

Speaking to a crowd gives a person an incredible opportunity. If a person is a good speaker, and people are willing to listen, then a speaker has the opportunity to persuade, inform and entertain. A speaker has the potential to inspire, make one laugh or change one's opinion. A public speaker that knows how to manipulate his or her crowd could potentially change the lives of every person in the crowd listening, and his influence might then spread beyond the crowd. Not all speakers know how to yield this power. Some speakers speak, and then are easily forgotten by their listeners. Their names and the words they spoke are not remembered throughout history. What makes some speakers and speeches more effective than others? Why are their words remembered and kept alive through quotes by others, while other speeches are heard and make no impact on history? Many factors contribute to this "fame" that some speakers and their words enjoy. To start with, the words themselves have to be considered. The character, status and reputation of the speaker also play a role. Finally, the mood and the atmosphere surrounding a speaker help to make a speech effective.

A speaker's style can have an extremely important impact on the effectiveness of his or her speech. Style can be defined as the, "pattern of words and phrases you use in your speeches" (McManus 60). Speeches are made up of words, and speakers use these words to convey their ideas and thoughts to listeners. Words have to be strung together in a manner that will most effectively convey the message of the speaker. Consequently, words are a speaker's most valuable tools. Public speakers and the men and women that help them write their speeches have to be selective in choosing the right words when writing speeches.

Certain words hold more power than other words. Selection of the specific words to use when speaking are important for a speaker because certain words have the power to elicit a response or feeling in the audience, while other words are flat and unexciting. Aristotle wrote that a speaker can invoke emotion in his or her audience, and he called this emotion pathos. Pathos is important for a speaker because it allows him or her to cause strong feelings of pity, disgust, sympathy, and excitement in an audience (McManus 10).

Denotative words are words that are literal and exact, while connotative words are more subjective. Connotative words have the power to excite and involve an audience by reaching out to the emotions of the audience members. Connotative words are effective because they draw out emotions and elicit associations from audience members (McManus 60).

McManus provides many examples of denotative words and their connotative cousins, and here the power of connotative words becomes apparent. He compares the word romance to the phrase love affair (60). Romance suggests something much more innocent, more accepted and a more positive relationship between two people than the phrase "love affair". The American Heritage Dictionary provides five definitions of affair, two that are relevant in the case of a love affair. An affair is, a sexual relationship between two people who are not married, and matters of personal or professional business" (14). Romance has five definitions, the first being "a love affair, and the second, "romantic involvement: love" (723). Most people, when hearing the phrase, "love affair", automatically think about infidelity taking place by one member of a relationship. The phrase conjures up images about a man and a woman sneaking around behind the backs of their unknowing spouses, late night meetings, lies and deceit, and

unrestrained passion. Romance is associated with flowers and candy, dinners and movies, it is more respectable. While the definition provided by American Heritage does say that romance is a “love affair”, it is important to remember that for most people romance would not be described as a love affair. Therefore, a speaker that chooses to describe his political opponent’s “love affair” as opposed to his “romance” is making a powerful statement. While technically the speaker is not saying anything negative about his opponent, he is sending a negative message to his listeners simply because of his word choice. An effective speaker will make use of connotative language, and use it to his advantage.

Another tool that a speaker can use when choosing words for his speech is to use figurative language. Figurative language is more symbolic and ornate than nonfigurative language. Devices for figurative language include similes, metaphors, and, repetition (McManus 62). Using any of these tools helps make a speech more interesting for listeners. In 9 Steps to effective speech-writing, Mike Brake discusses how repeating words and phrases will help a speaker highlight his or her main points and ideas for his audience, while using metaphors will help the audience better understand complex ideas.

Martin Luther King chose to use the figurative tools of repetition and metaphor in his “I have a Dream Speech” that he delivered in 1963 (McManus 62). He repeated two phrases throughout his speech, “I have a dream”, and “Let Freedom Ring”, that have both stood the test of time and are still repeated and used today. Repeating these phrases (“I have a Dream” eight times, and “Let Freedom Ring” ten times) allowed for King to reinforce them, making them stronger in his listener’s eyes (McManus 62). King chose to begin his speech with a financial metaphor by saying, “In a sense we’ve come to our nation’s capital to cash a check” (Safire 532). King goes on to talk about how the founding fathers of the United States had signed a promissory note for all Americans; however, “. . . America has defaulted on this promissory note insofar as her citizens of color are concerned. . . America has given the Negro people a bad check, a check that has come back marked insufficient funds.” (Safire 532).

