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Effectiveness and efficiency in international public speaking: when global English meets globalised cultures

The persistent human attempt to succeed in communication and optimise the efforts in doing so find its origin in the ancient rhetoric and it sees its most recent forms in disciplines which apparently are not related to linguistics, such as organisational business communication, or economics. However, these disciplines share a common feature: they share strong interest for global communication. The goal of any information-processing device is to find a solution; efficiency consists in finding it at the minimal cost. Effectiveness is the degree to which the discourse has an impact on the situation and so forwards one's chances of reaching one's goals.

Public speaking in an international context is a benchmark for testing both the effectiveness and the efficiency of speech communication in English, among native and non-native sujects. This short contribution underlines the relevance of fundamental components of public speaking, such as speech construction (opening, body, closing of the speech; working outline, formal outline, key-word outline), delivery (body language; visual aids), argumentation (informative vs persuasive speaking; patterns of reasoning; developing evidence and proofs). The results of our analysis will bring to further observations on the role of global English in international public speaking.

International public speaking is one of the common sites for the representation and construction of *the global*. By 'global' here we mean a conceptual arena in which multi-national communication can take place. Public speaking may represent and construct *the global* through texts, and it deliberately seeks, through various textual, visual and argumentative strategies, to invite or incite the listener to accept, as real, representations of global entities and of globalised cultures. In public speaking, *the global* is a great opportunity. The applications of the concepts of effectiveness and efficiency to English texts and contexts on the one hand, and to fields other than English linguistics on the other hand (economics and medicine, among others) are fundamental here in order to describe the internationalised domain of public speaking (FIG. 1).
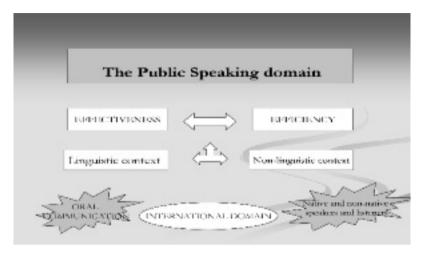
Fig. 1. The Public speaking domain

Public speaking components

The relevance of fundamental components of public speaking, such as speech construction (opening, body, closing of the speech; working outline, formal outline, key-word outline), delivery (body language; visual aids), argumentation (informative vs persuasive speaking; patterns of reasoning; developing evidence and proofs), may be evaluated in any Business Communication context. The second component – that is to say, *delivery* - is the most relevant in our perspective.

The nature of oral communication is transitory, temporary, short-lived, but, in spite of this, oral communication for business purposes should be permanent or, at least, should have a permanent effect on the listener. As far as oral communication in a business situation is concerned *voice and gesture* should be improved in order to fight against the irreversible time nature of the oral messages, because they play a central role in this particular kind of communicative interaction.

Effectiveness in oral communication in general, and in business communication in particular, may be compromised unless it is combined with variations in the speaker's voice and body movements. The perfect combination of these elements leads to pleasant *spontaneity*, which is the authentic key to success. «He who speaks from heart – Thomas Sheridan

used to say – can never fall into any absurdity in his manner» (1762: 125). This aspect becomes even more interesting while working with non-native speakers who want to become 'good business people' speaking 'good International English'.

Harmony between voice and gesture is as relevant for speech delivery as the idea of global English for globalised cultures. By 'voice', we mean the manner of utterance of the tones in speaking, the modulation of any oral performance, the rise and fall in pitch of the voice. By 'gesture', we mean any movement made with a part of our body, especially the hands and head, to express emotion or information, either instead of speaking or while speaking. Neither voice nor gesture may be 'absolute'. In fact, every intonational contour, as well as every kind of gesture, is unique in its realization: tones of intonation and body movements are relative, not absolute. Nevertheless, they are fundamental tools for effective and efficient realizations in texts in English as an International Language (EIL).

