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## **Credibility of the speech**

In Slovenia, the relationship between public speaking, rhetorical public speaking, improvisation and private speech with the use of stylized language is still unclear in principle, particularly when compared to the Western world, especially the United States of America, where rhetorical discourse plays a vital role, as witnessed during the last election. In this paper, I will discuss credibility, public speech and speech performance of public speakers.

In the past, spoken standard language had an immense impact on public speaking in Slovenia. There was no space for improvisation; speeches were mostly related to written texts and their interpretation. On the other hand, the manner of public speaking has changed over the years. The rise of media has had a great impact on public speaking. Nowadays, public speakers give the impression of a relaxed presentation – it seems like a spontaneous conversation.

I would also like to discuss what makes public speakers credible. Are speakers credible only when they speak on areas of their expertise? Is credibility only related to their competence, character or body language? How important is voice, when we talk about credibility? The purpose is to research the impact of voice on speech realization. The voice consists of a sound made by a person using the vocal folds for talking, singing, laughing, crying, screaming etc. Specifically, human voice is the part of human sound production in which the vocal folds (vocal cords) are the primary sound source. Our voice is our instrument and identity card – how does the voice (the tone of voice) affect others and how do they respond, positively or negatively? How important is voice (the tone of voice) in the communication process? – I will describe the impact of voice on the credibility of the speech.

Rhetoric started to flourish in ancient Greece and ancient Rome. Aristotle established a system of understanding and teaching rhetoric. He favored persuasion and was fairly certain that argumentation is not enough – the language (logos, pathos, and ethos) should be persuasive, too. He emphasized the speaker's character in terms of good intentions and honesty. Cicero's approach to rhetoric emphasized the importance of education and knowledge. According to Cicero, to be persuasive a man had to be knowledgeable in a variety of scientific fields.

Quintilian focuses primarily on the technical aspects of effective rhetoric; he believes that the speaker must be a good person (Beker 1997: 60).

Nowadays, contemporary authors argue that being a good speaker requires planning, a well-structured speech, and clarity. Characteristics of a good public speaker include confidence, good diction, strong vocal tone etc. As we can see, more attention is paid to the structuring of speech, voice acting and voice performance. The speaker's character is not even mentioned. This paper focuses on the ancient perception of a good speaker and compares it with contemporary authors. The aim is to find out how a good speaker is understood today, which the key features are and what the awareness of the impact of voice on the credibility, or general acceptability, is. Determining the general description, perception of a good speaker is at the forefront of the study. The research deals with questions relating to the speaker's credibility, character and voice performance.

Ancient authors have brought forward the importance of the orator's character in a public speech, especially in terms of convincing. Aristotle believed that the orator must take into account two key features: ethos (based on argumentation, which is part of his character) and pathos (based on the audience). Ethos was highlighted as the most important – the orator must be trustworthy. There are three things which inspire confidence in the orator's own character and induce the audience to believe something without any proof for it: good sense, good moral character, and goodwill. The goal is to make people good and to make the audience actively involved. In Aristotle's view, speeches must become ethical (Beker 1997: 15).

Aristotle pointed out the importance of the speaker's character and social reputation. In particular, he stressed the importance of the speaker's honor, honesty, benevolence

and good reputation in the society. A good reputation is defined as a general belief that someone is a man of honor, and honored as a sign of the reputation acquired through good deeds (Aristotle 1989: 40).

Two authors who dedicated the most attention to the speaker's character in their works on Roman rhetoric are Cicero and Quintilian. In his book *De Orator*, Cicero writes about the importance of rhetoric; he points out that speaking is a more complex phenomenon than people usually think, because it involves a lot of art and science, and that speaking is certainly much more than just a choice of words. According to Cicero, a good orator must possess a broad knowledge of science and culture as well as certain rhetorical skills. To become an orator, the person must demonstrate an ability to speak with knowledge, wisely and orderly. The orator must show a good ability to memorize texts and be well prepared for speeches.

Cicero notes that the speaker must possess vast general knowledge, particularly in relation to culture, emphasizing that only a wise man is a good speaker. The speaker should be well-informed of facts related to the subjects on which he is speaking. He says a good speaker should be well-qualified.

