Chapter 6, English for Presentation at International Conferences by Wallwork

3) An editor of a British TV news program once said: *The best news presenters are people who have something in common with the best television presenters* – *you feel like you are watching a human being* , *not just someone delivering prepared lines. Unless you make that emotional connection with the viewer* , *I don* ’ *t think you can succeed* .

In what ways can presenters set up an **'emotional connection'** with their audience?

\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*

How you introduce yourself and how the audience react to your introduction determine at least 30% of the success of your presentation. Audiences form their impressions of a presenter within approximately 90 seconds, after which it is difficult to change their opinion. This chapter outlines how to gain an audience's attention and

**6.2 Basic do's and don'ts at the beginning of your presentation**

DO:

• Try to look as if you are enjoying yourself. Many presenters only start to enjoy themselves after the first 10–15 minutes, but you should try to get into this mode as soon as possible and this means being as relaxed as possible.

• Help the audience to like you.

• Gratify the audience's natural self-interest—immediately give them the impression that you presentation is going to be useful for them.

Do NOT:

• Lower audience expectations by apologizing for the quality of your presentation or of your knowledge of English.

• Put your hands together and locate them as they covering a fi g leaf, or rub them together as if you were a magician.

• Say "I am happy to be here" but look as if you can't wait to leave the room

• Look down and speaking in a halting voice.

• Confuse being professional with being detached from the audience and adopting a particular tone and voice.

You can do this by using one or more of **the following techniques**:

a) say what you plan to do in your presentation and why ( 6.4 )

b) tell the audience some general facts about where you come from ( 6.5 )

c) show a map ( 6.6 )

d) give an interesting statistic that relates to your country ( 6.7 )

e) give an interesting statistic that relates directly to the audience ( 6.8 )

f) get the audience to imagine situations ( 6.9 )

g) ask the audience a question or get them to raise their hands ( 6.10 )

h) say something personal about yourself ( 6.11 )

i) mention something topical ( 6.12 )

j) say something counterintuitive ( 6.13 )

Whichever beginning you chose, when you get up try to smile and keep your eyes on the audience—don’t look up at the ceiling or down at the fl oor as this gives the impression that you can’t remember what to say. Have a quick glance (look) at your notes, rather than looking behind you to remember what is on your slide. Audiences like positive enthusiastic presenters, so don’t joke or say anything negative about the location of the congress, the organization, or about the local people, and the local infrastructure. This may amuse some members of the audience but alienate others—particularly those who live locally.

**a) say what you plan to do in your presentation and why ( 6.4 )**

original

Hello everyone and thank you for coming. First of all I’d like to introduce myself, my name is Ksenija Bartolić. As you can see, the title of my presentation is *Innovative*

*Methods of Candidate Selection in Industry* . I work in a small research group at the University of Zagreb in Croatia. We are trying to investigate the best way to select candidates for a job and we hope our research will be useful not just in the f eld of psychology but also for human resources managers in general.

revised

Hello, I am here to talk about a new way to select candidates for a position in a company. I’d like to tell you three things. First, why I think the current methods for selecting candidates are not effective. Second, my radical alternative, which is to let the receptionist of the company make the decision. And third, how trials proved that even against my own expectations this solution reduced recruitment costs by 500%. Moreover, it was as effective as traditional interviews in more than 90% of cases. I believe that human resources managers …

**b) tell the audience some general facts about where you come from ( 6.5 )**

original

Good afternoon everyone, my name is Cristiane Rocha Andrade and I am a PhD student at the Federal University of Paraná in Brazil. I am here to give you a

presentation on some research I have been conducting on allergies to cosmetics and to propose a way to use natural cosmetics.

revised

I come from Brazil. It took me 30 hours to travel the 9189 km to get here, so please pay attention! In Brazil we have two big forests, the Amazonian and the Atlantic with around 56,000 species of plants. More than 90% of these species have not been studied yet. This is why I decided to study natural cosmetics with raw materials from Brazil.

