

Sp Cm 212 Fundamentals of Public Speaking

Preparation Outline

Lecture 5M

The Informative Speech; The responsibility to engage the audience

We now come to the third and final responsibility of the informative speaker: To engage the audience in the subject. Without good information, the speech isn't worth hearing; without clear organization, the speech can't really be understood; but if you don't engage the audience, your good, clear information is going to go to waste—the audience will not hear it.

Is it really necessary to engage the audience? There's a debate right now among professors about how much we are responsible for making our lectures interesting to you, the students. On one side are those who say that the professor's central job is to explain his or her subject; adding in bells & whistles on top of that is "Edutainment"—not real education. On the other side are those who say that to teach today's young people, raised on television, the internet and other instant-gratification media, requires us to add in a lot of exciting stuff and especially technology to keep your interest.

My personal opinion is as follows. Each one of us who is a teacher is passionate about our subject—even as I've encouraged you to be passionate about your speech topics (due this morning) too. We find our subjects interesting, fascinating, intriguing—indeed, the most interesting, fascinating, intriguing subjects on earth. To engage students in our subjects, therefore, doesn't require anything to be *added* on top; all that is necessary is for us to make the interestingness apparent—to show students why it's so interesting.

You may want to think about your task as a speaker to be similar. Engaging the audience in your informative speech doesn't require you to add anything. But it does require you to do some hard thinking about why your audience should care.

Preview:

1. Engaging the audience
2. Sample speech analyzed
3. Visual aids (if time)

I. You need to relate your topic to your audience not just in your speech introduction but throughout your entire speech.

A. People are ego-centric.

1. "Ego-Centric" means that everyone looks out at the world from their own point of view.
2. Being egocentric is the human condition; we are not gods who can see everything at once; we can only look out from under our own eyebrows, through our own rose-colored glasses.
3. For example: the point of view from down here in the lecture hall is quite different from the point of view up there.

4. Egocentric is not egotistical; as Valentine's Day reminds us, when we look out from under our own eyeballs, we see other people—people for whom we might sacrifice quite a lot.
- B. As a speaker, you must relate your topic to the audience throughout the speech, adapting your information to their egocentric point of view.
1. What you know, and have to say, is complex, technical, and abstract.
 2. Your audience in an informative speech doesn't know what you know.
 3. To succeed as a speaker, you must "translate" your high-powered knowledge into terms your audience can understand—terms within their egocentric frame of reference.
 4. The textbook suggests a variety of techniques for doing this, including: explanations, examples, comparisons, contrasts, descriptions, and direct address.
 5. We can also add in visual aids to this list.
- C. Notice that this discussion has been abstract, and somewhat technical and complex.
1. "Abstractions" include the concept of "egocentric," and indeed the concept of "abstraction"!
 2. So let me translate this into terms that may work better for you with an example.

- EXAMPLE:
1. Information only.
 2. Information, "translated"
 3. Information, visualized

- D. Visual aids, an especially important means of relating to your audience, have three basic functions.
1. The first function is to convey information which would be difficult to convey in words alone; for example: a map.
 2. The second function is to clarify information by organizing it spatially, in colors, shapes etc.; for example, a chart.
 3. The third function is to relate information more compellingly to the audience by engaging their imaginations and emotions; for example: a photo of a person.
 4. These functions interrelate, so use them as guidelines only!

II. More exam prep: a sample speech, analyzed.

III. (if time) When designing your visual aid, be sure to avoid the extremes of "hot" and "cold."

- A. A visual aid is "too hot" if it distracts the audience from the speech.
1. Some visual aids are too hot because of the kind of medium they employ; for example, videos and food are often distracting.
 2. Some visual aids are too hot because of their design features, like their colors or animations.
 3. Some visual aids are too hot because they are presented poorly; for example, slides that are kept on display even when the topic has changed, or complicated demonstrations.
- B. A visual aid is "too cold" if it contributes little or nothing to the speech.

1. Some visual aids are too cold because they're just "eye candy," probably on display because the speaker has been required to use a visual aid and doesn't want to invest the time in thinking it through.
 2. Some visual aids are too cold because they are poorly designed—often too small or too crowded to be effective for the audience.
 3. Some visual aids are "too cold" because they are presented poorly, for example when slides simply repeat the material of the speech, or when the speaker turns his or her back on the audience in order to read the slide.
- C. Finally, some visuals are "just right."
1. A visual is just right in terms of content when it communicates something that could not be put into words. Ideally, *every detail* of the visual communicates.
 2. A visual is just right in terms of design when it is simple, yet effective.
 3. A visual is just right in terms of presentation if it is incorporated into the speech, as a living part.

To summarize this whole unit: We've looked at:

1. Invention: your responsibility to provide sound information, related to your audience's egocentric frame of reference.
2. Organization: your responsibility to

And don't forget there is also:

3. Style: simple, not technical.
4. Memory: 5 notecards
5. Delivery: which you'll practice in lab on Wednesday.

You've looked over the textbook, and heard me talk about the three responsibilities of the Informative speaker. The test this Friday will assess your ability to put these concepts to use in listening to, analyzing & evaluating a speech. But the real test of what you've learned will be your Informative speeches themselves. I'll be coming to listen—not to grade you, but to see what successes and weaknesses this class is experiencing. Do well as you climb that mountain!