Cicero points out that a good speaker has to manage the technical side of speech skillfully and master all three styles. The speaker needs to observe the rhythm of speech as well as the symmetry of the accent, which presupposes good knowledge of phonetics and the standard pronunciation. Three types of speakers are described; they differ from one another only in terms of quality. The best speaker is the one who teaches, satisfies and moves the audience. Some ancient speakers were role models; they avoided absurdness and irrelevant selection of topics in the wording of the low, vulgar. Quality speakers are not in the foreground. According to Cicero, this is mainly because the speaker should not exaggerate in his efforts to be witty. He needs to avoid using pre-prepared jokes because humor comes from the situations at hand. Also important is the choice of style (Beker 1997: 60).

Cicero, divided speaking into three parts: the one that refers to the speaker's ability (*vis oratoris*), one that deals with a single speech (*oratio*), beyond which is the focus

of a complex theme setting, defining the basic questions of voice shaking (quaestio). In accordance with the basic guidelines of ancient rhetorical tradition, the speaker's abilities include the choice of the right topic (inventio), proper placement of the correct structure (collocation), language and stylistic design of speech (elocutio), proper excuse (actio), and memory (memoria). Speaking to vary its four basic parts: introduction (principium), interpretation (narration), proving (argumentation), and completion (peroration), which usually serve to further strengthen the evidence (amplification) (Cvetanović 2000).

Quintilian also wrote in his work about the importance of learning and the characteristics of the speaker. Quintilian was convinced that the speaker's education and training last a lifetime. In his book he predominantly focuses on describing the character of the speaker and voice performance, as well as moral values of the speakers and their obligations. His basic postulate is that only an upright and well-intentioned person can become a speaker. He points out that the speaker has to be a good man, as he aims to speak of truth and justice and be persuasive. A good man will often talk about what is true and fair. Apart from the moral value(s) which is/are good to have and build moral character, Quintilian highlights the importance of knowledge, expertise and education. To be a good speaker, it is also important to build self-confidence, and be well exposed to justice and benevolence. The speaker needs to pay attention to the construction of his moral character, memorization, figuration, speech style, and speech performance. He was certain that voice has great power and importance in rhetoric.

However, in addition to these features, importance was attributed to voice quality in those days, too. In his work *Instituiones oratoriae (Training speaker)*, Quintilian pays close attention to voice description and makes one of the first – if not the first – attempts to separate voice quality from voice dynamics such as height, volume, speed, continuity of speech and pronunciation votes. Distinguished speakers have a natural voice, which is dependent on the speaker's voice anatomy and shape (Abercrombie, 1967: 92). Quintilian describes a pleasant-sounding voice. He was interested in correcting and editing voice in public speech (Laver 1996: 355). He was convinced that voice can be cultivated, not only on a paralinguistic level (emotional state, the

desired expression) but also on an extra-linguistic layer (the voice as such, the aspect of voice beauty). Quintilian argues that an elegant voice is primarily well-placed; an excuse is effortless, powerful, comfortable, sturdy, and clean. Cicero and Quintilian contributed greatly to the development/concept of voice quality description and emphasis on the importance of voice in Western culture. During the Roman period, a full, clear, strong, smooth and soft voice called orotund voice emerged.

Common arguments of all ancient authors are that a good speaker must be a good man, a wise, educated, professional, honorable, well-intentioned, ethically conscious person. Much attention was also devoted to remembering, vocabulary, skills, and speaking in a variety of styles (Quintilian 1985: 490).

Contemporary authors of rhetoric and public speaking are more focused on the structuring of the speech, speech performance, and oratory skills training. They pay less attention to the speaker's character. Cvetanović writes in his book that the speaker must believe in what he says, and has to be excited about the topic he is talking about. He is fairly certain that the speaker's goal is to reach the audience. The speaker has to take into consideration not only the intellect but also feelings, using logic, knowledge, persuasion, attitude dignity and voice. Furthermore, speech should be melodic (Cvetanović 2000).

In his book *How to learn public speaking and talking*, Dale Carnegie points out that the recipe for a successful speech is rules and speech technique. The necessary steps to take for a successful public appearance are: to determine the objective (to know what to achieve), to prepare for the oral presentation, practice a lot, develop self-confidence, and get rid of fear by facing it. The speaker should talk from his heart – not from a book. He should be excited about the topic, too. Casson designed a check-list spreadsheet to monitor the development of the speaker: smoothness, austerity, humor, experience, clearness, technology, voice, pronunciation, gestures, consistency, knowledge, and originality. It is said that modern human speaks in a simple, personal, natural, loud and, in most cases, focused manner. In his book *Temeljni suvremenoga govorništva (Cornerstones of contemporary rhetoric)*, Ivo Škarić points out that speech is a profession, a discipline – and that all professors,

actors, announcers, managers, politicians, lawyers, and workers should be aware of this fact (Škarić 2000).

