

*The Most Exciting Time  
Has Come*

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<b>1. FOREWORD .....</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>2. OVERVIEW .....</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>3. MAKING AN IMPRESSION.....</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>3.1 ORIGINALITY.....</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>3.2 RADICAL CHIC .....</b>	<b>8</b>
3.2.1 CASE EXAMPLE 1: JAPAN’S AGING SOCIETY .....	9
3.2.2 CASE EXAMPLE 2: NUCLEAR POWER PLANTS .....	10
3.2.3 DEVELOPING A RADICAL MIND .....	11
<b>3.3 SIGNIFICANCE .....</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>4. ORGANIZING YOUR SPEECH.....</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>4.1 THE BASIC ELEMENTS .....</b>	<b>14</b>
4.1.1 THE TITLE .....	14
4.1.2 THE INTRODUCTION .....	16
4.1.2.1 The Thesis Statement .....	17
4.1.3 THE BODY .....	17
4.1.3.1 Analyzing the Situation .....	18
4.1.3.2 Cause and Effect.....	18
4.1.4 THE CONCLUSION.....	18
4.1.4.1 The Perfect Conclusion .....	20
4.1.4.2 Closing the Speech .....	20
<b>4.2 SOME OTHER INGREDIENTS .....</b>	<b>22</b>
4.2.1 LOGIC AND REASONING.....	22
4.2.2 EVIDENCE AND SUPPORTING MATERIAL.....	22
4.2.3 PERSONAL EXAMPLES .....	24
<b>4.3 IMPROVING YOUR ORGANIZATION .....</b>	<b>24</b>
<b>5. ENGLISH .....</b>	<b>26</b>
<b>5.1 YOU CAN’T FIGHT A WAR WITHOUT BULLETS .....</b>	<b>26</b>
5.1.1 “SHORT WORDS ARE BEST...” .....	26
5.1.2 DICTION OR “HOW FORCIBLE ARE RIGHT WORDS!” .....	27
<b>5.2 GOOD GRAMMAR, BUT “THIS IS THE SORT OF ENGLISH UP WITH WHICH I WILL NOT PUT.” .....</b>	<b>28</b>
<b>5.3 PRONUNCIATION, ENUNCIATION, ARTICULATION AND THOSE OTHER BIG WORDS..</b>	<b>29</b>
<b>5.4 IMPROVING YOUR ENGLISH .....</b>	<b>30</b>

<b>6. DELIVERY .....</b>	<b>33</b>
<b>6.1 PROJECTING YOUR VOICE .....</b>	<b>33</b>
6.1.1 THE PITFALLS OF THE MICROPHONE.....	34
<b>6.2 ADJUSTING TONE AND VOLUME TO CONTENT .....</b>	<b>35</b>
<b>6.3 “MOTOR MOUTHS” AND THE SEVEN-MINUTE CURE FOR INSOMNIA .....</b>	<b>35</b>
<b>6.4 GESTURES AND BODY LANGUAGE.....</b>	<b>36</b>
6.4.1 EVERYTHING THEY IMPLY.....	36
6.4.2 LOOKING GOOD AND FEELING GOOD .....	37
<b>7. APPENDICES.....</b>	<b>39</b>
<b>7.1 APPENDIX A. Q&amp;A TIME .....</b>	<b>39</b>
<b>7.2 APPENDIX B. EXTEMPORANEOUS SPEECHES.....</b>	<b>40</b>
<b>7.3 APPENDIX C. THE EVOLUTION OF A PREPARED SPEECH.....</b>	<b>41</b>

## 1. Foreword

Over the years, as a student participating in speech contests and as a judge, I have come to realize that the so-called "oratorical contests" which are held in Japan are something unique. To the best of my knowledge, there are no such things as prepared public speaking contests, as seen in Japan, in countries where English is the native tongue.

Therefore, it is only natural that there are no reference sources on public speaking as it is practiced in the speech contests in Japan. Although there are many books that deal with public speaking in English, *per se*, they are not always suited to the conditions seen in the contests that are held here. This is not to say that those books are not good general sources with sound advice which can be applied, but they do not discuss many of the intricacies which these contests present. This manual is written for the sole purpose of correcting this shortcoming. It is not intended to be a general reference on public speaking, though I hope and think that some of the advice is sound in any setting, but rather it is intended to be a guide book for those students who take part in speech contests held by the various organizations in Japan.

You should also note that this manual is not written for the novice speaker. Although there is a lot of advice which I believe will be invaluable for novices, I feel that their "senpai" or seniors will probably help them more in learning the basics of public speaking. Rather, this manual is written for those speakers who have hit a wall and who want to have their names called when, "The most exciting time," comes. Finally, let me add that this is the work of a single person, and although I have tried to reflect the opinions of other judges with whom I have worked, some personal beliefs which may not be universal are included.

## 2. Overview

*"Winning is not everything, it is the only thing. "*  
Vincent Lombardi, head coach, Green Bay Packers, 1959-1967.

Although the quote above may not seem "right," I believe that it is the only attitude one can take if one wants to improve himself or herself. Only if you strive to be the best by winning will you really develop your abilities. This is why I feel that speech contests are a good way of studying English: They provide the chance and the incentive.

A speech contest should never be an end in itself, of course, but then again, it really isn't fun to put in a lot of work and come away empty-handed. This manual is designed to help speakers improve the quality of their speeches by pointing out certain factors which many of them tend to overlook.

Each section and subsection will discuss a certain aspect of a speech: why it is important; some of the common problems and pitfalls; and some suggestions. I have also included some examples and case studies.

Section 3 deals with how to choose and approach a subject, and the importance of significance.

Section 4 covers the basic components of a speech. This may seem elementary, however, I find that many of the best speakers tend to forget these basics.

Section 5 discusses English and the aspects which should be worked on in order to write a good speech.

Section 6 deals with delivery and the problems which Japanese have when speaking in front of an audience.

The appendices in section 7 cover question and answer sessions, extemporaneous speeches and the evolution of individual speeches.

In some parts of this manual I have included sidebars called "The Judges Point of View." Although this manual is full of items judges will be looking for in a speech, these sidebars will contain items which I feel are critical. The purpose of these sidebars is to give the student a chance to step into the judges' shoes.

### 3. Making an Impression

Making an impression on the judges in a speech contest is the easiest way to win a prize. In fact, it is the easiest way to win first place because, inevitably, it is the speaker who makes the strongest impression who wins.

Unfortunately, making an impression is easier said than done. All of the elements of a speech are involved: your English, your delivery, your appearance, your organization, your logic, etc. Among the many factors which come into play when you are making a speech, the most important is definitely your choice of topic or subject. This is the one component which can make or break you.

If your choice of topic is really good, then this can overcome some of the faults which may exist in your speech, in addition to overcoming a bad speaking order or other bad luck. Remember, however, that this implies that you must have something which is, unfortunately, not very common; i.e., originality. You may have one of the best subjects in the world, but if it is a common subject it will not leave an impression, as I will illustrate later.

Originality does not mean your subject has to be unique unto itself, however. You may have a common subject, but a viewpoint or slant that is totally different from anybody else.

Below I will discuss these two important factors for choosing a good subject: the originality of the subject; and taking a different point of view.

#### 3.1 Originality

*"All good things which exist are the fruits of originality."*  
John Stuart Mill; On Liberty; 1859.

If anybody were to ask me what I think the single most important element of a speech is, I would immediately respond by saying, "Originality."

I have gone through hundreds of speeches that have, literally, made me yawn or want to scream. The only things that help me maintain my sanity during a speech contest are those few speeches which are different from the rest.

One of the best examples of the lack of originality that comes to mind is a speech contest a number of years ago at which I was one of five judges. There were twelve speakers in all, and of those twelve, four of them talked about the elderly in Japan.

