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08/08/18

Professional Speaking

Prof. Lantinga

1st Speech Reflection

I spent a decent portion of time on my speech preparation, but it wasn’t enough. I spent about 2 and a half hours or so writing the speech itself- about an hour shortly after the speech was assigned, and then an hour and a half on the day before I was to speak. While I believe this is a good amount of time spent on writing, doing so much of it the day before it was due gave me very little time to practice rehearsing. I ended up rehearsing the speech for less than an hour, and stayed up late doing so. In the future, things I should keep in mind are making sure I get enough rest on the day before, and making sure I have a few days to practice with a finished speech so that it can really get ingrained a little at a time instead of cramming all my practice in a large chunk late at night when I’m tired, the day before it’s due. I rehearsed by placing a chair and cushion on top of a couch, and speaking standing up, as if looking out towards an audience. I tried to practice giving good eye contact, and looking across the “room” to make sure everyone was getting my attention. Being tired made the quality of practice pretty poor, however. After practicing, I thought I would do pretty okay- not my best, but okay, because I believed I wrote the speech well, at the very least. After giving the speech, I saw that there were areas that could really use some improvement. Although I got a pretty good grade, I knew I could do much better. My eye contact wasn’t great, I made unintended pauses, I completely forgot to smile and add enthusiasm, and I realized that the speech was dragging a little long. All of these could have been done better with adequate preparation and rest. In the future, I will try to make sure that I am working daily on the speech from day one.

My speech content was original and creative, but could have used more concrete examples. One of the things that really saved me was meeting with the professor and going over the content with her. Getting feedback on my metaphors helped me to know which ones to solidify and which to change. It also helped increase my confidence about the writing. I liked all of my metaphors- the reliability of letters, the idea that letters from completely different origins can cross paths and end up at the same destination, the idea that you never know what can be in a letter, that letters come from all over the world, and the recent news of growth that letters can bring. I also think I had an original and slightly bizarre hook in which I pretended that I didn’t know much about letters, calling them an ancient form of communication. The object was difficult, but I spent a good amount of time on a day-to-day basis thinking about letters, and just letting ideas percolate. I think the language I used was colorful and expressive at times, though perhaps a little too convoluted at others. Some things weren’t so great. I honestly had too much content in my speech, and saw the audience’s attention wane towards the end. There were times the evidence wasn’t very concrete, thus not giving the audience a very clear picture of my partner. I think I did well quoting my partner’s relationship with her best friend and stating facts about her extended family and roots. I think examples on how my partner is assertive and strong, how she is reliable, and why she loves singing would have given the audience a clearer picture. The speech seemed to have two conclusions, one following the other. I think I should have stuck with just one instead of tacking what I thought was a better conclusion onto the original one. All in all, the content was good, but a second meeting with the professor to go over my final revisions would have helped hugely.

My delivery was good, but could have been better if it had more eye contact and enthusiasm. I was quite nervous before going to the podium. Apprehension built up as other speakers went and my speech drew closer. I used some techniques I learned from the textbook like clenching and releasing tension in my legs, deep breathing, and imagining myself giving a successful speech. When I got to the podium and began speaking, my mental nervousness decreased dramatically, but adrenaline kicked in and I was shaking. I had to consciously keep myself rooted to the ground and not sway side to side. I think I did a good job speaking slowly and enunciating, but my lack of quality rehearsal meant that my speech lacked eye contact and enthusiasm. I didn’t get as much feedback as I would have liked from the audience, and could see that my speech stretched a little long for them. After watching the video, I can say that my lack of sleep really showed. My attempt at slowing down was a little too much, and my words were monotone and too “stretched” out. There were long pauses at times that seemed unnatural. Eye contact was good at the beginning, but gradually got worse. I swayed at the beginning, but that stopped once I noticed it. Overall, better sleep and rehearsal would have made the speech much better. In addition, I would like to practice giving future speeches in front of someone who can give me feedback that I can implement.