When discussing the character of the speaker, even Škarić rests his argument on Cicero and Quintilian's belief that only an honorable man can be the speaker. As a phonetician, Škarić puts special emphasis on voice and pronunciation. As it is commonly said – there are no great actors without great voices, just as there are no great pianists or painters without a good technique. A number of works stress that a good speaker is distinguished by clarity, logic, poetry, emotionality, attention etc. Contemporary authors, however, are mainly focused on improving public speaking, preparation, structure and language implementation with an emphasis on the speaker's confidence in his speech and the credibility of the speaker (Škarić 1988).

## **METHODOLOGY**

The survey on credibility of the speech was carried out as a web-based survey. The form was composed of statements regarding the importance of certain qualities of a good speaker. The survey was based on comparison of statements related to the notion of a good speaker as pointed out by ancient and contemporary authors.

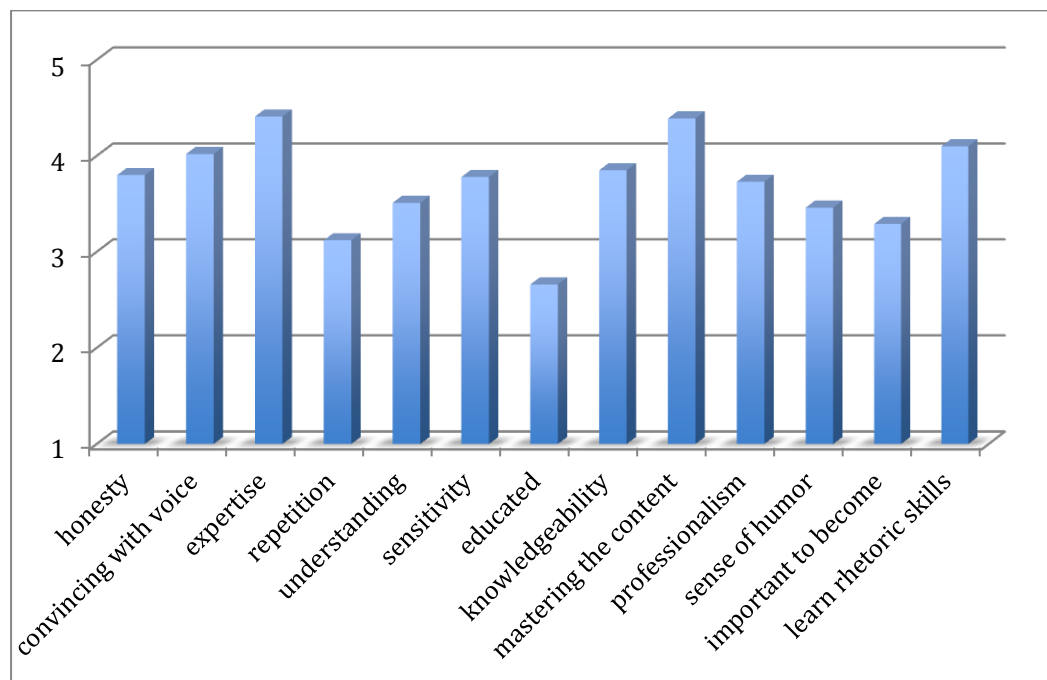
Respondents were asked to rank the statement using a scale of 1 to 5 (1 = don't agree at all, 2 = don't agree, 3 = neither agree nor disagree, 4 = agree, 5 = fully agree). The study included 61 individuals; all of the questions were answered by 41 people. Only results from the latter will thus be presented.

### **Characteristics highlighted by ancient authors**

We can see that the characteristics highlighted by ancient authors are still highly ranked. In regards to the highest ranked speakers, these qualities are: the speaker's expertise (average score 4,41), mastering the content (average score 4,39), convincing with voice (average score 4,02), the speaker's skills such as rhetoric (average score 4,1); medium-ranked speaker's qualities are: knowledge-ability (average score 3,85), honesty (average score 3,8), sensitivity (average score 3,78), professionalism (average

score 3,73), understanding (average score 3,51), sense of humor (average score 3,46) and repetition (average score 3,12). The lowest-ranked speaker's quality is education (average score 2,66).

