

Analysis of Writing Skills for University Students' English Speech Draft

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Abstract

With the rapid growth of globalization, English public speaking plays an increasingly important role in economy, politics, education, sports and many other areas. Therefore, many universities start to hold English public speaking competition to cultivate the ability of students in English public speaking. In china, there are some rather hot and popular English public competitions, such as FLTRP Cup English Speaking Contest and the CCTV Cup English Speaking Competition, which provide the stages for university students to show their English ability and the opportunities of communicating with other contestants who are fond of English as well. Finally, the chances of studying abroad provided by organizing committee serve as awards to the winners. Therefore, increasing number of students take part in the competition by online registration or promotion event in their universities. However, after attending English Public Speaking Contest several times, the author feels that students have some misunderstandings in English speech draft writing and some of them believe that English speech draft is similar to the traditional composition. To solve this problem, this essay aims to introduce the concept of prepared speech and then analyze the writing skills of university students English speech draft, including its content, structure and language of speech draft. First, the speaker needs to make clear the purpose of the speech, and arouse the interest of the audiences, and the speaker should develop the argument fully. Second, the whole structure of the speech is clear. Third, speech language should be vivid and can add some humorous elements, which helps university students have clear understanding on writing English speaking draft and then help students improve their English Public Speaking capability.

Keywords

English Public Speaking; Writing Skills; Speech Draft.

1. Introduction

One of the most notable developments in English learning in china during the past fifteen years is the explosion of interest in public speaking. English public speaking cultivates a special set of talents for Chinese college students that are of particular benefit to students in the globalized world and that will benefit them in multiple ways after they graduate from college. At the same time the speech competitions are getting underway in china's policy of reform and opening up, along with rapid economic expansion, and they are making English public speaking an increasingly valuable skill for Chinese college students as they prepare to make their way to a globalized world.

At present, there are a lot of studies on the English speech at home and abroad, such as the famous works of Carnegie's *The Art of Speech* and *The Speech Skills*. Many foreign universities offer speech class and the famous TED shares the speaker's unique and wonderful ideas in the form of speech. China pays more and more attention to the English speech too, holding a variety

of English speech contests, such as the FLTRP Cup English speech contest and CCTV Cup English speech contest. In addition, China's research in this area is fruitful, such as "English speaking class and the cultivation of talents" by Ren Wen, professor of Sichuan University, and "Problems and Countermeasures to cultivate college students' English speaking ability" by Tian Zhaoxia, the associate professor of Nanjing Normal University.

Although there are a bountiful of researches in the English speech, many students still remain confused when asked to write an English speech draft. Hence, this essay analyzes the excellent English speech draft and then summarizes some great writing skills from it and the author comes up with some useful speech writing skills. Besides, the questionnaire is still used to research which part of English speech draft is the most difficult to students. As we shall see throughout, English public speaking is intellectually challenging and it helps students develop skills of high value to their post-college careers. Therefore, grasping the writing skill of English speaking is a vital skill for university students. Hoping that this essay serves as a tool that makes students understand the way of speech writing and improve their English speech skills further.

2. The Content of English Speech Draft

In public speaking, the most important thing is the valuable idea instead of the confidence, the stage performance or fluency language in speech, which shows the significance of speech content.

2.1. The Clear Message and Purpose of Speech

Many speakers are tempted to say everything they know about topics so as to show that they have a plenty of knowledge and to prove how clever and deep thinking they are. However, a list of undeveloped ideas is useless. The audience has no time to think about one idea before the next is spoken clearly and they can't really understand what the speaker thinks or means.

A good speech has one clear message (especially true if it is a short speech) that the audience can understand it. It attempts to change people's perceptions, to provide a new or unusual way of thinking the topic. This is why it is necessary to research the topic to find interesting and relevant information. As for English Public speaking contest hold by FLTRP Cup, it gives a specific topic as usual, such as "Red star over China" (the prepared competition topic in 2021), or it provides a short video. The contestants should write a speech draft after watching the video. No matter which kind of form it is, it requires students do analysis first, research related information and then find out the most suitable aspect to talk about. The famous writer, Richard Bach, once said, the great work decided by the power of words that was deleted. It is the same to a speech. The secret of a successful speech lies in the cut content. In a word, less is more.

