

Effective Speaking

Effective speaking is the most frequently required skill in professional as well as social sphere. It involves the ability to express ones message effectively to the audience through the spoken word. Messages can be delivered face-to-face or through electronic devices. Speaking should be aided with appropriate gestures and postures.

Importance of speaking in professional world

1. To talk to colleagues, clients and suppliers
2. Required in varies forms of presentation or speech such as conferences, meetings, seminars, group discussions etc...
3. It can be studied, polished and perfected with hard work
4. At a higher hierarchical organizational level the ability sell ideas and plans to the management this is required more than technical skill.
5. Presentation should be convincing and create an impact
6. It affects career growth
7. It affects organization reputation

Importance of speaking in Social world

1. In personal and community life one speaks to family friends and acquaintances.
2. Talk to them persuade them, safe their perception motive them and build relationships.
3. They may not be prepared speeches.
4. They are more spontaneous.

Being confident, clear and fluent is the key to effective oral communication. Confidence, clarity and fluency in speeches and presentations should be evident in content, presentation style and in handling of the audience.

Following are the guidelines for effective Speaking:

1. Confidence:

Content-

1. Choose a topic of your interest
2. If given a specific topic develop genuine interest
3. Prepare extensively, more than the required material, so that you don't go blank when asked questions.

Presentation-

1. Stage fright should be transformed into excitement and enthusiasm to be successful speakers.
2. Stage fright should be befriended, since it sharpens reflexes.
3. It is natural to be nervous before a speech.
4. Preparation is the key and an antidote for nervousness.
5. Give a mock speech/ presentation in front of the mirror or friends to find out your strengths and weaknesses.
6. Try positive visualization technique to be in control of self on stage.

7. Prepare the introductory part of the speech thoroughly so that you have smooth beginning and be able to take control of stage fear while the introduction of the speech takes control of the presentation.
8. Do not start immediately after reaching the stage.
9. Relax, Take a couple of deep breaths, before you start.
10. Check the venue and other arrangements beforehand to avoid unnecessary confusion and nervousness.
11. Familiarize with the room.
12. Look at friendliest faces in the audience.
13. Do not show your nervousness explicitly- it is not seen by others even to the one-tenth.
14. Do not comment on your nervousness.
15. Be not camera conscious if you are being recorded.

Audience-

1. Anticipate all sorts of questions from the audience, easy and difficult, prepare to answer them all.

2. Clarity:

A speaker's meaning must be understood immediately with no chance of misunderstanding.

A speech lacks clarity, if the speaker:

1. Speaks either very fast or very slow.
2. Does not articulate the words properly
3. Pronounces incorrectly or does not follow the standard pronunciation.
4. Gives wrong emphasis on words.
5. Uses too many unfamiliar words.

Clarity in speech can be achieved by:

1. By speaking an average of about 120-140 words per minute.
2. Exercising the speech organs to be able to articulate the words properly.
3. Learning the correct pronunciation of the words while preparing a speech
4. Stressing the right word in the sentence as per the context. Misplacing of emphasis will confuse the audience.
5. Thinking and organizing the contents of the message in logical manner for the audience to understand easily
6. Using simple and unambiguous words and expressions and avoiding technical terms technical terms acrimony and complicated words and phrases that the audiences are not familiar

3. Fluency

Fluency is delivering with continuous flow of message at appropriate rate with appropriate pauses. It depends mostly on the proficiency of the language

Guidelines for fluency

1. Avoid fillers like "aaah..", "um.." and weak words like "I mean actually" etc
2. Avoid speech errors like, speaking too fast or too slow pausing in correctly emphasizing wrongly, pronouncing incorrectly etc..
3. Believe in what you speak.
4. Concentrate on your ideas rather than your appearance.
5. Expand your vocabulary.
6. Write personal diaries, watch English movies for conversational English read aloud passages.

7. Listen to good speakers.
8. Practice correct pronunciation, accent and tone.
9. Learn from your mistakes.
10. Think in English.
11. Avoid feeling irritated when audiences interrupt.

Developing voice quality

Although our voice quality depends on various factors such as our vocal habits developed since our childhood and the structure and conditions of speech organs, which cannot be changed much, we can improve on our voice quality by manipulating other aspects of voice such as rate, volume, pitch and pauses. To develop voice quality, we need to first identify the strengths and weaknesses of our voice. Just like effective body language enables us to enhance the impact of our speech, a proper use of our voice makes our speech more lively and dynamic. The features associated with our voice are known as paralinguistic features.

