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My Experience in Public Speech

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Sir Winston S. Churchill, a former Prime Minister of United Kingdom, says these words about public speech: “A good speech should be like a woman's skirt; long enough to cover the subject and short enough to create interest”. This metaphorical quote underlines the three main points about a good public speech: to be brief, to create an interest and to cover the topic. It may seem easy to say but quite hard to put in practice, especially when the speech must be performed by a nonnative speaker in a nonnative language. That was my case. For my honor project this semester, I had to give a speech about different subjects to students from other classes in English, which is my second language. This task was quite difficult for me for two reasons. First, I usually didn't like to speak too much in English because I was not really fluent in English as much as I was in French. Therefore, I was scared to not be able to give a speech in an English style by being not too long or short. I was also terrified to not be able to make my topic interesting enough for my audience, especially when it comes to use humor in English inside my topic.

Second, I was not used to give a long speech alone in English in front of unknown people who are native English speaker. The fear of being judged by my audience because of my pronunciation with my French accent during my speech, made me feel so cold like an ice water. I was ready to give up anytime. With these obstacles in my mind, I wondered for few days if I could fulfill my honor project. I was extremely anxious and hesitated to do this project. I even

wished that the project might be cancelled, so I could change the project. However, I finally convinced myself to not be afraid. My magical words were: “In a race, some obstacles are made for the runners to cross it and show how strong they are. So, I have to demonstrate the same strength that the runners and cross these obstacles. Remember! It is also a speech for fun and more practices for my communication class. It has nothing to do with my credit for my class. And if I have a blank during the speech, I have to remember some tips from my communication class with Ms. Jody”. Thus, I personally did not regret to participate to this project because I learned how to be more confident for a speech as a nonnative speaker and I tasted the joy to share some information with other students.

During my honor project, I learned how to build my confidence when I gave a speech in English. For example, I usually spoke slowly and in low voice when I should speak publicly in English in order to hide my shyness. However, for my speech, I learned how to use my vocal variation (volume of sound, modulation of pitch, and rhythm) to speak clearly with more conviction. I first wrote my main points on a paper. Then, I read my points out loud and repeated them until I memorized each point in my heart. Finally, I started to play with some English words that were easy for me to use and close to some French words in order not to forget the main ideas of my speech. Therefore, I became more confident about my speech and spoke without fear in front of my audience.

Besides building my confidence, I also enjoyed sharing some information with other students. As an illustration, in a technique class, I had to speak about my Congolese culture and helped the students to see some differences between my culture and their culture. I highlighted some points such as how to behave in front of an elder or how women are treated in my society. Then, one student asked me if I cherish my freedom here in USA. It was interesting to see that he

thinks that my culture has too many restrictions. However, I reminded him that it was not bad to live these restrictions because I had learned some social and basic manners from them. The student agreed with me on that point and I was glad to show him a positive point of view of living in such society. Thus, I was delighted to share some knowledge with other students and tasted the joy of sharing some common points.

In conclusion, my experience as a nonnative English speaker was like a big jump of obstacles in a race. I had to face my fear of speaking fluently in English in front of a public alone. I also had to overcome the fear of being judged for my French accent when I spoke in English. But it was worthwhile to experience it and to come out with an increase of confidence and the joy of sharing some knowledge with other students. Moreover, if I had to redo it in future, I will not hesitate like before. I will go with much confidence because my goal will be to share more with my audience and have fun.

Works Cited

“Public Speaking Quotes .” *Goodreads*, Goodreads Inc., www.goodreads.com/quotes/tag/public-speaking.