

Giving an Effective Public Speaking in English

92E 027 Hiroyuki Ito

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1. Introduction

When I was a sophomore in 1993, I had made a decision to study counseling for spritual sickness in a church in Yonezawa City in Ymagata Prefecture. The minister by the name of Nobuo Tanaka gives us effective and powerful message about counseling. He is also a psychologist. His speaking doesn't stumble over words, easy to understand for everyone. We don't get bored about his lecture. At the beginning, I took little interest in his way of speaking, but I started to collect many tapes of his lecture and tried to listen to the tape as much as possible. And I had an opportunity to lecture in worship service in chapel assembly hours of Keiwa college. Also, I had a chance presenting my English speech in Keiwa College festival. This is how I came to choose the topic "Giving an Effective Pubulic Speaking in English" in this paper.

We are called upon to make a speech at some point in life, but most of us feel difficult delivering a good speech in public. I hope this paper help us some suggestions on how to give an effective speech.

When we have to give a speech, we will be terrified. We may get nervous, we may forget what we are trying to say, we stumble over words, we sometimes speak too long and we bore our audience. Later we think, "Thank goodness, it's over. I'm not good at speaking in public. I never want to do that again. But we all admire speakers who can casually deliver a humorous, intelligent and well-reasoned talk apparently without making much effort. We may find it difficult to believe that even the most accomplished performers on stage suffer from nerves. When a speaker doesn't get nervous, the chances are that he has become complacent and boring. We need nerves to give us sparkle but what we don't want are nerves which cripple us and prevent us from performing well.¹ So, in this paper, I will not show how we should kill the butterflies but I will show how we can train ourselves to fly

information and thoughts.

2. The General Concept of Speaking

A public speech is a planned event involving a large group of people. One person is required to speak for an extended period of time while others listen. Adjustments should be taken into consideration in terms of public-speaking situation, but the stream of speech is tend to be one-way, from speaker to listeners in a form of monologue.

When we think of conversation, it is spontaneous, in which the participants have usually not prepared their remarks in advance. Some ideas may have been thought through and some participants may even have a strategy or a goal they are pursuing, but it is unlikely that those gathered prepare the messages in advance. In fact, too much preplanning violates the spirit of a conversation.

As opposed to a conversation, a public speech involves an extended stream of speech requiring the speaker to prepare his or her remarks in advance. Thus, a public speech is prepared according to principles and guidelines designed to help the speaker compose the speech in advance and deliver it effectively to get the audience's attention. Finally, the speaker has a strategy in mind: she or he sets the specific purpose of the speech and analyze the audience, practiced delivering the message, and tries to control the outcome of the communication.

Certain recurring situations in our society require formal communication: speeches at public hearings or at meetings of an organization; oral reports in the classroom or the conference room and occasional fragmentary presentations, perhaps as part of a larger debate on an issue under discussion at church, school, or on the job. These situations have built them into certain expectations and principles that other, less formal, communication situations generally do not have. Let's look carefully at the individual components of the situation and the expectations that go with them.²

3. Preparing and Planning of the Speech

3-1. Choosing a subject

Once we decide on a topic, the first step in discovering ideas that is needed to decide into what category it falls.

These are the subjects we can think of.

People: The people about whom the person speak may be real or factitious, famous or unknown, heroes or villains.

Place: Geographic areas, plots of land, cities, countries which have served as speech subjects.

Things: Shoes, dogs, minerals, satellites, etc.

Events: Occasions such as birthday, dedications, play openings, or weddings, etc.

Processes: Speeches which explain processes, discuss how things work or happen or develop.

Concepts: These deal with theories, meanings, and feelings which come from the mind of the speaker rather than from the observable world. Concept subjects tend to be more abstract and personal.

Problems: Since problems dominate every facet of individual and social life, they deserve special prominence as speech subjects. Problems are common topics. Racial strife, killing diseases, international conflict, poverty, crime, drug addiction, inflation, traffic congestion, and smog are a few.

Plans and policies: Speakers often translate their concern for problems into courses of action designed to solve a problem.

