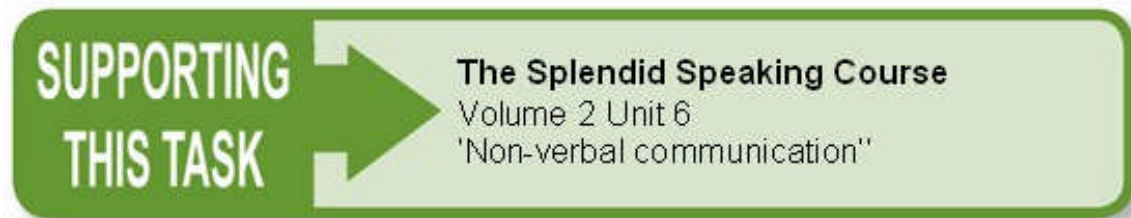

Splendid Speaking Podcasts



Topic: Structuring a Short Talk
(Interview 24: May Archives)

This show can be listened to at the following address:

<http://splendid-speaking.com/blog/?p=41>



Comprehension Questions

As you listen, decide if the following questions are true or false according to what Ioana says.

- 1) The choice of film to talk about was difficult.
- 2) Tom Cruise plays the role of a Samurai.
- 3) She found the film misleading.
- 4) The advice the Emperor received was possibly driven by a financial gain.
- 5) Tom Cruise's actions were honourable.

Transcript

Introduction

Welcome to the Splendid Speaking podcast. My name's Pete Travis and this week we're listening to Ioana from Romania, who is preparing for CAE. A reminder that transcripts for all podcasts including this one are available to subscribers of our mailing list. You can sign up to the newsletter from www.splendid-speaking.com.

Can you think of a book or film that has had a big influence on you? Would you be able to give a short synopsis of the film and explain why it had affected you in just two minutes? Well, this week, Ioana was asked to give a two-minute presentation on this very subject. Shortly before the interview in Skype I sent Ioana the following question:

Talk about a book you've read or a film you've seen that has had a big influence on you. You should include

- what it's called
- a short outline of what it's about
- why it influenced you

With a task like this the speaker needs to make sure they do what they've been asked to do, and within the time limit. The danger with this question is that too much time's spent outlining the plot and therefore not enough time on explaining why it has influenced you. This is an edited version of the original presentation, which overran by a few minutes. However, in this extract, listen and decide how well Ioana manages to deal with both parts of the question. If you have access to the transcript, listen a second time and answer the comprehension questions. Finally, make a note of her use of English, which we'll look at in the feedback session.

Let's listen to Ioana.

OK, firstly I would like to say that ... it's been quite a difficult task because there are so many books and so many ... films that I could mention ... so many really impressive books ... books and films ... masterpieces I can ... I may say ... but I've chosen ... the last Samurai ... starring Tom Cruise ... I don't know if you've seen it ... the action takes place in Japan ... and ... it's about the ... American influences that they're starting to ... to disturb the ... the Japanese ... way of life the peaceful way of life and the Samurai's. So Tom Cruise ... is hired ... by the Japanese ... Emperor ... who ... who feels like he should ... support the Americans ... so Tom Cruise is really impressed by the Samurais and finally gets to know them better ... and that's about it. So ... I'm going to say, I'm going to start saying how it impressed me. Well ... it was really striking ... how misleading some ... some decisions can be and ... how deceitful life can be. The Emperor, which was ... quite young ... was really ... misled ... misled by his counselors who really wanted to ... support the Americans ... they thought it profitable and maybe it really was maybe they ... had some money coming from it ... but ... it wasn't really for his good or for the county's good ... and it also ... says that honour and value are ... are fading away right now and maybe we don't ... we won't realize it until it's too late.

Feedback

Let's start by thanking Ioana for taking part in this Skype interview and for agreeing to be recorded. Why not go to the Splendid Speaking website and leave your own comments on her talk.

Now for some feedback. Ioana's unedited presentation lasted for about 4 minutes, and in the final two minutes she explained in further detail why the film had influenced her. As the time limit approaches in an examination, it's likely the speaker will be allowed to finish the point he or she is making and then be stopped, so it's important to try and cover the question within the set time. These final two minutes have been cut yet what remains is a two-minute presentation that covers both aspects of the question. Had Ioana stopped at this point, I feel she would have covered the two issues well in the time allowed.

