

Public Speaking

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Dedicatória

A todos os apaixonados pela comunicação.

Aos meus netos.

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Preface

In contemporary daily life, individuals are constantly required to exercise their communication skills — not only as a mean of social interaction, but also as a fundamental tool in both professional and personal contexts.

Regardless of one's professional domain, the ability to articulate, inform, persuade, and engage with others is essential for active and effective participation in society.

Despite the proliferation of social media and other digital communication channels, there remain numerous instances in which direct, personal communication is indispensable. In such moments, it is through our own words, voice, and ideas that we must express ourselves to achieve specific objectives.

This manual has been conceived to support the development of communicative competences in such scenarios. It focuses on the acquisition and refinement of public speaking skills, aiming to enable individuals to engage with clarity, confidence, and effectiveness when addressing an audience.

Abstract

This manual has been developed with the aim of disseminating foundational knowledge on Public Speaking (PS), as well as equipping future professionals with the necessary skills to communicate effectively in a variety of everyday academic and professional contexts.

In contemporary society, both within organisational settings and in personal interactions, it is increasingly necessary to articulate ideas, convey messages, and present projects in a coherent and persuasive manner. Effective communication requires adherence to certain principles, coupled with creative strategies that ensure clarity and impact. The nature of the audience ultimately dictates the appropriate timing, content, and form of communication.

Nevertheless, PS remains a source of discomfort for many individuals, whether the purpose is to inform, coordinate, persuade, or argue convincingly, based on truthful and logical reasoning. Fortunately, a range of techniques and strategies can be acquired to overcome such discomfort and to enhance one's communicative competence.

This manual addresses these challenges and explores various other dimensions of this essential area of knowledge.

Upon completion of this manual, and through the application of its contents, learners will be able to:

- Sustain and effectively manage audience attention throughout a presentation;
- Minimise or conceal outward signs of stress when speaking in public;
- Design, structure, and deliver effective public speeches.

More specifically, learners will be able to:

- Express ideas in a fluent, reasoned, and systematic manner, both in oral and written forms;
- Develop collaborative skills related to the collection, analysis, systematisation, and interpretation of information;
- Organise and structure data to construct coherent and purposeful speeches;
- Distinguish between, and appropriately utilise, the three main types of speech;
- Apply communication strategies in individual and group-based projects or activities;
- Enhance the ability to synthesise and formulate conclusions;
- Critically analyse public speeches delivered by others;
- Demonstrate readiness to receive, process, and integrate feedback during and after public presentations.

Keywords: public speaking, strategic communication, organisational communication.

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I. Introduction to Public Speaking

Why do we communicate?

Why do human beings communicate? Why is communication such a vital element in our lives?

According to Morin (1998), we communicate to inform and to be informed; to know and to be known; to explain others and ourselves; to understand and to be understood. Living in society makes communication indispensable — we cannot survive in isolation, and we rely on one another to live, learn, and grow.

In fact, communication is a sign of survival. No one can live alone for too long without expressing his own feelings, ideas, efforts, achievements and so on. Our brain therefore works to develop ways of communicating in society, with the goal of adapting ourselves, accepting and tolerating others and being accepted.

However, for many individuals, communication becomes significantly more challenging when it must occur in front of an audience, regardless of its size. Some authors describe PS as such an uncomfortable experience that it may feel as though one is exposed or vulnerable. Others argue that a speaker's aim is not only to inform but also to captivate the audience — to engage them to such an extent that the speaker can guide their attention, emotions, or even opinions.

Due to these reasons, it is crucial to develop the ability to deliver a speech effectively: to be engaging, to present well-structured and meaningful arguments, to inform clearly and persuasively, and to ensure one's voice is heard and respected in society. Overcoming the potential obstacles associated with PS is both a personal and professional asset.

What is Public Speaking?

You have most likely been asked at some point to speak in front of a group — this is what we refer to as PS. It involves delivering information to an audience with a clear purpose: to inform, to influence, to connect socially, or simply to entertain.

PS is characterised by five essential elements:

1. Who – the source of the message (the speaker);

2. What – the content of the message;
3. Whom – the audience receiving the message;
4. What medium – the channel used, typically oral speech;
5. What effect – the intended impact or goal of the speaker.

PS is important due to several reasons:

1. Every time you speak in public, you might build greater self-confidence;
2. As your skills improve, it is likely for you to become more socially competent;
3. PS enables you to reach a larger audience more efficiently than individual conversations;
4. You can demonstrate your knowledge and expertise on a subject and hopefully gain credibility;
5. With well-structured arguments and supporting data, your speeches become more persuasive.

How PS Differs from Casual Conversation

When you try to convince your friends to go to the beach instead of the cinema, you are communicating with a purpose. While this might resemble PS in intent, since the aim is to persuade, it differs significantly in scale and preparation.

PS typically involves addressing a larger audience and carries greater responsibility in terms of clarity, organisation, and delivery. Unlike casual conversation, PS demands careful planning and strategic execution. The stakes are higher, and the effectiveness of the message depends on how well the speaker adapts to the expectations and needs of the audience.

In essence, to be taken seriously and to succeed in public speaking, one must go beyond spontaneity and engage in deliberate preparation and practice.

PS as a Communication Process

PS should be understood as a dynamic and interactive communication process that involves at least two participants — the speaker and the audience — and is shaped by multiple contextual and psychological factors.

Over the years, several models of communication have been developed to explain how messages are constructed, transmitted, received, and interpreted. These models are essential for understanding the underlying mechanisms of PS and improving their effectiveness.

One of the most influential frameworks was proposed by Shannon and Weaver in 1949, known as the Linear Model of Communication (see Fig. 1). This model identifies four fundamental elements:

- **Source** – the originator of the message (the speaker)
- **Message** – the content or information being conveyed
- **Channel** – the medium through which the message is transmitted (e.g., spoken words, visuals)
- **Receiver** – the individual or group to whom the message is directed

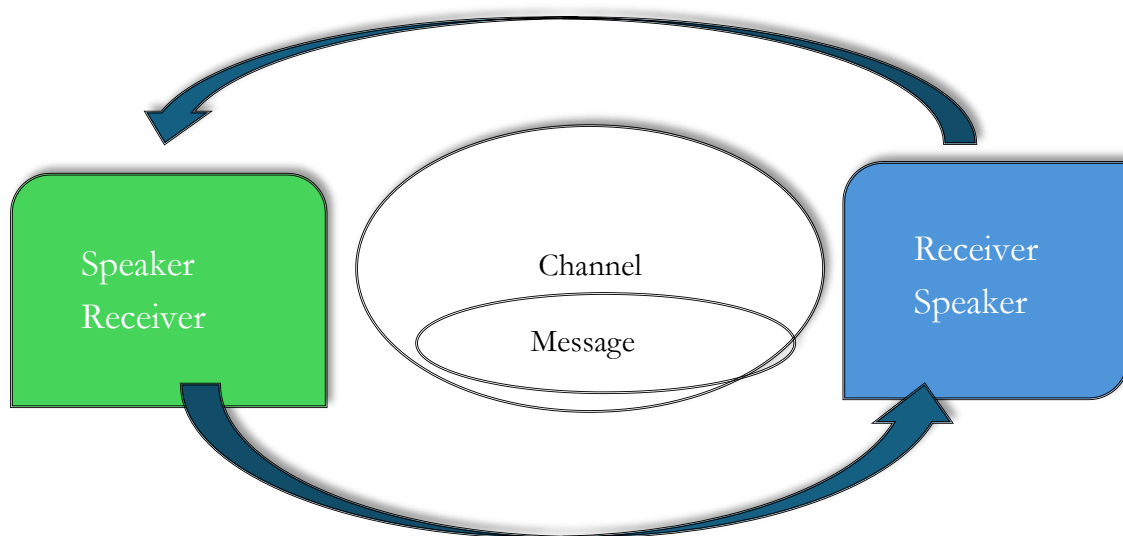


Figure 1– Linear Model of communication (Shannon & Weaver, 1949)

This model views communication as a **one-way transmission**, in which the speaker actively sends a message to a passive receiver. Although this approach is useful for understanding the basic flow of information, it fails to capture the complexity of real-life communication situations — particularly in public speaking, where encoding, decoding, culture and values, **feedback**, noise, and **context** play crucial roles.

As communication theory evolved, more sophisticated models emerged, such as the **Transactional Model**, which highlights the reciprocal nature of communication (Muller, 2013). In this model, both speaker and audience are seen as **simultaneous senders and receivers**, continuously exchanging verbal and non-verbal cues, interpreting each other's responses, and adjusting accordingly (Schramm in Kapur, 2020) (see Fig. 2).

