

UDC 811.11

**CULTURAL DIFFERENCES AND PUBLIC SPEAKING TRADITIONS
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The article focuses on public speaking from a perspective of cultural diversity.

Cultures emerge, maintain themselves and change through communication. Cultures are integrated systems of learned beliefs, values, attitudes and behaviours that a group accepts and passes along from older to newer members. Cultures have visible outer layers (art, food, language, clothing) and underlying characteristics of society (ideology, folk beliefs, perceptions and biases). Cultures have different norm for speaking and listening. Our cultures affect our public speaking in a number of ways. They provide us with core resources (values, attitudes and behaviours) that shape our own speeches and our responses to others' messages. In addition, our technologically advanced society provides a variety of resources we can use to research topics and present our speeches. Finally, our cultural heritages provide expectations regarding the *how*, the *who* and the *what* of public speaking [1]. Because you perform each speech within a specific situation to an audience that holds expectations regarding its length, appropriate delivery, and so on, you succeed best when you understand and adapt to cultural norms.

Cultural awareness as the foundation of communication

Cultural awareness is the foundation of communication and it involves the ability of standing back from ourselves and becoming aware of our cultural values, beliefs and perceptions. Why do we do things in that way? How do we see the world? Why do we react in that particular way? Becoming aware of our cultural dynamics is a difficult task because culture is not conscious to us. Since we are born we have learned to see and do things at an unconscious level. Our experiences, our values and our cultural background lead us to see and do things in a certain way. Sometimes we have to step outside of our cultural boundaries in order to realize the impact that our culture has on our behaviour.

Cultural awareness becomes central when we have to interact with people from other cultures. People see, interpret and evaluate things in different ways. What is considered an appropriate behaviour in one culture is frequently inappropriate in another one. Misunderstandings arise when *I* use *My* meanings to make sense of *Your* reality. Misinterpretations occur when we project our own behavioural rules on others, instead of finding out what a behaviour means to the person involved, e.g. a straight look into your face is regarded as disrespectful in Japan. Italians perceive US Americans as people who always work, talk about business over lunch and drink their coffee running in the street instead of enjoying it in a bar. Does it mean that Italians are lazy and American are hyperactive? No, it means that the meaning that people give to certain activities, like having lunch or dinner could be different according to certain cultures. In Italy, where relationships are highly valued, lunch, dinner or the simple pauses for coffee have a social connotation: people get together to talk and relax, and to get to know each other better. In the USA, where time is money, lunches can be part of closing a deal where people discuss the outcomes and sign a contract over coffee [2].

Cultural differences will affect the norms of the speaker-audience relationship. Much of your success in adapting to the audience hinges on establishing common ground and drawing on common experience. When you are speaking to audiences who are vastly different from you, it will take work to find out about the culture and experiences of your audience so you can adapt to them. This may mean conducting additional research to find statistics, examples and other supporting material that will be meaningful to the audience. Or it may require you to elaborate on ideas that would be self-explanatory in your own culture. For example, suppose that Maria, a Mexican-American exchange student, was giving a personal experience speech for her speech class at Yeshiva University in Israel on the *quinceanera* party she had when she turned fifteen. Because students in Israel probably do not have any experience with the Mexican coming-of-age tradition of the *quinceanera* parties, they would have trouble understanding the significance of this event unless Maria was able to use her knowledge of the *bar and bat mitzvah* coming-of-age ritual celebrations in Jewish culture and relate it to them [3].

Thus, when presenting to an international audience a speaker should always consider many additional factors that come into play if a presenter works across a cultural gap. Your ability to determine the demographics and psychographics of your audience (including regional make-up, age, race, gender, education, political leanings, leisure time activities, etc.) will aid you enormously as you begin to develop content and determine the

appropriateness of examples and anecdotes within your presentation. Additionally, knowing your audience will ensure that you avoid any content that could miss the mark.

Cultural differences between american, european and asian listeners

The increased globalization of business has required that executives be effective presenters in a number of different cultures. Many managers perform quite well in their own countries, but neglect to account for the cultural differences of the audience when planning presentations. Successful presenters are able to adapt to the specific cultural and business needs of their particular audiences. What works in the United States does not necessarily translate directly to the rest of the world.

Let's comment upon the differences between American, European and Asian listeners.

American audiences thrive on a fast pace and are often bottom-line oriented. "Time is money." That is why never beat around the bush and get straight to the point. Typically, they wish to be both informed and entertained. Speakers may often be interrupted with questions and there is lots of audience-speaker interaction. Practice direct interaction with the listeners and remember – people like being treated as individuals. Never talk down (or up) to your audience. Treat them as equals, no matter who they are. Be enthusiastic and use your personality, your charisma to involve them.

