



glenn r. capp

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Basic Oral Communication is the third edition of the book formerly titled *How to Communicate Orally*, 2nd ed.

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To present-day students of oral communication everywhere who insist on a greater voice in their educational process, including a say in what texts they shall read.

This third edition retains the practical skills approach of the first two editions for the beginning speech course, but it recognizes other approaches emphasized by recent research and writings. Although it includes the same basic philosophy, clear and direct style, and organizational pattern, it makes at least four significant changes and adds three new features.

The changes include a general updating of basic principles based upon research since publication of the second edition; numerous new illustrations taken from famous speeches of history, significant contemporary speeches and student classroom speeches designed to exemplify the various rhetorical principles discussed and to make them meaningful; a deletion of the less significant sections and a rear-

preface

range of others that reduces the number of chapters from 16 to 15; a rewriting of several sections, including the introductions to chapters, for the purpose of greater clarity and conciseness.

The new features include a streamlining of the questions and exercises, many of which accompany the third edition in a student workbook; a list of suggested collateral readings for each chapter including recent texts and articles in professional journals designed primarily for supplementing the concepts discussed and for giving additional and sometimes conflicting points-of-view; an appendix of eight student speeches spaced over a 35-year period for student analysis, comparison, and evaluation and perhaps to make unnecessary the use of a supplementary anthology. These new features were suggested either by the editors or reviewers employed to evaluate the previous editions, or by users of former editions including my colleagues.

The title has been changed to *Basic Oral Communication* because this term seems more descriptive of the underlying philosophy of the book than *How to Communicate Orally*. Although by design this edition retains emphasis on the rhetorical skills necessary for effective communication in the modern world, it includes more than a "how to" approach by emphasizing the ethics of the communicator and the value of proper evaluation. It stresses the importance of weighing carefully the validity and accuracy of what one talks about—the necessity for talking sense, not nonsense.

The step-by-step arrangement of the text corresponds generally to the order in which one encounters the principles of speech as he prepares himself to communicate orally. Part I discusses basic concepts—the goals of good speech, how to develop oneself as an ethical communicator, and how to listen. The material on acquiring self-confidence has been updated and moved from Chapter 10 to Chapter 2 because the discussion applies specifically to the speaker, the subject of Chapter 2. Part II stresses preparation of a speech—its content and composition. This part continues to receive major emphasis and includes numerous excerpts from recent speeches to illustrate the principles of composition. Part III discusses presentation—the coordinated use of mind, body, voice, and language. This part has been reduced from four to three chapters, deleting some of the more obvious principles and moving other materials to Part I. Part IV applies the principles of the first three divisions to discussion, debate, and speeches for special occasions. In all four parts, the practical approach predominates. The text contains a minimum of advice and a maximum of explanation. In addition to explaining principles, the book demonstrates those principles by illustrations from speeches that have made contributions to the historical and modern fields of communication.

For permission to quote from copyrighted materials and to include numerous brief excerpts from speeches, I am grateful to the many publishers

and individuals listed in the footnotes. Several of my present and former colleagues have made valuable suggestions to this or previous editions: Dr. and Mrs. Thomas B. Abbott of the University of Florida, Dr. Bernard C. Kissel of Florida Technological University, and Professors Chloe Armstrong, Lola Walker, Gardner Gateley, George Stokes, Mary Booras, and Edna Haney of Baylor University. Two persons warrant special mention: my colleague Professor Cecil May Burke had a profound influence on the chapter on voice, and my wife Thelma was my most interested and severe critic. My son, Glenn Richard, Jr., and daughter-in-law, Carol, of Pacific Lutheran University probably had more influence than they suspected by helping me attempt to bridge the generation gap. My former and present students also helped in this respect by insisting that I cut the academic jargon and "tell it like it is." In commenting on a former edition, one student wrote: "the book is written with uncommon clarity, in terms that most freshmen can understand with reasonable effort."

Waco, Texas

Glenn R. Capp

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On July 20, 1969, President Richard M. Nixon set a new record in speech-making when he talked to an audience estimated at over 500,000,000 people and transmitted his message by electronic devices over a distance of some 250,000 miles. It may seem unlikely that you will ever talk to "man on the moon" but the occasions for communicating with your fellow man in everyday activities here on the earth are increasing daily.

Perhaps no academic discipline has received more stress nor made more advances in the past 35 years than the field of oral communication. The 1934 volume I of *Speech Monographs*, an official publication of the Speech Communication Association, lists some 1400 theses and dissertations from the beginning of graduate studies in speech (first master's

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degree in 1902 and first doctoral degree in 1922) to that date; the August, 1969, volume XXXVI of the same publication lists 2997 studies for the year 1968 alone and notes that more than 33,000 theses and dissertations have been listed in prior volumes.

Baylor University exemplifies this rapid growth. In the fall of 1934, the speech faculty consisted of one full-time and one part-time teacher of speech; 35 years later the faculty includes 17 full-time and four part-time teachers and has one of the three largest departmental faculties in the University. It ranks fifth in size among the 25 departments in the College of Arts and Sciences in the number of students taught and seventh in the number of majors.

Despite the increased occasions calling for accurate and effective communication in life situations and the rapid progress made in the training program, you are likely taking your first course in communicating orally. No doubt it will be a study unlike any you have undertaken before. How can you get off to a good start? What is the nature of the study?