Paralinguistic Features:

Paralinguistic communication refers to the study of human voice and how words are spoken. Paralinguistic features are non- verbal vocal cues that give extra life to one's speech. The characteristic nuances of voice are:

1. **Quality-** Each one has a unique voice quality and it depends on its resonating mechanism. Quality of voice may be rich and resonant, soft and alluring, thin and nasal, hoarse and husky or harsh and irritating. Voice quality cannot be changed but can be trained for optimum impact.
2. **Volume** – Volume refers to loudness or the softness of the voice. If the volume is too high, it sounds impolite and insensitive and if it too low it conveys the idea of timidity. Volume should be adjusted with respect to the place of delivery and the number of audience. Speaker should vary the volume to be audible and clear.
3. **Pace/ Rate** – Rate is the number of words spoken per minute. A normal rate is 120-150 words per minute. If the person speaks too slowly and monotonously he is considered a dull and boring. If the speaker speaks too fast it becomes difficult to grasp the thoughts and switch from one thought to another. A well-paced varied message suggests enthusiasm, self- assurance and awareness of audience.
4. **Pitch** – Pitch refers to the number of vibrations in voice per second. The rise and fall of the voice conveys various emotions. Lowness of pitch can convey sadness, shock, dullness, guilt etc. The pitch is high when excited, joyous, triumphant and even angry. They tell our listener whether we are asking a question, making a statement, as well as whether we are sincere, happy, dynamic listless, bored, tense relaxed or sarcastic. A well balanced pitch results in a clear and effective tone. It helps in avoiding being monotonous. A variety of pitches should be used to hold listeners' attention.
5. **Articulation-** To articulate well means not to slur, chop, truncate or omit sounds between words or sentences. If all sounds are not uttered properly the meaning gets lost. Bad articulation also lowers the credibility of the speaker.
6. **Pronunciation** – Pronunciation requires us to speak the sounds the way they are generally accepted. The best way is to follow Received Pronunciation (RP), Queen's / Kings' English, Oxford/ BBC English which is the Standard English.
7. **Voice Modulation** – Intonation refers to tonal variation and modulation refers to regulating, varying and adjusting the tone, pitch, and volume of the sound or speaking

voice. It brings flexibility and vitality to voice and helps express emotions and sentiments such as impatience, planning, despondency, suspicion etc...

8. **Pauses-** A pause is a short silence flanked by words. A pause helps listener reflect on the message and digest it accordingly. It is a natural process to give a break, but it should also be spontaneous. Being too conscious will make it appear artificial. Vocalized pauses or vocal segregates such as uh, ah, hm, ahem, a, aah should be substituted by silent pauses or else they make the speech sound vague and dilute the conviction of the message.

Manipulating Paralinguistic Features

Although our voice quality depends on various factors such as our vocal habits developed since our childhood and the structure and conditions of speech organs, which cannot be changed much, we can improve on our voice quality by manipulating other aspects of voice such as rate, volume, pitch and pauses.

Rate: Though the average rate at which a person speaks is 120 to 150 wpm, this rate is not universal. This rate varies from a person to person. Great personalities like Martin Luther King, Atal Bihari Vajpayee, etc. had their own rate based on pauses, vocal attribute, the mood, the occasion and the strength within. With thorough practice one can get control over his rate.

Volume: Naturally, our voices sound louder to us than to our audience. So, the volume should be adjusted to the sound arrangements of the room. Based on the majority of audience and the equipment provided, the adjustments should be done.

Pitch: The pitch we maintain tells the audience whether we are sincere, happy, dynamic, listless, bored, tense, relaxed or sarcastic. Changes in our pitch give our voice the focus, warmth, and vitality. So, our voice has to be trained in the manner that it shouldn't have the same inflection throughout the sentence and sound monotonous. Practicing in front of mock audience, recording one's own voice and modifications if any could provide the right pitch for the speaker.

Pauses: Initially, to manage pauses may be a bit difficult task. But, with fine practice and effective procedure, we can attain the stage of using them at apt stages and leading them to modulate the rate and rhythm of our messages.

Barriers to Speaking

Language: Inadequate proficiency or lack of command over language poses a barrier to speaking. Proficiency includes accuracy and fluency. So ability to speak grammatically correct, using right pronunciation, correct accent, appropriate vocabulary and suitable expressions is proof of proficiency of language.

Inhibition: Shyness or inhibition may be barrier to speaking. So the cause of inhibition should be analyzed and overcome.

Physical barrier: The physical setting of the place where a speech is to be delivered can sometimes pose as a barrier. It may be in the seating arrangement, lighting, ventilation, audio equipment, projection system, external noise etc.

Cultural barrier: In multicultural context it is important to use words and expressions that are comprehensible to all. It is also better to avoid culture- specific examples as the listener will not be able to relate to them.

Perception – Perceptual/ Attitudinal Barrier: Everybody has their own perception that is shaped by their background. Same things can be viewed differently by different people. So it is important to view things from others' perspective while speaking.

Emotions – Emotional Barrier: The mind of the speaker sometimes is blocked by feelings of fear, suspicion and mistrust, which become an emotional barrier. It affects the flow of speech. Controlling emotions and keeping oneself cool is important to speak effectively.

