

Lecture #2

Oral Communication

Summary Slide

- Types of Oral communication
 - Extempore
 - Impromptu
 - Memorization
 - Reading
- Modes of delivery
- Delivery guidelines

Importance of communication

- Ideas are useless unless you communicate to someone else.
- Example

Consider the example of Ahmed, who majored in metallurgy. He has analyzed a group of Pistons that broke when used in experimental automobile engine. His skillful

analysis is of no use unless he communicates the results to someone else, such as the engineer who must redesign the pistons.

We will cover oral communication in this lesson.

We will cover

- Types of Oral communication
- Modes of delivery
- Delivery guidelines

Oral Presentations

Oral presentations can be formal or informal, depending upon their explicit and implicit purposes and the delivery situation.

An oral presentation can be almost any report type, such as a design review, a proposal, or a conference talk.

Whatever the specific type, however, an effective oral presentation is carefully planned with your objectives in mind and pays close attention to the demands of your audience.

Comparison table between written and oral communication on next slide.

<i>Written Documents</i>	<i>Oral Presentations</i>
Publication permits potentially unlimited audience over time and place.	Audience generally limited to time and place of delivery.
No direct audience interaction.	High level of audience interaction is possible.
Refined argumentative structure.	Simple presentation of main points.
Large volume of detailed information can be communicated.	Limited information transfer.
Precise syntax and diction.	Conversational syntax and diction.
Emphasis on text.	Emphasis on visuals.
Reader controls pace of presentation.	Speaker controls pace of presentation.

Effective oral communication is a combination of many skills:

- outlining and planning,
- preparing overheads or other display media,
- rehearsing and
- delivery.

Formal and Informal Oral Reports

An oral report may be delivered around a small table with just a few listeners or in a large auditorium to hundreds of people.

Informal oral reports are generally characterized by small-group settings with a high degree of audience interaction and a relaxed manner of delivery and dress.

Informal oral presentations can foster the free exchange of ideas and be important for producing action items.

Oral presentations in professional environment generally fall into two categories:

- informative speaking
- persuasive speaking

Informative Speaking

Informative Speaking has audience learning as its primary goal.

An informative speech may explain a concept, instruct an audience, demonstrate a process, or describe an event.

In an professional setting, the informative speech may take many different forms:

- Individual or Group Report
- Oral Briefing
- Panel Discussion
- Oral Critique

Persuasive Speaking

Persuasive Speaking is used to influence what an audience thinks or does.

Some of the goals of persuasive speaking include:

- to reinforce the attitudes, beliefs, and values an audience already holds
- to inoculate an audience against counter persuasion
- to change attitudes
- to motivate an audience to act

Delivery Methods

There are at least four methods for making an oral presentation.

- Extempore
- Impromptu
- Memorization
- Reading

The **extemporaneous** method involves significant effort but results in a degree of quality that tells your audience that you care about them. It requires

- The detailed laying out of the presentation from beginning to end.
- Doing your homework to fill in your knowledge gaps.
- The use of 3 x 5 cue cards or similar method to jog your memory on specifics and keep your presentation on track.

The **impromptu** method is characterized by poor organization and incompleteness. It tells the audience that you are indifferent about them.

The **memorization** method is risky; you can lose your place or leave something out and, in a panic, you might revert to the impromptu method, resulting in disaster.

Preparation

Irrespective of the method of delivery, the presenter must consider the following parameters in preparing for the presentation:

- knowledge of the audience,
- knowledge of subject,
- use of time,
- rehearsal and
- personal appearance and grooming.

Additionally, the preparation and use of visual aids is an important element of any effective presentation.

Knowledge of the Audience:

- Do not patronize your audience!
- Neither speak down nor speak up to your audience.
- How much do they already know about your subject?
- Know the age level of the audience as well as its members' level of educational sophistication and special interests.
- Tailor your presentation accordingly.

Knowledge of Subject:

- Whether you use notes, manuscript, or strictly memory, you must know your subject well.
- If gaps exist, fill them up!