A fifth talked about the tax system and how taxes are necessary for social security for the aged, so if you count that half about the elderly, there were four and one-half speeches concerning senior citizens. And I would like to note that this was not a some minor speech contest; rather, it was at one of the major spring contests.

Let me assure you that the judges were very tired of hearing about the aged by the time the contest was over. Furthermore, the fact that there were four similar speeches made them all blur in one's mind, so that it was really impossible to remember how they differed, if they differed, and who gave which. Needless to say, none of those speeches placed.

Originality is, therefore, the most important element of a speech because it is so rare, and the reason it is so rare is because it takes a lot of work and thought to find a subject which is both original and significant (which happens to be another interrelated and important element which I will discuss later).

### ***The Judge's Point of View***

*If a judge is an old hand, he may judge quite a few contests every year. If he also judges manuscripts, then he may end up listening to or reading over 100 speeches a year. This is why being original, and thus different, is so important. The judge wants to hear something new. Be sure to make a speech on something that will stimulate the judge, something that will make him sit up and listen.*

The reason originality is so important in practical terms is because it leaves an impression. Remember, you are not the sole speaker at a speech contest. There may be nine, eleven, fourteen, or even nineteen or more other speakers. Furthermore, the judges do not hear the speeches at the same time. There is a speaking order, and if you are an early speaker, then it will be that much harder to leave an impression. Keep in mind the example I mentioned above. The only impression that those speeches made on me was the total lack of originality, not how sincere the speakers were, nor how well-organized their speeches were. This is really a shame because those speeches were, in fact, fairly well-written and the speakers were sincere.

How, then, does one discover or conceive an original topic? I know that finding original subject matter is easier said than done. Therefore, you will have to be prepared to spend considerable time on this aspect of speechmaking if you wish to be successful. Here are some suggestions:

- **Increase your input of useful information.**

By this I simply mean that you should read newspapers, news magazines, nonfiction titles, biographies, essays and everything else which you can lay

your hands on. You should also watch wide varieties of news programs, television documentaries, and other "educational" television programs.

- **Be opinionated.**

Try to form an opinion about anything and everything, even if you have only recently heard about a subject. By being opinionated, you may find that your opinions differ from that of the mass of people. This is not necessarily a bad thing, in fact, it is a good thing, especially if you can think of arguments to convince them that you are right. Besides, you can always change your mind later.

- **Look for niche subjects.**

That is, those small subjects that are of importance, but of which most people know little about.

- **GO to as many speech contests as possible and avoid topics that have been used.**

But, and this is a big "but," if you can write a speech with a totally different approach to a commonly used topic, go ahead and write that speech. Because the judges will have become tired of speeches with a common topic approached in a common manner, a different approach will seem like a breath of fresh air. In order to keep track of the different topics, you might try creating a database of speech contests, the topics discussed, and the conclusions of the various speeches. It might also be a good idea to note the names of the judges attending.

- **Don't write a speech based on a personal example.**

Using a personal example is fine, if relevant to the subject matter. But basing a speech on a personal example makes it trivial (e.g., a speech entitled "My Father" – a speech that was actually presented) or too common (how many speeches concerning aging or ill grandparents have you heard recently?).

### **3.2 Radical Chic**

*"Whoso would be a man must be a nonconformist. "*  
Ralph Waldo Emerson



Because it is so difficult to find a really original subject, one of the ways for being different that I like and find much easier is having a different point of view or slanting the way a topic is approached.

There is really nothing very difficult in this if you are as cynical as I am, but many Japanese find it difficult to be nonconformist. This may have something to do with Japanese culture and the concept of "wa," but I'm really not in a position to say, so let's discuss how to be a radical through a couple of case examples.

### **3.2.1 Case Example 1: Japan's Aging Society**

I really don't want to harp about those four speeches which I mentioned earlier (or maybe I do?), but I think this is a perfect example because there is usually at least one speech on the elderly at any given speech contest.

Typical Assertion: Japan's society is aging and we must do more to care for the old. If I were to make a speech on the old I would take the opposite standpoint; i.e., Japan's society is aging, so that is why the elderly are going to have to contribute more to society, and not expect retire at a young age.

Reasoning: Many speakers overlook a simple fact. Japan's aging society is going to peak around the year 2020. In addition, the United Nations has projected that Japan's population will decrease to about 90 million by 2050, and to about 60 million by 2100. This means that the speakers are really talking about themselves to a certain extent because they will be living during this time of drastic population decrease. In the year 2050, they will be a part of the elderly of which they speak. When you think about it, it is rather selfish for a university student to ask for help for the elderly when he is talking about his future self. So, I think that it might be better to assert that since we will not be able to expect so much, we had better be prepared to continue working.

Another important fact is that, with the Japanese government's current budget deficit, the elderly are not going to be able to expect large social security payments. Furthermore, because of the great numbers of senior citizens, they will be that much more of a burden to the younger working generation. This means that the elderly are going to have to work, because they won't be able to depend on social security. Then, why not assert that the elderly should continue to work and that companies should allow people to work even when they are in their 60s, 70s or even 80s? When you think about it there are a number of advantages to this: Continuing to work helps to keep one's mind active, thereby preventing senility; the tax burden on younger people will be lighter; the labor shortage will be alleviated somewhat; and there will be more tax payers and fewer people on social welfare.

Of course, all of the judges may not agree with these arguments but at least the approach will be different, so that they will probably remember the speech as being just that. And, if the organization, reasoning, English and other factors are good enough, the impression you leave on the judges may cause them to rank you first even if they disagree with your opinions.

### **3.2.2 Case Example 2: Nuclear Power Plants**

Typical Assertion: Nuclear power plants are dangerous, so we must abolish them.

Although this subject is not used that frequently as the theme of a speech, it is such an old argument that if it were presented in a speech it would seem far too common. I believe that it would demonstrate a greater degree of intelligence to weigh the pros and cons of nuclear power plants against those of fossil fuel power plants and the like, and assert that nuclear power plants are the better choice.

Reasoning: Although many people and organizations advocate that nuclear power plants are dangerous, we must also consider the alternatives to nuclear power generation, and their pros and cons.

Fossil fuel power plants: Although this type of power plant is still the most common, and possibly the safest, there are a number of problems. First of all, coal and petroleum, are finite sources of energy, and they are much too precious to be used for something like keeping one's house warm. For example, petroleum is the source of many of the new materials which are being used in high technology today. Where would we be without the many different types of plastics we take for granted?

Second, although it is little known, fossil fuel power plants also generate radioactivity. In addition, they produce carbon dioxide, the main cause of the so-called "greenhouse effect" which is said to be heating the atmosphere.

There are a number of other aspects to fossil fuel power plants which are not so pleasant (e.g., they are one of the main causes of acid rain, pollution in general, etc.), so that a strong case against them is possible.

Hydroelectric power plants: Besides helping to destroy the immediate regions where the dams necessary for hydroelectric power plants are built, anybody can see that the number of such locations is limited. As far as Japan is concerned, just about every possible site is already in use.

There are, of course, some other alternatives, but I think that when you weigh the pros and cons of the different sources of power, there is no outstanding reason to

be against nuclear power. If researched thoroughly and presented in the proper manner, I believe that you could have the judges and audience thinking that nuclear power is the only feasible source of power generation for the near future. \*

\*Addendum: Interestingly enough, several years after I wrote the above, a young lady presented just such a speech in favor of nuclear power plants. It was very well organized and argued, and won a prize. The one major problem with this speech was that her arguments were only substantiated by one source, her father, who is an employee of Tokyo Electric Power Company. I hope you can see the problem with this. Despite the fact that she failed to cite a third party in her speech, this totally different approach won over many of the judges, so she placed.

