(Thomas, 2021)

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COURSE NAME:

**Public Speaking**

Assignment Title:

**Public Speaking**

ATLANTIC INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITY

**12/2021**

**Introduction**

The art of speaking in public is not new. Its long tradition can be traced back to Classical Greece ( approximately 490-322 BC. Any man that lived at that was expected to acquire and develop public speaking skills as part of their duties as a citizen

Public speaking is one of the essential skills that all humans need. As long as one is alive, one will at some point find themselves in a public speaking situation. It can be a presentation at work, speech at a family gathering, or even speaking in front of a group of friends. Some people, of course, take public speaking as a profession; thus, they get hired to speak on different occasions for different reasons. However, it does not matter that much what kind of public speaking one is doing or where they are doing it, most of the skills for public speaking are the same, and usually, the purpose of public speaking is the same.

Public speaking is about the communication of information for different reasons. One can present to convince people to follow a particular way of thinking or doing things. Another can speak to motivate, encourage people, and make them believe in themselves more. This is usually done during difficult times, for example, during war or disasters. Others speak to entertain and make people laugh and enjoy themselves—it is all about sending a specific message to the audience. Public speakers usually want their audience to do something after listening to them. Either they want people to take action, or they want people to feel in a certain way.

This essay will look at what public speaking is, thus the definition of public speaking from different sources and identifying the differences or similarities. The essay will discuss the essential elements of public speaking, thus diving into what makes good or great public speakers. What are the everyday things that any public speaker should have if they want to be great? The essay shall look at the benefits of learning public speaking skills, thus the social and professional benefits. The essay shall also focus on steps to take to overcome the fear of public speaking.

**Definitions**

It is the act or process of making speeches in public (Webster, 2021)

It is the art of effective oral communication with an audience (Webster, 2021)

Public speaking is the process and an act of speaking or giving a lecture to a group of people in a structured, deliberate manner intended to inform, influence or entertain a listening audience (Thomas, 2021)

From the above definitions, one can see that public speaking is all about speaking in front of other people with a goal in mind. The goal can be encouraging people to do something, showing people that life is good to be entertaining them, asking people to support a certain cause. It is about sending a message and asking people to take a certain action after.

**Benefits of Public Speaking**

The art of public speaking has many practical benefits both socially and professionally. (Nikitina, 2011)

 Professionally, most if not all managers in workplaces like employees who can express themselves confidently. Public speaking gives one the power to share in meetings and be able to sell their ideas to the rest of the team without much effort. If one has any form of competition at work public speaking can set them apart from their competitors. When one can speak well with confidence people tend to listen to them no matter what the subject is and how much they know about it. At the same time, public speaking allows one to research more on different subjects so there is a high chance that when one speaks they have all if not most of the facts about the subject/topic.

If one is running a business, public speaking can be the determining factor between getting more clients and getting less. Thus if you can speak with confidence and with all the right points it is easy to convince people to buy whatever one is selling. Public speaking also attracts the right customers to one’s business. In a business environment communication is the key and public speaking gives one the skills to communicate effectively internally and externally. At times in the business world, one is called upon to speak without much preparation on different occasions and if one has public speaking skills it makes their lives easier in those kinds of situations. Public speaking also helps in motivating and persuading other people to reach and attain professional goals.

With good public speaking skills, one can achieve a lot of recognition professionally.

Besides all the above professional benefits public speaking also has personal and social benefits. It increases one’s self-confidence, when one has public speaking skills they feel confident speaking anywhere at any time. One’s communication skills can improve immensely through practicing public speaking and that makes it easier for them to connect with other people socially. Because of the nature of it, public speaking teaches a lot about organizational skills. For one to become a good public speaker they have to be highly organized in their speeches and presentation and if one does this long enough it becomes more natural in their daily life.

