

Critical Appraisal of Effective Speech Delivery in Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

People fulfill a variety of needs through communication and effective communication can provide considerable pleasure. A stimulating conversation, participation in a group discussion that leads to solving a problem, a persuasive speech that moves the audience to take action is instances of successful communication. Communication is vital in all areas of human lives, to persuade, to influence relationships, to inform, to share, to discover and uncover information. To live is to communicate. To communicate effectively is to enjoy life more fully. Communication is any process in which people share information, ideas and feelings. That process involves not only the spoken and written word but also body language, personal mannerisms, and style, the surroundings – anything that adds meaning to a message. This review attempts a critical appraisal to effective speech delivery in terms of the communication process, skills involved in speech preparation, quality of effective speech delivery, mode of speech delivery and relevance of body language in speech communication.

Keywords: *Communication, Speech delivery, effective speech, skills*

INTRODUCTION

Communicating is simply talking or exchanging some type of message. While message exchange is part of communication, there is more to that. People engage in one form of communication or the other daily, yet it is increasingly difficult for scholars to agree on common definition of the concept. Communication indeed, is a complex activity that has many definitions as there are scholars in the field. However, what is not contestable is the fact that communication is crucial to human existence. The term communication is derived from the Latin word *communis*. This means common or communicate (to share).

For communication to exist, at least two activities must take place. The first is the actual transmission of the message from the sender to the receiver. The sender transmits his message to the target receiver. This communication does not end here until the receiver has successfully interpreted the sender's message. Communication is characterized by the mutual exchange of meanings between the sender and receiver. It is the mutual process through which messages are transmitted and interpreted within an individual or between two or more people. It is the act, process or means through which information, people, ideas or concepts are exchanged within an individual or from one party to another, in such a manner that both parties understand the message accurately. Speech communication refers to the ability to convey verbal

messages to people in a carefully organized and convincing manner. However, for speech communication to be effective, it must possess the quality of understanding. According to Afinotan (2009), effective communication is basically the process of passing information and understanding from one person to another. Effective speech delivery is not an exception here. This is also called public speech making. One may be faced with the challenge of presenting a speech before a group of people in a face-to-face situation, on any given topic. The listeners will assess his personality and capability based on the confidence he exhibits and ability to convince them to appreciate the logic behind his view or perception. Successful speech making is often the product of adequate research, planning and understanding of the techniques of influencing people effectively. The ability to speak or communicate effectively determines, to a great extent, one's professional advancement. This is an exercise where his ability and credibility is assessed purely from his comportment and speaking skills. The ability to communicate verbally with colleagues also determines his self-esteem and status among his peer group and within the organization. Therefore, this study is a critical review to effective speech delivery in Nigeria. The aims are to assess:

1. The skills involved in speech delivery
2. The qualities of effective speech delivery
3. The mode of speech delivery
4. The relevance of body language in speech communication

THE COMMUNICATION PROCESS

Communication as a process means an ongoing activity. It has no clear beginning or ending. When one opens his mouth to begin a speech, that point is not the speech beginning point. All the thought, preparation and practice that precede the actual performance are part of the communication process. When a speech is ended, communication does not end. The audience talks about it, and one reflects on what happened. A process is ongoing and communication is a process.

The communication process also involves sending and receiving messages. When a speaker sends a message during a speech, at the same time is receiving information (by way of reaction) from the audience in the form of facial expressions, nods or applause. The audience's reactions should affect how the speaker delivers the rest of the speech. To give a message between speaker and audience suggests another important characteristic of a process: all the parts are interrelated. One part affects the others and is affected by the others. For instance, in a public speaking situation, the people who make up the audience affect the speaker's choice and treatment of the topic. The speaker's words then have an impact on the audience. The way in which the audience reacts to the message triggers a response in the speaker, who may or may not adjust the message, depending upon the audience's responses.