Table 1. - Characteristics highlighted by ancient authors

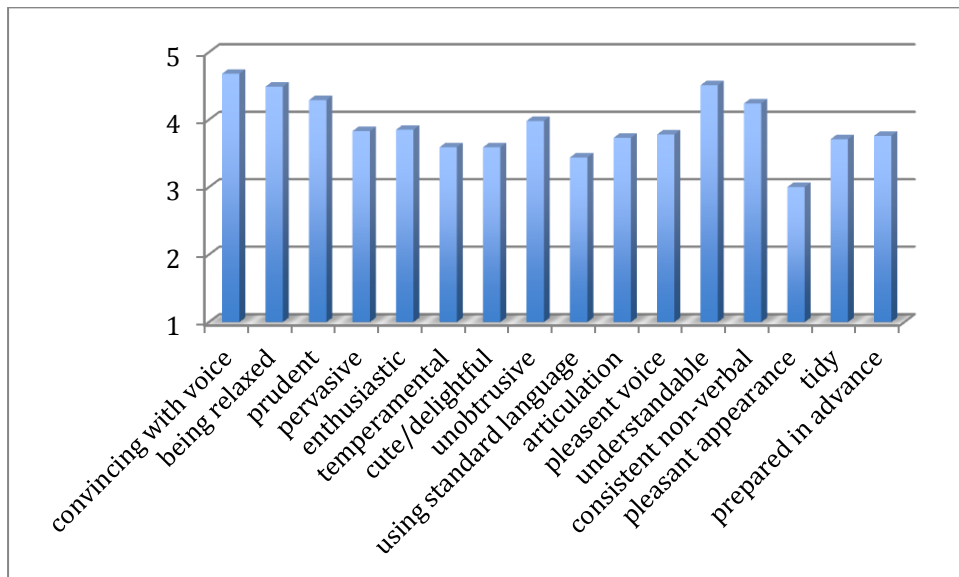


### Characteristics highlighted by contemporary authors

We can see that the characteristics highlighted by ancient authors are still highly ranked. In regards to the highest ranked speaker's qualities, these qualities are: convincing with voice (average score 4.68), understandable (average score 4.51), relaxed (average score 4.49), prudent (average score 4.29), consistent verbal and non-verbal communication (average score 4.24); medium-ranked speaker's qualities are: unobtrusive (average score 3.98), pervasive (average score 3.83), enthusiastic (average score 3.85), prepared in advance (average score 3.76), pleasant voice (average score 3.78), articulation (average score 3.73), tidy (average score 3.71), temperamental (average score 3.59), cute/delightful (average score 3.59), using

standard language (average score 3,44), sense of humor and repetition. The lowest ranked speaker's qualities are pleasant appearance.

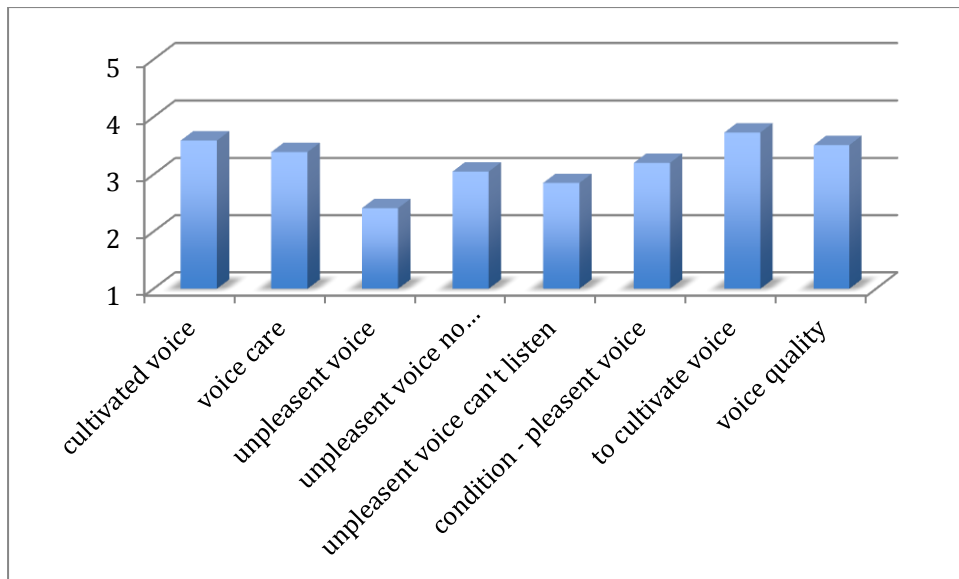
Table 2. - Characteristics highlighted by contemporary authors



It seems that voice is not the most important factor of the speaker's credibility. On the other hand, highly ranked qualities are the importance of cultivating voice (average score 3,73), having a cultivated voice (average score 3,59), voice quality (average score 3,51) and voice care (average score 3,39). The lowest-ranked speaker's quality is unpleasant voice (average score 2,41).