### 3.2.3 Developing a Radical Mind

Although I cannot say this with certainty, I have this vague feeling that being radical really has a lot to do with your personality and the way you were raised. For those of you who have sweet personalities and who were raised to be "nice," the following are a few things you might try.

- **Suspect everything.**

Never accept a thing at its face value. If somebody asserts something, always ask "Why?" if only to yourself. Try to look for deeper motives than those he or she has presented.

- **Practice taking the opposite point of view.**

When you listen to a news commentary or read an editorial, don't simply accept what is being said or written. Always think of the opposite side. Think of arguments against what is being said, even if you really agree.

- **When you attend or take part in a speech contest, think of other possible angles to the speeches which are being presented.**

Often, when I listen to another person's speech, I find myself disagreeing and thinking, "What if?" This, "What if?" often has the potential for being a good speech that is not all that common.

- **When you are talking with friends, say something really radical or even crazy.**

The ensuing conversation may become heated, but the various ideas that pop up from such conversations are often interesting. (You may, of course, lose a friend, but you might also end up with a good subject for a speech.)

- **Read anything and everything.**

Don't limit yourself to one newspaper. If you are reading the Asahi, be sure to read the Yomiuri or even the Sankei for other opinions. The same is true for magazines and even books. You might even try reading the Akahata Shimbun or some other sources far to the left or right just for variety.

- **Never overlook something because it seems trivial.**

Some of these trivial things when examined in depth can make very good speeches. For instance, how many people were really worried about Saddam Hussein when he first grabbed power or Al Qaeda before September 11, 2001?

### **3.3 Significance**

Finding a subject that is significant would seem so easy. Why is it then that I find myself writing, "Lacks significance," or even, "So what?" on so many judging sheets?

Actually, I have already given you the best way to check whether your speech has any significance. Simply ask yourself, "So what?" in regard to your conclusion. In fact, it might be an even better idea to ask yourself, "So what?" in regard to every assertion or argument you make.

If you find yourself incapable of making a reply that is meaningful, then your statement, assertion, argument, conclusion or whatever is most likely insignificant. To be frank if your answer to the question, "So what?" is insignificant, then your speech is probably insignificant.

The reason significance is important is that it determines the appeal and impact of your speech. In other words, if your speech is significant, that many more people will be interested in it or will be affected by it. You must remember, of course, that there are two elements involved in significance: quantity and quality. In order for your

#### ***The Judge's Point of View***

*During a speech contest a judge will be constantly asking himself the question, "So what?" regarding the speeches he listens to. This is why you must be able to answer this question in a way that will convince the judge of the importance of your speech.*

speech to be significant, it must incorporate both of these elements.

Let me give you a simple illustration.

*Somewhere in Japan, one million ants are about to be killed.*

Is the preceding sentence significant? Certainly, in terms of quantity the answer must be yes, because one million of anything is a significant number. In terms of quality, though, it would not seem very important because few people value ants enough to do anything. Qualitatively, significance is lacking in this example, although quantitatively the number is high.

Remember, never forget to ask the simple question, "So what?" of your speech. Be sure to constantly ask this question.

## 4. Organizing Your Speech

The organization or structure of a speech is the most basic of basics. The organization of a speech will not, by itself, win you any contests. Conversely, bad organization may keep the best subject in the world from sounding so good.

I am sure that most of you are well versed in the fundamental elements of the introduction, body and conclusion of a speech, so I will not talk about the details involved, but rather will make some suggestions concerning each of the various parts.

Good organization is taken for granted. It will not win any points, but bad organization will detract from an otherwise good speech. It may even cause a judge to vote against you if your speech is in the running for a prize.

Let me note here that speeches can take many different forms. I mention this because there is an infatuation in Japanese E.S.S. circles with what is called PHCS or Problem-Harm-Cause-Solution speeches. In the world outside of English speaking societies, there is no such thing as a PHCS speech. The PHCS format was created by some well-intended Japanese student who wanted a fixed format that would facilitate the teaching of speech writing. That is fine as far as it goes; however, many students now think of PHCS as gospel, as if PHCS is a format from which one cannot deviate, and that is **not** good.

There are many different ways to organize a speech, and there are many different types of arguments. For instance, you could write a speech about a topic that doesn't have any problem or harm, but if the suggestion were adopted the world would be a better place because certain advantages would develop. Or you could write a speech similar to John F. Kennedy's speech on putting a man on the moon; i.e., a speech geared toward achieving one goal. Or you could write a speech such as those of the Reverend Martin Luther King, Jr. that list problems that can only be overcome with a change in attitude.

### 4.1 *The Basic Elements*

#### 4.1.1 The Title

The title is an often overlooked part of a speech. I feel that this is a grave mistake because your title is the first part of a speech with which the judges and audience come into contact.

Remember, before the judges ever have a look at you or hear you utter a single word they will probably have read the title of your speech in the contest's program. Even if they haven't, the chairperson is sure to announce the title along with your name.

What, then, makes for a good title?

Although there is much personal preference involved, I suggest the following set of guidelines:

- **A title should be appealing.**

In other words, I believe that a title itself should be interesting, and that it should make people want to hear your speech

- **A title should be intriguing.**

A title should tell the audience and judges just enough about your speech to get them wondering what it is going to be about.

- **A title should not tell too much about a speech.**

Simply stating the subject matter is not a good idea for a title. Something like, "Money Politics" or "International Trade" not only tells the audience what the speech is going to be about, but they also suggest the reasoning and the conclusion.

- **A title should be an integral part of a speech.**

Although this is not an absolute requirement, I think it shows good form if you can somehow work your title into your speech; e.g., going back to your title at the conclusion of the speech, or even closing the speech by repeating the title.

- **A title should not be too vague.**

A problem which has become common is that titles are just too vague. Here are some examples from a contest:

- The Third Intervention
- Can't You See It?
- Everlasting Issue
- Life Liquid

As I said above, you do not want to tell too much about your speech in your title, but you do want to let the audience and judges know your subject matter to some degree. If you do use a vague title, there is one way to get around it, however; i.e., be sure to include a thesis statement.

#### 4.1.2 The Introduction

The introduction may be one of the most analyzed, researched, prepared, and least well executed of the three main components of a speech.

The problem is that all students have been told or think that making a good first impression is of the utmost importance. I won't say that making a good first impression is to be laughed at or ignored, but the degree to which introductions can help a speech in regard to making a good impression is vastly overestimated.

To put it simply, **the introduction of a speech should be the place where you introduce your thesis**; no more, no less. Of course, there are various ways of doing this, and some methods are more elaborate than others.

Basically, however, all you have to do is present a **thesis statement**. (More on thesis statements in the next subsection.) In many cases, however, the speakers get too involved in the techniques and mechanics of the introduction, and forget about introducing the thesis. The most common example which comes to mind is where the speaker tries to introduce his or her speech by being humorous. Often this will cause the speaker to spend too much time in trying to get the audience to laugh, and forget about introducing the thesis or make it so vague that it is not communicated properly.

This approach can lead to a number of problems. First, by trying to make the introduction funny -- something which Japanese in general aren't very good at -- the speakers often end up making introductions in which the humor seems forced.

Of course, if you can think of a genuinely witty way to open your speech there is no better way to get the audience's and judges' attention.

The second pitfall in trying to make an introduction humorous is that it may detract from your thesis, as I have already noted. If the joke, anecdote, or whatever you use to include humor has a direct bearing on your subject, then good. But if you tell a funny story which has no direct relation to your subject, then you are wasting time on irrelevant material and this will make your theme that much more ambiguous.



An introduction need not be elaborate. It might be as simple as saying, "Today, I have come to talk about (subject)." You would, naturally, want to amplify why you think this subject is important, but that is about all that is really necessary.