The concept of *harmony* applies perfectly to effectiveness and efficiency as well. *Harmony* between effectiveness and efficiency is as relevant in text production as the idea of global English for globalised cultures. The efficiency of a text depends on its being useful to participants with a minimum of effort, its effectiveness depends upon whether it makes a strong impression and has a good potential for fulfilling an aim.

2. 'Efficiency' and 'effectiveness': what they are and what they do

Some definitions of the words 'efficiency' and 'effectiveness' and of their derivatives have been explored in order to be used as a basis for our analysis.

Here are the most relevant definitions:

1. The Oxford Dictionary of English Etymology (http://www.oed.com)

> *Efficient* (adj.): 1. making, causing to be; that makes a thing to be what it is; chiefly in connexion with 'cause'. First example in John Trevisa's translation of 'De Proprietatibus Rebus' 1398: "The cause efficient". 2. productive of effects; effective; adequately operative. Of persons: adequately skilled. First example in J. Barlow's Oration (1787, 4th july):

"Without an efficient government our Indipendence will cease to be a blessing". Etimology: lat. 'efficient-em, efficere', ex (out)+facere (to make)

Efficience (obs. Or arch.): 1. the exercise of efficient power; causative or productive activity (1669); 2. effectiveness, efficacy (1865)

Efficiency (n.): 1. the fact of being an operative agent or efficient cause. Now only in philosophical use (1593, 1628, 1676, 1695, 1870. esp. 'causal efficiency'); 2. fitness or power to accomplish, or success in accomplishing, the purpose intended; adequate power, effectiveness, efficacy (1633, 1818, 1858, 1863. See esp. 1863 Fawcett, POL. ECON. II.: "That nothing more powerfully promotes the efficiency of labour than an abundance of fertile land"; 3. spec. in Economics, as 'economic, marginal, technical efficiency'(1906 to 1966); 4. US. 'efficiency apartment'(1952), one with limited facilities for washing and cooking; 'efficiency engineer', or efficiency expert, one who examines the efficiency of industrial or commercial organization or production

Effective (adj.): 1. that is attended with result or has an effect (1776: A. Smith, "The masters alone had an effective power superior to the people")

Effectiveness (n.): The quality of being effective, in various senses (1607...). Etymology: lat. 'effectivus', see 'effect'

2. Merriam-Webster Online (http://www.merriam-webster.com)

Effective. 1. producing a decided, decisive, or desidered effect. Impressive, striking; 2. ready for service and action ('effective manpower'); 3. actual ('the need to increase effective demand for goods'); 4. being in effect, operative ('the tax become effective next year')
Effectiveness: synonyms 'efficiency 1', efficacy, performance
Efficient: suggests an acting or potential for action or use in such a way as to avoid loss or waste of energy in effecting, producing, or functioning

('an efficient small car')

Efficiency: 1. the quality of being efficient; 2a. Efficient operation; 2b. The ratio of the useful energy delivered by a dynamic system to the energy supplied to it, 3. efficiency apartment

3. Cambridge dictionaries online (http://dictionary.cambridge.org)

Effective. 1. successful or achieving the results that you want; 2. (before noun) in fact, although not officially

Effectiveness. One example: 'there are doubts about the effectiveness of the new drug (=how successful it is) in treating the disease

Efficient: working or operating quickly and effectively in an organized way

Efficiency: 1. when s.one or sth uses time and energy well, without waisting any

4. The Oxford Dictionary of English Etymology (1966)

Effect: result (XIV, Chaucer); accomplishment XV; operative influence XVII. From Old French: 'effect' or Latin 'effectus, efficere', work out. Ex+fic-, facere, make, do (FACT). Hence EFFECTIVE (Trevisa)

Efficient: making a thing what it is XIV (the cause efficient, Trevisa, translated from Latin 'causa efficiens'; adequately operative or skilled XVIII. Latin 'efficere'

6. Peters (2004)

Effective, efficient. These words are all about getting things done and having the desired effect.

