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AUTHOR Friedrich, Gustav W.  
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ABSTRACT

A review of the role of theory and research in the teaching of public speaking reveals that although speech models have been an important pedagogical tool since the beginning of systematic instruction in public speaking, research investigating the value of model speeches is limited. A 1966 survey of 861 instructors in public speaking indicated that while theorists agreed that both good and bad models should be used to illustrate the principles of speech making, few were able to offer specific suggestions on appropriate usage. The few empirical studies on modeling suggest that models enhance skill development but do not reduce performance apprehension more than other techniques such as thinking over speeches before giving them. A. Bandura's social learning theory, however, which focuses on the role of modeling in human behavior, offers a useful framework for further research. It describes four basic functions in modeling (acquiring new, appropriate behavior patterns, facilitating appropriate behavior, removing inhibitions from fear-provoking behaviors, and promoting the direct or vicarious extinction of fear); presents factors influencing the effectiveness of modeling; and suggests variations in the process of modeling. (MM)

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THE USE OF MODEL SPEECHES: The  
Research Base for Live, Taped, and  
Written Speeches as Models for  
Improving Public Speaking Skills

Gustav W. Friedrich  
University of Oklahoma

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THE USE OF MODEL SPEECHES:  
THE RESEARCH BASE FOR LIVE, TAPED, AND WRITTEN SPEECHES  
AS MODELS FOR IMPROVING PUBLIC SPEAKING SKILLS

As my contribution to a program on the role of theory and research in the teaching of public speaking, I will develop four points concerning the role played by model speeches in such classrooms: first, speech models have been an important pedagogical device since the beginning of systematic instruction in public speaking; second, model speeches continue to be a central element in public speaking instruction; third, the research supporting this use of model speeches is quite limited; and fourth, an excellent resource for generating the necessary systematic research exists in the form of Bandura's Social Learning Theory.

In his survey of the role of rhetoric in Greco-Roman education, Donald Lemen Clark asserts that "From Isocrates in 390 B.C. to St. Augustine in c. 400 A.D. belief in the value of imitation was undeviating" (1957, p. 149). By imitating elders and betters, it was believed, students could improve whatever rhetorical ability they originally possessed.

There were, of course, differences of opinion concerning the identification of "betters." Some instructors favored a focus on classical models (the ancients), while others favored more contemporary models (the moderns). There was also a difference of opinion concerning whether models should be selected for their plain, simple, and lucid oratorical style (Atticism) or for a more ornate, rhythmical, and emotional style (Asianism). In addition, there was disagreement concerning whether one might more profitably focus on one individual as a model as opposed to studying the style of many individuals. What was not in dispute, however, was the acknowledged value of imitation.

There was also widespread agreement on how teachers might best use

imitation as a pedagogical technique. The starting place was the prelection--an analytical and appreciative lecture which pointed out the strengths and weaknesses of the model. While this analysis was sometimes offered in the form of a textbook or treatise (e.g., Plato's Phaedrus), discussion in the classroom was preferred because the teacher could, thereby, serve as a model while analyzing the discourse. Quintilian provides the following recommendations for handling the prelection as groundwork for imitation:

The teacher, after calling for silence, should appoint one pupil to read--and it will be best if they are selected by turn that they may thus accustom themselves to clear pronunciation. Then, after explaining the controversy (*causa*) with which the oration is concerned--so that the students will have a clearer understanding of what is to be said--the teacher should leave nothing unnoticed which is important to be remarked as to the thought (*inventio*) or the the style (*elocutio*). He should point out what method is adopted in the exordium for conciliating the judge; what clearness, brevity, and apparent sincerity is displayed in the statement of facts (*narratio*); what design there is in certain passages, and what well-concealed artifices--for that is the only true art in pleading which cannot be perceived except by a skillful pleader. The teacher should then point out what good judgment appears in the division of the matter into heads, how subtle and frequent are the points of argument, with what force the speaker excites, with what charm he soothes; what severity is shown in his invectives, what urbanity in his jests; how he commands the feelings, forces a way into the understanding, and makes the opinions of the judges coincide with what he asserts. In regard to

the style he should point out what words are appropriate, eloquent, or impressive, when amplification deserves praise, and when there is virtue in its opposite; what phrases are happily metaphorical, what figures of speech are used, where the word order is smooth and polished yet manly and vigorous.