This **interactive perspective** is especially relevant in public speaking, where the success of a speech depends not only on the clarity of the message but also on the speaker's ability to read the audience, manage their reactions, and adapt to feedback in real time (Anonymous, 2012).

Understanding PS as a process of mutual influence helps us to move beyond the notion of "delivering a speech" and toward the goal of **creating a shared communicative experience** between speaker and audience.

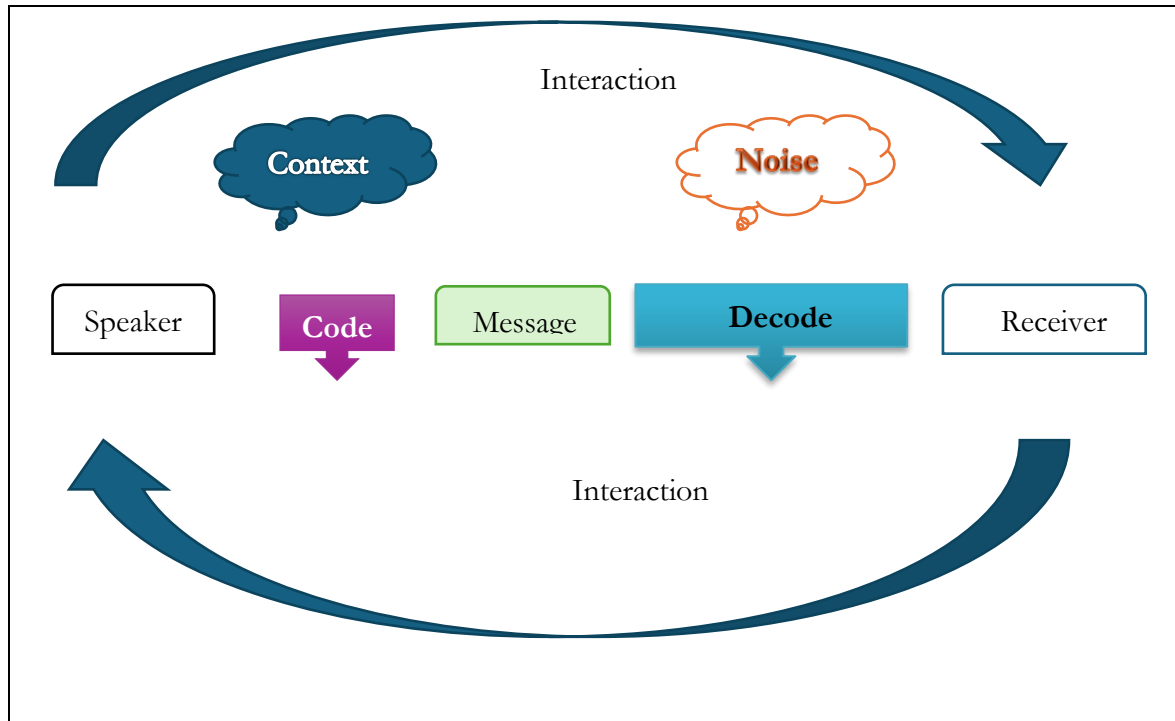


Figure 2- The process of communication in Transactional Model
(Source: adaptation of drawing in Oliveira, C. (2012)).

Exercise

Use the Transaction Model of communication to analyse a communication process you have had recently. Sketch out the communication meeting and make sure to label each part of the model (communicators; message; channel; feedback; as well as physical, psychological, social, relational, and cultural contexts).

The Historical Tradition of Public Speaking

PS has been practiced for over 2,500 years. Traditionally, the purpose of PS falls into one of three broad categories: **to inform, to persuade, or to entertain.**

As early as the 4th century BCE, the Greek philosopher Aristotle observed that, to guide citizens towards shared norms and social cohesion, one had to master the art of persuasion. He argued that rhetoric — the capacity to persuade — was central to effective leadership and citizenship.

According to Mahler and Pétreaul (2017), **rhetoric** may be understood as the use of strategic appeals to influence an audience. Aristotle identified three rhetorical modes of persuasion which the speaker must have in mind:

1. **Ethos** – The appeal to credibility or authority. A speaker uses ethos to demonstrate expertise and trustworthiness. Ethos also exists when a public speech occurs, in oratory skills.

Example: A medical doctor warning about the dangers of smoking or fast-food consumption is likely to be perceived as credible.

2. **Logos** – The appeal to logic and reason. A well-supported argument, underpinned by evidence and sound reasoning, engages the audience intellectually.

Example: "If I can burn 2,500 calories in a week, can I reduce 500 calories per day to achieve that goal?" This is a deductive argument based on a general principle applied to a specific situation.

3. **Pathos** – The appeal to emotions. A speaker may evoke feelings such as fear, happiness, trust, or anger, just to keep the audience attentive.

Example: Emotional appeals are often found in advertisements and political campaigns.

Contemporary Challenges

In today's globalised, fast-paced and highly connected world, capturing and retaining the audience's attention is increasingly challenging. Audiences are more discerning, more exposed to professional speakers and diverse content, and often more critical.

Technological advancements, diverse audience expectations, and limited attention spans require speakers to be more creative, engaging, and intentional in both the preparation and delivery of a speech. These factors make PS a demanding — yet essential — skill to master.

Being an Ethical Speaker

Since classical antiquity, PS has been associated with ethical responsibility. A speaker must earn the audience's trust through personal and professional integrity.

The fundamental principles of ethical PS include:

1. Trustworthiness
2. Integrity in content and intention
3. Respect for the audience and differing viewpoints
4. Dignity in personal conduct
5. Truthfulness in the message conveyed

To foster trust and uphold ethical standards, the speaker should:

- Ensure the message aligns with ethical values
- Rely on accurate and truthful information
- Avoid stereotypes, prejudice, and unsupported generalisations
- Speak with conviction, based on thorough preparation
- Demonstrate genuine respect for the audience
- Be fully prepared for the occasion

Note: While these principles should guide ethical communication, they are not always observed by all speakers in public forums.

Managing Anxiety in Public Speaking

Fear of PS is common — even among seasoned professionals such as teachers, actors, and comedians. This anxiety often triggers physiological responses (Kartadireja et al., 2024), such as:

- Excessive sweating
- Accelerated heart rate
- Shortness of breath

These symptoms are natural stress responses. However, they can be managed — and even reduced — through **frequent practice and exposure**. Repeatedly facing the fear of PS helps develop the necessary resilience and skills to perform with confidence.

Moreover, speakers must avoid presenting information that feels too obvious or uninspiring, as this may disengage the audience and increase pressure to "perform well."

If the speaker is perceived as an expert or if the subject matter is new to the audience, expectations are often more manageable — which can reduce anxiety.

Techniques to Manage PS Anxiety

1. Prepare well in advance — preparation builds confidence.
2. Rehearse the speech aloud, ideally in front of a mirror.
3. Record and review your speech to ensure it fits within the time limit.

4. Cultivate a positive mindset; replace negative thoughts with encouragement. Avoid thinking like “What if I fail? Or what if ICT fails? Or what if the audience doesn’t understand my message? Or what if they put difficult questions I am not prepared to answer? Or what if the audience argues in a bad mood?
5. Identify friendly or receptive faces in the audience to boost comfort.
6. Visualise success before going on stage (prepare yourself to face good achievements).
7. Breathe deeply between sentences to control rhythm and composure¹.
8. Hold an object (e.g., a pen or a clip) quietly in your hand to release tension.
9. Press your toes onto the floor — it is discreet and helps channel nervous energy.
10. Keep one hand in your pocket to press gently against your leg, for some seconds but do not leave it there all the time. During the speech, don't forget that hands should be above the waistline with smooth gestures that illustrate the speech. In public, the hand in the pocket can lead to some suspicion on part of the audience because the speaker is hiding something, in this case one hand or both. To show hands means truth, transparency and therefore trustworthiness.
11. If your hands are sweaty, discreetly place them on a handkerchief in your pocket to dry them before greeting others.

Exercise

Each reader is invited to practise these techniques for at least five minutes.

Also, rehearse the appropriate strength and intention behind a handshake — as non-verbal communication is equally part of public speaking.

Sometimes it can be difficult to perform using all these aspects simultaneously. So, we must rehearse these aspects:

- Visual contact / Verbal saluting / Strong smile / Strength of achievement / Security of hand movement / Hand position / Hand temperature / Hand texture

¹The oldest self-soothing technique is breathing. Before starting a presentation, prolong the exhalation more than the inhalation for a few seconds. This strategy will “trick” the brain's amygdala, which plays a crucial role in regulating emotions. For example, when we sigh (physiological sigh) we naturally prolong the exhalation more, but from a physiological point of view we do it unconsciously because our brain needs to calm down to face a certain adversity or stressful situation at a given time. Prolonging the exhale is detected by the brain's amygdala, triggering a feeling of calm and comfort, helping the communicator to lower toxic levels of stress.

