

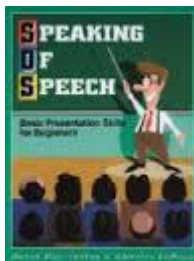
Book Review

Speaking of Speech, New Edition

[David Harrington and Charles LeBeau. Oxford: Macmillan LanguageHouse. 2009. 118 p. ¥2,500. ISBN: 978-4-7773-6271-4. Level: TOEIC 400-550, CEFR A1-A2.]

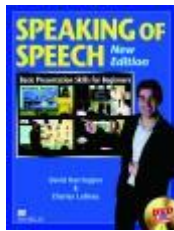
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Before 1996, for teachers wanting to teach the basics of speech to Japanese students there were only a few options: choose a speech textbook created for native speakers of English, choose a speech textbook created for ESL students, choose a textbook created for the Japanese market, create your own speech textbook, or choose not to use a textbook. Looking at textbooks created for native speakers, it was clear that the level of the explanations was too high for most if not all Japanese students. The same is true of textbooks created for ESL students, many of whom have gone to English language institutes attached to universities, then passed the language requirement to enter universities. Textbooks created for the Japanese market were often uninteresting in content and activities. It was a lot of work for teachers to create a textbook or handouts for the class.



Then, in 1996, Macmillan LanguageHouse released a book called *Speaking of Speech*, written by David Harrington and Charles LeBeau, and illustrated by Ty Semeca. The sub-title was “Basic Presentation Skills for Beginners,” and it was just that. It had a simple organization: the physical message (how to stand and give a speech), the story message (how to arrange the contents of the speech), and the visual message (at that time this meant the use of audio-visual aids like charts and posters). It had little text, and the text was in easy-to-understand English. Instead of long explanations, the book used many clear, humorous illustrations. The activities were interesting and useful. It was the book that many speech teachers had been waiting for, and they purchased the book.

However, while using the book, the teachers found some weak points: it only taught two speeches—an informational speech and a persuasive speech, although there were many interesting illustrations, it contained no color and so was not visually appealing to students, and there were no sample speeches for students to use as models. Teachers either supplemented the textbook, used it as a resource book, or reluctantly abandoned it.



Thirteen years later, in 2009, these deficiencies were addressed in *Speaking of Speech, New Edition*. In terms of layout, it became full color, with many photos (see Figure 1) added to the entertaining color illustrations (see Figure 2), making this a very attractive book.

Step 1 INTRODUCE:
First, *introduce* the chart. Tell the audience what kind of chart it is.



"This bar graph shows monthly sales from January to October."

Figure 1. Photos

Problem 1: Standing in front of visual and blocking the audience's view.

Solution: Stand off to the side.



Figure 2. Interesting Color Illustrations

The number and types of speeches taught increased to five speeches: an informative speech, a descriptive speech, a demonstration speech, and two comparison speeches. There is a

teacher's manual that includes answers to the activities, teaching tips, and the audioscript. Most importantly, a DVD of model speeches was bundled with the book. How useful is the new edition? After using it for two and a half years in classes for first and second year English majors at the university level, here are some observations.

The layout, as was mentioned above, includes interesting color illustrations and photos and is appealing, but that is expected of textbooks these days. The activities, which at first glance seem a little too simple, are actually quite useful and interesting to students, many of whom are perhaps preparing and giving a speech in English for the first time. (Remember that this book teaches the basics of speech and is aimed at a low English level audience.) Students enthusiastically do the activities. The activities are extremely well thought-out and are easy for teacher and students to comprehend what to do.

The original concept of dividing the act of giving a speech into three areas (physical, story, and visual) is retained in the new edition and remains an appropriate and comprehensible format for teachers to teach speech, and for students to comprehend what they have to do to give a good speech. The book includes checklists to remind students of important elements and steps, and at the back of the book there are photocopiable evaluation sheets. Of course, teachers can choose to adapt the evaluation sheets, or even create and use their own.

One modification to the visual message section of the book is that instead of referring to audio-visual aids like posters and charts, the book now refers to slides that reflects the move away from paper posters to computer presentation software to create presentations. A whole new section deals with what to avoid while using such software, and how to use the software to create good presentations. Of course, teachers can choose to still have students use paper posters instead of presentation software, as the advice in the new section can mostly be applicable to the non-digital audio-visual aid.

One of the most valuable components is the DVD that is bundled with the student textbook. It is a professionally-created DVD with extremely high production values. It presents a model of each kind of speech. It highlights the important parts of the speech that is being taught. Some students laugh at some of the reactions of the audience, especially some of the reactions of the guys to comments by the female presenters, but this is a minor defect, and does not significantly alter the teaching value of the DVD. The DVD comes with an English subtitle option, which is useful for all students. Rather than providing only a teacher's DVD, the bundled DVD allows students to view the model speech when they need to and as many times as they want to see it.

One problem with the original *Speaking of Speech* book that still remains in the new

edition is how the three basic messages (physical, visual, and story) are presented. All three messages are presented on the first page of the textbook (p. 5), which is fine. However, for students to learn much about the visual message, they have to wait until they prepare their third presentation. That is, they have already presented two speeches without having the benefit of the good advice regarding the visual message. The same is true regarding the story message. Students have to wait until they are finished with the fourth speech before they learn how to craft a good story (how to put the information together in the speech) for the fifth and last presentation.. Teachers can deal with this “defect” by some judicious jumping around in the textbook to provide the necessary advice for the physical, visual, and story messages for all five presentations. The DVD model speech helps in this regard, as advice about the visual and story messages can be given to students while they view the DVD in class.

Speaking of Speech, New Edition is an excellent textbook to teach basic speech for university students of all levels, even CEF B1 to C1 (which is intermediate to near-native level). Teachers who are interested can download the table of contents and some sample pages from

<http://www.mlh.co.jp/catalog/product.php?la=en&i=617&openedtag=0> and can see a video by one of the authors at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=04nBzIk6W18>. Sample copies of the book can be requested from Macmillan LanguageHouse. In 2013 Macmillan came out with a DIGIBOOK version of the book so that students and teachers can use a digital copy of the book and not have to bring the paper book to class. Macmillan does warn that people who download an illegal copy of the book from the Internet are liable for criminal action (Halliday, 2014). For students who have already used *Speaking of Speech, New Edition* there are books like Powell’s (2011) *Presenting in English: How to Give Successful Presentations* (see the 2012 review by Miles) and textbooks by other publishers, but for those teachers who have appreciated the approach of *Speaking of Speech, New Edition*, there is good news—Macmillan has announced that *Speaking of Speech Book Two* will be coming out in November, ready for the JALT International Conference.

For teachers in 2014 there are still the same options as in 1996, choose a speech textbook created for native speakers of English, choose a speech textbook created for ESL students, choose a textbook created for the Japanese market, create your own speech textbook, or choose not to use a textbook, but it is fortunate that teachers have *Speaking of Speech, New Edition* to teach basic presentation skills.

Special thanks to Darren Halliday of Macmillan LanguageHouse for allowing use of graphics from the book.

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