

## Style – Using your voice effectively

### A. Goal of the lesson

- This lesson aims to motivate and enhance the step by step to discover and use the power of their voice.

Tip: You as trainer can always consider to have your participants not sitting behind tables. In this session particularly it is way more productive, if you literally create a space that allows standing in a circle, standing opposite to each other in a few meters distance or walking around. Theoretically, you could even do this outside of a building – just as you prefer.

Disclaimer: Working on your voice can be (for some participants) a very delicate issue. Please be especially careful of creating a safe space learning environment in which it is absolutely ok to make mistakes in order not to lose their motivation

### B. Activities

#### 1. Introduction activity (5 minutes)

- a) „It is not only the use of language itself – it is also the use of our voice that makes us humans a very special species:
- b) Guiding Question: What are aspects which we as humans can do with our voice? [volume, comprehensible vs mumbling, clarity, speed etc.] Keep record of the aspects (on Flipchart, board etc.) and ask the follow up question:
- c) „Why is it important, to speak ... loudly/clearly/slowly etc.?  
[In theory, we as trainer could easily explain this ourselves – but if you want to truly motivate them to work on their voices, we recommend to sell the value by giving them the opportunity to answer these questions on their own.]
- d) Follow up assignment: Let us all make a very bad performance together. How does communication look like, or better sound, when we speak too fast/slow/loud/silent/uncomprehensible etc.?

Advanced level training trick: For this small assignment we could just stand in a circle. But we could also be „milling around“: Everybody walks randomly around the room. As soon as the trainer gives an assignment, i.e. talk to each other very very silently, the participants find a teampartner and form teams of two for this assignment. Then they start milling around again... thus you create a better atmosphere and it is easier for them to find a „good“ teampartner they feel they can trust later.

#### 2. Exercise I - Working on the first aspect, i.e. volume (10 to 15 minutes)

Form teams of two and define who is A and who is B

Trainer present a quick topic for them to talk about without preparation, i.e. my favourite movie, band, city, etc.

a) A begins to talk about topic, using his/her natural volume – B listens and shows A without talking or interrupting immediate feedback on the volume. This can be done by pointing the index finger to the ceiling (louder please) or to the floor (too loud), by holding your hands to your ears etc. and serves the purpose of providing feedback, and as well activating every one. Speak until you found the right volume.

b) B begins to talk about topic, using his/her natural volume – A listens and shows B without talking or interrupting immediate feedback on the volume...

c) If your group is small enough let every participant speak in front of the group, while the listening crowd silently gives immediate feedback with their hands. Again speak, until you found the right volume.

d) Every participant tells what he or she found out about their way of speaking and what they are going to work on in the future. AND they get one minute to write down their individual promise to their future self.

Optional: You can simulate the setting of a debate if you want, having them stand in the front and everyone else standing or sitting like in a debate.

### **3. Exercise II - Working on the second aspect i.e. speed (10 to 15 minutes)**

Optional: Create new teams of two – or just go back to your team partner.

Again provide them with an easy trivial topic, no preparation.

a) A begins to talk about topic, using his/her natural speaking speed – B listens and shows A without talking or interrupting immediate feedback on the speed. Speak until your team partner is happy.

b) B begins to talk about topic, using his/her natural speed – A listens and shows B without talking or interrupting immediate feedback on the speed...

c) If your group is small enough let every participant speak in front of the group, while the listening crowd silently gives immediate feedback with their hands. Again speak, until your audience is happy.

d) Every participant tells what he or she found out about their way of speaking and what they are going to work on in the future. AND they get one minute to write down their individual promise to their future self.

#### 4. Exercise III - Working on the third aspect i.e. filler words (15 minutes)

Disclaimer: Filler words is special! Some speakers just don't have them. Some will need more time, practice and effort than 15 minutes.

[Optionally, ask around the class to verify whether they know what filler words (such as „uhm“, „so“, etc. are. Advanced students may be aware of filler words that they uniquely possess themselves, and can be asked to write them down. For example: „at the point at which,“ „mister/madam Speaker“]

For this exercise, we have three levels:

Level 1: Everybody speak individually (and at the same time) and try to avoid filler words.

If you want to be a well prepared expert trainer on this you can come up with a breathing exercise now, which serves the purpose of getting rid of nervousness.

Examples include the „Alligator“

If you don't have a catalogue of breathing exercises, you can guide your participants through a couple of deep breaths, and possibly ask them to plant their feet firmly into the ground to have them mentally take „the floor“ for themselves.

Level 2: Everybody speak in teams of two. When you accidentally have a filler word, your teampartner tells you to start again. You pass this level after successfully speaking one minute without any filler words.

Level 3: This is the ultimate stress test: in front of an audience. Volunteers first!

One after the other faces the challenge to speak in front of the group – and does not pass the level before they manage one minute speaking without filler words. Success deserves applause! You might need an exit strategy here – it can happen that a person is not successful and becomes more nervous, thus performing even worse. Then you need to be a reliable trainer who protects the participants even if they fail in an exercise!

Tip: For such exercise, we recommend not to create any order who will be speaking first and who second... but instead have the stage open and the audience ready and whoever feels confident enough to start, just goes to the front and begins.

#### C. Preparation

This time there is not too much work to do before the session. So you can focus on being especially clear about how you instruct the assignments. We recommend to prepare an exact wording for the instructions.

#### **D. Hints**

With 45 Minutes this exercise is short, but possible. We recommend to add another 45 minutes to have a quick practice debate/opyy proppy in which you focus your trainer's expert feedback on the aspects of the session (volume, speed, clarity etc.)

#### **E. Verification and Theory**

To be honest, there is a whole universe of theories and literature about everything that influences our voice. Fortunately, to be succesful debaters we do not need to become experts on the background theories. Therefore, it is absolutely sufficient here to become aware of our own voice and get the feedback from other persons who listen to us.