Effective has expanded its domain continually since C15, when it was a scholarly word, and even since C17 and C18, when it had particular uses in military and technical contexts. It can now be used in relation to almost anything that achieves the intended result, from 'effective advertising' to 'effective parenting'. It refers to objects and instruments, as well as methods and strategies, and even to people who harness and mobilize others' efforts towards a particular goal, such as an 'effective chairman'.

Efficient is most often applied to people who don't waste time or energy

and other resources in fulfilling particular tasks, such as an 'efficient waiter'. It can also be applied to engines and machinery which give relatively large amount of power in relation to their consumption

The definitions bring us to the following conclusions:

The two words are all about getting things done and having the desired effect.

The word *effective* has expanded its domain continually since the 15th century, when it was a scholarly word, and even since the 17th and 18th, when it had particular uses in military and technical contexts. It can now be used in relation to almost anything that achieves the intended result, from 'effective advertising' to 'effective parenting'. It refers to objects and instruments, as well as methods and strategies, and even to people who harness and mobilize others' efforts towards a particular goal, such as an 'effective chairman'.

Efficient is most often applied to people who don't waste time or energy and other resources in fulfilling particular tasks, such as an 'efficient waiter'.

Both words are linked to the word *fact*. Both were used for the first time in English in a Middle English translation from Latin of a religious text

3. Being 'effective' and 'efficient': Quintilian's categories

To pass now to their current usage, the two words find their most natural groundwork in the analyses of organisational performance. Within this framework, effectiveness is a prerequisite for a company to accomplish its goals. Therefore, in the business field, the analysis of organisational performance is a crucial step in the assessment process. The starting point for evaluating the performance of an organization is its effectiveness, followed by efficiency. Nevertheless, we wonder what is the relationship, or the link which joins these two concepts to the big domain of communication. How did these two words, used for the first time in English in a Middle English translation from Latin of a religious text, find their most natural application in economics (20th century) after centuries of limited usage? Moreover, what is their actual and authentic meaning nowadays?

The common application of the two words to business contexts may lead

the attention away fromrisks to lead us far from the authentic role of *effectiveness and efficiency* in linguistics. Quintilian will help in rediscovering their original role and application. Rhetoric is the key to understanding the passage from the first occurrences of the word to their usage in the economic field (Craig 1998).

It is classical rhetoric, despite its different terms and methods, which needs to be revisited in order to assign the authentic role of effectiveness and efficiency (Covino/Jolliffe 1995). Quintilian named four qualities of style: *correctness, clarity, elegance, and appropriateness*. While correctness depends on conformity with prestigious usage, and appropriateness is presumably definable as the degree to which one's choices fit a current setting, the notions of 'clarity' and 'elegance' seem at first too subjective to be defined and quantified. In our opinion, they are akin to the notions we are discussing here, that is to say the notions of efficiency (*clarity*) and effectiveness (*elegance*). Still, Quintilian's categories reflect the assumption that texts differ in quality because of the extent of processing resources expended on their production (FIG. 2).
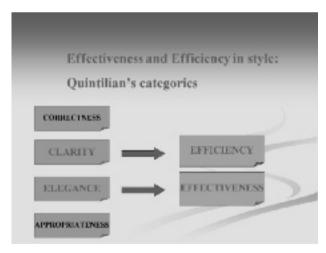

Fig. 2 – Quintilian's categories

4. Effectiveness and efficiency in text analysis

Although these considerations pertain to the field of stylistics, but they could perfectly be suitable to other domains as well. Rhetoric in its wider

sense, and public speaking, just to consider one of the most common of its applications to any discipline, are the links which joins effectiveness and efficiency to any field of communication. Following De Beaugrande 2004:

> EFFICIENCY is the utilization of a text (by producer or receiver) with the least outlay of effort (I.2.8.3). EFFECTIVENESS is the degree to which the text has an impact on the situation and so forwards one's chances of reaching one's goals (I.2.8.4).

