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MOVE THE WORLD THROUGH DIFFERENTIATED INSTRUCTION

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Abstract: The article focuses on training public speaking skills through

differentiated instructions. It touches upon the importance of public speaking skills and principles to follow when differentiating instructions. The authenticity of the topic is determined by a lot of researches in the field, thus, the studies made by A. C. Tomlinson and S. E. Lucas have been used in creating the theoretical framework. The practical framework is based on one public speaking lesson that provides some findings on a way to differentiate instructions for four types of learners.

Keywords: differentiated instructions, aural learners, physical learners, visual learners, logical learners, impromptu speech

As we live in a society, very few want to take risks to spoil the image they have created for ages. Although all are afraid to speak in front of others, it is clear that public speaking skills are the most important. These skills resemble communication skills that are used daily to communicate with people, including person-to-person interactions, conferences, public forums and organizational situations.

Public speaking fits the very model of communication. Communication is considered to encompass the simultaneous sending and receiving messages through one or more channels. A public speaker sends orally or nonverbally messages to an audience which provides the speaker with a certain feedback. Thus, the elements of the speech communication process are:

- Speaker – the person that communicates a message to the listener. The success of the speaker depends on the credibility and preparation of the speech. The speaker has to be highly interested in everything he speaks out.
- Message – the information that is transmitted and that has to be relevant, coherent and captivating
- to keep the audience engaged.
- Channel –the message that is communicated.
- Listener – the person that receives the information.
- Feedback – the nonverbal messages that is sent from a listener to a speaker.
- Situation – the time and place when the speech is delivered.

There are a lot of debates on the resemblance of public speaking to a simple conversation procedure. Every day, as Stephen E. Lucas states, any adult or kid spends about 30 percent of waking hours in conversation. S/he has to organize the thoughts logically to be understood, to tailor the message to the audience, to tell the message passionate for a maximum impact and to modify it in accordance with the listener's feedback. All these seem to be a part of an effective

public speaking performance. Still, despite the similarities public speaking is different from conversation. The author underlines a set of features that make public speaking different. It is:

- a more highly structured speech as it requires much more preparation;
- a more formal language usage, as listeners very often react very negatively when the speakers do not polish their language;
- a special method of delivery that makes the speaker to follow some rules: clear voice, more erect posture, Z eye contact, and non-verbal habits [2].

Public speaking is a process that develops critical thinking, a skill that is very important in everyday life. It involves “elated” skills such as distinguishing fact from opinion, judging the credibility of statements. It focuses on the ability to see the things clearly. Critical thinking is a matter of logic, of being able to spot weaknesses of other people’s arguments and, thus, to avoid using them in one’s own speech. In broader sense, this is the ability to see clearly the relationships among ideas. This is a life-lasting skill that each person striving for a successful life should develop.

Teachers have been always looking for different approaches in education that might help develop public speaking skills. Many scholars believe that public speaking skills can be trained through differentiated instruction. Differentiated instruction offers the possibility to every student to train the skill of speaking in public on the basis of the learning mode that prevails in her / his character. Carol Ann Tomlinson asserts that differentiating instruction implies the observation method to differentiate the similarities and differences among learners, and to plan the instructions in the way learners could understand them better. The instructions are ruled by the teacher that “recognizes diversity in their students, in terms of how and what they identify with and how they learn, and when this recognition is reflected in how teachers teach, students are free to discover new and creative ways to solve problems, achieve success, and become lifelong learners” [5, p. 14].

During the process of differentiation, the teachers should pay attention to content, process, and product based on student readiness, interests, and learning profiles. In the process of learning, some students can work with complicated fractions but others will need more practice and time before starting to show progress. Readiness is much different from ability. When the teacher knows the learner’s

