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## PUBLIC SPEECH – A CHALLENGE FOR A STUDENT

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**Annotation.** Public speech represents a highly important factor of communication in modern society. The following 2 different terms are used for this purpose in Lithuanian language – public speech (lith.: *viešoji kalba*) and public speaking (lith.: *viešasis kalbėjimas*). Although they sound similar and often are used as synonymous, they slightly differ in meaning. Public speaking is a wider concept, covering both spoken and written texts, whereas public speech deals with only spoken ones. It is suitable for discussion of academic speeches of students. Academic speeches represent one of the types of public speeches based on topics and field of activity of the speaker.

With the aim to find out the attitude of students towards public speeches and their feelings experienced while speaking a questionnaire survey was conducted involving the 2<sup>nd</sup> year students studying under the study program on Law and Pre-trial Investigation in the Faculty of Public Security of Mykolas Romeris University (MRU). This survey showed the major concern to arise due to audience and this emotion is mostly experienced right before saying the public speech or in its course. Some of respondents reported their anxiety to disappear once they finish their public speech. Respondents also reported various uncontrollable physiological experiences such as irritability, worry. Investigation showed that despite the selected specialty there are very few students willing to talk in public. Very limited number of them tends to experience pleasant feelings while standing in front of the audience and talking.

**Keywords:** public speech, audience, anxiety, fear.

### INTRODUCTION

Public speech represents a highly important factor of communication in modern society. The number of situations keeps increasing where even ordinary member of a society needs to talk in public, and public speech becomes one of the aspects based on which he/she is then assessed as a human. Academic environment of a higher education university institution is not an exclusion. Secondary schools involve less oral examinations, school-children are not always taught subjects of rhetoric and public speaking, consequently public speech may turn out to be a true challenge for some of university students. On the other hand, importance of the ability to appropriately speak in public varies among specialities of students. However it is clearly relevant for future lawyers, i. e. the students of the study program on Law and Pre-trial Investigation in the Faculty of Public Security of Mykolas Romeris University (MRU). The nature of their studies and specificity of their future work determines the need to be able to

expressively speak in public, communicate one's thoughts clearly and to be very precise and specific. In contrast to other specialities, for example, managers, public relations experts, representatives of this particular specialty can't afford speechmaking, long and mindless talking as it will not bring them positive appraisal. However, for some students public speaking is far from pleasant undertaking, and for some it is simply a huge self try-out requiring to overcome their internal fears, namely the fear of audience, to learn to communicate with an audience using eye-contact, to develop an ability not only to read out loud the text, but also to comment on it, to be able to speak without having a drafted text, etc. Academic public speech mostly deals with the presentation of research papers, communications during workshops. This environment is acting as a springboard towards a much more public speaking during court proceedings, communication with suspects and victims, etc.

**The subject** of this research paper – the attitude of 2<sup>nd</sup> year students studying under the study program on Law and Pre-trial Investigation in the Faculty of Public Security of MRU towards speaking public speeches and the feelings experienced by them while speaking in public.

**The objective** of this research paper – to analyze the attitude of 2<sup>nd</sup> year students studying under the study program on Law and Pre-trial Investigation in the Faculty of Public Security of MRU towards the necessity of speaking public speech, and feelings experienced by them while speaking in public in front the audience.

To achieve the above-specified objective the following **tasks** were set:

1. To discuss the concept of public speech, its purpose and pertinent problems.
2. To analyze findings of questionnaire survey that reveal attitude of students towards speaking public speeches, and the feelings experienced by them while speaking in public.
3. To summarize obtained findings and results.

For the **purpose** of the research under consideration 55 2<sup>nd</sup> year students studying under the study program on Law and Pre-trial Investigation in the Faculty of Public Security of MRU were involved in questionnaire survey. They were presented with questionnaires and filled them in anonymously in written. Research was conducted in 2016. Students were presented with total 13 questions, one portion of them being associated with their attitude towards the necessity of speaking public speeches, the other one – with the feelings

experienced by them while speaking in public, and the last one – with their willingness to do it.

For the purpose of research analysis, **methods** of mathematical calculation and questionnaire survey were used enabling to gather information and reveal the things that most frequently disturb and disrupt public speaking. Theoretical review of public speeches used descriptive method that helps revealing the scientific environment of the subject under investigation. The analytical method was used for the purpose of analysis and interpretation of survey findings.

