

# Public Speaking Preparation Stage: Critical Thinking and Organization Skills in South Korea

Dr. Ian Done D. Ramos

Department of English Language and Literature, University of Suwon

17 Wauan-gil, Bongdam-eup, Hwaseong City, Gyeonggi-do 18323, South Korea

Tel: 82 (31) 220-2352 / 2204 / 2503 E-mail: professionalworkian@gmail.com

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## Abstract

Public Speaking involves the creation and delivery of a formally organized communication process in front of audiences coming from different cultural, political, religious, economic, educational, and social orientations. Public speeches follow the same principle of what content should be included (like in the essay), and in effect, students are encouraged to use certain strategies. In this study, the focus was to examine how critical thinking and the organization of speech writing was implemented in a Public Speaking course in South Korea. Data were collected over 3 semesters with a total of 47 Korean national undergraduate English majors. The following questions provided the base of this study: 1) what role does critical thinking play in the creation and organization of written speeches by Korean university students? and 2) how do students perceive the usefulness of critical thinking in a Korean university public speaking course. Furthermore, this study collected both quantitative and qualitative data; therefore, the participants' responses are recorded with percentages, and further reasons are provided by students. Data were then triangulated by examining students' actual written speeches with the prescribed rubrics. The findings suggest that engaging students in critical reflection, genre reading, and attention to speech discourse can lead to the overall improvement of both critical thinking and organization of student speeches. From these findings, a pilot public speaking training program matrix is presented to help prepare English majors in South Korea (if they may pursue teaching) or similar contexts for teaching courses related to public speaking.

**Keywords:** Public Speaking, Critical Thinking, Organization Skills, Effective Communication, Speech Writing

## 1. Introduction

In Korea, learners of English continue to struggle to obtain both linguistic and communicative competence on the stage of language acquisition (Ramos, 2014a, 2014b; Moodie & Nam, 2016). To enter prestigious universities and/or land a successful job, university graduates are expected to possess a significant amount of English communicative competence. In effect, Korean students and parents place a high value on English language learning from an early age through to the completion of a university degree. Although most companies initially consider high exam results (e.g. in TOEIC), employers and recruitment teams also believe that an applicant who possesses strong oral and communication skills in English to be a huge asset (Choi, 2008).

This may be a reason why, in recent years, more and more Korean universities are developing and implementing programs and courses related to public speaking to help students overcome their communicative competence struggles. Through communicative focused courses like public speaking, learners can develop and refine their oral and communication skills through guided practice in a supportive environment. However, the authors of this paper noted that in their public speaking courses, students encountered various difficulties in the writing and organization of their speeches which appeared to stem from a lack of autonomous critical thinking and overreliance on the professor.

This study examined different groups of students in a Public Speaking class over 3 semesters in the hopes of providing future directions for the course and similar courses in the future. Thus, answers to the following research questions were pursued: 1) what role does critical thinking play in the creation and organization of written speeches by Korean university students? and 2) how do students perceive the usefulness of critical thinking in a Korean university public speaking course? Through addressing these questions, this study contributes to a deeper understanding of critical thinking concerning public speaking courses, as well as their perceived usefulness from the students' vantage point. Through the findings of this study, the author also provides important implications for the preparation of novice teachers who will be teaching the Public Speaking course or English majors if they happen to pursue teaching.

## 2. Review of Literature

### 2.1 *Defining Public Speaking*

As everyone knows, Public Speaking (or Public Speech) involves the creation and delivery of a formally organized communication process in front of audiences who are from different cultural, political, religious, economic, educational, and social orientations. Slagell (2009) defines public speaking as a speech act in everyday language and practice that a speaker performs to share ideas with an audience. In public speaking, the focus remains mainly on the speaker, and, most of the time, the crowd of listeners' main task is to passively listen. Thus, public speaking differs from daily communication in that it is often one-directional where the speaker, who is the bearer of information, is the lone dominant speaker, while daily communication includes one or more participants actively and spontaneously interacting.

