



## An Assessment of Speaking as a Language Skill

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### ABSTRACT

*One's capacity to communicate through systems of language, differentiates us from other species, but the use of that language to communicate effectively is actually harder than anticipated, particularly in front of the audience. Fortunately, by reading this work, one can learn the skills required to communicate more effectively, one-on-one and in a speaking situation. It is pertinent to remember the importance of improving one's speaking and communication skills; the effort is well worth the benefits achieved in one's personal, professional and public life.*

**Keywords:** Assessment, speaking, language, skill, communication in conflict, freedom

## Introduction

Public speech making is the process or act of performing a presentation focused around an individual's direct speech to a live audience. It is sometimes termed oration or oratory.

According to Wilson et al (1990, p. 15), it is any speaking situation where someone is given responsibility for maintaining communication over a period of time where others accept the role of relative quiet but actively attentive listeners.

### The Role of Relative Quiet and Actively Attentive Listeners

- i. Presenting a good speech requires practice and knowledge. There are few basics to get started
- ii. Approaching the speaking situation occasion, audience and purpose structuring.

## 2. Literature Review

### History of Speech Making

Early training in Public Speech making took place in ancient Egypt. The first known Greek work (specify) on Oratory, written over 2000 years ago elaborated on principles drawn from the practices and experience of Orator. In the ancient Greek City – still in classical Greece and Rome, the main component was heroic (That is composition and delivery of speeches) which was an important skill in both Public and Private Life.

Aristotle and Quintilian discussed Oratory and the subject with definitive rules and models was emphasized as part of a liberal art education during the middle ages and reminiscent.

The art of Public speech making was first developed by the ancient Greek. Greek Oration is known from the works of classical antiquity. Greek Orators spoke on their own behalf rather than on behalf of representative of either a client or a constituting, and so any citizen who wished to succeed in court, in politics, or in social life had to learn techniques of Public speech making.

These skills were taught first by a group of self-styled sophists who were known to charge fees to make the weaker argument stronger and to make their students better through instruction in excellence. Plato, Aristotle and Socrates all devoted theories of Public speech making was taught through Greece eventually lost political sovereignty.

The Greek culture of training on Public speech making was adopted virtually whole sale by the Romans. With the political rise of the Roman republic, Roman Orators copied and modified Greek techniques of Public speech making under Roman influence instruction in the toxic development into a full curriculum including instruction in grammar (study of the Poets). Preliminary exercises (Progymnasmata) and preparation of Public speeches (declamation) in both forensic and deliberative general.

The Latin style was heavily influenced by Cicero, and involved a strong emphasis on a board art (including philosophy) as well as on the use of with and on digression (often used to explore general theories related to the specific topic of speech).

### Types of Public Speech Making

According to research there are four types of Public speech making. They are as follows:

1. Speaking to inform
2. Speaking to persuade
3. Speaking to actuate
4. Speaking to entertain

### Speaking to Inform

When an individual gives a speech before an audience to impart information on a particular topic/issue, it is said to be an informative speech. Examples: Business presentation, seminars in colleges, class presentations and so on.

A person giving an informative speech should be short and precise because, long speeches easily bore the audience. The success of an informative speech will depend on how much the audience could understand from the speech.

### **Speaking to Persuade**

Persuasive speech is one where the speaker tries to announce a group of people. The speech aim is to change the opinion of the audience, it is the difficult aspect of speech because you are faced with people that have total opposite views from your own, and your success is dependent on whether they dance to your tune and ignore theirs. So, if you must succeed, you have to show your enthusiasm while speaking. Examples: Political campaign, business, marketing/advertisement.

### **Speaking to Actuate**

Speaking to actuate is a higher level of persuasive speaking. The speaker goes a step beyond persuasion and convincing. The aim is to motivate people enough to take a specific step to act. Very few people have achieved this mastery of the art of persuasion where they could so deeply convince people that they move into action.

One can find this common in conceit situation, it can also be seen when the speaker wants his audience to help him actualize an aim through concrete action. It is characterized by a show of charisma, very strong words and great emotional involvement. Sometimes the speaker ends up getting the audiences very agitated that they become more interested than the speaker. It is also common in military groups where members of a mob overthrow their leader accusing him of not being aggressive enough in the fight for their common cause.

