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PUBLIC SPEAKING AND AUDIENCE DESIGN

The article is devoted to the acute problem of public speaking, to the art of persuasion in democratic societies. Public speaking is an inseparable part of the life of human beings. The art of speaking persuasively requires certain skills and knowledge from public speakers as the world is constantly changing and setting new challenges to communicators in various rhetorical situations. So are the audiences that are becoming more demanding, sophisticated, informed, and digital. A special attention has been paid to the cooperation of a speaker and their audiences, to the ways of learning about the audiences, their demographics and culture, their modelling and design in different types of contexts. All these factors define the topicality of our research and its relevance to modern trends in humanitarian studies. The novelty of the research lies in the fact that we have applied theoretical and practical approaches to the study of the topic and focused on the cooperative audience design, analysed the expectations and preferences of the audiences of young listeners. The purpose of our research was to define audience and its design, to find out about the ways of shaping it, to point out what makes speakers successful, cooperative and well-perceived in public speaking in general and in education in particular. The topic and the purpose defined the methods of our research: surveys and questionnaires, description, analysis, and generalization.

It has been found out that successful speakers usually use audience participation (questions, polls, volunteers), refer to shared experiences or knowledge, include "you-focused" language and speak directly to the audience's needs and desires and use metaphors or examples that are relatable to them. It has been shown that with the help of the analysed techniques and approaches, it is possible to design our audiences, convert them into a second persona, make them not only active listeners but the ones that feel and live the speech. The empirical study has proved that the most important qualities of a good public speaker is their confidence and credibility, vividness, cooperation with the audience, positive attitude and passion, the ability to engage the audience and tell compelling stories, kairos, and a good sense of humour.

Key words: public speaking, persuasion, cooperation, audience design, rhetorical situations, questionnaires.

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ПУБЛІЧНЕ МОВЛЕННЯ ТА ДИЗАЙН АУДИТОРІЇ

Стаття присвячена актуальній проблемі публічних виступів та мовлення, мистецтву переконання в демократичних суспільствах. Публічне мовлення є невід'ємною частиною життя людей. Мистецтво переконливого виступу вимагає від публічних спікерів певних навичок та знань, оскільки світ постійно змінюється та ставить нові виклики для комунікаторів у різних риторичних ситуаціях. Так само й аудиторії стають більш вимогливими, складними, обізнаними та цифровими. Особлива увага приділяється співпраці спікера та його адиторії, шляхам вивчення аудиторії, їх демографії та культури, їх моделюванню і дизайну в різних типах контекстів. Усі ці фактори визначають актуальність нашого дослідження та його значення для сучасних тенденцій у гуманітарних науках. Новизна дослідження полягає в тому, що ми застосували теоретичні та практичні підходи до вивчення теми і зосередилися на дизайні кооперативної аудиторії, проаналізували очікування та уподобання молодих слухачів. Метою нашого дослідження було визначення аудиторії та її дизайну, з'ясування способів її формування, окреслення того, що робить промовців успішними, кооперативними і добре сприйнятими у публічному мовленні загалом та освіті зокрема. Тема та мета визначили методи нашого дослідження: опитування та анкети, опис, аналіз і узагальнення. Було виявлено, що успішні спікери, зазвичай, залучають аудиторію до участі (питання, опитування, волонтери), звертаються до спільного досвіду або знань, говорять мовою, зосередженою на слухачах, і спілкуються безпосередньо про потреби та бажання аудиторії, а також використовують метафори чи приклади, які їм зрозумілі. Було показано, що за допомогою проаналізованих технік і підходів можна формувати нашу аудиторію, перетворювати її на друге «я», робити її не тільки активними слухачами, а й тими, хто відчуває та проживає промову. Емпіричне дослідження довело, що найважливішими якостями хорошого публічного спікера є їхня впевненість та надійність, яскравість, співпраця з аудиторією, позитивне ставлення та пристрасть, здатність залучати аудиторію та розповідати захоплюючі історії, кайрос та гарне почуття гумору.

