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## **Book Review**

**Stephen E. Lucas *The Art of Public Speaking* (13th edition). New York, NY. McGraw Hill Education, 2019. HB ISBN 978-1259924606, PB ISBN 978-1260548099, EBook 9781264453153 Year of publication 2019. Pages 896.**

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Public speaking, or as the Ancient Greeks called it rhetoric, is probably as old as civilisation itself. As Lucas (4) points out, the Ancient Athenian statesman Pericles reputed assertion 2,500 years ago, is just as true now, as it was then: ‘One who forms a judgment on any point but cannot explain’ it clearly “might as well never have thought at all on the subject.” Public speaking is often thought of as a subject limited to politicians, for example, in Mark Antony’s famous speech in Shakespeare’s *Julius Caesar* ( Act III, scene ii): ‘Friends, Romans, countrymen, lend me your ears;/ I come to bury Caesar, not to praise him.’ But in reality, public speaking (in the shape of everything from traditional oral presentations to more contemporary webcasts and podcasts), whether it is to simply convey an argument effectively, or to persuade audiences of a particular point of view, occurs everywhere from business meetings to teacher’s addressing classes, to student speeches in school and to all manner of civic engagement at a wide variety of public events. Public speaking is the lifeblood of local democracy and perhaps democracy itself. Even the speeches made at weddings and funerals can be considered a form of public speaking.

In our increasingly technologically dominated world there is a commensurate need for scientists and other innovators to communicate their complex ideas to the general public, which has been shown by the success of the TED talks ( TED originated in 2006 and represents the convergence of Technology, Entertainment and Design) as a phenomenon in

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the Anglophone world. Public speaking isn't a specifically English language phenomenon though and effective public speaking is valuable in all languages and cultures (though this book provides examples with English speakers in mind). As Lucas points out (5): 'Eloquence was highly prized in ancient India, Africa, and China, as well as among the Aztecs and other pre-European cultures of North and South America.'

Lucas' *The Art of Public Speaking* is one of the best regarded and most complete text books in the field and is often used in American university courses on public speaking. Now updated to its 13<sup>th</sup> edition. there are considerable augmentations from educational technology which increase the potential value of the book considerably. The book still follows a traditional model of teaching public speaking in which students gain confidence and skill through practicing their own speeches in various forms, while different types of public speeches are analysed as examples. However, the technological enhancements include a complete library of media and exemplary texts, relevant study aids for speech preparation and some innovative online assessment tools. Lucas points out in the preface ( xvi) that there is 'an extensive video program that is available both on DVD and on Connect, McGraw-Hill's online learning platform. The video program includes over forty full student speeches, plus more than sixty speech excerpts. Eleven of the full speeches and eighteen of the excerpts are new to this edition'. For those who use the LMS Blackboard then this edition is fully integrated with that. This approach will be familiar to those teaching EFL or EAP and has been carefully thought through to give maximum benefit to teachers and learners. The Annotated Instructor's Edition and Instructor's Manual of the book, provide teaching advice and give outlines on how to use the various exemplary materials and supplementary learning and assessment aids. .Also of note in this new 13<sup>th</sup> edition is a new chapter on presenting online speeches and eleven new full student speeches for analysis. If using the E-book ( which is shorter in print terms, than the two print editions, as so much material is presented online) then there are sixty fully integrated speech excerpts that can be accessed while the eBook is read. In all of the different versions of the 13<sup>th</sup> edition there is also amended

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presentation of audience analysis, including a useful account of how contemporary issues of gender and sexual orientation might affect speeches. There is also greater emphasis on how presentation technology has continued to evolve. Whether all this is worth the price of the new edition, if you are already using an older one, may depend on what kind of resourcing the university, college or school has. But if resourcing is no issue, then you will find the new edition offers numerous benefits. The chapters themselves are organised into five parts: ‘speaking and listening’ (chapters 1-4); ‘speech preparation’ (chapters 5-8); ‘getting started’ (chapters 9-11); ‘presenting the speech (chapters 12-14) and varieties of public speaking (chapters 15-20).

The 1st Chapter, ‘Speaking in Public’ shows the role of public speaking historically in terms of Pericles’ dictum (above) on the need of an individual to communicate their ideas and public speaking’s role in civic society. Public speaking and daily conversations share similarities but also differ as well, as public speaking usually includes time limitations, comprehensive preparation and more formal language which is delivered with a specific audience in mind. As a speech communication it consists of seven interacting elements: speaker, message, channel, listener, feedback, interference, and situation. Chapter 2, ‘Ethics and Public Speaking’ addresses the issue of plagiarism (the bug bane of many a lazy politician) as well as a consideration of whether whatever public statements are made are consistent with the ethics of the society and the audience. I think this last issue is quite a thorny one and probably deserving of even more attention than in just one chapter. There is for example, considerable differences between societies in terms of what they consider ‘free speech’ to be, as can be seen when comparing European countries and the United States. Much of what passes for politically acceptable free speech in America, for example, could see the speaker end up in a British court. However, it is sensible as Lucas argues to eschew name-calling and abusive or offensive language in public-speaking. Though if you look at politicians like President Trump this seems in conflict with their basic rhetorical strategies.

