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Lecture: 06

Relevance of Public Speaking

Good morning friends and welcome back to NPTEL online certification course on Public

Speaking. Till. Now we have been talking about the introductory lectures. In the previous

lecture, we talked about the role of ethics in Public Speaking and you might have realized

how maintaining an ethical responsibility is beneficial both from the point of view of

speakers as well as of listeners. My dear friends, we are in the midst of sixth lecture now and

in this lecture we will be talking about the relevance.

You might be, at times, thinking of that even when this Public Speaking came into being

2000 years ago, how it is still relevant. Of course, the question might, at times, trick you and

you might find that it is still relevant though the forms have changed. We have several

facilities at our disposal but then speaking as such is still relevant. This lecture will talk about

why it is relevant and in this regard we shall also be familiarizing you with the relevance

theory which is actually a part of pragmatics, fine?

This pragmatics was propounded by H P Grice who actually said that between the speaker

and the listener, there has actually to be a sort of understanding and this understanding is not

only about the words but also about the non-words about the context. So, the question is how

it is relevant. So, let us talk a little bit about this relevance theory which is a part of linguistics

and in linguistics it is a part of pragmatics as I told you.

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Relevance Theory

- Relevance theory, as proposed by Sperber and Wilson (Relevance: Communication and Cognition) claims that the search for relevance is a fundamental feature of human communication.
- According to this principle of relevance in communication, an input (a sight, a sound, an utterance, a memory) holds relevance to an individual only when its processing delivers positive cognitive effects i.e. adds to his knowledge on a topic, clarifies a doubt, strengthens, revises or discards his pre-suppositions, and helps him arrive at a true and worthwhile conclusion about the topic.



Now this relevance theory for the first time--- it came into being with two philosophers, two scientists rather and these two cognitive scientists named Sperber and Wilson. So, one was a French, the other was a British linguist and both these people actually propounded this theory of relevance. So, as propounded by them, these two people claim that the search for relevance is a fundamental feature of human communication.

Now what is this fundamental feature of human communication? Actually, this was developed to describe the interpretation procedure from the point of view of hearer's perspective. It is not what the speaker speaks--- how he speaks and what he speaks are very important but the hearer or the listener which in pragmatics, they will say they will call addressee. What is their role in making the message or making the utterance understood?

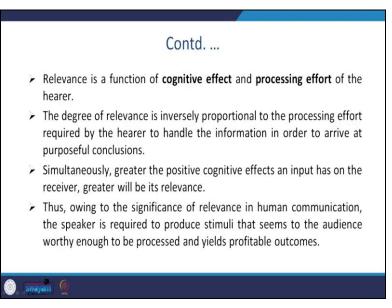
And that is why these two cognitive scientists, namely Dan Sperber who was a French cognitive scientist and Deidre Wilson a British linguist. These two people propounded this relevance theory. According to this theory or according to this principle of relevance in communication and input. So, by input here I mean utterance, message, fine?

So, an input may be a sight, it may be a sound, it may be an utterance. It may be memory, it actually holds relevance to an individual only when it is processing delivers positive cognitive effects. What do I mean by cognitive? Cognitive means knowledge if people are to be benefited by what the speaker speaks only then the message or the communication will become relevant that is it adds knowledge on a particular topic.

It actually clarifies a doubt, strengthens, revises or discards the pre-suppositions of the hearers because as I have been saying that human communication tends to be maximized as per its relevance. It is actually geared, it is geared to the maximization of relevance if there is no relevance of what I hear, naturally I will not be able to hear. So, first and foremost as a speaker, we think that we have conveyed our message.

But as a hearer also because much depends upon how the hearer responds to it, my response here I mean how the hearer receives the message.

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My dear friends, relevance is a function as I have been saying of cognitive effect and processing effort of the hearer. So, what the hearer does? Imagine, you speak a sentence. Now it is up to the hearer----- how the hearer interprets that is very important. So, initially this relevance theory did not believe only in encoding and decoding. This relevance theory believed in that apart from encoding and decoding.

There are two other things also important----- the first is that how the message is communicated and how the message is interpreted or received. The degree of relevance is inversely proportional to the processing effort required by the hearer to handle the information in order to arrive at purposeful communications or purposeful communications. So, greater the positive cognitive effect, because whenever we speak, whenever we pass on a message we are under the impression that there is an atmosphere, there is a cognitive atmosphere.