SKILLS INVOLVED IN SPEECH PREPARATION

Many people do select a topic for a speech – the topic develops from the work they are doing, the hobbies they are pursuing or the interests that engage them. People are often asked to speak on their area of expertise but the specific topic is left up to them. If one wants to talk about a social issue such as crime, racial equality or educational reform, he will discover so much relevant material that cannot be covered in a single speech. If one tries to cover the entire topic, his treatment would have to be so superficial that the speech would not be meaningful. If one wants to speak on the subject of education for example, this should be divided into different sub-sections. Do you want to talk about primary, secondary or tertiary education? If you choose tertiary education, there are still many possibilities. Do you want to talk about how students learn? About curriculum? About interactive learning? About learning via computers? Narrowing a topic is the process of finding the specific aspect of a subject that will best meet the time restraints and other demands of the speaking situation, Hybels and Weaver (1992). The process of packaging a good speech could be divided into four logical steps; identifying the purpose, audience analysis, research and organizing the speech.

Identifying the Purpose: Every speech has its aim, purpose or reason for which it is delivered. Having this purpose in mind is very much like planning, knowing where you are going. The advantage is that it helps the communicator to look for materials, organize and outline his speech and adapt the speech to the needs and interest of his audience. The general purpose of a speech should tell whether the communicator intends to inform or persuade. Informative speeches generally concentrate on explaining – telling how something works, what something means or who to do something. A good speaker gives the audience information without taking sides. For example, if a speaker is giving an informative speech about using rabbits for research, he will not state whether he is for or against doing so, he will let members of the audience make up their own minds after laying bare the facts along with the advantages and disadvantages. The speaker has to keep close to the listening span of the identified audience of 15 minutes for the adults and seven minutes for children. Anecdotes, word pictures, proverbs, imageries are the oil that words are eaten. In a persuasive speech, the speaker takes a particular position and tries to get the audience to accept and support that position. For example, a speaker tries to persuade her audience that they should support 2020 of the present administration. The speaker now concentrates on looking for the best information available to support his point of view. The audience has certain expectations from the speaker. It expects that the speaker is knowledgeable about his topic and present it in an interesting way. A speaker is competent not only because he knows his subject but also because he knows his audience. Hybels and Weaver (2001) explain audience analysis as the process of finding out what the members of the audience already know about the subject they might be interested in, what their attitude and beliefs are, and what kind of people make up the audience.

Audience Analysis: A communicator need consider the audience's attitudes and belief about the subject under discourse. Sometimes one speaks before an audience that share one's belief. For example, speaking before a social club or church. The marketing club will be interested in learning from local sales representative who has surpassed all previous sales records. But sometimes the listeners may not have any particular attitudes or beliefs about the subject nor have enough information to make up their minds or they may not care enough to have an opinion. The latter will be difficult to deal with and to appeal to an indifferent audience; one has to try especially hard to make the listeners feel that the speech has relevance and importance to them. Sometimes the speaker's beliefs are contrary to those of the audience and the speech may be met with hostility. If the audience opposes the ideas on a subject, the speaker has to plan his speech carefully. Since people's attitude and beliefs affect how speech is received, it is absolutely essential to consider when a speech is in the planning stage. People's attitude and beliefs can be discovered through audience demographics. Demographic analysis reveals data about the characteristics of group of people including age, sex, education, occupation, race/nationality/ethnic origin, geographic location and group affiliation.

As a speaker, one needs to have a sense of the age range of the audience because interests differ with age. Students are usually interested in school, future jobs, music and interpersonal relationships. Young parents are often interested in subject that might affect their children such as school bus safety and parent-teacher association policy. Middle-aged people tend to focus on their jobs while adults are interested in issues related to leisure activities and health. However, not all subjects are age-related. Computers, elections, world and national news have interest for most age groups because they affect everyone. Sometimes the same subject can be of interest to various age groups if it is adapted to each group's particular concerns, for example the subject on nutrition. To pregnant women the speech could be adapted to the needs of the fetus assuming that every mother-to-be has a high interest in having a healthy baby. To older adults, it could be about their particular nutritional needs such as the importance of calcium to avoid bone deterioration.