### THE CONCEPT OF PUBLIC SPEECH

The following 2 different terms are used in Lithuanian language – public speech (lith.: *viešoji kalba*) and public speaking (lith.: *viešasis kalbėjimas*). Although they sound similar and often are used as synonymous, they slightly differ in meaning. Public speaking is a wider concept than public speech the latter being limited by particular factors (the pretext of speaking, pre-defined topic, specific location, specified duration, etc.), whereas public speaking covers both spoken and written texts.<sup>1</sup> Thus, when dealing with only spoken texts, the concept of public speech should be used. It is also suitable for discussion of academic speeches of students. Academic speeches represent one of the types of public speeches based on topics and field of activity of the speaker.<sup>2</sup> They are usually spoken orally adding some visual aids (presentations, videos and audio materials). Preparation of appropriate visual materials also requires for specific linguistic skills to ensure conception of the relation between the displayed aid and the speech delivered, to prevent additional aids from overwhelming the very speech, to make them clearly visible (legible, audible), to prevent them from being too abstract or being overloaded with the information. Otherwise speaking, to make it possible for the audience to see (read) and to listen for the speaker.

Respectively, public speech is a unique way of communicating, a specific spoken form of language, an organized communication, however it is different from the communication itself in that the latter is more used for communicating and interchanging of information

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<sup>1</sup> Koženiauskiene, R. Retorinė ir stilistinė publicistinių tekstų analizė. Vilnius, 2013, p. 13.

<sup>2</sup> Koženiauskiene, R. Retorika. Iškalbos stilistika. Vilnius, 2001, p. 50.

whereas the public speech is a monologue spoken by the speaker on the specific topic for the pre-arranged audience.<sup>3</sup>

The complexity of public speech resides not so much in its preparation but in its direct contact to the audience of listeners. Very often the speaker has not only to consider the speaking of the speech and to select appropriate material for it, but also to get ready for distinct reactions of the audience. Proper preparation of the speech is only one of several parts of speaking public speeches as direct interaction with the audience is equally important. Respectively, the following 2 stages of the speaker's action are distinguished: pre-communicative and communicative. The core aspect of the pre-communicative stage is knowledge and ability to clearly and logically put thoughts into one's public speech, whereas that of the communicative stage – delivery of the speech and communication with the audience, alternatively, feedback. It is the feedback that is the major concern for of speakers as text preparation and search for information is predominantly controlled by the speaker himself whereas feedback cannot be controlled in the same manner. It is only possible to have excellent skills of communication with any type of audience, to be capable of answering the most inconvenient questions, etc., however these skills are not to be learnt from textbooks, even practice for some persons is not always helpful in developing such skills. It is absolutely necessary to have a gift eloquence in order to be able to get out of any situation. On the other hand, each speaker is wishing for a positive feedback, as he/she puts lots of efforts in preparing the speech and is expecting for good appraisal from the audience, however at the same time he/she is afraid he/she will not make it. Although the function of academic speeches is more informative one, i. e. they are intended for keeping others informed, clarification, proving, advising<sup>4</sup>, one should remember that even assuming their nature these speeches have to invoke interest and attract attention of the audience. Of course, the features characteristic to the style of informative speech such as clarity, consistency, accuracy, must be maintained. It's worth noting that very similar features are characteristic to the legal speeches, out of which the adjudication and accusatory speeches fulfil informative function, too. Therefore, academic and legal public speeches share common features and serve to fulfil the same function.

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<sup>3</sup> Koženiauskienė, R. Retorika. Iškalbos stilistika. Vilnius, 2001, p. 43–44.

<sup>4</sup> Baršauskienė, V., Janulevičiūtė-Ivaškevičienė, B. Komunikacija: teorija ir praktika. Kaunas, 2007, p. 29.

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## CHALLENGES IN SPEAKING PUBLIC SPEECHES

Public speech as a form of communication has to be developed through practice because theoretical knowledge alone cannot help to become a good speaker. Practice is identified as one of the means to get rid of the fear of audience. The majore “betrayers” of the speaker’s anxiety is his/her body and its physiology. Tremulous voice, sweaty palms, flush cheeks, etc., is what audience will notice, and what doubles the anxiety of the speaker – because of himself/herself and because the audience sees it all too.