Europeans like to detail with lots of supporting documentation. They prefer to listen to an entire presentation before posing questions. You should deliver your presentation in a polite, positive and considerate manner. Another piece of advice is to avoid pushy American style of presenting which frequently seems too emotional or even excitable at times. One of the mistakes made by inexperienced presenters is that in order to sound naturally they completely forget about the logical structure of their speech and make an impression of badly prepared, longwinded or simply unqualified in their field.

Asians, in contrast, are unimpressed with gestures and may find them distracting. Some speakers like to address members of their audience directly (they can even point with their finger at some of the listeners)! This is disrespect. Asians are happiest hearing presentations delivered in a visually neutral way. Prepare your presentation thoroughly. Improvisation is of no good when it concerns public speaking and can be met with disapproval since if you are forced to improvise it means that haven't spent enough time to prepare your presentation [4].

While delivering your presentation, it is important that you get verbal or non-verbal signals of understanding and agreement from your audience. These signals are different in different countries and cultures.

As speakers we need to know if the listener trusts us – whether the audience is prepared yet for the important thing we want to say. This is partly why we depend so much on reciprocal grunts (Yes...go on...quite!...I see...Mmhmm) and sub-verbal agreement signals (smiles, nods, raised eyebrows).

Some cultures – the Finns, for example – give very few such signals. Finnish culture has a high tolerance for silence and can be referred to non-expressive cultures that value privacy and encourage members to keep their emotions and ideas to themselves rather than express them publicly. So if you are a representative of expressive cultures (American or Italian) which encourage people to speak their mind and let their feelings show, you will find it rather unnerving to try to convince a Finn of something new: you won't feel the feedback.

Conversely, a Japanese who nods repeatedly and says Yes...yes...yes is probably not signalling acceptance of your argument, but just telling you that he has heard and understood your words. It is equally disturbing if you are not prepared for it [3].

To ensure you connect with your audience, experienced presenters recommend asking the following questions when developing your presentation.

A. How should I interact? How much you physically interact with your audience depends on that culture's definition of suitable audience distance. Americans are used to seeing speakers go into audiences and ask impromptu questions. British audiences would be appalled by such informality. This same sensitivity applies to how close you stand to someone. People in Latin countries have no problem touching and standing close, while Europeans may not appreciate such intimacy.

B. What does my audience expect? Doing your homework includes knowing how much information your audience needs to hear. Typically, you are on track if you share only two percent of your knowledge with the audience. While many cultures respond well to lots of detail, resist the temptation to bog the listener down with extraneous data that could cloud your central message.

C. How shall I respond to their questions? Make sure you fully understand the question. Even if a translator is present, always rephrase questions. This will ensure you understand the questions and also buy time so you can formulate in-depth and precise answers.

D. Who are the decision makers? In many cultures, especially Asian, the people who make the final decisions are typically not present at formal presentations. In this and similar cases, you must connect equally

with all members of the audience and not expect quick decisions. If senior people are present, direct most of your remarks to them, but remember to make eye contact with others in the room. Know also that “yes” among the British means “maybe” and that among Asians, if said immediately, probably means “no”.

E. How should I deliver the presentation? The pace should be at a rate that is consistent with the culture. South Americans, for example, are usually energetic and passionate and like a fast clip. Europeans prefer more time to assimilate information. When in doubt, use silence to your advantage by taking a break, checking for audience comprehension and then continuing.

F. Should I use humor? Although the Irish expect a light-hearted humor from their presenters, humor rarely translates well from culture to culture. Projecting a cordial image is appropriate everywhere, but avoid wordplays, puns or humorous stories with a punch line.

G. What kind of visuals should I use? In selecting visuals, be aware that in certain cultures different colours have different meanings. For example, in Japan white symbolizes death. Similarly, in some Latin countries, yellow has negative connotations. When in doubt, use emotionally neutral colors.

H. How long will they listen? Make sure that you have sufficiently answered their question and then tactfully move the discussion forward. You will have to be flexible to accommodate some cultures which allow more floor time per questioner than others [4].

Thus, speakers need to be sensitive to cultural differences, search for and use culturally appropriate material if they plan to increase the likelihood that the audience will understand them.

Socio-cultural pitfalls. how they see us: american listeners about russian presenters

According to G.Elizarova, Russian-speaking presenters tend to neglect socio-cultural features that characterize the Anglo-American speech behaviour. Russian-speaking presenters do not often see the difference between the concept of “report” typical for our culture and the concept of “presentation” which characterize English public speaking traditions. The results of this misunderstanding are stereotypes which American listeners have about Russian presenters [5]. We placed some examples of comments given by American professors on Russian students under the following headings:

A. Use of the English Language:

- Literal translation of idioms into English.
- Misuse “Yes” as a prompt – to continue a conversation.
- Their statements tend to be declarative.
- They use materials and ideas from sources without acknowledging the source.
- Russians are very much into theory; they use a lot of historical and philosophical digressions while talking, never coming straight to the point.

