

Discussing voice and speaking in everyday use and in performance:

Everyday speaking, performance and public speaking have features in common. They are:

Posture

Dynamic readiness

Breath

Tone

Resonance

Projection

Articulation

Modulation

When called on to perform or speak in public adjustments have to be made to meet the demands of purpose, occasion, circumstances and audience response.

Whether speaking in public, performing in a play, giving a performance of prose, poetry and drama, on the factory floor, in the classroom, in a café or in private conversation and discussion, speakers will need to adjust projection, articulation and modulation to meet the special needs of the situation.

Projection requires:

Judging and adjusting to the physical circumstances in which speaking and include-

Space

Outdoors – using a microphone, wind, various noises that cannot be controlled such as distant sirens and construction works etc, echoes from hard surfaces and...

Indoors—adjusting to the theatre, auditorium, stage, office, conference centre, school hall, classroom and

Wherever you are speaking it is important to take into account acoustic factors that will affect the propagation of sound.

Heavily carpeted and draped rooms will absorb sound and call for more energy of projection.

In a large, empty bare hall sound is reverberant. Add the audience. Their bodies and clothing absorb and reduce reverberation. Further adjustments must be made to compensate.

In all the above circumstances, also when using a microphone, it is vital to maintain a full voice tone and clear speaking. And it must be remembered that microphone technology amplifies both voice and speech. Inadequate voice production and sloppy speech will be amplified to an embarrassing extent!

Occasion

The occasion also affects the way voice or speech is modified in performance and public speaking.

The formality or casualness of an occasion affects speaking style and modulation.

The material to be presented places demands on a performer or speaker. The heightened language of poetry calls for subtle use of all aspects of modulation. Poetry does not sound like the shopping list. Poets write for the ear. Speakers must find the inherent, subtle nuances of words that the poet has given them.

Actors must find the very individual voice, speech, intention and motivation of the role being portrayed and must convey to the furthestmost patron in a big theatre, even the most intimate 'sweet nothings' being whispered into the loved one's ear with the utmost clarity. On occasions accents and regional dialects are called for as well.

Public speakers need to engage and enlarge all the nuances of language that fall easily to hand in everyday speaking.

Now how to deal with the above?

Projection: The first precept.

Projection is not volume. More breath and louder voice will more often lead to a dissatisfied audience, who cannot understand what is being said, and a speaker with a damaged voice.

Projection is energy. It requires a well-produced voice, complete understanding of the meaning and purpose, the message to be conveyed and *energised* articulation. Make sure word endings are strong. They very often carry the full meaning of a word. e.g. look at words such as *aim, ale, ache*. Look at *inch* and *itch*; and you can think of many more examples where a single consonant sound makes a radical change in meaning.

Pace and pause: The second precept.

This aspect of modulation is very important. In everyday casual conversation between people, the momentum and flow of what is being said is moderated and adjusted by our proximity and interaction. The sound waves between us are easily decoded. Distance requires more effort. Listeners have to receive the signals, and decode and process against their knowledge, experience and emotions. Giving the words and vowels their space does not impair the dynamic flow and momentum of the utterance. It is very different to 'speaking slowly' which becomes ponderous, boring and works against the vitality that will engage the audience.

To sum up:

For everyday speaking

Prepare your voice and speech well to be an ever ready instrument to meet the calls made on it.

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