Chapter 10

Exploring Public Speaking, 4ᵗʰ edition

Open Resource Textbook for Basic Public Speaking Course

Authors: Faculty of Dalton State College, Dalton, Georgia

Overview

- What language is and does

- Standards for language in public speaking

- Developing your ability to use language in public speaking

What Language Is

- any formal system of
    - gestures, signs, sounds, and symbols
    - used or conceived as a means of communicating thought,
    - either through written, enacted, or spoken means

- Most use of language is spoken (oral)

- Written language and spoken language differs in several ways

Study of language is controversial

- Words do not have meaning; meaning resides in the persons using it

- Not just something we use, but a part of us

- Extremely difficult to separate language from thinking

- Affected by power and powerful people

- Language affects power, too.
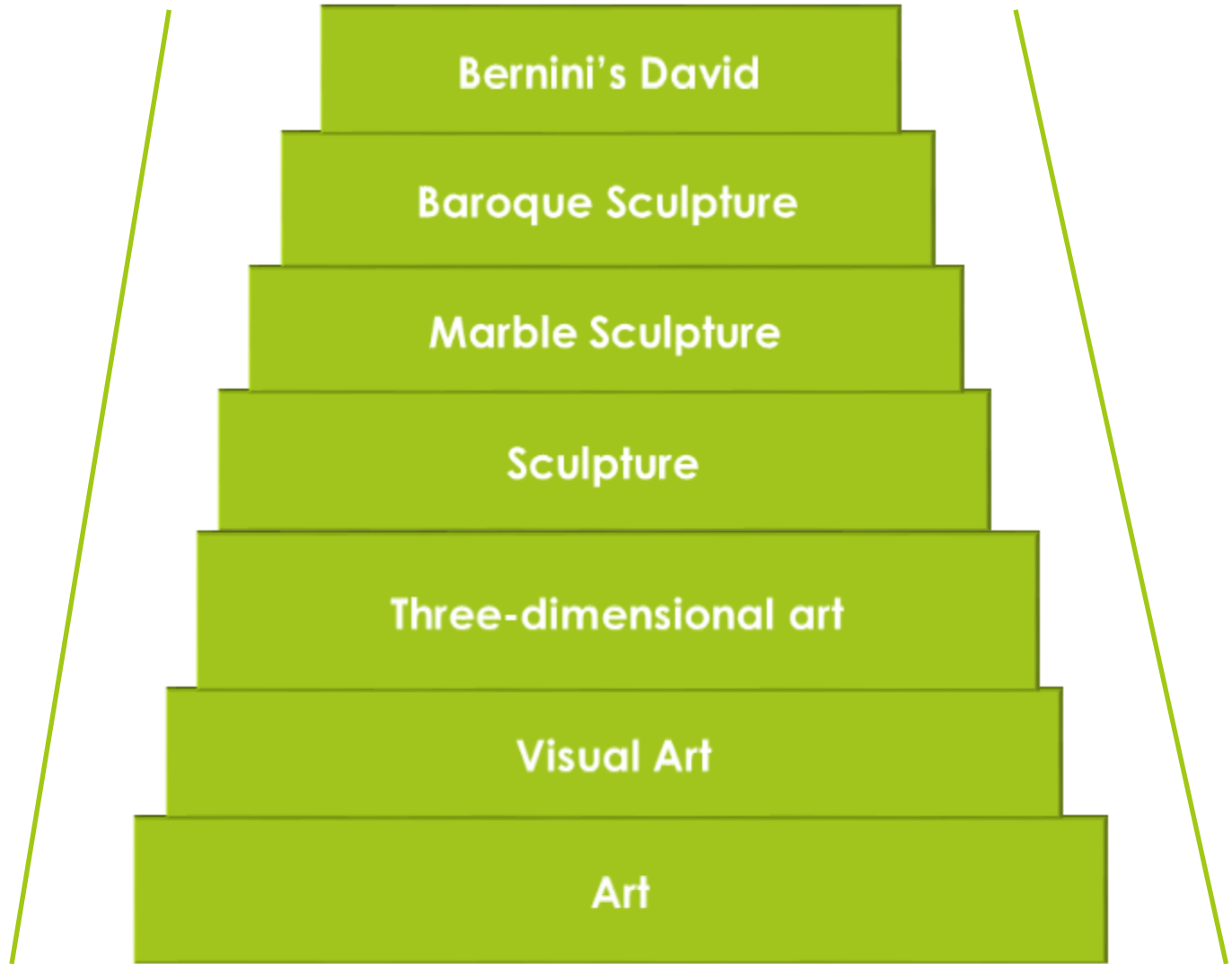
Study of language is controversial

- Example: euphemism to hide meaning

- "He who defines the terms wins the debate"

- Denotative vs. connotative use of words

- Ethical language use
    - encourages respect for others,
    - freedom of thought, and
    - informed decision making

Standards for language in public speaking (Overview)

- Clarity

- Effectiveness

- Credibility

- Rhetorical Techniques

- Appropriateness

Clarity

- Abstract vs. concrete
  - Too abstract, everyone has a different "meaning"
  - Too concrete/specific, some may not know the reference

- Right word (lightning vs. lightning bug)

- Familiarity

- Literal vs. figurative (metaphors/similes) – avoid clichés

Bernini's David

Baroque Sculpture

Marble Sculpture

Sculpture

Three-dimensional art

Visual Art

Art

Ladder of Abstraction

Effectiveness

- Language should be a means of inclusion and connection, not exclusion

- Avoid jargon with uninformed audiences

- Avoid slang unless audience is in the "in group"

- Complicated vocabulary (avoid long words when simple will do)

- Profanity and cursing (audience is the Kiwanis Club, not the Comedy Club on Friday night)

Rhetorical Techniques

- Assonance – pie in the sky by and by when you die

- Alliteration – "The fair breeze blew, the white foam flew"

- Antithesis - "Integrity without knowledge is weak and useless, and knowledge without integrity is dangerous and dreadful." (Samuel Johnson)

- Parallelism – "I came, I saw, I conquered." (Caesar)

Rhetorical Techniques

- Anaphora – " It was the best of times, it was the worst of times, it was the age of wisdom, it was the age of foolishness, it was the epoch of belief, it was the epoch of incredulity." (Charles Dickens)

- Hyperbole – exaggeration for effect

- Irony "The roasted chicken was as tender as a leather boot."

- There are actually dozens of others

Appropriateness

- Gender inclusive language
  - Avoid generic he
  - Avoid man to refer to all humans
  - Avoid gender-typing jobs or roles

- Ethnic identity - if necessary (usually not) to include reference to ethnic identity
  - be equal
  - Use correct terms (Asian, not Oriental, better, Korean, Japanese, etc.)

Appropriateness

- ☐ References to disability
  - ☐ Generally avoid – why relevant?
  - ☐ Use correct term
  - ☐ Do not totalize

- ☐ Appropriateness also refers to audience and context

Ways to develop your language abilities

- Use stipulated definitions at the beginning of a speech when appropriate

- Use personal pronouns

- Build your vocabulary but don't inflict on others