic that is compatible with their level of LSP proficiency.	1	5	4.01
	2	4	
	3	16	
	4	37	
	5	40	
	Without an answer	1	
14. Topic appropriacy relevant to the interest of audience: a student has delivered a presentation relevant to audience interest.	1	9	3.25
	2	16	
	3	29	
	4	38	
	5	11	
15. Planning and preparation: a student has prepared a straightforward presentation and has shown the ability to work as a team member.	1	6	4.04
	2	6	
	3	10	
	4	37	
	5	44	
16. Effectiveness of presentation: a student presents effectively, persuasively and enthusiastically using appropriate non-verbal presentation skills (e.g. gestures or miming).	1	1	4.47
	2	2	
	3	5	
	4	34	
	5	61	
17. Managing eye-contact: a student manages to keep eye-contact with the audience in order to check whether they are being understood, whether the topic is of interest, or whether they have lost the audiences' attention.	5	1	4.47
	4	2	
	3	8	
	2	29	
	1	63	
18. Handling follow-up questions: a student mostly gives appropriate answers or comments in response to the audience.	5	1	4.48
	4	0	
	3	6	
	2	37	
	1	59	
19. Time management: a student talks within an appropriate time frame.	1	1	4.34
	2	2	
	3	13	
	4	32	
	5	55	

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**Appendix 2. Model 4: The Specific Purpose Communicative Competence Scale.**

The Specific Purpose Communicative Competence Scale	
Criterion	Descriptor
Appropriacy of topic	Chosen topic is relevant for specific LSP area.
Alignment of thematic content with supporting visual material	Oral presentation is in line with visual aids used in slides. Material is effortlessly delivered and is straightforward to follow.
Structure and organisation of presentation	A student's presentation is clear and well-structured. It includes appropriate presentation elements, such as an introduction main points and a relevant conclusion. There is a suitable range of expressions and fixed phrases to introduce the topic in a logical manner, as well as to introduce their team members or a new presentation point. The student's interaction with other team members is appropriate, including proper ending of the presentation and inviting audience members to ask questions and participate.
Clarity of presentation	A student talks loud enough, at appropriate speed, with appropriate intonation and rhythm.
Vocabulary	A student uses vocabulary that is in line with a specific LSP topic.
Fluency	A student talks fluently, spontaneously and without hesitation.
Use of appropriate register	A student uses appropriate register that is in line with a specific LSP topic.
Managing eye-contact	A student manages to keep an eye-contact with the audience in order to check whether they are being understood, whether the topic is of interest, or whether they have lost the audiences' attention.
Effectiveness of presentation	A student presents effectively, persuasively, and enthusiastically using appropriate non-verbal presentation skills (e.g. gestures or miming).

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## РАЗВОЈ ВИШЕКРИТЕРИЈУМСКЕ СКАЛЕ ЗА ОЦЕЊИВАЊЕ КОМУНИКАТИВНЕ КОМПЕТЕНЦИЈЕ У ОКВИРУ ПРЕЗЕНТАЦИЈЕ НА СТРАНОМ ЈЕЗИКУ СТРУКЕ

У овом раду је развијена вишекритеријумска скала за оцењивање усмених презентација на страном језику струке са намером да се процес оцењивања олакша и учини објективнијим и поузданијим, те да се наставницима омогући да изврше оцењивање у свакодневним реалним условима у учионици на што једноставнији, прецизнији и временски економичнији начин. Стога су изражени преовлађујући теоријски модели комуникативне компетенције и модели комуникативне компетенције на језику струке, а затим је на њиховим основама креирано пет различитих модела скала за оцењивање. Пре свега, у изражавању је осмишљено укупно 19 критеријума са одговарајућим дескрипторима на бази истакнутих карактеристика усмене комуникације и активности јавног говора. Након тога, 103 наставника страног језика струке која раде у високошколским установама и средњим стручним школама у Србији и Хрватској су евалуирала осмишљене критеријуме тако што се од њих захтевало да помоћу Ликерове скале вреднују предложене критеријуме оценом од 1 до 5, у складу са тим колико сматрају да сваки од понуђених критеријума има утицаја на постигнуће ученика приликом њихове усмене изјаве. Циљ нам је био да изразимо да ли наставници подједнако вреднују критеријуме за оцењивање усмених презентација када врше оцењивање или појединим критеријумима дају предност у односу на неке друге. Подаци су прикупљени путем онлајн-анкете, затим подвргнути квантитативној анализи, која је показала да наставници не дају предност ниједном од понуђених критеријума, већ сматрају да их преба вредновати у приближно једнакој мери приликом оцењивања постигнућа студента у оквиру усмене презентације. Будући да 19 критеријума представља велики број параметара које наставници преба да вреднују када оцењују, што их може ометати и изазвати забуну, за преба изражавања оформили смо пет различитих модела скала за оцењивање усмене презентације који садрже различите комбинације предложених критеријума са дескрипторима и подврли их вишекритеријумској анализи одлучивања како бисмо дошли до одговарајућег модела скале погодног за оцењивање усмене презентације на страном језику струке. Модели скала укључују: 1) скалу засновану на прагматичкој компетенцији; 2) скалу засновану на језичком знању; 3) скалу засновану на садржају и структури презентације; 4) скалу засновану на комуникативној компетенцији на страном језику струке и 5) интезивни модел израживача. Резултати вишекритеријумске анализе одлучивања су показали да скала за оцењивање комуникативне компетенције на страном језику струке представља најоптималнији модел који се препоручује за оцењивање усмене презентације на страном језику струке у контексту учионице. Главни допринос рада састоји се у формирању нове скале за оцењивање усмене презентације на

сврханом језику сврху, чије су валидносћ и поузданосћ теоријски и емпиријски утврђене. Поврх тога, с обзиром на то да је вишекритеријумска анализа ових модела показала њихов поредак од најоптималније до најмање оптималној, и да се тиме не сујерише искључивање било које од формираних модела, сматрамо да би за будућа истраживања било корисно извршити оцењивање уопштеном свих модела, те упоредити исходе таквих оцењивања. Истраживање такође нуди разне могућности за даља истраживања која би се односила на тестирање валидносћ појединачне скале у пракси кроз њено поређење са другим инструментима за оцењивање. Ограничења овој истраживања односе се на уопштено анкете као истраживачкој инструментима за прикупљање података која са собом увек носи ризик и оставља могућност да испитаници нису довољно мотивисани да одговоре на питања.

**Кључне речи:** сврхани језик сврху, оцењивање, скала за оцењивање, усмена презентација, вишекритеријумска анализа одлучивања