2.2. The Importance of Interest to the Audience

The audience is reluctant to listen to the boring content or those they have already known, because it is wasting their time. Therefore, the speaker should try to share something interesting to the audience.

2.2.1. The Choice of Meaningful Topic

It is not interesting to talk about how much you love your family since this is obvious. A large number of people in the world cherish and love their families, but if you want to arise the interests from the audience, you can talk about why people don't like their parents. However, this should be based on the enough evident and real examples that can testify your ideas. For instance, there is ever a topic for prepared speech named "The Internet". At that speech competition, many contestants spend the precious but limited time in elucidating the concept of internet. As a matter of fact, it is unnecessary to do this because the audiences, including university students and judges, have already known what it is.

2.2.2. The Way of Seeking Interests

Although the importance of interests in a speech is mentioned several times, some students still have no idea of finding interests. As usual, people are curious about the things that they never heard. In fact, the first-hand experience of speakers is very precious since it is very special to speakers. What the speaker sees is very important emotional feeling and who is the only one taste that experience. Therefore, speaker can start their speech by talking about personal experience. Many excellent speeches are based on an individual story and learned a lesson from it or find related stories to connect the topic. Have you ever noticed anything that surprises you? Can you observe the little details in live that arouse the interests of others and also are beneficial to them?

However, moralistic platitudes are useless and should be avoided such as "You should work hard and you will realize your dreams". It is self-evident and the fact is that some people's dream is unrealistic, which can't be fulfilled no matter how hard they are working. If speaker intends to use a story in the speech, the story includes the following four elements: First, there is a hero that can arouse audience's interest. Second, the story should be full of tension by motivating interests and making suspense. Third, provide proper details. Too few details make the story not vivid, but too many details are so tedious. Last but not least, the story has a satisfying result or it should be moving, interesting or enlightening.

2.3. The Adequate Development of Ideas

After decided the topic, it is time to develop the ideas, which means that the speech content should be enriched. It is much better to take one point and develop that point carefully. But how to substantiate the point is a question needed to be solved. In other words, give reasons to the topics. Analyze and think through the implications of what you are asserting, give clear reasons and examples for anything that you state, otherwise why should anyone believe you? Provide hard evidence in the form of acceptable statistics, if possible (Sue Kay 2013). But the statistics can't be overused, because too many statistics is very boring too. Besides, vivid description by using appropriate adjectives and adverbs and word pictures is a good way to develop the idea, for example, "Have you ever seen a tree that is growing plastic bags? Not a pretty sight, is it? Our urban environment need not look like a rubbish dump if everyone topped throwing their rubbish in the streets for other people to clean up or the wind to blow into the trees. Imagine if our cities were litter free. How much prettier they would look. How much healthier they would be." (Tian Zhaoxia 2013) A vivid description can help audience better understand the information that speaker conveyed.

Some speakers will give suggestions to the audience. It is not very suitable for the English public speaking contest for the speakers who are generally the university students and lack of social and life experience. Instead of telling advice to the audience, speakers can analyze the topic and explore its meaning, while in informative public speech, the authoritative experts in certain area can give suggestions to people after doing scientific researches.

3. The Structure of English Speech Draft

A clear structure is important for understanding. It is imperative to help listeners to grasp the main points of speech and to recognize the reasons of stating the points.

3.1. The Way of Making Structure Clear

Speakers can take the structure of speech as a tree. There is a main body in the middle vertically and upward and collaborated with several branches. Every branch represents a discussion to topic: a twig arranged in the bottom of the tree as an interesting opening, the up two can be used to talk about the opposite example, and take another branch telling the possible resolution

as new argumentation. In the end, the last three branches lie in the top, which is the envision to the future. In summary, the structure requires an introduction, a body and a conclusion.