A speech that is open to the public has both men and women in the audience and gender audience member is important. A speaker has to avoid a "command language" and also be sensitive and responsive to the gender issue. If a speech is delivered to a mixed audience but does not acknowledge the presence and appeal to the needs of both genders, not only will he miss the mark but his speech may even seem sexist and inappropriate. The audience's level of education is important to a speaker because it gives some idea of the group's knowledge and experience. It is assumed that the more education people have, the specialized their knowledge are lawyers, medical doctors and doctorate degree holder (Ph.D) all have specialized knowledge; however might have little information about subjects other than their own. The main consideration when preparing a speech is whether the audience has the same knowledge the speaker has to start with the basics. For example if biology

major wants to talk on homeostasis and morphology, he should not assume that the speech class should know the terms. Although people might have general idea of what these words mean, they might not know their precise scientific definitions. The occupation of audience may influence the approach to some topics. Occupation may indicate an area of specialized knowledge; paramedics and nurses know about the human body; lawyers know about the legal rights, social workers know about social problems. Occupation can also indicate interest in a subject. Most professional groups would probably be interested in a speech about ethics in their profession. A speaker to an occupational group should try and adapt his speech to that audience's job interest. Politicians speak to whole audience made up of a single or many ethnic group. A speaker to a group with members from diverse backgrounds should be partially careful in the use of language. If the audience includes foreigners, they may have problems understanding slang and colloquial expressions. A speaker cannot reduce all cultures or even one culture to a single type. He needs to be sensitive and responsive to diverse audience. The more information and knowledge he has about his listeners the better he specifically adapt his speech to the needs of those audience members.

The audience's geographic location may affect the content and approach of the speech. If the federal government is giving money to improve health to the local hospital, find out if some of this money is coming to the local hospital. If the nation has been hit with a crime wave (or heat wave), has this been a problem in your local area? If a speaker has a chance to speak in a town or city other than his own, the audience will be pleased if he knows something about its area. Knowing the clubs, organizations that audience members belong to can be useful because people usually identify with the goals and aspirations of their organizations. A speaker to the group should be aware of what it stands for and adapt his speech accordingly. The Nigerian Union of Journalist (NUJ) will be interested in the speech dealing with the theory (freedom of the press) or practice. Some groups have particular issue or themes for the year and they look for speakers who can tie their speeches into these themes.

Research: Once a topic has been decided and the specific purpose of the speech, it is time to begin looking for useful information. The four most common sources one can draw relevant materials are personal experience and observation, printed materials from the library, journals, computer databases and interviews. If a speaker chooses a topic in which he has strong interest, the first thing to ask is whether he has any direct experience with the subject. One's experience can provide interesting and valuable material. For example if a speaker speaks on the danger of drunken drivers and gives facts and figures: how many innocent victims are killed each year by drunks on the road. He may stun his audience by telling them that his brother may be one of those victims. Because the speaker draws his example from personal experience, it becomes much more vivid than it would have been if he had used

only statistics from a book or an article. The influence computers have in our lives is hard to miss and they have greatly changed the methods of research as well. The internet is a group of networks connected to each other. The internet provides its users with thousands of online databases – collections of information that can be read on a computer screen – and libraries of images, sounds, computer programs, books and animation. The free information available over the internet is staggering. That a small sampling of the service available include medical libraries, legal libraries, public domain software libraries, world weather information and the database that might be useful to the speaker. The internet is a giant library of resources.

There is still a major gap in the information one needs to know and bridging the gap involves the use of computer databases. A computer database is simply a collection of items of information organized for easy access via computer. Because of the popularity of computers, most people think of databases in reference to the computer alone; however, there are many different types. Library card catalogues, dictionaries, encyclopedias and telephone books are forms of databases. On the computer, the two common types of databases are citation databases and full-text databases. One advantage of the internet is that it provides contact with authorities and others around the world on 24 hour basis. Using interest groups such as mailing lists, news groups, live chat groups and web forums, one can ask people questions, share ideas, sound off and just plain converse with others on almost any topic imaginable. Since the internet is not limited by geography or time constraints, one can post a question and receive an answer from anywhere in the world in less time than it will take to get the answer from a book, from a face to face with an authority of another source. When accessing information from the internet, one needs to be aware of the precautions that something is on the internet does not make it credible, valid or worthwhile.

