teaching think!ng & creativity

CROSS CURRICULUM PROJECT PLAN

FREEDOM TO SPEAK

Introducing
FREEDOM TO SPEAK

Amid terror that our young people are growing up incapable of articulating themselves, the Rose review insists that teachers prioritise speech and drama. In this year eight -level cross-curriculum project pack, **Kerrie Sharron** shares how she prepared her class for *Speakout Challenge* - a speech competition for London and Essex schools.

'Even more basic than the freedom of speech is the freedom to speak'

Stephen Hawking

Hammersmith regional finalist Benedict Townsend discusses teenage stereotypes.

As citizenship education becomes more established in schools, and schools start to take student voice seriously, more and more passionate and motivated students are looking for ways to take political action to address their concerns and make changes to the world.

The citizenship order instructs that it shouldn't just be the motivated and confident students who are supported in channelling their voices. Developing the skill to be politically active is an *entitlement* for *all* students.

Many teachers struggle to find avenues to fulfil this entitlement – trying campaigning projects, mock trials and newspaper articles as avenues for active citizenship within the constraints of the classroom. While these activities are important, oral communication is surely the mainstay of political activity in the UK.

By speaking, we explore ideas and develop, challenge and refine our political views. Our parliamentary political system is predicated on debate. Our political media is dominated by visual media. But at grassroots level, we change opinions and rally support for a cause through speaking. The effectiveness of our interactions with the machinery of the state, and our ability to stand up for our rights, is heavily dependent on how we present our case and how we negotiate. So is our ability to get jobs and

to achieve in them. Being able to speak effectively is a fundamental part of political and cultural capital.

But many students are limited by their vocabulary and lack of skills - they don't have the confidence to speak up, even when necessary. While they may have *freedom of speech*, lack of confidence and skills mean many do not actually have the *freedom to speak*. It is fundamental to real political empowerment that we arm students with the confidence and ability to advocate for themselves, their rights and for issues they believe in.

Aside from the imperatives of the citizenship order, there are other strong reasons to emphasise the development of speaking skills in secondary education. Businesses and universities often complain that students do not have basic communication skills. This is imperative in the recent Rose report, which puts heavy emphasis on actively developing speaking and listening skills in primary education.

While speaking is widely used in secondary schools, more often it is used as a learning strategy – rather than developed as an outcome in itself. Students present, answer questions and work in groups – in order to reinforce knowledge and to develop and challenge ideas. But outside English lessons, I am not sure that very much work is done to help students develop style, clarity, structure, progression, reason, confidence or performance skills in their speaking, or to develop forms

of speech specific to their subject. Students are often asked to 'give a speech' without any teaching time going into developing techniques for making that speech any good. Concurrently, assessment of the speech will be focused on the content relevant to the discipline - and not technique.

This scheme of work was written to enable students to develop the ability to speak on a subject of concern as a form of political action. Students develop and perform a speech that aims to make others aware of an issue, and persuades them to change their views or behaviour in support of the issue. It is a powerful experiential form of learning about taking political action that is easy to manage for a whole class of any year group – within the limitations of a classroom.

Although the scheme of work was developed for citizenship, it focuses on students learning techniques to develop public speaking skills - and therefore most activities would be transferable to another subject. Learning is focused on identifying when and how these techniques should be used, and applying them correctly. Assessment focuses solely on ability to use the techniques (as opposed to the sophistication of the content) and emphasis is placed on assessment for learning - where students assess, analyse and advise each other throughout the project in order to fully understand what is necessary to speak well and how to improve.

Embedded in the unit are other key skills - students learn to research in order to back up an argument, rather than as an end in itself. They learn how to construct, structure and progress an argument. They learn how to edit, redraft and revise a text and they develop their ability to assess and empathise with their audience. Additionally, students learn different techniques to memorise information, and think about what techniques suit them. The unit also encourages students to think about their personal strengths and use them to their advantage in performance. The dynamic of the unit flicks between whole-class modelling, individual creative work and pair support and assessment.

Due to this emphasis on peer-assessment in pairs, students develop their ability to work closely with a partner and to support someone else in their personal development – refining skills of constructive feedback and support. Perhaps above all, the unit is characterised by a high level of praise from peers, from the teacher and from the class as a whole. Almost all the pupils were able to identify their strengths in their unit evaluations. An extraordinarily high level of students said the unit had improved their confidence.

Year eight Speakout Challenge unit

The unit was delivered over four 100-minute lessons. In the unit, public speaking skills are broken down into structure, delivery, and content/engaging the audience.

The unit is structured around the preparation of a speech for a public speaking competition – modelled on the *SpeakOut Challenge* competition for year ten students.

All the students in the class take part in a class competition. The winner from each class goes to a yeargroup final. (See resource one.)

