

3.16 PUBLIC SPEAKING SKILLS

Aim

- To help students develop techniques to speak in public in formal and non-formal settings.

Materials Required

- Copies of the Input.

Input

A) Preparing a Speech:

Speech training is essential for good leadership. Here are some reminders of good speech writing:

Whom Are You Going To Speak To?

First know your audience: How old are they? Are they men or women? Urban or rural? What are their interests? What is their economic status? Etc.

Why are You Speaking?

- What is the occasion for your speech? If your topic does not fit the occasion you could be cracking jokes at a funeral!
- Get to know the history behind the occasion, the reasons for its occurrence, the people involved, dates, their special traits that have contributed to the event etc.

Why Are You Called To Speak?

- There may be a reason why you are invited to speak. Knowing how you are connected with the event (that is, if you are connected) will help you add that particular detail people who have invited you are looking forward to hearing. This does not mean bragging about yourself or your involvement with the event.

Time and Timeliness:

- Make your topic fit the time allowed. Do not exceed your time. Be specific. Generalised topics do not grip the audience. "Ten ways of holding a cricket bat" will attract your listeners more than just "Cricket".
- Make your topic timely, that is, of current interest.

What is Your Topic?

- If you are not already given a topic to speak on here are some tips that may help:
 - * Pick a topic of current interest.
 - * Pick a topic your audience is interested in.
 - * Pick a topic that will stimulate your hearers to action rather than one that they will sleep over.
 - * Pick a topic that you yourself are interested in.
 - * If you are given a topic to speak on it means that that you are to come well prepared. Your audience is likely to know your topic and is looking forward to hearing what you have to say. Your knowledge of the audience will tell you how many are familiar with the topic and the degree of familiarity. But here is where your hard work and your communication skills will carry you through an effective speech delivery.

The Body of Your Speech:

- Plan your talk in three parts:

1. Introduction:

- Wake up your audience with something interesting, something that will arouse their curiosity. If you are tackling an explosive issue, make sure you first define the problem clearly before you proceed to present your solution to it.

2. The Middle

- Give your middle substance.
- Avoid jokes, if you are not good at cracking them. The effect could be pathetic.
- Elaborate on one or two points, no more.



- Use examples to make your theory “accessible”
 - Be simple in your vocabulary and your phrasing.
3. Conclusion
- Conclude with a striking sentence which the people will remember.

Relevant Skills

Write a speech of approximately one page on any of the following

- Introduce yourself
- How I got my vocation
- How I survived and learned from a very difficult experience.
- My parents Etc.

B) Public Speaking

In public speaking what you are matters, what you say matters and how you say what you say also matters. This last factor may be analysed in three groups. Audio expression, Visual expression, Getting into your speech.

Audio Expression

Loudness: If you are not using a mike it is important to throw your voice forward. If you are before a mike adjust your position during your opening sentences so that you are clear and audible.

Variation: Difference in volume according to your phrases and meaning adds great emphasis by making certain ideas within a message stand out. Loud tones communicate excitement, higher emotion, boisterous feelings, anger. A soft tone can attract attention to what one is saying.

Rate: Choose a pleasant speed when communicating. Yet a variation will also help. A rapid rate is usually associated with excitement, danger, the need for sudden action. A slow rate often communicates calm, tiredness, sickness, resignation.

Pause: Just as commas are used in writing, pauses are used to separate points or divide ideas. Long pauses serve to separate lines of thought. Wrong pauses can change meaning. For example, “Woman (pause) without her (pause) man is a beast.” “Woman, without her man (pause) is a beast.”

Visual Expression:

Be presentable: How you dress, or comb your hair says a lot about what you stand for. The ideal way to present oneself is to appear in a manner that bespeaks simplicity and self-respect.

Control your nervousness: Stage fright is natural, even among professionals. These feelings are useful to key you up to do a better job. Speakers who are over-confident can speak for hours without saying anything. They seldom prepare themselves.

Posture: The way a speaker stands, holds his/her shoulders and head while speaking, communicates a good deal to the audience.

In a formal speech, where the audience is about twelve or more feet away, the speaker stands erect, with weight evenly balanced on both feet. The feet should be relatively close together, with one foot slightly in front of the other.

In an informal speech where the audience is close, the speaker can make it apparent that a carefully prepared speech is not intended by that he/she just wishes to ramble on a bit and throw out a few ideas and then solicit questions and comments. In so doing, sitting on the table or chair or leaning on the stand is tolerable.