Nor is it without advantage that speeches corrupt and faulty in style, yet such as many, from depravity of taste, would admire, should be read before the boys and that it should be pointed out how many expressions in them are inappropriate, obscure, high-flown, low, mean, affected, or effeminate; expressions which are not only praised by the majority, but, what is worse, praised for the very reasons they are vicious. For straightforward language, naturally expressed, seems to some of us to have nothing of genius; but whatever departs in any way from normal speech, we admire as something exquisite. . . .

Nor should the teacher merely point out these things. He should frequently ask questions and test the judgment of his students. Thus carelessness will not come upon them while they listen, nor will the instruction fail to enter their ears. And at the same time they will be led to find out and understand for themselves, which is the aim of this exercise. For what object have we in teaching them but that they may not always require to be taught?

I will venture to say that this exercise, if practiced diligently, will contribute more to the improvement of the students than all the textbooks of rhetoric, valuable as these doubtless are. . . . For in learning almost anything precepts are of less value than experience. (II.V.6-16)

Having selected the model for study and having prepared students for imitation with the prelection, students were now ready for the three imitative exercises of memorization, paraphrase, and translation. The simplest one, and hence the first to be used, consisted of learning the model by heart. The next exercise, paraphrase, required students to create variations of the model. This might, for example, take the form of turning poetry into prose or it might involve modernizing the original or making it more or less metaphorical or figured. The final exercise, translation, was a contribution of the Romans and involved translating the model either from Greek into Latin or from Latin into Greek.

As argued earlier, a belief in the utility of models and imitation has been constant and undeviating one for teachers of public speaking. Systematic knowledge about the contemporary use of models in teaching public speaking, however, is limited. The best single source, although currently somewhat dated, is Ron Matlon's doctoral dissertation, completed at Purdue University in 1966. He reported a portion of this effort in a 1968 essay (Matlon, 1968). In an attempt to capture the view of public speaking theorists, Matlon surveyed (a) 17 methods of teaching speech textbooks, (b) numerous journal articles, essays, and theses published between 1940 and 1965, (c) 112 basic speech textbooks, and (d) 53 authors of basic textbooks (with 79 questionnaires mailed to authors, 53 represents a 67.1% return rate). To supplement the view of theorists, Matlon solicited the views of instructors at 514 institutions located throughout the United States in the fall of 1966. Responding were 861 individuals representing 297 institutions. Among his conclusions were:

1. Public speaking theorists are in agreement that models should be used. Of the 112 textbooks surveyed, 86 included models and 23 of the 26 texts not including models specifically argued for their use (usually

citing ready availability as the reason for their omission).

2. The major use of models, according to theorists, is to illustrate principles of speech making. In order of number of mentions in textbooks, the illustrated principles include style (58), organization (52), logical proof (45), general and specific purpose (40), attention and interest techniques (36), emotional proof (30), audience analysis and adaptation (25), introductions and conclusions (24), ethical proof (15), and delivery (11).
3. Theorists agree that a wide variety of models should be used: both good and bad; students and public figures; current and former public figures; and live, filmed, and recorded--but mainly printed--models.
4. While theorists are in agreement that models ought to be used, they provide few suggestions concerning appropriate usage. Eighteen authors suggest brief written reports on the model (ranging from a brief outline to a maximum of two pages), five mention brief oral reports (up to a five minute limit), three suggest having students paraphrase the model, and two propose using the model as a focus for classroom discussion. The five authors who discuss the issue are unanimous in agreeing that memorization of the model would stifle creativity and is, therefore, to be discouraged.
5. The majority of instructors (61.9%) claim to use models in their teaching--primarily to illustrate, in order, the principles of organization, evidence usage, style, audience analysis and adaptation, reasoning, and locating the general and specific purpose of a speech. For those not using models, the major reason provided is a lack of time; additional reasons are beliefs that the use of models might stifle creativity or that student performances are more important.
6. Most teachers (75%) believe in using both good and bad models and in

using the speeches of both students and public figures (although public figures are more commonly used). Print models (44.4%) are the most common, followed by filmed speeches (16.7%), speeches by teachers (15.8%), and live speeches (7.6%),

7. The major approach to using models is to discuss them in class (33.8%), although written reports (30.3%) and assigning without additional use (22.8%) are also common.
8. By way of summarizing usage, then, a common form would involve a printed text of John F. Kennedy's "Inaugural Address" as a model speech to accompany the teacher's lecture on organization, evidence usage, or style. In class discussion, students would be asked to identify good and bad usages of the principles being discussed.