### 2.2 *Creation of a Written Speech*

Public speeches follow the same essay writing principle of what content should be included, and in effect, students are encouraged to use the following: "personal experience, social

issues, cultural issues, literature, or the content of other subjects” (Raimes, 2012, p. 308). This comes along with the idea of “self-writing or writing with the only the self in mind as an audience” (p. 400) where students do note-taking as one process to succeed in speech writing (Brown, 2007). Raimes (2012) emphasizes that “Writing is for the discovery of learning, not just demonstration of learning” (p. 309). Thus, she concludes that “...students need topics that allow them to generate ideas, find the forms to fit the ideas, and invite risk-taking. (p. 309). Consequentially, a written speech is a form of the narrative given by a person who tells past experiences and gives the judgment of those experiences. For Pavlenko (2007), narratives are typically analyzed for three types of information:

1. subject reality which includes the thought and feelings of how the events or phenomena were experienced by individuals;
2. life reality which comprises repeated events and common themes found in individuals' narrated experiences; and,
3. text reality which involves how individuals make use of particular cues in the stories that they tell about themselves to construct themselves as particular kinds of individuals, with particular identities as characters within the story and, at the same time, as individuals who take particular stances concerning the audience as their stories unfold. (cited in Hall, 2012, p. 161)

Besides, effective communication requires certain knowledge “including, but not limited to, speakers' knowledge of social roles and relationship, perceptions of personal and cultural identity, and the communicative goals of an interaction” (DeCapua & Wintergerst, 2010, p. 74), which should be reflected in writing speeches. Further, they emphasize that “since cultural knowledge is built up through years of socialization and enculturation, a newcomer cannot expect to learn everything there is to know immediately”(p. 74). Therefore, a student should consider them in drafting his or her speech as both the writer and speaker himself or herself address it to the audience or listeners.

### *2.3 Critical Thinking Affecting Writing and Organization*

Critical thinking (CT) has a vital place in writing and organizing a speech. Malmir and Shoorcheh (2012) states that “writing activities are the best way to teach critical thinking because writing is an activity which forces students to organize their thoughts, think deeply about their topic and persuasively present their conclusions” (p. 610). As students master different types of speeches such as persuasive speech, inspirational speech, and the like, students are keen to apply their critical thinking and organize points to complete a speaking engagement task. According to Grabe and Kaplan (1996), the organization of knowledge within the text occurs via various models such as definition, description, classification, comparison, problem and solution, cause and effect, analysis, and synthesis. According to Bayat (2014), “The aforementioned models employed for organizing knowledge enable the writer to construct the text effectively and help the reader to understand the thesis of the text with ease” (p. 157). With this, critical thinking is triggered and held responsible for writing and organizing ideas and opinions for an audience.

For the public speaking classroom, therefore, CT remains a vital component. Without CT, students will be unable to solve problems or compose solutions to complex situations. Students must learn to use critical thinking as a necessity for public speaking. Sellnow and

Ahlfeldt (2005) advocated problem-based learning as one method for helping students develop CT in public speaking courses. In their study, they found that by using problem-based learning in public speaking courses, students were challenged to implement CT into classroom instruction when working in groups. Additionally, research has found that using CT in classrooms allows students to expand their understanding of grammar and syntax to better compose speeches. Ramos' (2015) study revealed data from focus group discussion and interviews regarding CT and public speaking. Some students in the focus group discussions developed an open-mind to critical thinking activities because they had the potential to widen their logical thinking capacity by organizing their thoughts or information using proper words and grammar. This study and others support that CT remains a necessary component to building fundamental public speaking skills (Sellnow & Ahlfeldt, 2005; Lucas, 2011).

Other research supports the notion that CT and public speaking are connected. In DeWaelche's (2015) study on the implementation of critical thinking in his three courses consisting of advanced, intermediate, and cultural English courses, one survey respondent noted that despite the difficult discussion questions and often challenging undertaking in interacting in English, such tasks helped students think critically. This remains vital to the public speaking process as this CT allows for students to visualize and organize thought-provoking outlines and content in speeches (Oaks, 2006). The sentiment that CT implementation allows for students to think and organize information critically remained agreeable among students in both the survey and FGDs. It was determined that "throughout the observations that students with limited English ability struggled to participate despite efforts by their peers and the instructor to involve them. Yet, participants in the focus group discussion explained that students often demonstrated critical thinking skills when responding in Korean to the questions, despite being unable to articulate their ideas in English" (DeWaelche, 2015, p. 12).