I mean, the knowledge is being transmitted and transmitted to whom---- the hearer. So, this cognitive effects an input has on the receiver, greater will be its relevance. So, if my message affects the hearer, fine, in the best possible manner then only the hearer will result into action or my communication will be considered to be meaningful. Thus, going to the significance of relevance in human communication, the speaker is required to produce stimuli.

Now the question is what sort of stimuli? These stimuli can be anything. It can be the way I create my message, it can also be the way I bring some non verbal cues, I make use of my gestures, I make use of my postures. I actually refer to certain things and the way it is being responded to or understood by the hearer. So, the speaker will produce stimuli that seems to the audience worthy enough.

If the stimuli that is created, if the hearer does not understand it worthy, if the hearer does not understand that it has got some sort of significance, it will not be processed and it will actually not be able to yield productive result or profitable outcomes. Now, when I talk about cognitive factors, it is not only the words fine. It may be something other than words also it may be also the context in which context I am speaking is not it.

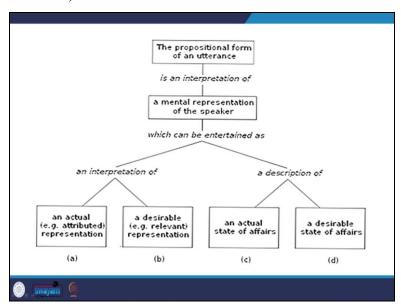
Say for example, if one speaker says--- Could you please close the door? Imagine if one speaker says--- Could you please close the door. Now the hearer may not say yes or no but then there is a sort of inference and the inference is that the hearer understands that the door is to be closed and the hearer without waiting for or without answering what the hearer does, the hearer simply closes the door.

So, what results here? Inference. So, as a hearer what we do is---- we actually infer the meaning. Now while we are inferring the meaning, one has to be very careful. Now in this regard you will find that RT will say that it is actually a sort of ostensive communication. Now what is ostensive communication? You might be thinking about what this ostensive communication is?

This ostensive communication is when the speaker draws the addressee by addressing, I mean, hearer addresses attention to the fact to the fact that communicator wants to convey some information as I said--- could you close the door. So, now in this sentence, what the hearer will do? The hearer will actually close the door. Now, what the speaker did? The

speaker simply showed a sort of ostensive communication that he wants the hearer's attention to be brought.

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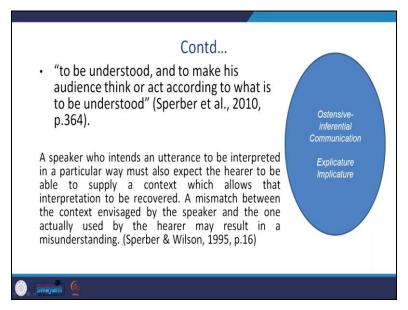
so that he actually wants to bring or convey some amount of communication. Now here is a chart you can find the propositional form of an utterance. So, by utterance, I mean it can be a sentence, it can be a word, it can be a message whatsoever. So, this propositional form of utterance is an interpretation of a mental representation of the speaker and that can be entertained as interpretation and description.

So, when it is interpretation, it is an actual attributed representation or a desirable relevant representation. When it is description--- what it does? Actual state of affairs and a desirable state of affairs. So, these two things are very important, my dear friend. Now as in this relevance theory, what the addressee or the hearer is expected the addressee has to infer. Now infer meaning thereby, extract understanding for the communicator. What the communicator wanted as I gave you the example.

So, the hearer already inferred that the communicator wanted that the door to be closed and while doing that, what he does? He not only takes into consideration the literal meaning along with the real world knowledge in this regard. My dear friends, we can come across two terms which actually are very important the first is explicature and the other is implicature. Now you might be very curious to know as to what these two terms are? Explication is when the speaker speaks something and it is very explicit, now it is very crystal clear.

The speaker does not have to do, the hearer does not have to take some extra efforts to understand it. But when it is implicature, when it is implicated. So, this implicature is something that the speaker suggests or implies. Now how can the speaker suggest or imply. The speaker can suggest or imply with an utterance even though it is not literally expressed. So, if it is not literally expressed then how can the hearer understand. Implicature actually can help in communicating more efficiently that is why we will discuss separately how non-verbals speak, how symbols speak more at times than words, not by saying explicitly everything but by simply suggesting what we actually want to communicate.

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In this regard, Sperber and Wilson say that a communicator wants to be understood and to make his audience think of or act according to what is to be understood. Not every now and then he will speak at the literal sentence, he will actually speak a sentence and maybe he will actually rely on the inference of the hearers, fine. So, it is very important here to mention what these two cognitive scientists say.

