Beyond "Speeches":
Building presentational skills

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The art of presentation requires teachers and learners to be engaged in the entire process, from determining the topic and purpose, to making the presentation and doing the evaluation. This paper outlines some of the activities demonstrated to lead students from basic conversational competence to the presentational expertise they are expected to demonstrate in both individual and group presentations.

"Speeches" を超えて−プレゼンテーション・スキルの構築プレゼンテーション技術には教師、学習者の双方が、トピックおよび目的を決定することからプレゼンテーションをし、評価を行うまでの全過程に関わることが必要とされる。本稿では、学習者を、基礎会話能力から個々またはグループ・プレゼンテーションにおける専門的プレゼンテーション技術の獲得へと至らせる諸活動の概要を述べる。

At any conference, participants perceive a different conference depending on the sessions, colloquia, or workshops they attend. The PAC3 at JALT2001 conference's wide range and depth made this especially true. One area covered by several sessions was students' presentations. Anderson, Sudo, and

Matheson (2001) focused on individual presentations in an EAP program. Pfeil (2001) considered how to use presentations to create learner autonomy. LeBeau (2001) demonstrated a light-hearted way to develop speechmaking skills in even low-level learners of English. Our demonstration outlined a number of activities designed to lead students beyond "speechmaking" toward the presentational expertise they are often expected to demonstrate in individual as well as group presentations. We concentrated on presentations as a component of basic English courses rather than as in courses dedicated to speeches or presentations, and in doing so we reviewed problem areas and discussed possible remedies. Our focus was on informative presentations, as they are more common in work environments than persuasive or entertaining speeches.

Presentations are a long used, and unfortunately often misused, aspect of many courses. Students are directed to prepare either alone or with others to present information to the rest of the class, given minimal direction in how to do it, and receive an evaluation from the teacher. Why should we as educators be surprised when this leads to presentations that lack meaningful content, students with poor conceptualization of the audience, an over reliance by presenters on rote memorization, and audiences that do not pay attention. Fortunately, these are all problems that can be overcome.

The problems with content begin with lack of understanding of the audience. Addressing audience needs first helps avoid many later problems. Even with homogeneous groups, presenters often show little awareness of their audience. They often explain things the audience already knows or give information they don't need. There are a number of ways to train students to become more aware of the audience, beginning with consideration of the audience's background and interests. One method is to use a simple checklist that focuses the presenter's attention on the audience (see Appendix A). Another activity raises students' awareness of the types of topics appropriate for different audiences (see Appendix B).

Once presenters have a basic understanding of audience differences, they can move from theoretical topics to consideration of their own provisional topic. Appendix C gives one way to get feedback from classmates regarding topics and requires presenters to consider their topic's appropriateness.

Audience and topic considerations can be combined in another way if students are more advanced learners, have had previous experience with making presentations, or are enrolled in content courses taught in English. In these cases, topic and audience considerations evolve from the materials (see Appendix D). Students in a mythology class taught in English at one Japanese college have used the worksheet given in the appendix to prepare presentations with titles such as "Pan and

Peter Pan" and "From Sirens to Mermaids." Each of these presentations started with first considering what the audience (other students) knew about the topic, determining what would be interesting to learn more about and narrowing the topic to one that could be covered in the presentation time.

For Oral English or Special Studies classes, topic determination relies on either the text, the student interests or majors. Regardless of this, the students must consider their audience. The worksheets in the appendices can be adapted for students in these types of basic English courses, asking students to consider purpose, audience, and visuals before beginning to research the topic.

Over reliance on rote memorization or reading directly from a script is another concern. Too often, presenters don't realize their message is lost because they are concentrating on the words they prepared rather than ensuring the audience understands them. One solution is to raise awareness of the negative effect this has on the audience, such as by asking presenters to work together with a listener (see Appendix E). Two replacements for memorization or reading a script are the use of crib notes or visual aids to direct the presentation. Crib notes provide support to the presenter, while still allowing breaks to look at and get feedback from the audience. Visual aids serve a similar function with the advantage of giving the audience more information.

Audience inattention is a final concern. Ideally, appropriate content and fluid presentation style will hold an audience's attention. However, students in the audience often pay more attention to completing their own preparations for presenting than they do watching others. Several techniques can focus the students' attention, including giving tests based on the presentations, requiring students to ask pertinent questions or write summaries, having presenters "quiz" the audience, and doing peer evaluations. For these, some training is beneficial. One place to start is note taking, including having students turn in notes they've taken or allowing them to use them during tests. When notes are allowed, learners quickly see their value. In addition, practice in raising questions and requesting clarification, advocated for writing (Ashwell, Barfield, Cowie, Nix, & Zemach, 2000), can be just as beneficial for speaking. Various models for peer evaluations have been presented, including Yamashiro and Johnson's (1997) in their paper regarding development of a presentation course.

Conclusion

The art of public speaking requires teachers and learners be engaged in the entire process, from determining the topic and purpose, to making the presentation and conducting evaluation. Any number of texts in both

English (Kushner, 1997; Stuttard, 1994; Theibert, 1997) and Japanese (Hinotani, 2001; Morita, 2000) are available for those who need to speak in public. Whether preparing students for speeches or presentations alone or with others, training can help students recognize potential problems in their presentations and correct them before they stand in front of an audience.