The survey of 2<sup>nd</sup> year students studying under the study program on Law and Pre-trial Investigation in the Faculty of Public Security of MRU was aimed at revealing the necessity of speaking public speech for lawyers as well as finding out their feelings as of speakers while speaking in public. The questionnaire was comprised of total 13 questions. Answers of 55 students were obtained. Data were calculated using the method of mathematical calculation that was supposed to reveal the most characteristic features of the feelings experienced when speaking in public. The aim was also to find out if student have ever talked in public before or during studies.

The first statement of the survey *To my opinion, speaking public speeches is...* was matched by the answer *important for the lawyer* by all of the respondents. Other available answers, namely *not so very important for the lawyer*, *not important at all for the lawyer* were not selected. It shows that students understand the significance and necessity of public speeches. The second statement was aimed at finding out if the ability to speak cannot be considered as a good cover to conceal the lack of one’s knowledge in law; for this reason the following three options were made available: *For the lawyer: it is important to possess knowledge in law and the ability to speak convincingly; it is not so very necessary to possess knowledge in law, however it is increasingly important to be able to speak convincingly; and it is important to possess knowledge in law, but ability to speak convincingly is not necessary.* Majority of students responded by choosing Option 1, 2 students – Option 3, and only 1 student – Option 2. It leads to the conclusion that students do not tend to confuse linguistic manipulations with the possession of knowledge in law. However, attitudes of respondents turned out to be different when answering about the appropriate time frame required for preparation of the excellent speech. 32 students reported that preparation must take 5–6 days, and 23 students opted for 3–4 days. None of the respondents chose shorter time frame. It

shows a responsible attitude towards speaking in public and public appearance. Of course, different persons need different preparations for speaking in public, consequently their dedicated time frame for this purpose may differ.

Another group of questions was aimed at seeing if students have ever talked in public before and if such opportunities are available for them during their studies. As many as 40 out of 55 respondents reported that they have talked in public before, mainly indicating various events, camps, students' scientific conferences, etc. Some of respondents have even mentioned examinations and course credit tests where they have to speak in public. They were excluded from the above-mentioned number as the examinations were taken by every student. Unfortunately, only few students have spoken in public during the years of their studies (when taking part in the scientific conference and giving a lecture to the audience of the Third Age University (U3A)). Should presentations of research papers, speaking in workshops and lectures count, all the respondents would be included. The following contraposition becomes obvious: students who have been active at their schools and had plenty of opportunities to speak in public, now when they are university students, do not realize their potential of speaking in public. The question if they are not willing to do so themselves or too little events are held in the faculty and they are faced with fiercer competition is worth further consideration. On the other hand, their public speeches tend to obtain a little bit different nature when they are spoken at workshops and seminars when presenting their research papers. Occasional and informative speeches nevertheless differ in their nature and functions. During seminars students learn to formulate their thoughts in concentrate, reasoned, clear and accurate manner, to express desired information, etc. But in this case the audience remains the same and becomes familiar and one's very own over time enabling the speaker to relax and forget about the role played by the audience. However, when analyzing students' responses regarding their sensation when speaking in public, this factor does not add them any self-confidence. Statements of this particular type offered several answer options to choose from. Out of the options to describe one's sensations when speaking in public – it's pleasant/ unpleasant, as many as 37 of respondents reported that *it is unpleasant as I feel uncomfortable when being watched by the audience*. The answer *I feel unpleasant because I am afraid of the audience reactions* was selected for 25 times, and *I feel unconfident about my linguistic knowledge* was marked by 16 students. All these answers