Table 3. - Characteristics highlighted by contemporary authors





## Conclusions

Ancient rhetoricians such as Cicero, Quintilian and Aristotle paid a lot of attention to the characteristics of good orators in their works. In their opinion, being a good orator does not only imply good speaking skills but also morality, honor, good reputation and goodness of the heart. Only a good person can be good orator, the authors argue.

A comparison between ancient and contemporary authors shows that in modern textbooks less attention is devoted to characteristics such as kindness, honesty and sincerity, when compared to ancient authors – Aristotle, Cicero, and especially Quintilian. The authors of the 20th and 21st century predominantly deal with the importance of structuring the speech, using rhetorical figures of speech and good performance.

Research has shown that a good speaker should be familiar with the theme he is discussing – he should be an expert or should master the content. He should also be well-trained in speaking skills such as rhetoric. He should be convincing and relaxed, his verbal and nonverbal communication should be consistent. He has to be intelligible, determined, unobtrusive, enthusiastic, and persuasive. Perhaps not one of the dominant characteristics of a good speaker, but a quite important one nonetheless, seems to be the voice – voice cultivation, voice care and voice quality.

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## The survey

Rank the statement using a scale of 1 to 5.

5 = fully agree

4 = agree

3 = neither agree nor disagree

2 = don't agree

1 = don't agree at all

1. A good speaker must be honest. 1 2 3 4 5
2. A good speech should be persuasive. 1 2 3 4 5
3. Good speakers, convince me with their voice. 1 2 3 4 5
4. Good speakers, convince me with their professionalism. 1 2 3 4 5
5. Good speakers convince me to control non-verbal communication. 1 2 3 4 5
6. A good speaker must be respected in the society. 1 2 3 4 5
7. A good speaker should be compassionate. 1 2 3 4 5
8. A good speaker should be relaxed. 1 2 3 4 5
9. A good speaker must be prudent. 1 2 3 4 5
10. A good speaker must be credible. 1 2 3 4 5
11. A good speaker must be pervasive. 1 2 3 4 5
12. A good speaker must be empathic. 1 2 3 4 5
13. A good speaker must be highly educated. 1 2 3 4 5
14. A good speaker must be knowledgeable. 1 2 3 4 5
15. A good speaker must master the content of talk. 1 2 3 4 5
16. A good speaker must be an expert in the areas of the talk. 1 2 3 4 5
17. A good speaker must show enthusiasm. 1 2 3 4 5
18. A good speaker must have a sense of humor. 1 2 3 4 5
19. A good speaker must be temperamental. 1 2 3 4 5
20. A good speaker must be likable. 1 2 3 4 5
21. A good speaker must be peaceful. 1 2 3 4 5
22. A good speaker must be unobtrusive. 1 2 3 4 5
23. A good speaker should speak standard language. 1 2 3 4
24. A good speaker should have a pleasant voice. 1 2 3 4 5
25. A good speaker must have cultivated voice. 1 2 3 4 5
26. A good speaker should cultivate his voice. 1 2 3 4 5
- 30
27. A good speaker should be understandable. 1 2 3 4 5
- 32
28. The voice of a good speaker can be unpleasant. 1 2 3 4 5
29. If the speaker's voice is unpleasant, that attracts my attention. 1 2 3 4 5
30. If the speaker's voice is unpleasant, I can not keep up with it. 1 2 3 4 5
31. A good speaker must be consistent - non-verbal and verbal communication should be aligned. 1 2 3 4 5
32. A good speaker, should have a pleasant appearance. 1 2 3 4 5
33. Good speaker must produce a pleasant sounding voice. 1 2 3 4 5
34. It is necessary to be a good speaker. 1 2 3 4 5
35. The skills of a good speaker must be learned. 1 2 3 4 5

- 36.** A good speaker should pay attention to the development / cultivation voice. 1 2 3  
4 5
- 37.** A good speaker, must take care of the aesthetics of voice / tone of voice. 1 2 3 4 5
- 38.** A good speaker must be prepared in advance. 1 2 3 4 5
- 39.** A good speaker must have good articulation. 1 2 3 4 5