Before the unit, many students expressed extreme unease at having to give a speech, an unease they continued to express through the beginning stages of peer performance/assessment. Even after initial discussion of techniques to 'hook' an audience, many students started their speeches: "Hello my name is… I am here today to talk to you about". And, more strikingly, initial drafts of speeches that students had completed for homework prior to the unit were little more than a reproduction of research carried out for homework. Students would introduce the subject then reel off a series of facts – some relevant, others totally irrelevant and far beyond the yeargroup's understanding. It was clear that speeches were being structured around the information obtained, rather than planned to give a message. As you will see, the techniques and resources used in this unit enabled students to overcome some of these common and obvious pitfalls in a strikingly successful way.

Introduction

The project was introduced in the lesson prior to beginning the unit. Students were given some time to think of subject ideas, then told to research their subject for homework - so they understood it fully for the next lesson. Despite their initial anxiety and reservations, students were engaged and motivated by the competitive structure of the unit and the fact that they could choose the subject they would speak on. Hundred percent engagement was a feature that continued throughout the unit -even with several normally disaffected students and one statemented student who refuses to do any work in most lessons.

Allowing students to decide the subject of the speech was also important, since their speech would constitute a citizenship action. Students would be taking action on an issue that personally concerned them. By choosing their own subject, they were able to bring the passion and energy they felt for the subject to their performance.

Students chose a variety of subjects. Some chose major political issues – poverty in developing countries, global warming, war in Gaza, knife-crime in London and smoking. Some chose school-related issues - like "Why do teachers never understand students?", how much homework students should get, bullying and uniform. The project was introduced the week before it was started. The students' first homework assignment was to research their subject and bring the lesson information, facts and stories about it to the lesson.

Lesson one: writing a great speech

Lesson aims: The first lesson focused on structure and content. By the end of the lesson, students were able to identify what makes a speech effective, explain how a speech should be structured, describe and use techniques to 'hook' the audience and plan and develop arguments with audience in mind. A secondary outcome was that the students refined their research skills – researching to support hypotheses, not vice-versa.

Starter: Identify features of a good speech

Students watched a speech from the *Speakout Challenge* website and identified things that made the speech effective in pairs.

2009 grand finalist and Leuisham regional winner Eniola Alonge

Speak Out Challenge

Can you change someone's opinions, attitude, beliefs, behaviour?

Your challenge is to motivate other people to care about the issue you have chosen, to feel what you feel… understand why this issues affects THEM … and maybe even change some of the small things they do….

5 Steps to a great speech

1. Choose an issue you really care about
What makes you mad? Upset? Angry? What do you think people should know about but don't? What do you think others could do to help make our community, country or world a better place?

2. Decide what the aim/key message of your speech is
Are you trying to persuade others to agree with your opinion? To change their behaviour? To do something to make the world a better place? Do you want them to join a campaign, start recycling, stop making racist comments or bullying other kids?

3. Get YOUR facts straight – do some research
Make sure you understand the issue really well before you try to explain it to others. Find out what people can do to address the issue. What is causing the problem? How can it be solved? YOU MUST BE ABLE TO BACK UP YOUR VIEWS WITH FACTS!

4. Write a great speech
Make sure your speech has a great 'hook', a strong ending, and that the points you make are interesting and engaging. Make sure you have looked at the 'how to engage your audience' tips and thought about what will make your speech powerful – real life stories, facts, humour, props…

5. Practise your performance
'Mark up' your script. Practise saying it out loud. Think about your body language. Know your speech really well so you don't have to read it. Be confident that you, and your speech are fantastic!

THE CHALLENGE
All speakers will present a speech. Class will peer-assess and secret-vote on the best speech. Winner gets £5 Borders voucher and opportunity to present in assembly. Winner will be part of Speakout Challenge of all year eight students at the end of the year.

Activity one: Mark a speech

After discussing what makes a 'good' speech as a class, students were presented with a simplified markscheme that corresponded to their ideas. This markscheme is used to mark each other's work throughout the unit, and in the final competition (see resource two).

The second activity was to use the markscheme to mark a speech that was less strong than the first speech (and was also taken from the *SpeakOut Challenge* website) in pairs. The pairs had to justify their marks in the feedback session. (This technique is called 'snowballing'. It is used to help students develop confidence. Students are more comfortable to feedback to the class because they have prepared and rehearsed their answers already in pairs). The activity also enabled the students to practise giving reasons to support an opinion.

The feedback from the peer assessment activity affirmed that the students understood the terminology. They were able to differentiate between good and bad performances of each of the different features of a good speech. It provided a structured way to develop understanding of the marking criteria, preparing students to make independent use of it during the project. It was an effective start to the project. I noticed that in the preceeding peer-assessment activity. students were able to use the criteria effectively, giving specific and accurate feedback on their partner's speeches.