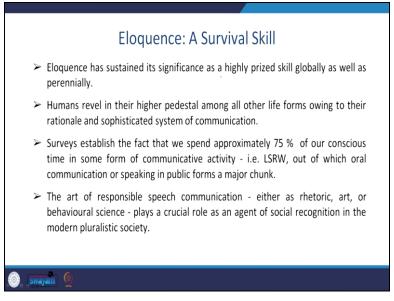
A speaker who intends an utterance. So, whenever I use this utterance it should be understood as message or meaning, utterance to be interpreted in a particular way must also expect the hearer to be able to supply a context. Now, context is very important when a speaker says something and if the hearer is not able to understand the context. What will happen? It will actually result in a sort of miscommunication is not it.

Because the speaker every now and then will not speak everything explicitly rather he will also speak something implicitly. So, a mismatch between the context envisaged by the

speaker and the one actually used by the hearer may result in a sort of misunderstanding. That is why at times you might have found that a speaker spoke something and the hearer understood or inferred something and that can lead to a sort of miscommunication, my dear friends.

Now we have talked something about relevance theory but we need to understand why Public Speaking is relevant? You keep the principles of relevance theory in your mind and then let us also try to find out when we are in a situation of Public Speaking. How can we make our speech, our talk our presentation relevant? Eloquence as you all know, fine. Eloquent by eloquence we mean the way we speak know.

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Eloquence has sustained its significance as a highly prized skill. All these three or four lectures we have been devoting, we have actually been underlining the importance of speaking. So, eloquence can help you survive even when there are odds, that is why I call it a survival skill. So, it is highly priced skill globally as well as perennially. You might have found that not only in one country but in other countries also, how it is at the art of eloquence that can actually help you tide over a crisis. Let us refer to the critical condition that is between Ukraine and Russia. So, what is happening, whatever is happening, my dear friends. This is perhaps the result of a failed talk, a failed conversation, a failed a speech or a failed negotiation.

Why because maybe the two parties while they were communicating, they could not realize the consequences? The consequences which were far off and now both the countries are having a sort of harvest or reaping a sort of harvest which is not approved of. Human beings revel in their higher pedestal among all other life forms. That is why a good speaker always has an edge over those who are poor speakers.

Does that mean that the speaker does not have knowledge? No. The speaker has not been able to use his speaking sparks or skills to the best possible manner or to make it relevant so, that the audience members or the addressees could be benefited. So, other life forms going to their rational and sophisticated system of communication. It is always said and many surveys have also resulted that we spend approximately 75% of our conscious time in some form of communicative activity.

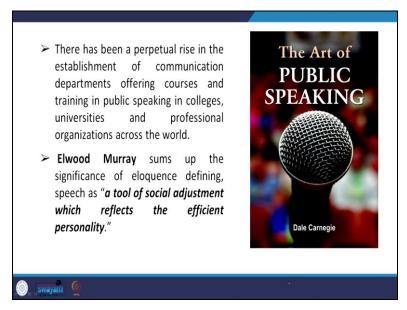
Now in the present day world where you have so many facilities of phones, Internets, several channels, several systems, several gadgets. Every now and then you find that communication is in its process, agog fine. So, 75% of our time we are speaking either speaking over a telephone or speaking physically personally talking to people. So, LSRW you can relate to listening speaking reading writing.

So, out of which it is oral communication that actually had got an edge over all other forms. So, speaking in public forms a major chunk. It is that time said that at least it is 90% of the time that when it comes to communication, we actually keep on speaking the art of responsible speech communication either as rhetoric. So, we have already talked about rhetoric. What rhetoric is--- by using several methods by making use of several literary devices, several figures of speech art or behavioural science. They play a crucial role as an agent of social recognition in modern pluralistic society.

Now today you will find if you have a look at majority of the countries of the world, you can find they are thriving and they are surviving because of some of their great speakers, some of their great leaders, because leadership also is a quality that one can learn through Public Speaking. Not all people can be good leaders, not all people could be good elocutionists, not all people could be good speakers, not all people could realize what the speakers expect and not all people can make their speeches or their talks pertinent, make them relevant rather.

Now nowadays there is no wonder that all of a sudden sometimes in a professional setting, in a corporate world because every now and then we are not ready to speak but sometimes or the other, you will find that there comes your turn, you are not informed my dear friend also.

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So, there has been a perpetual rise in the establishment of communication departments in majority of the colleges and universities all around the world and many professional organizations see to it that a good number of their people are good speakers because organizations from time to time require people not only to negotiate a deal, carve a deal, fine, go for making priests there are sometimes representatives they are mediators there are arbitrators, I mean quite a good number of professional qualifications people may have.

