

Presentations in English – Teacher’s Notes

Step 4 Top up your techniques

Overall objective

Learners take their presentations to a new dimension successfully and effectively by integrating rhetorical techniques.

Specific objectives

Learners:

- can recognise and name a variety of techniques
- have seen and read examples of techniques working in presentations
- recognise that the use of techniques is effective
- recognise that using techniques is not difficult and not just for great speechmakers – it is something for them!
- have had a lot of fun
- have begun to incorporate techniques into their presentations
- have extended their range of signposting
- can develop presentation structure to achieve objectives

Tips

1. Powerful techniques – Introduction

Pages 50 and 51

This exercise works best if students cannot see page 51. They first read the presentation transcript and then read the extract aloud. Alternatively, you can read the extract aloud in order to pace content and stress certain words. Learners appreciate that the extract works best when it is read aloud. Indeed, they should recognise that there are sections that do not even work well in writing that are extremely effective in speaking.

After this, break down the transcript and analyse the techniques. Students can usually extract all of the techniques even if they cannot give names to them:

- Repetition, Rule of Three and Mantra are often all identified as ‘repetition’. It is useful to point out that Rule of Three and Mantra are indeed forms of repetition but not exactly the same thing. Mantra is the most difficult technique to implement. It takes some work to find just the right Mantra and it could be argued that the one on page 50 is not the most effective.
- Students do not always recognise the rhetorical question at the start of the section as they can see it is as a headline rather than as part of the presentation transcript.

- Examples are to do with Association which is a principle of memory. i.e. we remember something better if it is associated with something else. Here, audience members would remember Milena's story much better than a myriad of facts, figures and data on the 'Summit Programme'.
- Dramatic Contrast is made in 3 forms: simple comparative forms, use of opposites and 'not ... but'.

Once students have identified the techniques, let them read the information on page 51. Then they can identify the techniques they imagine themselves being able to use. Point out that practising techniques is a lot of fun and that students should experiment as much as possible within the training environment.

2. Repetition

Page 52

Repetition is dealt with here as it is possibly the easiest technique to use. Anyone who speaks can use repetition! It can feel unnatural for the presenter as s/he feels that s/he is making points the same points over and over again but it actually increases clarity and impact for the listening audience. We are actually taught not to repeat in writing but to find other words and we sometimes carry this rule over to presentations. In fact, it is better to repeat something in a presentation rather than to keep talking and talking. The presenter can integrate this while using variety in pace and stress. Exercise A draws attention to these points and students should find Svitlana's and César's extracts on the DVD much more effective than the written statements on page 52.

Recognition and awareness are first stages to students integrating techniques into their own presentations. The *Find Your Voice* sections in this Step are essential as these short bursts of practice are the next milestone on the road to improvement. Again, students should also have a lot of fun doing these exercises.

3. Rhetorical questions

Pages 53 and 54

Rhetorical Questions are relatively simple to use but sometimes this is the only technique students know and they overuse it. In addition, they do not use the correct grammar or form rhetorical questions that are too long or sound really artificial. *Have we introduced new intensive training to improve our employees' performance in presentations?* instead of: *So, what have we done?*. Presenters can use a flat intonation and audiences do not recognise rhetorical questions as questions. The exercises here should encourage students to use short, pithy, accurate questions with a lively intonation. Encourage students to limit the number of rhetorical questions to a maximum of 4 or 5 in each presentation.

4. Rule of 3

Page 54

The Rule of 3 is a technique that goes back to classical writers on rhetoric. If students are unconvinced, get them to do an internet search and they will see that the Rule of 3 is applied in many fields. It exists in maths, painting, photography, and architecture and it is used by comedy and political writers, advertisers and musicians. US marines are taught to limit their attention to 3 tasks or goals. The Three Click Rule is used by web designers for access to internet information. It is really impossible to ignore its effectiveness.

5. Contrast

Pages 55 and 56

Again, if students are unconvinced you can point out that contrast also goes back to classical writers who referred to some of its different forms under headings like antithesis, enantiosis, and antitheton. Many quotations from the great speeches of the last 2,000 years include contrast. There is research on 500 political speeches that shows contrast prompts a large proportion of applause enjoyed by politicians.

6. Find Your Voice

Page 57

Students come up with many different effective versions of this presentation and the exercise highlights the differences between formal written English and presentation English.

7. Analysis of César's presentation

Page 58

It is very interesting for students to know that César had the most problems of all 4 DVD presenters when it came to integrating rhetorical techniques into his presentations. He found it difficult to complete the *Find Your Voice* exercises in the Step and often opted out saying that he couldn't do them or didn't feel himself. His use of technique in his final Step 4 presentation is very good, and the presentation is a good example of how technique can improve performance. It also demonstrates that practice helps students to accept technique - they need to keep trying on techniques for size until they find something they feel comfortable with - and that both trainers and students need to be patient and flexible during the process.

8. Presentations diary

Page 60

The diary is again at the bottom of the page but stress that it is an essential exercise!

Student presentations

What to look for:

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Use the Feedback Form on page 60 and concentrate on the points mentioned. If you are working with a group, different members of the group can also concentrate on listening for the use of different techniques for different presentations. Structure is important as students have to develop an optimum structure for their message and you need to feel that students have 'sold' their recommendation.

What to worry about:

- complete resistance to using techniques
- lack of structure

What not to worry about:

- only using one or two techniques as this is a first step to accepting the effectiveness of using techniques
- Q&A is again not a focus at this stage but you can begin to introduce Q&A sessions if you feel your students need this practice (see Step 7)