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Speaking Tips # 31 061208

Does a good speaker have to be eloquent ?

Certainly, a good speaker can be eloquent, but that is far from evident.

An eloquent speaker speaks grammatically well and uses ingenious linguistic variations in combination with a substantial vocabulary (*phew, some eloquent words there!*). But that only concerns the very words and sentences. Only that, however, does not make anybody a good speaker. An academic or branch specific babble could perhaps be considered eloquent. However, it seldom makes anybody happy but the speaker and can be immensely boring, even for the most knowledgeable listeners. Above all, there seldom is anything to memorize, apart from the very fact that it was self centred drivel. If eloquence disregards listeners' understanding, all sophisticated linguistic variations become meaningless, and in fact pathetic, as only the speaker's self admiration impregnates the whole presentation.

A speaker who is, however, linguistically talented and who also knows how to combine his talent with an attractive delivery, is both eloquent and a "good" speaker. That is of course a great combination. But if we can anchor our message without eloquence, then that is as great! It is much better than to be eloquent without, or with a misunderstood, message.

What makes a presentation good is when we know "how" to use words and sentences, not "that" we use them. They may be few, simple and common, yes actually should be simple and common. It's all about intonation, emphasis through pauses, voice volume, pace and variation, body language, eyes and feelings, not to mention examples, metaphors and stories. All this is intimately associated with bringing life into the words and sentences.

A book is a stage play challenging our imagination. In our imagination it is easy to bring life to words, even unconsciously. A verbal presentation, however, is live theatre! The speaker is expected to turn imagination into reality. Those who manage that are good speakers. In order for us to be considered "good" we must bring life into our language and focus on the message rather than on the choice of words. We need to focus more on "how" we use the words to bring the message across and less on "which" words we use.

Hence, a speaker who is eloquent is not necessarily a good speaker. There is more to it than that.

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