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Chapter 3, 'Listening' is a salutary reminder of the important role of active listening in all forms of communication and I would agree with Lucas' comment ( 84) that we should engage in 'listening seriously and committing ourselves to become better listeners' and should suspend judgement on what a speaker looks like. There is a nice self-assessment tool ( 54) to find out how good you are generally as an active listener. These self-assessment quizzes as well as questions that promote critical reflection are a feature of the book. Listening has become a central tenet of much business communication theory for effective workplace interaction but its importance is often overlooked in public speaking training. Chapter 4, 'Giving Your First Speech' focuses on the need for adequate preparation, practice and creating an effective structure for the argument of the speech. There were many useful tips here which will improve almost any public speaking performance and preparation and frequent practice are the best ways to avoid any anxiety over speaking in public.

Chapter 5, 'Selecting a Topic and a Purpose' is a useful reminder that not all public speeches are going to be the same and the topic and purpose may cause certain variations. In the case of the classroom the situation is slightly unusual as while speakers in public life often chose subjects they are experts on, or have been deeply passionate about for a long period of time, this may be less true for young adults at school or college. Lucas gives valuable advice on how to deal with this including such aspects as (77) researching topics thoroughly and (80-85) determining in advance the specific purpose of a speech. This indicates how far Lucas' textbook is written with students in mind which is a large reason why it has been so successful. Many public speaking books often presume their readers are already experts or passionate about certain subjects and merely need to know how to improve their public speaking skills. In Chapter 6, 'Analyzing the Audience' the reader is reminded that good public speaking is all about listeners and audiences (96): 'Good public speakers are audience-centered. They know the primary purpose of speechmaking is not to browbeat the audience or to blow off steam. Rather, it is to gain a *desired response* from listeners.' There is a vast difference between, say, giving a talk about vintage cars to an audience of school children as

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opposed to members of your local vintage automobile association. So considering your audience demographics ( 98-102) and their knowledge is time well spent as Lucas argues. In Chapter 7, 'Gathering Materials' the emphasis is on the variety of ways research can be undertaken on a subject and includes libraries, newspapers, journals, the internet, interviews and the speaker's own knowledge. In Chapter 8, 'Supporting Your Ideas', Lucas examines the kinds of evidence that can be used to support the arguments when making a public speech and as in chapter 7, much of this is familiar as it is similar to writing essays. Various sources include quotations, statistics, and testimony( 153-157) and like an essay there is a need to let your audience know where this information has come from. While I would certainly agree with this, I think more discussion was necessary on how to ensure sources cited, especially from the internet, were actually reliable and the book is to my mind too brief on the subject of critical internet literacy, considering that the growth of conspiracy theories and completely erroneous 'facts' is a crucial problem in today's world.

Chapter 9, 'Organizing the Body of a Speech' gives clear guidelines on how to integrate purposive argument and appropriate evidence and a suitable structure of what would be called the overarching thesis statement in an essay, that is subsequently broken down into main points, with an effective introduction and conclusion and carefully arranged signposting. Chapter 10 'Beginning and Ending the Speech' serves to focus much more sharply on the way the introduction and conclusion of a speech work. Where this process differs from an essay, which is usually written for a specific academic audience ( such as your professor) is that there is a necessity (183-186) to establish credibility and goodwill and to pique the interest of your audience. This fact isn't typically thought of as being important in academic writing ( though it is in journalism). There are also typical strategies for concluding speeches such as using quotations which would be frowned upon in the genre of the academic essay. In Chapter 11, 'Outlining the Speech' the importance of outlines as both ways to ensure speeches are articulate and cogent and to include key words in a 'speaking outline' to help in delivering the actual speeches as a performance is discussed.

