

The Concept of Employing a *Presentation-Practice Worksheet* for Acquiring Effective Oratory Skills

The effectiveness of presentation delivery depends on supportive oratory skills working automatically: The presenter's focus can remain entirely on providing the intended information.

These oratory skills encompass the following abilities:

- looking at the audience while recalling information and speaking
- speaking with a strong, emotive voice (symbolized by ☺ in the *Presentation-Practice Worksheet* below) that regularly comes down at the end of sentences, thereby sounding authoritative, interested and genuine
- switching between two speaking tempos: 80% of one's regular speaking tempo reducing the hectic in communication, but also 50% (symbolized below by **boldface** type) to capture the audience's attention as preparation for key moments of information and for transitions
- employing pausing: pausing for half a breath between announcing a new page and clicking to it (= →) otherwise the announcement information is lost due to the immediately pursuing distraction of the clicking activity; pausing for a full breath between (= ↔) to allow the audience to comprehend information before continuing to the next section in the introduction and conclusion, and where appropriate also to change speaking tempo from 80% to 50%; pausing for two full breaths (= ↔ ↔) after clicking to a new page to allow the audience enough time to read/look through the page

The dilemma in acquiring these oratory skills is that while practicing an entire presentation it is difficult to focus on the way one is speaking while trying to remember what to say next. A solution for this dilemma is to focus first on developing the oratory skills by working with radically reduced content. This allows students to exercise *double attention*: focusing not only on what minimized content is left but primarily on the oratory skills required to deliver this information effectively. *Double attention* is only applied during the early phase of practice with little content. This enables students to recognize problems and make positive alterations in practice.

The *Presentation-Practice Worksheet* below – an extremely abbreviated version of a sample presentation with information regarding pausing, speaking tempo and standard phraseology – provides a platform for developing effective oratory skills. Teachers of presentation courses can pre-teach various sections of the presentation on the worksheet with the provided passages. This way students gain initial experience in putting *double attention* into practice, first demonstrated in plenum then exercised in small groups of three or four. Each student should initially read off the unfamiliar passages a few times yet simultaneously pay attention to their oratory skills. Fellow students act as coaches to ensure that the presenter practices *double*

attention in order to be able to implement positive alterations with each new practice attempt. Then in a second round everyone practices the section again, this time working from memory without anyone (presenters or coaches) employing the worksheet. Everyone makes an effort not only to remember what to say but to speak effectively too.

Initial practice can begin with the section entitled *Greeting the audience*, later *Introducing oneself*, then perhaps a week later combining the two sections into one extended block. It is best to practice single sections before combining them pairwise, and then practicing ever larger combined blocks of sections. Practice for developing one's oratory skills should be carried out systematically on most sections of a presentation throughout the first half of a course. Such practice enables students later to work on their own, perhaps with the aid of a recording device to monitor themselves. At this point students should customize the worksheet by replacing the sample gray-marked passages in italics with passages from their own presentation. Then students practice in like fashion with their own customized version of the *Presentation-Practice Worksheet*.

Acquiring effective oratory skills is not at all a matter of text memorization which exerts an oppressive burden on the speaker's ability for recall. The standard passages do not have to be learned by heart. Rather students should know what to do section by section and thereby come to develop trust in themselves to be able to find adequate formulations that serve the task at hand. Having established effective oratory skills greatly lightens the burden of presenters because they can now focus entire on providing the details of their presentation. At this point, students can initiate practice of the presentation in its entirety. Practice with their own customized *Presentation-Practice Worksheet* can be carried out in the same manner with future presentations on different topics. After applying such practice to just a few presentations, students will have acquired these effective oratory skills for life. In fact this kind of practice should work for presentations in other languages as well (assuming allowances are made for cultural differences).

The most essential of all these oratory skills concerns pausing because it not only ensures that the audience is provided the opportunity for grasping the information just provided, it also allows presenters to better remember what comes next and to prepare for the next activity. In other words, effective employment of pausing substantially reduces the pressure brought about by the compulsion to speak incessantly. At all times the speaker can completely concentrate on the present activity without having to worry about what comes next.

Presentation-Practice Worksheet

- not to be spoken: **Times New Roman** plus underlining = headings of presentation sections; Times New Roman in brackets [-] = directions
- unmarked text in Arial = standard presentation phrasing to be practiced until you can rely on being able to provide them with good eye contact, effective pausing, speaking tempo control and strong, emotive voice which comes down regularly at the end of sentences
- gray-marked text plus *italics* = passages of an abbreviated presentation, later to be replaced with your own presentation passages
- speaking tempo = **boldface text** = **slow talk 50%**, **CAPITALIZATION** = 50% plus enunciation! Otherwise normal tempo ~80%
- measured pausing = → half breath, ↔ full breath, ↔ ↔ two full breaths; 😊 = speaking with particular interest and emotion!