Consequentially, there are some challenges to not having CT in the public speaking classroom. Goatly (2000) states that it can be difficult for students to complete argumentative or persuasive writing styles because of a lack of CT. To solve this issue, visualization (VIS), where people are encouraged to picture themselves being successful in the communicative situation, has been suggested (Ayres & Hopf, 1985, cited in Choi, Honeycutt & Bodie, 2015) as one technique, and it is laid out in work on imagined interactions (Honeycutt, 2003, 2008). Imagined interactions are defined as the "process of social cognition whereby actors imagine and therefore indirectly experience themselves in anticipated and/or past communicative encounters with others" (Honeycutt, 2003, p. 2). When the past encounters remain unsatisfactory, students who lack CT tend to be anxious in writing and organizing their ideas and opinions. Educating students to be good critical thinkers allows them to gain useful insights into rational thought and the ability to think both in the concrete and abstract – all important skills needed for a healthy democratic society (Worrell & Profetto-McGrath, 2007). Therefore, writing remains a process where critical thinking needs to be both implemented in instruction and communicated through speech (Bean, 2001), and "organization of knowledge within the text can be considered as the concrete form of the writer's opinion on the topic" (Bayat, 2014, p. 157), which is carried out upon the collaboration of writing and critical

thinking.

#### *2.4 Communicative Activity Enhancing Public Speaking*

In a study conducted by Ramos (2014b), it was found that Korean students treated communicative tasks as a challenge and supplied additional motivation to complete the task, especially when a teacher or an interesting topic motivated them to inhibit shyness and discomfort. Generally, students also feel satisfaction whenever they were able to communicate in English (Park & Huebner, 2005). Ramos (2014b) added that in fact, some were excited to practice for their benefit and responded positively when they had improved or advanced. These students distinguished good conversational strategies from others. Additionally, the students in the study could maintain the potential to remain excited to practice their interaction skills, as it is useful in job-seeking and other personal benefits, as emphasized in student FGDs (focus group discussions) and teacher interviews.

Thus, Public Speaking illustrates how a speaker and a receiver reconcile aural skills with production building strategies. A public speaker is expected to internalize and apply the principles of Public Speaking. For instance, Korean students are often required to prepare speeches that are culturally-sensitive in orientation, since audiences in Korean universities have the potential to be multicultural, although not always. This implies that materials gathered, speeches organized, and the art of delivery performed during the speaking process are carefully executed to establish a good relationship between the speaker and the listeners during the process of public speaking.

### **3. Research Method**

#### *3.1 Participants*

The study included 47 third- and fourth-year Korean nationals majoring in English who were attending a Public Speaking class at a university in Korea. All students agreed to partake in the data collection of this survey voluntarily. The study was conducted over 3 semesters at a university in Gyeonggi-do province in South Korea. Informed consent was gained before data collection procedures.

#### *3.2 Data Collection Procedures*

All data gathered in this study were collected through a questionnaire that targeted critical thinking and organization skills in the creation of formal speeches. Each question included participants marking their response on a Likert scale (i.e. excellent rating to poor rating) and is accompanied by a reason which a student confirms 'agree' or 'disagree' by writing 'yes' or 'no' beside each reason. Space below each statement was also provided for each question, just in case, students had further details to provide. In the usage of this Likert scale and open-ended responses, the students gave indicators of their ability or inability to perform with critical thinking and organization skill. These results were then interpreted by the researcher to ascertain the trends and leanings of students concerning their critical thinking usage when writing and organizing speeches. According to Dörnyei (2011), "The open responses can offer graphic examples, illustrative quotes, and can also lead us to identify issues not previously anticipated" (p. 107). Several students who marked the prepared reasons and provided further details were also counted.

There were 47 students from whom the data was collected in the three semesters. All students who were labeled from student A down to student AX rated all questions and confirmed the

prepared reasons whether they agreed or not; however, not all of them wrote other supportive reasons not found in the questionnaire. Regarding the written responses collected from the students, grammar, syntax, and spelling errors remain uncorrected to demonstrate without bias the actual responses of the student participants.

Finally, data was triangulated by examining students' actual written speeches with the rubrics taken from <https://www.google.com/search?q=speech+manuscript+rubrics&ei>. The rubrics were slightly modified, particularly the number of sources in the research analysis section.

### 3.3 Data Analysis Procedures

This study collected both quantitative and qualitative data. Therefore, the participants' responses are recorded with percentages, and further reasons are provided by students. Quantitative results are displayed in tables, and analysis and interpretation are supported by qualitative statements such as reasons or comments.

