

Grammar usage in public speaking

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Abstract

Many people think that it is difficult to speak grammatically correct since grammar has so many rules. However, in the concept of public speaking, grammar can be used to avoid mistakes and misunderstanding, so that, the messages are delivered correctly and the targets are reached purposely. Here, the writer divides the discussion of the grammar usage into two categories; they are the function of grammar in public speaking and the grammar awareness in public speaking. In addition, it is hoped that the readers consider to pay more attention toward the grammar before saying something, especially speaking in a public speaking context.

Keywords : Grammar, Public, Speaking

I. INTRODUCTION

Speaking is one of communication skills which function to deliver message to others. It usually focuses on the meaning and sometimes even ignores the grammar form. Small mistake likes wrong pronunciation or wrong synonym choice can categorize as common mistake as long as the meaning can still be understood by the listener. But, something that people often forget is communication also needs to be clear to get good understanding between the speaker and the listener and for this result, grammar is surely needed. The problem now is some people have miss perception toward grammar that it is only deal with writing skill and have less importance while use in speaking skill.

This thing gets very serious attention when it goes to public speaking area since in this area, the speaker not only deliver the message to one person but to many people. Wrong concept and use of grammar can change the meaning which result in misperception toward the target the speaker going to achieve. Therefore, grammar in public speaker can be said as a must to be

considered. In this discussion, the function of grammar usage in public speaking and grammar awareness for effective use in public speaking will be discussed.

II. DEFINITION

Definition of grammar

The term grammar is often used by non-linguists with a very broad meaning. As Jeremy Butterfield (2003) puts, "Grammar is often a generic way of referring to any aspect of English that people object to." However, he then also mentions that, "Speakers of a language have in their head a set of rules for using that language." Therefore, grammar has broad understanding when it is used in different area. Grammar can just fall by the wayside when it's considered to be a skill only studied by beginners, when really everyone needs to improve on usage and understanding throughout their lives. Public speaking skills, both formal and informal, need to be honed throughout life.

Other linguists state in their book that, "in grammar, the vast majority of the information in it

is acquired—at least in the case of one's native language—not by conscious study or instruction, but by observing other speakers; much of this work is done during infancy. Learning a language later in life usually involves a greater degree of explicit instruction.” (O’Gradi et al, 1996) While Holmes (2001) state that, “The term "grammar" can also be used to describe the rules that govern the linguistic behavior of a group of speakers. The term "English grammar", therefore, may have several meanings. It may refer to the whole of English grammar—that is, to the grammars of all the speakers of the language—in which case, the term encompasses a great deal of variation.”

From those opinions above can be concluded that grammar is a rules that govern the linguistic behavior of a group of speakers that is studied unconsciously by observing other speakers. It cannot be classify into one definition only since different use of grammar may create different function of the grammar toward the subject itself.

Function of Grammar in public speaking:

1. Incorrectly

To make a point. Incorrect grammar in the midst of an otherwise grammatically correct presentation will draw attention to your point. Use this to either illustrate a mistake or to create humor. But remember not to overdo, event when you still joking, audience will start to think you really don’t know how to speak grammatically correct.

2. Colloquially

But tread lightly! In the South, using “y’all” is appropriate, although still best used for humor unless you are a Southerner yourself. But beware over-usage, which may be mistaken for disrespect. When you added an 'eh?' to your speech, someone may be thinking "it's been a running joke all week, why not?" It didn't prove helpful to the speech. While it didn't turn the crowd against you, it's non-effectiveness equated to ineffectiveness in that situation.

3. Simply

Don’t risk confusion. Many speakers spend hours to hone a sentence for the perfect phrasing, and the result will often leave the audience straining to

remember (or even understand) the fancy words.

4. Clever Phrasing

Triads and Alliterations

- a. Triads are words in threes, often with the same first letter, such as big, bad, and bodacious. Presenting ideas in threes is one of the oldest tricks in the book – our minds are trained to pick up on triads – not too little, not too much.
- b. Alliterations are words that sound the same used to make a point: expect my advice to be concise and precise.

5. Correctly

What a concept! Correct usage of whatever language you are speaking in identifies you as intelligent, learned, and credible. It allows the audience to focus on the meaning of your message instead of critiquing the words from which it’s built.

An often over-looked grammatical faux pas is the “umm, err, ah” method of stalling or regaining thought. While many speakers dismiss this concept, saying it “keeps them real”, who would you rather listen to? People will go nuts listening to someone say “uh” 20 times as they work to make their point, regardless of their inherent genius.

Best approaching when you think about the words to use is silence. This may be effective than moaning unnecessary sound, it also help you to build an image and can make you look thoughtful and ponderous. Whenever you find a firewall in finding the right words to say, underlining the point you have just made.

Grammar Awareness for Effective Use in Public speaking

The next discussion will discuss detail examples of grammar usage often use in public speaking. Grammar usage refers to the rules that govern the form of the words that are used and how people string those words together in sentences. Remember, that correct grammar and usage are essential for clear and effective

communication. The area for grammar usage can be simplified by parts of speech and the use of punctuations. But, the writer will limit the discussion into 3 (three) categories only, those are:

- A. Pronouns – Personal and Indefinite
- B. Pronoun Agreement and Consistency
- C. Possessive Pronouns

A. Pronouns – Personal and Indefinite

Pronouns replace nouns. It keeps from having to repeat names and objects over and over. But pronouns can be a bit tricky at times. This section discusses the different kinds of pronouns and the rules they follow.