Ключові слова: *публічні виступи, переконання, співпраця, дизайн аудиторії, риторичні ситуації, опитування.*

Introduction. Public speaking has been a vital part of human communication for centuries as it is an effective way to shape a society, its opinion, mindset and world view, and verbal and non-verbal behaviours. Language, in its turn, is a powerful tool to convey the meaning, senses and intentions of speakers in order to inform, persuade, entertain or convince the audience, converting it into a second persona. In democratic societies practical skills of persuasive public speaking, the knowledge and application of effective tools how to cooperate with the audience have been developing constantly and changing under the influence of new technologies and challenges. requiring the attention of scholars and scientists in different social spheres. These facts justify the **topicality** of our research and define its **purpose** – to define audience and its design, to find out about the ways of shaping it, to point out what makes speakers successful, cooperative and well-perceived in public speaking and education.

Analysis of recent research and publications. There are a lot of aspects of public speaking and audience design that have been studied by many scholars within the scopes of sociolinguistics, cognitive and discourse linguistics, rhetoric, communicative linguistics, applied linguistics, education, politics etc. Thus, H. Clark and G. Murphy (Clark, Murphy, 1982) introduced the audience design theory (1982), proposing that speakers consciously were adjusting their linguistic style based on audience characteristics. A. Bell (Bell, 1984) further developed Audience Design theory (1984), showing − through sociolinguistic studies like radio speech − that speakers were adapting to forms of address to align socially with their listeners. D. Hymes (Hymes, 1962) created the SPEAKING model, emphasizing the central role of audience and context within communicative events. C. Perelman (Perelman, 1991) introduced the idea of a "universal audience" − a constructed, idealized audience used to frame persuasive discourse − and sparked debate on applying such models in practice. In the field of persuasive public-speaking frameworks, A. Monroe (Monroe, 1962) devised Monroe's Motivated Sequence, a structured rhetorical method designed to guide audiences from attention to need → satisfaction → visualization → action, enabling intentional audience influence. In the context of media, data and communication studies J. Webster (Webster, 1998) analyzed how audiences were formed and responded − especially in media contexts − offering rigorous empirical models to frame speech to maximize reach and impact. A. Stuart (UNC Chapel Hill) studied classroom presentation courses that included peer rehearsal and professional feedback to boost student awareness of audience needs and engagement techniques. D. Usera (Usera, 2023) identified five active Audience Engagement Techniques, shifting public speaking from monologue toward interactive dialogue − directly modeling how to involve listeners.

Emerging digital/AI-focused researches have shown that scholars pay their attention to the analysis of the integrated methods, applied in public speaking. R. Schmälzle et al. (Schmälzle, 2025) introduced an LLM (large language models)-based thin-slicing method, using AI to analyze short excerpts of scientific talks and predict audience impact, signaling a data-driven future for audience modeling. The authors suggested that the first moments of a presentation (less than 10 % of a talk) conveyed relevant information that was used in quality evaluations and can shape lasting impressions of the presentation. The LLM-based thin-slicing framework is a scalable feedback tool to enhance human communication. Studies like VoiceCoach (2020) and TED-talk rhetorical-device frameworks (2017) further combine computational tools and large speech corpora to model and enhance how speakers engage audiences.

Ukrainian scholars conduct their studies in the field of communication, political discourse, media communication, education and public diplomacy (N. Chaban); historical pragmatics, speech manipulations, language strategies of mass-media, political speeches of those who shape and manage mass-consciousness (I. Shevchenko). A special attention has been paid to the analysis of the strategies of linguistic consolidation of society through President Zelensky's speeches in 2022–2023 (O. Semenets), to the description of the structure and compositions of Zelensky's speeches, highlighting persuasive language techniques in the international context. M. Ovcharov specializes in rhetoric and argumentative strategies in public speaking. He developed the concept of *evidence-based argumentation* (Ovcharov, 2023) and in 2025 published the first Ukrainian journal "Unknown Orator" to combine theory with practical public speaking techniques.

These scholars span theory, practical frameworks, educational settings, and tech-enhanced analysis − together providing a rich foundation for modeling and influencing public speaking audiences.

