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**MONOGRAFÍA PARA LA UNIDAD DE APRENDIZAJE DE
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VISUAL AIDS IN PUBLIC SPEAKING

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INTRODUCTION

Beliefs and perceptions about Public Speaking in English have varied along the time, whether teachers can make little or no difference in improving students' skills or whether it is just a matter of practice.

The Public Speaking in English course in the B.A. in Languages from the Autonomous University of the State of Mexico, deals with several topics such as body language, voice, gestures, facial expressions, platform movement, visual aids, formal and persuasive speeches, etc., so students can have plenty of practice in order to master oral presentations.

The advent of technology has both complicated and simplifies the task of the speaker. For example today it is possible to produce complex graphs on a computer; display them electronically with a projector or present them via Internet. But how much information should be included on a graph? And most important, where does that graph fit into the organization of the presentation?

This paper gives a complete description of one of the topics to be covered along the programme of Public Speaking in English, which is 'The use of visual aids in an oral presentation'.

It is divided into two sections, the first one is going to be the presentation of the topic, theory and some useful tips in order to deal with visual aids and in the second part the procedure of the class itself is presented in order to provide the reader with a set of steps to be followed when presenting this topic to students.

Communicative Learning Teaching has become extremely popular in recent years. Learning a language is not just a matter of learning grammar but being able to convey ideas and the communication purpose plays a vital role.

At this point, I believe that the use of visual aids may help students in order to convey messages; therefore Public Speaking students must be aware of how to use those tools effectively and get the most of them.

VISUAL AIDS IN PUBLIC SPEAKING

In this section students will learn how to prepare and use slides and other visual aids in their presentations. Most presentations in classes used to take advantage of overhead transparencies; in today's presentations, computer projected slides are being used so this document is focused on them.

According to Comfort (2006), we should use slides or visuals when we need to:

- Focus the audience's attention
- Reinforce our verbal message
- Stimulate interest
- Illustrate factors that are hard to visualize

And we do not need to use visuals to:

- Impress our audience with overwhelming detail or animation
- Avoid interaction with our audience
- Make more than one main point per slide
- Present simple ideas that are easily stated orally

Having taught Public Speaking in English for more than five years I have come up with some useful tips for planning successful slides and visuals.

1. Use slides reasonably. One of the biggest problems in presentations is the overuse of slides. A useful rule is one slide for every one minute of presentation time.
2. Make slides graphic. Use of pictures and charts will give the audience a reason to pay attention.
3. Present one point per slide. Give more than one point per slide is not a good idea.
4. Make text legible. Minimum font size is 30 pt. because sometimes people at the back can barely see. Take into consideration the size of the room.

5. Use color carefully. Use no more than three colors per slide, the colors should contrast with each other to provide better visibility. Do not forget to take into consideration the background color or images.
6. Make graphic data simple. Avoid too many numbers; graphic data should be concrete in order to allow the audience to picture the information.
7. Classify information. If you are going to have a picture that can have a big impact on your audience, let the written information appear first, give any explanations and then let them see the picture, otherwise the audience will be amazed by the picture and they will not pay attention to the rest of the information.
8. Avoid unnecessary slides. If something can be stated orally there is no need for a slide. Titles are an exception. Begin and finish your presentation with the same slide.
9. Watch out spelling mistakes and typos. Make sure to have your slides read by someone else before your presentation. Misspelled words or typos cannot be part of your slides.
10. Use animations carefully. They can interfere with the content of your message.
11. Print your slides. In order to be aware of which is your next slide, have them printed. Imagine there is a power cut.

According to Urech (2000, p.78) one should use a maximum of 25-35 numbers per visual aid. Data charts should only contain bottom line information, conclusions, and final results. Data charts include: percent, parts, graphics, timelines, frequency, correlation, etc. Backup slides can contain raw data.

She also mentions the 5 x 5 rule (five lines with a maximum of five words per line) should be used for word slides. This results in no more than 25 words per slide excluding the title.

Having clear and concise information on the slides makes it easier for the audience to retain information; we should simplify the slide and focus audience's attention where we want it.

James Kirkpatrick (2011), a doctoral student in Counseling Psychology in his article 'Step model for More Effective Presentations' states that there are three types of titles for visual aids:

1. Topic Title: used when it is not necessary to convey a specific message but only to provide information.
2. Thematic Title: used to tell the audience what information they should draw for the data presented.
3. Assertive Title: used when we want to give the audience our opinion about what conclusion they should draw from the data.

He also mentions:

“...Make your presentations people-centered, not media-centered. Avoid using too many slides and putting too much information on them. While you may need to use slides to present your data, remember that building rapport and interacting with your audience is critical. Slides alone cannot make a presentation interesting, your enthusiasm and delivery is the key to making a presentation lively...”

Visual aids, when used effectively, can help a speaker communicate better and listeners understand better. They help clarify and support our message.

One of the easiest methods to guarantee a successful and effective speech is to use interesting visual aids. Unfortunately a lot of speakers either do not use visual aids at all or use overcrowded, difficult-to-read visuals that make it almost impossible for the audience to understand the visuals' content, to listen to the talk, and to take down notes all together (Evans 2006).

Although it is not that common to use overhead transparencies these days, it is important to mention some vital tips when using transparencies.

Covering part of an overhead transparency and revealing the contents by sliding the cover down is often used to control the audience's attention. Not surprisingly, most audiences do not appreciate this technique. It is recommended to cut out the transparencies in order to 'build' the information and to present it little by little. Tiny numbers at the edge of each transparency are recommended in order to have your cut outs sorted out.