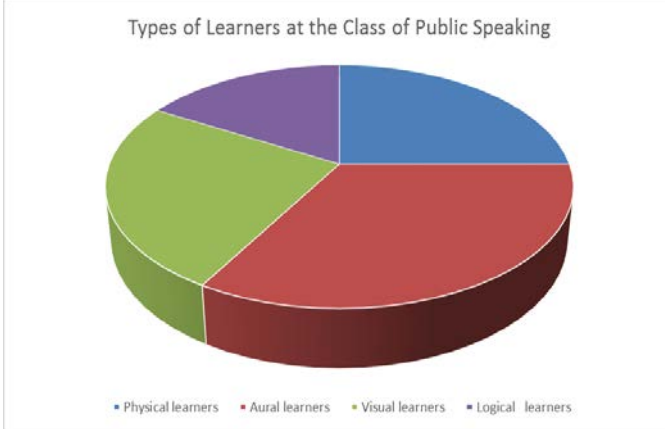
readiness for a certain concept, he can work with him according to his needs. Moreover, if the teacher individualizes instructions according to learner's readiness, he makes instructions that are more appropriate to learner's skills and basic understanding of the topic. The learning profile refers to students' preferences toward specific way of processing the information. Student's learning preferences differ in context.

Carol Ann Tomlinson underlines the five-way hierarchy to differentiate instructions [5, p. 15]. The first element is the *content*; it represents the information that is given to students. The *process* shows how students understand the topic. The *product*, the third element, represents what the students know, understand, and are able to do as a result of study. The *affect* is the way the students connect their thoughts and feeling in the classroom. The last element is the *learning environment* that is the atmosphere of the classroom where the lesson takes place. All these elements are extremely important in differentiating instructions.

Another linguist that contributed to the differentiated approach to teaching content is Lev Vygotsky. The scholar introduced the term "zone of proximal development" referring to "the exact level of the child's capabilities, so that we can provide the child with input which is set just above the level of his understanding" [6, p. 79-91]. The scholar believed that the child cannot learn a lot by himself, he has to be assisted by another person. This fact is extremely important in training public speaking skills. The child has to be provided structures that represent content, the design of the speech should be made in pairs or groups, and, then, the final product (the speech itself) will be very good.

I have applied this theory in teaching public speaking to my third year students (12 students). First, there were detected four types of learners. The diagram below emphasizes the number of learners and the learning mode that prevails in their character:

Table 1. Types of Learners at the class of public speaking



Second, the content was taught in accordance with the students' best way to process the information.

The input covered teaching a structure for impromptu speeches. The chosen structure is Problem/Solution/Benefit that helps in designing a short unprepared speech. The students' output was the delivering of the speech "You cannot feel unique if you are not encouraged". Each group or pair of learners got a worksheet with directions to be followed. Thus, the following structures helped in making the impromptu speeches:

Structure: Problem/Solution/ Benefit Structure.

Technique: Storytelling to start and to end with.

Physical Learners

Introduction (Symbolic personal story to emphasize the problem):

1. Decide upon a problem.
2. *You cannot feel unique if you are not encouraged*
3. Emphasize the problem through a picture. Bring the picture, try to use your body to represent the essence of the picture.
4. Connect the picture and your body performance to your personal story.
5. Generalize the problem referring to the community you are coming from.

Body:

1. Provide some solutions to solve the detected problem.

2. Choose the most efficient of those cited.
3. Use the picture and your body performance from the introduction to show how the problem has been solved.

Conclusion:

1. Name the beneficiaries of the provided solution.
2. Use the same personal symbolic story to wind up.
3. Give a piece of advice.

Visual Learners

Structure: Problem/Solution/ Benefit Structure

Technique: storytelling to start and to end

Introduction (Symbolic Story to emphasize the problem):

1. Decide upon a problem.
2. *You cannot feel unique if you are not encouraged*
3. Emphasize the problem through a (three dimensional) hands-on product.
4. Use the materials (wooden sticks, a balloon, a piece of rope) to make the problem real (to be seen).
5. Connect the (three dimensional) hands-on product to your personal story.
6. Generalize the problem referring to the community you are coming from.

Body:

1. Provide some solutions to solve the detected problem.
2. Choose the most efficient of those named.
3. Use the picture the (three dimensional) hands-on product from the introduction to show how the problem has been solved.

Conclusion:

1. Name the beneficiaries of the provided solution.
2. Use the same symbolic story to wind up.
3. Give a piece of advice.

Logical Learners

Structure: Problem/Solution/ Benefit Structure

Technique: Storytelling to start and to end with.