Presentation of the main research material. Communication plays a vital role in our lives. We can hardly imagine our existence without it as we have to share various types of information, our feelings, thoughts, fears or concerns, we have to come to agreements, negotiate, persuade, comfort or entertain. There are different reasons why

we do that but we experience that on a daily basis, changing our roles from listeners to speakers, from being alone to a member of an audience. Aristotle says that audiences are not helpless dupes and that every instance with a speaker represents a fundamentally different situation. He recognizes that rhetoric is not a universal magic but a strategic art that seeks the best way of figuring out what to say to an audience under certain circumstances, in a given situation. According to H. Clark (Clark, 1982, p. 287), the speaker designs each utterance for specific listeners, and they, in turn, make essential use of this fact in understanding the utterance. Often listeners can come to a unique interpretation for an utterance only if they assume that the speaker designed it just so that they could come to that interpretation uniquely. It turns out that in ordinary conversations we tailor what we say to the particular people we are talking to. We have a good idea of the knowledge and beliefs they share with us at the moment and what they are thinking of, and we design our utterances accordingly. This property is called audience design.

Audience design is a sociolinguistic model formulated by H. Clark (Clark, 1982) and G. Murphy in 1982 and later elaborated by A. Bell (Bell, 1984), which proposes that linguistic style-shifting occurs primarily in response to a speaker's audience. According to this model, speakers adjust their speech primarily towards that of their audience in order to express solidarity or intimacy with them, or away from their audience's speech to express distance. J. Webster (Webster, 1998) believes that there are three basic models of the audience: audience-as- mass, audience-as-outcome and audience-as-agent. In other words, the main purpose of a speaker is to appeal to the audience, make it think, feel, and act, either verbally or physically.

L. Bitzer (Keith, 2013, p. 28) states that audience is the group of people who need to be persuaded to take action: the professor who might change the bad grade, fellow employees who might be convinced to put pressure on the employer, or a congressperson who faces a key vote on a bill relating to climate policy. To be successfully persuasive we need to figure out exactly whom we want to persuade and what would convince them.

It is very vital to know the audience and first of all its demographics. Demographics includes: age, gender, family orientation (single, married,

divorced, widowed, from one-parent or two-parent family), religion, cultural background, occupations, socioeconomic status: upper-class, middle-class, lower-class, membership in special organizations, education etc. These factors help us understand who we are going to talk to, which methods, language register and modes of communication we are to choose to be persuasive and achieve our goals. There are other demographic factors but they are less significant in public speaking. Another list of factors that influence the makeup of the audience includes the following ones: situation (*What motivates the audience to listen to the speaker?*); context (*What is the broader context of the speaking situation?*); demographics; ideology; homogeneity/heterogeneity; occasion (*What expectations are there for the speech, given the situation?*); need (*What reason for speaking is the speaking adapting to?*); genre (eulogy, toast, apology etc.).

Many scholars state that we have to know our audience before we speak, so we must research its demographics: age, gender, profession, education, cultural background; understand psychographics: beliefs, values, attitudes, interests, motivations; consider context: formal vs. informal setting, expectations, time constraints, event purpose. In such a way we create an 'audience persona' just like marketeers create customer personas.

As we have mentioned before, we have to align with our audience and consider its educational background, keeping in mind the following three percepts: a) not to underestimate the intelligence of our listeners and speak down to them; b) not to overestimate their need for information and try to do too much in the time that is available to us; c) not to use professional jargon, abbreviations and other types of clipping if there is a chance that our listeners are unfamiliar with it as there is a good chance that our listeners will quickly tune out what they do not understand.

In order to find out more about our audience it might be helpful to find the answers to some additional questions. For example: *Do the members of the audience have any common experience? Do they share any common interests? Do they have any identifiable goals, fears, frustrations, loves or hates that could be tied in?*. It is also important to learn about their attitudes by asking *what they care about*; about motivation: *is attendance optional or required?*; values: *is the audience homogeneous or heterogeneous?*; level of agreement: *does the audience agree with our position?*; level of commitment: *how much do they care?*. All these questions may be of use to us in predicting the audience reaction to the topic we are going to present and choosing the relevant communicative behaviour.