Just as in any library there is plenty of bad information as well. In order to gather high quality material, one must pursue answers to the following questions: What is the source of the information? Did the information come from an academic, government or commercial site? Who sponsors the site, who manages it and what are their credentials? How up to date is the site? Has it been updated recently? The most recent date must be clearly listed somewhere on the site. What is the purpose of the organization sponsoring the document or information? Is the information presented objectively or does it represent the biases of its author? Is the information and the site confirmed by information at other sites? One way of confirming that information is sound is to find it repeated at a number of different web sites or in other sources. Think clearly about the web site one has chosen and the information found there. Interviews can be an excellent source of speech and material because one can talk directly to decision makers. Interviews are also a good means of getting up-to-date information from experts, for example, if a religious crisis breaks out in Plateau State, one can interview a person who is knowledgeable in this area. In addition, if the subject is complicated one can ask questions about points he

does not understand. The library can be a rich source of material and any library whether large or small has millions of pieces of information in essentially the same way so when one learns how to use one library, one can use this skill in any library. Today however most library resources can be found on the internet. Articles from periodicals include magazines, journals and newspapers have some of the latest information on a subject and are often used as source material for speeches. Since hundreds of thousands of magazines and journal articles are published every year, an index is needed to find particular articles. Some databases also have abstracts which are summaries of the articles. An abstract provides enough information about an article to decide whether it is worthwhile to locate the entire thing.

Most libraries have local newspapers, papers from around the state and a few of the important national newspapers. Most are available online. The national newspapers deal comprehensively with international and national issues while local papers cover information of importance to the particular area. With computers and the availability of online electronic newspapers, most people have access to a variety of large scale newspapers. Encyclopedias are an important part of any library's reference collection and most libraries have several different sets. Encyclopedias contain short articles written by experts and they are a very good way to get basic information on a subject one does not know much about. They work best as a starting point. Once the basic knowledge is gotten, one can do further research in other sources.

Organizing the Speech: When organizing a speech is distinguished between main points and minor points. This makes the speech flow more naturally and logical to the listeners. The main points are all the broad, general ideas and information that supports the central idea; the minor points are the specific ideas and information that support the main points. The main points could be arranged according to: time order, spatial order, cause-and-effect order, problem solution, motivated sequence and topical order. Time order or chronological order is used to show development over time. This pattern works well in a historical approach. For example, in a speech about what to do if one is a victim of crime, the speaker arranges her points in chronological order. Time order is used to explain a process. Spatial order refers to a physical or geographical layout to help the audience see how the parts make up the whole. To help the audience visualize the subject, explanation should be from left to right or from top to bottom or in any direction that best suits the subject.

Spatial order makes particular sense when the speech to use is on a chart or diagram. When using a verbal support, the speaker naturally moves from top to bottom or from left to right. A speaker who uses cause-and-effect method divides a speech into two major parts cause (why something is happening). Example the issues of child labour in the society. A speaker does not have to start with the cause and end with the effect. On the above speech, the speaker could start with the positive and negative effect of child labour and ends by showing how all these

situations came about. If one is using a cause-and-effect order, begin with the aspect most likely to capture the audience's attention.

QUALITIES OF EFFECTIVE SPEECH DELIVERY

There are two basic functions of speech introduction: to arouse the interest of your listeners and to establish your credibility (Osborn M. and Osborn S., 1991). There are a number of ways to attract, build and hold the interest of the audience. These include asking the rhetorical questions, beginning with a quotation, telling a story, involving the audience, building suspense, relating your subject to personal experience and shocking and startling the audience.