This abbreviated summary, of course, reflects model useage in the classrooms of 1966. There are reasons for believing, however, that the situation in 1983 is not much changed. A 1978 survey of the basic course in speech at U.S. colleges and universities by Gibson, Gruner, Hanna, Smythe, & Hayes (1980) discovered that models are among the most frequently used supplementary materials in our classrooms (38%)--a useage exceeded only by films (44%) and by teacher-prepared handouts (92%). A 1980 survey of basic speech courses in the midwest (Daniel & Seiler, 1981) reached similar conclusions. Live or video demonstrations were reported as being the most commonly used supplement to lecturing and discussion.

Given a long history of useage, then, what have we discovered about the effectiveness of modeling as a pedagogical technique for teaching public speaking? Unfortunately, empirical studies of the effectiveness of modeling are exceedingly rare. One of the very few studies to explore the use of models for enhancing public speaking skills is that of Jabusch (1962) who attempted to discover if model speeches could successfully



reinforce instruction concerning how to prepare speeches to inform. His conclusion was that "there is a good chance that the use of model speeches is effective in improving certain aspects of informative speaking. . . .

Therefore, in the case of the teacher who considers himself qualified to use this method of teaching, the results of this study would support the use of model speeches in the beginning college public speaking class" (pp. 115-116).

A slightly more common research strategy within the public speaking domain has been to focus on the ability of models to reduce apprehension rather than to increase skills. Frandsen (1962), for example, attempted to determine the effect of live and filmed model speeches on the confidence level of students enrolled in introductory speech classes. His findings "suggest that it is not certain that anything would be gained by supplementing 'conventional instruction' with models when dealing with heterogeneous groups of students" (p. 9).

In a more complex study, Morgan (1970) compared three approaches to the reduction of public speaking anxiety: (a) having students view a tape of their speech with the instruction that they notice those features that they liked and disliked (video-taped self model), (b) viewing a same-sexed videotaped model presenting a speech appropriate for the assignment (other modeling), and (c) being instructed to "think" about their speech behavior (practice-only). Each of these three experimental conditions was administered six times over the course of a semester as students completed the presentation of an assigned speech. Morgan discovered that all three conditions produced significant decreases in both reported and behavioral anxiety--with no differences among them.

In an equally elaborate design, Benton (1974) attempted to contrast the effectiveness of three variations of symbolic modeling with three

control conditions. The three symbolic modeling conditions involved two videotaped models (one male and one female) delivering three speeches at each of the two treatment sessions. For the mastery condition, the models presented all speeches in a relaxed, self-assured manner. For the similarity-mastery condition, subjects were given the additional information that the relaxed models they were viewing had formerly, like the subjects, been fearful when speaking before groups of people. For the last symbolic condition, coping, subjects observed the models as they gradually became more confident over the course of delivering three speeches. The three control conditions included (a) expectancy control (involving the observation of irrelevant, videotaped discussions lacking apparent therapeutic value), (b) a no treatment, pre-test/post-test control group, and (c) a post-test only, no treatment control group. The results were highly significant reductions in measures of speech anxiety for all six groups.

The results of three studies, then, suggest that modeling is no more effective than other approaches for reducing public speaking anxiety. A fourth study concludes that models may enhance the development of informative public speaking skills. This is certainly not a very impressive set of conclusions--especially when one considers the important role that modeling has and continues to play in the teaching of public speaking.

Ralston (1981), in his thesis and related efforts (Brady & Ralston, 1982; Ralston & Brady, 1982), has begun to work at remedying this situation. Arguing that modeling has demonstrated its utility for reducing a wide variety of other types of anxiety--an argument supported by summaries by Perry & Furukawa (1980) and Rimm & Masters (1979)--Ralston has attempted to specify the conditions under which modeling may be maximally

effective in reducing public speaking anxiety.