In terms of structure, this shortened version, is a good model for how to deal with this type of question. Ioana introduces her presentation nicely by acknowledging how difficult it can be to make a choice of this kind:

“OK, firstly I would like to say that ... it's been quite a difficult task because there are so many books and so many ... films that I could mention ... so many really impressive books ... books and films ... masterpieces I can ... I may say...”

She then goes on to give her interpretation of the synopsis, giving the listener just enough information to get an overview of the film in question without going into too much detail about the plot. Notice how she does this using the present tense, which has the effect of making the description seem more immediate:

“... the action takes place in Japan”

“...So Tom Cruise ... is hired ... by the Japanese ... Emperor ... who ... who feels like he should ... support the Americans ... so Tom Cruise is really impressed by the Samurais and finally gets to know them better”

Ioana then goes on to talk about why the film made an impression on her and even in this short, edited version she manages to do this adequately.

In terms of vocabulary she showed a good working knowledge of word formation such as:

‘impressive books’ and ‘impressed by the Samurais’
‘peaceful way of life’
‘misleading decisions’
‘deceitful’
‘profitable’

When moving from the synopsis to the reasons it impressed her, Ioana said the following:

“...So ... I’m going to say, I’m going to start saying how it impressed me...”

This sounds a little clumsy and it would be better to say something like: ‘Moving onto why the film impressed me’ or ‘So, why did it impress me so much?’

There were some hesitations during the talk, but in general Ioana proved to be quite fluent and there were no pronunciation problems. Iona’s use of English was of a good level and I liked the way she shifted from active to passive voice frequently throughout the talk. However, can you spot anything in these extracts which could be seen as errors in an exam?

“...it’s about the ... American influences that they’re starting to ... to disturb the ... the Japanese ... way of life...”

“...The Emperor, which was ... quite young...”

“...it wasn’t really for his good or for the county’s good...”

Did you spot the errors?

“...it’s about the ... American influences that they’re starting to ... to disturb the ... the Japanese ... way of life...”

Ioana repeated the subject here, a common mistake when using relative clauses. It should be ‘that are starting’ not ‘that they’re starting’.

“...The Emperor, which was ... quite young...”

This is another relative clause error. The relative pronoun should of course be: ‘The Emperor who’.

“...it wasn’t really for his good or for the county’s good...”

It would be more natural to say ‘it wasn’t really in his best interest’.

OK. That’s the end of this podcast. Once again, many thanks to Ioana. Until next week it’s ‘Bye’ from me Pete Travis. And remember that you can download the transcript to this and all previous podcasts by signing up to the Splendid Speaking newsletter, a link to which you’ll find at www.splendid-speaking.com

Answers to Comprehension Questions

1) The choice of film to talk about was difficult.

Ans: True

2) Tom Cruise plays the role of a Samurai.

Ans: False

3) She found the film misleading.

Ans: False

4) The advice the Emperor received from his counselors was possibly driven by a financial gain.

Ans: True

5) Tom Cruise's actions were honourable.

Ans: False

The Splendid Speaking Self Study Course

Strategies for structuring short talks are covered in Volume 2 of the 'Splendid Speaking Self-Study Course'.

Volume 1: Introductions and Small Talk

In this volume you'll learn how to:

- Make an impact with a 15-second introduction (Unit 1) - a useful skill in a job interview or networking situations.
- Make small talk using the S.O.F.A. strategy (Unit 2)- a surefire way to make social situations much easier.
- Listen effectively and show interest in what others have to say (Unit 2), so you can build an immediate rapport with other people.
- Relate a S.T.A.R. story (Unit 3) that illustrates a personal achievement - ideal in an interview for a job or training course.

Plus 2 other key speaking strategies on body language and giving examples.

Volume 2: Powerful Presentations

In this volume you'll learn how to:

- Captivate your audience by choosing one of five memorable ways to start a presentation, and then signpost it clearly so your audience don't get lost (Unit 4).
- Introduce photographs and information graphics (graphs, charts, tables, etc) to illustrate your talk (Unit 5).
- Avoid worrying when you're asked to "say a few words". You'll soon be giving a T.O.P. spontaneous talk, and using pauses for effect (Unit 6).

In addition to these 12 key strategies you can test yourself with our interactive quizzes on useful collocational phrases to do with work, business, education and relationships, for example.

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