



## Balancing the Old and the New

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When my editor first alerted me to Todd Frobish's (2000) article critiquing public speaking texts, I immediately thought, "He's unfamiliar with my book." Not only is it informed by Jamieson's (1988) work, but it also presents up-to-date rhetorical theory, including Fisher's (1984, 1999) narrative paradigm and Foss and Griffin's (1995) invitational rhetoric. It broke ground in incorporating diverse ways of organizing, presenting, and listening to speeches along with classical theories and traditional patterns that are widely taught.

Although Frobish focuses on the fifth edition of Stephen Lucas's best-selling text, his broadened claims include public speaking texts in general:

The current state of speech pedagogy does not fully reflect modern theory and research . . . Our most pressing problem is in our representation of the modern rhetorical situation. . . . Our theory, typically derived from the latest research, reflects changes in the modern rhetorical situation, *but by ignoring this research, we have rendered our current speech texts out-of-touch* (239) [emphasis added].

An outcry from many textbook authors greeted Frobish's article. Much of his argument is based on research that is several years old. For example, he cites sources from 1989, 1990, 1992, and 1995. One notable assertion--that our textbooks show "a lack of conceptual diversity in the classroom and a rejection of rhetorical and cultural plurality" (quoted on p. 240)--is proven false by Jaffe (1995) as well as Kearney and Plax (1995), two texts that focus on diversity. Frobish further says that Jamieson (1988) presents a new model of eloquence, but that "authors still resist teaching any form of this new eloquence in public speaking textbooks" (p. 240).

Because Lucas's book has dominated the field of public speaking for many years, it is reasonable for Frobish to critique this, the leading text. However, Lucas has many competitors for a reason. Authors take on a huge textbook writing project, not for fun, but because they find inadequacies in current offerings, and they believe they have something important and unique to say. They gamble that a large enough group of colleagues will agree with their assessment, and as a consequence, select their text.

Perhaps Frobish is correct about deficiencies in Lucas's fifth edition, but he cannot generalize to speech texts overall. Other authors in this special issue contend that their texts do balance the latest in theory and research with time-tested concepts and strategies. I am no exception. In three editions, I have integrated up-to-date research with traditional, still timely material.

My own thinking about public speaking drew from classical rhetorical traditions as well as from Jamieson (1988), Ong (1982), McLuhan (1964), Goody and Watt (1995), and others who argued that the technology of a culture changes the institutions of a culture. I was particularly interested in the way film, television, and now the Internet influence public discourse. Armed with many hours of undergraduate and graduate anthropology as well as extensive reading of philosophers who examined women's ways of thinking and knowing, I set out to write my own text, one of the first in the field to offer itself as "a cultural perspective"

(Jaffe, 1995).

My background and interests shaped my text in many ways; here are a few examples. The opening chapter in all three editions of my text features both Ong (1982, 1995) and Jamieson (1988) along with an explanation of public speaking in oral, literate, and electronic cultures. Throughout, I discuss ways that the technology of a culture influences how people think as well as how they do research, record their information, and use audiovisual aids. In a culture that is progressing at “twitch-speed” (Prensky, 1998) it is almost startling to remember that pictures were first put on the Internet in 1994. Consequently, Chapter 7, “Researching Your Speech in an Electronic Culture,” addresses the I-generation (the Internet-generation) and provides practical and cautionary tips for students who often use the Internet as their sole source for materials.

In addition, I base public speaking in the dialogical theory of communication developed by Geissner (McGwire & Slembek, 1987; Schwandt & Soraya, 1992), Buber (1958, 1965), Arnett (1981), and Stewart and Thomas (1995), among others. The first (1995) and third (2001) editions include a separate chapter on narrative speaking, and the second edition (1997) integrates narrative speaking throughout the text. All three editions discuss the influence of culture and gender on reasoning along with the five canons of rhetoric. All present right brain strategies ranging from mind mapping to use of alternative, nonlinear organizational patterns; the third edition (2001) explicitly addresses cognitive styles as a form of diversity.

I could continue. Suffice it to say that I--along with a myriad of other authors and the instructors who choose our texts--do not “still resist teaching any form of this new eloquence in public speaking textbooks” (240) as Frobish suggests. Instead, we strive to balance rhetorical traditions with up-to-date theories and practices both in our texts and in our classrooms.

But this is not new. Not only are we--the twenty-first century authors--creatively integrating contemporary theory and pedagogy, but we join a long line of twentieth-century writers who did similarly. Winans’s (1917) early text argued,

Our subject is yet in an unsettled state, and wide differences of opinion are unavoidable, perhaps desirable. I hope that in the future we shall have more established truth as a result of the scholarly efforts of the young men now entering our field (x).

By the 1930s, the same author (1938) talked of “conversing with an audience”(11) and exhorted young speakers to “fix firmly in mind that a speech is a dialogue and to emphasize constantly the part of the audience, anticipating and watching for its response” (14). Thonnsen & Gilkinson (1947) include a chapter on radio speaking, on experimental studies of audience reactions, and on objective measurements of speech. Bryant and Wallace (1960) updated their 1953 text to “[reflect] the new interest in linguistics” (vi) and--after the McCarthy era--to face the problem of speaker ethics as squarely as possible. McCroskey (1993) refers to his first 1968 edition, which was written to integrate the dominant rhetorical tradition with research from the developing social science tradition. Throughout the last half of the century, authors have added the ubiquitous transactional model of communication, Maslow’s hierarchy of needs, dissonance theory, Burkean concepts, theories about the rhetoric of protest, and other ideas that emerged in the academic and social milieu of a turbulent century.

And so it continues. Current authors and instructors are not ignoring the rapid technological advances, the changing international scene, the cutting edge thinking in philosophy and the social sciences. Instead, many of us are thinking long and hard about ways to create public speaking texts and classrooms that flesh out Jamieson’s model that “synthesizes the old and the new . . . taking account of the changing rhetorical situation while holding on to the classical rhetorical ‘virtues’” (241).

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