### **Speaking to Entertain**

This is common in our society today because you see them amusing their audience and making their money from it. It is so centered on entertainment. Examples are the comedians and musicians, ceremonial speeches are other form of Public speaking usually given at wedding ceremony, funeral, graduation, parties and so on. One can only be successful in this aspect of public speaking by speaking to the people that one knows and it would be greater if one can bring in stories and incidents about the respective person. The speech can be memories, touching or emotional as per once occasion and the mood.

However, one should take at most care not to hurt feelings by making sharp remarks about them.

### **Component of Public Speech Making**

Aristotle, a foremost Greek philosopher and orator outlined three component every speech ought to have. They are as follows: Logos, Ethos and Pathos

1. **Logos** – this has to do with thoughtful argument presented logically. Discerning audiences do not just swallow hook line and sinker whatever a speaker tells them. For a speaker to convince any informed audience he must present arguments, though facts that are sensible and credible.
2. **Ethos** – This has to do with personality or personage of the speaker. The perception of the speaker by the audience is crucial and it can determine whether a speech succeed or not. The speaker cannot be separated from the speech. In fact, the speaker is the speech.
3. **Pathos** – These entails the use of emotive or emotional words or Language to move the audience, the direction the speaker intends. Barrack Obama, Martine Luther King (Jnr.), Nelson Mandela are some of the famous public speakers who have used powerful words and description to sway their audience emotions and feelings.

### **Speech Situations**

Aristotle classified speech into three categories

- i. **Deliberative (political) speeches:** Speeches made to influence political learnings at the parliament or to sway votes or support.
- ii. **Forensic speeches:** Speeches made in law courts by lawyers and Judges.

iii. **Epidictic speeches:** Ceremonial speeches made in praise or 'dispraise' of somebody or a group of people.

### Models of Speech Making

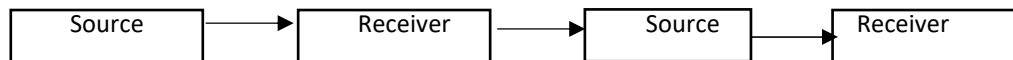
Models of speech making, for our focus of public speech making, we will introduce two widely discussed models of communication; interactional and transactional.

#### Interactional Model of Public Speech Making

The interactional model of public speech making comes from the work of Claude Shannon and Warren Weaver. The original model mirrored how radio and telephone technologies functioned and consisted of three primary parts: source, channel and receiver.

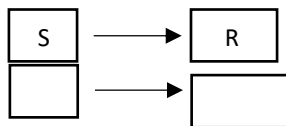
The source was the part of the telephone a person spoke into, the channel was the telephone itself, and the receiver was the part of the phone where one could hear.

The other person Shannon and Weaver also recognized that often there is static that interferes with listening to the telephone conversation, which they called noise. In public speech making, the source is the person who is giving the speech, the channel is the speaker's use of verbal and non-verbal communication and the receivers are the audience members listening to the speech.



Linear model

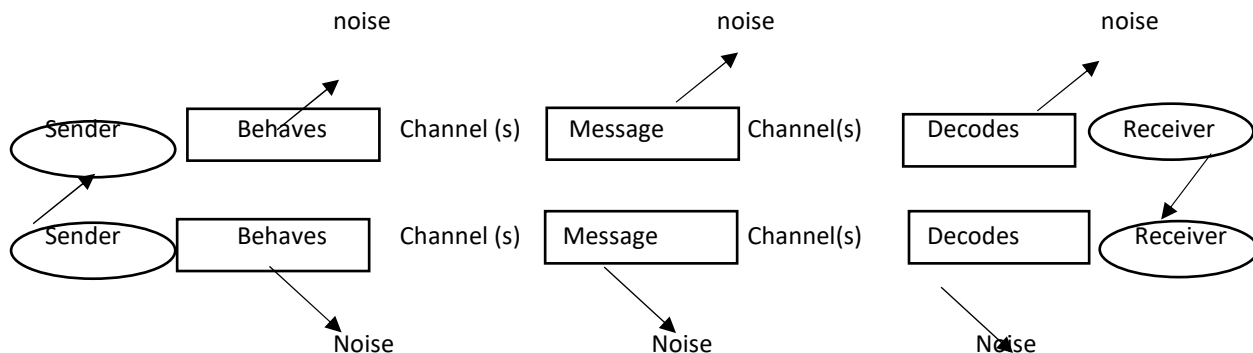
Interactional Model



#### Transactional Model of Public Speech Making

This is the exchange of messages between sender and receiver where each takes turns to send or receive messages. Here both "sender" and "receiver" are known as "communicators" and their role reverses each time in the communication process as both processes of sending and receiving occur at the same time.