These standards may fluctuate together or independently. Effectiveness might call for strange, attention-getting devices that arouse interest, but decrease efficiency. The text producer should strive for the level of difficulty appropriate to the audience. These regulative principles control textual communication: the efficiency of a text is contingent upon its being useful to participants with a minimum of effort, and its effectiveness depends upon whether it makes a strong impression and has a good potential for fulfilling an aim. Effectiveness and efficiency tend to work against each other. As a matter of fact, plain language and trite content are very easy to produce and receive, but cause boredom and give poor content. In contrast, creative language and bizarre content can elicit a powerful effect, but may become unduly difficult to produce and receive. Hence, appropriateness must mediate to indicate the proper balance between the conventional and the unconventional in each situation.

5. Models for EIL performances

'Globalised' and internationalised businesspeople are very much concerned with their manner of speaking. However, they are not always conscious of the fact that powerful and persuasive communication in careers has a long tradition. In fact, the American tradition of elocutionary schools, as well as the endless tradition of rhetorical studies, gives several examples of the development of a *science of speech,* with particular attention to business communication in English.

The principles of some past studies in the field of rhetoric may be adapted easily in a modern perspective to improve students' performance, as it is the case with the main cues to *effectiveness* and *efficiency* in international

business communication in English. One of the first objections from the students as far as voice and gesture are concerned may be the following one: if neither voice nor gesture are absolute, may we have a model for 'good' oral performance and 'proper' gesture?

Interestingly, the history of linguistics seems to demonstrate that a 'model' for both was once considered possible. As far as the study of oral performance is concerned, examples are scattered throughout the centuries: some sixteenth-century English treatises on punctuation (Hart 1569; Puttenham 1589) made the first steps towards the definition of a written 'transcription' of an oral text; in the 17th century the study of English intonation and rhythm was improved with the specific aim of demonstrating the 'Excellency' of the English language (Butler 1634); the 18th and 19th centuries saw the flourishing of 'delivery' all over Europe, because speaking opportunities were developing rapidly in parliament, at the bar, in the pulpit, in the theatre and in polite conversation, and the demand for expressing ideas in oral English increased. In particular, that was the best period for the studies on intonation and gesture to be developed. In 1775 the first impressive study of English intonation by Joshua Steele appeared (Zanola 1996): this work pioneered a number of important frontiers in the subject of prosodic features as a whole. It was followed by John Walker's *The Melody of Speaking (1787),* a markedly pedagogical treatise aimed at giving a guide to those who wanted to read and speak well. Apart from Sheridan (1762), other eighteenth-century elocutionists kept to the traditions established by early English grammarians and elocutionists. In fact, the great majority of the 18th century writings confined the treatment of oral language to inaccurate generalizations on the motivational power of words, but concentrated on the relationship between language and gesture.

Centuries have passed, but no fixed rule about the proper use of voice and gesture has been found. And yet, what has been clearly stated since the 17th century (we are referring to John Hart, 1569) is that the listener's *eie and eare* (sight and hearing) should be harmoniously involved by the speaker's *melody of voice and gesture*. The parts of a speech ought to be combined into a suitable and attractive arrangement. Without harmony, the entire effectiveness and efficiency of oral communication may fail.

6. The role of 'delivery'

The human voice produces waves of sounds, supported by the intermingling of sounds and by gestures. In other words, we could interpret oral communication as a form of *rhetoric*: in fact, it uses the five traditional rhetorical canons to get a point across to the audience effectively. *Invention, arrangement, style, memory and delivery* (in Latin, *inventio, dispositio, elocutio, memoria, pronuntiatio)* are fundamental keys to speech. The last one, *delivery,* particularly influences the effectiveness and efficiency of any oral performance (Kegan/Laskow Lahey 2000).