The introduction should be short and interesting. A speaker often begins a speech by saying, "my topic is...and first I'm going to tell you about AA and then I'll talk about BB and finally I'll conclude by summing up my ideas about A and B." (Sue Kay 2013). This introduction is very boring in the English public contest if all of the speakers start their speech in this way. On the contrary, there are two ways that can light the opening. First, speaker can start the speech with making a few comments relating to the main topic then to develop it in the body of speech draft. Second, speaker can begin a speech with sharing a meaningful but short story. The conclusion should emphasize main argument and concisely repeat the main points and relate them back to the introduction to form a rounded structure which allows the main points to be memorable.

3.2. The Adding of Transitions and Signposts

Within the structure there must be a logical flow of words and ideas. If words are presented in complete sentences, they flow logically. Likewise, ideas in a speech will flow logically if they are presented either deductively or inductively, which means that they can be developed from the general to the specific or vice versa. NO matter which structure it is, it is imperative to make audience follow the speaker instead of rambling. In doing so, speaker can use some transitions such as "however, also, similarly, therefore, on the other hand, firstly, secondly, thirdly, a good example of this is, another point is..." Those help audience follow the speech.

Signposting is a useful way of showing audience the position of speech. For example, "I've talked about water pollution in china to testify my view of enhancing the environment awareness and now I'll tell you about the reaction from the public..." Besides, transitions can be aided to signposting.

A good speech should flow. This means that sentence should be connected with linking words and phrases, such as "therefore, because, as well as, on the other hand...", and the sentences should be related to each other. When author write a speech draft, one can ask three questions about draft: does every sentence make sense? Whether it is related to the previous and following sentences? Is there a logical development of the idea? To make speech effective, speaker must simplify all of content to a closely connected line and strive to make the structure of speech as clear as possible.

4. The Language of English Speech Draft

When writing a speech, the speaker should be aware of the language, because the language of speech draft is different from traditional compositions.

4.1. The Entertainment Language

There are two ways that can add entertainment element in the speech. The addition of those two elements can light the speech.

4.1.1. The Usage of Humor

Humor is a technical art that not all people can use this skill. But if one can use it appropriately, it will add some special flavors to the speech. The following has some suggestions: First, talking about some anecdotes that is related to the topic of the speech and the humor in it must be very natural. Actually, the best humorous come from the careful observation and then recompose it again. Second, a strong contrast between what you say and what you show can produce humorous feeling and also happy atmosphere. For example, author once saw a speech from TED. The speaker wanted to explain some information about human's brain and who told the audience to pay attention to seeing PPT for it is very difficult to understand but it is also important to everyone, at this moment, the speaker showed a picture of funny monkey's

animation. Of course, everyone understood the meaning of picture, then the audience burst out laughter right away. Third, some speakers will use self-mockery to produce the effect of humor and even win the audience with hostility. Zhou Guoping says, self-mockery can be explained by looking at the self-weakness in a high position and then tolerant it. But this should be used in a suitable time.

Even for those people who are born with humor talents, some dangers still should be avoided: vulgar words, ragged verse, ridicule others, tedious and all of the humors that are connected with politic, ethnic, religious and gender. Besides, serious speech should be treated seriously. It is considered as bad manners if one makes fun of distressing situation or disadvantaged people.

4.1.2. The Usage of Word Picture

Another way to make a speech come alive and to be entertaining is the use of word picture. When a speaker describes a situation with such vivid language, the audience can believe themselves involved, to be at the described or to be able to see the situation for them. But care must be taken not to become overly sentimental or emotional. A wonderful example is given by Mr. Xia Peng, the champion of world English public speech. "Thank you, ladies and gentleman, my topic today is 'walls and bridges'. I am studying in a city famous for its city walls. All visitors to my city are amazed by the imposing sighting of the city walls, silhouetted by the setting sun with gold and shining lines. With old cracked bricked patched with lichen, the walls are weather-beaten guards, standing still for centuries in protecting the cities". This description is very vivid, which seems that the bridges appear in front of the audiences and judges who can see the beautiful picture.