The number of survey participants was not determined by random sampling methods using Slovin's formula, since all students in the three semesters participated in the study. Frequency count to determine the number of responses in the survey questionnaire was utilized by the percentage formula. However, the number of students writing further comments or reasons was counted in the cardinal number.

## 4. Results

The tables below present the results of student respondents about applying critical thinking, organizing a speech, and written speeches in the Public Speaking course. Table 1 shows the percentage of students in applying critical thinking.

Table 1. Percentage of students in applying critical thinking

|   | E | %  | G  | %  | A  | %  | F | %  | P | % |
|---|---|----|----|----|----|----|---|----|---|---|
| 1. Effectively discriminate bad supporting details from useful ones               | 5 | 11 | 19 | 40 | 20 | 43 | 2 | 4  | 1 | 2 |
| 2. Effectively give logical reasoning on whatever the situation is                | 4 | 9  | 20 | 43 | 13 | 28 | 9 | 19 | 1 | 2 |
| 3. Effectively apply critical thinking to persuade people to believe what is said | 8 | 17 | 26 | 55 | 11 | 23 | 2 | 4  | 0 | 0 |

*Note.* E-excellent; G-good; A-average; F-fair; P-poor

In “effectively discriminate bad supporting details from useful ones,” 11% were excellent; 40%, good; 43%, average; 4%, fair; and 2%, poor. The data shows that the fair and poor ratings were not competitive, while the excellent rating was higher but not impressive. Thus, the data demonstrate that marking the good and average as top ratings, with a 3% difference, for this skill manifested satisfactory performance among the students. Twenty-eight student respondents among the total sample revealed they believe that very relevant supporting details give sense to their points. In support, student I revealed: “I know a lot of things like different cultures.” (sic) However, student M made the following comment: “I’m not sure.



Writing the script with 100 percent relevant materials is not easy for me. Sometimes, it is tricky.” (sic)

In “effectively give logical reasoning on whatever the situation is,” 9% were excellent; 43%, good; 28%, average; 19%, fair; and 2%, poor. This question’s excellent and poor ratings gained appeared to have little response, but the average and fair ratings with a 9% difference implied better results. Overall, the students indicating the good rating gained the highest performing skill, because according to 18 student respondents, they have read many books on the cause-effect phenomenon. However, student AS argued: “Everything has double sides. All things have good sides and bad sides. It is not because of reading many books on the cause-effect phenomenon.” (sic) As a reminder, student AW stated: “At this point, studying the very basic of philosophy is crucial for logical reasoning.” (sic) While, student AV expressed: “My knowledge is wider than other people, I think. I’m interesting to a lot of kinds of situation.” (sic)

In “effectively apply critical thinking to persuade people to believe what is said,” 17% were excellent; 55%, good; 23%, average; 4%, fair; and 0%, poor. The survey results demonstrate that no one selected the poor in this aspect. Students who rated fair in this skill, however, did not show satisfactory performance in the survey, while those who rated excellent and average, with a 6% difference, responded strongly. As is shown, the good rating obtained the highest percentage. Twenty-six student respondents among all who participated believed that it is because they project credibility of being a public speaker, and one of such strategies is to quote an expert’s opinion. Student L mentioned: “I quote some good sentences from the Internet. And I write about my feeling and thinking that go through until now.” In support, Student AR asserted: “I have power to lead people and strong voice,” (sic) while student AV agreed: “I can persuade that is right. But I’m not good at against. It’s some hard to persuade that it is wrong.” (sic) However, Student M argued: “... It is not about how strong critical thinking I have, but about how well use other strategies. I think I have to change it, but it is not easy for me.” (sic)

Table 2 shows the percentage of students in organizing a speech.