Use of Time and Rehearsal:

- Time limits are to be observed!
- Even if no time limit is given, you should strive to do justice to your subject in as little time as possible.
- But not at the price of an incomplete presentation.

Personal Appearance:

- Your personal appearance affects your credibility.
- Informal clothing is rarely appropriate for a professional presentation.
- Pay significant attention to personal grooming.

Presentation Delivery

- Poise and Enthusiasm
- Eye Contact
- Use of Voice
- Use of Time

Poise and Enthusiasm:

- Be well prepared and strive for muscular control, alert attention, vibrant interest in the subject, and an eagerness to communicate.
- Avoid distracting mannerisms, but don't stand in a "frozen" position. Moving about, if not excessive, can accentuate your enthusiasm.

Eye Contact:

- During your presentation try to make eye contact with most and if possible every person in the room.
- Avoid fastening your gaze on your notes, on your chart or screen, or on some point in space above the heads of your listeners.

Use of Voice:

- Don't speak too softly, too fast, or mumble!
- Your audience must be able to
 - (1) hear what you say
 - (2) understand what you say

Use of Time:

- Without adequate preparation, it is easy to become nervous and start rushing through a presentation.
- Instead, use the pacing established during your many rehearsals.

Making a Formal Presentation

- The material of your presentation should be concise, to the point and tell an interesting story.
- In addition to the obvious things like content and visual aids, the following are just as important as the audience will be subconsciously taking them in:
 - **Your voice** - *how* you say it is as important as *what* you say

- Body language** - a subject in its own right and something about which much has been written and said.

- In essence, your body movements express what your attitudes and thoughts *really* are.

- Appearance** - first impressions influence the audience's attitudes to you. Dress appropriately for the occasion.

- As with most personal skills **oral communication cannot be taught**. Instructors can only point the way.

- So as always, ***practice is essential***, both to improve your skills generally and also to make the best of each individual presentation you make.

Preparation

- Prepare the structure of the talk carefully and logically, just as you would for a written report. What are:

- the objectives of the talk?

- the main points you want to make?

- Make a list of these two things as your starting point

- Write out the presentation in rough, just like a first draft of a written report.

- Review the draft. You will find things that are irrelevant or superfluous - delete them.

- Check the story is consistent and flows smoothly.

- If there are things you cannot easily express, possibly because of doubt about your understanding, it is better to leave them unsaid.

- Never** read from a script. It is also unwise to have the talk written out in detail as a prompt sheet - the chances are you will not locate the thing you want to say amongst all the other text.

- You should know most of what you want to say - if you don't then you should not be giving the talk! So prepare ***cue cards*** which have key words and phrases (and possibly sketches) on them.

- Postcards are ideal for this. **Don't forget to number the cards** in case you drop them.

- Remember to mark on your cards the visual aids that go with them so that the right OHP or slide is shown at the right time

- Rehearse your presentation - to yourself at first and then in front of some colleagues.

- The initial rehearsal should consider how the words and the sequence of visual aids go together.

- How will you make effective use of your visual aids?

Making the Presentation

- Greet the audience (for example, 'Good morning, ladies and gentlemen'), and tell them who you are. Good presentations then follow this formula:

- tell the audience what you are going to tell them,

- then tell them,

- at the end tell them what you have told them.

- Keep to the time allowed. If you can, keep it short. It's better to under-run than over-run.
- As a rule of thumb, allow 2 minutes for each *general* overhead transparency or Powerpoint slide you use, but longer for any that you want to use for developing specific points.
- 35mm slides are generally used more sparingly and stay on the screen longer.
- However, the audience will get bored with something on the screen for more than 5 minutes, especially if you are not actively talking about it.
- So switch the display off, or replace the slide with some form of 'wallpaper' such as a company logo.
- Stick to the plan for the presentation, don't be tempted to digress - you will eat up time and could end up in a dead-end with no escape!
- Unless explicitly told not to, leave time for discussion - 5 minutes is sufficient to allow clarification of points.
- The session chairman may extend this if the questioning becomes interesting.
- At the end of your presentation ask if there are any questions - avoid being terse when you do this as the audience may find it intimidating (ie it may come across as *any questions? - if there are, it shows you were not paying attention*).
- If questions are slow in coming, you can start things off by asking a question of the audience - so have one prepared.