Abraham Lincoln’s Gettysburg address is a speech that is full of metaphors pertaining to birth, life and death. The first line of Lincoln’s speech has three references to birth, “conceived in liberty”, “brought forth”, and “created equal” (Safire 49-50). Lincoln also spoke about a “final resting place”, men who “gave their lives”, “living and dead”, and “honored dead” (Safire 50). Using these metaphors helped to make Lincoln’s speech more interesting, but it also made the speech more meaningful for the occasion that he was presenting it at.

The setting in which a speaker presents his speech can help make a speech more effective. The mood and events of the time period that a speech is delivered in can give a speech power. Social turmoil, violence, and events that cause for celebration oftentimes result in people giving speeches. In times of crisis, people oftentimes look for someone to lead them, and speakers can use this to their advantage. A speaker might choose to lay blame on someone else for the cause of the crisis, and promise to help lead the people out of the crisis into a better time. If there is a cause for celebration, a speaker can use this to his or her advantage as well by taking credit for the good that has occurred. Events that are taking place can oftentimes leave people emotionally charged, and speakers can take advantage of this to promote themselves and their agendas.

Certain occasions call for someone to deliver a speech and express the feelings of a group of people, be it a group of or the entire people of a nation. The speaker becomes the person that people stop and listen to, the person that has the power to become the guider of others, simply because people are taking the time to listen and focus on his or her words. (Safire 22).

A speaker needs to be aware of both his verbal and nonverbal delivery skills. Nonverbal skills are skills that people can see but cannot hear. A person's physical appearance can oftentimes make as much of an impact as the actual words that one is speaking. Listeners use nonverbal delivery skills to make assumptions about a speaker's sincerity, caring, and trustworthiness. Eye contact, facial expressions, posture and one's manner of dress are all examples of nonverbal delivery skills that a speaker should be aware of. Knowing how to correctly use nonverbal skills can help a speaker become more confident in both their own eyes, and in the eyes of their audiences members. A speaker who is confident has a greater chance of delivering an effective speech than a speaker who is not confident.

Maintaining eye contact with audience members helps the speaker to grasp and hold the attention of the audience. Keeping eye contact means that the audience is much more likely to stay interested in the speaker, which in turn helps audiences to gain a greater understanding of what a speaker is speaking about (D'Arcy 164). A speaker that has managed to get his audience's attention, interest and understanding has the potential to make an impact on the audience. Consequently, a speaker can use the tool of eye contact as a means to help make his speech an effective one.

A person's posture is important because it communicates to others the level of one's confidence. Proper posture also helps create an environment for your body to project a fuller voice (McManus 76). By not showing confidence in one's self with proper posture, a speaker is weakening the credibility of his spoken message by not appearing to have confidence in what he is talking about. Most people are not going to be persuaded or influenced by a person that does not have confidence in what they are saying.

Facial expression helps a speaker reach out to his or her audience in the same manner that using eye contact does. A speaker that scowls or looks pained and unhappy is not going to get the same type of reaction out of an audience than a speaker who smiles and conveys a relaxed, more at ease face. A speaker who smiles occasionally and is relaxed conveys a more open and trustworthy depiction of themselves than someone who is not smiling. A person that is perceived as trustworthy has a much better chance of getting an audience to believe in what he or she is saying as opposed to a person who is not trustworthy. Audiences might find themselves doubting the words and credibility of a person who they do not regard as trustworthy. Therefore, a relaxed face helps a speaker to reach out to his or her audience and make more of a positive impact on them.

Dana Milbank examined the role that facial expressions played in determining the winner of the first presidential debate of 2000 between George W. Bush and John Kerry. Bush "scowled, squinted, clenched his jaw and appeared disgusted". Millions of Americans were watching this debate on television; consequently, Bush was portraying himself in an unfavorable way to the electorate he was trying to get to vote for him. Milbank says that Bush's campaign was partly focusing on the idea that he was more likable than Kerry, who lacked the "common touch" that Bush had. Therefore, the

expressions that Bush made during this televised debate caused concern over the damage it might have done to his campaign. Milbank discusses how Bush was described by some as “defensive, annoyed, angry and arrogant”. These are obviously not characteristics that a presidential candidate wants to be associated with.

