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# Audience Message Speaker

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Edition

John Hasling

# THE AUDIENCE, THE MESSAGE, THE SPEAKER

EDITION

JOHN HASLING
Professor Emeritus
Foothill College





#### THE AUDIENCE, THE MESSAGE, THE SPEAKER

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## THE AUDIENCE, THE MESSAGE, THE SPEAKER

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

John (Jack) Hasling has retired after teaching speech communication for 27 years at Foothill College in Los Altos Hills, California. As Professor Emeritus he continues to be involved in campus activities and teaches a course occasionally. His recent interest is in children's literature, and this year his first collection of stories was published. He travels and lectures on a theme stressing the importance of reading out loud to children.

Jack Hasling received his M.A. from Sacramento State University in 1963, where he later became a lecturer in speech and coach of the debate team. In 1966 he accepted a position at Foothill College and taught there until his retirement. His primary area of expertise has always been public address, but he has also taught courses in group discussion, interpersonal communication, and radio broadcasting. In his earlier years he worked as an announcer and engineer at several Northern California radio stations. In 1980 he published a book with McGraw-Hill entitled *Fundamentals of Radio Broadcasting*.

In addition to teaching, Jack Hasling has been actively involved in faculty affairs at the state and local levels. He served as chairperson of the Foothill College Improvement of Instruction Committee, and later as president of the Academic Senate. He is a former member of the Commission on Instruction for the California Association of Community Colleges and is a charter member of the Bay Area Speech Teachers Association. He has also served as parliamentarian at several conventions of the California State Academic Senate.

## PHOTO CREDITS

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## **PREFACE**

When I wrote the first edition of this textbook in 1971, my tools were a manual portable typewriter, scissors, paste, and white-out. I did not have access to duplicating equipment, so I sent my only copy of the manuscript to McGraw-Hill through the mail. I shudder when I think of how primitive our facilities were in those days, and I wonder how we ever got along without the word processor, copy machine, fax, e-mail, and the Internet. I reflect upon this bit of nostal-gia because my intent is to have the 6th edition of *The Audience*, *The Message*, *The Speaker* be a vehicle for transporting the classical concepts of rhetoric into the twenty-first century.

Technology is not all that has changed in the past 27 years. We have significantly expanded our awareness of social behavior in a pluralistic society, and we have a greater understanding and appreciation for the role the listener plays in the communication process. This new edition, therefore, brings the textbook up to speed in three areas of consideration: computerized access to information in databases and on the World Wide Web, challenges and opportunities in relating to a culturally diverse audience, and the responsibility of listeners to fill

their share of gaps in communication.

#### Computer Access to Information

One of the first things I had to learn when I began writing the 6th edition was how to footnote information acquired on the Internet. Actually, there was a good deal of catching up that I had to do in matters pertaining to computer access of information, and the process of doing that helped me to empathize with the struggles and frustrations that I knew students would be experiencing. There is a wealth of data that comes to us on a cathode ray tube, but learning the procedure is slow, crashes are frequent, downtime is lengthy, and computer availability is limited. For these reasons I did not drop from the new edition the methods of using the *Reader's Guide to Periodical Literature* and the other bound indexes and reference books.

Certainly the World Wide Web is a useful tool for research, and I want to encourage students to use it. But at the same time I want them to be discerning about the *quality* of the information they find. In Chapter 5 I express my concern that much of the data, interpretations, and viewpoints that are put on the Web may not have gone through the kind of editing process that is required for articles to appear in professional journals. Students who are serious about their education, their ethical standards, and their personal credibility should be aware of this limitation and not let their confidence in electronic wizardry short-circuit their critical judgment.

What has not changed in this edition is the emphasis placed on the need for the content of a speech to be substantive. Whether information is displayed on a computer screen or on a printed page, the student must be able to recognize specific facts and know how to employ them in supporting a thesis.

#### Relating to a Pluralistic Audience

A new feature of this edition of the textbook is a chapter on the audience in a pluralistic society. The subject has been mentioned before in previous editions under the heading of "audience analysis," but it has never received the thorough treatment that I believe it should have. Frankly it has been pretty much of a "hot potato" that many of us in the field of communication have been reluctant to touch. We know that cultural differences can profoundly affect the way an audience may react to a speech, but we have hesitated to say anything about it for fear of offending someone. Furthermore, we may not really be sure what to recommend, or how to advise a student to deal with a situation that involves addressing an audience when ethnic background might affect the reception of the message. Consequently, mistakes that could be avoided are made inadvertently by speakers.

The position I have taken comes from Aristotle's teachings that "the central task for the speaker is to find or make common ground with the audience." That may have been less difficult at a time when the audience consisted of 500 Greek citizens rather than a television audience of millions of people from hundreds of different cultures. Nevertheless, I believe that Aristotle would stick by that principle even in this time and place. To find the common ground is to find that which is reasonable. To exacerbate differences by exploiting the human weaknesses of hate, revenge, envy, and greed is to follow the path of demagoguery. By seeking the common ground of reason, it is possible for the speaker to gain respect, if not agreement, from everyone in the audience regardless of race, sex, religion, or cultural origin.

Of course, it is much easier to make generalizations than to be specific. There are some questions that do not have clear answers. For example, how do you find common ground with people whose perspective on racism—based upon their own personal experiences—is fundamentally different from your own? Is it likely that what you say in your speech is going to affect their thinking? I suggest that in such a case making forceful assertions from the podium may not be the best approach. To increase the rhetorical pressure when the opposition is rooted in emotional conviction can only make matters worse. The issue might be addressed more productively in small groups on an interpersonal basis, and not from the stance of what Teddy Roosevelt used to call "the bully pulpit."

#### Listening and Reacting

In previous editions of this text, emphasis has been placed on the efforts a speaker can make to overcome the careless listening habits of people in the audience. That emphasis is still there, but a chapter has been added in the 6th edition that calls attention to the responsibilities of the receiver of the message. What I

have attempted to do is expand the scope of the text so that the whole issue of oral communication in a public setting is examined. Making the point that listening is active behavior is very much a part of public address as well as of interpersonal communication. We know that unfortunate social consequences can result when people who need to act on the information they hear "tune out" when they should be focused on the subject at hand. One clear example is that of a court trial when the life and property of a defendant rests on the attentiveness of the jury. My hope is that Chapter 4 will prepare students, who may never have the opportunity to give a speech, to serve the democratic process as quiet but competent decision makers.

Chapter 4 has been given the title "Listening and Reacting" for the specific reason that effective listening is not passive behavior. Receivers must regard themselves as active participants in the communication process. Good listening doesn't happen accidentally; an effort is required and skills need to be employed. Furthermore, the reaction of the listener has a very real effect on the sender of the message. It's important for people in the audience to recognize the extent to which their verbal and nonverbal responses influence the speaker.

McGraw-Hill and I would like to thank the following reviewers for their thoughtful insights: Martha Einerson, University of Idaho; Dayle Hardy-Short, Northern Arizona University; Vanessa Thompson, College of West Virginia;

and Mike Ingram, Whitworth College.

This new edition of *The Audience, The Message, The Speaker* is as small as ever. The size has always worked well for me, and apparently it has for other instructors, too. As a group, those of us who teach public speaking tend to lean toward the loquacious side of the continuum, and we don't want a textbook that covers the whole field. It's better to have a little ball that we can pick up and run with. That has been my game plan for the past 27 years.

John Hasling

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## THE AUDIENCE