Personal Pronouns

Personal pronouns refer to specific people or things. They can be either singular (I) or plural (we); they can be subjects (I) or objects (me), subject (we) or object (us).

Pronoun mistakes are often made by using the subject form when you really need the object form. Here are two guidelines to follow:

Always use the object pronoun in a prepositional phrase. Pronouns and nouns in prepositional phrases are always objects.

Example: He often says these things to Dolly and me.

Please keep this between us.

Not to use object pronoun in subject position. Even when it is something that is usually used in every day speech.

Example: My Zio and I are taking picture together. Instead of [my Zio and me]

Always use the subject pronoun in the form of than construction (comparison). When a pronoun follows than, it is usually part of a clause that omits the verb for the effective sentence.

Example: I realize that Sophie is more beautiful than I. [than I am]

Tony is much more creative than she. [than she is]

Indefinite Pronouns

Unlike personal pronouns, indefinite pronouns, such as anybody and everyone, don't refer to a specific person. The following indefinite pronouns are always singular and require singular verbs:

Everybody has opportunities to be a winner.

Neither child stops to talk

Has anyone found my tools?

The following indefinite pronouns are always plural and they need plural verb, do not use singular verb:

both few many several
Both sound like bad options.
Only a few are passed.

These indefinite pronouns can be singular or plural, depending upon the noun or pronoun to which they refer, match the verb instead:

all any most none some
Some of the money is counterfeit.
Some of the coins are too thick.
None of the birds have been fed.
All of the bread is moist.

B. Pronoun Agreement and Consistency

Pronoun-Antecedent

Just as subjects (both nouns and pronouns) must agree with their verbs, pronouns must also agree with their antecedents—the words they replace. For example:

Children will often refer everything their teachers tell them.

The word children is the antecedent and is replaced by their and them in the sentence. Because children is plural, the pronouns must also be plural.

Indefinite pronouns can also be antecedents. Singular indefinite pronouns require singular pronouns:

Everyone has his or her own stories to tell.
Neither of the scientists could explain what she saw.

Plural indefinite pronouns, on the other hand, require plural pronouns, just like they need plural verbs:

both few many several
Both of us have finished our projects.
Only a few are still in their pure nature.

Finally, those pronouns that can be either singular or plural, depending upon the noun or pronoun to which they refer, should take the pronoun that matches their referent. If the antecedent is singular, the pronoun and verb must also be singular. If the antecedent is plural, they must be plural:

all any most none some
All of the chocolate is gone. It was delicious!
All of the cookies are gone. They were delicious!
None of the information is accurate; it's all out of date.
None of the facts are accurate; they are all out of date.

Pronoun consistency

Just as you need to be consistent in verb tense, you should also be consistent in your pronoun point of view. Pronouns can be:

A passage that begins in the third-person plural should continue to use that third-person plural point of view.

We have spent our attention
Incorrect: to this subject and she gets the point.

We have spent our attention
Correct: to this subject and we get the point.

Incorrect: If you prepare carefully, one can expect to pass the exam.

Correct: If you prepare carefully, you can expect to pass the exam.
OR

If one prepares carefully, one can expect to pass the exam.

C. Possessive Pronoun

The possessive pronouns its, your, their, and whose are often confused with the contractions it's (it is or it has), you're (you are), they're (they are), and who's (who is). Because we use apostrophes to show possession in nouns (Louise's truck, the rug's pattern), many people make the mistake of thinking that pronouns use apostrophes for possession, too. But possessive pronouns do not take apostrophes. When a pronoun has an apostrophe, it always shows contraction. See the differences that show in the examples below:

Pronoun with apostrophes: It's time to see the master.

Possessive pronoun: My dog likes to wave its tail much.

The pronouns who, that, and which are also often confused. Here are the general guidelines for using these pronouns correctly:

Use who or whom when referring to people:

He is the one who should make that appointment, not me.

Use that when referring to things:

The thin waitress told the customers that they desperately needed to go on a diet.

Use which when introducing clauses that are not essential to the information in the sentence, unless they refer to people. In that case, use who.

She miss him, who has stolen her heart, very badly.

Iqbal, who is a computer programmer, would be a good match for Yani.

The film, which is a comedy, won several awards.

Conclusion

Grammar is a rule that govern the linguistic behavior of a group of speakers that is studied unconsciously by observing other speakers. It has variety in its every usage, depend on the context. When it is deal with public speaker, it become the form how the speaker use the grammar to deliver her purpose in speaking. In delivering the speech the speaker needs to say incorrect grammar sometimes, to use colloquial

style but not overdo. She needs to keep simple style in delivering speech, make clever phrasing and write concept to avoid unnecessary sound while thinking. Beware also for the parts of speech mistakes, in this discussion the writer only discusses three subjects those are Pronouns – Personal and Indefinite, Pronoun Agreement and Consistency, and also Possessive Pronouns. Each of those contains mistakes that can be avoided if the speaker awareness over the grammar increases.

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