**c) show a map ( 6.6 )**

**d) give an interesting statistic that relates to your country ( 6.7 )**

A. Today I am going to present some results on the problem of soil erosion and how it affects food production in my country.

B. Ten thousand tons of soil are lost through erosion in my country every year. This means that fertility is lost and desertification ensues.

C. Two months ago I went home and saw the devastation caused by the floods [shows picture of floods]. I have an uncle whose land has been almost completely eroded. This means that his crops will fail this year. So why is this a problem? It means that in the world today …

*Imagine if this room was filled with soil. Well*, *after a single rainstorm on a small field in my country* , *three quarters of the soil would have disappeared* .

**e) give an interesting statistic that relates directly to the audience ( 6.8 )**

• 73 million papers have been completed in the last 10 years.

• Last year 7,300,000 papers were completed.

• Every day 20,000 scientific papers are completed.

• 14 papers are completed every minute.

• In the 10 minutes that I have been talking to you this morning 140 papers will have been completed around the world.

• Hands up those of you who have finished writing a paper in the last seven days. Well around the world, in the last week about 140,000 papers will have been produced, that’s an incredible

14 papers every minute.

• By the year 2050, eight hundred million papers will have been written, that’s enough paper to fill this conference room thirty three thousand times.

**f) get the audience to imagine situations ( 6.9 )**

original

My name is Minhaz-Ul Haque and the title of my presentation is Using Protein from Whey-coated Plastic Films to Replace Expensive Polymers. As you can see in this outline slide, I will first introduce the topic of …

revised

Suppose everyone in this room had brought with them today all the food packaging that they had thrown away in the last year. I have counted about 60 people here. Given that the average person consumes 50 kilos of food packaging a year, then that is three tons of packaging. Over the next 4 days of this conference, we will produce about 450 kilos of packaging, including plastic bottles. My research is aimed at increasing the recyclability of this packaging by 75%. How will we do it? Using protein from wheycoated plastic fi lms to replace expensive polymers. My name is Minhaz-Ul Haque and …

**g) ask the audience a question or get them to raise their hands ( 6.10 )**

Do you know anyone who has a rare disease? [ *Two second pause* ] Well if you are from the United Kingdom, the chances are that you don’t. But if you are from Spain, then you might know someone who does have a rare disease. Does that mean that here in Spain we have more rare diseases? No, it simply means that our definition of what constitutes a rare disease is different from that in the UK. A rare disease in the UK is something that affects 1 in 50,000 people. In Spain we follow the European Union definition of 1 in 2,000. That’s a very big difference. Well, my research group has been looking at …

original

Hello everyone, I am Rossella Mattera, a PhD student in Molecular Medicine. I am here today to tell you about the ExPEC project, in particular about a vaccine against ExPEC. What is ExPEC? ExPEC or extra-intestinal pathogenic Escherichia coli, is a microorganism that causes a large spectrum of diseases associated with a high risk of death. The commonest extraintestinal E.coli infection that is caused by these strains is cystitis, in fact 80% of women have this “experience” during their lifetime, with a reinfection in less than 6 months …

revised

Hands up the men who have had cystitis. [ *Pause* ] I bet many of the men here don’t even know what cystitis is [ *said in jokey tone* ]. In this room there are 20 women and 16 of you women will experience cystitis during your lifetime. You men are lucky because cystitis mainly affects women. It is a horrible infection that makes you feel you want to go to the toilet every two or three minutes. Cystitis is caused by ExPEC or extra-intestinal pathogenic Escherichia coli. This infection affects 80% of women. Cystitis, pyelonephritis, sepsis, and neonatal

meningitis are common infections caused by these strains. Most ExPECs are resistant to the antibiotic therapy, therefore we need a vaccine. I am a PhD student in Molecular Medicine. I am here today to tell you about a vaccine against ExPECs.