Milbank also discusses how different types of body language are appropriate for certain settings. George W. Bush’s squinting and slouching in the presidential debate was damaging to his image, as he looked small and uncommanding next to the taller John Kerry who was standing up straight. However, Milbank then goes on to say that in more informal situations, Bush’s squinting and scowling conveys “Texas confidence“, which is appealing to some people.

The nonverbal delivery skills that a speaker uses can make a huge impact on the effectiveness of his or her words. An example of nonverbal delivery skills being as important as verbal delivery skills would be the John F. Kennedy and Richard Nixon debates of 1960. The day after their first debate, a survey was given, asking participants which candidate they thought had given the better performance at the debate. The outcome was that people who had listened to the debate on the radio felt that Nixon had done the better job, while people that had viewed the debate on television thought that Kennedy had performed better. (Kelley 9). It was determined that Kennedy’s physical appearance was more favorable than Nixon’s; therefore, the people that were actually able to see the candidates (on the television screen) were persuaded by the nonverbal delivery skills of the two men. On television, Kennedy looked tan and fit compared to Nixon, who was pale, underweight and looked like he needed to shave (Kelley 9).

Using proper verbal skills also gives a speaker an edge into delivering an effective speech. A speaker’s voice has the ability to energize and excite an audience. Voice can help give emotion to the words that a speaker is delivering (D’Arcy 169). A person’s voice can convey sympathy, understanding, guilt and regret. By showing emotions through voice, a speaker is allowing his or her audience to feel as if they are connecting with him or her on a real and personal level. When a speaker has achieved this level of connection with his audience, he has opened himself up in a manner that many audience members might find appealing and trustworthy. This will help a speaker’s words to reach out to his or her audience, and consequently the speech will be more effective.

According to Jan D’Arcy, there are five characteristics of voice: rate, volume, pitch, quality and articulation (173-178). These five characteristics help determine if a person has a “pleasant” voice, or a voice that people will want to listen to and respond to.

Rate can be defined by how slow or fast one speaks, and this affects the way people perceive a speaker. A speaker who speaks fast will be perceived as being nervous, and also might commit the error of slurring words together, making it hard for an audience to effectively hear and process what is being spoken (McManus 80). A speaker who talks slow might be thought of as being unsure of what he or she is talking about; therefore, he or she will lose credibility in the eyes of the audience (D’Arcy 173). Slow speakers also might either frustrate or lose the attention of an audience (McManus 80). Effective speakers know how to properly vary the rate of their words. Speaking slowly and emphasizing certain words helps gain the audience’s attention, and can highlight main points by conveying the importance of those words through emphasis (D’Arcy 173). Speaking quickly during an exciting part of a speech also helps to keep the audience involved with what is being said (McManus 80). An effective speaker will

use pauses throughout his or her speech. Pauses help give emphasis to what was said right before the pause was taken. Pauses also help keep the audience involved by keeping the audience on edge, and carefully and anxiously waiting for the next line of the speech. An effective speaker will also use a pause when he or she wants his audience to reflect on what was just said (D'Arcy 173). Pauses allow the audience time to let words "sink in" before being given another idea by the speaker (Cheek 94). Pauses have the ability to add drama to a speech, holding the audience captive to the words of the speaker (McManus 80).

Volume is also another important aspect of voice. Volume is the loudness or softness of one's voice. The proper volume one should use when giving a speech in one that all members of the audiences can hear adequately (Cheek 93). An effective speaker will also vary the volume of his or her voice when delivering a speech. Speaking softly during certain portions of the speech forces the audience to become more involved with what the speaker is saying by forcing them to listen more intently. Speaking louder at key intervals places emphasis on certain words and phrases, giving those words a more important and powerful feeling (Cheek 93). Effective speakers will use the volume of their voices as a tool to highlighting important points to audience.