Remember, the introduction is called an introduction because it introduces the **subject matter** of your speech.

#### **4.1.2.1 The Thesis Statement**

A thesis statement is simply your point of view on the subject you have chosen reduced to a single sentence. It narrows your speech topic and states your position precisely.

A thesis statement is necessary for three reasons:

1. A thesis is expected by the audience and judges. People have learned to expect a thesis early in a speech. It provides a sign post telling your listeners where you are going to take them.
2. A thesis helps the audience follow your ideas. If you do not state your position early in the speech, some of your points might not make sense. This is especially true if you are taking a radical point of view or if you are dealing with an abstract topic.
3. A thesis statement helps you to stick to your topic. It is difficult to wander from your main topic when you have already stated where you want to go with your speech.

#### **4.1.3 The Body**

The body is the part of the speech where you present background information on the subject, analyze it, present case examples, and lead up to your conclusion.

The most difficult part of organizing the body is determining how much to tell the audience and judges. You don't want to tell them something they already know, but you don't want to forget something that is vital to your reasoning.

One guideline is the degree to which the subject matter has been covered in recent newspapers, news programs, etc. If your subject has had a lot of attention recently, then you should go over the outlines, but you do not have to go into too many details because this will make your speech boring.

Conversely, if you have followed my advice on choosing a subject, then you are going to present a theme with which the audience is not too familiar or which is counter to the prevailing opinions, so that you will have to go into greater detail. Be sure that this detail leads to your conclusion, however.

By "leading to the conclusion," I mean that the body should make your conclusion seem acceptable. In the perfect speech, the entire audience should be convinced that yours is the only possible conclusion and that something must be done about the matter. In the imperfect speech, the audience should at least accept your conclusion as a possible choice and not reject it outright. In a bad speech, the audience will totally disagree with you. The body of a speech helps to create the atmosphere or frame of mind in the audience for this.

#### **4.1.3.1 Analyzing the Situation**

For any topic, there is a situation that must be analyzed. The problem with many analyses is that they are biased. Often, the speaker will only present one side of an argument, and go on from there. In order to gain any credibility with the judges and audience, you must present both sides of an argument, then give us your reasoning for choosing one side over the other. Unless you do this, the basis for your entire speech becomes suspect and this can weaken all of your other arguments.

#### **4.1.3.2 Cause and Effect**

Many students fail to explain the cause and effect relations within their arguments or within their speech as a whole. Without including cause and effect relations, a speech is apt to sound illogical and in many cases it makes it difficult to follow a speech.

#### **4.1.4 The Conclusion**

The conclusion is the part of the speech where you are totally in charge; i.e., it is where you tell, ask or order the audience to do something or the other. That is why **it is the most important of the three main components of a speech**, and requires the most work.

When looking at or listening to the actual conclusions of most speeches, however, I find that this is the weakest part of most speeches. I have this feeling that either

the importance of conclusions are underestimated and speakers aren't spending enough time on their conclusions, or that speakers just don't want to put in the time to write a good speech. If the former is true, the answer is simple: Spend more time working on the conclusion. If the latter, then you shouldn't be writing a speech in the first place.

### **Never underestimate the importance of a strong conclusion**

As I have said in the section on the body of a speech, the body must lead up to the conclusion. To put it another way, the conclusion must be a logical extension of the body. Be sure that your conclusion includes all of the problems or assertions which you have stated.

Another general rule that applies to all conclusions is that they should be worded strongly. To put it another way, your conclusion should be phrased in a way which will show your conviction. This is because if it sounds like you don't believe your own conclusion, why should anyone else? Be sure to use strong words, phrases and sentences.

With respect to types of conclusions, it is really difficult to say which kind is best without knowing the actual subject matter. Let me list some of the more common types below, and tack on my feelings concerning each.

- **Simply asking the audience to be more aware of a problem**

In my opinion, this is not a conclusion, per se. Although this is an acceptable way to end a speech to inform, it is not a very strong way to end and, to be frank, I can't think of many speech contests which were won by speeches to inform.

- **Asking the audience to do something tangible**

I feel that this is an excellent way to end a speech and possibly the best if what is asked is practical. For instance, asking the audience to vote when elections are held is fine, but asking them to help build a better computer or rocket ship is impossible for most.

- **Asking the audience to do**

#### ***The Judge's Point of View***

*One thing that is sure to attract a judge's attention is a strong and well-written conclusion.*

*When there is little difference in the quality of the speeches presented, it is the speech with the strongest conclusion that wins. If there are two speeches that are both well-written and presented, then it is inevitably the speech with the stronger conclusion that is going to win the contest.*

### **something intangible**

This is a tricky way of ending a speech, and often it will make your speech sound weak. For example, asking the audience to work for world peace is a fine sentiment, but because of its scale and ambiguity, it is far from practical. If, however, you can find ways in which the audience can work for world peace, then this type of conclusion may be as good as a "tangible" one.

- **Presenting a plan, proposal, or solution**

This is a fine way to end a speech, but this creates the problem of how the conclusion relates to the audience that is, for the most part, made up of students. If, however, you can relate your proposal to the audience and get them involved in some way, this may be the best type of conclusion possible, as long as it is workable.

#### **4.1.4.1 The Perfect Conclusion**

What makes for the perfect conclusion? Although opinions may vary, I would like to list some of the factors that I think are important.

- **Your conclusion should be worded strongly.**
- **Your conclusion should never be ambiguous.**
- **Your conclusion must be a logical extension of the body of your speech.**
- **Your conclusion should cover all of the problems and assertions that your speech presents.**
- **Your conclusion should be as concrete as possible.**
- **Your audience must be able to relate to your conclusion.**
- **Your conclusion should be practical.**

#### **4.1.4.2 Closing the Speech**

In its simplest form, a speech does not have to be closed elaborately. However, in order for a speech to be effective, in order for a speech to leave a lasting impression, the way you close it makes a tremendous difference.

The problem with trying to close your speech in a memorable way, however, is that it requires very good English language skills. This is the place where you want to be rhetorical and poetic, the place where you want to showcase your English ability.

In order to cover up for a lack of language skills, here are some simple techniques that can be used:

- **Use quotations**

If you can't think of something rhetorical to say, then borrow another person's words. You can also quote passages from poems, words of a song or some other source that you think is relevant and rhetorical.

- **Tie your ending in with your title**

Going back to your title is a very clean and effective way of ending a speech.

- **Use words, sentences and phrases in threes**

This is a technique that Sir Winston Churchill used to great effect.

Here is an example from *My Early Life* in which he starts three sentences with "you":

*Come on now, all you young men, all over the world. **You are needed more than ever now to fill the gap of a generation shorn by the war. You have not an hour to lose. You must take your places in life's fighting line.** Twenty to twenty-five! These are the years! Don't be content with things as they are. "The earth is yours and the fullness thereof." Enter upon your inheritance, accept your responsibilities.*

Here, in his first statement to the House of Commons as Prime Minister (13 May 1940), he uses three successive phrases with "victory":

***Victory at all costs, victory in spite of all terror, victory however long and hard the road may be; for without victory there is no survival.***

Here is an instance in which he uses the phrase, "never give in," three times (from an address to Harrow School on 29 October 1941):

***Never give in, never give in, never, never, never, never—in nothing, great or small, large or petty—never give in except to convictions of honor and good sense.***

## **4.2 Some Other Ingredients**

This section deals with some other components and elements of speeches: Logic and reasoning; evidence; and personal examples.

### **4.2.1 Logic and Reasoning**

One of the definitions of logic given by the *American Heritage Dictionary* is, "Valid reasoning, esp. as distinguished from invalid or irrational argumentation."

This is why logic is so important. It helps to make your arguments seem valid and rational. It can help make the infeasible seem feasible; the improbable probable; and the impossible possible.