Introduction

- 1 - Greeting the audience. ↔ ↔ 😊 Hello, ladies and gentlemen. Thank you for coming to my presentation today despite *the cold weather outside / the late hour.* I am really happy to see that so many of you have come today.
- 2 - Introducing oneself. ↔ **Let me introduce myself. My name is** → 😊 **YOUR NAME.** → I am a student at the *Beuth University of Applied Sciences Berlin.* I am studying *your degree program* in my *first/second* year.
- Anecdote/Hook (optional). ↔. Let me begin with a little anecdote. →...
- 3 - Announce the presentation topic. ↔ 😊 **And that brings us to the topic of my presentation today, which is** → 😊 **THE JOB APPLICATION PROCESS IN ENGLISH.** → [CLICK to title page (including your name)]
- Purpose/benefit. ↔ ↔ 😊 My presentation should enable you to *effectively design your application documents and answer interview questions.*
- Announce the outline. ↔ **And now we come to the outline of my presentation today. It is divided into three parts.** → [CLICK to the Outline page]
- 4 - Outline. ↔ ↔. 😊 First, we will deal with *the pre-application stage. We will discuss what provides the basis for successful applications.*
- Then, we will turn to *the application documents. I will demonstrate how to highlight your primary qualifications.*
- Finally, we will focus on *the job interview. I will compare it to a form of sport.*
- Services for the audience. ↔ **My presentation will last about ten minutes.**
- **If you have any questions, I will be happy to answer them during/after my presentation.**
- **Handouts will be provided during / at the end of the presentation.**
- 5 - Transition to the first body section. ↔ 😊 **Now let's begin the first section of my presentation** → **THE PRE-APPLICATION STAGE.** → [CLICK to the first page of your first body section]

Body/Transitions

- 6 - Start the first body section. ↔ ↔ 😊 *To make good decisions about starting your career you first have to know yourself well.*
- Transition to the next page within a section: ... *Before you start the job application process, you have to know not only what your qualifications are but also what you really want to do in your heart.*
- ↔ **Now let's turn our attention to** → **PROPER APPLICATION PREPARATION.**
- [CLICK to next page within the same section]
- ↔ ↔ 😊 *Start with a list of all of the requirements for this position. Then determine which requirements most closely identify the work of this position...*
- 7 - Transition to the next body section: ... *Once you can distinguish your primary from your secondary qualifications, you are well on the way to designing you application documents effectively.*
- ↔ **That's all there is to say about the first topic** → **THE PRE-APPLICATION STAGE.**
- **Let's now turn or attention to the next topic** → **THE APPLICATION DOCUMENTS. *Here we will discuss the resume and the cover letter. Let's now first discuss the resume.** → [CLICK to the first page of the next body section]
- ↔ ↔ 😊 *To create your resume, you cannot simply translate your German 'Lebenslauf' into English: The design of the resume is quite different.*
- 8 - Transition to the CONCLUSION section [not "the END"]: ... *If you have prepared well for the job interview and practiced your answers, you will be effective.*
- ↔ **Those were the main points concerning the job interview.**
- **That brings us to the CONCLUSION of the presentation.**
- **Let me now briefly summarize what I have reported to you today.** → [CLICK to the Summary page]

Conclusion

- 9 - Summary. ↔ ↔ 😊 *To effectively apply for a job, know not only what work you are qualified to perform but also the kind of work you really like. Moreover, identify your primary qualifications in order to promote them well in the Summary section of your resume and through bulleting in the cover letter. Preparing for and practicing the job interview well increases your chances for the potential position.*
- Post-summary. → *I suggest that you work closely with Prof. Pocklington's book on the topic. It provides all the advice and exercises required to be successful.*
- Announce the END of the presentation. ↔ **And that brings us to the END of the presentation.**
- Invite questions. → If there are any questions, I will be glad to answer them now. [CLICK to contact info page / answer questions]
- Contact info. ↔ No (more) questions? If you have any questions in the future, you can contact me at this email address.
- Handouts. - ↔ Let me now pass out the handouts.
- Thank the audience. ↔ 😊 Thank you, ladies and gentlemen, for attending my presentation today. You have been a wonderful audience. Have a nice day!

Abstract

As a prerequisite for giving powerful presentations one needs to gain control over one's eyes, voice and speaking tempo. Normally we do not pay attention to these matters, especially when speaking in a foreign language: We are fixated on what we are saying and on how best to formulate it.

To acquire these complex oratory skills requires intensive focus while simultaneously thinking about what to say through *double attention*. The trick is to reduce one's presentation content to merely the first and last sentences of all body transparencies thereby dramatically reducing the burden of memory during one's initial presentation training to be able to exercise with *double attention* more effectively.

A prototype presentation with most content removed provides the basis for initial classroom practice. Later students can customize it for their own presentation topics. Through practice these oratory skills can be acquired in just a few hours of *double-attention* training; the full presentation can then be practiced with complete attention on content because the oratory skills now work automatically as desired.