International Journal of Research in English Education (IJREE)

Book Review **Published online: 20 December 2022.**

Book Review: The Art of Public Speaking

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Received: 3 October 2022
Revision: 1 December 2022
Accepted: 18 December 2022
Published online: 20 December 2022

Abstract

The art of public speaking comes into play in many places. It is important not only in the delivery of speeches and public talks, but also in professional presentations, training events, and motivational speaking. ELT teachers, teacher trainers, lecturers and university professors, all have a reason at times to speak in front of others. A lackluster speaker can make a topic or proposal seem less than enticing, while a polished speaker can add allure to an otherwise mediocre proposition. Stephen E. Lucas' "The Art of Public Speaking" is the leading public speaking textbook in the field. Whether a novice or an experienced speaker when beginning the course, every page-turner will learn how to be a better public speaker through Lucas' clear explanations. Vivid examples, creative activities, annotated speech samples, and foundation of classic and contemporary rhetoric provide learners a strong understanding of public speaking. Lucas' book which is under review in this paper reminds us that the most ordinary person can become extraordinary by developing their God-given potentials and unique gift of speech to be an inspiration and positive influence in the lives of others.

Keywords: ELT, public speaking, speaking skill

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1. Introduction

The Art of Public Speaking (13th edition) by Stephen E. Lucas published by McGraw-Hill tries to define the art of being the best by helping today's students become capable, responsible speakers and thinkers. With a strong focus on classical and contemporary theories of rhetoric, this award-winning book offers full coverage of all major aspects of speech preparation and presentation. By utilizing the full suite of resources, English as a Second Language (ESL) and English as a Foreign Language (EFL) students learn to build confidence through speech practices, internalize the principles of public speaking, and prepare for success in the classroom and beyond. It also supplies a proven set of teaching and learning tools that is without parallel among public speaking books (Lucas, 2020). This new edition offers a revolutionary digital experience (i.e., McGraw-Hill Connect Lucas and Connect Lucas Plus). The Connect Lucas products allow students and instructors to access all course materials including a complete media and research library, study aids and speech preparation and assessment tools from a single place, connectlucas.com.

As to the importance of public speaking skill, the dire need of teaching aids in the field of English Language Teaching (ELT) for a more dynamic class experience, and to help EFL and ESL learners become responsible speakers and thinkers, the book under review in this paper is about a must-learn topic that needs constant attention.

2. The Book Review

With the aim of public speaking improvement in the technology era, the book "The Art of Public Speaking" approaches the issue of speaking skill especially in the field of ELT and tries to introduce new techniques and strategies to help academic students, teachers, teacher trainers, and public speakers overcome their anxiety and become proficient speakers. The main gap that encouraged the author of the book to start writing the book was that performing speech, especially in the presence of audience, seems to be a nightmare for many individuals which could simply be practiced, improved, and overcome by employing specific strategies (Heyman, 2008, p. 132). Besides, online instruction and the dire need of online presentations as well as oral lectures were the other sources of inspiration.

The newest edition of the book (13th Edition) uses a rational, page-turner-friendly, well-structured, and easy-to-understand sectioning by categorizing its 20 chapters into four sections of (1) Online speeches and the guidance for influential online speaking, (2) Full speeches for analysis and discussion in both print and digital format (3) Fresh real world examples to illustrate the importance of public speaking in school, business, and social settings, and (4) Enhanced discussion of presentation technology.

The book has also provided an extensive video program that is available both on DVD and online via McGraw-Hill's learning platform. In addition, many teaching aids and teaching flexibility in the course has been provided for experienced instructors. When instructors teach from this textbook, they benefit from Lucas' Integrated Teaching Package. The Annotated Instructor's Edition and Instructor's Manual, both written by Steve Lucas, provide teaching tips and give outlines on how to use the various supplements. As a result, instructors are able to see various teaching examples, how to integrate technology, and analyses and discussion questions for video clips in class. The Annotated Instructor's Edition, Instructor's Manual, Test Bank, CDs, videos, and other supplements provide instructors the tools needed to create a dynamic classroom.

