

BASIC ELEMENTS OF RHETORIC

Nicoletta Di Blas – Introduction

1

What is rhetoric?

- The “art of speaking”
- Ancient Greece, 5th century BC

“To a certain extent all men attempt to discuss statements and to maintain them, to defend themselves and to attack others. Ordinary people do this either at random or through practice and from acquired habit. Both ways being possible, the subject can plainly be handled systematically, for it is possible to inquire the reason why some speakers succeed through practice and others spontaneously; and every one will at once agree that such an inquiry is the function of an art”

(Aristotle, Rhetoric, 4th cent BC)

2

The 5 parts of rhetoric:

3

- «Inventio» (invention): finding arguments
- «Dispositio» (arrangement): putting arguments in order
- «Elocutio» (style): choosing the right style/wording
- «Memoria» (memory): *just for public speaking* – learning the talk by heart
- «Actio» (delivery): *just for public speaking* – non verbal aids (how to move, how to change tone of voice...)

3

Part1: inventio

- Invention: finding arguments, finding «what to say»

4

Examples from commercials



5

Arguments / 1

- Arguments can be related to:
 - The author/sender (ETHOS)
 - The addressee (PATHOS)
 - The thing under discussion (LOGOS)
 - reason, facts and figures

6

Arguments / 2

- Arguments can anticipate what the addressee wants/thinks

- It is useful to think about:

- (2–3) possible **objections** and be ready to answer
 - (2–3) possible **wishes** and be ready to fulfill them

“This campus is extremely locked down due to security, but as part of this tour, you will get to explore the areas that only employees are typically allowed to venture.”

(from the description of a Silicon valley tour)

7

Step 2: dispositio

- Arrangement: how to organize the arguments
- It depends on the “context”:
 - Written vs. oral communication
 - Span of attention by the audience
 - Interruptions?
 - Kind of presentation
 - ...

8

The “Nestorian” order

- STRONG
- LESS STRONG
- STRONG

In what cases:

- Written text, conference, lesson, ...

Pre-conditions:

- Continuous attention by the audience



9

Descending climax

- STRONG
- LESS STRONG
- LESS STRONG
- ...

In what cases:

- TV footage, interview...

Pre-condition: short span of attention



10



11

Ascending climax

- LESS STRONG
- SCALING UP
- STRONG

In what cases:

- High expectations

Pre-condition:

- continuous attention, captive public

12

Winning of favor

- Possible start
- “Captatio benevolentiae”: winning of favor
- 3 (main) ways

13

1) Praise the audience

“I'm honored to be introduced by someone who writes so powerfully about the past and is working so effectively to shape the future. [...] I'm honored to be here with all of you and to be here at Freedom House. For more than 50 years, Freedom House has been a voice for tolerance for human dignity. People all over the world are better off because of your work.»

(Bill Clinton, at the Freedom House in 1995)



14

2) Show understanding

“I have roots in the countryside, as I also harvested potatoes, [...] I spent the cold winter evenings in the stables where it was warm and wonderful country stories were told. I spent many years of my childhood in the Como countryside. These are values that cannot be forgotten, that one carries throughout one's life.”

(Silvio Berlusconi, «Confagricoltura» meeting, an Italian association of , 27 Sept. 27, 1994)

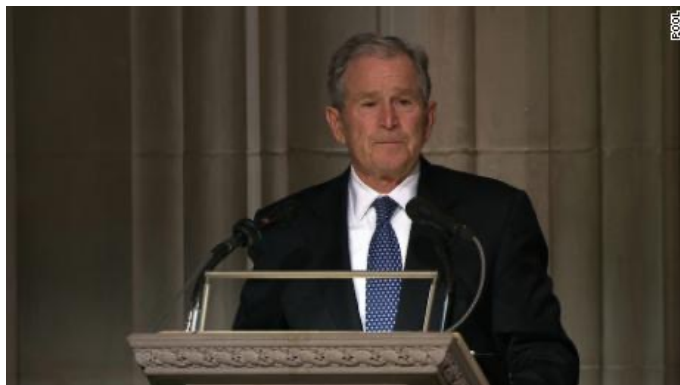


15

3) Be humble and/or self-ironic

“I want to thank you for overlooking my dress code violation. They were about to stop me at the door, but Irving Kristol said, “I know this guy, let him in.”