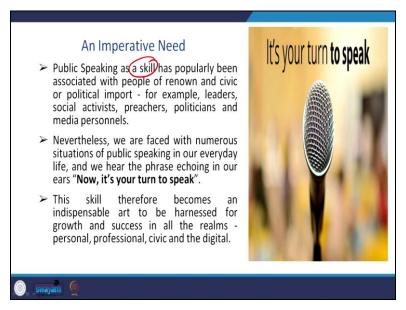
But when it comes to speaking and that also in public, it actually becomes very difficult. In this regard what Edmund Murray sums up as the significance of eloquence by calling or by defining that it is actually a tool of social adjustment which reflects the efficient personality. You might have found that even in our own lives also, if we are not able to speak properly, when I say speak properly means meaningfully, naturally you cannot create relationships you cannot have better establishments better associations.

So, it is actually a tool of social adjustment, otherwise, how come people from one part of a country to another part of country how do they survive? It is based on their eloquence, my dear friend, people have a tendency to learn languages and when they learn languages, they speak. So, man has got the capacity to speak and as you know one philosopher says----

Thanks to language man became man. So, those people who know how to make adequate use of language, they only can survive.

And even if you know the art of better writing, you have to learn the art of better speaking because it is an integral part of your personality my dear friends. Now why it is needed and how can we make use of it.

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It is actually a skill, by now you might have realized that Public Speaking is a skill and it is associated with people of renown. Of course, there are good speakers and nowadays sometimes you will also find that there is also a scarcity of good speakers when conferences are being organized they actually look for people who can sustain, who can engage the crowd not only by dint of their information but also by dint of the gift of the gab. So, good speakers are always in want.

So, with people of renown and civic or political import, for example, leaders most of the leaders you might have found that the very first art that their brand is, their sword in is speaking skills. So, majority of them have got a niche for speaking, they have carved niche in terms of speaking. They know the art of, how to motivate people. Social activists you take any name and you will find it is by dint of their speech that they are able to attract people, motivate people, find, captivate people.

Preachers in a country like India you will find there are more preachers available and every now and then and they are. Now they have got the facility of coming and preaching even on different channels also and the and through that they are not only having a good name, a good fame but they are also disseminating their knowledge. Politicians and media personals they are already there.

Nevertheless, sometimes or the other we are faced with numerous situations of Public Speaking in our everyday life and we hear the phrase---- majority of the time it is now your turn to speak and the moment your turn comes, my dear friend, you might all realize what sort of turn starts in your mind. Many of them are anxious, many of them actually want to have a shortcut and try to find out the door.

But then I think those people who are attending this course will not have such a situation they will stand they will wait for their turn and they will say yes I am ready. So, this skill of speaking in public becomes an indispensable art to be harnessed for growth and success in all the realms, my dear friend. Now what are the other things that this facility can do---- the first is it can boost your confidence.

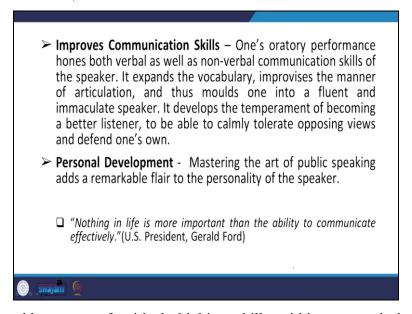
Of course, initially when you are a novice, when you are not able to speak and you simply think of speaking. So, why you are not able to because you do not have the confidence so, if you take some lessons in Public Speaking, it will actually boost your confidence. So, confidence in speaking will also allow you or prompt you your confidence in writing and facing the outside world.

It actually helps to boost one's confidence by overcoming the fears, we will have a separate relation or a separate lecture on how to overcome the fears. Many of you might have come across this situation but might not say, because you are always frightened of a sort of public fear or a sort of public same as to what people will say but then we will of course provide a lecture to it.

It also adds to the self-worth of the speaker. When you have spoken and you bring a lot of applause and there is a lot of clapping you might have found that how you feel from within a sort of rejoicing a sort of happiness, a sort of satisfaction. And you know, one after the other speech one after the other talk that you deliver every now and then not only is your confidence getting a proper boost or a proper upsurge, rather you also get a lot of reputation.

