

## Public Speaking: What I Have Learned and How I Have Grown

Since I moved to the US, I am learning new things every day. Public speaking is one of the new things for me. I try to absorb and get with it, but sometimes it is difficult. I am aware of it firsthand. It is not easy. Especially speaking in public is difficult because I don't have much chance to do it. I always felt I have a handicap, but this class made me feel I can be confident. Through this semester, I realized how difficult public speaking is but I learned how I can reinforce my speaking.

At the beginning of the semester, I set the following goals: speak to audience with clear pronunciation, improve the skill of making good supporting materials, and get to the point within a specific length of time.

Speaking to the audience with a clear pronunciation voice was difficult for me. As an ESL student, public speaking makes me nervous and gives me double pressure. Even though I have had some experiences in public speaking in my first language, it was a totally different experience and feeling than that. I had anxiety about each speech. I thought I may speak in Japanese during the speech without thinking. Some words were difficult to pronounce. I had to practice the difficult words over and over again. Sometimes I focused on specific words too much then I lost where I was in the speech. However, I felt that I could overcome this by rehearsing many times.

Improving the skill of making good supporting materials was one of the goals I was determined to achieve. Depending on the purpose of the speech, to inform, persuade, or convince etc., I needed to use effective supporting materials to help to explain the topic to the audience. I thought that showing more visual aids helps to explain the topic but it wasn't the case all the time. Sometimes too many visuals can be overwhelming to the audience or make them lose the interest of the speech. Also, I have

learned how important it is to use credible sources. I can be a better public speaker by using better materials.

Getting to the point within a specific length of time was helped by using an outline format. Using an outline helped me to organize my speech. Also it kept me on the right track. Sometimes I try to put in too much information into my speech, and my outline become too wordy. I clearly realize it when I rehearse. I always end up using twice as much time as the requirement. Therefore during the speech, the outline helped me as a map of my speech. I learned that to finish in a specific time, I need to organize well and practice as much as possible.

I have learned and improved not only from the goals that I set at the beginning of the semester. Other classmates' speeches helped me to learn what are good things to do or not at the podium. For example, looking at the audience and making eye contact make the speaker look confident. Also, I learned that even for the native English speaker, sometimes it is difficult to pronounce some words. If you want to pronounce the words that are not familiar, practice is necessary.

Another thing I learned is how to become a better listener. Critical listening help to be a critical thinker. Becoming a better listener can lead me to become a better speaker. Becoming an audience-centered speaker can teach me hints about organizing techniques. I should always think about what audiences might disagree with, getting to the purpose of the speech, or following my topic. Reflecting these ideas in my speech is important to improve my organization for a speech. After I speak in public, I would appreciate the speaker more than before.

I have learned many things from this class, however, I still cannot digest everything that I learned and adapt to my speech. I feel that I am still weak to make eye contact with the audience. I think that to convince or get attention from the audience, I should be confident. Also talking to the audience with eye contact is important.

Considering my circumstances as an ESL student, I assumed that it takes at least the double amount of time for researching, organizing, and studying compared to native English speakers. This resulted in a lack of time to practice, and then I felt that I didn't have enough eye contact with the audience. Making more eye contact is my goal for my speech in the future.

From now on, I can take advantage of what I learned from this class for my job. I have to introduce the product that my client has developed to potential customers and convince them to buy it. I can analyze potential customers using what I learned through this course and make better presentations. Not only that, I can adopt organizing techniques for making technical manuals and tutorials for the product. I don't need to make public speeches at the moment, but in the near future, I will have to do it. Without this public speaking class, I don't think I could do it well.

Overall, I have had learned the importance of organizing and practicing. Also to be a better speaker, I need to be a better listener and an audience-centered speaker. This class gave me confidence not only for public speaking, but to live in this country as a foreigner.