Blended subjects: Very often more than one subject category appears within the same speech.³

3-2. Analyzing your audience

First of all, it is important to plan the speech. We should find out everything we can do about the subject. And at the same time, try to find out as much as we can about our audience. Who are they? What do they know about our subject? Do they have a common interest? Why are they coming to hear us speak? We should put ourselves in their shoes as we prepare our speech. Ask ourselves the purpose of our speech. What is the occasion? Why are you speaking? There are many possible speaking roles, and each one has its own special characteristics. We should know which category we fit. But, don't spoil our speech by confusing one speaking roles with another.

Sometimes people find it difficult to pinpoint exactly what they want to achieve. Sometimes we give the speech because we've been told to. If we are not sure of how to identify our objectives, here are some keywords.

General objectives fall into the following categories:

- To inform/teach/train.
- To stimulate/motivate/inspire.
- To persuade/convince.
- To explore/debate/negotiate.
- To amuse/entertain.

We just remember that one general objective. It is not good to confuse ourselves with a mixture of too many general objectives, just aim to develop our main point. Our audience is large or small, if we are going to be an effective speaker, we should find out as much as possible about them.

Finding our audience will enable us to make our talk relevant to them and thereby overcome many of the difficulties that listeners face when trying to follow the spoken word.

Others to know about the audience

- How much do they already know about the topic?
- How much do they think they know?
- How much do they want to know?
- How much do they need to know to achieve our objective?⁴

3-3. Selecting the ideas

If we overload our talk with too many good points, our audience will forget them. It is very important for us to remember those even after days later, I think they will only have retained approximately a quarter of what we have said. We will be more effective if we choose one or two points, develop them, present supporting evidence, choose relevant illustrations, and recap and summarize frequently.⁵

Summary of preparing the speech

- Why are you speaking? Identify and write out our objective.
- Who is going to listen? Find out about the audience.
- Draw an ideas map. Don't be judgemental; be creative.
- Select ideas. Choose a few key points to achieve our objective.

4. Constructing an Impressive Message

Listeners find it difficult to concentrate on the spoken words, so we must give them a framework. This is the equivalent of a contents page. We should know that our listeners can't re-read our previous paragraphs so we need to help them when their concentration fails. Therefore, our structure must be logical, simple to follow and relevant to our audience.

I have suggested that we choose a suitable structure at this stage in our preparation, because it enables us to place our ideas in the correct order. If we are not decided on our structure, try writing out our main points on several small cards so that we can change them easily and experiment with a variety of different sequences.

The next preparation is to develop key ideas. It will depend on the type of talk we are giving. If we are merely speaking for a few minutes at an internal meeting, we may find that we only need to note down a few selected points from our idea map, choose the sequence which will be most logical for our audience, and preparation will be complete. If we are addressing a conference of several hundred people, or bidding for a vital contract, we will want to plan in more detail how we can develop and support our main points and present them in the more positive way. We should think around our key ideas. We can write out our main points on cards.⁶

Summary in building an impressive message

- Select a suitable structure.

- Expand our key ideas with minor points.
- Add colour to the grey patches using relevant personal facts, example and illustrations.
- Choose a punchy beginning.
- End decisively.⁷

5. Delivery

The impressive speaker has sincerity, enthusiasm and vitality even if they don't have professional actor's experience. We will find it impossible to express these emotions.

Let's consider some of the elements in nonverbal aspects:

- We can't keep good eye contact – one of the essential elements of effective speaking.
- Our body language is restricted – our script is like a ball and chain limiting our movements.
- We will sound unnatural and therefore insincere.
- Script dependence will mean we will never learn to be a convincing speaker or develop self confidence.

To memorize is another method in making delivery. All our energy will be directed inwards instead of outwards to our audience. They will feel an invisible barrier and a lack of warmth, even if they don't understand the reason. We know our talk is like word for word so that nerves will have an adverse effect on our memory and unless we think quickly, we will find ourselves floundering. Therefore, to memorize is sometimes necessary in making delivery. But it is not good to rely on our memory for the entire speech.

