

Course Topic: "Yes, We Can": Obama's Art of Pausing

I. Introduction

- Overview of the importance of strategic pausing in public speaking
- Introduction to Barack Obama and his distinctive speaking style

II. Understanding the Art of Pausing

- Explanation of how strategic pausing can enhance the delivery of a speech
- Video analysis: Clips from Obama's speeches demonstrating his use of pauses
 - [*Insert video link*](#)

III. Oral Exercise 1: Pause Practice

- Explanation and demonstration of different types of pauses (short, medium, long)
- Practice session: Participants practise incorporating pauses in a given speech script
 - Short Pause: This is a quick pause, about the length of a breath or one beat. It's often used at the end of a sentence or between phrases.
 - Medium Pause: This is a longer pause, typically two to three beats. It's used to indicate a transition between ideas or topics, or for dramatic effect.
 - Long Pause: This is the longest pause, around four or more beats. It's used sparingly for major dramatic effect, like before revealing something surprising or particularly important.

Obama's Pause Play

"We are here today (SHORT PAUSE) to celebrate a major milestone. (MEDIUM PAUSE) It's not just any milestone, (SHORT PAUSE) but a testament to our collective efforts, (SHORT PAUSE) our unwavering commitment, (SHORT PAUSE) and our shared vision. (MEDIUM PAUSE)

But let's not forget, (SHORT PAUSE) this journey was not easy. (MEDIUM PAUSE) There were hurdles, (SHORT PAUSE) there were setbacks. (MEDIUM PAUSE) Yet, (LONG PAUSE) we persevered. (MEDIUM PAUSE)

And so, (SHORT PAUSE) as we stand here at this momentous occasion, (SHORT PAUSE) let's look back at our journey, (SHORT PAUSE) not just to see how far we've come, (MEDIUM PAUSE) but to remind ourselves (LONG PAUSE) that we can conquer any challenge that comes our way. (MEDIUM PAUSE)"

The facilitator can guide the participants through the script, indicating where to pause and what type of pause to use. After the guided practice, participants can then try it on their own or in pairs, experimenting with different types of pauses.

IV. Oral Exercise 3: Cadence and Rhythm

- Explanation of how varying cadence and rhythm can make a speech more engaging
- Practice session: Participants practise delivering a given speech script with varied cadence and rhythm
 - Cadence: This refers to the rise and fall of the voice, the musicality of the way we speak. It includes variations in pitch and tone. Barack Obama is known for his powerful cadence, which often rises gradually to a peak before falling dramatically.

- Rhythm: This refers to the speed and pace of the speech, including where we choose to speed up, slow down, and pause. Obama often uses a consistent rhythm in his speeches, which can create a sense of unity and momentum.

"Riding the Rhythm: Obama's Cadence Control"

1. "Yes, we can." (INCREASE volume on 'can', QUICK pace)
2. "Change we can believe in." (NORMAL volume, SLOW pace)
3. "The audacity of hope." (INCREASE volume on 'audacity', NORMAL pace)
4. "A more perfect union." (INCREASE volume on 'perfect', SLOW pace)
5. "The time for change has come." (INCREASE volume on 'change', NORMAL pace)
6. "We are the ones we've been waiting for." (INCREASE volume on 'ones', SLOW pace)
7. "We will not be silenced." (INCREASE volume on 'not', QUICK pace)
8. "Our time is now." (INCREASE volume on 'now', QUICK pace)
9. "There is not a liberal America and a conservative America — there is the United States of America." (INCREASE volume on 'United States of America', SLOW pace)
10. "We the people." (INCREASE volume on 'people', QUICK pace)
11. "The hope of a skinny kid with a funny name." (INCREASE volume on 'hope', NORMAL pace)
12. "We are one people." (INCREASE volume on 'one', QUICK pace)
13. "In the face of impossible odds, people who love their country can change it." (INCREASE volume on 'change', NORMAL pace)
14. "There's not a black America and white America and Latino America and Asian America; there's the United States of America." (INCREASE volume on 'United States of America', SLOW pace)
15. "We are not as divided as our politics suggest." (INCREASE volume on 'not', NORMAL pace)
16. "Our stories are singular, but our destiny is shared." (INCREASE volume on 'shared', NORMAL pace)
17. "We rise or fall as one nation." (INCREASE volume on 'rise', QUICK pace)
18. "This is our moment." (INCREASE volume on 'moment', QUICK pace)
19. "We don't quit. I don't quit." (INCREASE volume on 'don't quit', QUICK pace)
20. "We have never been just a collection of individuals or a collection of Red States and Blue States: we are, and always will be, the United States of America." (INCREASE volume on 'United States of America', SLOW pace)

V. Analysing Obama's Speech

300-word excerpt from Barack Obama's famous 2008 "Yes, We Can" Speech:

"In the face of (PAUSE) impossible odds, (LONG PAUSE) people who love their country (PAUSE) can change it. That's what we're (PAUSE, SLOW PACE) trying to do here. (LONG PAUSE)

We've been warned against (PAUSE, LOW VOLUME) offering the people of this nation false hope. (PAUSE, INCREASE VOLUME) But in the unlikely story that is America, there has (PAUSE) never been anything false about hope. (LONG PAUSE, SLOW PACE)

For when we have faced down impossible odds, when we've been told we're not ready or that we shouldn't try or that we can't, (PAUSE, HIGH VOLUME) generations of Americans have responded with a simple creed (LONG PAUSE) that sums up the spirit of a people: (PAUSE) Yes, we can. (LONG PAUSE)"

VI. Lessons from Obama's Speech

1. The Rhetorical Pause: Obama uses pauses for rhetorical effect, allowing key points to resonate. This creates anticipation and engages the audience.
2. Volume Control with Pausing: He uses a combination of volume control and pausing for emphasis. This highlights key phrases and points, adding drama and gravity to his speeches.
3. Pacing and Rhythm: Obama's speeches have a unique cadence and rhythm, enhanced by strategic pauses. This aids in speech clarity and audience comprehension.
4. The Power of Repetition and Pausing: He uses the technique of repetition, combined with pausing, to reinforce key messages.
5. Inspiring with Words: Obama's speeches are inspiring, and his strategic pausing adds to their impact. This shows the power of well-chosen words and well-placed pauses in evoking emotion.