Unfortunately, there is little advice I can give to make your speech seem more logical and, therefore, more reasonable. If you think you have a problem with logic, you might read a good book on logic (e.g., a book on debate theory), try having a debater look over your speech and pick it to pieces, or even try your hand at debating.

The reason I suggest debating and debaters is that they probably have a lot more practice in constructing logical arguments. It goes without saying that your arguments do not have to be as structured as a debater's would, but the overall flow will not be any different.

### **4.2.2 Evidence and Supporting Material**

Evidence in itself is not necessary for many speeches. If you are making a speech which is outrageous, radical or just plain different (and I suggest that you try all of these), however, you will inevitably be forced to say something which most people will find hard to accept. This is where supporting material comes into play. If you can't convince the audience that your arguments alone are good enough, give them some hard facts or the opinion of an expert to consider.

There are several different types of evidence: Tangible objects, opinion, factual examples, and statistics. All of these are acceptable in a speech, and unlike debate, there is no test or order of validity.

Another aspect of evidence in which speeches differ from debates is the way evidence is presented. In debates, evidence is presented in a very structured style: The source (newspaper, magazine, expert, etc.) of the evidence is stated; the date the source was issued is stated; then finally the evidence is presented. (Dr. So-and-so, professor of something-or-the-other at Here-or-there university, in his book "Whatchamacallit" published in 19xx, says, quote, "Such-and-such," unquote.) In debate all of these factors are relevant and of importance.

In speeches, however, there is no such structured format. All you have to do is state the source and the evidence. (So-and-so says such-and-such.) The date of the evidence may or may not be necessary depending on the type of evidence which is being presented. On one hand, if the evidence is an opinion on a general subject such as originality, one of the quotes I used earlier from Ralph Waldo Emerson should suffice (even though he lived in the 19th century). On the other hand, if you are discussing recent trends, then you will want statistics which are as new as possible.

Still another way that speeches differ from debates is that you don't want too much evidence. In a debate you must substantiate just about everything, or at least you want to. In a speech, you want to limit the amount of evidence you use to a minimum, so that you can show your command of English, your excellent logic, your eloquence, etc.

The following are some guidelines you should remember.

- **Try to tie in any evidence into the flow of your speech.**

In other words, don't worry about the structure as you would in a debate. Rather, worry about making sure that the evidence does not disrupt the flow of your speech.

- **Use evidence only when you think it is absolutely necessary to strengthen a point.**
- **Use the minimum amount of evidence necessary.**
- **In a speech a quote is as good as a hard fact.**

### **4.2.3 Personal Examples**

There are many speeches that make use of personal examples. This is good in that it shows you have experience with the subject matter, and can talk about it firsthand.

One of the problems is that, like humor in introductions, speakers tend to overestimate the value of personal examples. Personal examples are great if they are relevant, significant and directly related to the subject of the speech. Unfortunately, many examples are only indirectly related, of little significance or simply "by-the-ways."

In other words, the basic rules for using personal examples are to make sure that they are really applicable to the speech, are significant and have a direct bearing on your arguments.

Note: Another thing about personal examples is that many speeches that include them are either trivial or too common; e.g., all four speeches on the aged which I mentioned in the section on originality had personal examples about their own elderly relatives or acquaintances.

## **4.3 Improving Your Organization**

One of the worst speeches I have ever heard was organized exactly like a first affirmative constructive speech in a debating match. I placed the speaker last, thinking I might be the only judge doing so, because the arguments seemed to be valid. To my relief, however, I found that the other judges had also placed this speaker last.

The moral of this episode: Good constructive speeches are not necessarily good oratorical contest speeches.

An ordinary speech (i.e., a speech given in a speech contest) should be structured, but not over-structured. There is no need to worry about that PHCS nonsense that some seem to be wedded to. An introduction, body and conclusion are all necessary parts of a speech, however, that is about all the structure you need. Also, the boundaries of these three should not be obvious; i.e., one should naturally flow into another.

How, then, can we get the introduction to flow into the body, and the body to flow into the conclusion? The answer is logic.



Before you even begin to write your speech, be sure to write an outline of the major points. Then, put those points into their logical sequence and add any subpoints which you feel are pertinent. Next, mark the locations where you think evidence, examples, stories, jokes or other additional material would be useful. By this time, you should have more than enough material in your outline to write a speech. Therefore, the next step is to write the speech.

After finishing the initial draft you will have a speech which is either too long or too short. My personal experience in writing speeches tells me that an initial draft should be too long. If it is too short, it usually means that you have not done enough research, have not thought all of your arguments through, or, simply, have not thought enough about your speech.

If your speech is too long, look for any unnecessary or superficial details in your speech and delete them. If your speech is too short, go back to the outline stage and rethink your speech, or do more research on the subject.

## 5. English

### 5.1 *You Can't Fight a War Without Bullets*

One problem which every "pure" Japanese speaker (as opposed to "returnee" Japanese speakers) has is the English language itself. Of course, you are all attempting something that is very difficult: writing and delivering a speech in a second language.

The prerequisite, therefore, is to have a sound vocabulary. You could, of course, write a speech with a vocabulary of only a few hundred words, but I am afraid that such a speech is not going to win you prizes in many collegiate speech contests. This is because the subject matter about which you can write will be limited by your vocabulary. The more specialized the subject, the larger the vocabulary that is necessary. Trying to write a speech on an original subject without a sound vocabulary is like trying to fight a war without bullets for your soldiers.

#### 5.1.1 "Short Words Are Best...."

*"Short words are best and the old words when short are the best of all. "*  
Winston Spencer Churchill

In building their vocabularies, many of the students of the ESSs in Japanese colleges tend to study big words. Furthermore, many of the big words that become part of their active vocabularies are the same. I have nothing against using big words, but it is a pain to hear big words mispronounced, and when you hear the same word(s) used over and over again, it becomes a little boring.

Short words are more effective than big words as Winston Churchill has shown us in his many writings and speeches. This is something that many students and speakers overlook. Another aspect they overlook is the phrases made up of short words. There are many combinations of short words that are more effective than one big word and they are often easier to pronounce as well.

My suggestion is that all speakers should buy a good thesaurus. A paperback copy will do. You will find many alternatives to big words in a thesaurus, and many alternatives for other words which you think you might be overusing. Be sure that the thesaurus is used, however, and not left sitting on your bookshelf.

While you are at it, you might also look into buying a book of quotations. *Bartlett's Book of Familiar Quotations* is probably the most famous, but if any other is

available don't spurn it. Such a book of quotations can be helpful in two ways: They have many examples of how short words can be used effectively; and the many quotes can be used to spruce up your speeches.

### 5.1.2 Diction or “How Forcible are Right Words!”

Diction or the choice of words is another aspect of English that is often overlooked. There is always a right way to describe something and a wrong way. Most speakers seem to do well enough when it comes to descriptions in the bodies of their speeches, but when they get to their main points and conclusions their choice of words often falls apart.

In addition to the above, the English used is often weak. You must be sure to use strong language, especially in the conclusion. This is something many Japanese speakers of English find difficult to do.

A judge at a speech contest once commented, "Language and culture are inseparable, so you must know the culture in order to master the language." How true! Japanese culture is very subtle, polite and often ambiguous. As a result, the Japanese language is very subtle, polite and ambiguous. Conversely, the English language is a very straightforward, candid and forceful language. Therefore, making a speech in English with a Japanese frame of mind leads to a weak speech.

There is a story of a Japanese businessman who lost a contract in the U.S. because he didn't understand this. It is reported that this businessman spoke excellent English, but had spent little time abroad. When the contract was about to be signed, he gave what he felt was a strong affirmative to an important point, but added, "I think," to the end of the sentence. In Japanese, because it is such a subtle language, the verb "omou" (to think) at the end of a sentence implies a strong opinion. In English it suggested that he had reservations or doubts.