Facial expressions: Facial expressions can have a wide range of smiles, grins, smirks, frowns, grimaces, etc. which can add emphasis when you want, or de-emphasise what you do not consider important. Facial expressions must be exaggerated in formal public speaking since the distance tones down one’s facial expression. But in an informal setting, be moderate.

Eye contact: This is the most expressive region of the face. Generally the speaker ought to give the illusion that he/she is looking directly at the members of the audience. In almost all situations, random eye movements are distracting, looking over the heads of the audience, at windows or out of them, at the floor, at one’s watch or at one’s notes...are all distracting.

Gestures: Movement of hands and arms while speaking is important. But these movements must flow through the whole arm right to the tips of the fingers, not simply from elbows down. Remember to use the space above your head, particularly if one is speaking from a long distance. Make sure the gestures do not detract what you want to communicate. More than

the hands and the arms, the whole body can be used. Thus one can make use of the techniques of pantomime. The use of notes: Notes can inhibit eye contact, facial expression, posture and gesturing and thereby affect the speaker's total skill at non-verbal communication. In formal speeches notes may be used but eye-contact must be made from time to time. Do not use notes in both hands – use it in one hand, and gesture with the other. In an informal setting it is preferable not to use notes. Never pretend that you have no notes. Quotations and statistics may be read from notes. What if you forget what to say? In such a situation do not look at the notes when you feel embarrassed – look at the audience, keep your poise, pause to collect yourself.

C) Getting Into Your Speech

Here are a few general tips for public speakers:

- Do not waste time on apologies when you begin; and when you end, do not announce your conclusion.
- Be enthusiastic about what you have to say.
- Even when speaking on an abstract topic, be concrete and down to earth. Show how your abstract analysis has concrete repercussions.
- Be yourself – your audience can notice when you pretend. Admit your limitations.
- Be brief
- Speak from your heart.

Relevant Skills

- Keeping the rules of public speaking in mind, deliver your speeches before the rest of the class. (Or deliver ready-made elocution speeches).
- The teacher as well as the rest of the students evaluate the manner of deliver (and, if the speech is original, the content of the speech as well)
- This exercise could be repeated once every week.

C) Impromptu Speeches

You are having a great party. The company of your friends is exhilarating. The host claps his hands to draw the attention of the audience and invites you to speak. Suddenly all eyes turn towards you...

What to Say?

Here are some ideas:

- Speak about the occasion: its purpose, high points or humorous aspects.
- Speak about the people assembled, their successes, future plans, or other group interests.
- Current events in politics, in the local situation or in the community.
- Choose something that you know people of that age and upbringing may like to hear.

What Manner of Delivery?

Now that you know what to say, plan your style of delivery. A few headings are suggested:

- The event: history, persons, relevance
- Story – moral/relevance
- Cause-effect
- Problem-solution
- Then and now
- Past, present, future
- Deduction: from many to one
- Induction: from one to many
- East-west
- Rich-poor
- Statement, example, conclusion

Don't:

- Make apologies about “being unaccustomed to giving impromptu speeches”.
- Be unduly nervous and anxious
- Repeat yourself
- Be overconfident
- Exaggerate your actions.

Relevant Skills

Once the fear of facing their own companions is over, ask the participants to get ready for impromptu speech training. Explain that they will have to deliver impromptu speeches on topics given barely two minutes earlier. They would have to spend the two minutes collecting their thoughts along the lines suggested above. This exercise could be repeated once a month.



D) Speeches for Specific Occasions:

