

(1) Title: Drastic Measures: Teaching Effective Delivery Through Phil Davison

(2) Course: Basic Communication Course / Introduction to Public Speaking

(3) Abstract:

This activity is designed to help students recognize the differences between effective and ineffective delivery behaviors by analyzing an antithetical political speech. Using a speech by former politician Phil Davison, students will be put in a position to understand the implications of delivery in transforming perceptions of a public speaker. Furthermore, students should identify practical strategies for improving delivery skills and apply knowledge of delivery skills to various contexts to better understand the overall importance of delivery in conjunction with content and structure.

(4) Rationale:

For many basic courses speaking assignments, the evaluation of effective delivery includes familiar and generic criteria: make eye contact, transition on main points, incorporate gestures, and articulate words clearly. It is critical that students practice using these criteria in order to become more confident, charismatic speakers (Ivic & Green, 2012); however, before this can occur, students must be able to correctly name and acknowledge these specific behaviors. Therefore, to introduce students to effective public speaking delivery behaviors, this activity aims to have students identify and offer strategies for improvement in regards to a real-life public speaking example. This activity has students watch, reflect, and discuss a “poor” speech to develop a basic recognition of verbal and nonverbal delivery behaviors, in addition to understanding the extent to which these behaviors should be incorporated within their own speeches.

Specifically, this activity incorporates a politically-charged speech by Phil Davison, a politician vying to be the Republican candidate for the Stark County, Ohio treasurer election. The speech by Davison became a viral YouTube sensation, and even landed the politician an appearance on the Comedy Central television show *Tosh.0*. While many examples of speech delivery exist, Phil Davison offers instructors and students an opportunity to uniquely learn from the antithesis of effective delivery. Building from Mathan and Koedinger’s (2005) application of the *intelligent novice* (Bruer, 1993), this activity asks students to practice error detection and correction within a model of (un)expected performance. Therefore, instructors can use this activity to provide a fresh and engaging take on speech delivery that students enjoy.

In addition to watching the speech, students will be given a transcript of the speech prior to their viewing. Instructors should provide students an opportunity to observe the content and structure of the speech in order to better understand the ways in which the speaker’s delivery behaviors change their entire opinion of the performance. Following the viewing, instructors will engage students in a discussion regarding the observed effective and ineffective behaviors, their changing viewpoints on the speech based on delivery, areas for potential improvement, and the importance of strong delivery behaviors outside of classroom public speaking assignments.

(5) Directions/Method:

This activity may be completed in 50 and 75-minute class periods. The nature of the activity will require the instructor to access YouTube or a downloaded version of the original speech by Phil Davison (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=djfDZrm9KZs>). Additionally, the

activity requires a typed-transcript of the speech to provide students beforehand (see Appendix). Finally, the video lasts approximately 5 minutes and 51 seconds.

Prior to watching the video, the instructor should either split students into groups or have them individually analyze the transcribed speech. Following basic principles of speech content and structure outlined in most public speaking curricula, students should evaluate the speech based on their knowledge of effective speech construction and preparation. For instance, students may notice that Davison attempts to establish his credibility during his introduction or that he frequently uses vivid language to complement his main points (Simonds, Hunt, & Simonds, 2013). The instructor should begin a conversation with students regarding the observable elements within the speech transcript and their derived impressions of the speech as a whole.

Next, the instructor should play the speech by Phil Davison in its entirety, instructing students to follow along with their transcripts. Once the video has finished, the instructor should provide students with an opportunity (around 5 minutes) to take note of the observed ineffective and effective speech delivery behaviors. Finally, the instructor should begin by asking students to list the low-inference delivery behaviors they observed within the speech before gradually moving the discussion to focus on the different perceptions formed before and after watching the speech. Questions for students to answer during the discussion of the speech include:

- Start with observable behaviors:
 - What did they see that went *wrong*?
 - What did they see that went *well*?
- How did your impression of Phil Davison change before and after watching the speech?
- How did the specific aspects of delivery specifically affect your perception of the speech?
- How did his vocal variety affect the speech organization?
- How did his nonverbal behaviors affect your interpretation of the speech?
- What does this tell you about the importance of verbal delivery?
- Would you give Phil Davison the nomination and allow him to run for treasurer? Why or why not?
- **Debriefing:** What are some other situations where verbal delivery might be of extra importance?
- **Debriefing:** What steps can you take to ensure you delivery your information in an effective manner?