People with good public speaking skills are usually the ones that are listened to even in community meetings and other social gatherings. Their level of influence on others is high socially because they have good communication skills as well as the ability to convince people with words. Public speakers have high chances of meeting new people in life because they are comfortable talking one on one or in groups with anyone. When one develops self-confidence in speaking they can start a conversation without much difficulty. Public speaking also helps with improved memory. When one practices public speaking one has to train themselves to remember their presentations and speeches as much as possible. Lastly, people with public speaking skills have great control over emotions and body language. If one stands in front of people many times they develop an understanding of their body and the messages it sends to people when they speak. They are also aware that people do not always respond positively to speeches and presentations therefore they need to control their emotions all the time.

**Essential elements of Public Speaking**

Some essential elements are required for public speaking to take place. The first one is the speaker, there can not any public speaking if there is no speaker. The speech/presentation starts with the speaker, he/she is the one that initiates the conversation or talks. Whether the talk/speech is successful or not depends on the credibility, preparation, and knowledge of the speaker about the topic.

Secondly, we have the message. The message is what motivated the speaker to start the talk or speech, this is what the speaker is telling the audience about. The speaker must prepare well and deliver it in a way that the audience can understand. When the speaker finishes the audience should be able to remember what the speaker was sharing or what the speaker want them to do.

The channel is the other element of public speaking. This refers to what the speaker is using to convey the message, thus what makes the communication possible. This can be a PowerPoint presentation, recorded video, a written speech, phone call, or any other thing that can be used to communicate.

The fourth element is the listener.

The speaker can not speak without the audience, so the listener is the audience that the speaker is presenting to. Sometimes it is a group it is just one or two people. This element is the one that determines whether there will be action after the message or nothing takes place. If the listener does not take the message it means the speaker’s message dies there on stage. It is how the speaker connects with the listener that determines how far the message will reach after the speech. After listening to the speaker, the listener gives feedback which is the fifth element of public speaking. The listener may or may not agree with the speaker so they send a message back that informs the speaker on how they have taken the message. The feedback can be verbal or non-verbal depending on the situation.

Wherever and whenever there is some form of communication there is always some form of interference. Interference is the sixth element of public speaking and it refers to anything that affects the communication process between the speaker and the listener. This can come in different forms, for example, the relationship between the speaker and the listener. Sometimes it can be what is going on around the place where the communication is taking place.

Lastly, we have the situation, this refers to the time and place where the communication or presentation is taking place. It is the physical setting of the event. This can look at what kind of event is it, is it a church event, is it a funeral, is it a wedding or maybe a celebration for the business lounge to mention but a few examples. All these elements are interlinked and they make public speaking possible.

**Steps to take when preparing a speech**

First of all the speaker should reflect on what they want to talk about. Thus putting down all the ideas and points that they want the audience to hear. If one wants to be a great speaker one has to be highly organized and part of being organized is being able to write the goals of one’s speech first before they stand in front of the audience. If points are written down it makes it easier for the speaker to see if they have left out anything.

After writing down all the points the speaker should move on to arranging the points according to priority. This is the stage where the speaker takes the main points depending on what message they want to communicate to the audience. This is a crucial step as it determines the effectiveness of one’s speech. It is tempting for one to take all the points and try to present all to the audience no matter how many they are, but it is not a great idea. If people are given too much information there is a high chance that they will forget. It is more effective for public speakers to keep their points at 5 maximum

People love stories and stories are not easy to forget. A good public speaker comes up with relevant stories for their chosen points. To increase the chances of one’s audience to remember each point the speaker said, the speaker should try to have a short relevant story for each point that they want to communicate to the audience. The story should be simple and real so that the listeners can relate or easily understand the point being made. As one comes up with stories they can also start to expand their 5 points by adding more content to them. Write all the thoughts and ideas about each point on paper so that there is no chance of forgetting important things.

One has to then write the outline of their speech on a single piece of paper. That is putting all the five main points and a few words to remind the speaker of all the important points they have to make during the presentation. These points have to be in the order in which one wants to present them so that there isna flow to the speech as they present to the audience.