Maybe if this man's English hadn't been so good, his American counterpart would have overlooked this "I think." Because his English was excellent, however, the American thought he had a thorough understanding of the language and culture, and was really doubtful about a critical point.

You might remember this story when you are writing a speech. Try to use strong language, even if you wouldn't dare use such language in Japanese. Instead of saying, "I think this is necessary " say "I **BELIEVE** this is **INDISPENSABLE**." Instead of "We should change the situation," say, "There is **NO DOUBT IN MY MIND** that we **MUST** change the situation."

The use of strong language is especially important for your conclusion. Unless you use strong language, how are you going to show your conviction? How are you going to show that you really believe what you are saying? How are you going to get the audience and the judges to remember what you said?

This will be difficult for many Japanese, but I think it will be particularly difficult for coeds. Assertiveness is not considered to be a virtue in Japan, especially for women. Therefore, they tend to be subtle. Try to overcome this, at least when you are writing and making a speech. Rid yourself of any inhibitions and be compelling!

Here are some things to remember when you are writing your speech.

- **Whenever you have a choice between two words or phrases, use the stronger of the two.**
- **Use words for which you know the usage is correct.**
- **Check the usage of a word or words in a dictionary, thesaurus or other reference material.**
- **When using a word or phrase for the first time, have a native speaker or "returnee" check the usage.**

Remember, you may think you have the best subject or conclusion in the world, but this won't mean anything unless you convey your thoughts accurately and convincingly. Your goal is to leave the strongest possible impression.

## ***5.2 Good Grammar, But "This is the Sort of English Up With Which I Will Not Put."***

Grammar must be looked at from two points of view: Grammar in manuscript eliminations and grammar at the actual speech contests. Grammar in the former is much more important than the latter. The reason for this is simple; each elimination judge has a copy of the speech manuscript in front of him. This allows each elimination judge to scrutinize the speech for grammatical errors. This is not to say that grammatical mistakes in the finals are condoned; however, only the grossest of mistakes will be noticed by all the judges. When a judge who has been in Japan for any length of time listens to a speech, he or she tends to overlook little grammatical mistakes, so that the weight placed on grammar is not as great.

Therefore, you should be very careful concerning the grammar in your manuscript. Most speakers tend to take manuscript eliminations lightly, then get up tight when

chosen to take part in the finals of a contest. This is a serious mistake. As far as grammar is concerned, the manuscript eliminations are more stringent. **Be sure that the grammar in your manuscript is as nearly perfect as possible!**

Note, however, that this only applies to speakers who have imperfect English pronunciation. To those with native accents – that means you "returnees" out there – a grammatical mistake during your delivery at the finals will be noticed just as much as a grammatical mistake in your manuscript. This is because your "perfect" pronunciation is working against you; **your perfect pronunciation makes the judges expect perfect grammar.** So you had better be ready to deliver. The only exception to this is described below.

#### ***The Judge's Point of View***

*The judges don't really "hear" a lot of the mistakes made in grammar because they are so used to hearing grammatical mistakes by Japanese speakers of English. This does not hold true if you speak English like a native speaker, however. As a result, "returnees" will probably be penalized more for a single grammatical mistake.*

There are some grammatical mistakes that even native speakers make. For example, the title of this section. This is another quote from Winston Churchill which he made when told by a reporter about his grammatical mistakes. The quote is grammatically correct, but you won't hear a sentence like this often, and it would probably sound more natural if worded as, "This is the sort of English which I will not put up with." In fact, probably most native speakers would use the latter form, not that in the title. So, if you know certain English idioms or common usages which are grammatically incorrect but frequently used, go ahead and use them without worrying about their ungrammatical nature.

Remember, for Japanese speakers who speak English with a Japanese accent, **grammar in the manuscript** is far more important than grammar during actual delivery. For speakers with perfect pronunciation, **mistakes in either will be noticed.**

### **5.3 Pronunciation, Enunciation, Articulation and Those Other Big Words**

The oral aspects of English are something that cannot be changed overnight. If you have lived in Japan all your life, the only thing you can do is practice, practice, and practice. You should, of course, practice with your speech if you are going to take part in a speech contest, but really improving your pronunciation, enunciation, intonation, and articulation, are going to take a lot of work.

The following is a list of pointers to make your English sound a little better (this includes some advice which "returnees" might also find helpful).

- **Avoid using too many words ending in "s."**

The letter S is very common in English and this may be difficult at times, however, you should remember that the "S" sound is not that pleasant to listen to, especially at the end of a word or sentence.

- **Avoid difficult to pronounce words.**

This is another reason for you to buy a thesaurus. Use it to find another word which is easier to pronounce.

- **In a speech contest intonation and articulation are just as important as pronunciation.**

Intonation and articulation can be improved more quickly and are more noticeable in your delivery, so work on these rather than on the pronunciation of individual words.

- **Never take the pronunciation of a word for granted.**

If you are unsure of the pronunciation of a word, be sure to look it up in a dictionary. There are many speakers with near perfect pronunciation, who make the mistake of taking the pronunciation for granted and later find, to their chagrin, that they pronounced the word incorrectly.

A special note for "returnees": As was true for grammatical mistakes, any mistakes in pronunciation you make will be more conspicuous, and each such mistake will be remembered. Be sure you don't make any pronunciation mistakes by following the fourth pointer I have listed above.

## ***5.4 Improving Your English***

This is probably the single most time consuming thing you will do, and the least dramatic in terms of improvement. You have spent at least six years in this endeavor, and I am sure you know what I am talking about.

As I am sure you are well aware, your English will not improve overnight, nor is there any single book with a "secret" way to improve it. The best way I know of in which to improve your English, in general, is to read, read, and continue reading.

The following is a list of some reading material that I would suggest:

### **Novels :**

Never try to read something that is above your head. Be sure to choose something which is at or slightly higher than your current level of English. You might try something like *The Wizard of Oz*, *Alice In Wonderland*, *Winnie-the-Pooh* or other children's stories.

There are also English novels which can be read if you have a vocabulary of around 800 words. Many of these are available from Puffin Books which is the children's division of Penguin Books.

The trick here is to read the same novel two, three, or even a dozen times. By doing this you will pick up words and phrases that you did not know. If necessary, underline and write down those words and phrases in a notebook.

Furthermore, if you continue to read a single author, you may be able to pick up some of his or her style.

For more advanced students of English, let me suggest any of the books written by Winston Churchill, especially *My Early Life*. This is reputed to be the best book written by one of the best writers of the English language.

### **Newspaper editorials and syndicated columns:**

Unlike regular newspaper articles, editorials and syndicated columns (those columns which are printed in more than a single newspaper) have a higher standard of English (by which I mean they are not written in "journalese"). If you subscribe to the Japan Times or another English newspaper published in Japan, read those editorials and columns written by American, English or other native speakers.

Again, read the same editorials two or three times, and underline and write down the words and phrases you don't know.

### **Magazines devoted to a single subject:**

There are many magazines that are targeted at certain hobbies, pastimes, etc. If you like cars, pick up a copy of an automobile magazine. If you like photography, pick up a photography magazine. If you like clothes, pick up a fashion magazine.

In regard to these magazines, I don't think you have to read the same article numerous times, because most of their articles will be dedicated to similar topics, and thus use similar English.

**Newspaper and news magazine articles:**

Concentrate your reading of these only after you have chosen a topic for a speech. The main point in reading such articles is to pick up jargon used in the topic you have chosen. They may not help much in improving your English, because they are mainly written in a "dialect" of English called "journalese." Be sure to note the words and phrases that are unique to the topic you have chosen.