Speech Performance Marking Criteria

Give the Speaker a mark out of five and write a comment about what you liked and what you thought they could improve at the end

Name of Speaker:	
INTRODUCTION Attention-grabbing 'hook'	
DELIVERY Clear confident loud performance	
BODY LANGUAGE Good posture, using body language	
ENGAGEMENT Engages and involves audience	
CONTENT Speech is interesting, well-explained and uses examples/stories	
ENDING – Was lively and exciting and made me want to vote for them!	
Comment	

Activity two: Create a speech outline

The next step was for the students to develop an outline of their own speeches using the *Speakout Challenge* speech builder (see resource three).

The first task aimed to get students to clarify what they wanted to achieve with their speech. Students had to decide what their message was. Students were asked to explain to their partner why they had chosen their subject, and how they would like their speech to affect their audience, to help them finally articulate in one sentence what their message was. I modelled the activity:

My speech topic: Students not handing in their homework.
My message: Make an effort to do your homework because it will help you achieve the best you can at school.

The students initially struggled to complete this task. The thought path was challenging. Many students chose cliché messages - and needed to be challenged to think about the audience and what they wanted *them* to do to stop the problem.

For example, one student was doing her speech on child abuse. Her initial message was: "Child abuse must stop!" (Perhaps the recent "Full stop" NSPCC campaign was floating somewhere in her memory!) I questioned her – did she think some of the students she would be speaking to might be abusing children? We discussed how the issue of child abuse was relevant to a group of year eight students. Eventually, she changed to the message to: "If you are being abused, or know of other students suffering abuse, there are ways to get help."

The next activity asked students to brainstorm all the reasons why people should support their position. When all the arguments were on paper, students were instructed to think about their audience and think about the people who aren't interested, or don't agree, with their view. The students had to think through who they were targeting and then*, and only then,* identify the two or three best points to raise in their speech.

Before the students tried this task, we modelled it as a group using my speech about homework. As a class, we brainstormed potential arguments. We then discussed which arguments students would listen to and which would make them turn off.

For example, it was obvious to students that: "Do your homework or you will get a detention" was not very persuasive. But they were persuaded by arguments that emphasised the number of students who do not achieve their potential because they don't do their homework. Arguments that recognised the reasons why students don't do their homework - because they are having trouble in class or don't understand –urged the students to get help outside lesson time rather than just give up. They also liked arguments that mentioned their dreams and futures.

Many students found my contribution – that when students don't do their homework it creates a huge pain in the bum for teachers, following them up, keeping them for detentions - very amusing!

Modelling this activity together showed students the link between argument and message, to show that argument needs to be targeted at an audience. They started to think about how to logically construct arguments. I asked students to think in pairs about what would be the best order for my arguments – out of the best ones we had picked. Most of the students decided that it was necessary to scare the audience first – with warnings of failure. Then, they said, the speaker should bring in the hopeful and inspiring arguments. Some thought that my humorous arguments could make a funny and memorable end point.

After this modelling, students continued planning their own speeches. Having already pinned down their messages, they found it much easier to think through their arguments. They were finally removed from the research they had done for homework in their thinking. Many were able to follow the pattern of identifying a problem then coming in with solutions – building to a climax.

I believe this activity was very important in the success of the speeches. Above all, it enabled students to give focus to their speeches and to understand that an effective speech has to be structured around its aims and its audience. It also gave them a clear technique for doing this. This was a massive leap from the initial drafts the students brought in, which were often incoherent or bluntly informative.

When the students began writing their speeches, some ignored their plans and reverted to their old habits of rehashing factual information in a structureless narrative. But with the structure in place already, it was easy to challenge students – is this an argument? Will it persuade people? Is it interesting? In response, the students did not become apathetic in a defensive or defeatist gesture at the criticism. They were able to understand the weakness of their work and had a clear path out of the problem.

Testament to the success of this approach was the fact that in the final speeches, no student rattled through factual information. Even the weaker students clearly introduced their speeches with a hook and gave at least one argument before reiterating their message in conclusion.

2008 grand finalist and Essex regional finalist Ed Alston

Speech builder:
The "Speak Out" Challenge!

Your Idea Generator

● Is there one thing in the world you would like to change? Why?
● What really motivates or annoys you? Why?
● Your proudest achievement - what is it?
● What would you miss the most out of everything you have? Why?
● Who do you admire the most? Why, and what have they achieved?

Your Topic Is

Your Key Message Is

Just one short sentence - keep your message in mind as you develop your speech.

Your Introduction

Now what is your opening sentence that will grab the audience's attention?

The Body Of The Speech

What are your three key points, and do you have any stories or examples to back them up?