Tactics to use in PS Performances

This section outlines practical tactics not only for overcoming anxiety, shyness, or nervousness (Jason, 2015 ([here](#)); Moseley, 2024 ([here](#)), links to videos are in webgraphy), but also for enhancing your **preparation and delivery** of a PS with **clarity and confidence**.

Hand Gestures

When nervous, speakers often become overly self-aware of their hands, which may seem out of place or difficult to manage. Effective hand gestures, however, can reinforce your message and project confidence. Consider the following techniques:

1. **Maintain a natural bend in your arms**, ideally forming an approximate 90° angle.
2. Use **open palm gestures**, facing the audience, with gentle circular motions — as though the message is being projected outward from you to them. Avoid rubbing or wringing your hands.
3. **During pauses**, let your fingers lightly touch or form a steeple shape (vault). This “anchor gesture” reinforces control and calmness at the end of a statement.
4. **If placing hands in pockets**, do so with one hand at a time, and only for very brief seconds.
5. **Avoid pointing with your index finger**; instead, use an open hand with fingers aligned in a relaxed staircase form — more inclusive and less aggressive. (Promote round gestures instead of sharp ones).
6. **If you cross your arms**, make sure your hands remain visible to avoid appearing closed-off.
7. **Use prompt cards** if needed — keep them in one hand while the other remains free for light gestures. Movements should be slow and deliberate. The card can be available on a table, pulpit or other place where the speaker has visual access. The audience can't see that the speaker won't survive the presentation without the card, so visual management must be practiced during information gathering when the card is consulted. Recommended card size: A6 sheet (approximately 10 cm x 14 cm), i.e. a quarter of an A4 sheet. In short, the card doesn't always have to be in the speaker's possession, because we need our hands to help complement the message through our gestures.

Eye Contact

Eye contact is a powerful tool in building rapport and conveying sincerity. Here are some guidelines:

1. **Engage the entire audience** with your gaze. If you notice a receptive individual, feel free to return to that person occasionally — this helps build confidence through positive non-verbal feedback. (Avoid looking at those members of the audience who are more suspicious of your speech or who appear aggressive through their countenance and other elements of non-verbal bodily information. Most probably, the speaker won't have time to catechise them; it is

better to worry about everyone else in the audience and understand the impact you're having on everyone else, ignoring those elements that could compromise the speaker's emotional state).

2. **Avoid looking over your glasses**, as it may appear condescending. Similarly, avoid staring at the ceiling, which might be interpreted as hesitation or fear.
3. **Never turn your back to the audience to look at the board behind you**, where the digital presentation is shown. This suggests a lack of preparation or even an urge to escape. The visual displayed behind you is also available on your laptop screen — use only that as your reference.

Posture and Movement

Nonverbal communication plays a critical role in PS (Jasuli et al., 2023; Marinho, 2020). Your body language should project confidence, availability, and control.

- Maintain a **straight yet relaxed posture**, conveying readiness and self-assurance.
- Use **natural head and hand movements**, maintaining the 90° arm position when gesturing.
- Move **slowly and purposefully** — a few steps to the right or left and then returning to center can help maintain the audience's attention, especially when transitions in content occur. (Whenever the speaker starts a movement, he should complete it, avoiding moving from side to side. Avoid oscillating body movements such as a pendulum or back and forth. Body stability is appreciated by the audience and makes the speaker more trustworthy).

Types of Speeches

Public Speech typically falls into one of three main categories:

1. **Informative Speech** – Aims to provide new knowledge or clarify a topic for the audience.
2. **Persuasive Speech** – Seeks to influence the audience's opinions, beliefs, or behaviours.
3. **Entertaining Speech** – Designed to amuse, inspire, or emotionally uplift the audience through humor, stories, or positive messages.

Understanding the type of speech someone is delivering allows you to better align your content, tone, and delivery style with your objectives.

Exercise

Task 1: Write a one-minute speech for each of the three types mentioned above (informative, persuasive, and entertaining).

Task 2: Based on the guidance provided in this section, prepare and rehearse three short speeches, applying the recommended techniques for gesture, eye contact, posture, and audience engagement.

II. Analysing your audience

Be an audience-centered speaker

Audience-centered speakers are people who try to make strong connections with the target audience. This type of speakers provides the audience with a significant experience.

Most of the time, this speaker has previously researched demographics, i.e. age, status quo and gender, etc. Other factors are psychographics, such as beliefs, values, background in life and others. So, the better listener you are, the better speaker you become. If you understand your audience you learn to perform in a way that fits it, so the message can be delivered efficiently, and you will grab the audience's interest. To become a better listener, you must:

1. Get information from the person who has arranged to speak with the speaker, about the conditions for delivering the speech; after it, try to gather further information from the person who invited you to speak about the impression you have made on the audience.
2. Learn about your target people.
3. Write down any information you may consider not important but can be precious later.
4. Pay attention to the public reactions to your speech while you are talking.
5. Pay attention to verbal and non-verbal reactions after your speech (Levy, 2015) ([here](#), link to video on webgraphy).

Beyond demographics and psychographics, it may be useful for you to know if there will be other speakers and their subjects. You can decide to make little changes to your speech in order not to repeat some ideas, nevertheless without leaving your original ones. It may be useful to talk to the group a few minutes before the speech. This may provoke a goodwill feeling among the audience, as you may find some data from them, otherwise you could not know.

On the one hand, the audience's feedback, while you are speaking, is very important. For instance, if people are trying to fidget in seats, or checking the purse, it may mean they are bored. So, you may need to put more liveliness into the speech, like to tell a real story, or to tell a joke to have their attention again.

But, on the other hand, if they try to get more comfort in their seats, they are willing to hear you. You must not frustrate them.

If you face an exigent audience, there are some tactics you must know to decide later if you need to put them into practice.

1. Someone may ask a question you do not know the answer to, putting you in a difficult situation. Let us see what to do in such circumstances:

- First, thank them for the question and ask their name. When answering mention the name.
- Then you may say that it is an opportunity to reveal you are investigating the subject and you count on getting some results very soon.
- Or you are exactly studying that domain in a graduation program.
- Or that this is not the right moment to debate it; you are willing to discuss it afterwards.
- Or you already have your opinion and would like to discuss that person's opinion after the break.
- Or it is a subject under police investigation, so when it is finished, you will come to discuss it in the future opportunity.
- Or you do not have a consistent opinion yet, you have experienced the equipment but would like to try it more times to build an expert point of view.
- Or the person's opinion is very interesting, and if (s)he has time you would like to discuss the subject more properly in the coffee break. Then, you must approach the subject with clearness and trust.

2. If someone seems to act with anger towards you, do not show hostility unless you want to gain an enemy in front of an audience. First, ask the person's name (repeat the name out loud in public, to increase the responsibility of what is being said by the provoker, as this removes the author of the potential attack from anonymity. This strategy increases the likelihood of the "attacker" reducing the verbal force of his attack. In public, it is easier to attack anonymously). Then, thank for the presence, this attitude shows a very gentle way of facing the situation and puts the audience on your side.

3. If someone leaves the room while you are speaking perhaps they do so, just because they need to. But if you are facing a difficult situation concerning a controversial topic, you may say "I have noticed some persons have left suddenly, perhaps they are upset with this subject. Is there anyone else wanting to leave too? Well, I think this matter is very important to society and I challenge those staying to discuss it frankly among us".

4. Do not "bluff", the audience will not forgive you, and the next time your fame will anticipate you. Prestige and notoriety are qualities you need to work a lot to conquer, but those can be lost in a few seconds. After your speech, the audience has already formed an opinion about your expertise, your preparation and a positive image will have been stuck in their minds.

Exercise

Imagine yourself speaking to the audience in the next video:

(<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cFLjudWTuGQ>). As you can see, the audience is composed of university students. Naturally, they behave differently from a senior audience. Prepare and try the same speech for an audience full of young people, later in front of senior people. What must you change in it?

Formal and Informal methods of audience analysis.

An audience analysis is a process of verifying the level of interest of an audience in the subject you are approaching. You may determine this during and after the speech and in one of the two ways: formally or informally.

Formal ways

The audience-centered speaker tries to put joy and some entertainment into his speech, after having done a previous study of his public. He may be helped by a focus group, but this is an expensive method, and you need time to do it. Another method is a survey, but this also implies time and money.