Information about our audience should come from two key sources: our personal experience with the group (either as a speaker or as an audience member); original research (we might ask to the program planner to provide us with the relevant information; obtain copies of public relations materials; use recent news release or corporate newsletters; Internet resources etc.).

The idea of the audience (its modern equivalent *public)* includes the individuals with interests and biases who make up the audience, the situation that the audience finds itself in, and the challenge of proper timing. Finding the right combination of audience, circumstances, and message is not the only challenge that a rhetorician faces persuading the audience. There is also the issue of timing. To persuade the audience a speaker needs to say the right things to the right people in the right situation, at the right time, and with the right ethical conditions. In this context a very important notion is kairos. The Greeks used the term *kairos* to describe the right time to say something. In rhetoric *kairos* means that there is exactly the right time to deliver a message if the audience is to be persuaded.

The audience possesses defining characteristics before the speaker addresses it but it is also possible for the speaker to compose or evoke their audience. In modern rhetoric there is a widely used term that stands for the 'converted audience' − *second persona*. The second persona means that the actual people making up audience at the beginning of the speech, take on another identity that the speaker convinces them to inhabit through the course of the speech itself. The idea of *persona* comes from the Greek term *proso-non*, which means "a person" but also means "a mask".

E. Topping (Topping, 2019), an author of the well-known rhetoric guide for students, teachers, politicians and preachers, talks about the key notions of the effective public speaking: *logos, pathos* and *ethos*. He states that a very special attention is to be paid to *logos*, that is a rational speech, and suggests that in the course of delivering a speech and working cooperatively with the audience, a speaker, in order to make their speech rational, should master grammar as it is the precondition

of clarity. Many successful public speakers state that in order to make a difference we have to not just inform our listeners but to make them feel and live what we are expressing and sharing. In other words, we have 'to move their heads and hearts', appealing to reason and emotions, at the same time prefer the concrete. E. Topping (Topping, 2019, p. 99) emphasizes that good speakers have to master three types of motions: change of position, change of motions, and change of tempo. One more tool of successful speaking is voice which will convey a distinct meaning by the alteration of tempo, pitch, or accent. As to the aims of a speaker, it is important to keep in mind that it is about either teaching, pleasing or moving. So, in order to teach somebody or something a speaker is to be clear, to please – be vivid, and to move – make a direct appeal.

At the same time, L. Bitzer (Keith, 2008, p. 28) points out that what works for one audience under certain circumstances may not work for another one under the same circumstances – or even the same audience under different circumstances. That is why it is important to be well-aware of the rhetorical situation which he defines as a specific combination of exigence, audience, and the constrains, having combined Aristotle's focus on circumstances with Cicero's focus on intentions.

Another prominent contemporary rhetorician M. McGee (Keith, 2008, p. 29) turned from a focus on the relationship between a speaker and an audience toward a more global view of persuasive processes that give meaning and sense to symbols (speeches, pictures, moving images, etc.) in a context. Thus, we have to focus not only on who is speaking, who is listening, and what the speaker is saying, but also on what the speaker is doing, where and when they are trying to get it done, and for what reasons.

One more important factor is culture as in order to fully understand the rhetorical situation, a speaker is to comprehend the culture it takes place in. In other words, it is the knowledge of what the culture sees as a speaker, what serves as a speech, what it means to be a member of an audience, and what is appropriate and acceptable and what is irrelevant.

In the course of public speaking the most significant figure is a speaker as they play the main role in the rhetorical situations. R. Topping (Tropping, 2019, p. 2) shared an interesting remark about speakers and rhetoricians, having quoted G. K. Chesterton: "… while the aim of the sculptor is to convince us that he is a sculptor, the aim of the orator is "to convince that he is not an orator". In this case what is true of the preacher is true for the politician, the professor, and his students." There are certain skills, knowledge and behaviour that are expected of the speakers. Thus, a successful speaker should read the room in real time and watch for body language (crossed arms, leaning in, nodding), facial expressions (boredom vs. engagement), responsiveness (laughter, questions, murmurs); adapt on the fly if the audience looks bored by changing pace, adding humor or asking a question. If they are confused it is necessary to simplify or repeat key ideas. It is to be done as the audience is dynamic, not static and we can influence their mood, focus, and reaction. The next step is to shape the audience's mindset through framing by using storytelling to prime the audience emotionally, asking rhetorical questions to trigger reflection, framing challenges in a way that positions a speaker as the guide to a solution, creating contrast (before vs. after, problem vs. solution) to anchor key points. The point is that great speakers don't just inform − they frame reality and shift how the audience thinks.