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

How To Conclude Your Speech

The answer to any of these will give you your ending:

● What is my key message? _____

● What do I want the audience to do after I have spoken? _____

● Why is this topic important to me? _____

● What one change do I want to bring about? _____

Activity three: Use one of the 'hook' techniques to create an engaging introduction

From this point, we started to explore techniques for structuring and writing speeches effectively. We looked at the basic structure of introduction, middle and conclusion. We read through a list of ways to hook the audience (see resource four) and, as a class, analysed the techniques used in the two speeches we had already watched. Students were given a quick task to decide which of the three 'hooks' I was thinking of using for my speech, would be most effective and to explain why (see resource five).

Students were then given time to come up with an idea to hook their audience and begin writing the introduction and main section of the speech – which should be built around the two or three key points already identified. Stronger students were really motivated by the creative challenge of writing a hook. They started discussing ideas avidly or got their heads straight down.

Here are some examples of the students' best hooks:

"It affects every single person on this planet, but it especially affects our generation. Despite this, millions of us miss ways to prevent it every singe day. Shall I tell you what it is or have you worked it out? Global warming."

"160,000 children miss school every day in fear of intimidation. People think it is cool to take the mick out of someone. But it is not cool. You are actually ruining someone's life. Today, I am going to talk to you about bullying. I have been a victim of bullying because of my hair."

Weaker students got the concept, too. They mostly chose to use a bold statement or statistic to get the audience's attention. One student started by saying:

"Homework! Homework! Homework!"

Great Speech Writing Tips

1. INTRODUCTION: Get their attention - Hook Them!

Nobody likes to be bored. If you don't get the audience's attention right at the beginning their attention may wonder and they may not bother to listen to your speech. Find an interesting way to start the speech. Here are some ways you can 'hook' your audience

1. **STARTLING STATEMENT** – this year half of the year 11 students in the UK will not pass their GCSEs

2. **INTERESTING STATISTIC** – Only 30% of HFS students regularly hand in their homework

3. **A QUESTION** – Do you think that YOU, ALWAYS do your best to achieve your potential at school?

4. **A PROMISE** – By the end of this speech I promise you, that you will know how to improve your grades in only 1 school term

5. **A SPECIFIC DATE** – August 2012. The summer you will stand in HFS hall and receive your GCSE results

6. **A STORY** – 'She was tall, beautiful, lively and always the girl who had all the boys after her. She walked into school with her head held high…'

7. **A CHALLENGE TO THE AUDIENCE** – At the end of this speech I challenge you to tell me that what you're doing now is enough

2. The Main Bit - Keep them interested!

A) Tell Them What You Are Going To Tell Them

Speeches are different from written communication. People hear the words instead of reading them. When people read and don't understand something they can go back and read it again. But with a speech listeners have to get your point the first time. So you should explain what your main point is going to be – so that they can follow. For example – 'Today I am going to prove to you, why doing your homework is so important!'

B) Keep them engaged

Listeners find it hard to focus on someone speaking for too long, unless they are really interested. There are lots of tricks to keeping someone interested – read below.

1. **Ask Questions** – Use lots of YOU focused direct and rhetorical questions. Let the audience know that you are having a conversation with them. For example "Do you believe that…?" "What do you think works…?"; "You will discover that…"

2. **Use Props** – We all remember a good prop, something that brings your point to life. Use visible and colourful objects that the audience will remember.

3. **Get the Audience Working** – Get them involved with you. Ask them to respond to your questions actively with a show of hands, or get them to stand up in response to a question.

4. **Use Drama** –Bring your speech to life. Don't be afraid to act out a part of your speech - bring it to life. Use your body as a prop, use dialogue, accents and vocal variety.

5. **Tell a Story** – "Facts tell, stories sell". People are interested in real life stories. Use stories from your personal experience to expand on your point.

6. **Be funny** – If you are a funny person, tell a joke, or make the audience laugh. If they are enjoying listening to you they will certainly continue.

7. **Use facts** – The audience has no reason to believe you unless you can prove what you are saying. Facts make a point interesting and real, not just some chip that the speaker has on their shoulder!

8. **Be interesting** – Don't say something unless you yourself think it is interesting and would want to listen to it!

3. End with a Bang!

The ending is the bit the audience will remember. You need an ending that is rousing, and leaves people feeling excited and motivated to do something and to vote for you!

Use these questions below to help you decide what you want to say in the ending.

● What do I want the audience to do after I have spoken?
● Why is this topic important to me?
● What one change do I want to bring about?

For example – 'I know every single girl in this room is special. I know you are talented. But the world needs to know. Only YOU can make life work for you. Only YOU are in control of your destiny. Do what you need to do. Go out there, do your homework, work hard, and show the world just how incredible YOU are!'