Informal ways

It can be done through observations of the audience's behaviour (a) before, (b) during and (c) after the speech.

(a) **Before the PS** – The person who invites you to speak can give you information or you can get into conversation with other people who already know the audience. The information can concern sociological data, or qualifications, or level of specialisation about the topic, for instance.

(b) Adapting to your audience **during the PS** – Along with the speech, you can put questions to the audience and try to get what they think about your message.

To interact with the public, you may make the speech livelier and more interesting.

To give the public an opportunity to take part in the event may be interpreted as the speaker has given importance to the participants.

This method cannot always be practised; it depends on the speaker, the subject and the public, that is why the speaker must study demographics and psychographics, to check if it is applicable.

Another possible method for the speaker is to be attentive to the behaviour of the public (Kamil et al, 2023) during speech, looking for:

1. Lack of eye contact;
2. Body movements in the seats;
3. Facial expressions;
4. No response to questions.

Perhaps it is the right time to introduce some “tools” to gain the audience interest, like an appropriate joke, or a true story, or a personal experience around the subject. What the speaker is trying to do is to involve the audience in the speech. Sometimes the speaker needs to focus again on the speech and center the matter, or must verify the degree of details, or simply to make a summary of the subject.

To show a short video related to the theme may be another solution, that is why it is very important to prepare the speech with balance among a part of theory, a part of practice or experience, a part of technical aids, if adjustable. If it is possible to show a before, “on stage” and “after intervention” images of a process concerning the main topic, this will entice people’s attention.

To have a positive effect on the audience, the power of telling a story concerning the topic is important too.

(c) **After the PS** – After the speech, audience analysis is much easier as you may have already formed an opinion about the way the audience has behaved. Did the audience applaud after you finished? Were the claps heart feeling? Did the audience look bored when you looked at your notes, in the middle of the speech? If the audience has asked you questions, it is a good sign, because it means they were interested. These results should be included in preparation for another speech.

Very Important

Considering the conclusion of the PS, never end it by saying, “and that’s it!” as it shows you are timid and perhaps can be seen as lack of experience. You must show the audience you are about to finish the speech by saying “and to end this, I have to say that...” or “To summarise, I must tell you...”, or “Last but not the least, ...”. This will tell the audience the end is coming and it is time to face the moment to applaud.

Exercise

The reader can prepare and rehearse two short speeches using these kinds of endings.

III. Listening and Feedback

Hearing vs Listening

Hearing is a passive, physiological process — it occurs when our ears detect sound, often without conscious effort. In contrast, **listening** is an active, mental process that involves focusing attention on the sound and interpreting its meaning.

As previously discussed, a competent public speaker must also be an effective listener. Throughout the delivery of a speech, attention should be paid to the audience's responses — both verbal and non-verbal — to assess whether the message is being received as intended (Abrahams, 2015) ([here](#), link to video is at the webgraphy). Although this may seem demanding at first, it becomes more intuitive with experience and significantly enhances the communicative impact.

Effective Listening

An audience has a collective "mood" or energy, which may be shaped by the topic, the context, or the speaker's performance. This mood can shift during the speech, and it is the speaker's responsibility to remain attentive and responsive.

To facilitate effective listening during your own speech, consider the following strategies:

1. **Observe non-verbal cues** such as posture, facial expressions, eye contact, nodding, or applause.
2. **Pause briefly** between key ideas to assess whether the audience remains engaged.
3. **Pose occasional questions** to involve the audience and maintain attention.
4. Identify potential communication barriers, such as a mismatch between the speaker's content and the audience's background (demographic and psychographic factors).
5. **Account for intercultural differences** in non-verbal communication. Certain gestures may be acceptable in one culture but offensive in another; always consider the diversity of your audience.

The Four Stages of the Listening Process

Listening is a process that comprises four distinct stages:

1. **Attending** – The listener focuses attention to perceive the message.
2. **Interpreting** – The listener attaches meaning to the message.
3. **Responding** – The listener reacts or provides feedback (verbally or non-verbally).
4. **Remembering** – The listener retains the information for later use.

Understanding these stages helps both speakers and listeners to refine their communication strategies.

Active Listening

Active listening is the deliberate process of focusing fully on the speaker, both mentally and physically. It involves more than just hearing words — it requires the listener to signal engagement through visual and verbal cues.

Examples of active listening behaviours include:

- Maintaining eye contact;
- Nodding;
- Using short verbal confirmations such as “I see,” or “Uh-huh”;
- Mirroring emotions or gestures appropriately.

Additional techniques that reflect active listening:

- **Paraphrasing** to confirm understanding: “So, what you’re saying is...”;
- **Finishing a sentence** (in context) to demonstrate attentiveness;
- **Asking open-ended questions** to encourage the speaker to elaborate;
- **Expressing empathy**, particularly when the subject is emotionally significant.

These behaviours reinforce the speaker’s perception of being heard and understood.

Types of Listening

Depending on the context and purpose of the communication, several distinct types of listening can be identified (see Fig. 3):

1. **Pseudo Listening** – Pretending to listen while paying little or no attention. Often used to appear polite.

2. **Appreciative Listening** – Engaging with the message for enjoyment or aesthetic value (e.g., listening to a story or a speech with humor or inspiration).
3. **Empathetic Listening** – Demonstrating deep emotional understanding by placing oneself in the speaker’s position. Involves attentive body language and a caring attitude.
4. **Comprehensive Listening** – Focusing on understanding and retaining the content of the message. Often used in academic or professional contexts.
5. **Critical Listening** – Listening to analyse, evaluate, and form reasoned opinions about the speaker’s message. Involves both comprehension and judgement, followed by a respectful response.

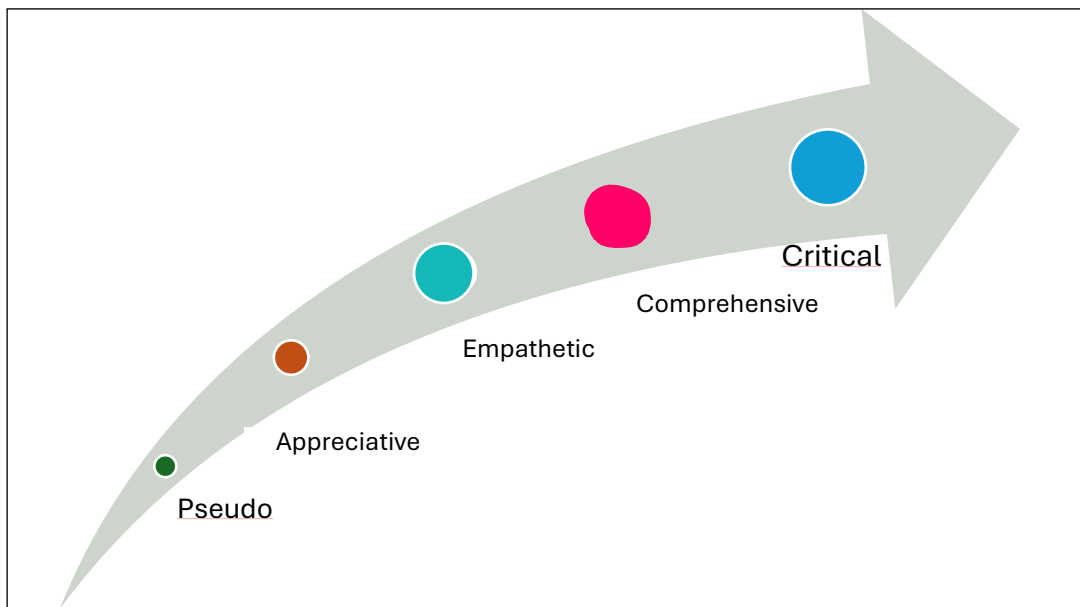


Fig.3 – Levels of Active Listening

Improving your Notetaking Skills

As a listener, particularly in the context of preparing for Public Speaking, developing effective note-taking skills is essential. One of the key aspects of this skill is recognising verbal and non-verbal cues from the speaker that highlight important information.

Recognising Verbal and Non-Verbal Cues

Verbal clues often indicate which parts of a message are most relevant. For instance, when a speaker:

- Uses an example,
- Repeats key details, or
- Cites a source, ...it usually means that the point being made is central to the speech.

Non-verbal signals are equally important. A change in **facial expression**, a particular **hand gesture**, or a deliberate **pause** can serve as an invitation for the audience to focus more closely on what is being said.

The Value of Notetaking

Taking notes during a speech is a habit that all learners — and aspiring speakers — should cultivate. Writing down everything *verbatim* is neither effective nor necessary. Instead, the goal is to extract meaningful insights from the speech, allowing you to convert that information into lasting knowledge later.