4.2. The Quotations and Idioms

The use of quotation, idioms and proverbs is to color and help explain the meanings. First, they must be relevant to the topic, which has just been said and is about to be said. It is pointless to inject "time is money" into a speech about economic development unless the relevance is explained. The speaker needs to illustrate the reasons. Second, quotations must be used correctly, which requires the knowledge of the original meaning and context. This may also require research in order to check. For example, "To be or not to be, that is the question." This comes from Shakespeare's Hamlet where the prince is debating with himself about the meaning of "existence" and questioning whether it is better to live an unhappy life or to end it by committing suicide. Therefore, it is a serious issue and should not be treated lightly. Third, speaker should not overuse the idioms, proverbs and quotations. There is no room for more than 1 or 2 in a 3-minute speech. Fourth, use idioms or quotations that are less well-known. In English public speaking contest, many speakers like to use the proverbs of "every coin has two sides". This is very tiresome for the audiences who have heard many times. Another example is author's personal experience: in 2014, author attended the FLTRP Cup English Public Speaking Contest in Sichuan University. Because author was the 13th contestant, one finished speech very soon and then back to the spectator seats. Seeing over the next 60 contestants, author found that nearly the six of them has quoted the same words from Obama. Think about the feeling of judges and audiences. So, all these should be considered into speech when speaker writes the draft.

4.3. The Appropriate Language

A successful speech draft not only composed of interesting contents, but also appropriate language. How to use appropriate language in the speech?

First, audience is very important for speaker. Before making a speech, speaker should try to know the types of audience. Are they university students or the general public or the experts in some area? Speaker needs to adjust the language according to the audience. For example, if the audiences are the general public, it is better for a speaker to choose more plain and simple

words. The former president, Barack Obama, is a good example of that, who knows how to communicate with the audience very well.

Second, try to use some rhetorical devices, such as repetition, analogy, parallelism, metaphor. An example is selected from the Barack Obama's Victory Speech: Change Has Come to America. "If there is anyone out there who still doubts that America is a place where all things are possible, who still wonders if the dream of our founders is alive in our time, who still questions the power of our democracy, tonight is your answer". This is a very good beginning of the speech by using parallelism, enhancing the momentum of the speech.

Third, in a prepared speech, there is no excuse for ungrammatical language since there is a plenty of time to check and to practice. For instance, "knowledge" not "knowledges"; and "here comes my reason" is Chinglish. It looks careless if grammar and pronunciation are incorrect as the speaker has had time to check and to practice. The judges will pay much attention to the correctness of grammar in a speech in English public speaking contest, especially the Chinese judges who believe that university students should not make mistakes in grammar. Hence, check the speech draft after writing over the speech draft, and one can even invite teachers or reliable friends to recheck it again.

Fourth, the goal of writing speech draft is to speak it out, so how about the sound of language still plays an important role in a good speech. All of the great speaker are great composer of music, who fascinates the audience with the sounds of language and it's rhythm and beats, and the prosody in general. Ideas are anchored in the sounds of language. The perfect symmetry and harmonious balance which are often realized by echoes of sounds and comparison and contrast in content, are especially appealing to the ear. (Sue Kay 2013)

5. The Usage of Writing Skills in a Case

After knowing some writing skills of English Speech Draft, an excellent speech is shared to show the usage of some of those skills. This speech was made by Wang Liansi, a student of Hunan University, who was the champion of CCTV Cup English public speech. The following is her prepared speech:

Ladies and gentlemen,

I grew up in a city by the Yangtze River where water never poses a subject of any great moment. The abundant water resource is like a cozy cradle, breeding me, raising me and blessing me, and it frees me from any concern for water shortage. However, during my stay in Sydney this summer, some trifles challenged the thoughts and ideas that dwelled in my mind.