Table 2. Percentage of students in organizing a speech

|    |             |             |            | E                    | %  | G  | %  | A  | %  | F  | % | P  | % |   |
|----|-------------|-------------|------------|----------------------|----|----|----|----|----|----|---|----|---|---|
| 1. | Effectively | utilize     | materials  | without              | 17 | 36 | 22 | 47 | 4  | 9  | 4 | 9  | 0 | 0 |
|    |             |             |            | plagiarism           |    |    |    |    |    |    |   |    |   |   |
| 2. | Effectively | organize    | speeches   | with                 | 11 | 23 | 15 | 32 | 14 | 30 | 6 | 13 | 1 | 2 |
|    |             |             |            | various              |    |    |    |    |    |    |   |    |   |   |
|    |             |             |            | sequential           |    |    |    |    |    |    |   |    |   |   |
|    |             |             |            | patterns             |    |    |    |    |    |    |   |    |   |   |
|    |             |             |            | such                 |    |    |    |    |    |    |   |    |   |   |
|    |             |             |            | as                   |    |    |    |    |    |    |   |    |   |   |
|    |             |             |            | comparison-contrast, |    |    |    |    |    |    |   |    |   |   |
|    |             |             |            | cause-effect, etc.   |    |    |    |    |    |    |   |    |   |   |
| 3. | Effectively | incorporate | strategies | (such                | 7  | 15 | 22 | 47 | 12 | 26 | 6 | 13 | 0 | 0 |
|    |             |             |            | as                   |    |    |    |    |    |    |   |    |   |   |
|    |             |             |            | personal             |    |    |    |    |    |    |   |    |   |   |
|    |             |             |            | stories,             |    |    |    |    |    |    |   |    |   |   |
|    |             |             |            | quotes,              |    |    |    |    |    |    |   |    |   |   |
|    |             |             |            | statistics,          |    |    |    |    |    |    |   |    |   |   |
|    |             |             |            | anecdotes,           |    |    |    |    |    |    |   |    |   |   |
|    |             |             |            | etc.)                |    |    |    |    |    |    |   |    |   |   |
|    |             |             |            | where                |    |    |    |    |    |    |   |    |   |   |
|    |             |             |            | necessary            |    |    |    |    |    |    |   |    |   |   |
|    |             |             |            | in                   |    |    |    |    |    |    |   |    |   |   |
|    |             |             |            | my                   |    |    |    |    |    |    |   |    |   |   |
|    |             |             |            | speech               |    |    |    |    |    |    |   |    |   |   |
|    |             |             |            | manuscript           |    |    |    |    |    |    |   |    |   |   |

Note. E-excellent; G-good; A-average; F-fair; P-poor

In “effectively utilizing materials without plagiarism,” 36% of the total number of students responded excellent; 47%, good; 9%, average; 9%, fair; and 0%, poor. These figures demonstrate that average and fair ratings gained lower equal impression while the excellent rating gained a higher impression indicating that a student performed the skill well. Further yet, none reported a poor perceived level of performance. Above all, students who indicated a good rating had the most satisfactory performance. Due to substantial input in the class, 28 student respondents among all participating students agreed that they have learned ethics in their Public Speaking course, and thus have been able to utilize materials effectively. Student A supported: “Because it comes from my brain and experience.” Student L also asserted: “I write my personal stories but in the introduction, I quote some sentences to interest listeners.” On the other hand, student B commented: “No, I usually need a teacher in that process.”

In “effectively organizing speeches with various sequential patterns such as comparison-contrast, cause-effect, etc.,” 23% of the students responded “excellent”; 32%, good; 30%, average; 13%, fair; and 2%, poor. This also demonstrates that the student respondents who marked fair and poor ratings did not perform well in doing such skill. However, the excellent, good, and average ratings seem to have closer intervals; particularly, the student respondents indicating a good rating had the most effective performance in this aspect. During the research phase, 25 students among all participants expressed their reasoning for selecting average or higher ratings saying that they have learned the value of utilizing a variety of speaking devices in public speaking. For instance, student AQ mentioned: “Yes, I can use various idioms and skills.” (sic) Besides, student AT stated: “Because I learned a lot of grammars and comparison ways when I was in senior high and university.” (sic) Student AW said: “I have learned the natural flow of speech is quite important.” (sic) However, student G mentioned: “I can express emotionally but I lack care in organization skills.” (sic) Likewise, student N expressed saying: “When I write my script, something is repetitive.” (sic)