The 1st Chapter of the book has been allocated to public speaking as a vital means of personal empowerment and civic engagement throughout history (Lucas, 2020, p. 50). In fact, the concentration of this part is on the similarities between public speaking and daily conversations and their differences as well. The most conspicuous difference between these two items are strict time limitations and detailed preparation comparing to ordinary conversations. Another difference could be the type of language being used for public speaking as a formal language with accurate grammatical structures and comprehensible sentences. The third difference could be the method of delivery for public speaking in a way to be understandable for the audience and to avoid distracting physical mannerisms and verbal habits.

The author further demonstrates that the speech communication process consists of seven elements which are the speaker, message, channel, listener, feedback, interference, and situation. The interaction of all these seven elements determines the outcome in any instance of speech communication. As the final point in chapter 1, the author alerts the speakers of the ethnocentric beliefs in order not to show the superiority or perhaps the inferiority of cultures to audience (Gudykunst & Yun Kim, 2003).

Chapter 2 of the book has been devoted to the importance of ethics and guidelines for ethical speaking and listening and the effects of plagiarism on public speaking. The first guideline, as he declares, is to make sure our aims have appropriate compatibility with the ethics of the society and our audience (Bosmajian, 1983). The second guideline is

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to be thoroughly prepared for each speech. Honesty has been considered as the third guideline for public speaking (Ruggiero, 2015). The fourth guideline is allocated to avoidance of name-calling (Heyman, 2008) and abusive language. And the last guideline is to put ethical principles (Blanchard & Peale, 1988) into practice at all times (Lucas, 2020, p. 68).

Furthermore, two types of plagiarism have been scrutinized as Patchwork Plagiarism and Incremental Plagiarism. Based on the definition of the book, patchwork plagiarism involves stitching a speech together by copying from a few sources. Incremental plagiarism occurs when a speaker fails to give credit for specific quotations and paraphrases that are borrowed from other people (Lucas, 2020, p. 36, 37, 69).

The 3rd Chapter of the book, Listening Trends, highlights the importance of listening skill and critical thinking. The author maintains that most people are normally poor listeners (Brownell, 2018). Interestingly, he later adds up some causes of poor listening such as distractions and letting our thoughts to fly over without any direction. Sometimes the opposite could occur, this means that listeners might be overloaded with too much obsession toward listening through the details and even every single word. Therefore, they forget the general message of the lecture. The other form is to make prejudgments and jump into conclusions without getting the gist of the lecture. Last of all, the attention of the listeners could be paid to the appearance and gestures of the speakers instead of paying attention to the content of the speech.

Based on these implications, the author suggests some strategies to improve listening and to promote ourselves to become better listeners. The first strategy could be "listening seriously and committing ourselves to become better listeners" (Lucas, 2020, p. 84). The second strategy could be active listening and giving attention to what the speaker discusses. The third strategy is to avoid distraction as much as possible in order to enhance the quality of our listening. Moreover, not to be distracted by the appearance has been considered as the fourth positive strategy. Avoiding judgment has been added as the fifth influential strategy to shift to a better listener. Suspending judgment could also be an effective strategy and taking notes are among the most popular strategies to be expanded and acquired (Peck, 2003).

Chapter 4 provides the readers with some fruitful guidelines for giving their first speech comprising the both preparation process and efficient speech delivery. Moreover, some examples are provided on simple speeches with commentary. Lucas (2020) persists on declining the number of main points and developing them creatively. Comprehensive explanations also have been added about the format of the speech from A to Z, as the author says, including the introduction, main body, and conclusion. Emphatic emphasis on multi-practice-in-advance prior to public speaking to avoid any possible interruptions has been made, which would definitely help hinder any butterflies and anxiety that might come forth for any speakers.

In Chapter 5, "The Selection of Topics" has been scrutinized. In fact, choosing a topic and determining the general and specific purposes are those radical steps that need to be taken gracefully. Lucas (2020) believes that general purposes could have two distinct aspects: to inform or to persuade.