Here are a few key strategies:

- Focus on **main ideas**, rather than trying to capture every word;
- Identify and structure **subtopics** that support the main idea;
- Establish **connections** between different ideas by using keywords, arrows, symbols, or short annotations;
- Use **sketches, diagrams, or mind maps** to visually represent the associations your brain is making during the speech;
- Leave space for **questions** that arise during the speech — these can be clarified later, either during a Q&A or through further reflection.

After the session, review your notes, organise them into coherent sentences, and **summarise** the key ideas. When possible, integrate the speaker's answers to your questions into the summary to consolidate understanding.

This process not only reinforces memory but also allows for deeper reflection and future application — it is essential for academic growth and effective communication.

Exercise

Describe a scene from a well-known film to a peer. Ask him to act as a listener and take notes on what you say. Afterwards, discuss his listening behaviour and note-taking approach. What non-verbal cues did he respond to? What did he retain or miss? How did he organize the information?

IV. Selecting the Topic and Purpose of Public Speaking

Understanding the Purpose of a Public Speech

In some situations, the speaker may be free to choose the topic of his speech; in others, the subject may be assigned. Regardless of the context, your objective is to make a strong and lasting impression on your audience. To do this effectively, consider the following five guiding questions:

- Do you already possess substantial knowledge about the subject?
- Do you need to conduct in-depth research, or simply recall key aspects?
- Can you draw on your **personal experience** to enrich the topic?
- Could friends or colleagues assist with relevant input or insights?
- Is it possible to **interview someone with first-hand experience** to add credibility or emphasis to your speech?

In addition, it is essential to consider:

1. **The occasion or event** – The context will influence both tone and mood. A formal conference differs significantly from a classroom presentation or an informal talk.
2. **The audience** – As discussed earlier, your listeners' characteristics will determine the appropriate content, style, and delivery approach.

General Purpose vs. Specific Purpose

The general purpose of a speech typically falls into one of three categories:

- To inform
- To persuade
- To entertain

However, most speeches have a more specific purpose. Once you identify your topic, ask yourself:

- What can I do to make a meaningful impact on my audience?
- What might the audience not yet know about this subject?
- Which part of the topic am I most interested in sharing or exploring?

By reflecting on these questions, and studying your audience in advance, you will be better prepared to define the most appropriate structure and focus for your speech.

Choosing an Appropriate Speech Topic

Before writing your speech, select a general **subject area**. If you have ample time to prepare, you might explore a topic unfamiliar to you. However, if time is limited, choose something more familiar to ensure clarity and depth.

Once the subject is defined, narrow it down to a **specific topic** that fits within the given time constraints. Consider:

- A topic that is too **broad** may not allow sufficient depth or structure.
- A topic that is too **narrow** may lack enough content to sustain a full speech.

The goal is to choose a **focused topic** — one that is well-defined and contains enough information to develop a coherent and balanced speech.

Additionally, consider:

- Audience expectations and knowledge level;
- Available time and resources;
- Visual or technical aids to support your message.

Assessment Exercises

Choose one of the following topics and prepare a brief speech:

- A tradition in your country that you dislike;
- The pros and cons of having pets;
- A meaningful anecdote or “The importance of music during childhood”;
- Types of make-up;
- Should alcohol be consumed socially;
- The (dis)advantages of creativity;
- Do you prefer routine or dynamism;
- A marketing idea to encourage children to eat more vegetables;
- Why should people enjoy wearing hats? Be imaginative.

Preparing a Public Speech on a Historical Subject

When developing a historical topic, consider limiting the scope using one or more of the following techniques:

1. Time period – e.g., 1939–1945;
2. Geographical location – e.g., “What happened in Porto between 1805 and 1810”;
3. Individual or group – e.g., “Winston Churchill” or “Mediterranean Migrants”;
4. Specific event or theme – e.g., the 2009 Economic Crisis; or the 2020 pandemic; or 2026 Golf Crisis.

To ensure balance, combine theoretical content with practical examples, using tables, charts, or graphics when appropriate to support your points and improve clarity.

From Topic to Speech Structure

Once you have chosen your topic, begin organising your ideas. Techniques such as **brainstorming**, **clustering**, or **mind mapping** can be useful tools.

You may draw inspiration from:

- Personal experiences;
- Hobbies or interests;
- Core values;
- Professional knowledge;
- Conversations and readings.

Group related ideas together, identifying patterns and connections. Use visual tools such as diagrams to structure the main points and sub-points. Afterwards, conduct targeted research (e.g., in books, online databases, interviews) to support your ideas.

Finally, synthesise all gathered material into a cohesive structure that your audience can easily follow.

Developing a Thesis Statement

A **thesis statement** is a concise sentence that summarises the core message of your speech. It helps the speaker stay focused, and it aids the audience in understanding and remembering the central point.

How to craft a thesis statement? Let's say your general goal is:

"To persuade the audience to learn how to change a car tire."

Your thesis statement could be simplified too:

"How to change a car tire efficiently."

Then, supporting arguments might include:

- "Learning this skill enables you to assist others in emergencies."
- "Changing a tire is a practical step toward greater independence."

A good thesis statement should:

- Be clear and specific;
- Avoid including multiple, disconnected ideas;
- Avoid being framed as a question;
- Avoid being too vague or general.

Exercise

Apply the process outlined above to one of the following topics. Develop a clear and focused statement:

- Planting a tree;
- Convincing someone to separate recyclables at home;
- Inviting new friends to go to the cinema;
- Gently refusing an invitation;
- Asking for help using the metro system in Porto;
- Explaining why Portuguese people tend to arrive five minutes late.

V. Researching to the Public Speech

Types of supporting materials for a speech

The speaker must gather data to support the speech. He can do it by researching primary resources (personal experiences) and secondary ones (based on others' experiences).

There are other kinds of resources like observation, participative observation, interviews, surveys, documents, books, periodicals and newspapers, encyclopedias, statistical sources, biographies, social media and internet.

The speaker may improve his speech preparation by including supporting materials to add more credibility, such as fiction or real examples, statistics and expert testimonies.

Exercise

Imagine you want to ask the CEO of your company to put an extra heater in the store, and for that, think about what you can do to create support material to add to your claim (example: personal story to reinforce idea, statistics about productivity, recommendation by energy efficiency, testimony of former chief).

Quoting research sources in PS

A speaker must always respect copyright while researching. The best way is thus to take notes of every source, no matter its type, so he can mention it later at the end of the speech. Nowadays, there are proper software programmes like “endnote”, and others to help taking notes of all this data.

The speaker must take note of the author's name, publication date, title of the book (or other), city or country, editor and number of page(s). The last one is compulsory if he intends to make a quotation *ipsis verbis* (word by word). That is to say, the number of pages on which there is a quotation must be mentioned at the end of the citation.

If the speaker has just inspired himself in the source but has written the text himself, the **written** citing must be like this:

Author, (date). *Title in Italics*. Editor.

If the speaker has effectively made a quotation, the citation should read:

Author, (date). *Title in Italics*. Editor. (p. 10,11).

Orally, the speaker may say, for instance: “As the author X said, “No one is guilty until it is proved that he has done something”. Some verbs and expressions are advisable, like:

- “W explains that...”
- “G writes that...”
- “According to author Y...”
- “Z goes on to say...”
- “As reported by TV journalist...”
- “Like the article in the periodical says...”

The speaker must learn how to quote a source in visual aids. If there is a quotation, the speaker may write on a slide of PowerPoint or Prezi, for instance:

“Our lives begin to end the day we become silent about things that matter.”

— Martin Luther King Jr.

In the bibliography, the speaker must add:

King Jr., M.L. (2003). *I have a dream: writings and speeches that changed the world*. EUS. Amazon

For more information, search American Psychological Association styles (APA, 7th edition, <https://apastyle.apa.org>) or other source according to demand.

VI. Organising the Public Speech

The importance of Speech Organisation

A well-organised speech significantly enhances the speaker's credibility and the audience's understanding. Consider the example of a theoretical driving instructor whose structured teaching style stood out. By grouping content logically — for instance: car lights, road types, traffic signs, and speed limits — the instructor allowed students to engage with the material in a coherent and memorable way.

The same principle applies to public speaking. A structured speech:

- Shows preparation and commitment.
- Projects a professional image.
- Reinforces the message's credibility.
- Enhances comprehension and retention.
- Makes the speech more enjoyable and accessible to the audience.

Developing and Selecting the Main Ideas

Begin by defining your **core message**. Next, determine the purpose: do you intend to inform, persuade, or entertain?