In “effectively incorporating strategies (such as personal stories, quotes, statistics, anecdotes, etc.) where necessary in a speech manuscript,” 15% of the students were excellent; 47%, good; 26%, average; 13%, fair; and 0%, poor. It reveals that no participants found this skill difficult, while the students who rated excellent and fair, with a 2% difference, were able to manage to perform such skill, and those who rated average performed much better. Overall, the good rating rendered higher responses among students, which is almost half the total number of student responses. Twenty-three of them expressed the reason behind this all which is, they have internalized the skills of writing a speech. Student AS said: “I like writing and reading so I know when I need those strategies.” (sic) Student AC expressed his opinion: “I thought of many stories and other things based on what I learned” (sic) while Student M commented saying: “Yes, I have tried to write my script much more interestingly (sic) and I also realized through this class that personal experience is one of the best materials.” (sic) However, student AT identified his weakness: “It is hard for me to apply all of the strategies which we’ve learned during the class when I write my speeches. (Even though I know I’ve learned them, still hard for me to apply.” (sic) Student AW reflected and commented: “Writing a speech is a matter of transforming my personality into an adequate form of material.” (sic) Student AV commented: “I need more skills to write. I don’t know when I use,



where I use,” (sic) and this was similar to student AP’s situation. Student K added saying: “Because the skills, like quotes and statistics, are not familiar to me.” (sic)

Table 3 presents the percentage of students’ written speeches following the rubrics required in their speech class.

Table 3. Percentage of students in actual written speech rubrics

| Skills                  | E  | %  | G  | %  | F  | %  | P  | %  |
|-------------------------|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|
| Research Analysis       | 8  | 17 | 21 | 45 | 5  | 11 | 13 | 28 |
| Organization            | 27 | 57 | 17 | 36 | 3  | 6  | 0  | 0  |
| Language                | 25 | 53 | 15 | 32 | 7  | 15 | 0  | 0  |
| Tropes and Schemes      | 21 | 45 | 16 | 34 | 9  | 19 | 1  | 2  |
| Appeals                 | 23 | 49 | 18 | 38 | 6  | 13 | 0  | 0  |
| Grammar and Conventions | 9  | 19 | 22 | 47 | 16 | 34 | 0  | 0  |

*Note.* 4 pts-E(excellent); 3 pts-G(good); 2 pts-F(fair); 1pt-P(poor)

As for research analysis, 17% of student participants obtained 4 points for having clear and convincing command of facts and information with insightful explanations that help to illustrate the speaker’s inspirational ideas and arguments. At least four sources were incorporated into the speech. All four sources were used to strengthen the persuasive argument or inspirational mode. Forty-five percent hit 3 points, which was the highest percentage among the participants for obtaining the clear use of facts and information with partially developed explanations in support of the speaker’s inspirational ideas or arguments. At least three sources were incorporated into the speech. Two points where only 11% belonged to this spot were marked for their partially clear use of facts and information with limited or incomplete explanations to support the speaker’s inspirational ideas or arguments. At least two sources were incorporated into the speech. Finally, 28% got only 1 point, for they had confusing or incomplete facts with little and/or confusing explanations as to how the facts support the speaker’s inspirational ideas or arguments. At least one source was incorporated into the speech.

In terms of organization, 57% of the student respondents, which was the highest percentage, were given 4 points for clearly and logically organized speech with an engaging introduction, a logically sequenced body with appropriate transitions, and a clear and convincing conclusion. Three points were marked for a clear attempt at the organization with a beginning, middle, and end and an attempt to use transitions, but only 36% reached this level. Two points were given to only 6% who reached some inconsistencies in the organization and/or a lack of sustained focus throughout the speech with inconsistently used transitions. Finally, there were no student participants who got 1 point.

In the language aspect, 4 points were assigned for using the sophisticated and varied language that is suited to the topic and audience, for the conciseness and originality of word choice, and the appropriateness tone gave the purpose of the speech. With such, 53% of them got this

level which was regarded as the highest percentage among student participants. Three points obtained by 32% were marked for using appropriate language and word choice, but with less sophistication, expressiveness, and/or originality. Fifteen percent were given 2 points for using words that may be unsuited to the topic, audience, or purpose of the speech and for having word choice that lacks originality and fails to convey an appropriate tone for the speech; nobody got 1 point in this aspect.

In the aspect of tropes and schemes, 4 points were rendered to artfully incorporate at least six different tropes or schemes to persuade the target audience. Tropes and schemes were fluidly and naturally scattered throughout the speech and aided in the persuasive argument. Usage did not feel forced. With such, 45% of student participants reached this score which was the highest percentage. While 3 points were scored to 34% who incorporated at least six different tropes or schemes to persuade the target audience, 2 points were marked on 19% who were able to incorporate at least five different tropes or schemes to persuade the target audience. Finally, only 2% got 1 point for incorporating four or fewer tropes or schemes to persuade the target audience.

