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Chapter 1: Public speaking

Mary R. Power

Bond University, Mary_Power@bond.edu.au

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CHAPTER 1: PUBLIC SPEAKING

Quotable Quotes

“Half the world is composed of people who have something to say and can’t, and the other half who have nothing to say and keep on saying it.” (Anon.)

“If there is an opinion, facts will be found to support it.” (Judy Sproles)

Speaking Formally Introduction

Although they are far less common than daily conversations, we remember the few formal speaking events in our lives far better than the thousands of conversations we have with people on a daily basis.

Included in these memorable speaking events are:

- presentations of reports, papers, etc.
- debates
- forums
- introduction of speakers
- speeches of acceptance
- speeches at weddings, parties and funerals.

Speech communication courses aim to impart the skills to make the audience remember such speeches as well as the speaker does.

Even people who do not consider themselves “public speakers” are often required to make *oral presentations* of reports they have written or papers they have prepared (eg. at conferences and in meetings).

Speakers in *debates* put opposing cases, persuading the audience to follow their line of argument.

In a *forum* several people present their views on a topic. Each speaker may be given the chance to react to the views of the other speakers. Usually the audience is given the opportunity to ask questions of the speakers.

Introductions present an opportunity to enhance the speaker’s credibility with the audience and to lead it to expect to hear an interesting speech.

Receiving an award or prize usually calls for a *speech of acceptance*. Strangely, even Olympic athletes rarely seem to prepare for these important speeches of acceptance.

Finally, for most of us, speeches form part of the rituals that mark the major events in our lives such as *weddings, parties and funerals*.

Characteristics of Formal Speaking

Formal speeches rely on the memory capacities of both speakers and listeners. Most cultures have a strong oral tradition in which poetry and songs are passed on from one generation to the next and depend on the storyteller or singer having a good memory. These long epic poems were remembered because of the use of the rhythms of poetry and because they include much repetition and restatement of ideas to help the audience remember what it heard.

Successful formal speeches use variations of these devices. Speaking to an audience larger than six requires the use of more rhetorical devices than does conversation because larger audiences are more diverse and need to be encouraged to merge their individuality into a group to become “the audience” and not just a collection of individuals.

To keep the audience together the speaker needs to use devices to encourage unity. These devices include:

- reference to shared values and experiences
- use of familiar images
- use of humour (so that the audience bonds together in laughter)
- use of a common vocabulary that is more like the language of conversation than of writing, but is embroidered - more elaborated and more formal than everyday conversation; the more formal the situation, the more formal the language.

Other devices used to help people remember what is said include:

- *the structure of the speech* –“Here is my theme.” We should know the speaker’s main message immediately. We expect that future points will:
 - elaborate on this main point
 - give examples of this main point
 - give evidence to support this main point

Conclusion

We expect the conclusion to bring us back to the main theme with a different twist to keep us thinking about it.

- *the use of “speech devices”*—along the way we expect speakers to give us time to process what they are saying. Speakers should therefore use repetition, contrast, and lists of two or three aspects of their point to elaborate their idea. Balancing one idea against another as in *peace and war* or emphasising a point in a list of three as in: (“It is a *celebration* of a tremendous spirit of life, of one man’s *affirmation* of life and his *triumph* over death itself”) are devices used to link ideas together to ease the listener’s processing of those ideas and make the speech more memorable.

Tasks to Work on for Public Speaking

Journal

Reflect on the last occasion you spoke “in public”. Perhaps it was an impromptu speech in class or giving a vote of thanks to a visiting speaker or at a family event. How did you feel? What did you do to prepare? Use the Speech Evaluation form on p. 21 to evaluate your performance. How successful was the speech in achieving the expected aims? Why/why not?

Individual task: Public speaking

Imagine that you have been asked to give a speech at the annual Woman of the Year luncheon in Brisbane on either of the topics *Who cares?* or *Our Destiny*. Alternatively you could choose one of the topics on p. **** and designate your own audience. Some of your planning will involve asking questions like the following:

Audience:

What are their expectations, life experience, interests, background knowledge of my topic?

Topic:

Is the topic explicit or is it sufficiently vague for me to interpret it in such a way that I can talk about whatever I want?

Speaker Credibility – Competence:

Do I have the knowledge, accomplishments and experience to speak on this topic? (Never give a talk on a topic you know nothing about).

Trustworthiness:

How can I appear honest, just and objective? How will the audience believe in my competence?

Appearance:

What will I wear in order to show respect for my audience?

Sincerity:

What can I say to make sure the audience sees me as sincere?