Types of Speaking

Task – Oriented Speaking – Speaking in order to perform a task or assignment is called task- oriented speaking. Instances that require task- oriented speaking are:

- Collecting data
- Eliciting information
- Addressing people to motivate or persuade them
- Interviewing somebody for preparing articles for a magazine
- Conducting a research
- Enquiring about something
- Negotiating a deal
- Guidelines for effective Task- oriented Speaking are:
- Be clear with your purpose
- Plan and prepare
- Give a brief background to the objectives of your task at the beginning
- Stay focused on your purpose and agenda
- Listen carefully to or observe your audience's response in order to adjust your speech accordingly

Interpersonal Speaking: It is mostly relationship oriented speaking. It is connected with building new relationships or keeping alive the existing relationships. It includes conversations, counseling, group discussions, team communication etc. Interpersonal speaking helps us develop and sustain good relations and plays a vital role in the execution of group- oriented or team – oriented assignments.

Semi- formal and Informal Speaking: Speaking to a colleagues on personal matters makes our speech semi-formal, if it is with casual acquaintances it may be considered informal speaking. Semi-formal and informal language involves the use of reduced forms as 'they've' for they have; assimilation (adjacent or nearby consonants blending or changing to resemble each other) did ju: (did you); Elision (omission of consonant or vowel sound usually at the end of syllable) a thousand people – (a thousand people), Reduction (dropping of a strong vowel when a syllable gets weak stress) you know- ya no, 'I can go' I kin go

And the language we use depends on the people too. If we are communicating with our friends, family members, relatives, etc., the language is informal, and if it is with the rest, the language carries formality. Compare the examples below:

Formal	Informal
Does Sheela Want to join dance classes?	Sheela wanna join dance class?
What are you going to do tonight?	Whaddyagonna do tonight?
They are going to prepare script tonight?	They're gonna make the dialogue tonight?

Semi-formal English follows the rules of formal grammar but can use contractions and less formal vocabulary. It doesn't use unfamiliar acronyms, expressions such as wanna, gonna, etc. Though the semi-formal speech is not as preplanned as formal, it would be better to have some practice on its usage. Occasions like after-dinner speeches, speaking during official picnics, speaking to our client during personal shopping, etc. may come under semi-formal speaking. Compare the examples below:

Formal	Semi-formal
I don't think that it is necessary	Don't think it's necessary
Do you want some coffee?	Want some coffee?
Are you going there?	Going there?

Persuasive Speaking

Persuasion is an art as well as a psychological process. It always occurs in situations where two or more points of view exist. It's because of the variations in one's values, policies, principles, certain techniques, etc. However, with the power of persuasion, we may be able to make people agree with us on many matters. Everyone among us might have been convinced or persuaded by a speaker in some or other situations. That attribute that makes us feel convinced is known as **source credibility**.

Besides, a speaker may need to persuade others for various purposes. These may be:

- To accept a new methodology developed by the speaker to solve a technical problem
- To agree with the speaker's view on a topic
- To convince that they are the right candidate for the post of the president of students' union
- To motivate to take immediate action on a matter

And we need to be conscious on acquiring a few skills in order to persuade. They are:

1.Credibility: Aspects such as intelligence, expertise, and knowledge of the subject; and sincerity, trustworthiness, and concern for the audience, contribute to our credibility. Here are a few guidelines to attain that:

- Develop interest in the topic on which you speak
- Refer magazines, books, journals, newspapers, etc., to gain more knowledge
- Use your body language effectively to show the audience that you are passionate about the topic and enthusiastic in sharing the information with them
- Tell your audience the benefit they are going to reap from your speech
- Adapt yourself to audience by giving relevant examples from situations related to their life

2.Evidence: Supporting materials such as examples, statistics, definitions, testimonies, analogies, etc. act as evidence in your speech to the audience. Using any of these evidences effectively can drive home one's point. (Refer the example and its emphasis by Azim Premji, Chairman, Wipro Ltd, in page 131). Similarly, an analogy can make a point by showing how one idea resembles another. Some analogies are figurative and others are literal.

3. Reasoning: Several general conclusions arrived at by people on various matters. This happens based on their observations and experiences with some people. Such conclusions are never foolproof and may always be challenged. And these may also happen in persuasive speaking. When audience question us, we need to go for **specific instances**. And our specific instance must be large enough to justify our conclusions. Extreme words, such as everyone, always, never, only, etc., should always be avoided. Since we can't avoid questioning for our specific instance, it should be assisted with evidence. And if specific instance is based on your general statement, it should be reasoned with specific ideas.

4. Emotional appeal: Effective persuasion often requires an appeal to our listener's emotions. The emotions that are generally evoked by most persuasive speakers are: fear, compassion, pride, anger, guilt, and reverence. To persuade our listeners, we need to use emotional language. We may appeal on any of these emotions depending on the topic and the point we wish to drive home in our speech. It may be either an appeal to persuade your friend to stay in India rather than going abroad for higher studies or an appeal to make your friend realize on the sense of guilt he is with as a consumer.