Good Luck!

Activity four: Using techniques to 'engage the audience'

After the students had spent 20 minutes writing, I stopped the class and we looked at techniques to 'engage the audience' (see resource four). Students were then given a further 20 minutes to plan the techniques they would use, what they would discuss and to continue writing.

The students chose photo props, stories and facts as strategies to engage their audience. We discussed that arguments had to be backed up with facts to make them persuasive - otherwise they are just opinions. At this point, many students recognised that they needed to do further research – in order to find facts, pictures or stories to support their arguments.

This was an excellent development, as it reflected a structured use of research. Students searched effectively because they knew what they were looking for. It was at this stage that the students realised they didn't want to be boring. This really motivated them.

The strong students were incredibly creative – using humour and manipulating the audience with personal and moving stories. The weaker students relied on using questions and facts to engage the audience.

Which sentence should I use as my opening sentence?

a) *Hi. In my speech today I would like to explain to you why it is so important that students complete their homework on time.*

b) *Hi, my name is Miss Sharron and today I will be talking to you about homework and why you should make sure you always do it!*

c) *Doing homework isn't fun. It isn't cool. And it doesn't pay the bills... But it will help you on your way to making a success of your life and fulfilling your dreams…*

d) *Last year 50% of Highbury Fields students left HFS without 5 GCSEs A-C. In 3 years half of you in this class may also walk out of HFS without enough GCSE's to get on in life. And one of the main reasons for this is students NOT DOING THEIR HOMEWORK.*

EXPLAIN YOUR CHOICE WITH REASONS

Activity five: Mini-plenary- peer assessment

After the students had been given some time to work on their speeches, they were asked to read what they had written so far to their partners. The partners had to mark each other's speeches using the markscheme, then explain to the speaker the reasons for their marks, give a positive comment and some feedback on how they could improve.

Students enjoyed doing this. It reinforced the concepts they had learnt. I heard many students commenting to each other that they thought the other person's speech was boring – and generally students responded very well to the constructive criticism. I saw no examples of offence taken. On the contrary, I was positively surprised to see the extent to which students were supporting each other by engaging jointly in the creative process of idea generation to overcome the identified weaknesses.

Some students were very reluctant to read their speech out at this stage. I wilfully insisted that all the students ido this activity, and I sat with and coaxed reluctant students into reading. I allowed some of them to do it in another room or in the corridor. However, once students had participated, and received positive feedback, there was generally no resistance in future peer performances or participating in the final competition.

Hot Tips for Performance

> 1. **Say it Out Loud**
> 2. **Mark Up Your Script**
> 3. **Learn it**
> 4. **Rehearse it**

1. Say it Out Loud

You need to practise reading your speech like you're really talking to a group. Why?

● To time it – remember, one minute is the maximum
● You will hear problems that your eyes don't see – like sentences that are too long and seem to go on forever like this sentence does so that I can make a point about sentences that are too long!
● To find any accidental tongue-twisters. For example, these sentences are easy to read to yourself – But try saying them out loud!

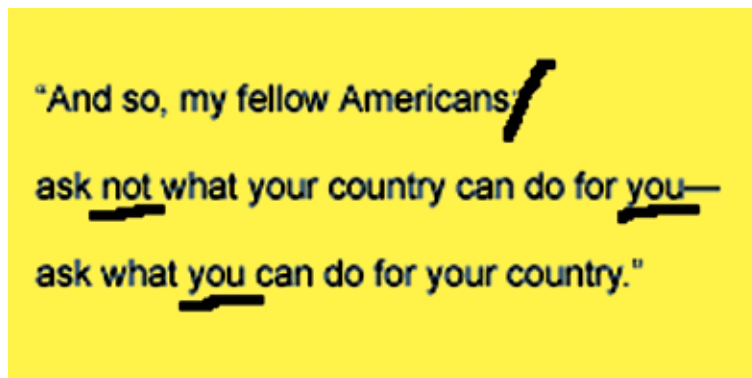|	
She sells sea shells on the sea shore. The sea shells that she sells are sea shells I'm sure.	Peter Piper picked a peck of pickled peppers; A peck of pickled peppers Peter Piper picked; If Peter Piper picked a peck of pickled peppers, Where's the peck of pickled peppers Peter Piper picked?

2. Mark Up Your Script

This means making marks on the speech to help you remember how you want to sound when you perform your speech.

Professional announcers, newscasters and actors do this all the time. And so do people giving speeches. You can underline words that you want to emphasise by saying them louder or with more energy. And you can mark places where you want to pause for dramatic effect, or need to take a breath.

You should make up your own marks to use that you understand.

Here is an example of a marked up script – can you tell how it was meant to be said?