- To inform, include reliable facts and explanations.
- To persuade, use expert opinions, evidence, and emotional or logical appeals.
- To entertain, incorporate humor or anecdotes with a relatable impact.

Then, divide your main idea into several supporting points, which should follow a logical and fluid progression — like a flowing river. For example:

Main Idea: Why does the sun rise every day?

Supporting Points:

- Historical perspectives: how astronomers studied this phenomenon
- Scientific explanation for day and night cycles

- Direction of the sun's apparent movement
- Seasonal variations in sunrise location
- The Earth's rotation, not the sun's movement
- Galileo Galilei's role in advancing heliocentric theory

To enrich your speech, each point could be accompanied by:

- Quotes, expert testimony or data
- Visual aids (e.g., images of Galileo, diagrams of planetary motion)
- Examples or personal reflections

A helpful structure might include:

1. Definition and significance of the topic.
2. Historical and expert perspectives.
3. Advantages and benefits.
4. Disadvantages or controversies.
5. Current vs. past challenges.
6. Real-life applications and testimonials.

Use examples, comparisons, statistics, and credible sources to strengthen your argument and maintain balance.

Patterns of Organisation

Informative Speeches: Designed to convey knowledge. Possible structures include:

- Chronological: in the order events occurred.
- Spatial: by geographical or physical location.
- Cause and Effect: to demonstrate impact or consequences.
- Topical: organized by categories or aspects of a topic.

Persuasive Speeches: Intended to influence the audience's beliefs or actions. Effective structure may follow Monroe's Motivated Sequence:

1. Attention – Capture the audience's interest.
2. Need – Highlight a problem that requires action.
3. Satisfaction – Present a solution.

4. Visualisation – Help the audience imagine the positive outcome.
5. Action – Tell them what to do next.

This model combines logical progression with emotional appeal — a powerful combination in persuasion.

Organizing the Data

Organisation reflects preparation and respect for the audience. It allows listeners to follow the reasoning and message without confusion.

A classic speech structure includes:

1. Introduction:
 - o State the purpose
 - o Preview the main points
 - o Engage the audience

2. Body:
 - o Develop main ideas logically
 - o Include supporting materials: data, expert testimony, quotes, visuals
 - o Ensure transitions between sections are smooth

3. Conclusion:
 - o Summarize key points
 - o Restate the central message (thesis)
 - o Close with a strong final statement, e.g.:
 - ✓ “To conclude this presentation, I would like to emphasize that...”
 - ✓ “I am now available for any questions or comments.”
 - ✓ “I hope you’ve enjoyed this session and I’m happy to discuss further.”

Exercise

You have received a card with several images. Invent a coherent product or gadget that connects them all. Now, organize and deliver a persuasive five-minute speech to convince potential clients that your creation is the best on the market. Make use of the structures and strategies discussed in this chapter.

VII. Outlining the Public Speech

Preparation and Speaking Outlines

Once you have selected the **main topic** of your speech, the next step is to construct a **Preparation Outline** — a structured document that organizes your ideas and supports the speech development process. This outline includes:

- **Introduction**
 - o Brief self-introduction (if it is your first contact with the audience)
 - o An attention-grabbing opening
 - o Presentation of the main idea or thesis

- **Body (Development)**
 - o Key arguments, supporting facts, and examples
 - o Trends, data, expert testimonies
 - o Case studies, stories, or relevant discoveries

- **Conclusion**
 - o Summary of main points
 - o Reinforcement of the central message
 - o Closing statement that leaves a strong impression

- **Transitions**
 - o Use transitional words and phrases to guide the audience, such as:
First, next, moreover, however, nevertheless, finally, in conclusion, etc.

- **Speech Title** and General/Specific Objectives

Use full but concise sentences and organise your outline using a structured format: Roman numerals (I., II., III.), capital letters (A., B.), Arabic numerals (1., 2.), and lowercase letters (a., b.).

Speaking Outline

The Speaking Outline serves as a memory aid during speech delivery. It is based on the Preparation Outline and should include:

- Keywords and cue phrases.
- Main and subordinate ideas.
- Quotations, statistics, and citations.
- References (optional).

This outline is for the speaker's use only, and its style can be more informal and personalized — if it is clear and usable during the performance.

Formatting Your Speech

When formatting your written speech for submission or preparation, keep the following in mind:

1. Title and Header
 - o Choose a compelling title
 - o Include your name, date, course/class name, and teacher's name
 - o Add page numbers (preferably aligned to the top right)

2. Organisational Structure
 - o General Goal(s)
 - o Specific Goal
 - o Main Idea/Thesis Statement
 - o Outline hierarchy:
 - I. Introduction
 - II. Development
 - III. Conclusion
 - A. Subpoints

3. Further details
 - a. Additional explanation

4. Text Features
 - o Highlight important terms in bold

- o Conclude with a bibliography formatted in APA Style (7th edition), citing all quoted or referenced materials.

Exercise

Using the outline structure provided, prepare a short speech based on a topic given to your group. Write the Preparation Outline and then your Speaking Outline. Present the speech to your colleagues.

The Importance of Introductions and Conclusions

Both the **introduction** and the **conclusion** are critical components of a successful speech.


- The introduction sets the tone, establishes credibility, and prepares the audience for what is to follow.
- The conclusion reinforces key points and provides closure. It is often the most memorable part of the speech.

Grabbing the Audience's Attention

A persuasive speech often begins with an **attention grabber** — a compelling element designed to capture the audience's interest in the first 30 seconds. This is your opportunity to make a strong first impression.

Attention-grabbers may include:

- A surprising or humorous anecdote.
- A relevant short story or film excerpt.
- A personal testimony or real-life account.
- A powerful quote or statistic.
- A rhetorical or thought-provoking question.
- A striking non-verbal action.

 Important: The attention grabber must be relevant to your topic. Irrelevant openers may confuse or alienate the audience.

Additional recommendations:

- If the audience does not know you, briefly introduce yourself.
- Avoid overused or vague phrases like "I'm here to talk about..." in your opening.
- Match the length and style of your attention-grabber to the overall tone and duration of your speech.
- Given the widespread use of media and digital tools, strive for originality — creativity is the key.

VIII. Language and Style

The Influence of Style: Speaker, Audience, and Purpose

When preparing a speech, three main factors will influence your choices regarding language and style:

1. The speaker's personal style.
2. The audience's characteristics.
3. The main goal of the speech.

A speaker's style is crucial for capturing and maintaining audience interest. It reflects the speaker's unique way of conveying ideas and organizing information for effective delivery.

The Speaker's Style

There are three principal styles a speaker may adopt:

- **Content-Rich** Speaker – Focuses on delivering substantial, detailed information that captivates the audience intellectually.
- **Humorous** Speaker – Incorporates humour to entertain, ideal for icebreakers or fostering quick engagement within groups.
- **Storyteller** – Captures attention through vivid and compelling narratives that make complex ideas relatable.

Choosing the appropriate style depends on the topic, the audience, and the speaker's own strengths.

Understanding the Audience

As emphasised previously, the audience profoundly shapes how communication must be adapted. Key questions to consider include:

- What is the audience’s prior knowledge of the subject?
- Is the topic potentially controversial?
- Does the content offer new insights?
- Is the topic meaningful and relevant to the audience?
- What expectations does the audience have?
- What are the demographic and psychographic characteristics of the audience?

Answering these questions will guide the speaker in tailoring the message to maximise engagement and impact.

Defining the Speech’s Goal

The goal of the speech — whether to inform, to persuade, to entertain, or to commemorate — also influences stylistic decisions. It must be considered alongside the speaker’s style and audience profile.

How Diction Influences Speech Style

Diction refers to the speaker’s choice of words. Good diction ensures that:

- Words are accurate, appropriate, and clearly understood.
- Ambiguities are avoided — words should not leave room for misinterpretation (denotation vs. connotation).
- Language is adapted to the audience’s level and cultural context.

You may opt for:

- Specific diction – Using precise, vivid terms that help the audience visualise concepts.
- General diction – Employing common, everyday words to express broader ideas.

Pronunciation in PS

Correct pronunciation is essential for clear communication (Tate, 2009) ([here](#), link to video at the webgraphy). Poor pronunciation can distract the audience or undermine credibility.

Recommendations to improve pronunciation:

- **Record yourself** practising the speech.
- **Request feedback** from a native English speaker or language coach.
- **Practise** difficult sounds and be mindful of rhythm and pausing.

Practical exercises:

1. Speak while holding a pencil horizontally between your teeth — this helps with articulation.
2. Vocalise vowel and consonant patterns ("tatata", "ieaou" sounds) to warm up.
3. Practise English sounds like "T" and "TH" ([θ] and [ð]).
4. Practise Spanish sounds such as the strong "R" or "Hijo".
5. Practise Portuguese sounds like "lhe" and "ão".
6. Share and practise characteristic sounds from your own language or region.