belong to the category *it's unpleasant*. There were significantly less students who chose the opposite option, i. e. *it's pleasant*: 13 students marked *I feel pleasant because meeting the audience is a challenge for me and it's fun for me to face it*, and there were 11 respondents who reported that *I feel pleasant because I can speak my thoughts and opinion in public*. Only 1 of the respondents marked the answer *I feel pleasant because I enjoy the attention of the audience*. Given the above discussed findings it's true to suggest that speaking public speeches is associated with unpleasant sensation by students, which is mainly caused by the anxiety due to audience. Probably the factor of audience is rightly mentioned as the audience is the one who watches and notices all the signs of worry of the speaker. The questioned students reported that **before they start speaking in public** they experience *trembling hands / legs* and *flushed cheeks* that were indicated by 30 and 29 students, respectively. Other signs of being worried, namely *entire body feels shaky* and *sweaty palms* were selected by 25 students, whereas 16 students indicated that they have *dry mouth*. Only 1 student indicated that he *feels normally*. The audience as the most formidable factor also remains at the **start of speaking in public**. This was indicated by 25 students out of all the respondents. Statements *I gain self-confidence* and *I start being more worried* were chosen by almost the same number of respondents (21 and 22 students, respectively), meaning that some of the students when they start speaking stop being worried and start feeling self-confident, whereas others – on the contrary. The first ones are mainly worried only about the very start of speaking only while they are waiting for their turn to come to start speaking in front of the audience, whereas the others do not feel revealed after they start speaking, they feel even more worried. An extreme concern and fear is felt by the students who indicated that *I want to run and return to my seat* and *I feel so concerned that I can barely breathe* (11 and 2, respectively). Persons usually are willing to escape from uncomfortable condition as soon as possible to feel safe again. The state of students who indicated they find it hard to breathe is of particular concern because it indicates the true fear of the audience.

However, concern and anxiety is more prevalent only when preparing for speaking public speech and when speaking, whereas **at the closure of the speech**, majority feel this concern to disappear, they *feel relieved*. This sign was indicated by 48 students as one of the factors of sensation at the end of the public speech. However the factor of the audience still remains important – 29 students reported that *I wonder what the audience thinks of me*.

Sometimes students (15 and 11, respectively) *feel disappointed because they have spoken not everything they have planned or still feel concerned*. Anxiety, concern and worry as well as desire to escape from the uncomfortable condition is what actually prevents them from relaxing, and when being stressed people normally cannot think freely resulting in some of the information to be skipped and not spoken. In these cases written draft of the speech or at least its sketch could be of huge help. There were only 6 students who reported that *they tend to admire themselves and their speech*. It makes an impression that even those who indicated that they felt concerned before they started speaking or during the speech, at the end they admired their speaking performance. Consequently, it leads to the conclusion that anxiety is caused by the fear to fail, to perform poorly, to say something inappropriate but not the true fear of the audience.

The basis for speaking public speeches is sort of formed by the verbal action however the non-verbal factor remains highly relevant here although it is not so much obvious and noticeable. When students were given a question if they strive to control their gestures and mimic when speaking 28 respondents responded with the following: *I put my efforts to control my gestures and facial expressions*. Two rather contrary statements, namely *I use gestures and facial expressions as additional means to contribute to my public speech* and *I do not attempt to control anything as I am afraid to forget the text due to being worried* were indicated by approximately the same number of students – 10 and 12, respectively. Whereas the option *I do not attempt to control anything as I don't care about it at all* was chosen by 5 students. These findings show that students are cautious about speaking the speech in public and they tend to think not only about the text but also about the way they behave and look in front of the audience, and they also attempt to use non-verbal means to add to the speech that they deliver.

Findings of the questionnaire survey show that students feel anxious and uncomfortable when speaking in public although rather many of them previously were event moderators at their schools and repeatedly took part in conferences, etc. This conclusion is also augmented and justified by the question if they are going to speak in public in the future. More than half of the respondents indicated that *If only it is possible, I'd rather not speak in public in the future*. Responses *I will be speaking in public* and *I will do what my superior awards* showed equal distribution – 13 and 11 students, respectively. Despite the available experience and

public speeches delivered as part of their studies, students are reluctant to speak in public. Only very few of them indicated that they were going to this in the future, too.

In summary, public speech is a challenge for a student requiring considerable efforts. Generally, public speeches are spoken only if necessary, i. e. in cases of defending completed assignments and presenting research papers, however there are few who would volunteer for speaking in front of the audience.

## CONCLUSIONS

Public speech is distinguished as a unique form of communication because of its specificity of speaking in front of the audience, to inform audience about something, etc. The concept of public speech should not be confused with the communication or the term of public speaking. Both of them cover much wider concept of communications. Public speech is distinguished by its monologic spoken form, and it is mostly intended for the smaller or bigger audience. It is the factor of the audience that is most frequently indicated as the one causing most of the anxiety and worries for the speakers who are afraid of the audience reactions, their attitude towards the speaker, even if he/she is well familiar with the audience. Questionnaire survey of the 2<sup>nd</sup> year students studying under the study program on Law and Pre-trial Investigation in the Faculty of Public Security of MRU revealed that major concern occurs due to the audience and before starting to deliver the public speech or in its course. For some of respondents this concern and worry disappears when they finish speaking the public speech. Various uncontrollable physiological experiences mentioned by respondents also show their anxiety and concern. The investigation showed that despite their chose specialty there are very few students willing to speak in public. Only very few of them feel pleasant sensations when standing in front of the audience and speaking to it. It is much easier for the speaker to communicate when not being watched by the audience.