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In Chapter 12, 'Using Language' he examines the different kind of registers that using language can provide in a speech (such as formal and informal language), the various figures of speech available, imagery, the distinction between denotative and connotative language and finishes with an explanation of what inclusive language is. Although it may be beyond many public speakers, I did question why there was not more discussion of linguistic uses such as irony and ambiguity or traditional rhetorical strategies such as *bathos* and *pathos* for that matter. Remember Mark Antony's wonderful irony in, 'I come to bury Caesar, not to praise him'? Chapter 13, 'Delivery' is a well-reasoned discussion about the importance of how a speech is delivered and includes issues such as timing and proxemics (or body language) Lucas is correct to say that. pitch, tune, volume, pauses, pronunciation, articulation, and dialect all play a part in delivery but I wasn't convinced that a textbook such as this one could do much to teach what is more usually thought of as the specialised remit of speech and drama training. There is however a very useful section on dealing with audience questions (244-247), a subject which often foxes even the best public speakers. In Chapter 14, 'Using Visual Aids' Lucas enters a territory which is more familiar from books on giving presentations which more often than not only consider PowerPoint. However, the author's focus is not quite the same as he is concerned to make the visual aids illustrative rather than as sometimes happens, entirely taking over the speaker's presentation. This is something we have all seen on occasion. when we failed as a member of the audience to even know what the actual speech was about, as we were so distracted and amazed by the all-singing, all-dancing animation.

Chapter 15, 'Speaking to Inform' begins the section on types or genres of public speaking and suggests a useful framework to delineate these types of speeches driven by conveying information: speeches about objects, speeches about processes, speeches about events, and speeches about concepts. There's some useful advice on not being too technical, although this will probably depend on the kind of audience it is intended for and their level of knowledge about the subject. Chapters 16 'Speaking To Persuade' and Chapter 17, 'Methods of

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Persuasion' focus on the psychology of persuasion and Lucas suggests it involves tailoring a message to the listeners' beliefs and attitudes. There is some useful discussion. but it is fair to say it is not as in depth as discussions of the same in marketing, advertising or political propaganda where the subject of persuasion can often occupy an entire book. Chapter 18, 'Speaking on Special Occasions' introduces four main types (380): speeches of introduction; speeches of presentation; speeches of acceptance, and commemorative speeches. There are some useful points made about each of these specific genres but I'd have liked to have seen eulogies, or funeral speeches treated separately here as they are often very traumatic for a family member but yet have a very important social and family function to perform. In chapter 19, "Online Speeches" are analysed as belonging to two main types: recorded online speech (synchronous) and real-time online speech ( asynchronous). There is useful advice on technological issues but again, there are books available for this which go into much more detail. Chapter 20, 'Speaking in Small Groups' was something of a surprise as I would not normally regard this as public speaking. However, Lucas makes a case for the fact it should be considered a subset of such. A section on presenting the recommendations of the group and ensuring different viewpoints are represented adequately gives food for thought as the small group network is already such a key component of Arts and Humanities teaching.

The main disadvantage of this book is that it is relatively expensive. However, as a complete, exhaustive handbook to studying and teaching public speaking it deserves its very prominent position in the field. This is as extensive a handbook as you are likely to get on the subject. It is also unlike many books on public speaking for business people or the general public insofar as it has students at college and university firmly in its sights as its target audience and is written with this specific audience in mind. The new edition offers much to recommend it through a judicious and pedagogically valuable use of technology to play a role in both learning and assessment. It is easy enough for a tutor to add their own examples to supplement the various speeches and other material provided, as is common in EFL and ELT.

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There are a wealth of examples of speeches supplied and while these are mostly sourced from the American context, as it is an American textbook, as long as you and your students don't mind this then they are usually interesting and informative. The main drawback, if there is one, is if you using this with a different language than English then the course teacher would have to find and provide all their own textual and other examples. This is an area where a web site for international teachers could perhaps allow teachers to put up suitable material in different languages, which would enhance the effectiveness of *The Art of Public Speaking* when used to teach public speaking in languages other than English. Public speaking should be a core element in universities and colleges and is equally valuable in non-Anglophone language contexts.

### **References**

No author, no date, 'History of TED' *TED: Ideas Worth Spreading* available online <https://www.ted.com/about/our-organization/history-of-ted>

**About Reviewer:** Dr. Alan Ali Saeed is an Assistant Professor teaching modern English literature at Sulaimani University, Iraqi Kurdistan. He has a BA (Hons) from Sulaimani University (2004), an MA with merit (London University 2009), a PhD on Bergson and British modernist women's writing (Brunel University 2016), as well as a PGCHE (Falmouth 2021) in university pedagogy. He has published on Katherine Mansfield, British modernism, contemporary British fiction and on contemporary Anglophone fiction about Iraqi Kurdistan. See his publications here: <https://sites.google.com/a/univsul.edu.iq/alan-ali-saeed/publications> His email is: [alan.asaeed@univsul.edu.iq](mailto:alan.asaeed@univsul.edu.iq)