3. Learn it

There are some tricks to learning a speech. Choose one of these strategies:

A. Learn your speech off by heart.
Perform your speech from memory. However, you should keep a copy on hand in case you get lost and need to refer to it. Write it out neatly with clear paragraphs, use headings and highlight important sections.

B. Use prompt cards.
Use prompt cards to guide you through the key points you have planned, but improvise around these points. You should make one card for the introduction, conclusion and each key point, and include any important facts/stories/ quotes you may forget or specific sentences you want to use verbatim.

C. Improvise.
Your speech will be free flowing and improvised. You will only plan the main points you want to talk about and write them up on one card to keep you on track during your performance.

4. Rehearse it

Practise your speech on your own and with a friend. Remember to focus on:

● Speaking loudly and clearly
● Changing the tone of your voice and being expressive
● Using pauses
● Not reading from the script
● Eye contact with the audience
● Confident posture
● Using body language

Taken from teachers.scholastic.com/writewit/speech/sayit.htm

Activity six: Building a memorable ending.

As a class, we discussed why the end of the speech is critical. A speaker's last words form the feeling that the audience is left with. This defines how he or she will be remembered. In the final part of the speech, the speaker should be building to a climax where they can urge the listeners to act on their speech. Depending on the subject, there should be some kind of outcome - either a change in the viewer's ideas or a change in their behaviour.

For this activity, I asked the students to use the speech builder to write down what they wanted the audience to do and to feel as a result of listening to their speech. This would help them to write strong endings.

An example of a successful ending:

"Remember Baby P – the cute one-year old with blonde hair and blue eyes and red cheeks. Remember his abusive mother's boyfriend. Remember - that he died. Should any child have this fate? Should they die? Will you let another chubby-cheeked baby die? Put a stop to child abuse."

"I'm not saying that you have to adopt five pets. Just show the ones you've got that you love them, because they're caring beings too."

The students were asked to finish a first draft of their speech for homework.

A proud group from Croydon's Thomas More Catholic School.

SPEAKOUT CHALLENGE SPEECH ASSESSMENT CRITERIA

LEVEL	STRUCTURE	CONTENT	DELIVERY
4	You have an introduction	Your speech has a message	You do some of your speech without reading it You make eye contact with audience Your voice is clear
5	You have a clear introduction, middle and conclusion	Your speech has a message Speech is interesting and engaging. You use facts to back up your points	You do most of your speech without reading You use body language Your voice is loud and clear
6	Your introduction has a 'hook' to get the audience's attention Your ending is exciting and motivating	Your speech uses several of the techniques to engage the audience (facts, stories, questions, humour, props, involves audience)	You are loud, clear and confident You speak directly to the audience, looking at them and engaging with them You use pauses

Lesson two: learning how to effectively perform your speech

Lesson aims: By the end of the lesson, the students were able to describe features of a good performance, use techniques to develop their own performances and assess and support a peer in developing their work.

Starter: the eye-contact game

This is a warm up activity to get students ready for an active speaking lesson and to reinforce the importance, and difficulty, of using eye-contact. The students all stand up. One student has to speak for 30 seconds and make eye contact with everyone in the room. The listeners sit down once contact has been made.

Activity one: Peer-assess finished speech for content and structure

Students are asked to perform their speech (which they should have written in full for homework) to their partner (a different partner from last week) who marks the speech for content and structure. Following exchange of feedback, the pair should come up with ideas for improving the speech. Time is allocated for redrafts.
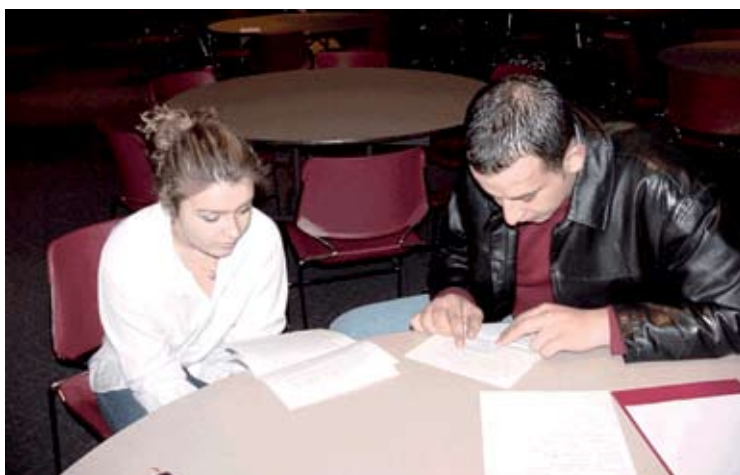
When I did this in my lesson, all the students wanted redrafting time. In my experience, this is unusual - my students are usually reluctant to redraft work once they think they have finished it, and get bored. The degree of compliance showed how useful the peer-assessments were.