Delivery is fundamental to succeed in effective business communication. The business person, the lawyer, the politician - as well as the actor or the minister of the church - have all been always concerned with the manner of speaking (Platz 1935). In the 19th century American elocutionists' writings, a first attempt was made to develop a *science of speech:* their manuals are a valuable source of information about reading and speaking skills (Zanola 2002), speech sounds (isolated or in context), prosodic features, speech defects and speech correction. The followers of this Movement were all eclectic in their theories and methods, taking what they considered best from other colleagues and adding ideas of their own. Their common aim was the sincere desire to improve the speaking and reading of the American people; their common interest was to study vocal mechanism and body movements, as the main cues to *effectiveness* in oral communication in general, or to public speaking in particular.

7. Topics for discussion

Convinced of the importance of a harmonious connection between voice and gesture, we will try now to summarise some benchmarks for effectiveness and efficiency in international public speaking, that we will call *Elements of Effective Presentation*. We consider these topics as fundamental to an 'effective and efficient presentation' in International English, to an international public, in an international business situation.

1. The importance of the eyes in a business meeting and in a formal presentation

2. The supporting role of face expressions
3. Body language and verbal communication: how should they synchronize?
4. Elements of voice quality
5. Can body language be 'persuasive'?
6. Memorability and persuasiveness in a good presentation.

7.1. The importance of the eyes in a business meeting and in a formal presentation

People who do not engage others with their eyes are judged less credible than those who do. If the speaker concentrates too much on his/her listener, he/she will not concentrate on what he/she has to say. If he/she will fix over the head of his/her listener (or listeners) to cope with the discomfort of seeing too much, he/she may seem talking to the air. One of the things that could be suggested, for example, is to look and speak to one person at a time, when there is more than one person listening; this technique has a wonderful calming effect both on the speaker and on the listener.

7.2. The supporting role of face expressions

The face is capable of a bewildering range of emotional expressions – some say (Ekman 2007) over seven thousand different expressions are possible from the eighty muscles of the face! Unfortunately, without hard work, we will not be able to expand significantly our range of expression. The best way to improve our physical behaviour could be to videotape our speech performances: turning off the sound and playing the tape forward, any repetitive motion will become painfully obvious!

7.3. Body language and verbal communication: how should they synchronize?

The first objective should be to reduce random movement. After gaining control over nervous movements, the next step should be to learn a wider range of *deliberate* physical expressions. In other words, becoming more 'animated', but in a 'rational way'. Which regularly took place if students are *involved in what they are saying*: in other words, they realize that they have to work *at feeling* the meaning of the words they use, rather than just saying them.

7.4. Elements of voice quality

Benjamin Disraeli said that "There is no index of character as sure as the voice" (Scott Cook 1989). The elements of vocal quality are many but we can say that a speaker is a 'good speaker' if he/she:

• Is loud enough
• Has an adequate and varied rate of speech
• Uses clear diction
• Has a pleasant pitch
• Has good phrasing
• Uses frequent pauses
• Makes a variety of intonational curves (rising, falling, or neutral)

7.5. Memorability and persuasiveness in a good presentation

Some simple devices may be suggested in order to make an oral performance in some way memorable and persuasive. Among them, some rhetorical effects must be underlined:

• ellipsis (for example, to leave out the 'and' before the third phrase)
• asyndeton (the use of sentence fragments to quicken the rhythm)
• anaphora (when successive sentences are begun with the same word or group of words)
• balance (a balanced phrase opposes two elements, the first usually spoken with pitch going up, the second with pitch going down)
• rethorical questions (to introduce an idea for discussion, to indicate misunderstanding, to make an accusation, etc.)
• hyperbole (to exagerate)
• repetition

8. Conclusion

The sounds which accompany our thoughts, the prosodic features which join them in a complex 'melody', and the gestures that accompany any speech are moulds into which we pour our own thought. It is our voice

which gives form and direction to our ideas; it is our body which gives life to them.

The strong link which joins voice - in all its forms and functions - and gesture is too important a subject to be underestimated. The balance between them is the benchmark for judging both the efficiency and the effectiveness of any speech. An *effective and efficient speaker* will do the right thing and he/she will do it right for the audience.

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