In Chapter 6, readers are bestowed with another important facet of public speaking as "Analyzing the Audience." Good speakers are audience-centered and their aim of speech is to gain a suitable response from listeners. In order to be an effective listener, knowing about the psychology of the audience has been counted essential. Based on this fact, as a speaker, we need to learn about the demographic traits such as age, religion (Eck, 2001), racial, ethnic (NBC news, 2017), and cultural background (Lucas, 2020, p. 99-103).

In Chapter 7, the main focus is given to materials gathering. The author declares that speakers could gather materials through library research, searching the internet, their own knowledge and experience, and interviewing all of which have been expanded exclusively for the readers to make then known with the most appropriate ways to proceed the speaking.

In Chapter 8, the author illustrates how supporting materials are needed to bolster the speaker's point of view. Three basic types of supporting materials are examples (O' Keefe, 2016), statistics, and testimony. It is worth noting to cite the sources in speech letting the audience know how and where the information have been assembled.

In Chapter 9, a reader-friendly demonstration of how to organize the body of a speech is discussed. It is said that main points and supporting materials are the crucial elements for a standard and acceptable body. In addition, the structure of the sentences should be organized in a way to make sense and be conspicuous for the audience. In other words, the process of planning the body of a speech begins when we determine the main points (Lucas, 2020, p. 200), "Main

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points can be organized in different ways depending on the topic, purpose, and audience." Supporting materials are the backup ideas for main points.

In chapter 10, the beginning and closing of a speech are discussed comprehensively. It is believed that the first impression is the most significant impression. And, in fact, that is the reason most of the speeches should start with great introductions and end with impressive conclusions. For introduction, four objectives need to be considered as attention and interest of the audience, revealing the topic of speech, establish credibility and goodwill, and preview the body of the speech (Lucas, 2020, p. 221).

In Chapter 11, "Outlining the Speech" is the main focus of discussion. As the title discloses, outlines are crucial to effective speeches. By making outlines, we make sure how the ideas are relevant and coherent. Two kinds of outlines are introduced as *the detailed preparation outline* and *the brief speaking outline*. The speaking outline should include key words or phrases to ease remembering what is going to be presented in the speaking.

In Chapter 12, readers find the opportunity to receive a comprehensive explanation on using appropriate and becoming language for public speaking in order to get the attention of the audience and to have the highest impression on them. According to Lucas (2020), as a speaker, we need to be entirely aware of the meanings of the words and know how to use a language appropriately and clearly. Linguistically, words have two kinds of meaning: Denotative and Connotative. And the differences between these two types of meanings are described analytically and perfectly at the end of the chapter.

Chapter 13 offers an analytical perspective toward delivery methods. "Speech delivery is a matter of nonverbal communication" (Lucas, 2020, p. 237). It is based on how we can utilize our voice and body to convey messages. Four methods of delivery have been identified within this chapter as follows: (1) Reading verbatim from a manuscript, (2) Reciting a memorized text, (3) Speaking impromptu, and (4) Speaking extemporaneously. The effective use of voice is another factor which is fully described in this chapter and it teaches speakers how to control the pitch, tune, volume, pauses, pronunciation, articulation, and dialect.

In Chapter 14, Few (2009) considers using different types of visual aids in details. Diagrams, sketches, and other kinds of drawings are helpful because they illustrate what the speakers are going to explain. In Chapter 15, the readers are specifically well informed with informative speeches and its four categories are as follows: speeches about objects, speeches about processes, speeches about events, and speeches about concepts.

In Chapter 16, entitled "Speaking to Persuade", the focus is on the importance of persuasion and its psychology to find out how listeners could be persuaded by what the speakers discuss (Miller, 2013). Indeed, "when we speak to persuade, it means that we advocate that subject" (Jones & Simons, 2017, p.109). In other words, how successful we are in any persuasive speech depends on how well we tailor our message to our listeners' values, attitudes, and beliefs (Lucas, 2020, p. 339).

In Chapter 17, methods of persuasion are introduced the most important of which is Credibility. According to Keefe (2016), credibility has been counted as one of the important factors of persuasion and it is divided into two sub factors called competence and character. If the listeners accept the competence and character of the speakers, definitely they will accept whatever being discussed in lectures or public speaking.

