

DOMAIN 1. LISTENING AND SPEAKING

COMPETENCY 1.0 UNDERSTAND LISTENING AND SPEAKING FOR INFORMATION AND UNDERSTANDING

Skill 1.1 Analyze techniques of organizing information for formal presentations.

Preparing to speak on a topic should be seen as a process that has stages: **Discovery**, **Organization**, and **Editing**.

Discovery: There are many possible sources for the information that will be used to create an oral presentation. The first step in the discovery process is to settle on a topic or subject. Answer the question, What is the speech going to be about? For example, the topic or subject could be immigration. In the discovery stage, one's own knowledge, experience, and beliefs should be the first source, and notes should be taken as the speaker probes this source. The second source can very well be interviews with friends and possibly experts. The third source will be research: what has been written or said publicly on this topic. This stage can get out of hand very quickly, so a plan for the collecting of source information should be well-organized with time limits set for each part.

Organization: At this point, several decisions need to be made. The first is what the *purpose* of the speech is. Does the speaker want to persuade the audience to believe something or to act on something, or does the speaker simply want to present information that the audience might not have? Once that decision is made, a thesis should be developed. What point does the speaker want to make? And what are the points that will support that point? And in what order will those points be arranged? Introductions and conclusions should be written last. The purpose of the introduction is to draw the audience into the topic. The purpose of the conclusion is to polish off the speech, making sure the thesis is clear, reinforcing the thesis, or summarizing the points that have been made.

Editing: This is the most important stage in preparing a speech. Once decisions have been made in the discovery and organization stages, it's good to allow time to let the speech rest for awhile and to go back to it with "fresh eyes." Objectivity is extremely important, and the speaker should be willing to make drastic changes if they are needed. It's difficult to turn loose of one's own composition, but good speech-makers are able to do that. On the other hand, this can also get out of hand, and it should be limited. The speaker must recognize that at some point, the decisions must be made, the die must be cast, commitment to the speech as it stands must be made if the speaker is to deliver the message with conviction.

The concept of recursiveness is very useful to one who writes speeches.

That is, everything must be written at the outset with full knowledge that it can be changed, and the willingness to go backward, even to the discovery stage, is what makes a good speech-writer.

Skill 1.2 Analyze factors affecting a listener's ability to understand spoken language in different contexts.

The more information a speaker has about an audience, the more likely he/she is to communicate effectively with them. Several factors figure into the speaker/audience equation: age, ethnic background, educational level, knowledge of the subject, and interest in the subject.

Speaking about computers to senior citizens who have, at best, rudimentary knowledge about the way computers work must take that into account. Perhaps handing out a glossary would be useful for this audience. Speaking to first-graders about computers presents its own challenges. On the other hand, the average high-school student has more experience with computers than most adults and that should be taken into account. Speaking to a room full of computer systems engineers requires a rather thorough understanding of the jargon related to the field.

In considering the age of the audience, it's best not to make assumptions. The gathering of senior citizens might include retired systems engineers or people who have made their livings using computers, so research about the audience is important. It might not be wise to assume that high-school students have a certain level of understanding, either.

With an audience that is primarily Hispanic with varying levels of competence in English, the speaker is obligated to adjust the presentation to fit that audience. The same would be true when the audience is composed of people who may have been in the country for a long time but whose families speak their first language at home. Black English presents its own peculiarities, and if the audience is composed primarily of African-Americans whose contacts in the larger community are not great, some efforts need to be made to acquaint oneself with the specific peculiarities of the community those listeners come from.

It's unwise to "speak down" to an audience; they will almost certainly be insulted. On the other hand, speaking to an audience of college graduates will require different skills than speaking to an audience of people who have never attended college.

Finally, has the audience come because of an interest in the topic or because they have been influenced or forced to come to the presentation? If the audience comes with an interest in the subject already, efforts to motivate or draw them into the discussion might not be needed.

On the other hand, if the speaker knows the audience does not have a high level of interest in the topic, it would be wise to use devices to draw them into it, to motivate them to listen.

Skill 1.3 Distinguish among styles of language appropriate to various purposes, content, audiences, and occasions.

Slang comes about for many reasons: Amelioration is an important one that results often in euphemisms. Examples are “passed away” for dying; “senior citizens” for old people. Some usages have become so embedded in the language that their sources are long-forgotten. For example, “fame” originally meant rumor. Some words that were originally intended as euphemisms such as “mentally retarded” and “moron” to avoid using “idiot” have themselves become pejorative.

Slang is lower in prestige than Standard English; tends to first appear in the language of groups with low status; is often taboo and unlikely to be used by people of high status; tends to displace conventional terms, either as a shorthand or as a defense against perceptions associated with the conventional term.

Informal and formal language is a distinction made on the basis of the occasion as well as the audience. At a “formal” occasion, for example, a meeting of executives or of government officials, even conversational exchanges are likely to be more formal. A cocktail party or a golf game are examples where the language is likely to be informal. Formal language uses fewer or no contractions, less slang, longer sentences, and more organization in longer segments.