Similarity:

How can I identify myself with the audience in areas relevant to my speech?

Time:

How long will I be expected to speak for?

Questions:

Will questions be directed to me and for how long?

The Speech Itself

Theme and Thesis:

What is my main idea?

Evidence:

What evidence will support my argument?

Attention:

How will I capture and maintain attention?

Illustrations:

What illustrations or stories can I use to make the topic come alive for the audience?

Jokes:

Are jokes appropriate to the occasion?

What jokes will relate to the topic?

Quotations:

Are there quotations that will add credibility?

Style:

Will I be relaxed and casual or more formal?

Use of speech techniques:

How can I use repetition, alliteration, active verbs, rhetorical questions, comparison, contrast, metaphors and similes, and visual descriptions to maintain interest?

Speeches on the topics “*Who Cares*” or “*Our Destiny*” given by prominent Australians, Dame Roma Mitchell, Pat O’Shane and Dame Leonie Kramer are available in “*Women of the year: A collection of speeches by Australia’s most successful women*”. Buderim: (1987) Women of the year luncheon, Watermark Press. Reading these speeches will show you how these women solved the problems set by the topics.

Persuasive Speech

A persuasive speech refutes opposing arguments or establishes alternative arguments by:

- stating the point to be refuted or established and explaining why it is important.
- previewing how the point will be refuted or supported.
- presenting credible evidence from respected sources.
- telling the audience what the evidence demonstrates.
- explaining the significance of the demonstration.

A persuasive speech works well using the following format:

- Opening statement of your thesis.
- Examples and evidence supporting your case linked together by transition statements.
- Refutation of the main arguments against your position.
- Strong conclusion stating your case clearly.

This format is worth analysing because it is the kind of format people use for all sorts of persuasion. For example, you might want to go to a particular movie with your friend and your conversation might go like this:

(Thesis) I hear that *Crawling up the Wall* is a great movie.

(Evidence) It's got Madonna interviewing the Pope.

(Evidence) The action scenes have you sitting on the edge of your seat all the time.

(Evidence) The music is great. I have heard the sound track and want to buy it.

(Meeting objections) Madonna has had counselling and it's not her usual film where she works on the neuroses resulting from her strange home life.

(Conclusion) *Crawling up the Wall* is a really interesting movie, everyone who has seen it says it's great but that they won't spoil the suspense by saying what it's about. Let's go.

In a conversation you have a greater opportunity to question ambiguities than you do when listening to a speech where arguments have to be more fully documented and more clearly explained.

Designing an Informative Speech

Bradley (1991) suggests that in an Informative Speech you can:

- describe
- tell a story
- report
- instruct
- demonstrate
- define
- analyse
- compare *and*
- contrast

An informative speech requires you to present information clearly in a way that will be easily remembered. To do this you will need to capture *attention* -perhaps with a description or a story. People will continue to listen if they perceive you as a *credible source* so you need to give them information which establishes your credibility as an information provider. What you tell them must be organised into meaningful chunks in order to facilitate recall. Constant repetition and a strong, interesting and memorable conclusion also aids recall of information.

Individual Tasks

Whenever there is a speech advertised on campus attend the event and take notes. Most politicians have speech writers and very often their speeches are well researched and persuasive. Some speakers are dramatic; others handle information well; some are great weavers of stories; others are boring in the extreme. You will learn what to do and what not to do from each speech you attend.

Read the following speeches by Cicero, Lincoln, Churchill, Whitlam, Kennedy and Martin Luther King and identify what makes them persuasive or not.

Speech Examples

Men and Women of Australia!

Gough Whitlam 13 November, 1972

The decision we will make for our country on 2 December is a choice between the past and the future, between the habits and fears of the past, and the demands and opportunities of the future. There are moments in history when the whole fate and future of nations can be decided by a single decision. For Australia, this is such a time. It's time for a new team, a new program, a new drive for equality of opportunities; it's time to create new opportunities for Australians, time for a new vision of what we can achieve in this generation for our nation and the region in which we live.

Comparison of one thing with another

It's time for a new government—a Labor Government.

Tricolon

My fellow citizens, I put these questions to you: Do you believe that Australia can afford another three years like the last twenty months? Are you prepared to maintain at the head of your affairs a coalition which has lurched into crisis after crisis, embarrassment piled on embarrassment week after week? Will you accept another three years of waiting for next week's crisis, next week's blunder? Will you again entrust the nation's economy to the men who deliberately, but needlessly, created Australia's worst unemployment for ten years? Or to the same men who have presided over the worst inflation for twenty years?