B. Contact with the Audience:

- Russian student often say “You must do this...”. – Do you know that imperative constructions and modal verbs expressing obligation may cause offence if they are addressed to British or American audience?
- Interaction between a presenter/performer/lecture and the audience/class is appreciated and expected in America. From talking with Russian students have discovered that this is not so much the case in Russia.
- Sometimes they seem uninterested in whether the listener understands or is interested in what they are saying; they rarely ask for feedback.
- Speech is less encouraging than native speakers.

C. Non-verbal Behaviour:

- They are not sensitive to non-verbal signals.
- They don't maintain proper eye contact (they appear to be shifty-eyed).

D. Politeness and Concern for the Listener/ the Speaker:

- In their concept of politeness and concern for the listener their speech lacks formulas of encouragement.
- They often appear rude and unconcerned.
- Frequently interrupt when others are speaking.
- They often talk with each other during presentations.

When you are communicating, you should always consider the audience – and particularly if you are giving a presentation. A “professional” presentation is one where you put the audience first. You think about how the audience would most like to receive the information you are giving. The key to an effective presentation is that you have a few main points that you want the audience to remember and that you highlight these points

during the presentation in an interesting, and if possible, enthusiastic way. Knowing as much as you can about your audience's cultural background before preparing your speech will ensure that you are more effective in delivering it. Speakers should be aware of cultural differences and public speaking traditions, demonstrate cultural awareness, search for and use culturally appropriate material.

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UDC 821.111

THE HISTORY OF PUBLICATION, COLLECTING AND STUDY OF SWEDISH BALLADS

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The publication and study of Swedish ballads (in comparison with English-Scottish and even Danish) began much later. In the beginning it was not a deliberate work but the so-called accidental ballad transmission. That is why the first written lines of Swedish ballads are found on a map of 1425 and on a fresco series on the ceiling of Floda church of the 15th century.

One of the main questions in the Scandinavian ballad field concerns the question of origins: how old are the most ancient Scandinavian ballads, and where did they come from? Although an oral ballad tradition survived well into the twentieth century in isolated pockets of Norway, Sweden and the Faeroe Islands, the early days of this tradition are only dimly understood. It is commonly agreed that the Scandinavian ballad was already well-defined long before the first ballad manuscripts were assembled in Denmark in the mid to late sixteenth century. How much earlier is uncertain; apart from a few suggestive references in Swedish chronicles and other historical sources to public performances of narrative “songs” that seem to resemble ballads, [1, p. 89], as well as there are stereotyped formulas and well-known lines in a ballad style in “The Songs of Euphemia”, a Swedish poetic translation of the beginning of the 16th century [2, p. 212]. Other attempts to date the origins of the first Scandinavian ballads through comparative evidence gleaned from the fields of anthropology, history, folklore or other literary sources have produced mixed results, with conclusions that range from as early as the eleventh to as late as the middle of the sixteenth century. This dispute may never be resolved, for the shortcomings of the manuscript sources for the period before approximately 1550 are as legendary as they are insurmountable.

Occasionally, however, evidence about the early days of the Nordic ballads comes to light where it is least expected. A map of Greenland made by the Danish cartographer Klaus Klaussen Svart (better known in the Latinized form as Claudius Clavus) in 1425 is perhaps the best known case of what we might call accidental ballad transmission in the Scandinavian field [1, p. 89]. This map was found in Warsaw in 1889 and in 1900 an explanation for it was discovered in a medieval manuscript in Vienna by a researcher Björnbo. A detailed study of the map and the found materials has revealed a number of interesting details.

In this map for the places the names of which Clavus did not know, he invented his own. To name the bays along the shores of the North Sea, he used Latin ordinal numbers; to designate the Swedish rivers – Danish ones. In Iceland for the rivers and capes he assumed the names of Scandinavian runes; in Norway and on the island of Gotland – senseless words as in the nursery rhyme (ekarene, apokane, uitu, vultu, seg, sarklekog and others).

But the way he referred to geographical names of Greenland's coastline is particularly interesting. If you read all the names of the rivers and capes from north to south along the eastern coast of Greenland and then vice versa along the western coast you will have the lines of a Scandinavian ballad: “There lives another man on the Greenland river, he can be called Spildeber, he has more lousy fells than fat. He is now rushing to the sand from