Speeches delivered to executives, college professors, government officials, etc., is likely to be formal. Speeches made to fellow employees are likely to be informal. Sermons tend to be formal; Bible lessons will tend to be informal.

Jargon is a specialized vocabulary. It may be the vocabulary peculiar to a particular industry such as computers or of a field such as religion. It may also be the vocabulary of a social group. Black English is a good example. A Hardee’s ad has two young men on the streets of Philadelphia discussing the merits of one of their sandwiches, and bylines are required so others may understand what they’re saying. A whole vocabulary that has even developed its own dictionaries is the jargon of bloggers. The speaker must be knowledgeable about and sensitive to the jargon peculiar to the particular audience. That may require some research and some vocabulary development on the speaker’s part.

Technical language is a form of jargon. It is usually specific to an industry, profession, or field of study. Sensitivity to the language familiar to the particular audience is important.

Regionalisms are those usages that are peculiar to a particular part of the country. A good example is the second person plural pronoun: you. Because the plural is the same as the singular, various parts of the country have developed their own solutions to be sure

that they are understood when they are speaking to more than one “you.” In the South, “you-all” or “y’all” is common. In the Northeast, one often hears “youse.” In some areas of the Middlewest, “you’ns” can be heard.

Vocabulary also varies from region to region. A small stream is a “creek” in some regions but “crick” in some. In Boston, soft drinks are generically called “tonic,” but it becomes “soda” in other parts of the northeast. It is “liqueur” in Canada, and “pop” when you get very far west of New York.

Skill 1.4 Evaluate visual materials for use in an oral presentation.

Multimedia refers to a technology for presenting material in both visual and verbal forms. This format is especially conducive to the classroom, since it reaches both visual and auditory learners.

Knowing how to select effective teaching software is the first step in efficient multi-media education. First, decide what you need the software for (creating spreadsheets, making diagrams, creating slideshows, etc.) Consult magazines such as *Popular Computing*, *PC World*, *MacWorld*, and *Multimedia World* to learn about the newest programs available. Go to a local computer store and ask a customer service representative to help you find the exact equipment you need. If possible, test the programs you are interested in. Check reviews in magazines such as *Consumer Reports*, *PCWorld*, *Electronic Learning* or *MultiMedia Schools* to ensure the software’s quality.

Software programs useful for producing teaching material

- Adobe
- Aldus Freehand
- CorelDRAW!
- DrawPerfect
- Claris Works
- PC Paintbrush
- Harvard Graphics
- Visio
- Microsoft Word
- Microsoft Power Point

Tips for creating visual media

- Limit your graph to just one idea or concept
- Keep the content simple and concise (avoid too many lines, words, or pictures)
- Balance substance and visual appeal
- Make sure the text is large enough for the class to read
- Match the information to the format that will fit it best

COMPETENCY 2.0 UNDERSTAND LISTENING AND SPEAKING FOR LITERARY RESPONSE AND EXPRESSION, PERSONAL APPRECIATION, AND ENTERTAINMENT

Skill 2.1 Judge the effectiveness or appropriateness of given details or examples for making a presentation or a performance more interesting or appealing.

Helping students to discover what types of details or examples will enhance a particular presentation or performance will depend in good part on the assignment/s given.

Possibilities for in-class performances are:

- live skits or one-act plays based on original student work
- live skits, plays or recitations based on literary texts assigned for class reading and discussion
- audio or video recordings of either of the above, e.g., a “radio play” based on Shirley Jackson’s story “The Lottery.”
- informative reports
- demonstration speeches, e.g., “how to make a dirt cake”
- persuasive speeches
- panel debates on course-related topics

Before assigning presentation or performance work, teachers should familiarize students with several examples of successful speeches, presentations, drama, etc. For instance, if a teacher shows the class a video recording of Martin Luther King’s 1963 “I Have a Dream” speech, the teacher should first provide students with written copies of it, then ask them to do the following:

- List all written works and songs mentioned by King.
- List all historical events and persons mentioned by King.
- List all landforms and American place names mentioned by King.
- Make a list of all the metaphors and similes used in the speech.
- Make a list of words, phrases, and ideas repeated in the speech.

Next have the students, singly or in groups, evaluate and analyze all of the above. Typical questions to ask are:

- Why do you think King uses imagery from the natural world—*islands, sweltering summer, etc.*—to describe abstractions such as freedom, equality, justice, and injustice?
Do you think that his use of metaphors shows any patterns or conscious intentions? Do you find his imagery effective? Why or why not?
- Why do you think King mentions so many landforms and American place names?
- What is the relationship to King’s subject of the works and songs mentioned in his speech?
- What is the effect of King’s use of repetition in the speech?