## 6. Delivery

Delivery is one of the more difficult parts of a speech for many Japanese, regardless of whether they are male or female, "returnee" or "native" Japanese.

It is, however, one of the aspects that can improve dramatically with some practice, so I will give you some pointers and also tell you the mistakes which are frequently made.

### 6.1 Projecting Your Voice

*"I sound my barbaric yawp over the roofs of the world. "*  
Walt Whitman

Good projection is a must. You have to be heard to be understood. And although microphones are used at some (many?) speech contests, you can't expect them. You must be prepared to project your voice to the back of the largest room of which you can conceive. And by project I do not mean to shout. Projecting your voice and shouting are two totally different things.

The first thing to do is find the tone of voice with which you can project the best and, at the same time, with which you are comfortable. This tone will be your "normal" speech voice, and you must be able to raise your voice or lower it from that tone for emphasis.

The only way to find that tone is through practice. I recommend practicing outside with a friend.

Have your friend stand about 5 meters away at first, then deliver part of your speech. If he can hear you clearly and you are comfortable with that tone, then have him stand 10 meters away. Try delivering your speech, again. If he can hear you clearly and you are still comfortable, then have him stand 20 meters away. If he can hear you at 20 meters, try delivering your whole speech. If you can deliver your entire speech at this distance so that your friend can hear it, and you are still not overstraining your throat, you shouldn't have any problems as far as projection is concerned.

#### ***The Judge's Point of View***

*Because the judges sit only ten or so rows away from the speaker's podium, they usually don't have to worry about being able to hear a speech, but they will notice if you are not projecting, and they will note that on the judging sheets.*

If you find that your friend can't hear you or he can only hear you when you are straining your throat, then you will have to learn to project your voice from the stomach, rather than the throat. This is a technique used by actors and singers. Practice by pulling in your stomach each time you pronounce a word. Go through your entire speech one word at a time. Next, repeat the process described in the preceding paragraph.

You may have to practice projecting from your stomach for some time before it feels natural, but through practicing you are sure to improve your projection.

### **6.1.1 The Pitfalls of the Microphone**

The microphone is a great invention, and a special boon for women who have an itchy-bitsy voice. For those speakers who have learned to project and are accustomed to projecting, however, the microphone might prove to be a dangerous enemy.

The problem is that when you are using a microphone, it is very difficult to tell how loud you sound to the audience. This is especially true when you are up tight, as you probably will be when making your speech. You may also be afraid of not being audible, so you will end up raising your voice. This only makes it more difficult for the audience to understand what you are saying. There is such a thing as being too loud to be understood.

The only advice I can give in this regard is to study the sound level when other people are using the microphone. There is usually a microphone test for speakers before most contests. Listen to how the other speakers sound, and adjust your voice accordingly. If necessary ask your assistance or some of the other participants how you sounded.

Even if there isn't a microphone test and you are the first speaker, you should be able to check the amplification level because there is usually an opening address. If you feel that the volume of the amplification system is relatively high, then try to deliver your speech in a normal tone. Avoid getting too close to the microphone, however, or else it will pick up your breathing. If you think the volume level is low, try to project more.

Another reason for standing away from microphones is that they tend to pick up Bs, Ps and Vs in a way that sounds like a small explosion. This is very unpleasant to listen to, and detracts from your overall speech.

## **6.2 Adjusting Tone and Volume to Content**

Another aspect of delivery is that you must use your voice for emphasis. Make sure that your voice matches the tone of the words which you are speaking.

If you are coming to an important point, be sure that your voice expresses that by becoming stronger. If you are telling a funny story, make sure that your voice reflects that. If you are recalling something sad, then make sure that your voice sounds sad.

Always try to illustrate your words with the tone of your voice, raising and lowering it as necessary. Speaking with the same tone of voice is a surefire way to bore the judges and audience.

## **6.3 “Motor Mouths” and The Seven-Minute Cure for Insomnia**

When a person is a bundle of nerves, as is often the case at speech contests, he or she tends to speak faster than normal. This is even true of "returnees," and it is potentially more harmful for them because they have the ability to talk really fast. I know because I was a speaker and in my first speech contest in high school I delivered a five-minute speech in 3 minutes and 10 seconds.

If you have good pronunciation, this really isn't too much of a problem as far as being understood is concerned. The problem lies in the quality of your delivery. Your speech probably won't put the judges to sleep because they will be too busy listening to you, but, they will definitely know that you didn't have great delivery. You won't be able to emphasize anything with a fast delivery, and this will result in a lower score.

The opposite of a too-fast delivery is the slow and monotonous delivery. This will put the judges to sleep. Again, I know because I have experienced this as a judge. Although I didn't really go to sleep, I had to fight off the desire to sleep so that I couldn't concentrate on what the speaker was saying. And I am not the only judge who has felt this way. Of course, a monotonous delivery alone is not fatal, but it certainly will detract from an otherwise good speech

Of these two problems, too fast or too slow, I think being too slow will hurt you more. There are very few speech contests which penalize speakers for using too little time, so, if your delivery is too leisurely, you should pick up your delivery speed so that you are talking at a more natural pace.

That is the key word: PACE. Learn to pace your speech. This can only be done with lots of practice. Again, if your speech is a little short, don't expect it to last the whole seven minutes. Pace it to finish in six minutes, or whatever it takes to deliver the speech at a natural rate.

If you have good pronunciation, you can probably deliver a 900-word speech in seven minutes without any problem. If you think your pronunciation is poor, however, try to limit your speech's word count to 800 to 850 words and concentrate on being understood.

## **6.4 Gestures and Body Language**

### **6.4.1 Everything They Imply**

Simply reciting a speech learned by rote is not a good speech. As I have discussed above, delivery is a key factor, and gestures are a key factor in delivery.

In general, most Japanese have a hard time using gestures. This may or may not be because of cultural differences. To further complicate matters, the gestures that Japanese do use are frequently incomprehensible to foreigners. For instance, why do Japanese suck in their teeth? Why do Japanese laugh when nothing funny has been said?

In some cases, Japanese use gestures which have opposite meanings to Westerners. The classic example of this is when beckoning someone with your hands. Japanese will wave back and forth with the hand pointing down. In the west, this gesture is used to shoo someone away.

Because of the problems Japanese have with gestures, when most speakers try to implement them, the gestures look contorted -- unnatural. To overcome these problems, try to follow the suggestions below.

- **Study the gestures and mannerisms of native speakers**

In many cases this is easier said than done, but anybody can watch native speakers give interviews on television. Also, watching how actors use

#### ***The Judge's Point of View***

*Sometimes a speaker is praised for his good gestures, and sometimes he is cautioned for his bad use of gestures. I think the latter is more common. If you are not comfortable using gestures, or are not sure how they should be used, forget about them. Most speakers won't use them, so it won't be noticed, at least not too much, if you don't.*

gestures in movies can also be effective. A movie that comes to mind is *The Verdict* starring Paul Newman. Newman's final statement as defense attorney is especially impressive. Another more famous, but older, movie that comes to mind is *To Kill a Mockingbird* starring Gregory Peck.

In general, movies depicting courtroom dramas have at least one scene in which an actor makes a speech. Study the gestures and mannerisms that the actors and actresses use in those speeches.

- **Never use a gesture until you feel and look comfortable using it.**

You should never use a gesture that looks tacked on. It would be better not to use such gestures. If you want to use a gesture, be sure that you are comfortable with it. Also be sure that you look natural when using the gesture.

This can be checked by practicing your speech in front of a big mirror, or if you have access to a video camera (camcorder), shoot yourself giving your delivery. The latter method is especially effective, and it can also help you memorize your speech if done a number of times.

- **Be sure that the gestures you use agree with what you are saying.**

You don't want to say, "Come here," and shoo someone away, do you?