(6) Results/Debriefing

First, the use of humor in the classroom enhances student motivation to learn and increases their ability to process knowledge by clarifying the content (Wanzer, Frymier, & Irwin, 2010). Thus, the video by Phil Davison kept students engaged by providing them with purposeful and deliberate examples of (un)expected delivery behaviors. Additionally, by practicing error detection, students are more cognizant of the implications of such behaviors if implemented into their own public speaking performances. The activity gives students an opportunity to identify effective delivery behaviors while also emphasizing their practical importance outside of the classroom (Davison did NOT win the nomination; Taylor, 2010). Despite the positive reactions to the activity, instructors should make sure to maintain focus on the relevant content and not allow students to be swept away in the emotions that follow viewing the video.

(7) Appendix:

Ladies and gentlemen of the Stark County Republican Party, Executive Committee, good evening. And thank you, not only for your attendance but for allowing me the opportunity to speak. My name is Phil Davison and I'm seeking our party's nomination for the position of Stark County Treasurer on November 10th, November of 2010, excuse me. In terms of my background, I am from the village of Minerva, where I'm serving my 13th year, as the, elected service as a Minerva Council Member. In terms of education, I have a bachelor's degree in Sociology, a bachelor's degree in History, a Master's degree in Public Administration, and a Master's degree in Communication. In terms of elections across Stark County I have represented our party twice on the county ballot, in both the primary, in the general elections. When I ran for Stark County clerk of court in 1996, and Stark County commissioner in 2000, and I will not apologize for my tone tonight. I have been a Republican in "times good" and I've been a Republican in "times bad".

Albert Einstein issued one of my favorite quotes: In the history of the spoken word, and it is as follows: "In the middle of opportunity", excuse me, "In the middle of difficulty lies opportunity". I'm gonna repeat that so I have clarity tonight! "In the middle of difficulty, lies opportunity". This is the opportunity we have been waiting for!!! The Stark County Treasures Office is a mess, it is in dire need of structure and guidance, and not is the time to seize this opportunity. With an aggressive campaign and with an even more aggressive campaigner. If nominated tonight, I promise each and every person in this room, I will hit the ground running, come out swinging and end up winning! (yelling voice tone). Let's send a message tonight! To the people of Stark County and to the people of the Stark County Democratic Party! We are tired of business as usual! Drastic times require, what? Drastic measures, yes! Who said that? Thank you. Drastic times require drastic measures!

We will not tolerate incompetence and irresponsibility any longer. Now is the time to snap the Democratic strangle-hold on the Treasurer's Office in two! And I harken back to what my friend Alex, just said, he ran against the Treasurer in 1996, it was a problem then and it is a problem now. Infestation! Politics is not touch football; politics is winner take all. It always has been, and it always will be! If nominated tonight, I want to develop and expand my campaign for what I believe is the greatest strength of the Stark County Republican Party and that is its people. I believe in the axiom, that all politics is local, and because of this belief I want to harness the thoughts and ideas that individuals in our party have, concerning Stark County in its political sub-divisions, and use that to its fullest extent. Knowledge is power. Let's tap into this power and use it as a tool to win the Treasurer's Office. Let's use this knowledge not only as a tool but as a weapon. We must win this election, if nominated tonight, I will win this election! And I'm gonna say that again so there's no miscommunication tonight. If nominated tonight, I win! Tell your friends, tell your neighbors! Tell Randy Gonzalez! I'm coming both barrels, guns loaded. I believe in the entities, the principles of the National Republican Party, The State of Ohio Republican Party, and the Stark County Republican Party. If nominated I will not hide those beliefs, on my march to victory on election day! If nominated tonight, I can guarantee with 100% certainty, that what you are seeing from me tonight is, whatever one outside those doors is going to get over the next eight weeks! I used to be an idealistic thinker, I am now a pragmatic thinker. Government may be about service, politics is about winning. Tonight as a Candidate, seeking a Republican Nomination for the position of Stark County Treasurer, I humbly ask for your vote as member of the Stark County Republican Party Executive Committee. Thank you.

References

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