In Chapter 18, the concept of speaking on special occasions and its four types are introduced as speeches of introduction, speeches of presentation, speeches of acceptance, and commemorative speeches (Lucas, 2020, p. 380). Speeches of introduction should include enthusiasm. Speeches of presentation are given to acknowledge the achievements of the recipient. Finally, commemorative speeches are discussed as speeches of praise or celebration.

In chapter19, "Online Speeches" are discusses by the author. Two types of online speeches are: *recorded online speech* and *real-time online speech*. According to Lucas (2020), a recorded online speech is delivered, recorded, and then uploaded to the internet for later viewing (also called synchronous and asynchronous) and a real-time online speech is created for the audience that will view the speech on the internet as it is being delivered and this demands the speaker to learn and master a software program designed for the sake of online speeches (Lucas, 2020, p. 396).

In Chapter 20, the final chapter of the book, there is an investigation into speaking in small groups. A small group has been defined as three to twelve people assembled for a specific purpose (Carpenter, Boster, & Andrews, 2013). In addition, the author thoroughly explains how a good speaking could be achieved by discriminate and clear-cut strategies.

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3. Advantages of the Book

The Art of Public Speaking presents a solid, fully customizable foundation, and an abundance of teaching aids from which to choose, allowing for complete teaching flexibility in the course. For novice instructors, its wisdom, steady hand, and unmatched ancillary package instill confidence and build success in the classroom from day one.

In fact, the main aim of the book, with an emphasis on technology and modern life-style, is to present a multi-dimensional view of giving speeches in public through introducing efficient strategies so as to enhance the quality of speaking for the public which consequently results in achieving the purpose of transferring knowledge to the audience in a fruitful way. It is worth mentioning that the book uses a well-structured, coherent sectioning system in which each chapter lays the ground for the following one, forming a logical category under which all chapters of the book fall. One of the strong points of this book is the number of case studies presented in it, comparing and contrasting them with each other, which leads to finding the probable shortcomings and strengths of each method and strategy.

In addition, considering the practical skills of public speaking which are grounded in classical and contemporary theories of rhetoric, the book offers full coverage of all major aspects of speech preparation and presentation. Utilizing the full suite of resources, students learn to internalize the principles of public speaking, build confidence through speech practice, and prepare for success in the classroom and beyond.

Another transparent advantage of this book is the authentic examples being made for each chapter which makes it more understandable and practical for the readers. Moreover, employing the public speeches performed by real prominent speakers of the world in authentic occasions, is among the other merits of the book, since investigating such real lectures as great models could pave the way for those striving to improve their public speaking skill. In addition, the high-quality photos printed within the pages of the book, undeniably, makes it more attractive, motivating and reinforcing for real page-turners. The speaking tests which are developed and inserted at the end of each chapter for self-evaluation is a notable advantage that cannot be ignored. At last, considering technology-enhanced instruction, distant education system, home-schooling, the pandemic of COVID 19 which caused a paradigm shift in educational system throughout the Globe and the dire need of the teaching and learning community to enhance their internet literacy, allocating two chapters of the book to Online Speaking seems to be beneficial for both learners and teachers. Finally, the book helps speakers forget the self, cast out fear, be absorbed by their subject and most importantly, expect success!

4. Shortcomings of the Book

The book comes with some shortcomings that the authors of this paper suggest. The first disadvantage is that the content of the whole chapters could be influential and practical merely for native speakers of English. In other words, some parts might sound vague for second language speakers of any other languages of the world. On the other hand, a few number of the contributing authors have not provided rich case studies which could contribute more to the literature by presenting something unique, supporting the discussions. Furthermore, it would be more informative to include studies and examples conducted in more diverse contexts, including the Middle East or Iranian EFL context, for it to be plausible in a broader range of contexts and cultures. So, it is respectively recommended that further work in this area of study should focus on various cultures and contexts, including the Iranian EFL context.

Overall, the topic of public speaking and speaking skill itself has gained significance attention in Iranian educational system specifically in the field of language teaching and learning. Therefore, Iranian EFL teachers, teacher trainers, EFL learners, and university students can benefit from this book and instructions given for the enhancement of public speaking, speaking skill, academic lectures, oral presentations, and online lectures.

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