- What words would you use to describe the tone and effect of King’s speech?
- How do any of the matters above relate to King’s intended audience? Who is his intended audience?
- Do the contents of “I Have a Dream” offer any hints or suggestions about what to put into speeches and/or presentations in general?

A similar set of questions and exercises can apply when evaluating and analyzing a wide variety of well-known speeches, performances, and writings. The content and methods of such an approach are equally relevant and helpful to students as they prepare their own presentations. In addition, numerous speeches are available in both print (online) and video. A few of them are:

- Barbara Bush: Commencement Address at Wellesley College, June, 1990.
- Elizabeth Glaser: “Aids Speech” at the Democratic Party Convention, July 14, 1992.
- Adolf Hitler: Closing Address at National Socialist Party Congress (Nuremberg Rally), 1934.

Once a presentation or performance has been assigned, and the topics chosen, have students prepare by doing the following:

- Conduct research in the library and online to determine what others have done with the same topic and/or similar assignments.
- Consider who the audience is, then determine the appropriate tone, vocabulary, and content to get one’s key points across.
- If advocating a particular cause, opinion, and/or course of action, the speaker must determine what type of support will strengthen their case (see below). He or she will also need to take into account any opposing views and determine a strategy to address and counter them.
- Take into consideration matters regarding personal delivery: what to wear, the importance of eye contact with one’s audience, body language (gestures, facial expressions), and the need to avoid mumbling, speaking in a monotone or too fast.

A variety of supporting material is needed to make a successful presentation. Options for a persuasive speech, for instance, include:

- Facts, figures, and statistics
- Quotations from experts or other authoritative sources
- Quotations from literary works or news media
- Personal experience and anecdotes

The above information can be enhanced by presenting it through:

- Photographs, charts, graphs
- Video or audio recordings
- Printed handouts
- Reciting passages from a given work

For other types of speeches or presentations, have students determine what methods, support, and props are appropriate to achieve the effect they desire to have on their audience (see all of the above).

Skill 2.2 Recognize the different roles of voice and intonation patterns in oral presentations of stories, poetry, and drama.

Shifting into a new character calls for an analysis of that character's ways of talking, moving, and relating to others in the world. Everything a student does to give themselves the appearance—both physically and emotionally—of a character, involves an interpretation of that character's motivations, intentions and passions. Characterization is the basic decisions a student makes regarding the why and how of his or her character. They may justify their decisions based on details they notice in illustration or word, on understanding they have about similar characters in real life, and on their own motivations and intentions.

Basic frame sentence for character analysis:

“Since my character is _____, then he/she would act like _____.”

This may result in a student employing a goofy, clumsy shuffle when acting in their role, or addressing everyone as “baby.” The student must evolve from a child into an actor, and finally, into a specific character. It is your job to facilitate this transformation.

Child > Actor > Character

To further the immersion in their role, encourage students to call each other by their characters' names. Emphasize the “as if” nature of a play, in which the students treat characters as if they were real, with real emotions and motivations driving them to act the way they do.

Do not give students your own interpretation of a character's personality. Let them create their own interpretation, and follow along with their reading of the character.

Vocal Techniques

Voice is perhaps the most important tool of interpretation in classroom theater. It can portray anger, sadness, jealousy, happiness, fear and excitement. Vocal techniques integrate word choice, emphasis, and attitude, accentuating or deemphasizing them as the student sees fit. The voice puts life into the words of the play, with intonation, pitch, loudness or softness and even accent reflecting or obscuring the intent of the speaker.

Just look at the phrase, "It's all right," as an example of the impact of voice and tone. Said with a soothing voice, it implies patience and understanding. Said with a sarcastic, cynical voice, it gives off a dismissive feeling. A host of a party might say the same phrase with suppressed frustration to a guest who has broken a favorite vase. In each case, the vocal choices made either highlight or shadow the inner thoughts of the speaker.

Encourage students to try on different vocal roles. Explain to students that while you must use the words in the script, *how* you say them is up to individual interpretation. A simple explanation is to simply tell them to "read something and then say it in your own way." Have students decide on words they want to stress by highlighting or underlining them in their scripts. Circle words that should be spoken louder and draw a line lightly through words that should be whispered. Allow students to transform vocal inflection to match with their vision of their character. They will soon combine their own attitudes and analyses with attitudinal hints the text supplies to create an effective emotional portrayal.

Storytelling Techniques

- It's important to try to have complete silence before you begin, so that the students are concentrating and focused on the story and the person reading it. Turn off any background music.
- Make eye contact with everyone. At least you should be able to see all the students from where you are sitting or standing. Move them around if necessary.
- Make sure that there are no distractions behind you – stand in front of a wall, not an interesting bookshelf or a window.
- Think about yourself telling a favorite anecdote to your friends. "Did I tell you about the time when I..." How do you tell it? What gestures and effects do you use? At what points are you sure of getting a laugh? What are you doing with your body language and how are you telling the story? Is there a particular pause before the punch-line that works wonders? Apply your style to the story you're telling.