We have already talked about in one of the lectures that Public Speaking in a way allows you to develop critical thinking. So, we will leave this and will proceed further. It actually allows you when you go to listen to some other person and you are also a good speaker and you have already done a lot of exercises in it, you can now develop way critical thinking as to what is being said is really reliable or really relevant or not.

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So, it actually adds a sort of critical thinking skills within you and then your verbal communication skills also get a sort of betterment. Your communication skills are enhanced the more you listen to you can apply it those people who feel very much scared of speaking in public if they keep on listening to I mean listening to some of the speeches and if they also keep on participating that the day is not far that they will feel that their communication skills have also increased a lot.

My dear friends, there are quite a good number of examples that many people were not able to speak in public and they had lots of years. But then when they took a training in such courses and when they made themselves you know read several books on Public Speaking and practised it in the most practical way they also felt that their communication skills were improved a lot.

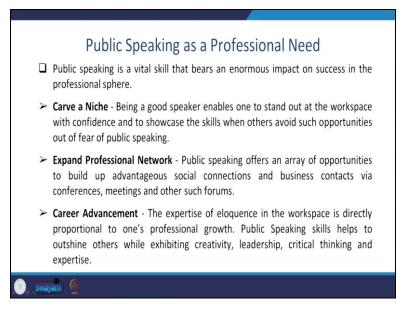
Of course, if you really want to consider somebody a man having a good personality there are certain things know Dale Carnegie in one of his books says that you can judge a person by having a look at four things. The way he walks the; way he talks the way he writes and the

way he walks meaning thereby if you really want to see a man or having a good personality you will find that he is a very good speaker.

So, it adds to your personal growth, it adds to your personal calibre. Mastering the art of Public Speaking as a remarkable flair to the personality of the speaker. In this regard let me make a mention of the quote from one of the U.S presidents Gerald Ford who says--"Nothing in life is more important than the ability to communicate effectively." And you have seen quite a score of such speakers who are still relevant because they can speak well and they can draw crowds, my dear friend.

Is Public Speaking also a professional lead? Because we can enhance our reputation in informal settings as well but professionally also can it also provide a sort of professional say scale can it also provide a sort of professional upsurge. Of course, with your speaking skills you can carve a niche, t by becoming a good speaker fine you can make yourself stand out you can become a sort of outstanding person in the place that you are working.

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You can showcase your own skills you know something you want to tell it to others either in the form of a leader, either the form of Secretary, either the form of CEO, either in the form of chairman whatsoever. And if you are good at speaking skills your network also will expand your professional network will rise, my dear friends. So, it offers an array of opportunities every now and then you are a person sought after to advantage your social connections it actually lends you a social recognition.

Wherever there be such a function or a celebration or a public gathering a good speaker is always sought after only. Not only in informal settings but in professional gatherings also in conferences you might have if you might have attended several conferences you will find that there are many people who are still shaky about presenting their paper in front of people even in meetings even in congregations.

Career advancement----- you will often find that when you are rated on the basis of your communication skills and the first of all is how you speak whether you have that professional eland whether you have that professional calibre to convince people to reason with people to argue and to come to a proper result to negotiate. Because through our speeches we negotiate meaning my dear friend.

Leadership skills as I have been saying, that most of the leaders that you know, not only in the present world but even in history also you will find that they had the power to influence the power to influence comes from the power to speak.

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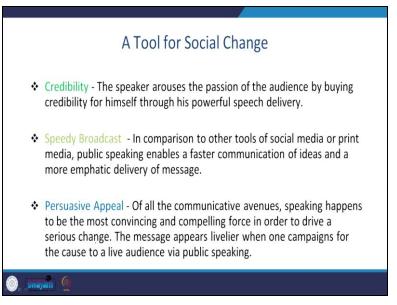
So, speaking in public gives you the power to persuade an audience, to motivate them, fine. So, a good speaker can become a good leader and he can have several opportunities find where he will always be the person most sought after.

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Now here is a survey where you can find that how this still is most important for all sorts of people and specially this is regarding graduates fine. So, you will find how the business executives who were hired and what were the qualities able to effectively communicate able to think critically able to make ethical judgments able to work in teams. And once you start working in teams, you can work in teams only when you know the art of persuading.

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Now Public Speaking has been ranked first in this category and Public Speaking can also be a marker of social change let us go back to the books of history. We were under the rule of the British how did we become a free nation whose contributions were there in making us free all the leaders. And what did these leaders do? They actually flared the passion in us, fine. There is quite a good number of names not only in your country but outside also.