Pitch refers to the highness or lowness of one's voice (Cheek 94). An effective speaker will be concerned with changing the pitch of his or her voice because if he or she does not, the speaker runs the risk of boring the audience with a flat, monotone voice. A speaker will also show expression to his audience by raising his pitch as certain intervals to convey emotions. Using a high pitch can convey excitement to the audience, exciting them and conveying a speaker's passion for what is being said (Cheek 94)

It can be argued that Nixon gave a better verbal argument than Kennedy did in their 1960 presidential debate because the people that listened to the debate on the radio were not influenced by appearances; therefore, they focused on the words, thoughts and ideas of the candidates (Kraus 78). Nixon's voice was more powerful on radio because his voice was deeper and richer than Kennedy's. He sounded more commanding and more determined. Kennedy, on the other hand spoke with a higher pitched voice that did not sound as good as Nixon's (Kraus 79).

Some speakers hold power over a crowd before they even begin to speak. A speaker's reputation can and will precede him or her, and this can work to the speakers advantage or disadvantage. People oftentimes go to a speech with a basic idea of what they are going to hear. Speakers have agendas, and listeners are oftentimes aware of these agendas. The people that made up audiences are oftentimes there because they support or oppose a speaker's agenda. Other times, people are merely curious about a speaker and the issues that are going to be addressed. Perhaps they want to become more knowledgeable about a topic, and they hope to accomplish this by listening to a speech about that particular topic. Nonetheless, listeners usually have preconceived notions about the speakers they are listening to. Sometimes, this can translate into a speaker holding power simply because of who he or she might be. Politicians are wonderful examples of speakers that an audience holds a preconceived notion of. Most people either feel some degree of respect, contempt, or admiration for elected officials. People listening to politicians might be persuaded or turned off by a speaker's message simply because of who is doing the speaking. Movie stars, musicians, sports heroes and other

entertainers are examples of people who can use their fame to get people to listen to them, and then perhaps ultimately persuade listeners.

In the book *Rhetoric*, Aristotle states that a speaker has a philosophic responsibility he must fulfill for his audience (McManus 9). In order to fulfill this responsibility, a speaker must have ethos, or ethics in modern terms. Ethics has to do with the reputation of a speaker that people are aware of before the speaker actually starts to talk. Ethos can be described as the credibility and image of a person. A speaker with ethos is a speaker who will be sincere, relaxed, knowledgeable and concerned about his audience. A speaker with a positive ethos will earn the trust of his audience (McManus 10). Consequently, an audience is going to listen more intently and with a more open mind if they trust who is talking to them. People are going to be more apt to be persuaded by a person who they trust. Therefore, a positive ethos helps make a speaker more effective.

Aristotle also states that a speech must have a logical structure, or logos. Logos can be described as the rational thought and reason that a speaker uses when speaking to an audience. The modern derivative of logos, is logic, which is associated with reasoning. An effective speaker will use reasoning and evidence to back up the arguments he makes when delivering a speech (McManus 9). An effective speaker knows that in order to persuade his audience he has to provide them with proof because a sensible listener wants it. Mike Brake argues that effective speakers will provide their audience with figures and statistics to strengthen their arguments (Brake).

Every speaker is presented with a unique situation and opportunity when delivering a speech. What makes some speakers more effective than others is that the effective speakers learn to make the most out of what they are given. For some speakers, this might mean capitalizing on one's strengths, or even one's weaknesses. Andrew Wilson provides an example of George W. Bush capitalizing on a weakness and turning it into a strength. Bush's address to Congress on September 20, 2001 was written in a simple style that made use of Aristotle's technique of writing speeches in a way that works for the speaker. In Bush's case, this involved using simple words and short sentences because Bush is "not an articulate man". Bush said, "We will not tire. We will not falter. And we will not fail." (Wilson 736.) Speakers have to use the tools they are given to the best of their advantage. Bush accomplished this by revealing to Congress a "firmness of mind" and "clarity of purpose" that was striking to people across the world (Wilson 736.)

The point is that not all people are great speakers. Anyone can learn to become a great speaker with a little research, practice and coaching. An effective speaker makes use of his or her audience, feeding off of its emotions and reactions. In turn, both the speaker and the listeners can become motivated and inspired by the transfer of emotions that can take place during a speech. Effective speakers are people that have learned to read others, they have figured out what an audience wants to hear, and they are prepared to give the audience what they want.

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