

Speech Qualities: Part 4

L. Audience Contact, Use of Notes

Good contact with your audience is essential for effective teaching and public speaking because it engenders respect and confidence. Good audience contact also helps to keep the attention of the audience, and enables you to gauge their reaction to your message. The use of notes plays a key role in determining whether you have good audience contact or not. Extensive notes, especially those that are read verbatim, are hindrances because the speaker is tied to them and loses contact with the audience. However *skilled* use of notes is not disturbing even if the notes are longer than normal, because skilled speakers do not lose contact with the audience by looking at their notes too long or at the wrong time.

1. Visual contact with audience

- Look directly at individuals in audience as you speak.
- Avoid rhythmic movement of the head from side to side.
- Avoid staring at one individual too long.
- Place your notes in a position such that they can be read with just a slight movement of the eyes; if you move your head too much you lose audience contact.

2. Audience contact by direct address

- View your talk as a dignified, professional conversation with one or two people using pronouns such as “you”, “your”, “we”, and “our” when appropriate
- Avoid becoming too familiar, and do not stereotype or cast aspersions on the audience by inappropriate use of “you” or “your”.

3. Use of outline

- Presentations delivered from outlines are typically the most effective because they flow, have conversational quality, and permit the speaker to have good audience contact.
- On some occasions talks are read from manuscripts, but this usually requires an experienced speaker to be effective.
- Avoid trying to memorize your talk
- Typically visual aids such as overhead transparencies or slides serve as the outline for most professional presentations.
- Written notes can be used in addition.
- Good preparation and familiarity with the material will help you to avoid being tied to your notes.

M. Coherence through Connectives

A coherent talk is one that is easy for the audience to follow, while lack of coherence causes the audience to lose concentration and attention. Coherence means sticking together within or uniting together to make a logical whole. For most of your material, coherence is

largely accomplished by the logical order in which the parts are arranged and presented. But in most talks some parts or points need to be connected beyond the simple arrangement of material. Words or phrases are used to show the relationship of the new material to what preceded it, thereby filling the gaps due to change of thought, point of view, nature of the material, etc. This is coherence through connectives. For example, the introduction should be smoothly connected to the body of the talk, which should be smoothly connected to the discussion and conclusions.

1. Use of transitional expressions

- Words such as in addition, also, moreover, furthermore, likewise, similarly, hence, thus, for these reasons, therefore, in view of the foregoing, so, so then, thereafter, however, on the other hand, on the contrary, contrariwise, formerly, heretofore, and so forth.
- If more is required try making the application of the preceding point a part of the introduction to the next point.
- Not only should consecutive parts be connected, but also sometimes points or material more widely separated should be connected. For example, material used in the introduction could be restated during the conclusion with clarification and application.

2. Coherence adequate for audience

- The use and extent of connectives will depend on the familiarity of the audience with the material.

N. Logical, Coherent Development

For our purposes logic is the science of correct thinking or sound reasoning, the criteria of valid thought. It is the system of principles underlying any art or science, such as valid induction or deduction. Logic imparts understanding because it is the means by which a subject is explained in its connected parts. Logic shows why the parts belong together, produce a particular outcome, or behave in a particular manner. Development is coherent and logical if all the parts are gradually united in sequence. The development may be in order of importance, chronological, from problem to solution, etc.

In the development of arguments, two basic methods are typically used: 1) set out the hypothesis directly before the audience and then produce facts (data) to support your hypothesis, or 2) attack some erroneous hypothesis using your data leaving the only other possible explanation to assert itself at the end. No two speakers are alike, and the development of your presentations will depend on your purpose and your personality.

1. Material in reasonable order

- Each point, statement, or idea must have a proper foundation
- Ask yourself: What is the most natural thing to say next? Having gone this far what is the most logical question to ask next, then answer it?
- Arrange material with regard to which parts naturally depend upon each other.
- Always have a reason for the order in which you present the material.

2. Only relevant material used
 - Irrelevant material can be identified by using your topical outline. Material that does not fit logically into the sequence of the talk should be adjusted so that it does if it is necessary. If it cannot be adjusted to fit it is extraneous and should be eliminated.
3. No key ideas or points omitted
 - How can you tell? Material is essential if you cannot accomplish the purpose of the talk without it.

O. Convincing Argument

One main goal of a presentation is to convince the audience to accept the validity of your argument and apply or act on it. To convince means to satisfy with proofs (data). The data alone may not be sufficient and arguments in support of them is often required. To convince by argument involves at least three basic factors: 1) the proofs (data, logic) themselves, 2) the sequence in which the proofs are presented, and 3) the manner and methods used in presenting them.

1. Foundation laid
 - Make the point of discussion clear.
 - Clearly define important or unfamiliar terms to establish a common ground with audience.
 - Amount of foundation depends on the background of the audience.
2. Sound “proof”, data given
 - As the speaker or the expert you must always be able to answer the question, “Why”.
 - “How, Who, When, Where, What” are typically observations and produce facts and data.
 - “Why” produces reasons, explanations, hypotheses, and requires reasoning and support which may be your data or other people’s data (i.e. some other authority, testimonial evidence).
 - In preparing your talk, continually ask yourself why and make sure you can answer yourself.
 - All evidence (data, quotations, and testimonials) must be used honestly. Be specific with references. Do not take data or quotations out of context. Be careful with statistics.
3. Effective summary
 - Usually essential to a convincing argument, to drive home the point.
 - May take the form, “since this is so, and since that is so, then we can conclude such and such.”

P. Audience Helped to Reason

This aspect deals with HOW you present the argument, the manner in which you present the facts and the arguments. Often it is not enough to present abundant, good quality data and reasonable arguments. You must present them in such a manner using techniques to help the audience reason so that they understand the material, arrive at the same conclusions, and are able to apply the information.

1. Common ground maintained
 - Express your points in a manner that will appeal to the audience.
 - Keep in mind their viewpoint or background.

2. Adequate development of points
 - Present sufficient information on each main point so the audience can reason and understand.
 - Don't cover too many points; i.e. present too much material.
 - Develop each main point using illustrations or examples according to allotted time. If you do not have time to develop a particular main point then you probably have too many points and too much material.
 - Use questions, rhetorical questions accompanied by appropriate pauses to stimulate audience participation and involvement.
 - Adequate development will depend on background of the audience. Watch for their reaction.

3. Application, practical value made clear
 - Make the connections, show how your data and interpretations relate to other problems and how your material can be applied in a general way.