Rhetorical Question: A rhetorical question which needs no immediate answer attempts to arouse curiosity. A speaker may open her speech on the use of safety belts by asking the audience: how would you like to have your name in the radio? Don't wear your seat belt while you are riding in your car. One has a greater chance of being killed if one does not wear safety belt. This rhetorical question provides a provocative opening. The listener's first reaction is to think that they would like to have their names in the radio – we all enjoy recognition. However, their positive response will quickly change as they realize the circumstances under which their names will appear.

Beginning with quotation: Starting a speech with a striking quotation or paraphrase from a well known person or respected authority both arouses interest and gives one some borrowed ethos:

*Cowards die many times before their death
The valiant never tastes of death but once (Julius Ceasar).*

Story Telling: Telling a story helps capture a listener's attention and depicts a problem in vivid terms. A speaker may introduce the issue of polygamy with the following story: "Once upon a time, there lived a man that married seven wives and had hundred children. The problem was how to satisfy these women and feed the family..."

Involving the audience: One of the most frequently used of involvement techniques is complementing the audience. People like to hear good things about themselves and the community. In 2008, Barrack Obama delivered his acceptance speech at Illinois, Chicago, his remarks included this statement:

*"...and to you Mitchell Obama who has been my friend for sixteen years, the rock of my family and the love of my life...
To you my children, I love you more than ever, and you deserve a new puppy to the White House..."*

With this elegant recognition, Obama was able to pay homage to his family without embarrassing them or going overboard with praise.

Building suspense: Anything truly unusual draws attention to itself and arouses curiosity. Consider the headlines from the sensational newspaper: “**Aids Has No Cure!**”, “**A Mother of Six Has Just Delivered Octuplets!**”, “**Plateau Crisis Rendered Thousands Homeless!**”

When using this technique, one must be sure not to go beyond the bounds of propriety. The speaker wants to startle the listeners and not offend them.

Relating your subject to personal experience

A good conclusion should tie a speech together and give the audience the feeling that the speech is complete. A condition should signal the end of the speech and one could say “the last thing I would like to say . . .” Or “finally”. A quotation that fits the subject is a good place to use it. It gives added authority to everything on has said and often helps sum up the main ideas. In his speech to persuade the audience to take action against the plotters of Caesar’s assassination:

*I came to bury Caesar and not to praise him
The evil that men do live after them
The good is oft interred with their bones
So let it be with Caesar... (Julius Caesar)*

Shocking and startling the audience: When a speech is a persuasive one, the goal is often to inspire the audience to some course of action. In President Obama’s speech to congress at the White House a week after signing into law the Economic Stimulus Plan (Bailout) of \$785b, the following was stated;

“...The economic meltdown is global and real. But we shall recover, rebuild and come out stronger than ever before.”

Obama was given a standing and thunderous ovation by his audience by instilling confidence in the people.

MODES OF SPEECH DELIVERY

Good speakers present speeches that have fluency, that flow without unnecessary interruption as observed by Carlin and Payne (1995). The final part of the speech process is selecting delivery format that best suites the needs of the audience; the situation and the speaker. There are four modes of speech delivery, memorized, scripted or manuscript, impromptu and extemporaneous.

Memorized speech: This requires preparing a manuscript and presenting it from memory. Two situations that call for this delivery are contest and professional speaking. The later often prepares a general speech on a topic with broad appeal such has motivation or how to be successful. He gives the speech to the audience with little or no adaptation. The advantage is that one can concentrate on movement, gestures and appealing vocal delivery. If the purpose is to entertain, a well recorded, memorized speech produces the best comic timing. A speaker has problems with physical delivery; inexperienced speaker does not know what to do with the hands.

The problem can be solved by planning gestures and movements, but the movements often look planned. Another problem is forgetting part of the speech. This can create awkward pauses and can be upsetting to beginning speakers. Here the audiences are not following along with a copy. Unless one says something as he wrote it, no one will know. The biggest disadvantage is that it is inflexible. If the audience looks confused, it is not easy to add another example. If they react negatively to an idea, it is difficult if not impossible to adapt without moving away from the memorized script. One may find it difficult to return smoothly to the prepared material.