- a) The Announcement:
- Plan your talk.
 - Open with an attention-getting sentence.
 - Relate all the essential information – who, what, when, where, and how much – succinctly and clearly.
 - Be enthusiastic; make the subject inviting; emphasise its importance.
 - Repeat the essential information briefly.
- b) The Speech for Introduction:
- Speak for not more than two or three minutes – you are not the main speaker.
 - Learn about the host/chief guest before the meeting – convey what you have learned to the audience.
 - Make sure it is accurate, including of course, the proper title of the talk and the proper pronunciation of his/her names.
 - General comments that show how the subject relates to the occasion and the audience, or that summarise the speaker's work in the field are appropriate.
 - Do not include your personal opinion.
 - Build the host/guest up, but not to an embarrassing extent.
 - Welcome the host/guest to the podium
 - Be seated!
- c) Speech of Presentation of an Award:
- Do not use notes.
 - Discuss reasons for the representation and what the symbol being offered represents.
 - Discuss the characteristics and qualifications of the recipient.
 - Be sincere in expressing the genuine pleasure felt by those giving the award or gift.
 - Maintain the proper spirit of bestowing an honour, yet avoid making embarrassing exaggerations.
- d) Speech of Acceptance of an Award:
- Speak briefly, unless a long speech is expected.
 - Discuss the importance of the award to you; show your appreciation.
 - Modestly discuss significant and relevant facts that led to the honour being paid to you; discuss the roles played by other persons.
 - Pay tribute to those presenting the gifts.
- e) Speech of Welcome:
- Do not use notes
 - Discuss the nature of the occasion.
 - Discuss complimentary and interesting traits of your visitor(s) or new members.
 - Discuss pertinent features of the welcoming group.
 - Be a genial and cordial ambassador of good will; make the welcome explicit.
- f) Response to a Speech of Welcome:
- Graciously acknowledge the host's courtesy.
 - Bring greetings from the group that you represent (if you are a representative and point out common bonds).
 - Sincerely praise the welcoming organizations.
 - Be enthusiastic about what you have to say.
 - Even if speaking on an abstract topic, be concrete and down-to-earth. Show how your abstract analysis has concrete repercussions.
 - Be yourself – your audience can notice when you pretend. Admit your limitations.
 - Be brief.
 - Speak from your heart.

TEN COMMANDMENTS FOR THE PUBLIC SPEAKER

1. Stand erect, with one foot slightly advanced.
2. After having taken your position, address your audience, then pause, creating a moment of suspense.
3. Speak deliberately in a normal tone and throw out your voice to those in the last row of seats.
4. Keep your hands at your sides for the first minute or two at least.
5. Speak clearly with a distinct enunciation. Do not drop your final d's and t's and do not slight your vowels and syllables.
6. Remember inflection and an occasional change in speed or rate.
7. Avoid the same key and monotony.
8. Do not try to be dramatic – let it come naturally. Do not 'pose.'

9. Forget yourself in what you are saying. Have something to say, something to ‘persuade’ and lose all self-consciousness in the saying of it – in “putting across” your message.
10. Use the emphasis of stress, be forceful and, above all, be sincere.

THE PUBLIC SPEAKER BEFORE A MICROPHONE

1. Adjust the mike to the level of your mouth. Keep it about 12 inches from your mouth so that you do not come too close to the microphone nor have you to bend to reach it.
2. Speak into the microphone. Once you have accepted the fact of the microphone, try to forget about it. Put as much effort for clarity, interpretation and effectiveness with it as you would without it.
3. Do not turn away from the microphone when speaking. You may look around at your audience but, when speaking, speak into the microphone. Otherwise your audience will be irritated because they will miss part of your message.
4. Remember that a mic lessens emotional intensity and hence, if you are using your normal speaking voice, you must make a special effort to hold your audience. Avoid over-rapid speech.
5. Never blow into the microphone. The moisture of your breath can damage it. Preferably, tap lightly to ensure that it is in working condition.
6. If you increase your volume for a particularly vehement passage, move slightly back from the microphone.
7. If you change a wireless mic, it will give you freedom of movement but may limit your ability to be vehement.
8. There is much that one can learn from the way others use a mic. Be open to suggestions from others who are better judges of the proper way in which you use a microphone.
9. The clarity of your speech over the microphone depends largely on the acoustics of the hall in which you speak. A hum or an echo could make your speech inaudible or unclear.
10. If you can do without a mike, it is always preferable.

Relevant Skills

Make a list of special events and allot each participant a day when he will deliver a special occasion speech.

Review

1. A good speech requires one to know the audience, the ‘why’ of the speech, why one is called to speak, the topic as well as the time.
2. The body of the speech has got three parts: the introduction, the middle and the conclusion.
3. Audio expression, Visual expression, and getting into the speech are important factors to consider for a good outcome.
4. There are different types of speech for different occasions:
 - a) The Announcement
 - b) The Speech for Introduction
 - c) Speech of Presentation of an Award
 - d) Speech of Acceptance of an Award
 - e) Speech of Welcome.
 - f) Response to a Speech of Welcome

Reflection

Reflect on this statement: what you are matters, what you say matters and how you say what you say also matters.

Resources

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References

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