**Fourth Class Reading Material 2 Your Voice Features**

As a public speaker, your voice is one of your most important delivery tools for conveying your ideas to your audience. Your credibility as a speaker and your ability to communicate

your ideas clearly will in large part depend on your vocal delivery。

Vocal delivery includes pitch, speech rate, volume, pronunciation, articulation, pauses, and general variation of the voice.

**Speak to Be Understood** To be understood, you need to consider four aspects of vocal delivery: volume, articulation, dialect, and pronunciation.

**Volume**. The fundamental purpose of your vocal delivery is to speak loudly enough that your audience can hear you. The volume of your speech is determined by the amount of air you project through your larynx, or voice box. More air equals more volume of sound. In fact, the way you breathe has more impact on the sound of your voice than almost anything else. To the ancient orators, a person’s breath was the source of spiritual power. To breathe is to be filled with a positive, powerful source of energy.

**Articulation**. The process of producing speech sounds clearly and distinctly is articulation. Without distinct enunciation or articulation of the sounds that make up words, your listeners may not understand you or may fault you for simply not knowing how to speak clearly and fluently. Here are some commonly misarticulated words.

Dint instead of didn’t

Soun instead of sound //Lemme instead of let me //Wanna instead of want to

Seeya instead of see you //Whadayado instead of what do you do

**Pronunciation:** If English is not your native language, you may have to spend extra time working on your pronunciation and articulation. Here are two useful tips to help you. First, make an effort to prolong vowel sounds. Speeeeak tooooo proooooloooong eeeeeeach voooooowel soooooound yoooooooou maaaaaaaake. Second, to reduce choppy sounding word pronunciation, blend the end of one word into the beginning of the next. Make your speech flow from one word to the next, instead of separating it into individual chunks of sound.

**Speak with variety**

To speak with variety is to vary your pitch, rate of speech, and pauses. It is primarily through the quality of our voices, as well as our facial expressions, that we communicate emotions, whether we are happy, sad, bored, or excited. If your vocal clues suggest you are bored with your topic, your audience will probably be bored also. Appropriate variation in vocal pitch and rate as well as appropriate use of pauses can add zest to your speech and help maintain audience attention.

**Pitch**

Vocal pitch is how high or low your voice sounds.

You can sing because you can change the pitch of your voice to produce a melody. **Lack of variation in pitch has been consistently identified as one of the most distracting characteristics of ineffective speakers**: A monotone is boring. Everyone has a habitual pitch. This is the range of your voice during normal conversation. Some people have a habitually high pitch, others have a low pitch. The pitch of your voice is determined by how fast the folds in your vocal cords vibrate. The faster the vibration, the higher the pitch. Your voice has inflection when you raise or lower the pitch as you pronounce words or sounds. The best public speakers appropriately vary their inflection .The variation in their vocal inflection and overall pitch helps they communicate the subtlety of their ideas.

**Rate.**

How fast do you talk? Most speakers average between **120 and 180** words per minute. There is no “best” speaking rate. The skill of great speakers does not depend on a standard rate of speech. Daniel Webster purportedly spoke at a leisurely 90 words per minute, Franklin Roosevelt at 110, and John F. Kennedy at a quick-paced 180. Matin Luther King Jr. started his “Dream” speech at 92 words a minute and was speaking at 145 words per minute during his powerful conclusion.30 **The best rate depends on two factors: your speaking style and the content of your message.** A common fault of many beginning speakers is to deliver a speech too quickly. One symptom of speech anxiety is that you tend to rush through your speech to get it over with.

**Pauses.**

It was Mark Twain who said, “The right word may be effective, but no word was ever as effective as a rightly timed pause.” An appropriate pause can often do more to accent your message than any other vocal characteristic. President Kennedy’s famous line, “Ask not what your country can do for you; ask what you can do for your country,” was effective not only because of its language but also because it was delivered with a pause dividing the two thoughts. Try delivering that line without the pause; it just doesn’t have the same power. Effective use of pauses, also known as effective timing, can greatly enhance the impact of your message.

Beware, however, of the **vocalized pause**. Many beginning public speakers are uncomfortable with silence and so, rather than pausing where it seems natural and normal, they vocalize sounds such as “umm,” “er,” “you know,” and “ah.” We think you will agree that “Ask not, ah, what your, er, country can do, ah, for you; ask, you know, what you, umm, can do, er, for your, uh, country” just doesn’t have the same impact as the original statement. Although most people fill a pause with an “er” or “um” from time to time, seek to reduce vocalized pauses when you speak.

**Silence can be an effective tool in emphasizing a particular word or sentence.** A well-timed pause coupled with eye contact can powerfully accent your thought. Asking a rhetorical question of your audience such as “How many of you would like to improve your communication skills?” will be more effective if you pause after asking the question rather than rushing into the next thought. Silence is a way of saying to your audience, “Think about this for a moment.”