There is more to think about when it comes to giving a speech than just the topic. You have to make decisions about whether you should use a podium, what you should wear, what gestures you should use, how fast you should speak, how should you handle the audience and their questions, etc. These are just a few of the issues involved in transforming a written message into an oral performance, but one of the most important ones is the use of visual aids and how to deal with the equipment needed.

Kushner (2010, p.120) talks about visual aids, he mentions that they are vital for the presentation but that the placement of the equipment also plays a crucial role. He states that:

“... When using a computer projector or overhead it should add, not detract, from your presentations. This can be accomplished by placing the screen or flipchart at a 45-degree angle and slightly to one side of the center of the room when possible. In this way a presenter can occupy the central position and more easily focus the audience’s attention on the explanation of the data being displayed....”

One major problem when using visual aids is that the speaker often gives their presentation to the visuals and not to the audience. This problem can easily be corrected if the speaker remembers to keep shoulder orientation towards the audience at all times and not to the visuals.

One final sentence to remember related to visual aids: If your audience takes longer than seven seconds to understand or comprehend the content of your visuals, they will possibly fall into a reading mode, and being in that mode they hear almost nothing that the speaker says.

AUTONOMOUS UNIVERSITY OF THE STATE OF MEXICO

FACULTY OF LANGUAGES

B.A. IN LANGUAGES

PUBLIC SPEAKING IN ENGLISH

UNIT 4 INFORMATIVE SPEECH

4.4 VISUAL AIDS

A. BACKGROUND

This topic is presented almost at the end of the course. Students have already learned and practised about:

- ✓ Communication
- ✓ Voice
- ✓ Body Language
- ✓ Eye contact
- ✓ Gestures and facial expressions
- ✓ Platform movement

By the time 'Visual aids' have to be presented, they already know how to manage and use the rest of the elements in order to make a successful presentation. They are aware of the *dos* and *don'ts* during a presentation relating to voice, eye contact, body language, etc.

B. PROCEDURE

SUGGESTED LESSON PLAN

Title:	Including visual aids in your informative speech
Level:	Upper-intermediate
Communication skills:	making a well-design and well-presented visual aid
Age:	20 – 21 years old
Number of students:	19 to 22 students
Duration:	100 minutes approx.
Materials:	Worksheets, pencils, video projector, computer, squeezing balls.

GENERAL OBJECTIVE: At the end of the class students will be able to make effective power points slides in order to use them as visual aids during oral presentations. Students will use speaking, listening and reading skills during the presentation of the topic and writing to build to their own visual aids in order to practice what they have learn.

Procedure:

PRE-ACTIVITY  ACTIVITY  POST ACTIVITY

Pre-activity

Specific objective: students are going to learn and recall some concepts related to public speaking by brainstorming words and ideas out of a key word given by the teacher.

1. *Group work.* Using squeezing balls, the teacher is going to throw one at a time saying key words from the concepts covered in previous classes. Students are going to brainstorm ideas in order to recall some concepts. (15 min approx)

Activity

Specific objective: a presentation on visuals is going to be given to students in order for them to comprehend how to design and work on effective visual aids in order to use them for oral presentations

2. *Individual work.* Teacher is going to give a presentation on visual aids. She is going to explain some concepts and rules to be used when preparing slides for an oral presentation. Students are going to take some notes in the worksheets given. (20 min)

3. *Group work.* Using squeezing balls, the teacher is going to throw one at a time saying key words from the concepts covered in previous presentation. Students are going to recall ideas and words in order to prove that all the points covered along the presentation on visual aids are understood. Teacher will be checking if doubts arise or if some concepts or ideas are not clear for the students and will clear them up. (15 min approx)

Post-activity

Specific objective: students are going to work in pairs in order to build up some visual aids for a particular topic. At this stage, the activity is just for practicing and checking if visuals are well-designed. These visuals are not going to be used for the formal speech presentation.

4. *Pair work.* Students are going to be given a topic. They will have to work in pairs in order to build visual aids for the topic given. All the students must build 20 slides and the same topic will be given to the whole group.

This activity will be given as homework because students will need computers in order to build up their slides.

5. *Group work.* Next class, teacher is going to check the slides with the whole group in order to find out if they followed what they were told in the previous class. Teacher and students are going to work cooperatively.

Possible problems

Students may not remember concepts from previous classes during the pre-activity, if one student cannot brainstorm any words the teacher is going to throw another squeezing ball to a different student.

Further practice

Students should build their visual aids for the next oral presentation which is *Informative Speech* following all the tips and concepts learned in class.

CONCLUSION

For learners of the B.A. in Languages, making a presentation in English can be difficult and demanding. The speaker needs certain skills which go beyond the range of ordinary language courses. At the end of the course, students of Public Speaking in English need to master oral presentations; using visual aids effectively is part of mastering them.

This paper gave a detailed description on how to teach the use of visual aids in oral presentations. Summing it all up visuals should not be used to repeat what it can be said and should not be overcrowded with too much information.

Visuals may be used to reinforced and explain the main points and they must show the relevance of their use to the message. Fonts, colors and animations should be used carefully; otherwise the slides can have a negative impact on the audience.

Visual aids, particularly power point slides, are not the messenger (the speaker is). The slides are just a communication aid.

The speaker needs to have in mind that visuals are just a way to complement oral presentations and that one must have a backup plan in case one is not able to project the presentation from a computer. A good speaker always has a version printed because the show must go on.

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