The communicators can be human or machine but humans are taken as communicators in the article to analyze general communication between humans.



#### Factors to be Considered in Public Speech Making

There are some factors to be considered which include:

1. What to say – One must know the subject matter which one is to talk about and keep in thought; and never digress from the key subject of a topic. One should also be as elaborate as possible noting the whole pedagogies in the particular discipline.
2. How to say – One should know the intonation, whether it's going to be a persuasive speech or no persuasive speech. He/she should also know the calibers of people and the disciplines present as the audience/professors, academic doctors, politicians etc.
3. Who to say – A public speech maker must know when to use words, he/she must know the appropriate time for particular statement, though the audience might be able to pin point. These factors but unconsciously, when the point is hit you will see them nodding their heads.
4. Whom to say to – He/she should also know the people (students, market women, layman, businessmen, politicians, etc.) so as to address them properly.

### **Principles of Public Speech Making**

1. Choose a topic you have full grasp of: It is dangerous to speak or write on a topic you do not really understand.
2. Determine the speech intention or purpose of the speech: Knowing what you want to achieve with the speech will definitely keep you on track.
3. Analyze the audience and the occasion: Know your audience, Audience helps the speaker to know the needs, aspirations, expectations, opportunities (and threats) of your audience in terms of their age, sex, size, culture, educational qualification, religious and political utilizations etc. The audience characteristics would better equip the speakers to communicate with them effectively.
4. Do your homework thoroughly: Take time to research into the topic and rehearse your speech as much as possible.
5. Use simple language: The use of complex words does not make a speech superior. Infact, it makes the work appalling. Complex language impedes comprehension.
6. Be confident and do not let yourself to be intimidated by anybody or anything.
7. Start your speech with salutation or greeting to attract the attention of the audience at the beginning and the end of your speech.
8. Speak to express not to impress: When you express, you will impress.
9. Establish rapport between you and your audience. Carry them along by using such words as 'we' we all know that....." You will agree with me that ..... etc. this is called identification.
10. Strive to be conversational, be relaxed and natural: This does not necessarily mean being chatty.
11. Use of examples, illustration, facts and figures to drive home your points.
12. Use titles, headings and sub-headings: They can help you in structuring and delivering your speech in an orderly and systematic manner.
13. Strive to maintain eye contact with your audience as this would help you know how they are reacting to your speech or message. It will make you adapt to your audience continually.
14. Do not try to show off your body, your accent or your clothing. Focus on your speech and not yourself.
15. Switch off your phone(s) to avoid distractions.
16. Let your dressing be formal because public speech making is a formal communication function.
17. Be loud enough to be heard by your audience as your audience ought not to stain their ears to hear you.
18. Pronounce your words correctly.

19. Vary your pitch during your speech: Varying pitch in speech can enhance comprehension and effectiveness of your speech. Pitch here means the highness or lowness of sound or tone.

20. Make use of time: Time yourself, stick to the time and avoid unnecessary repetition. Do not allow people to signal or remind you before you wrap up.

### **Effects of Public Speech Making**

The effects of public speaking are dependent on the ability of the speaker to work on the minds of the audience, whether his presenting to get the minds of the audience on or against their supposed decisions. If the path is properly treading, the yield will be positive (successful) whereas negative if not followed properly.

In other to be effective, the principles listed herein should be treated and followed accordingly.

### **Conclusion**

Our capacity to communicate through systems of language differentiates us from other species, but the use of that language to communicate effectively is actually harder than anticipated, particularly in front of an audience. Fortunately, today, by reading some books and going to seminars one can learn the skills required to communicate more effectively one-on-one and in a speaking situation.

Every new speaker should work to become skilled at public speaking competencies. These competencies include: selecting a useful topic, writing an engaging introduction, organizing the points of the speech, finding effective supporting materials for the points, adding a conclusion that provides closure, using clear and vivid language, making sure that one's vocal expression corresponds to the goals of the speech, using non-verbal that complement the message, adapting the message to one's audience, using visual aids effectively, and using credible evidence and sound reasoning in persuasive messages. Each one of the competencies just listed is covered in depth in one or more chapters in this book.

Whether you are new to giving presentations, or a more experienced speaker, it is important to remember that the best way to improve your public speaking skills is through preparation and practice. Although it may take time to learn effective speaking skills, the effort is well worth the benefits you will reap in your personal, professional, and public life.

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