Manuscript speech: This mode of speech requires a speaker to write out every word of a speech. Public figures, business leaders and politicians use manuscripts for several reasons. They need a record of what they said, they need to make consistent public statements; they supply copies of their comments to the news media; they select language carefully and must fill a specific amount of time. However, it is difficult to write a speech that sounds natural. The spoken vocabulary is much smaller than the written one. As a result, some written words do not sound natural to the ear even though they look natural to the eye. This may also affect delivery. Often, one loses eye contact and has to look at the pages of every word. Gestures may be limited because one has to look at the pages all the time. If one loses the place during the speech, awkward pauses will mar the presentation.

Impromptu speech: This requires the least preparation. It is not rehearsed and does not involve notes or prior planning. When a teacher calls a student in class, the response is impromptu. A speaker may give a speech without audience warning or preparation. This happens on special occasions such as when a person receives an unexpected award. Impromptu speech is difficult to deliver since it must be organized and must have a clear message. To achieve this, one has to take a few seconds to form a thesis statement as for a prepared speech and develop this with a few simple ideas supported by facts or examples. This speech should be lively and maintain interest. It is usually brief since the speaker has no time to prepare.

Extemporaneous speech: This mode of speech relies on outline or notes. Notes contain key words and phrases that remind the speaker of the ideas he or she is to elaborate on. The major advantage of outline is flexibility. The speaker can adjust the speech's length, the number and types of examples, the language to fit the situation and audience. It enables the speaker to make changes right before he is scheduled to speak. It saves preparation time and provides better organization than is possible in impromptu delivery. In terms of both verbal and non-verbal delivery in extemporaneous speech, eye contact may suffer while looking at notes and the handling of notes may interfere with gestures and movement. The key to effective delivery is practice to become familiar with notes and reduce the number of times one refers to notes during a speech.

RELEVANCE OF BODY LANGUAGE IN SPEECH COMMUNICATION

Farrell T. and Farrell M. (1997) define nonverbal communication to include tone of voice, facial expression, eye contact, body posture, gestures, body movement, physical appearance including dress and use of space. There are two major benefits to be gained through knowledge of nonverbal communication. First, as receivers of communication (listeners) we can look for evidence that will help us understand more fully the message of the speaker. Second, as communicators (speakers) we can take steps to be sure that our nonverbal behaviour is supportive of the words we choose to say. Eye contact is important in speech communication because it conveys message of approval, love, interest, credibility, enthusiasm, excitement as well as of negative emotions. Eye contact projects confidence and trust; conversely, the lack of it suggests negative self-image, feelings of inferiority and even neurotic personality people are not comfortable when others stare at them; if one is on a side walk and stares at a stranger as he approaches, the stranger feels uncomfortable and suspects something is wrong.

The audience expects a speaker to offer an expressive not deadpan face. Facial expression signals expression of interest and enthusiasm as well as boredom and weariness. The face should come alive to show that one enjoys what he is doing. Smile and show acceptance and interest when appropriate. Enthusiasm is contagious but people need to know one has it before they can catch it. Some people seem to have more presence than others. They make immediate impact when they walk into a room. This lies in the physical appearance and manner of dressing of an individual. The impact can also be explained by body movements that accompany the spoken message. A speaker needs energy to maintain a fairly erect posture, leaning forward and using natural hands gestures that add to or compliment the words he is speaking. One should avoid a slumping, sagging body posture and hand motions that distract the attention of the listener.

CONCLUSION

The study of speech communication dates back to the time of the Greeks and Romans with important people like Aristotle, Cicero and Socrates. Communication as a study includes discipline as interpersonal and group communication as well as verbal and nonverbal messages. We all need good communication skills. Effective communication helps bring success and pleasure, change the way others act and behave and in maintaining and improving relationships. It is an ongoing process in which people share ideas and feelings. These elements include sender – receivers, messages, channels, feedback, noise and setting. Every communication is a transaction. This focuses on the people who are communicating and the changes that take place in them as they are communicating. It also implies that all participants are involved continuously and simultaneously; that communication events have a past, present and future and that the roles the participants play will affect the communication.

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