How they have been able to create a sort of change, whether it be Lincoln, whether it be

Gandhi, whether it be Nelson Mandela whether it is Rousseau, Voltaire, Lenin whatsoever all

these people they actually brought a sort of change in society. And who leads the person who

can take the crowd with him and who can take one who is able to convince we have already

seen Brutus and Anthony's speech.

So, how they can motivate, of course, speaking as we have been saying that face to face

communication is faster. So, when you speak live to a person fine. In face to face naturally it

has a better effect. So, a speedy broadcast fine and you can persuade people more when they

are with you in person. So, of all the communicative avenues, speaking happens to be the

most convincing and compelling force.

If there is actually a sort of enmity or a cold war going on even between two people, go talk

to him. There will be some amount of neutralizing fine. So, relations also get neutralized that

is why we always believe in dialogues, fine. Every now and then people have been saying

you need to initiate a dialogue; you need to talk fine. So, talk has got such a power when one

campaigns for even election or for some cause of poverty and whatsoever.

Now look at the condition in your neighbouring country, Sri Lanka. So, what a sort of turmoil

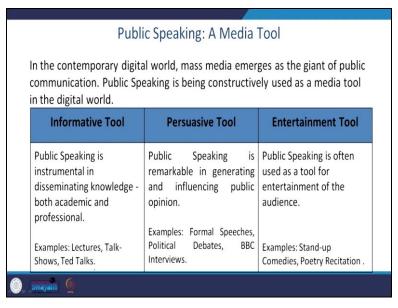
is there and you know that country actually needs a person who can come and pacify, who

can talk to them who can negotiate. So, who will come it is only a person who can speak who

can speak to convince who can speak to let their aggression bring to a table of discussion. So,

that actually art that spell speaking has got.

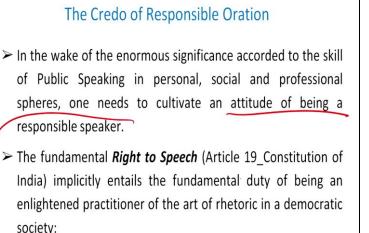
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Now these all tools we have already discussed-- informative tool, it is a persuasive tool it is an entertainment tool you get time and again you come across several such situations where either you can recite your poems, stand- up comedy theatres. These are for entertainment then other forms when you can infuse a group with your high ideas and ideals or you can also inform through lectures ted talks nowadays there are quite a plenty of such opportunities available my dear friend.

Now in order to speak what you require is a sort of credo a sort of credibility, fine.

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So, whether it is personal social and professional one needs to cultivate an attitude of being a responsible speaker we have already talked in the previous lecture that in order to be responsible you have to be ethical, my dear friend. And you know our constitution special

Indian constitution there is a fundamental right to speech fine which implicitly entails the fundamental duty of being an enlightened practitioner of the art of rhetoric in a democratic society.

So, with all this you can understand how important it is to understand the work of speaking in order to accept the role of a well informed citizen.

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To accept the role of well-informed, unprejudiced, judicious articulators

➤ To express tolerance, respect for feedback, caution with language, precision, and ethics in public speaking

➤ To defend the speech rights of the opponents in case of a disagreement/debate

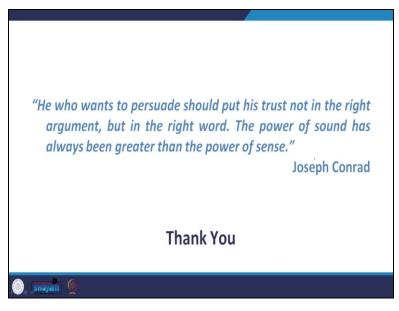
➤ To enjoy the liberty of speech with an acute sense of responsibility

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In order to express your tolerance respect for feedback in order to defend the speech rights of opponents even in case of a disagreement or debate when we have a negotiation, you will find that how with your niche for speaking, you can convince and you can bring a deal in a win-win situation. And you also have the liberty of speech with an acute sense of responsibility and I know that you will be able to do all these.

Now you might have realized how relevant it is to become a good public speaker and before I end this talk,

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Let me take two lines from Joseph Conrad who says----" He who wants to persuade should put his trust not in the right argument but in the right word." So, as a responsible speaker as an ethical speaker what you need to be aware of is not only the right argument but the use of the right word. The power of sound, as Conrad says—" the power of sound has always been greater than the power of sense."

By power of sound he means the power of speech, the power of words, the power of language. I hope you will also use your power of sound your power of language and will be meaningful next time when you get an opportunity to speak publicly. With this I come to the end of this talk. Thank you very much for your patience in listening to me. Have a nice day.