Activity two: 'Read through' and 'mark up'

This is the first step in developing performance skills. As a whole class, we read through resource six. The students all tried saying the tongue-twisters in their heads, then out loud. The aim of the task is to show that some sentences look fine on paper, but are not easy to say. The students then read through their speeches aloud, changing any parts that were too difficult to say.

Then I showed the students how to 'mark up' the speech. 'Marking up' is reading through the speech and marking where you want to pause or add emphasis.

I showed the students how to mark up with an activity where students read a marked-up script on the whiteboard aloud.

Marking up also develops the skill of analysing a text. As well as encouraging students to think about expression, it asks them to think more deeply about the meaning of what they are saying. It was clear that the students enjoyed this activity – and I noticed students following their mark-ups well during their performances.

Activity three: Learning the speech

The students were then given considerable time to memorise their speeches. I proposed three different techniques for learning a speech:

1. Learn your speech off by heart
You will be saying your speech from memory. However, you should keep a copy to hand in case you get lost and need to refer to it. Write it out neatly with clear paragraphs, use headings and highlight important sections.

2. Use prompt cards
Use prompt cards to guide you through the key points you have planned, but improvise around these points. You should make one card each for the introduction, conclusion and key points. Include the important facts/stories/quotes you don't want to forget or specific sentences that you want to use verbatim.

3. Improvise
Your speech will be free-flowing and improvised. You will only plan the main points you want to talk about, and write them up on one card to keep you on track during performance.

Students found these frameworks useful. Generally, methods one and two were used the most.

Activity four: Rehearsing your performance

Using the marking criteria as a whole class, we recapped the important points about delivering a speech effectively by identifying which of the marking criteria were related to performance and recapping other important features - eye-contact, tone variation, pauses, volume, confidence, movement and posture.

Two students volunteered to perform their speeches and get marked as a trial run.

Next, the students performed their speech to their partners, who marked them on delivery alone. Students then helped each other practise performing. We imagined the relationship was actor-director. This was an interesting process to watch. Students had become less shy by this stage, and with the security of their script and the confidence of having already performed several times, the students were nearly ready to perform.

It is easy to analyse what is weak and needs improving in another person's delivery. It is less easy to give advice on how to improve.

I think the students learned by observing how I was coaching students. Many of the students coached their partners by mimicking the techniques I was using. For example, when a student was timid, I asked them to read their first two lines, then read it louder, then read it again shouting. If a student was looking at the paper or looking down, I asked her to look at me and her partner while she spoke. We often rehearsed techniques by repetition until confidence grew. Another classic problem was posture. I spent time with students getting them to stand straight with their legs apart, their head up, thinking about how they would use their hands.

For some students, this process focused mainly on increasing volume. Other students were inspired watching each other and became ambitious – using arm gestures, moving around. I think this was a massively important activity. I don't think my students had ever rehearsed a speech before in a formal learning capacity with targets to improve their performance.

Lesson three: the Speakout Challenge competition

Lesson Aims: By the end of the lesson, *every* student was able to perform a highly prepared speech in a formal environment to the whole class.

Students need about 20 minutes to practise and prepare their speeches before the competition starts. During the competition, each student completes a markscheme for each speaker.

Two students were put in charge of collecting the results and adding up the marks. One student is the timekeeper and has a red and yellow card – the yellow card means '15 seconds to go', the red card means 'finish'. Another student should count the speaker in and film the speech.

The teacher assesses the speech using the levelled assessment criteria (see resource seven).

The students enjoyed listening to each other's speeches and were astonishingly self-regulating in terms of volume and their support for each other. The students were often surprised at how well their speech had been received - although some felt disappointed in their performance afterwards. It was apparent that the students had been rehearsing their speeches throughout the week and were excited about the competition. The deputy head came to help judge. We were both astonished at the quality of the speeches – the energy, passion and structure. The degree to which the speakers understood their audience was astounding.

Lesson four: reflection

Lesson aims: By the end of lesson, the students were able to reflect on the progress they had made - identifying how they felt they had improved, what their strengths were and areas for development.

Activity one: Reflection

The students use written feedback from the peer-assessment and the levelled feedback from the teacher as well as video material of their speech (uploaded onto shared drive on computers). These support them in their reflection and evaluation.

After viewing all the resources, the students should silently complete a set of evaluation questions in their books:

• What did you enjoy in this unit?
• Do you think you have improved over the unit? How?
• What do you think went well in your speech?
• What would you improve if you were going to repeat the speech?
• Have you learned anything you could use next time you do a speech in another subject?
• In what way was the feedback from other students and watching the film of your own speech useful?
• Did you learn anything assessing other student's work?
• Do you think your speech achieved its aims?