The initial discipline of the hostess was somewhat startling. "Shower should take no more than ten minutes". What? Isn't Australia one of the richest countries in the world? Since when did water become a luxury? But when in Rome, I was supposed to do as the Romans. Meanwhile, what equally intrigued me was that she never used the washing machine unless she had collected a full barrel of dirty laundry. And I was left with no choice but to take on challenges and adapt to changes. The moment bits and pieces of challenges to my old lifestyle tricked in, part and parcel of pictures of water shortage flooded in: Australia is the driest inhabited continent on earth; over 80 countries suffer water shortage that threatens health and economy; and 40 percent of the world's population still has no access to clean water or safe sanitation.

To someone from a place never inflated with water problems, the challenges I came across are far from delightful, while the changes I've made are far from painful. Michael Staley once said, "There is no challenge more challenging than the challenge to improve yourself". By adjusting myself from brawn to brain, by reshaping myself from slow to sure, I should be glad to take on my challenges far and away.

Thank you!

This speech is really impressive in terms of the content, language and delivery. It embodies some skills talked above, from which what makes an effective speech can be learned. The topic given to the speaker is "Global citizenship begins at home". Confronting this topic, most speakers choose to tell, or argue or reason what global citizenship is and why it should begin at home. The consequence is that the audiences gradually get bored with repeated yet superficial and quite vague concepts of global citizenship. As the competition proceeds, the judges as well as the audience begin to yearn for something new and fresh. So, where do new and fresh ideas come from?

The first tip we get from the speech is that fresh ideas come from a specific example, her personal story. With no mention of any theory, the speaker shows (instead of telling or arguing with) us by relating her personal experience in Australia how a global citizen develops her citizenship at home and how this citizenship goes beyond the boundaries of countries. Small episodes of shower and laundry in daily life give rise to deep thinking of what responsibility a global citizenship should take in face of water shortage in the world. In the end, she realizes that "the challenges I came across are far from delightful, while the changes I've made are far from painful". Up till now, she has not persuaded anyone of the notion "Global citizenship begins at home". On the country, she herself has been persuaded and the change is delightful. A great persuader does not try to persuade others. She persuades herself first. This is the second tip we learn. The third tip given here is how trifles, short moments of everyday life present a miniature of the whole world. Think about where profound and lofty ideas derive from in this speech. All these can't leave her careful observation, she can grasp the trifles of taking shower and even washing clothes, from which she sees a shortage of water in the world. Apart from that, try to feel the melody of language: "The abundant water resources is like a cozy cradle, breeding me, raising me and blessing me..." It sounds comfortable and attractive.

6. Conclusion

Above all, public speaking is an act of communication, not a performance or a recital. The best speakers are those who communicate most effectively with listeners. When presenting a speech, speakers need to focus on communicating their ideas clearly and convincingly. Speakers have to think strategically in light of some major factors: the resources of content, language, structure, and delivery available to every speaker. The first three factors should be done in the prepared speech, which should be written before it is delivered. This allows speakers to ensure that they are making relevant and sensible comments in a logical order and using appropriate language. Although many students know what they should do when they write a speech, they have no idea about how they can do it in detail. This essay analyses part of writing skills of English speech draft by giving examples and learning from excellent speech in order to help students confused about writing speech. Whilst this essay introduces some English public speaking skills for university students who strive to enjoy English Public Speaking contest, it can still help people prepare their speech draft when they confront with other kinds of speeches.

In fact, even if there are some successful models for the speech at a specific time, this model will not endure very long, because the enchantment of a great speech lies in its original and fresh presentation. No one likes cliches. Provided that each speech is similar to the other people's speech, then the influence of this speech may not be as good as the expected. What the audience are most reluctant to see is that all speeches nearly seem the same or everyone imitates other people's speech. Therefore, the skills analyzed in this essay can't be treated as the panacea of speech, which should be considered as a tool that can inspire creativity.

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