Questions build tension

What answer is expected to each of these questions?

Lincoln's Gettysburg Address

President Abraham Lincoln. November 19, 1863

At the dedication of the National Soldiers' Cemetery at Gettysburg, Pennsylvania.

Fourscore and seven years ago our fathers brought forth on this continent a new nation, conceived in liberty, and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal. Now we are engaged in a great civil war, testing whether that nation, or any nation so conceived and so dedicated, can long endure. We are met on a great battlefield of that war. We have come to dedicate a portion of that field, a final resting place for those who here gave their lives that that nation might live. It is altogether fitting and proper that we should do this. But, in a larger sense, we cannot dedicate—we cannot consecrate—we cannot hallow—this ground. The brave men, living and dead, who struggled here, have consecrated it far above our poor power to add or detract.

Make a list of the speech

devices used in this speech.

The world will little note, nor long remember, what we say here, but it can never forget what they did here. It is for us, the living, rather, to be dedicated here to the unfinished work which they who fought here have thus far so nobly advanced. It is rather for us to be here dedicated to the great task remaining before us,—that from these honoured dead we take increased devotion to that cause for which they gave the last full measure of devotion—that we here highly resolve that these dead shall not have died in vain—that this nation, under God, shall have a new birth of freedom—and that government of the people, by the people, for the people, shall not perish from the earth.

A knock at midnight **Dr Martin Luther King Jr.**

“... Centuries ago Jeremiah, the great prophet raised a very profound question. He looked at the inequities around. He noticed a lot of things. He noticed the good people so often suffering and the evil people so often prospering. Jeremiah raised the question, is there no balm in Gilead? Is there no physician there? Centuries later our slave foreparents came along and they too confronted the problems of life. They had nothing to look forward to morning after morning but the sizzling heat, the rawhide whip of the overseer, long rows of cotton. But they did an amazing thing. They looked back across the centuries and they took Jeremiah’s question mark and straightened it into an exclamation point, and they could sing. “There is a balm in Gilead to make the wounded whole! There is a balm in Gilead to heal the sinsick soul!” I can sing that and another song comes to me. I’ve seen the lightening flash, I’ve heard the thunder roll, I’ve felt sin breakers dashing trying to conquer my soul. But I heard the voice of Jesus saying still to fight on. He promised never to leave me, never to leave me alone”.

Cicero

Return to your senses, I beg you, Mark Antony, in time: consider your ancestry, not your associates.
Behave as you will towards me; but be reconciled to your country.
Still, these are your concerns. For myself, I shall avow my position. I defended the republic in my youth: I will not desert her in my age. I scorned the swords of Cataline: I will never quail before yours.
Nay, I would cheerfully put my body in danger’s way if by my death the freedom of the state can be realised, so that the anguish of the Roman people may at last bring to birth its prolonged travail.

Who was the audience here?

Why are the sentences shorter?

Where does the speech sermon arrive at a crescendo?

Cicero’s continued criticism of Mark Antony cost the Roman orator his life. You might consider this an example of an unsuccessful speech of persuasion! Note how audience attention is maintained by the use of balanced opposites.

Individual Task: Speech Topics

Use these topics in class, or alternatively give yourself extra speech practice by doing them yourself.

Plan and deliver either:

- a) an **Informative** speech six minutes long or
- b) a **Persuasive** speech of the same length.

Speech Topics

1. Smoking is a curse.
2. Star signs tell you nothing.
3. Men and women are equal.
4. First impressions count.
5. Birds of a feather flock together.
6. Opposites attract.
7. Windsurfing.
8. The causes of domestic violence.
9. Stress and its causes.
10. Everyone should learn the art of negotiating.
11. Can your personality change?
12. Economic theories and their uses.
13. Australians ought to play more sport.
14. Australians are consuming more than their fair share.
15. Australians neglect their spiritual dimension.
16. Parents ought to receive training.
17. Pornography ought to be banned.
18. Pornography serves useful social functions.
19. Humour varies with culture.
20. The key to getting along with one's neighbour.
21. Every driver needs courses in defensive driving.
22. Gobbledegook.
23. Talk show interview techniques.
24. Talk back radio.

- **Speech opportunity**

In groups of three choose one of the topics below and in 10 minutes work out a two-minute explanation for an audience which knows nothing about the topic. Select one person to give the explanation to the rest of the class.