Introduction (Symbolic Personal Story to emphasize the problem):

1. Decide upon a problem.

You cannot feel unique if you are not encouraged

1. Emphasize the problem through a table or a chart.
2. Draw the chart and try to expand on it.
3. Connect the chart to your personal story.
4. Generalize the problem referring to the community you are coming from.

Body:

1. Provide some solutions to solve the detected problem.
2. Choose the most efficient of those named.
3. Use the picture the table or chart from the introduction to show how the problem can be solved.

Conclusion:

1. Name the beneficiaries of the provided solution.
2. Use the same symbolic story to wind up.
3. Give a piece of advice.

Aural Learners

Structure: Problem/Solution/ Benefit Structure

Technique: Storytelling to start and to end

Introduction (Symbolic personal story to emphasize the problem):

1. Decide upon a problem
2. *You cannot feel unique if you are not encouraged*
3. Emphasize the problem through a piece of music. Expand on the essence of the piece of music provided.
4. Connect this piece to your personal story.
5. Generalize the problem referring to the community you are coming from.

Body:

1. Provide some solutions to solve the detected problem.
2. Choose the most efficient of those cited.
3. Use the piece of music from the introduction to show how the problem can be solved.

Conclusion:

1. Name the beneficiaries of the provided solution.
2. Use the same personal symbolic story to wind up.
3. Give a piece of advice.

Finally, the created “zone of proximal development” facilitated the process of designing the speech. This worked beneficially on stress

and fear management and, consequently, public speaking skills training.

The two-stage process of output presentation was peer or group speech delivery and individual speech delivery. It took from 5 through 7 minutes for peer presentation and 5 minutes for individual presentation. The feedback that the students provided at the end of the class was unexpected. The diagram below shows that 75% of students felt quite comfortable with the procedure due to the mode of learning that made them feel at ease, even if the whole process was not easy. There were three students that did not like the whole idea about differentiated instructions in training public speaking skills.

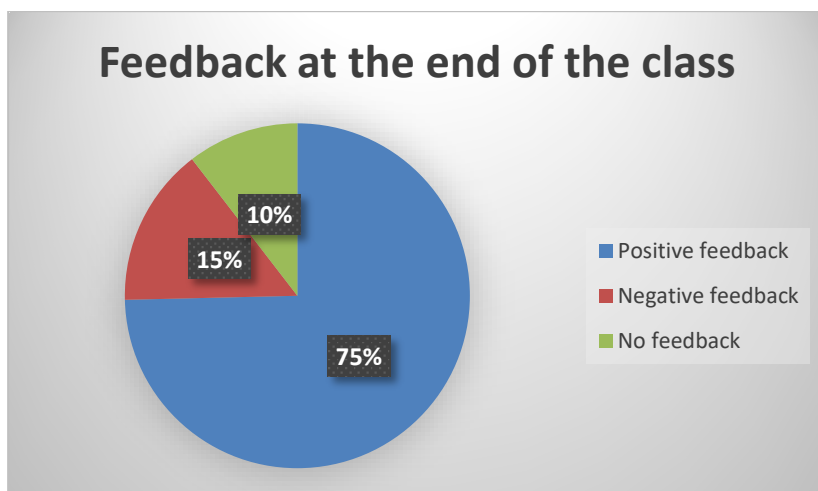


Table 2. Feedback at the end of the class

Summing up, it is worth mentioning that there are many advantages of this approach to teaching impromptu speeches to students. First, the instruction is designed in accordance with the mode the students are accustomed to in processing the information. This helps in creating a friendly learning environment. Second, the "proximal zone of development" is directed towards anxiety reduction through pair or group work. Still, these results and conclusions are not convincing as the practical framework is based just on one lesson where differentiation has been implemented. It is necessary to continue implementing public speaking training skills through different instructions to draw consistent conclusions.

Differentiation cannot just be a strategy in teachers' toolbox. It needs to be a way of life in the classroom, a daily occurrence that happens without hesitation. Although differentiated teaching requires many resources, time and motivation to be implemented, the students' outcomes make any teacher, who uses ways to satisfy every disciple's needs, feel rewarded.

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