- **Never try to choreograph your entire speech.**

I have seen this done and it looks terrible. Speakers try to memorize their gestures as well as their speeches, and the results are never good. Only use gestures that come naturally to you.

You will notice that three of my four pieces of advice are negative. This is because I, personally, was never great with gestures. Conversely, I have received a little praise because the few gestures I did use were natural. That is the most important thing about gestures; that they look natural.

#### **6.4.2 Looking Good and Feeling Good**

This is a subject which I have never heard discussed by judges, but I am sure that all judges and audiences are aware of how good, or not so good, a speaker looks. This may sound trivial, but I think not.

From the audience's (and judges') point of view, if you look well-groomed and dressed, you give an aura of being organized and confident. You look as if you are ready to make a good speech.

From the subjective point of view, if you look good and know it, you will feel more confident. And if you feel confident, your speech will be that much better.

In general, male speakers seem to have more of a problem with this than female speakers. You must remember that you are showing yourself off to several hundred people. They not only hear you, but they see you, and, as the saying goes, a picture is worth a thousand words.

Of course, there is no need to outdo yourself. You don't have to spend lots of money on a new wardrobe. All you have to do is make sure you look the best you can within your means. Try to remember the following:

- **Make sure your hair looks neat.**

Take a look in the mirror. Is your hair neat? Does it need a haircut? Should you go to a beauty parlor?

Pay special attention to your bangs. If they are too long, they will either make it more difficult to see your eyes, or they will cast a shadow over your eyes. Either of these can hurt you, because your eyes are the most important part of your expression.

- **Be sure to coordinate your clothes.**

This has a lot to do with taste, so if you are not sure about the clothes you have chosen, then ask someone who seems to have good taste.

- **Be sure to wear appropriate clothes.**

What is or is not appropriate for a speech contest is also a matter of taste, or, possibly, common sense. There is no need to be overly conservative, but you shouldn't be too flamboyant, either. You are taking part in a speech contest, not a fashion show or a rock concert.

Having said that, over the years, this hasn't been too much of a problem. The one case that really stands out is that of the young lady who wore a China dress to one contest. There were a few others on the other end of the spectrum, both men and women, who wore clothes that were too casual. Most of these were returnees, who sometimes have a different perspective when it comes to what is formal and what is casual.

- **Make sure that you look neat when taking the stage.**

Be sure that your hair is not a mess, and that all of your clothes are where they are supposed to be. For men: Make sure your necktie isn't crooked. For women: Make sure that you don't have too much makeup on.

Have your clothes cleaned and pressed if necessary, and be sure to polish your shoes. In many cases, speakers will present their speeches from a stage, and you would be surprised at the excellent view that the judges have of your shoes.

- **Keep your back straight.**

Make sure that you don't slouch when walking up to the podium or when delivering your speech. Slouching makes you look disheveled and unconfident.

- **Don't lean on the podium.**

Some speakers do this, causing them to droop. This is usually more of a problem for the tall, male speaker.

## 7. Appendices

### 7.1 Appendix A. Q&A Time

Question and answer periods may be one of the most painful times for both speakers and judges. They are painful for speakers because they don't know what to expect and they often have to grope for an answer. They are painful for judges because the speakers rarely answer the questions with direct answers.

This is another big problem for Japanese: Directly answering the question asked. Japanese culture tends to be ambiguous, so that even if a Japanese is speaking in English, he or she tends to answer in a very Japanese way; i.e., ambiguously. This gives the judges the impression that the speaker is uncertain, or does not know the answer to the question.

Therefore, be sure to follow the advice below.

- **Always respond to questions with direct answers.**

If there is a need to elaborate, then do so, but only after replying directly to the question.

- **Never give an ambiguous answer.**

If you are asked a "yes/no" question, answer with a yes or no, then elaborate if necessary.

If you are asked a "why" or "how" question, then tell the "why" or "how."

- **Always be to the point.**

Don't add something that has nothing to do with the question just to kill time.

- **Always go back to your speech.**

By going back to your speech in a natural way, you can show that you are consistent, and that you really believe in what you said earlier.

Try to practice questions and answers. This will be a two step process.

First, try to think of all possible questions, and come up with direct answers to all of the questions you have thought of. Next, ask various friends to ask you questions, then think of answers to those questions. (You might ask members of the debate section to help you with this, because they have a lot of practice in cross examination.)

Finally, don't be afraid of the question and answer period. The questions will be about your speech. In other words, they will be what are known as stock questions. As long as you have done your homework (i.e., as long as you have thoroughly researched your topic), you should think of the Q&A session as an opportunity to showcase your knowledge on the topic.

## ***7.2 Appendix B. Extemporaneous Speeches***

Extemporaneous speeches are usually just as painful to both speakers and judges as Q&A time. The reason is because extemporaneous speeches usually have poor English and organization and, often, no conclusions. Of these three, the most common mistake is the last; i.e., most extemporaneous speeches don't have conclusions.



Therefore, the first thing to do when you are trying to decide between two or three topics is to find a topic for which you can think of a conclusion. Although the stronger the conclusion the better, this isn't mandatory. Just find a conclusion that is logical for the subject. It doesn't matter if your conclusion is run-of-the-mill, either. Just about any conclusion will suffice, because most of the other speakers won't have conclusions.

[This was true when I first wrote this manual over ten years ago, but students have improved a bit since then. Today, a well-organized extemporaneous speech with a conclusion is the norm. You must now strive to come up with a significant, if not original, extemporaneous speech.]

Poor English can only be overcome by studying the English language, and I hope that some of the advice I have given elsewhere in this manual will be of some help. Otherwise, you should try to utilize as much of your active vocabulary as possible. Don't try to use too many words you have looked up in the dictionary during the preparation period for the extemporaneous speech. Trying to do so will only confuse you. Limit yourself to a few new words, and be sure to check their pronunciations.

In regard to organization, make a simple outline of your speech, and then add certain words, phrases or sentences that you definitely want to include. **Don't try to write down your entire speech!** You won't be able to write enough for a four-minute speech, and you don't want to read your speech anyway.

In a four-minute extemporaneous speech, I feel that about thirty seconds should be devoted to the introduction, 2 to 2-1/2 minutes to the body, and 1 to 1-1/2 minutes to the conclusion.

Finally, let me add that you shouldn't be afraid to improvise while delivering your extemporaneous speech. If you suddenly come up with a great idea during your speech, try to work it in.

### ***7.3 Appendix C. The Evolution of a Prepared Speech***

After writing and editing the first draft of your speech, put it aside. You should, of course, think about your speech, but not too much. Then, after one or two weeks, reread it. By doing so, you will probably be able to discover the flaws and weaknesses in your speech. You may also be able to think of different ways to say things or have completely new ideas which you will want to include.

You should also have others read your manuscript and ask their opinions. Don't limit yourself to one or two people. Nor limit yourself to asking only your peers; ask

your juniors or "kohai" as well as your seniors or "sempai" and teachers. You don't have to adopt all of the ideas people offer you. In fact, you shouldn't even try to include all of the ideas, even if they are from renowned judges or teachers. Doing so will cause your speech to be schizophrenic. Just try to include the ideas you like and that you think will take your speech in the direction you want it to go.

This process of editing and re-editing your speech should continue for the "life" of the speech; i.e., as long as you want to use it. There is no such thing as a "perfect" speech, so as long as you are not bored with a given speech you should try to improve on it.

Conversely, once you have become bored with a speech you should set it aside permanently. This is because if you are bored with the subject matter; you are unlikely to think of new ways to improve on it. I have also found that no matter how good the manuscript, if you are bored with it, you will not give a very enthusiastic delivery, thereby detracting from the speech.

The process described above will usually continue from three to six months, although this will depend on the topic and on the speaker.