

DEVELOPING PROFESSIONAL SPEAKING SKILLS

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To the question, “what should one do to become a good speaker of English?” a group of graduate students gave the following different answers:

1. Speak slowly and put stress on every word.
2. Pay attention to every sound and syllable.
3. Speak fast and fluently.
4. Speak like an English man or American or Australian
5. Be oneself and speak deliberately and confidently
6. Learn the rules of stress, rhythm and intonation.

A successful act of speech communicates something to someone. The act becomes real when it says that it makes sense to the listener and produces the desired response.

Speaking Skill

It is a wonder that human beings have the ability to speak. To convey a message effectively, we often combine speech with other non linguistic communication techniques such as body language and vocal techniques. Spoken language is a series of different sounds and it is addressed to the listener’s ears and it is an aural medium. Spoken language comes first in the life of every human being. Modern Technology has contributed a lot to oral communication. The telephone, radio, cell phone, television, internet and many other devices and processes help people to communicate orally.

When we say that some one uses a language well, we mean that they are able to use language effectively for all their communicative needs, in all kinds of situations, for all types of audiences. This means that the person possesses all communication skills or language skills. Good listeners are good speakers. The effectiveness of the spoken language depends not so much on how people talk but mostly on how they listen.

“You learn to do by doing”. Speaking to other people, discussing the effect of our efforts, participating in speaking activities and analyzing our own as well as other people’s speeches. The advisable rate of delivery is 120 to 150 words per minute.

Preparing for a presentation

Real preparation means doing research, digging something out yourself, and brain storming. It means gathering information, organizing thoughts, nurturing ideas, finding suitable evidence to support the concepts, selecting audio-visual aids and finding unique way to express them.

Effective speakers start strongly and end powerfully. There is nothing that can substitute experience.

Extemporaneous Speaking:- It is generally the most effective method of speaking. Everything is thought out and planned in advance. Prepare an outline you should derive the presentation from the outline. Some of the features of extempore delivery are

- a) It allows better audience contact, maintain eye contact, use gestures naturally and keep constant touch with the audience.
- b) To remain flexible and adaptable.

Techniques for Rehearsing

- a) Rehearse in front of a mirror.
- b) Rehearse in the room where the talk is to be given.
- c) Tape or Video tape your rehearsal.
- d) Check the length and content of your talk.
- e) Take a few deep breaths.
- f) Give details rather than generalized information.
- g) Relax and leave your body free so that your hands can communicate your thoughts too.

Use of Effective Language

Effective use of language helps human beings to”

- a) Record ideas
- b) Capture memories
- c) Share knowledge and experience.
- d) Accuracy - avoid clichés – literary in pompous jargons.
- e) Simple and plain words usually communicate the message directly and clearly to the listener.
- f) Use of positive words make the speech more pleasant.
- g) Appropriateness is the correct choice of words suitable to the subject, audience and purpose of speech.
- h) Vividness is the selection of words and sentence structures that enhance your content through emphasis.
- h) Repetition of a phrase, a word, a clause attracts the attention of the listener.

Mark Twain, the famous American Novelist, once said, “ The difference between the almost right word and the right word is the difference between lightning and lightening”. It is very important that how you say is more important than what you say.

Group Discussion:

It refers to an interactive oral communication situation. Human beings have a natural tendency to form groups. A GD is a cooperative activity within the frame work of ground rules. It is a platform where people can hone the art and technique of shared thinking. It is used in job interviews to find out how an individual is able to make their point within a team – how individuals communicate under collective pressure.

Several qualities like conceptual clarity, judgment of subtle hints of a problem, mature reaction to other’s views, effective presentation of yours ideas, ability to persuade, knowledge to see reason, among many others are integral to group discussion.

One reason why conversation is such a complex activity in another language is that it requires both speaking and listening.

Strategies for Fluency :

- a) Keep an audio diary :- Fix a regular time each evening to spend 5 minutes recording yourself talking about the events of your day. Try to imagine you are talking to one particular person rather than to the microphone, Rewind it and listen to the recording, stopping at places where there are pronunciation difficulties and check those points in a dictionary.
- b) Analyse other speaker's fluency
Video tape TV Programmes in which people are involved in the discussion. Replay the video, look and listen for signals by which the speakers indicate that they want to speak next and make a note of any useful phrases the speakers use to emphasise their current point and use them in your audio diary the next day.
- c). Rehearse short talks
For some types of speaking, such as giving a presentation, it is possible to prepare in advance. Here is a suggestion from another student, " I talk aloud to myself to prepare for a seminar."
- c) Practice speaking under time Pressure

When we are conversing in another language, we are aware of greater time pressure than when speaking in our first language. By the time we have worked out what we want say, the topic of conversation has often moved on,;so that what we wanted to say is no longer relevant. Working alone has the advantage of private practice, but the disadvantage of omitting the other main requisite for improving spoken English.

In English Social Conversation a person risks being considered impolite and arrogant if they directly correct someone else. This is the real problem for language learners.

Speaking with other international students can help to build your confidence in listening and the fluency in speaking that you need to participate effectively in academic studies. Regular active practice and efficient use of feedback provide the best combination for effective improvement in spoken English beyond the language class room.