After writing down the main points and preparing the outline, the speaker needs to practice. This is a very important part of the preparations it helps one to correct major mistakes in the speech and the presentation itself. It is encouraged to gather a group of friends or workmates and use them as one’s audience and perform in front of them. After performing one should ask for honest feedback from them and use their feedback to correct one’s self. Another way to use for practice in case one’s has no practice audience is to record oneself performing the speech and then watch the video after. When watching the video one can focus on presentation and body language and listen more carefully to the content to see if the points are clear and easy to understand for the audience.

When checking with friends or workmates one should ask them what they can remember from the speech as a way to check if one’s points are understandable for the audience. If one uses a video they should write down everything that they do not like about their presentation and repeat the performance until they are happy with the results. . (Walker, Public Speaking Success, 2021)

**Checklist before the speech.**

It is encouraged to check the following and make sure they are all in place before one goes on stage. Best public speakers spend a good amount of time preparing for their speech/presentation and as part of that preparation is crosschecking all the important points. Firstly one has to check and make sure that they have narrowed their main point for speaking to the audience to one sentence. Thus having in one sentence, the reason why you are speaking and what you want the audience to do after your speech.

Secondly, check and make sure that you have narrowed your points to at most five to not overload your audience with too much information at once. These should be the main points that support your reason for speaking to the audience. While you are checking to reduce your points to a maximum of five make sure that you at least have a story or a compelling example for each point you want to make to your audience. Stories are important because people love stories and usually do not forget stories.

Most presentations include PowerPoints and other visual aids. If you are using PowerPoint or visuals make sure that you put one point on each slide. Having too many points on one slide makes it hard for the audience to understand the points. Also, make use of big images and fewer words on slides. The picture is almost like stories they are easy to remember than words. Once all is checked spend time practicing your speech on video repeatedly and review it until you are happy with every aspect of style and substance

Once you have done all the above it is safe to say one is ready to present in front of an audience (Walker, 2021)

**How to overcome the fear of Public Speaking**

Being afraid of public speaking is a very normal thing. Even the most famous and experienced speakers are still scared of presenting in front of an audience. The difference is in how one responds to that fear. Many people show fear in many different ways and respond in many different ways too.

Some have a pounding heart, some dry mouth, some shaky hands, some quivering voice, some cold sweaty palms and some even develop stomach cramps before going in front of an audience. What is important is how one deals with these issues so that when they get on stage they will deliver the message that they want to deliver without getting shown or allowing the fear to compromise their message.

Here are some of the ways one can use to calm themselves before going in front of an audience. One’s breathing rate increases when scared and what usually helps is taking long deep controlled breaths for a while. Once the breathing is controlled one starts to feel calm. In most cases, the fear comes as a result of focusing on one’s physical self and not on the message one wants to deliver. Taking one’s mind off their physical being helps to calm them too. Instead of focusing on their physical self, one can focus more on the message that they want the audience to hear. While one is trying to focus on the message one has to also try to visualize themselves in the room or the locations they are going to deliver the presentation and see themselves standing in front of the audience giving their speech with confidence. The focus should be on the positives, not the negatives. Thinking that the audience might not agree or receive the message can only make the fear of public speaking worse. One should focus on all the positive things they did like preparation, research, and practice that they did to make the speech a good one. Finally one should try to make their lives easier by making sure that they do not have too much information to share with the audience. The fewer points one has the more impact the speech will have the easier it is also for the speaker to deliver the speech. One should try to keep the points at a maximum of five and build the speech on clarity, not complexity. (Walker, Public Speaking Success, 2021)

**Conclusion**

Public speaking is an essential skill that one should learn. Many times as humans we find ourselves in situations where we have to speak. Without the right speaking skills, we are often not able to deliver the message that we want and we often fail to convince people to do what we want them to do. The life of an educator is that of speaking or presenting information most if not all the time. How one presents the information to the students determines how much of that information is absorbed. It is of great importance that a teacher presents information in a structured way and in a way that the students can easily understand. All the points that are applied in public speaking are essential for an educator for them to be effective in their work of teaching.

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