A very important skill of successful speakers is their ability to engage the audience, to involve them in the message. They usually use audience participation (questions, polls, volunteers), refer to shared experiences or knowledge, include "you-focused" language and speak directly to the audience's needs and desires and use metaphors or examples that are relatable to *them*. As a result, a modeled audience feels like they're part of the story − not just observers. One more very significant skill is to guide emotions and energy. In order to achieve that it is advisable to start strong as energy levels in the first 90 seconds set the tone; to apply vocal variety and pauses to create rhythm; to use humor, surprise, or vulnerability to deepen connection; to build to an emotional peak before a key message or call to action. A very crucial thing to do is to reinforce a desired action or takeaway. It is possible to achieve that result when a speaker ends with clarity and purpose: *what do we want them to think, feel, or do?*; provides a clear and memorable call to action; repeats key messages or taglines for reinforcement; uses body language to signal importance (e.g., lean in, slow down).

M. Bowden (Bowden, 2013), a well-known presentation skills expert, suggests the following 14 steps of scripting the presentation: 1) address the audience and build rapport with it; 2) assert the perspective; 3) motivate the audience to pay attention; 4) proactively manage audience objections; 5) control and relax the audience; 6) choose the right language and its power; 7) deliver the facts, figures and data; 8) explain the steps for implementing your ideas; 9) provide for any other information; 10) summarize the three key points; 11) call the audience to action; 12) manage questions and answers; 13) highlight negative and positive consequences; 14) close with a sizzle. All these steps reflect the key notions of the successful public speaking – appeal to the heads and hearts of the audience in order to make a difference.

It is also very important to remember about the goas and objectives every speaker must have. So, when speaking to an *audience that agrees* with a speaker's position then their objective is to maintain its support; if the audience is neutral then the speaker's goal is to gain the listeners' attention and show them how the presentation can be of value to them. When facing an audience that *disagrees, the speaker* needs to be especially careful and diplomatic in his/her approach.

According to D. Usera (Usera, 2023), public speaking is often conceptualized as a one-way monologue performed by a speaker for a listening audience. This monologic approach faces challenges and limited results as demonstrated by the education literature on active learning. All public speaking conveys some information for the audience to remember. Similarly, education conveys material for a student to remember. While the active learning literature seeks to improve public speaking for teaching purposes, the more abstract practice of engaging the audience by turning them from passive listeners to active participants can improve public speaking for many more purposes outside of education. There are opportunities for speakers in a ceremonial speech, research talk, team meeting, and many other contexts to engage their audience in this way. D. Usera explored the nature and effective execution of five universal Audience Engagement Techniques (AET) that provided opportunities for a speaker to turn their passively listening audience into active participants in a dialogue. These techniques include *polling, discussion, recitation, imagination, and reflection.*