If we shouldn't read a speech and we shouldn't memorize it and we can't make up an entire talk off the top of our head, how can we express our message to the audience exactly?

To speak extemporaneously is the most effective delivery style because it has all benefits of impromptu speaking and none of the drawbacks of reading. Then, we can use brief outline notes to give us the confidence to sound enthusiastic, behave with vitality and look at the audience with sincerity.

In case of forgetting some words, we should decide which type of the message is most appropriate for us and our talk. And it is very useful to use the idea map as a safety net. Because we put possible facts and details about the subject of our talk. and we consider the script is as a safety net too.

In our preparation, we have to check the following stages:

- Setting an objective.
- Researching the audience.
- Drawing an idea map.

■ Choosing a path.⁸

When I give a speech, I usually use “4×6” cards, because it is useful and I can hold them in my hand, or rest them on the table. If we use small cards, we will look professional. Then we can smile, and look at the audience.

Impromptu speaking is also an useful method in delivering speeches. You know that every day of our life we are speaking without preparation so we know we have the ability to do so. For example, if we are asked to speak unexpectedly in a business meeting we can use one of the following techniques:

- Use the previous speaker’s comments.
- Summarize what has been said previously.
- Restate the problem and our own views.
- Agree with the other speakers and decline to comment further.
- Use mental prompts such as why? how? which? what? who? to build up our talk.

Summary in delivering the effective talk

- Speak extemporaneously.
- Choose a suitable safety net.
- Practice several times aloud preferably with a tape recorder or video.⁹

6. The Importance of Body Language

All of us communicate with one another nonverbally as well as with words. Most of the time we are not aware that we are doing it. But body language is very important for the audience because it is one of the means of communication. The audience is not impressed with words. They are impressed with enthusiasm, vitality and sincerity. To make a good first impression is very important. One of the ways to make a good impression is to smile. If we smile at our audience, they will think “I am happy to be here and I am glad you are here too.” If we think that smiling is inappropriate for our position or our view, the audience would smile in sympathy. Therefore, to smile is to make a good first impression.

The reason of the importance of body language is that we present our audience the confident image. Because we look or move with using body language, we will be giving off signs to our audience as to our inner feelings.¹⁰

The most important thing for body language is to look at the audience. When I give a speech, I always try hard to look at my audience, however I couldn’t do it well. I thought the reason why it is difficult to look at the audience. The answer is simple. We do not want our audience to know that we are getting nervous. If we don’t look at them, they won’t be able to see how nervous we are.

To use our hands will be a factor in emphasizing a point. We can express an idea, a spiral staircase, or a size. It is very important to look like a self-confident and interesting speaker. When we don’t use our hands, we keep our hands empty

and still by the sides of our body. This will feel odd, but it looks very natural.¹¹

Summary in being an effective speaker

- Use our eye contact with our audience and show them that we are interested in them.
- Your face should say, "I am happy to be here and I'm glad you are here too."
- Your hands should be empty and still.
- Gestures should start from the shoulder and be relevant.
- Stand tall, don't sit.
- Balance on both feet and wear imaginary with lead-weighted boots.
- Let the beam of clam confidence shine out from our chest.¹²

7. Conclusion

In this paper, I investigated a study in public speaking. Through making my speech, I have learned the way of being relaxed, speaking slowly and clearly and looking at the audience. I have found that it is important to use simple vocabularies and expressions whenever it is possible. Also I found it is important to make a pause for a few seconds occasionally to give the audience a chance to think about what I say. I have come to realize that I have to make sure that everyone in the room can hear my voice. If it is a large room, such as an auditorium, I will probably have to use a microphone.

We must just remember: be prepared, know the subject, the audience, and the occasion of the speech. And say what you have to say and then make a pause. Let our personality come through so that we make eye contact to our audience.¹³

If we follow these simple steps, we'll realize that we don't have to be afraid of speaking to the audience. In fact, we may find that expressing ourselves is so enjoyable that we can make more speech without hesitation. We're not convinced yet? Let's give it a try and see what happens. I am sure we will be able to find the joy of presenting the speech in public.

