# The Fine Art of Oral Presentations,

# or How to Make (Almost) Complete Strangers

# Listen to You with Delight and Learn from You with Ease

Professor Margaret Waller

Remember, these tips are useful whether you're speaking in English, in French or in Urdu.

PREPARATION - It takes a lot more time, effort, and coordination than you may think. Leave yourself HOURS not minutes to do this. The night before is WAY TOO LATE!

**BE CLEAR ABOUT YOUR GOALS**

* In other words, ask yourself what you want to do in this presentation? describe? persuade? explain? explore? demonstrate? Your goals will help you choose a suitable style or tone: serious? philosophical? whimsical? comical? scholarly? (Any presentation may have a combination of these styles of presentation.)
* Choose a topic you know something about and are interested in.
* Determine WHY you're interested in the topic you chose and why you think other people should or could be. **Determine what you think the student most and least knowledgeable about this topic knows already. This lets you know the dimensions of the window of interest and knowledge you're working with**.
* Identify the THREE/FOUR points you most want people to understand/remember. WRITE THESE DOWN. (I say 3 or 4 because there's a limit to what you can convey in the short amount of time you're given. Obviously, there'll be a lot of other information as well, and hopefully we'll all retain some of that depending on our interest level and whether the information is conveyed well.)
* Determine HOW you're going to make these points CLEAR and MEMORABLE through your presentation. What you do in your presentation should have a direct bearing on those goals.
* **Spend at least as much time on HOW as WHAT!!! Voilà une des choses qui distinguent une présentation de cette sorte d'un "paper" que vous lisez à un colloque par exemple.**

# PRACTICE, PRACTICE, PRACTICE

## It's VERY important that you sound knowledgeable and confident and that you SPEAK to us rather than reading from a long series of sentences or notes**. So practice, practice, practice to the point that you can do this with only the barest minimum of written notes.**

# BEGINNINGS

Think about the fact that various members of your audience have just a) been cramming for a math test, b) broken up with their boy/girlfriend, c) woken up. In any case, they have definitely NOT been thinking about your topic and probably have not been thinking in French at all.

What's a good WARMUP to your topic? It might only take 30 seconds or a minute, but it would help us get used to your voice, your topic, and the fact that we're all about to listen to something we haven't prepared.

FOR EXAMPLE: say a few things about what your topic is

and/or explain why you chose it

and/or ask us whether we've ever heard of x, read y, seen z

then say briefly what you and your partner will be doing in the presentation (this gets us on your wave length and saves you from that awkward moment of silence at the end when you make us guess whether or not you're done)

# MIDDLES

**VISUALS, VISUALS, VISUALS** (Did I mention visuals?)

"Visuals" doesn't necessarily mean a fancy poster - though this is often quite useful and is a nice attention grabber. "Visuals," however, **means anything that conveys information through SIGHT as well as sound**: a PHOTOCOPIED HANDOUT, a list of vocabulary words, GESTURES to dramatize what you're talking about, BIG color illustrations of something, a SHORT video clip (Don't overdo the video. If it goes on for a while it distracts from your own presentation. It also requires setting up the machine before class.) Make your visuals LARGE and EASY TO SEE OR READ.

**BE CREATIVE!! This makes your presentation memorable.**

* Involve your audience, especially if doing so helps engage us in your material and helps you convey or reinforce one of your main points.
* Act out a scene or a situation!
* Have us do something actively with you as part of the learning process.

# VOCABULARY

Remember that you and your audience are working in a foreign language. DON'T overdo the vocabulary words unless the context is very clear. **Also use gestures to make what you are saying clear.**

If you are going to use more than 3 or 4 difficult vocabulary words that are key to your presentation, you might want to go over them quickly with us beforehand (right after your initial warm up comments - see above); give them as a handout if possible.

# PRONUNCIATION

If you have a question about the pronunciation of a word or words, ask me or someone French or someone taking an upper-level French course. Don't practice the wrong pronunciation, this only reinforces it and makes it harder to remember the right sound.

# ENDINGS

## There is nothing more awkward for the audience than a presentation that ends with a whimper instead of a bang. Why not say something like: "This is the end of our presentation. We hope you've learned x, seen y, thought about z (or something that makes sense given your topic and presentation). We have a few minutes for questions. Do you have any questions?" (You might think of a question or two for US in case there's an awkward silence; anything to get us talking and engaged with you.)

By the end, if you've done all the things mentioned above , we'll definitely be clapping wildly for you. We know how hard it is to do these presentations well!

**A FINAL NOTE:**

Because I think these oral skills are so important and because this class is a speaking intensive course, I'm going to give you a worksheet that will help you prepare your next presentation**. I ask you and your partner to fill out this worksheet and hand it in to me right before your oral presentation.**

Names \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Topic: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Why did you choose this topic?

State your goals for the presentation.

What are the 3-4 points you want us to retain? For each, tell me how you propose to make these points clear and memorable. BE CREATIVE!!! THINK OUTSIDE THE BOX if that will be most effective.

1.

2.

3.

4.

VISUALS:

List the ways you'll be conveying the information through sight as well as sound:

WARMUP: How will you ease us into the topic?

ENDING: What are you going to say to wind up your presentation and begin the question and answer period?

PREPARATION:  
How much time did you spend preparing this presentation? together? separately?

What took the most time?

What would you do differently the next time?

Introducing Students to the Presentation

Professor Margaret Waller

Translated from French

Dear All,

You all participated I'm sure to oral presentations of students were boring, abstract, vague or poorly organized .... It will not be like this in our class! ☺

The time for oral presentations will be an opportunity to intrigue and interest your colleagues with the highlights from the ideas / images / critical quotes / surveys etc. you have found or developed by your essay. So you know you'll choose what we find particularly fascinating given topics we explored throughout the course.

Since our time is limited, you'll only 4 minutes for the presentation. I'll stop you after 4 and a half minutes. Remember that we need some context to understand some of the things you say. So choose what you'll do for your oral presentation. 4 minutes is not long. Time yourself!

The presentation will be noted for its clarity, organization, interest, and quality of content. You have worked hard. It's time to share and celebrate by doing your best.

Come with the equipment you / we need - quotes, images, a timeline - a copy for each (11 in total including you) - everything needed to communicate your ideas in the most efficient manner . Do not hesitate to use Power Point if it will help you BUT if so, it must have emailed me BEFORE noon Monday, May 2 We do not have time to wait until everyone puts its "flash drive".

Look vocabulary etc. you need and PRACTICE. 4 minutes = 2 pages about (double-spaced). The idea is not to read but you show how your spoken French has improved since the beginning of the course.

After each presentation, there will be 2 minutes for discussion. I count on each of you to ask at least one question to somebody else about his presentation. So be attentive and generous throughout the class as you have been throughout the course.

Hope to see you and listen to you,

Peggy