I am proud of my analogies. I had a difficult item, and not much to go on in terms of information about my partner, but was able to put in the work and come up with some creative and original metaphors that fit the information I knew. I put in a lot of work constructing the speech, and I am proud of the results.

I am disappointed in my preparation and delivery. I really believe that I could have done much better, and while I appreciate the good grade I got, and would not mind continuing to have this standard of grading, it doesn’t match up with my own standards of personal effort and possibility. I could have done much more rehearsal, over multiple days, and this would have translated to much better delivery.

In the future, I will focus on rehearsal of my speech. I will spend more time preparing a draft early on so that I can begin rehearsing several days before my speech is due. This will help with eye contact, and tone of voice. It will also allow me to get enough sleep the night before, which is another important point that I will work on. Being well rested will mean I will have the energy, enthusiasm, and clarity of mind to deliver the speech the way I want to deliver it. Rehearsing in front of a family member is something else I’d like to try to include in my preparation. This will give valuable feedback on things that I would otherwise miss. I would like to meet with the professor at least once every time a speech is due to go over the initial draft and get more feedback.

I thought Josiah had very good delivery. He maintained eye contact and pronounced his words clearly and loudly enough for everyone to understand and hear. He put an infectious enthusiasm into his speech, had a confident posture, and made me feel as if he was talking to me. The speech felt personal (even if content wasn’t the greatest). I think Liv had some good content and really expressed her partner’s ideals. Additionally, James had some very good metaphors that I thought were creative and original.

In *The Art of Public Speaking*, by Stephen E. Lucas, the author writes that “rather than than trying to eliminate every trace of stage fright, you should aim at transforming it from a negative force into what one expert calls *positive nervousness*- ‘a zesty, enthusiastic, lively feeling with a slight edge to it...’” (10). Transforming negative nervousness into positive nervousness really changes my view of the speech I will give. Moving forward, I will be using this to channel my nervous energy into giving the speech, so that it is lively and enthusiastic. If I can practice this transformation, I believe I will look more confident and draw in the audience.

I think this speech shows a lot about my life. This experience has shown me my procrastination habits and under-developed (but developing) time management skills. It shows an often-repeated pattern in my life of doing work that is not my best effort and receiving a good grade anyways. I think it shows me that I set my standards very high, and know what I am capable of. It also shows me that I don’t often get a chance to show my true potential, and haven’t had many chances to do so in the past. This is my chance to show myself and the professors what I am really capable of. It represents my entire high school experience, passing my classes despite absences and little to no homework done and effort put in. Now I am, for the first time in my life, consistently putting in the work that is required, and am setting aside time for it. I am getting good grades, but I know there is room for improvement. I have grown tremendously, having gained invaluable time and stress management skills. The only reason I received that 94 is because I put in what I regard as the minimal effort required for me to be relatively satisfied with my work. But I want to to be really proud of the work I do, and to know it is the best I can do. I know I have room to grow and I think foundation year is the perfect place for me to practice building the skills I need to do the best that I can do. In the end, however, if I don’t reach my best, I would also be okay with getting the bare minimum done, which to me means 100% homework completion and just showing up for class. This is already a huge improvement on the last several years of my life.

The first Foundational Mastery I chose is Help-Seeking, because during the preparation of this speech, I actively asked for help from the teacher. I received valuable feedback, advice, and guidance that helped add momentum to the forming of my ideas and final draft. Without this momentum, I wouldn’t have gotten as far as I did with having creative analogies, and a well-thought-out structure.

The second Foundational Mastery I chose is Perseverance/Resiliency. Although I did not prepare as much as I could have, I got the speech done and got a little rehearsal in as well. Historically, I have had a pattern of not doing work outside of school, and I feel that in this speech, I overcame that. I had a lot of work to do the day before, but I got it all done, showed up to class, and delivered the speech to the best of my ability given my circumstances. Moving forward, I would like to place more effort into creating an environment that fosters my success, and this includes shaping up my time management, and making decisions to do work instead of other things. Resiliency is important, and creating the conditions for success and persevering through difficult times are my priorities.