

Ceremonial Speaking

Ceremonial speaking stresses sharing of identities and values that unite people into communities. These are the special occasions on which we celebrate and reinforce common aims, benefits, and aspirations.

“In many ways, special occasions are the punctuation marks of life. They are the rituals that draw us together in celebration of some person or event” (Gamble, p. 385)

People gain appreciation of themselves through appreciation of their common heritage.

I. TECHNIQUES OF CEREMONIAL SPEECHES

Osborn suggests that there are two techniques basic to all forms of ceremonial speeches: Identification and Magnification.

A. Identification.

By identification we mean the means whereby we create close feelings among members of the audience, and between audience and speaker. Three methods are:

1. Narrative
2. Recognition of heroes
3. Renewal of group commitment

B. Magnification

Magnify the significance of the person or event being honoured. With magnification we emphasize certain values.

1. Themes: (a) Great obstacles
(b) Accomplishments that are unusual.
(c) Performances that are superior
(d) Pure motives
(e) Accomplishments that benefit society.
2. Tools of language: (a) Metaphors
(b) Similes
(c) Anaphora, repeating key words in a certain order

II. THE DESIGN OF THE CEREMONIAL SPEECH

Ceremonial speakers favour certain designs such as

- A. Comparison and contrast
- B. Historical
- C. Causation

Whatever the design used, it is important that the speeches build up in effect until you conclude. Never dwindle to conclusion.

III. TYPES OF CEREMONIAL SPEECHES

A. The Speeches of Introduction

- Establish the nature of the occasion.
- Enhance the speaker’s credibility.
- Encourage audience members to focus on the speech’s content.

B. The Speech of Presentation

- Summarize the purpose of the award
- Discuss the accomplishments of the person being honoured.
- Introduce and present the award winner to the audience.

C. The Speech of Acceptance of an Award

- Thank, recognize and give credit to those who bestow, and those who help.
- Reflect on values represented by the award.
- Explain what award means to you.
- Accept it graciously.

D. The Commencement Address (Graduation)

- Praise and congratulate the graduating class.
- Acknowledge how both graduates and members of the audience contributed to the success being recognized.
- Challenge the graduates to focus on the future.

E. The Keynote Address (Inspire the Group)

- Focus audience attention on common goals.
- Communicate the central focus of those gathered there.
- Set a tone that arouses interest and encourage commitment.

F. The Speech of Tribute (To acknowledge and praise the honouree)

- Describe what makes the subject of the speech worthy of praise and special recognition.
- Explain what the subject actually accomplished.
- Urge the audience to let the past accomplishment of subject inspire them to adopt the values being recognized so they will seek new and greater goals.

G. The Eulogy (Special Form of Speech of Tribute)

- Acknowledge the loss.
- Celebrate the life of the deceased by acknowledging the legacy left to humanity.
- Use illustrations to emphasize uniqueness of subject, bring the group together, and ease the sense of loss.

H. The After-Dinner Speech

- Generally designed to be entertaining.
- Usually light-hearted.
- Takes a good-natured, sometimes humorous, whimsical, or mildly satirical look at a topic of interest or relevance to audience.
- Must be easy to digest!
- Should establish a mood, convey the message and carry a theme.

Gamble, Teri Kwal, Michael W. Gamble. Public Speaking in the Age of Diversity.

Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 1998.

Michael Osborn, Suzanne Osborn. Public Speaking 2nd Ed. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1991.