

Session Objectives:

- Speech purposes – General
- Speech purposes – Specific
- Methods of speaking
- Analyzing the audience
- Nonverbal dimensions of presentation

Speech purposes – General

To Inform: The purpose of a speech may be to provide information to others. This is done either to educate the listeners or help them acquire new skills, or both.

Example: Educating product managers about new technology by conducting work-shops, seminars and training programs.

To Persuade: The purpose of a speech may be to sell a particular idea or a concept. In the process of trying to convince the listeners, persuasive skills come into play.

Example: Salesman trying to convince potential customers to purchase a newly launched product/service.

To Entertain: Another purpose of a speech is to entertain the listeners. This type of communication is generally humorous, and provides relaxation and enjoyment to the audience.

Example: After-dinner speeches are characteristic of shared humor, and are intended to get people to relax.

Informative speeches

The purpose of informative speeches is to increase the receiver's knowledge and understanding of a subject, to entertain or to change beliefs. The main concern of the speaker while giving an informative speech is to make sure that the audience understands and remembers the information.

Example: At the time of launch of a new product or service, a company spokesperson may give an informative speech at a press conference to increase the understanding of the public about the product or service.

Persuasive speeches

A persuasive speech is intended to make the audience think, feel or act in a desired manner. The speaker tries to get the audience to discard their old beliefs or form new ones or tries to strengthen their present opinions.

Example: In the speech that he delivered on the occasion of Republic Day, the chief minister tried to persuade naxalites to give up arms and to join the mainstream.

Entertaining speeches

The purpose of entertaining speeches is to entertain the audience by stimulating a pleasurable response in them. The intent of the speaker is that the people present have an enjoyable time. The speaker does not try

to impart knowledge to the audience nor does he try to change their mind about any aspect.

Example: On the first day of joining the college, he was asked by his seniors to give a brief entertaining speech about an unforgettable event in his life.

Speech Purpose – Specific

Unlike a general purpose speech where the aim is to inform, persuade or entertain, a specific purpose speech aims at getting an exact response from the audience. It specifically states what exactly it wants the audience to know, feel, believe or do.

Example : After I finish my presentation on goal setting, I want each one of you to jot down your short-term and long-term goals on a piece of paper.

Requirements of a specific purpose speech

There are three requirements that need to be fulfilled for a speech to be termed as a specific purpose speech. These are:

The speech should contain only one central idea.

It should be clear and concise.

It should be worded such that it obtains the desired response from the audience.

Methods of speaking

The manner in which a speech is delivered varies according to the subject, audience and occasion. There are four ways in which a speech can be delivered. These are:

- Reading from a manuscript
- Speaking from memory
- Impromptu delivery
- Extemporaneous delivery

Reading from a manuscript: In this type of speech, the speaker reads directly from the manuscript. The advantage of this type of speech is that it does not put a strain on the speaker's memory. Further, the speaker can prepare and practice the speech well in advance and deliver it in the desired style. However, the disadvantage of this type of speech is that spontaneity is lost. The speaker simply reads his speech and fails to develop a rapport with the audience.

Example: Speeches delivered at convocations in colleges and other academic institutions.

Speaking from memory: Memorized speeches are very similar to manuscript speeches. However, since the entire speech is memorized, the need for a manuscript does not arise. Similar to a manuscript speech, a memorized speech too has the advantage of allowing the speaker to prepare a carefully worded speech. However, the disadvantage is that such speeches lead to mechanical presentation. There is also the possibility of forgetting certain parts of the speech.

Example: Memorized speeches are common among school children. During school functions, they deliver speeches which are verbatim repetition of a write-up that has been prepared on a given topic

Impromptu speech: These speeches are delivered on the spot without any prior preparation. The speaker gets very little time to assemble his/her thoughts to deliver the speech. Most of our day-to-day conversation

fall in this category.

Example: While discussing a new business plan, the heads of all the departments are required to give impromptu speeches expressing their opinions on the new business plan and the benefit it would bring to the organization.

Extemporaneous delivery: This type of speech is considered to be the best amongst all types of speeches and involves researching, forming an outline of the speech, practicing, and delivering it in a conversational manner. Since the topic of the speech is known well in advance, the speaker gets adequate time to collect the relevant material and organize it in a clear and systematic manner. Noting the key points on small cards helps the speaker to recall them while delivering the speech without impeding his gestures and other non verbal communication.

Example: Speeches are delivered during debates. The participants collect material, both for and against the topic. They also make a list of anticipated arguments and prepare statements to counter these arguments.

Analyzing the audience

Effective communication requires the person to know his audience well. Knowing about the audience helps a speaker to prepare his speech. The needs of the audience varies with age, experience and attitude. Hence, audience analysis helps to retain the attention of the audience. By being aware of the possible reaction from the audience, a speaker is able to handle their queries and also convince them better. Audience consists of a group of individuals. A speaker must try to identify commonalities in the group and then reach out to them. The factors that can help a speaker to gain an insight into the commonalities are:

The age of the listeners: With age, there is a change in interests, learning and opinions. These factors determine the extent to which the listeners are receptive to your speech. Studies have revealed that older people are difficult to persuade.

The sex of the listeners: If the gathering consists of both males and females, it will have an impact on choice of subject, and the examples that the speaker chooses to give.

The occupation of the audience: The reaction of the audience to the message depends on their occupation. The occupation of people generally influences their values and attitude.

Intelligence and education level of the listeners: Overestimating or underestimating the intelligence of the audience can cause a communication breakdown. Factors like formal education and experiences influence the reaction of the audience.

Social, professional and religious groups listeners belong to: The attitude of the listeners is influenced by the social and religious groups to which they belong.

The influence of geographical experience: The values, beliefs and attitudes of people differ from region to region. While delivering a speech, the speaker must take care of geographical orientation of the listeners.

Non verbal dimensions of presentation

Many speakers take care to prepare and rehearse their speeches before they present them; still they may fail to have the desired impact on the audience. This essentially takes place because they fail to align together their verbal and nonverbal communication. The non verbal cues during presentations, determine the attitude of the speaker. Non verbal cues are said to be more reliable for this purpose than verbal messages. It reflects qualities of the speaker such as self-confidence, credibility, etc. One should analyze the possible impact of non verbal cues on the listeners, practice well before friends and try to improve the presentation style. This will help the speaker to make good presentations.

Summary

Public speaking is a specialized form of communication. Speeches have various purposes, which may be general or specific in nature. Speeches with a general purpose inform, persuade, or entertain the audience. Speeches with a specific purpose aim at obtaining a desired response from the audience.

There are various ways of making a presentation and the speaker needs to understand the audience to effectively communicate his message to them. Although the verbal message forms the major part of the presentation, the speaker should also pay attention to nonverbal elements of communication to deliver an effective presentation.