References

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Appendix A
Audience Checklist

1. My audience will be made up of

___	Children	They are about _____ years old.
___	My classmates	They are about _____ years old.
___	Students from other classes/schools	They are about _____ years old.
___	Business people	They are about _____ years old.
___	Experts in the topic area	They are about _____ years old.

2. The audience will be:

mostly men

mostly women

a balance of men and women

3. The audience will listen because

___ someone tells them to

___ the information is useful

___ the topic appeals to them

___ there will be a test about it

___ they are evaluating the presentation

Appendix B
Audience Awareness Worksheet

Every presentation should be directed at an audience. Here are titles of several presentations. Decide which audience would find the presentation interesting.

Presentation titles

1. ___ Let's make paper airplanes
2. ___ Organizing a successful advertising campaign

3. ____   History of the semi-conductor use
4. ____   Repair and maintenance of XYZ construction equipment
5. ____   Job opportunities in the travel industry
6. ____   Discovering your inner-self through yoga
7. ____   Basics of black and white photography
8. ____   The life cycle of the frog
9. ____   The International Campaign to Ban Landmines: What we can do
10. ____ Harry Potter: Popular fiction and its roots in mythology
11. ____ Highest money earning school festival shops
12. ____ Preparing your child for school success
13. ____ Preventing secondary infections among long-term patients
14. ____ Music and the unborn child: The effects of classical music listening by expectant mothers
15. ____ Motivating sales agents in tough economic times: Revitalizing management
16. ____ Changes in the tax code and their effect on retired workers
17. ____ Greek architecture and its influence on public buildings in America and Europe
18. ____ Making Halloween masks from paper, glue and paint
19. ____ The gardens of Kyoto
20. ____ Succeeding on college and university entrance exams

Audience choices
   a. Kindergarten students (5-year-olds)
   b. Junior high students
   c. High school students
   d. College & university students
   e. Pregnant women
   f. Engineers
   g. Hospital workers

h. Company executives
i. Parents and schoolteachers
j. Retirees
k. Members of the public (any adult)
l. Computer users
m. Foreign visitors

Appendix C
Audience Survey Worksheet

A. You are going to survey your classmates about presentation topics.
Write your topic idea

B. Questions to ask
1.   Is the topic "_____" interesting to you?
2.   Is the topic "_____" new to you?
        If no, what do you know about it? Where did you learn about it?
3.   Is the information about the topic "_____" going to be useful to you?

Keep a record of what your classmates say. Ask as many people as you can.

1	2	3	4	5
not at all	not so much	so-so	yes	very much

C. Now, evaluate what you learned.
- Are your classmates interested in your topic?
- Do they know anything about the topic? If so, what do they know?
  What new information could you provide them?
- If the topic is not interesting, it probably won't be a good topic to make a presentation about.
- If your classmates know a lot about it, you will need to go into greater depth in the presentation.
- If the topic doesn't seem useful, you will need to make the usefulness of the topic clear to your audience.

- Do you need to change your topic?
- If you do, ask your classmates the same questions about your new topic.

D. If the survey shows that students are generally interested in your topic, you will then need to focus the topic.
- Ask other students
- What do you want to know about the topic "_____"?
- Is there anything I should be able to tell you about the topic "_____"?
- *Keep a record.*

Appendix D
Audience Knowledge (Mythology) Worksheet

1. What myths or fairy tales have you found to be most interesting? Which ones would you like to learn more about? What do you know about these stories?
2. Select one as your presentation topic.
   Your presentation could be about: (a) any myth/fairy tale or combination of myths/fairy tales that illustrate the themes discussed in class; (b) the evolution of the image of one type of character in myths/fairy tales; (c) changes or differences between myths/fairy tales over time or distance.

Your topic:

3. What are 5 things you already know about this topic?
4. The points you know are probably familiar to the other class members as well. They are your audience. You need to tell your audience new information about the topic. Sources of information include:
   the course text, the library, video tapes in the LRC, Internet sites (see site list)

Use these to learn more about the topic.

5. After your presentation, the audience should know (if relevant to your topic):
   (a) the main characters in any of the myths or fairytales you use; (b) the basic story (or the selection of the story if you use part of a longer myth such as the Odyssey); (c) the differences or similarities between characters or across times; (d) the mythic themes; (e) the country of origin for the myths or fairytales; (f) how the characters in the story were viewed at different times.

6. Prepare your presentation

Be sure to use posters or other visual aids to help the audience understand. Skits are acceptable if supplemented with lecture or explanations.

Appendix E:
Speaker—Listener Checklist

1. Decide which is true for the speaker you listened to. The speaker
   ___ looked at their paper all the time
   ___ spoke loudly enough to hear everything
   ___ looked at the paper 50% of the time
   ___ spoke loudly most of the time
   ___ looked mostly at me
   ___ spoke loudly some of the time
   ___ looked only at me
   ___ spoke quietly

2. Based on the answers to number one, what was the biggest problem with the speaker's presentation?