Notes

1. Linda Markstein, Louise Hirasawa, *Developing Reading Skills*, Newbury House, Asahi, 1994, p.33.
2. Richard A Katula, *Principles and Patterns of Public Speaking*, Wadsworth Publish Company, 1987, p.8.
3. Keiji Nomura, *A Study in Public Speaking*, Kinokuniyashoten, 1990, p.7.
4. Cristina Stuart, *Effective Speaking*, Nichols Publishing Company, 1988, pp.7-15.
5. Ibid., p.18.
6. Ibid., p.22-27.
7. Ibid., p.38.

8. Ibid., pp.48-51.
9. Ibid., pp.56-57.
10. Ibid., pp.58-63.
11. Ibid., p.68.
12. Ibid., p.71.
13. Markstein, Hirasawa, p.35.

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Appendix

1. My Sample Speech Recorded in Video Tape

Occasion: The English Speech Presentation in Keiwa College Festival

Date: October 21, 1995 (from 1:30 p.m.)

Place: Keiwa College

Title: Why Do We Fear Failure?

The purpose of the speech: This speech is to persuade the audience that risking failure will be necessary to achieve success and keep on working toward our goals.

When I was a high school student, I attended an English conversation class for about six months which was offered as an extension course by Southern Illinois University at Niigata. I was a freshman at that time. Many of our classmates didn't try to speak English in front of the class. We were afraid of making mistake in speaking. Most of us would be afraid of being laughed at by others. We wished to speak perfect English in front of the classmates. But I thought people who speak perfect English don't need to attend an English conversation class.

I am a Japanese, but I make many mistakes even in using Japanese as all of you do. I had made a lot of mistakes when I lectured in worship service both in high school and in chapel assembly hours of this college. Furthermore, I have been embarrassed many time by speaking imperfect Japanese. But I have come to think that there is something more important than embarrassment. I should transmit my message to the people who listen to my lectures. Even if my Japanese is not perfect, they ought to understand much of the content of my message.

Sometimes we must risk failure in order to accomplish our goals. Sometimes we will fail. Sometimes people will laugh at us or feel pity or even scold us for our failure. We worry about failure because we want to do well, because we want to succeed. It is all right to worry about failure. It is natural. However, we must not let the worry stop us from trying to succeed. The more we worry and increase our anxiety, the more we want to succeed. They are normal signs of our strong desires to succeed.

Let's not fight against worries. Let's not try to fight against fear of failure. Accept the reality of making mistakes as well as sometimes failing. That's natural for us ordinary people. And keep on working toward our goals. Take the necessary risk of life, trembling and perspiring, and give yourself the chance for success. The safe course, the no-risk course, is sometimes an uninteresting course. Without risking anything, you may win the game of life and lose the game of life too. Do you understand the point I'm trying to make?

Not long ago there was a comparative study of education in Japan and in the United States. The result as reported in *The New York Times*. American researchers were impressed by the academic achievement and diligence of Japanese students. They thought that the American educational system should become more like that of Japan. However, more recent studies have pointed out some of the faults of Japanese education. Our educational system emphasizes memorization, conformity, and obedience. Failure will be particularly frightening for the students in such a system. The American system of education emphasizes individuality and creativity. Being different from others doesn't mean being a failure. Americans appreciate and highlight individual differences. The result is a society that is harder to control than Japan's. However, with the rapid changes which accompany technological advancement, we will find creative, adaptive thinking very valuable. Creative thinking implies taking a risk to think differently from others. Creative thinking implies the possibility of failure.

I expect that you will have to think creatively and independently if you wish to succeed in the future in Japan. Blindly following a system of rules, choosing the safe and secure salaryman course, will not be as rewarded in the future as it was in the past. Risking failure will be necessary to achieve success. You may consider such risks stressful yet exciting. Temporary successes or failure bring us the chance to try again. Trying is our noble human virtue. As the famous Japanese psychiatrist Masatake Morita puts it, "No one can guarantee success, but we can learn to keep trying even while we are failing."