Exercise

Practise pronunciation using the following well-known tongue twisters:

- From My Fair Lady (Cukor, 1964) ([here](#), link to video at the webgraphy):
 - o "The rain in Spain stays mainly in the plain"
 - o "In Hartford, Hereford, and Hampshire, hurricanes hardly happen"
- In Portuguese:
 - o "O rato roeu a rolha da garrafa do rei da Rússia"
- Try tongue twisters or challenging phonemes from your native language and share them with a peer group.

Inclusive Language in Public Speaking

Inclusive language aims to address all members of an audience respectfully, regardless of gender, background, or other characteristics.

- Avoid exclusive language that favours one group over another.
- Avoid slang, jargon, and region-specific expressions that may alienate or confuse listeners.
- Prefer neutral and universally understandable terms.

Inclusive language fosters a welcoming environment and strengthens the speaker's connection with the audience.

Using Vivid Language in Public Speaking

Vivid language helps the audience visualise the scenes, concepts, or emotions being described. It enhances memorability and engagement.

Strategies to achieve vividness:

- Use concrete words rather than abstractions.
- Incorporate figures of speech: metaphors, similes, analogies.
- Employ rhetorical questions to provoke thought and interaction.

Mastery of language involves constructing complete, well-formed sentences that convey precise meaning and stir the audience's imagination. It's preferable to use short sentences, avoiding prolix speeches.

IX. The Act of Public Speaking

The Four Main Types of Public Speaking

At this stage, it is important to understand the different modes of delivering a public speech. There are four primary types:

- **Impromptu Speaking** – It occurs when a speaker is asked to talk without prior preparation. If this happens, pause briefly to organise your thoughts, identify a main idea, and keep your message brief and focused. Think a few seconds ahead as you speak.
- **Extemporaneous Speaking** – It involves preparing and practising in advance using brief notes. The speaker knows the structure and topics but does not memorise the speech word for word.
- **Manuscript Speaking** – The speaker reads the entire speech from a written script. While useful for formal settings requiring precision (e.g., official statements), it often risks becoming monotonous and boring if not delivered with vocal variation.
- **Memorised Speaking** – The speech is fully memorised and delivered without notes. This method can appear artificial if not rehearsed with natural pauses, tone variation, and spontaneous engagement.

Vocal Qualities in Public Speaking

Vocal delivery can enhance or undermine the impact of your message. Key vocal elements include:

- **Volume** – Speak loudly enough to be heard clearly but avoid shouting. Adapt to the size of the room and the number of people.
- **Rate** – Maintain a natural rhythm. Avoid speaking too fast (which may overwhelm the audience) or too slow (which may cause disinterest).
- **Pitch** – Vary the pitch to avoid monotony and to emphasise key points.
- **Fluency** – Ensure smooth delivery with appropriate pauses for transitions or emphasis.
- **Articulation** – Pronounce words clearly and correctly.
- **Tone** – Match your tone to the content. Tone conveys meaning, emotion, and credibility.

The Role of Non-Verbal Communication in Public Speaking

Communication extends far beyond words:

- 55% of communication is transmitted through body language (posture, gestures, facial expressions);
- 38% is conveyed through vocal characteristics (tone, pace, intonation);
- Only 7% relates to the actual content of the message (Kamil et al., 2023)².

Your posture should be upright but relaxed, with shoulders back and eyes forward. Move purposefully — small steps to either side help maintain dynamism without distracting from the message.

Eye Contact

Maintain eye contact with all areas of the audience. Briefly focus on individuals to establish connection, but avoid over-fixating on one person to prevent discomfort or misinterpretation.

Hand Gestures

When under pressure, many speakers wonder: What should I do with my hands? (Pease, 2013) ([here](#), link to video at the webgraphy)

- Anchor position: rest hands together at waist height, forming a natural “dome” shape.
- Use open-palm gestures to signal openness and engagement.
- Always return to your anchor position after gesturing.
- Avoid hiding hands in pockets or crossing arms unless briefly and deliberately.

² This data is the result of research by (Mehrabian & Wiener, 1967) and (Mehrabian & Ferries, 1967). The percentages are often presented in a decontextualised or incomplete way, i.e. the values presented only refer to the context in which there is a contradiction between what is said (content) and the face and voice (non-verbal communication) of the person saying it. For example, one person asks another: ‘Is everything all right?’ The interlocutor replies ‘Yes, everything's fine!’ But if his response is in a sad and melancholic voice with a sad or apathetic face, it will lead the sender to believe more in the tone of voice and other non-verbal communication than in the content/message. To exceed these percentages by generalising to other contexts in which there is no divorce between what is said and the respective signs of non-verbal communication, is to significantly alter the author's conclusion. This percentage very often appears in many publications and journalistic articles as being true, extrapolating the original study.

- If your hands tend to sweat, discreetly dry them using a small cotton handkerchief in your pocket.
- To manage stress, hold a silent object (e.g., a pen or marker, or clip) this can absorb nervous energy without drawing attention.
- Remember: visible hands = transparency and confidence.

Example: Former U.S. President Barack Obama often maintained hand contact during handshakes — projecting control and connection.

Exercise

Pick a card with an object or image. Now deliver a 2-minute impromptu speech describing it without saying its name. Use appropriate non-verbal communication techniques.

Questions and Answers (Q&A)

At the end of your speech, be prepared for audience questions. Questions indicate interest, curiosity, or even disagreement. Anticipate some likely questions during your preparation, but remain open and composed when facing the unexpected.

If you do not know the answer, you can respond tactfully:

- “Thank you for that question. I’d be happy to discuss it further during the break.”
- “That’s a topic I’m currently researching — I hope to address it in a future talk.”
- “There may not be a definitive answer yet — ongoing studies have been inconclusive.”
- “That’s the million-dollar question. Does anyone in the audience want to weigh in?”

If the questioner insists and you still don’t know the answer, admit it humbly and offer to follow up.

Best practices:

- Listen actively to each question.
- Ask the speaker’s name and respond to them personally.
- Maintain eye contact and speak with clarity and honesty.
- Audiences respond positively to sincerity and professionalism (Treasure, 2015) ([here](#), link to video at the webgraphy).

Exercise

Simulate a Q&A session with a partner or small group. Practise answering unexpected or challenging questions using the strategies described.

X. Selecting and Including Visual Aids in Public Speaking

The Role of Visual Aids in Speech

Visual aids serve to complement, not replace, the spoken message. A well-chosen visual can enhance understanding, maintain audience attention, and increase the overall impact of a speech — hence the popular expression: "*a picture is worth a thousand words.*"

Today, speakers frequently use digital tools such as PowerPoint or Prezi to support their presentations. While Prezi is often praised for its dynamic and interactive features, both platforms should be used with care and purpose.

✅ Important: The visual aid is not the message. It is a supporting tool — not a substitute for preparation or delivery.

Best Practices for Using Visual Aids

1. Keep it simple: Avoid overloading slides with text. Use the “6x6 rule” — no more than 6 words per line and 6 lines per slide.
2. Use meaningful visuals: Prioritise images, graphs, charts, and videos that reinforce the message. Avoid using animations or effects that distract the audience.
3. Text and layout:
 - o Choose legible fonts: Verdana, Arial, Calibri, Candara, Garamond, or Kartika are good options.
 - o Use bold or italics sparingly, only for emphasis.
 - o Ensure high contrast between background and text to maximise readability.
4. Slide transitions: Keep transitions smooth and minimal. Avoid flashy effects.
5. Color usage: Avoid combining similar colors (e.g., red and orange; red and purple). Use clear and contrasting combinations.
6. Balance: Maintain consistency in the number of images or slides — do not overwhelm or underuse visuals.

Technical Considerations and Preparation

- Visit the venue the day before: Test the visual aid in the actual presentation space. Sit at the back of the room to check if everything is legible and visible.
- Test the equipment: Load your presentation onto the computer you will use and check for formatting issues. Taking your own laptop is often the safest option.
- Have a backup: Save the presentation on a USB drive and in the cloud. Always have a Plan B in case technology fails.
- Arrive early on the day: Be there at least 15 minutes in advance to set up and test your presentation.

⚠️ Avoid starting your presentation immediately. First, greet the audience, introduce yourself, and then transition into the use of visual aids when needed.

Low-Tech Visual Aids

If technology is not available, you can use traditional aids such as:

- Models and miniatures
- Hand-drawn diagrams or posters
- Physical objects relevant to the topic

These can be equally effective in engaging the audience and stimulating imagination.