(George Bush, annual dinner of the American Enterprise Institute, Feb. 26 2003)



16

Step 3: elocutio

17

□ Elocutio

- «Dress» ideas in words
- Style does make a difference!
- Figures of speech
 - Of «thoughts» and «words»
 - E.g. metaphor: a figure of thought: «Louis is a lion»

17

Example 1

- American civil war (1861 to 1865)
- Abraham Lincoln addresses those who urged a change of commanders in the middle of the Civil War
- He is **AGAINST** a change of commanders

18

Example 1 – the speech

«Gentlemen, I want you to **suppose a case for a moment**. Suppose that all the property you were worth was in gold, and you had to put it in the hands of Blondin, the famous ropewalker, to carry across the Niagara falls on a tight rope. Would you shake the rope while he was passing over it, or keep shouting to him , ‘Blondin, stoop a little more! Go a little faster!’ No, I’m sure you would not. You would hold your breath as well as your tongue, and keep your hands off until he was safely over. **Now, the government is in the same situation**. It is carrying an immense weight across a stormy ocean. Untold treasures are in its hands. It is doing the best it can. Don’t badger it! Just keep still, and it will get you safely over.»



19

Example 2.1 – figure of words: anaphora

- “**We shall not flag or fail. We shall go on to the end. We shall fight in France, we shall fight on the seas and oceans, we shall fight with growing confidence and growing strength in the air, we shall defend our island, whatever the cost may be, we shall fight on the beaches, we shall fight on the landing grounds, we shall fight in the fields and in the streets, we shall fight in the hills. We shall never surrender.**”

(Winston Churchill)

20

Example 2.2 – figure of words: anaphora

I have to confess that when we started our Food Security Initiative, I did not know that most food was grown by women. I remember once driving through Africa with a group of distinguished experts. And I saw women working in the fields and I saw women working in the markets and I saw women with wood on their heads and water on their heads and children on their backs. And I remarked that women just seem to be working all the time. And one of the economists said, 'But it doesn't count.' I said, 'How can you say that?' He said, 'Well, it's not part of the formal economy.' I said, 'Well, if every woman who did all that work stopped tomorrow, the formal economy would collapse'

(H. Clinton, *Address to the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women* delivered 12 March 2010, United Nations, New York).

21

Example 3 – similitude

- As the volume of data grows, so does its value and the interest of organizations in exploiting that potential by building systems to analyze those data. However, once generated, data are messy, heterogeneous and unsuitable to fit the plethora of applications requiring their use. As a consequence they need to be transformed before being analyzed. To this end, many commercial tools were developed, with the purpose of preparing the data, to shape them, as a demiurge would shape matter.

22

Implicit vs. explicit

- A “base-line” in communication: you always have to choose
 - ▣ Explicit: to be sure!
 - ▣ Implicit: to go deeper
 - Example (a CV, before and after)
 - People like to draw their own conclusions
 - Careful: this may be deceitful

23

On reference & common ground

- Reference: what are we talking about?
- Communication needs to be understandable – i.e. the addressee needs to be capable of «locating» what the sender is talking about
- “Shall we meet after dinner?”



24

On reference & common ground

5G RADIO ACCESS

CAPABILITIES AND TECHNOLOGIES

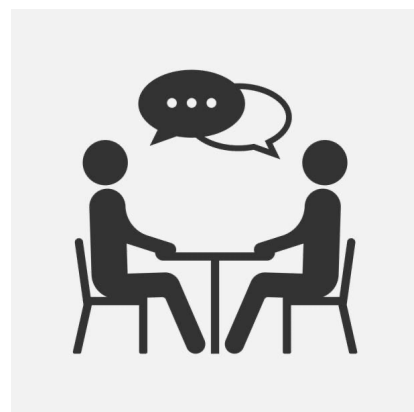
The capabilities of 5G wireless access must extend far beyond previous generations of mobile communication. Examples of these capabilities include very high data rates, very low **latency**, ultra-high **reliability**, energy efficiency and **extreme device densities**, and will be realized by the development of **LTE** in combination with new radio-access technologies. Key technology components include extension to higher frequency bands, access/**backhaul** integration, device-to-device communication, **flexible duplex**, flexible spectrum usage, multi-antenna transmission, ultra-lean design, and user/control separation.

(Ericsson White paper, Uen 284 23-3204 Rev C | April 2016)

25

On reference & common ground

- Communication has to build upon a «common ground» (i.e. **common knowledge) between the interlocutors**
- Two mistakes:
 - Taking pieces of knowledge that are *not* shared for granted (the most common mistake)
 - Not taking for granted pieces of knowledge, beliefs and/or information that *are* shared. This kind of mistake, less common, originates verbose communications



26

Step 4: memoria

□ Memory

- Keep in mind the arguments and their order
- Use «aides memoires»
 - E.g. associate the main arguments to something you know well
 - Create a “scene” (e.g. taxonomic groupings of individual organisms in biology)

27

Step 5: actio

- Voice
- Gestures
- Movements

TIPS:

- Rehearse! At least 4 times
- Prepare the first sentence you are going to say
- Use eye-contact, with single individuals

28

END