2. My Sample Speech Recorded in Video Tape

Occasion: The English Speech Presentation in Keiwa College Festival

Date: October 23, 1994 (from 10:00 a.m.)

Place: Keiwa College

Title: To Live an Affirmative Life

The purpose of the speech: This speech is to persuade the audience that living an affirmative life is to live fully in the present.

The present is all we have for our lives. The past is already gone, unchangeable. The future is not yet here. Sometimes people seem to waste a lot of time in the present regretting what they did in the past and worrying about what will happen in the future. If we are going to change our lives, we must begin to make changes now. If we are going to know our ourselves better, we must begin to study and accept ourselves now. If we are going discover our purposes, we must begin living purposefully now. If we are going build our lives on responsible action rather than on fleeting feelings, we must begin now. If we are going to recognize the gratitude and debt we owe to our world, we must begin now. Repayments starts now. Now is all we have.

I have gone through the suffering from insecurity for a long time, so I have been living a negative life for a long long time. It was not a good way for me to live, for I was not living fully in the present. Because of the deficiency, I decided to study counseling. I expected that by studying counseling, I could solve my spiritual sickness. Fortunately, I met a man by the name of Nobuo Tanaka. He is a minister in a church and a famous counselor in Yonezawa city in Yamagata prefecture. I definitely decided to go to his counseling school. His basic teaching, I discovered is that we must live an affirmative life. According to his lecture on counseling, counseling has several principles. His first principle is to live in unity with others and always try to be good. After that, we can continue to improve ourselves and develop a view of life. His second principle is that it is necessary for us Japanese to show our feelings more in order to understand another person's feelings. By using polite emotional expression, I am learning consideration for other persons who have problems. During my illness, I always kept my feeling to myself, but this did not help solve my spritual sickness. His third tenet is to learn to live in relation with each other. Much of our spritual sickness comes from not having a common bond in a relationship. The distortion in a relationship comes from having no real connection to inner feelings caused by illness. Finally, Reverend Tanaka considers the total human being to be important. One must unify body and soul and achieve real paece of mind. Thanks to Reverend Tanaka's teaching, my self-absorption has been cured, and now I find myself reaching out to others, my physical and spiritual well-being part of the well-being for others.

To repeat, to live an affirmative life is to live fully in the present. Therefore I hope all of us try to do that. By living in the present, we may find time to plan important moments to reflect on our lives. At the same time, we may find moments to reflect at special times and places. People who spend too much time

thinking of the future and the past miss the joy of living fully in the present.

Thank you for being good listeners. I suspect you have't agree with everything I've said but I hope that some of my suggestions will help you to capture the butterflies and train them to fly in formation.

3. The Entrance Ceremony of Keiwa College Recorded in Video Tape

Occasion: Greeting in the entrance ceremony of Keiwa College

Date: April 3, 1992 (from 9:00 a.m.)

Place: Shibata Cultural Hall

4. My Sample Lecture of The Chapel Assembly Hours at Keiwa College Recorded in Cassette Tape

Occasion: The Chapel Assembly Hours at Keiwa College

Date: May 3, 1994 (from 10:40 a.m.)

Title: 『自分らしく生きるために』

The purpose of the lecture: This lecture is to understand the audience that knowing myself is very important. What is the most important thing to live in your life?

5. My Sample Lecture of The Worship Service at Keiwa High School Recorded in Cassette Tape

Occasion: The Worship Service at Keiwa High School

Date: September 5, 1991 (from 8:50 a.m.)

Title: 『自分を見つめて』

The purpose of the lecture: This lecture is to understand the audience what I had done in the past and what I want to do in my future.

Appendixのサンプル・スピーチは全てビデオ及びカセットテープに収録され、本稿と併せて提出されている。紙面でスピーチの音声表現、身体動作表現、その他非言語要素を表現できないのが残念である。

(卒論指導教員 野村啓治)