Exercise

Prepare a 3-minute speech supported by a PowerPoint or Prezi presentation. Apply the visual design principles discussed. Practise delivering your speech using the aid effectively and naturally.

Copyright and Fair Use in Public Speaking

All quoted or referenced material in your visual aids must respect copyright laws. This includes:

- Literary, academic, and journalistic texts.
- Photographs, paintings, and illustrations.
- Musical compositions, recorded performances.
- Films, videos, animations.
- Software, websites, and digital content.

⚠ Even if used for educational or non-commercial purposes, you must credit the author and indicate the publication date.

Fair Use and Public Domain

- Fair use applies when using copyrighted material for educational purposes, provided it is properly cited.
- If the author has been deceased for more than 50 years, the work is likely part of the public domain and may be used freely, though attribution is still recommended.

Always use APA (7th edition) style for referencing, both in your slides and in any accompanying written material.

XI. Building Credibility in PS

Establishing credibility to persuade your audience

Credibility is essential in public speaking, particularly when the speaker's goal is to persuade. There are three main forms of credibility:

- Initial credibility – Based on the speaker's reputation or status before the speech begins.
- Derived credibility – Gained during the speech, through performance, argumentation, and audience connection.
- Terminal credibility – The impression the audience has of the speaker after the speech ends.

If you are still building your credibility, consider the following strategies:

- Begin with an **impressive** statement reflecting your expertise or experience with the topic (e.g., a research project or case study you conducted).
- Establish **empathy** and rapport with the audience — demonstrate that you understand and care about their concerns.
- Use **visual aids** and supporting materials to reinforce your message and professionalism.
- Throughout the speech, maintain the **principles** discussed earlier: clarity, structure, tone, and non-verbal communication.

The serial position effect: do not neglect the middle

According to the Serial Position Effect, people tend to remember information from the beginning (primacy) and end (recency) of a message more easily than from the middle.

To mitigate this:

1. Structure your speech carefully, breaking it into clear sections: introduction, development, and conclusion — each with subpoints and paragraphs to ensure variety and rhythm.
2. Use keywords or mnemonic devices to help memorize the flow of your content. For instance, a sentence like “Please Export My Dinner Away Softly” helps remember the mathematical order of operations (Parentheses, Exponents, Multiplication/Division, Addition/Subtraction).
3. Repetition reinforces memory. Practice key parts of the speech multiple times, especially transitional content in the middle section.

XII. Speech Evaluation

Evaluating Yourself as a Speaker

After delivering your speech, it is essential to reflect on your performance and evaluate whether your goals were achieved. Ask yourself:

- Did I fulfil the objectives I had set?
- Were the main points clearly conveyed?
- How was my self-confidence and composure?
- How did the audience react — were they engaged?
- Was my performance as effective as I expected?
- Did I manage the time well?
- Did the equipment and visual aids work properly?
- Was the speech well received and understood?
- Did the Q&A session go smoothly?

If most answers are positive, your speech will likely make a solid impact.

You can also prepare an evaluation form for the audience. Include questions such as:

A. Introduction

- Was the speaker clear and confident?
- Was the main idea easily identifiable?

B. Development

- Were subtopics distinguishable?
- Were the supporting materials relevant and sufficient?
- Was the pacing appropriate?

C. Conclusion

- Did the speech leave a lasting impression?
- Did the speaker offer new insights or ideas?
- Was the speaker engaging and well-prepared?

D. Overall Assessment

- Was the speech interesting and well-structured?
- Were the visual aids appropriate?
- Did the speaker's body language enhance the message?
- Was the delivery fluent?
- Did the speaker demonstrate expertise?

E. Final Thoughts

- Would you attend another talk by this speaker?
- Would you recommend this speaker to others?

The feedback will help identify strengths and areas for improvement.

Evaluating Other Speakers

When evaluating someone else's speech, apply critical thinking and consider:

- Clarity, originality, and coherence of the arguments
- Use of "claim, evidence, warrant" model, if applicable
- Relevance and appropriateness of context
- Effectiveness of visual aids and supporting materials
- Speaker's non-verbal communication, including posture and gestures
- Strength and clarity of the conclusion

By observing these elements, you will deepen your own understanding of effective public speaking.

The Importance of Rehearsal

The first attempts at speaking can reveal gaps in preparation or delivery — that is normal. But practice is the key to improvement.

- Rehearse multiple times: in front of a mirror, a friend, a colleague, or even your pet.
- Record yourself and watch the playback to notice distracting gestures or habits.
- Practise aloud to assess pacing, tone, articulation, and fluency.

- Test the coordination between your speech and your visual aids.
- Pay attention to breathing — managing stress helps avoid shallow breaths or vocal strain.

Rehearsing helps you become familiar with the content, increases confidence, and leads to a more natural and compelling delivery.

XIII. Preparing an impromptu speech

In PS, situations may arise where you are asked to deliver a speech without prior notice or time to prepare. This is known as an impromptu speech — or informally, a “no-prepared” speech. Although it may seem challenging, with the right mindset and structure, you can still deliver a clear, confident, and effective message.

There are two common types of impromptu speech: persuasive and informative. Below are some guidelines to help you structure each, even with limited time.

Impromptu Persuasive Speech

If the objective is to persuade the audience, you can apply the following six-step strategy, which closely aligns with Monroe’s Motivated Sequence:

1. Introduction – Start with a brief and impactful opening.
2. Grab Attention – Use a compelling fact, rhetorical question, or relatable statement.
3. Identify a Need – Present a problem or gap that the audience can recognize.
4. Present a Solution – Offer a clear and realistic way to address the problem.
5. Visualise the Outcome – Help the audience imagine the benefits of applying the solution in the short term.
6. Conclusion – Summarise key points and finish with a call to action or reflective closing.

Even without rehearsal, this structure offers a solid framework to ensure coherence and persuasion.

Impromptu Informative Speech

When asked to give an informative speech on the spot, your focus should be on clarity and simplicity. Follow these steps:

1. Define the Topic
 - o If a topic is assigned, move forward.
 - o If not, choose a simple, relatable topic that most people can understand (e.g., how to make tea, benefits of walking, a fun cultural tradition).

2. Determine the Speaking Style
 - o Choose a tone: formal, conversational, humorous, or explanatory, depending on the setting.

3. Outline the Structure
 - o Think in three parts:
 - Introduction – Brief explanation of what you will talk about.
 - Body – Divide the topic into two or three subpoints.
 - Conclusion – Recap and leave a final thought.

4. Mentally Prepare the Content
 - o Focus on the development of the subpoints using personal examples, comparisons, or simple facts.

5. Control your breathing and stay calm
 - o Inhale deeply, mentally say “Let’s go”, and begin confidently.

Exercise

Choose one type of impromptu speech (persuasive or informative). You have **1 minute to think** and then **2 minutes to speak**. Focus on applying the structure described above. After the speech, reflect:

- Were you able to keep a clear structure?
- Did the audience (or your practice partner) understand your main message?
- How confident did you feel?

XIV. Use of Storytelling in Public Speaking

In order to be more professional and more efficient, we can use the strategy of Storytelling in PS. When we use a story in our PS, real or not, to introduce a subject it is more easily accepted and retained in audience's brains just because we used the story.

The Neuro Storytelling strategy has established itself as an essential tool for effective public presentations by integrating neuroscience principles with narrative techniques. This approach is based on an understanding of how the human brain processes, retains and responds to emotional and cognitive stimuli, allowing the speaker to create a deeper and more lasting connection with the audience (we saw this when we talked about Pathos). To put it another way, by telling a story, the speaker allows the creation of a greater connection and consistency in the brain of his audience, enhancing the emotional relationship with the topic addressed in the speech (Sanini, 2021).

Neuroscience studies show that well-constructed stories activate multiple areas of the brain, including those associated with emotion, memory and empathy. By using engaging narratives, the presenter not only conveys information, but also promotes audience identification and emotional involvement, facilitating message retention and the call to action.

Globally, Neuro Storytelling has been adopted in a variety of contexts - from academic conferences to corporate presentations and awareness campaigns - proving effective in overcoming cultural and linguistic barriers. The universality of the narrative structure, combined with the emotional impact, makes this strategy particularly powerful in multicultural and interdisciplinary environments. This is the kind of situations public speakers will most likely have to face in life.

In short, Neuro Storytelling represents a significant evolution in the art of public communication, combining science and creativity to maximise the impact of presentations, whatever the subject. Its strategic application contributes not only to communication success, but also to building more authentic and memorable relationships with the audience.

Exercise

Rehearse to begin a PS using a story of your life (an experience in life shareable in public). The story must have something to do with the topic.

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