

中国人讲英语丛书 主编：纪玉华

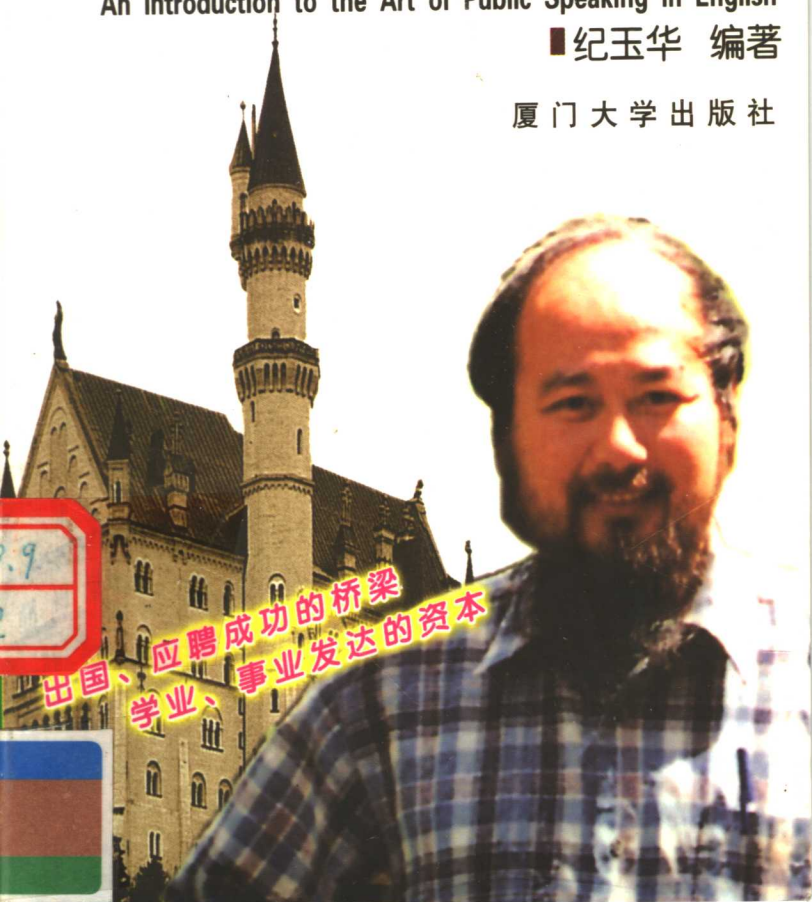
Chinese People Speak English

英语演讲艺术入门

An Introduction to the Art of Public Speaking in English

■ 纪玉华 编著

厦门大学出版社



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Foreword

This book is a companion to my *Introduction to the Art of Reading Aloud in English* (2nd edition, 2001). It was written on the basis of my 3-year experience of teaching “Public Speaking in English” at both undergraduate and postgraduate levels in the College of Foreign Languages and Cultures, Xiamen University (XMU).

I first thought of starting such a course in 1997, when I discovered that about 60% of our BA graduates and 30% of our MA graduates had difficulty speaking English in public though their ability to converse with native English speakers was far above the average. I realized that there were differences between public speaking and conversation and the differences must be made known to the graduating students and that basic knowledge and skills of public speaking in English must be explained to and practiced by them before they were plunged into the fierce waves of competition for limited challenging positions and well-paid jobs.

The importance of public speaking in English in today's China is self-evident. Just a brief look at the successful people we admire and the jobs we desire will make it clear that skilled presentation in English of

personal viewpoints before large groups of people is a prerequisite to success. "No skill offers greater possibilities for reward than the skill of public speaking" (Payne & Prentice, 1985; preface). The motivation behind starting a course in public speaking and writing a textbook for it is the belief that successful public speakers are made, not born, and that students can better their future by developing and refining their public speaking skills.

This book consists of twelve chapters. Chapters 1 ~ 3 aim at acquainting the reader with the basics of public speaking in English. Chapter 4 deals specifically with tone drills in expression, which, according to my experience, constitute an important part of basic training in public speaking. Chapters 5 ~ 9 discuss issues related to language, style, and strategies for presentation in public speaking from both the theoretical and practical perspectives. Chapters 10 ~ 12 present sample speeches for each of the three types of speech by both Chinese and foreign speakers of English.

It is hoped that this book will serve as a guide for students who are interested in improving their skills of public speaking. They are expected to part with this book much better speakers than when they first got hold of it. Nothing else will make me happier if this proves to be the case. As our ancient sage Confucius

said, "What man needs most to administer government is that his speech be correct." Indeed, if we are not able to give good speeches, failure to get good jobs is not the most serious consequence. I guess I will not sound an alarmist if I quote here what Weaver and Ness (1963: prologue) said about good speech:

"I am good speech. Were I to fail, man's intelligence would lapse to the level of the beasts', each man would dwell apart from his fellows, the structure of society would crumble, the fabric of life itself would fade, and all the processes of civilization would cease."

Finally, I feel obliged to make the following acknowledgements:

Prof. Lian Shuneng, Dean of the College of Foreign Languages and Cultures, XMU, who is supervising my study and research towards a Ph. D. degree, Prof. Yang Renjing, Director of the Institute for Research in Foreign Languages & Literature, XMU, Prof. Yang Xinzhang, Head of the English Department of XMU, and Prof. Lin Yuru, former head of the Department of Foreign Languages & Literature, have all been very supportive while I was writing, using, and revising this book. During my second revision, Prof. Xu Qichao of College of Foreign Languages & Cultures, South China Normal University, Prof. Lin Qingyang of Foreign Language

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Also, during the past three years I benefited from teaching four classes of MA students and four classes of undergraduate classes. My students gave me their feedback so that the first draft of this book was revised twice before it finally got into print. I feel obliged to them for their frank opinions and valuable suggestions.