It is a great experience watching re-runs of yourself speaking - especially enlightening for us teachers! The students were amused, surprised, embarrassed - and proud, too. With perhaps one or two exceptions in two full classes, all the students enjoyed the unit and felt they had benefited from it.

Evaluation

The unit was successful in several respects. Many students compared with and exceeded their year ten counterparts who did the *Speakout Challenge* workshop (a one-day training event funded by the Jack Petchey Foundation). Some of the speeches were so engaging that we all really enjoyed the competition. The atmosphere was fantastic.

Learning to create an engaging 'hook' was probably the most important development for most students. It was a concept they easily understood and were creative in employing, and it set an engaging tone to nearly all the participants' speeches. Most students were able to keep their speeches interesting - a marked improvement from the initial dreary dredged-up internet statistics.

I believe the work structuring the speech beforehand underpinned this development. But it was perhaps more largely affected by the constant peer and self assessment.

A common weakness, initially, was that the students' eagerness to use the information they had found resulted in boring narratives that reeled off information without thinking how the audience received it. The work we did on structuring a speech and making the speech engaging helped the students feel comfortable shedding irrelevant information.

Nearly all the students had clear starts and finishes to their speeches - and many used clear arguments and climactic and mobilising conclusions. Stronger students showed progression in their arguments and were able to follow a structure of raising awareness of the issue then proposing solutions. They used evidence to back up their opinions and reinforced their points.

Probably the most marked improvement in students throughout the unit was their development of confidence. Throughout the unit, their confidence grew. This was a direct result of putting so much class time into practising the speeches –starting by just reading them aloud and later performing to a small audience in the peer assessment activities.

I believe conceptualising the speech as a 'performance' also helped a lot of students - by thinking of it like that, they were able to invest in 'rehearsing' it. Students felt reassured by learning their speeches by heart and by preparing their movements when they performed it. Watching some incredibly shy students blossom into confident speakers was a really wonderful experience.

Overall, I feel all the students developed in this unit and took away skills they will use in all subjects. Perhaps above all, this was a unit that students enjoyed – from start to finish.

What did the students have to say?

"I enjoyed listening to everybody's speeches"

"I think it is a very interesting unit and I really enjoyed it and it was really different"

"One thing I enjoyed is speaking in front of people. Also gaining my confidence in front of my friends."

"One thing I learned is to project your voice and be confident" (this was from a student who took enormous coaxing initially to even read her speech out!)

"I spoke clearly."

"I think that I got everyone's attention, which is hard to do and is very good."

"One thing I learned is speaking to an audience ain't hard!"

"I think my loudness went well as well as my confidence."

"I think it went well. I had to conquer my fear and had a loud clear voice."

"I think I have improved because normally I wouldn't be as confident or loud."

"I think what went well in my speech was I think it was interesting. It was also good that I included the pictures as they kept the audience engaged."

"I have learned how to use pauses."

"I think the fact that I finished with only one stumble is astonishing!"

"Reading the feedback made me feel good about myself."

"I improved because I couldn't do speeches before!"

"The thing I most improved upon would be, I can make a serious point interesting."

"I have improved because I know how to get the audience's attention at the start."

"I have improved a bit because I've learned techniques on how to make a good speech."

"If I gave a speech again I would work on my body language and also think about how I am engaging the audience."

"I improved my body language. I realised my friends did not use body language and so I tried to make sure I did."

"I would try not to panic at the end."

"I would try to memorise it so I don't have to read from my book."

"I would try to end with more of a bang!"

"I need to improve my use of body language and need to add more information and facts on animal testing."

"I would try to speak without my book in my hand."

"Watching my speech on video was helpful because it gives you a hint of how you look and when you can see yourself it is easier to know how to improve."

"I need to talk slower and not rush and walk around more."

"I would be louder and not walk around the room so much."

"I have improved because I was less confident before and was shy and I wasn't that loud, but now I improved it, I think that it was the best thing I did!"

Other useful programs and resources

BT Better World Campaign website – range of free communication skills resources www.btbetterworld.com

Schools Question Time www.schoolsquestiontime.org

Citizenship Foundation Mock Trial Competition www.citizenshipfoundation.org.uk

Model UN http://www.una-uk.org/education/index.html

www.idebate.org a huge database of debate resources and online debating

English Speaking Union – www.esu.org Centre for speech and debate. Runs range of CPD programs for teachers as well as training for students, resources, information, and national debating and public speaking competitions, the 'Discover your Voice' program for students and a summer Debate Academy. Also runs the Britishdebate.com website.

Kerrie Sharron was a secondary school teacher working in London. She is taking a year out volunteering at an Israeli School. Many of her handouts are adapted from Speak Out challenge website worksheets.