Ralson's approach is derived from Bandura's (1977) Social Learning Theory. Because Bandura's theoretically consistent approach to

understanding the role of modeling in human behavior has much broader applications for teaching public speaking than that of reducing anxiety, the nature of that theory will be briefly summarized.

Emphasizing the prominent role played by (1) vicarious, (2) symbolic, and (3) self-regulatory processes in individual functioning, social learning theory approaches the explanation of human behavior in terms of a continuous reciprocal interaction between cognitive, behavioral, and environmental determinants. Modeling, or exposure to one or more other individuals demonstrating the behavior to be learned, is a crucial component of this process.

Modeling can serve four basic functions: (1) it can serve an acquisition function by teaching an individual new, appropriate behavior patterns, or (2) it can serve a social facilitation function by inducing individuals to perform behaviors, of which they were previously capable, at more appropriate times, in more appropriate ways, or toward more appropriate people, or (3) it can serve a disinhibition function, leading individuals to perform behaviors they formerly avoided because of fear or anxiety, or (4) it may promote the vicarious and direct extinction of the fear associated with the person, animal, or object toward which the behavior was directed.

Bandura hypothesizes that four component processes mediate the effectiveness of modeling:

1. Attention to modeled events, which is influenced by:
  - a. modeling stimuli: distinctiveness; affective valence; complexity; prevalence; functional value

- b. observer characteristics: sensory capacities; arousal level; perceptual set; past reinforcement
2. Retention of what is learned from that observation, which is influenced by:
- a. coding/organization: ability of the individual to translate the experience into words and to organize the experience
  - b. rehearsal/practice: which may be covert and symbolic or may be totally overt
3. The capability to reproduce a model's behavior, which is influenced by:
- a. basic capability of an individual to behave in a certain fashion
  - b. accuracy of feedback
4. The motivation to reproduce such behavior, which is influenced by:
- a. external reinforcement
  - b. vicarious reinforcement
  - c. self-reinforcement

The process of modeling involves many variations including: (1) simple modeling: the observation of someone actually present (live), a filmed or printed model (symbolic), or an imagined model (covert); (2) participant modeling: direct observation of a model with some enacting of target behaviors during the modeling sequence; (3) coping versus mastery models: coping models initially display flawed or fearful performance, and gradually, as the modeling sequence continues or in subsequent modeling depictions, become increasingly competent in the target behavior patterns; mastery models, on the other hand, show flawless performance from the very beginning, depicting the ideal imitative goal for the observer; (4) use of response induction aids: the inclusion of materials or procedures designed to aid an individual in performing a desired response (e.g., allowing a speech anxious individual to use notes and a lectern during

participant modeling); (5) seeing examples of appropriate behavior rewarded as opposed to seeing examples of inappropriate behavior punished; (6) the use of reinforcement with participant modeling; or (7) the use of multiple models to promote generalization; while single models may be presumed by individuals to have some special talents, this is less likely to be the case among a group of divergent models. Furthermore, multiple models are likely to vary slightly in the ways in which they demonstrate targeted behavior, thus providing greater possibilities for imitation.

This brief description of Social Learning Theory suggests a wide variety of questions that should be of interest to teachers of public speaking. For example,

1. Are models most usefully used to illustrate atomistic (e.g., use of examples) or holistic (e.g., informative speaking) public speaking skills?
2. What is the relative impact of live (bringing a speaker into the classroom) versus symbolic (a written or videotape model) versus covert (imaginal) modeling?
3. Are coping models (individuals who initially display flawed public speaking performance and, over time, demonstrate increasing competence) more effective than mastery models (flawless performance from the very beginning)?
4. Does the use of multiple models promote greater generalization?

Unfortunately, we currently lack the research base to answer any of these important questions. This cannot continue to be the case. An academically defensible program for providing public speaking instruction must have as its foundation a solid base of theorizing, research, and writing.

By way of summary, then, I have attempted in my presentation to

elaborate on four points: (1) the use of model speeches has been an important component of public speaking instruction from the beginning of systematic instruction; (2) we continue to depend on speech models for teaching public speaking skills; (3) there is an almost total lack of a research base for making important decisions concerning the best use of speech models; and (4) this unfortunate situation is one we can and should remedy within the framework provided by Bandura's Social Learning Theory.

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