## REFERENCES

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## VIEŠOJI KALBA – IŠŠŪKIS STUDENTUI

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### Santrauka

Viešoji kalba yra svarbus komunikacijos veiksnys šių dienų visuomenėje. Lietuvių kalboje vartojami du terminai – *viešoji kalba* ir *viešasis kalbėjimas*. Nors skamba panašiai ir kartais vartojami sinonimiškai, vis dėlto jų reikšmė šiek tiek skiriasi. Viešas kalbėjimas yra platesnė sąvoka, ji apima ir sakininius, ir rašytinius tekstus, o viešoji kalba – tik sakininius. Jis tinka ir aptariant akademinės studentų kalbas. Akademinės kalbos yra viena iš viešųjų kalbų rūšių pagal kalbos tematiką ir oratoriaus veiklos sritį.

Viešoji kalba yra savitas komunikacijos būdas, specifinė sakininė kalbo forma, organizuota komunikacija, tačiau nuo pačios komunikacijos skiriasi tuo, kad pastaroji yra bendravimo, informacijos keitimosi, o viešoji kalba – monologinė kalbėtojo kalba tam tikra tema, sakoma iš anksto organizuotai auditorijai. Viešosios kalbos sudėtingumas yra ne tiek jos parengimas, kiek tiesioginis kontaktas su klausytojų auditorija. Dažnai kalbėtojui tenka ne tik apgalvoti kalbos sakymą, jai pasirinkti tinkamą medžiagą, bet ir nusiteikti galimai įvairiai auditorijos reakcijai. Tinkamas kalbos parengimas yra tik dalis viešosios kalbos sakymo, nes tiesioginis bendravimas su klausytojais ne ką mažiau svarbus. Atitinkamai skiriamos dvi oratoriaus veiklos fazės: ikikomunikacinė ir komunikacinė. Jeigu ikikomunikacinės fazės svarbiausias aspektas yra žinios ir gebėjimas su aiškiai, logiškai sudėlioti savo viešojoje kalboje, tai komunikacinės fazės – tos kalbos perteikimas ir bendravimas su auditorija, kitaip sakant, grįžtamasis ryšys. Būtent jis kelia daugiausia rūpesčio kalbėtojams, nes teksto rengimą, informacijos paiešką kontroliuoja pats kalbėtojas, o grįžtamojo ryšio kontroliuoti neįmanoma.

Straipsnio objektas – MRU VSF TIP 2 kurso studentų požiūris į viešųjų kalbų sakymą ir jausena jas sakant. Tikslas – išanalizuoti MRU VSF TIP 2 kurso studentų požiūrį į viešosios kalbos sakymo būtinumą, jauseną, kai jiems tenka viešai šnekėti prieš auditoriją. Rengiant tyrimą, buvo apklausti 55 MRU VSF TIP 2 kurso studentai. Jiems buvo pateiktos anketos, kurias jie anonimiškai užpildė raštu. Tyrimas atliktas 2016 metais. Studentams buvo pateikta 13 klausimų, iš kurių dalis yra susiję su jų požiūriu į viešųjų kalbų sakymo būtinumą, antra dalis – su jų jausena viešai kalbant, trečia – su jų noru tai daryti. Apklausa atskleidė, kad labiausiai jaudinamasi dėl auditorijos ir dažniausiai jaudulys apima prieš sakant viešąją kalbą ir jos sakymo metu. Daliai apklaustųjų jaudulys dingsta pabaigus sakyti viešąją kalbą. Įvairūs apklaustųjų paminėti nekontroliuojami fiziologiniai potyriai taip pat rodo nerimastingumą, jaudinimąsi. Tyrimas parodė, kad nepaisant pasirinktos specialybės, studentų, norinčiųjų viešai kalbėti, yra labai nedaug. Nedaugelis iš jų patiria malonų jausmą galėdami stovėti prieš auditoriją ir jai kalbėti.

**Pagrindinės sąvokos:** viešoji kalba, auditorija, nerimas, baimė.

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