1. The rules of 500
2. How to change a car tyre
3. How to tie a shoelace
4. The rules of Australian Rules football
5. The rules of netball

- **Speech opportunity**

Practice gaining confidence by shuffling the following cards and giving them to people in your class who have five minutes to prepare a 30 second talk. However good they are have the timekeeper stop them after 30 seconds and make them sit down.

The plan for a 30 second talk can be used for longer talks and can be used as an outline.

In 30 seconds speak on the following topic:

“Apples vs Oranges”

using the formula:

- ◆ Opening, Greeting or Attention Getter
- ◆ Topic Outline Sentence
- ◆ Bodypoints
 - 1
 - 2
 - 3
- ◆ Summary
- ◆ Conclusion

In 30 seconds speak on the following topic:

“Rugby vs Soccer”

using the formula:

- ◆ Opening, Greeting or Attention Getter
- ◆ Topic Outline Sentence
- ◆ Bodypoints
 - 1
 - 2
 - 3
- ◆ Summary
- ◆ Conclusion

In 30 seconds speak on the following topic:

“Vegemite vs Peanut Butter”

using the formula:

- ◆ Opening, Greeting or Attention Getter
- ◆ Topic Outline Sentence
- ◆ Bodypoints
 - 1
 - 2
 - 3
- ◆ Summary
- ◆ Conclusion

In 30 seconds speak on the following topic:

“Surfing vs Windsurfing”

using the formula:

- ◆ Opening, Greeting or Attention Getter
- ◆ Topic Outline Sentence
- ◆ Bodypoints
 - 1
 - 2
 - 3
- ◆ Summary
- ◆ Conclusion

In 30 seconds speak on the following topic:

“Elephants vs Rhinoceroses”

using the formula:

- ◆ Opening, Greeting or Attention Getter
- ◆ Topic Outline Sentence
- ◆ Bodypoints
 - 1
 - 2
 - 3
- ◆ Summary
- ◆ Conclusion

In 30 seconds speak on the following topic:

“Age vs Youth”

using the formula:

- ◆ Opening, Greeting or Attention Getter
- ◆ Topic Outline Sentence
- ◆ Bodypoints
 - 1
 - 2
 - 3
- ◆ Summary
- ◆ Conclusion

In 30 seconds speak on the following topic:

“Trains vs Buses”

using the formula:

- ◆ Opening, Greeting or Attention Getter
- ◆ Topic Outline Sentence
- ◆ Bodypoints
 - 1
 - 2
 - 3
- ◆ Summary
- ◆ Conclusion

In 30 seconds speak on the following topic:

“Blue vs Purple”

using the formula:

- ◆ Opening, Greeting or Attention Getter
- ◆ Topic Outline Sentence
- ◆ Bodypoints
 - 1
 - 2
 - 3
- ◆ Summary
- ◆ Conclusion

In 30 seconds speak on the following topic:

“AFL vs Rugby”

using the formula:

- ◆ Opening, Greeting or Attention Getter
- ◆ Topic Outline Sentence
- ◆ Bodypoints
 - 1
 - 2
 - 3
- ◆ Summary
- ◆ Conclusion

In 30 seconds speak on the following topic:

“Cycling vs Walking”

using the formula:

- ◆ Opening, Greeting or Attention Getter
- ◆ Topic Outline Sentence
- ◆ Bodypoints
 - 1
 - 2
 - 3
- ◆ Summary
- ◆ Conclusion

In 30 seconds speak on the following topic:

“Accountants vs Solicitors”

using the formula:

- ◆ Opening, Greeting or Attention Getter
- ◆ Topic Outline Sentence
- ◆ Bodypoints
 - 1
 - 2
 - 3
- ◆ Summary
- ◆ Conclusion

In 30 seconds speak on the following topic:

“Horses vs Cows”

using the formula:

- ◆ Opening, Greeting or Attention Getter
- ◆ Topic Outline Sentence
- ◆ Bodypoints
 - 1
 - 2
 - 3
- ◆ Summary
- ◆ Conclusion

In 30 seconds speak on the following topic:

“Cars Vs Bikes”

using the formula:

- ◆ Opening, Greeting or Attention Getter
- ◆ Topic Outline Sentence
- ◆ Bodypoints
 - 1
 - 2
 - 3
- ◆ Summary
- ◆ Conclusion

In 30 seconds speak on the following topic:

“Contacts Vs Glasses”

using the formula:

- ◆ Opening, Greeting or Attention Getter
- ◆ Topic Outline Sentence
- ◆ Bodypoints
 - 1
 - 2
 - 3
- ◆ Summary
- ◆ Conclusion

In 30 seconds speak on the following topic:

“MacIntosh vs IBM”

using the formula:

- ◆ Opening, Greeting or Attention Getter
- ◆ Topic Outline Sentence
- ◆ Bodypoints
 - 1
 - 2
 - 3
- ◆ Summary
- ◆ Conclusion

In 30 seconds speak on the following topic:

“Boots vs Shoes”

using the formula:

- ◆ Opening, Greeting or Attention Getter
- ◆ Topic Outline Sentence
- ◆ Bodypoints
 - 1
 - 2
 - 3
- ◆ Summary
- ◆ Conclusion

In 30 seconds speak on the following topic:

“Films vs Videos”

using the formula:

- ◆ Opening, Greeting or Attention Getter
- ◆ Topic Outline Sentence
- ◆ Bodypoints
 - 1
 - 2
 - 3
- ◆ Summary
- ◆ Conclusion

In 30 seconds speak on the following topic:

“Trees vs Grass”

using the formula:

- ◆ Opening, Greeting or Attention Getter
- ◆ Topic Outline Sentence
- ◆ Bodypoints
 - 1
 - 2
 - 3
- ◆ Summary
- ◆ Conclusion

In 30 seconds speak on the following topic:

“Guns vs Roses”

using the formula:

- ◆ Opening, Greeting or Attention Getter
- ◆ Topic Outline Sentence
- ◆ Bodypoints
 - 1
 - 2
 - 3
- ◆ Summary
- ◆ Conclusion

In 30 seconds speak on the following topic:

“Hungry Jacks Vs McDonalds”

using the formula:

- ◆ Opening, Greeting or Attention Getter
- ◆ Topic Outline Sentence
- ◆ Bodypoints
 - 1
 - 2
 - 3
- ◆ Summary
- ◆ Conclusion

In 30 seconds speak on the following topic:

“Vita Brits vs Weet Bix”

using the formula:

- ◆ Opening, Greeting or Attention Getter
- ◆ Topic Outline Sentence
- ◆ Bodypoints
 - 1
 - 2
 - 3
- ◆ Summary
- ◆ Conclusion

In 30 seconds speak on the following topic:

“Holdens vs Falcons”

using the formula:

- ◆ Opening, Greeting or Attention Getter
- ◆ Topic Outline Sentence
- ◆ Bodypoints
 - 1
 - 2
 - 3
- ◆ Summary
- ◆ Conclusion

In 30 seconds speak on the following topic:

“Staminade vs Lucozade”

using the formula:

- ◆ Opening, Greeting or Attention Getter
- ◆ Topic Outline Sentence
- ◆ Bodypoints
 - 1
 - 2
 - 3
- ◆ Summary
- ◆ Conclusion

In 30 seconds speak on the following topic:

“War vs Peace”

using the formula:

- ◆ Opening, Greeting or Attention Getter
- ◆ Topic Outline Sentence
- ◆ Bodypoints
 - 1
 - 2
 - 3
- ◆ Summary
- ◆ Conclusion

Speech Evaluation Feedback Form

A seven minute talk gives an opportunity for each person in the class to try out public speaking skills. Practice will ensure that you achieve what you have planned within the seven minutes. Taking longer than the set time usually irritates your audience and interferes with their processing of your communication. In a classroom situation a student colleague can be designated as timer. If timekeepers tap loudly on the desk at the six minute mark speakers can rearrange their material in order to finish on time.

Classmates can give feedback to colleagues using this form. Hand the form directly to your colleague so that your comments do not influence the tutor's marking. Be as frank as you want while remembering that your classmates are at least as sensitive as you are and so need lots of praise to cushion your critical remarks.

Rate the speaker on each point using the following:

O = Outstanding
VG = Very Good
G = Good
A = Average
N = Needs work

Speaker:
Date:
Topic:

INTRODUCTION	Mark	DELIVERY	Mark
• Captured interest		• Kept eye contact	
• Introduced topic clearly		• Spoke clearly	
• Related topic to audience		• Paused effectively	
• Established own credibility to talk		• Avoided reading from notes	
• Previewed outline		• Showed enthusiasm	
BODY		• Presented visual aids well	
• Main points clear		• Kept audience attention	
• Evidence or support for ideas		• Finished in time limit	
• Sources credible			
• Organisation obvious		CONCLUSION	
• Language appropriate for audience		• Prepared audience for ending	
• Transitions organise flow of ideas		• Reinforced central idea	
• Refutation of counter arguments		• Ended with impact	

The best part of your speech was

Next time pay special attention to

General comments (Remember to praise as well as point out shortcomings; be helpful)