Ji Yuhua

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September 1, 2001

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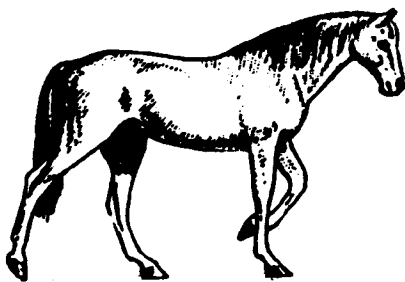
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Part One

The ABC of Public Speaking



Chapter 1

Public Speaking: What Is It

1.1 The world we live in is getting smaller and smaller. More and more people across the world are communicating with each other by means of the internet, not to speak of the telephone. In the 21st century, competition among nations is, and will be, characterized by “competition through communication and communication through competition.” As we all know, the most common kind of communication is speaking. We speak much more often than we write. We talk with our family members and friends, with our classmates and teachers, with our employers and customers, as well as with audiences in various types of meeting, formal or informal.

All of us can speak, at least in our mother tongue, but not everyone can speak well, and there is good reason to say that only a small number of us are able to speak well in front of many people, especially those whom we have never met before. Here we have come to a simple definition of public speaking. Public speaking is an act of speaking by one person to a group of people, large or small.

1.1.1 Public speaking can be examined from different points of view. For example, if we think of what a speaker does during a public speech event, we realize that public speaking consists of at least four phases: thought, language, voice and bodily action. First, the speaker has some information or thought which she/he wishes to share with other people. Second, she/he uses a language, which is understandable to her/his audience, to put her/his thought or information into words. Third, she/he uses her/his voice to send those words into the ears of her/his audience. And fourth, she/he makes gestures or moves about to make her/his audience pay more attention to and get a better understanding of her/his words. If we look at a public speech event as a whole, we realize that there are at least four factors that we need to pay special attention to: first, the speaker, who makes the speech; second, the listeners or hearers or audience, who hear the speech; third, the speech itself; and fourth, the setting or situation, that is, where and when and how the speech is made.

1.1.2 As to what a public speaker is, Woolbert (1920:3) has the following to say:

"A man speaking is four things, all of them needed in revealing his mind to others. First, he is a will, an intention, a meaning which he wishes others to have, a

thought; second, he is a user of language, molding thought and feeling into words; third, he is a thing to be heard, carrying his purpose and words to others through voice; and last, he is a thing to be seen, shown to the sight, a being of action to be noted and read through the eye. ”

1. 1. 3 Public speaking can also be defined from a sociological point of view. Murray (1994: 3 ~ 10) asserts:

“...the essence of speech is in its social aspect...the most important means of carrying on human relations. To improve speech, therefore, is to improve effectiveness in human relations...Speech is defined as a tool of social adjustment, which reflects the efficient personality, and as a psychological and sociological technique of modifying human behavior by means of body, voice, thought and language. ”

1. 1. 4 Monroe (1949: 28 ~ 29) looks at public speaking as if it were composed of a series of stimulus and response reacting to one another in a linear way.

“...an idea forms in the speaker's mind where it is translated into language symbols; reacting to impulses from the nervous system, the muscles used in speech convert these language symbols into audible speech; the sounds are carried as wave patterns in the air until they strike the eardrums of the listener; as nerve impulses,

they travel to the brain, where they again become language symbols which convey meaning to the listener's mind; the listener reacts to what he has heard; the speaker observes this reaction and responds to it."

1.1.5 Wilson and Arnold (1968:10~11) give a neat definition of public speaking as follows:

"Speech is thought conceived, transmitted, and expressed by brain, voice, and body, producing stimuli for auditors and for the speaker himself, and influencing subsequent thoughts, feelings, and actions."

1.2 Public speaking and conversation

Public speaking is different from conversation in the following aspects. Firstly, a public speech is usually directed at more listeners. In most cases you talk to more people when giving a public speech than in daily exchanges with friends. Sometimes a public speech evolves in the course of conversation. You may at first talk with one or two friends but end up talking to a large group of people who were passing by but stopped to listen to you. Secondly, public speaking is relatively uninterrupted discourse. You do most of the talking, with your audience, in most cases, asking you a few questions at the end. Thirdly, public speaking requires intensified volume of voice and bodily action. When you converse with your friends, you may sometimes get excited. You raise your voice and make movements

with your arms and hands, but they are generally not as elaborate as those of a public speaker. Fourthly, public speeches are mostly prepared ones. Impromptu speeches are rare. But when you engage in a conversation, most of the talking you do is unprepared.

1.3 Public speaking and reading aloud

Public speaking is different from reading aloud. You have probably read my book, *An Introduction to the Art of Reading Aloud in English* (2001). When you practise reading aloud the stories or speeches in that book, you may feel that not every passage I have chosen is to your taste. But you have to read them aloud, because you want to improve your oral skills. Whether or not you are happy with the material is not your primary concern. But when you give a speech, your primary concern is communication. You choose the topic you like, you choose the words and sentences that you believe will help convey your ideas to your audience. You feel you are an active user of your voice instead of a passive one, like a loudspeaker producing voices of others. Also different is the process of preparation for a reading-aloud presentation. When you have chosen or have been assigned a passage for a reading-aloud presentation, what you must do is to study the author, his/her background and the specific context within which the passage was written. Your