**h) say something personal about yourself ( 6.11 )**

original

I am going to describe the creation of strawberries with a strong consistency in the pulp. In our research we modified strawberry plants with agrobacterium and we obtained 41 independent transgenic plants. On the basis of yield and fruits firmness, we then selected six different varieties of strawberry.

revised

I became interested in agronomy and biosciences completely by accident. One summer holiday while I was a student I was working in an organic ice cream shop. Every day we got crates of fresh fruit, and every day we had to throw away kilos of strawberries because the ones at the bottom were completely squashed and had already started to mold. The pears, on the other hand, were always fi ne. So I thought, what if we could mix the succulent look and delicious taste of a strawberry with the strong consistency of the pulp in a pear?

One of the choices in the industrial chemistry degree, I think when you got to the third year, was whether to do the mainstream industrial chemistry subjects or to do polymer science. A friend a year above me said, “Oh, you should do the polymers. Polymers is a really big, important industry.” So I decided to try polymers. I went along to the first class—only five or six of us had chosen this, and I was the one girl—in a polymer engineering laboratory. The lecturer started to talk about grinding and milling and adding carbon black to rubbers, and he said, “When you come in the lab, you’ve got to wear dirty clothes because we use a lot of carbon black in here and you’re going to get covered in it. And tie your hair all the way back and make sure it’s all covered, because any loose hair can get jammed in the machine and you’ll be scalped.” I had very long hair! A friend told me later that this lecturer did not want girls in the lab and deliberately went out of his way to scare me off doing polymer engineering—and he succeeded—I dropped polymer engineering immediately and took up the industrial chemistry option instead.

• uses colloquial language and sounds like she is talking to a friend

• gives interesting details

• quotes from other people (i.e., uses their words)

• mixes long sentences with short ones

• obviously enjoys telling this story

**i) mention something topical ( 6.12 )**

original

My name is Horazio Perez and I work at the Center for Transportation Research in … In my presentation today I would like to tell you the results of an experimental study on real time bus arrival time prediction using GPS data.

revised

I know that a lot of you, like me, have been getting to the conference each day by bus. I don’t know about you, but I have had to wait about 10 to 15 minutes each time. And it’s been great fun. In fact, not only have the buses been late, but as soon as one comes, then another two quickly

follow. And that’s made me even happier. Why? Because my research is investigating why this happens—why do

buses come in threes? And if it happens here in Geneva, where Rolex have their headquarters, then clearly no one else has solved the problem yet, and I am going to get in

there first. My name is Horazio Perez and

**j) say something counterintuitive ( 6.13 )**

original

In this presentation a comparative analysis will be made of some investigations into the proficiency in the use of the English language on a world scale. The parameters and methodology used to make the analysis, along with some of the results will be presented. I will begin by giving a brief overview of the background …

revised

Who speaks and writes the best English in the world? The British maybe, [ *Pause* ] after all they have the Queen, and that’s where the language originated? [ *Pause* ] Or do you think it’s the Americans? Or the Canadians or Australians? [ *Pause* ] Actually it’s the Scandinavians, the Danes, and the Dutch. And if you have been attending most of the presentations here in the last few days, I guess it’s these guys who you understood the best. Does this mean that the native English speakers can’t even speak their own language? Of course not. But …

**6.14 Moral of the story**

The secret is to experiment. Try adapting your topic to one or more of the ways outlined above. Be creative. Have fun. And keep trying until you find the best approach. But before using it at the conference, test it out on colleagues to make sure that it gets the reaction you hoped for.

The more fun you have preparing your presentation, the more fun you will have when you give the presentation, and the more fun the audience will have listening to you.

It is fundamental to connect with the audience. If you don’t connect with them, they will not give you the attention you deserve. This is particularly true if your presentation is scheduled just before lunch, after lunch, or at the end of the day, i.e., at times of the day when the audience’s attention is very low.

Finally, it is not only at the beginning of your presentation that you can use these techniques. They are also excellent ways of regaining attention later in the presentation.