Delivery

- Speak clearly. Don't shout or whisper - judge the acoustics of the room.
- Don't rush, or talk deliberately slowly. Be natural - although not conversational
- Deliberately pause at key points - this has the effect of emphasising the importance of a particular point you are making.

- Avoid jokes - always disastrous unless you are a natural expert
- To make the presentation interesting, change your delivery, but not too obviously, eg:
 - speed
 - pitch of voice
 - Use your hands to emphasise points but don't indulge in too much hand waving. People can, over time, develop irritating habits. Ask colleagues occasionally what they think of your style.
- Look at the audience as much as possible, but don't fix on an individual - it can be intimidating. Pitch your presentation towards the back of the audience, especially in larger rooms.
- Don't face the display screen behind you and talk to it. Other annoying habits include:
 - Standing in a position where you obscure the screen. In fact, positively check for anyone in the audience who may be disadvantaged and try to accommodate them.
 - Muttering over a transparency on the OHP projector plate and not realizing that you are blocking the projection of the image.
 - It is preferable to point to the screen than the foil on the OHP (apart from the fact that you will probably dazzle yourself with the brightness of the projector)
- Avoid moving about too much. Pacing up and down can unnerve the audience, although some animation is desirable.
- Keep an eye on the **audience's** body language. Know when to stop and also when to cut out a piece of the presentation.

Visual Aids

- Visual aids significantly improve the interest of a presentation. However, they must be relevant to what you want to say.
- A careless design or use of a slide can simply get in the way of the presentation.
- What you use depends on the type of talk you are giving.
- Here are some possibilities:
 - Overhead projection transparencies (OHPs)
 - 35mm slides
 - Computer projection (Powerpoint, applications such as Excel, etc)
 - Video, and film,
 - Real objects - either handled from the speaker's bench or passed around
 - Flip-chart or blackboard - possibly used as a 'scratch-pad' to expand on a point

- Keep it simple though - a complex set of hardware can result in confusion for speaker and audience.
- Make sure you know in advance how to operate equipment and also when you want particular displays to appear.
- Sometimes a technician will operate the equipment. Arrange beforehand what is to happen and when and what signals you will use. Edit your slides as carefully as your talk - if a slide is superfluous then leave it out. If you need to use a slide twice, duplicate it,
- Slides and OHPs should contain the minimum information necessary.
- To do otherwise risks making the slide unreadable or will divert your audience's attention so that they spend time reading the slide rather than listening to you.
- Try to limit words per slide to a maximum of 10. Use a reasonable size font and a typeface which will enlarge well.
- Typically use a minimum 18pt Times Roman on OHPs, and preferably larger. A guideline is: if you can read the OHP from a distance of 2 meters (without projection) then it's probably OK
- Avoid using a diagram prepared for a technical report in your talk. It will be too detailed and difficult to read.
- Use color on your slides but avoid orange and yellow which do not show up very well when projected. For text only, white or yellow on blue is pleasant to look at and easy to read. Books on presentation techniques often have quite detailed advice on the design of slides. If possible consult an expert such as the Audio Visual Centre
- Avoid adding to OHPs with a pen during the talk - it's messy and the audience will be fascinated by your shaking hand!
- On this point, this is another good reason for pointing to the screen when explaining a slide rather than pointing to the OHP transparency.
- Room lighting should be considered. Too much light near the screen will make it difficult to see the detail.
- On the other hand, a completely darkened room can send the audience to sleep. Try to avoid having to keep switching lights on and off, but if you do have to do this, know where the light switches are and how to use them.

Revision

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