As a college student you may be interested in several approaches to training in oral communication. At first you desire to learn about the principles of speech composition and presentation and to acquire skills that will make you a more effective communicator. Later you may wish to learn more about rhetorical theories—how they developed, why they sometimes conflict, and how their validity has been tested. Finally, you may be interested in conducting humanistic and experimental studies designed to add to the knowledge of the field.

This text aims at those who aspire to the first purpose—to become an accurate and effective communicator in society. You should be aware, however, that facility in oral communication requires knowledge about speech-making as well as skill in composing and presenting a speech. It requires careful study, sustained practice, and dedication to purpose. Before you begin your study of the principles involved, you should first determine what constitutes a good speech. What do you hope to accomplish by your study? How will you know if you accomplish your aims? This chapter will help you answer these questions.

First you must dispel the popular notion that speech is easy and consists of a few simple formulas for controlling an audience. You must do more than master the skills of presentation, as important as these factors may be. You must also develop yourself as an able person with a broad background of information. In short, your worth as a speaker will consist of what you know, the type of person you are, and your skill in organizing and presenting your ideas.

Where do we get our standards for good speaking? Perhaps no absolute rules for good speaking exist which can turn all persons into standard speakers. Would not speaking be tiring if all speakers did everything exactly the

same way? All principles must allow for individual differences. We cannot say that there is only one way to make speeches. There may be many equally acceptable ways.

Although no formal rules prevail, certain general principles have evolved during the two thousand years the subject has been taught—some based upon empirical data and some derived from experimental studies.

These principles include a body of information and skills which can be learned and which will help you develop your potential ability as a speaker. The principles come primarily from two sources: (1) the rhetoricians—those teachers and writers of oral communication since the Classical period who have set forth their findings and practices; (2) outstanding speakers—those who have used speech effectively throughout history. A brief insight into the contributions of these two groups will assist you in understanding what constitutes good speaking.

what the rhetoricians say

The Classical rhetoricians come to our rescue when we attempt to characterize a good speech. Although these men wrote over two thousand years ago, much of what they said forms the basis of modern-day speech. A review of their writings gives us at least four different, and sometimes conflicting, concepts of what good speech should do.

the sophist theory

The early Greek Sophists had their beginning in Sicily about 465 B.C., when Corax and his pupil Tisias first set down a system of rhetoric. The occasion grew out of legal disputes, primarily over land titles, for law trials had become public spectacles. Juries consisted of at least five hundred and one persons, and litigants pleaded their own cases. There were also numerous opportunities for speaking on public issues. Public measures were decided at town meetings open to adult male citizens, all of whom had the right to be heard, and much depended upon the effectiveness of their speaking. With this emphasis on competition of ideas, can you doubt that speech training became popular?

The Sophists advocated effecting persuasion by any means available. To them the ends justified the means; they cared little about the ethics of the speaker. Consequently, they taught methods that might easily deceive. In short, they taught questionable practices and measured the success of their speaking by the results obtained.

Measured by this standard alone, public speaking can be vicious. A

speaker could be successful by complying with the prejudices of an audience, by avoiding the issue, or by simply getting an audible reaction from his hearers. He might even be declared successful in spite of the invalidity of his material if he succeeded in deceiving.

As unethical as this theory appears, some of this doctrine persists today. Some textbooks on speech and many public-speaking courses deal solely with "how to be effective," with little concern about the ethics of the speaker or the value of what he has to say. Ministers occasionally measure their success by how many people come forward at the invitation, without questioning the methods used to create an emotional state conducive to impulsive action. Lawyers may go on emotional tirades designed to conceal rather than to reveal the real facts of the case. Politicians sometimes skillfully comply with the prejudices of their listeners to get their votes. Some speakers attempt to rush their audiences to thoughtless decisions. These speakers say, in essence, "The results are tangible; therefore, the speaking must be effective." The Sophists said the same thing over two thousand years ago, and the belief is just as questionable today as it was then.

the "knowledge is eloquence" theory

Plato, 429-327 B.C., was the chief exponent of the theory which states that knowledge per se makes for eloquence. It regards formal training in oral rhetoric as unnecessary. Plato argued in part that knowledge brings eloquence automatically, that eloquence is implicit in knowledge.

Much of Plato's writings on rhetoric attempted to expose the Sophists. Most modern rhetoricians believe that he overstated his case in his zeal to expose the hypocrisy of the Sophists. The importance of subject matter seems apparent; it may be termed the requirement from which all others spring. That knowledge does not constitute the only requirement seems equally apparent. Many intelligent men fail to communicate their ideas and feelings because they do not analyze their audiences properly, speak so that they may be heard, or arrange their ideas so that they may be understood.

Recently a physician delivered the commencement speech at a university. His knowledge of medicine and his maturity of judgment were unquestioned, but he read his speech poorly, mumbled his words in a low tone, and rarely looked up from his manuscript. In five minutes he lost his audience, yet he droned on for forty. Many persons expressed regret about the choice of speaker; however, an experienced teacher of speech, reading the speech at a later date, labeled it an outstanding written address. The fault lay in the speaker, not in the speech. He simply could not express himself orally. In short, knowledge of subject matter is essential, but it is not the only requirement for successful speaking.