Polling allows the audience to respond to the speaker's questions or comments all at once. The second one is a *discussion*. Educators and trainers often use this AET, asking the audience to converse about a common question and respond to the speaker and each other. The following statement is an example of a *Discussion Question*: "*Since none of you have heard of an Audience Engagement Technique before, let me ask you this, what makes a speech 'engaging'?*". It is important to keep in mind that the speaker needs to acknowledge the key ideas from the discussion and tie them to the rest of the speech. If the speaker poses a discussion question and moves on without relating the critical ideas to the speech, the discussion comes across as a formality or throw-away. The third one is recitation. The *Audience Recitation Technique* requires all audience members to recite a phrase or word together. For example: "*So, fellow audience members, repeat after me: 'Engage . . . your . . . Audience.'*" Places of worship often have congregations recite whole prayers in unison; public speakers can train their audiences to recite phrases and ideas taught earlier in the speech. The next AET is imagination when the speakers put the audience in a hypothetical scenario through vivid descriptions. The goal is to create a mental video in the audience's mind that immerses them in the situation that the speaker is introducing. It can help the audience empathize by causing them to "live" the situation. For example, "*Imagine that you are giving a speech to a group of undergraduates who are uninterested in your topic. You get blank stares, students doing things on their cell phones, and a few falling asleep. You must do something to win back their attention, so you decide to deploy an AET.*". And the last one is reflection. While Imagination exercises are used for hypothetical scenarios, Reflection exercises are used for lived scenarios. The speaker can ask the audience to reflect on a past situation related to the speech topic. For example, "*Reflect on a time when you gave a speech to a bored audience. What signs did the audience give you? How did it make you feel? What did you do to counteract the boredom?*". All these techniques, suggested by D. Usera, are used to convert public speaking into active listening and learning with the audience being involved, engaged and interested.

A. Stuart (Stuart, 2013), a professor from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

(USA), states that on the university level in order to train students to get good public speaking skills it is advisable to add to the traditional methods of teaching (peer rehearsals, PowerPoint presentations, chalk talks, video-recordings of students' talks for later review by the students with the instructor), and collaboration with professional actors, who can help the students develop techniques for keeping the attention of an audience, for speaking with confidence, and for controlling nervousness.

In order to find out more about the qualities of a successful public speaker, we conducted a survey among the students of the Department of Applied Linguistics at the Lesya Ukrainka Volyn National University. There were 20 students engaged and they were given a questionnaire on the topic *What Makes a Good Public Speaker.* The analysis of the given responses has shown that the top qualities of a good public speaker are confidence, bravery, clarity, openness, the ability to engage the audience and tell compelling stories, clear pronunciation, and being genuine. As to the speakers they admire, they are Barack Obama because he speaks with clarity, calm confidence, and strong emotions. Also, Taylor Swift, Meryl Streep, Trevor Noah, Emma Watson, Michelle Obama, Steve Jobs, Natalie Portman, Angelina Jolie as they speak with warmth, confidence, humour, are able to reach their audiences, use stories to convert complicated things into the simple ones. Some students mentioned their university professors, for example, Dr. I. Biskub. Qualities that make a speaker memorable are confidence, passion for the topic and emotional connection, persuasive delivery, humour, simplicity and clarity, interaction with the audience. Things that make listeners lose their interest are monotone voice, lack of structure, overly technical language, lack of energy or enthusiasm, or when the speech is too long and unfocused. Body language of a speaker was marked as extremely important, and story-telling was found to be highly important. As to the question about the style of personality they prefer in a public speaker, they chose inspirational and emotional but did not accept formal and the authoritative ones. Answering the questions what they would do if they had a chance to give a piece of advice to someone new to public speaking, the students said that it was advisable to prepare their speeches thoroughly, avoid improvisations; not to be afraid of being judged if something did not go well; practice out loud and connect with the audience. And the last part was about the things that would make them want to listen to a speaker again. The students said that the speaker should be confident, charismatic, inspiring, have an interesting topic, create a sense of trust, and, as a bonus, with a good sense of humour.

So, the empirical study has proved that the most important qualities of a good public speaker is their confidence and credibility, vividness, cooperation with the audience, positive attitude, the ability to engage the audience and tell compelling stories, kairos, and a good sense of humour.

Conclusions and prospects for further research. Public speaking is an inseparable part of the life of human beings. The art of speaking persuasively requires certain skills and knowledge from public speakers as the world is constantly changing and setting new challenges to communicators in various rhetorical situations. So are the audiences that are becoming more demanding, sophisticated, informed and digital. With the help of the analysed techniques and approaches it is possible to design our audiences, convert them into a second persona, make them not only active listeners but the ones that feel and live the speech. The questions of training students to become effective speakers and interlocutors, the study of different types of audiences and ways of modelling them with the consideration of AI and its role in the modern world can be the topics for our future researches.

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