As for appeals, 49% of student participants (the highest percentage) hit 4 points for all three appeals that were fluidly and naturally scattered throughout the speech with a balance that effectively aided in persuasion or inspiration without making it feel forced or contrite. Thirty-eight percent obtained 3 points for all three appeals that were used throughout the speech to effectively persuade or inspire the audience. Thirteen percent were scored 2 points for an attempt at using all three appeals, although there may be some imbalance or the persuasion or inspiration may be slightly ineffective. Nobody got 1 point in this aspect.

On the level of grammar and conventions, 19% of student participants had 4 points for no spelling, punctuation, capitalization, grammar, or usage errors. Written in an artful style with sentence variety and the required format were followed in this aspect. Forty-seven percent (the highest percentage) were marked 3 points for some minor spelling, punctuation, capitalization, grammar, or usage errors; some sentence variety. A few errors in the required format were found therein. Finally, 34% were given 2 points for multiple spelling, punctuation, capitalization, grammar, or usage errors. There were no mechanical errors that disrupt the flow of ideas, but some errors in the required format were found though. There was nobody who got 1 point.

## **5. Discussion**

From the findings, there are three areas involved in this study, namely: applying critical thinking, organizing a speech, and written speeches.

### *5.1 Critical Thinking*

#### **5.1.1 Discriminating Bad Supporting Details**

Most students (40%, good; 43%, average) were able to effectively discriminate bad supporting details from useful ones due to some basic yet important elements of human reasoning. One of those is useful evidence linked with first-hand practical experience which helps individuals to judge materials and concepts as essential tools in orchestrating their arguments or beliefs, especially when one has been exposed to cultural diversity. As cultural diversity – defined as a variety of cultural information such as custom, tradition, belief, the pattern of thinking, and other practices of more than two cultures – is more complex to deal

with, one should undergo stages of critical thinking. In other words, when lower stages of cognitive processes are achieved before moving to higher stages, it becomes easier for a learner to understand the complexity and make conclusions or the right judgments on what is being argued or presented. However, one reason why students were confused despite all the relevant materials available proved to be a lack of organizational skills and content internalization. Completing such a task could be tricky for them because, in general observation, most Korean students are not normally comfortable handling and exploring multiple complicated issues, thus easily giving up when these are not substantiated nor solved immediately (Ostermiller, 2014).

One reason for this could be a love for convenience. Modern Korea remains one of the most technologically advanced nations on the globe, and society has advanced in a way where convenient PC rooms, automated banking, and kiosks, to name a few, have created an atmosphere of fast convenience in the country. This convenience is carried on in any classroom activities. For instance, when conversation questions prove to be difficult, most students easily skip them or raise a complaint. Thus, the organization of thoughts and forming of knowledge on their own is somewhat difficult to achieve suitable evidence, especially in the Public Speaking courses which demand higher levels of critical thinking. According to Ramos' (2015) study, "some Korean students in the FGDs (focus group discussion) became open-minded to critical thinking activities because they could widen their logical thinking capacity by organizing their thoughts or information with proper words and grammar" (p. 57).

#### 5.1.2. Giving Logical Reasoning

urther yet, many students (43%, good; 28%, average) were able to effectively give logical reasoning on whatever the situation they argue. The cause-effect phenomenon remains a key factor in carrying out this skill. In Korea, it is generally observed in any given classroom that students stick to knowledge gained from a book but are not often able to think outside the box or independently when asked to give reasons or give hypothetical answers. However, at this stage, these students may be able to adjust and reinforce their critical judgment, especially when a student possesses large amounts of knowledge and interests concerning any given argument. An increased knowledge base could be some meaningful exposure to multiple situations from a young age (e.g. reading a book where moral lessons and practical experiences are stored as well as other prior knowledge). Ramos' (2013) study asserted that meaningful interaction that involves a variety of topics talked about who talks with who, and language experience are contributing factors with huge impacts on students' language learning and practical use of the language.

Practical use entails that students' capacity to 1) remembering the lessons and applying them when needed in a practical situation, 2) using the materials for review to develop their knowledge and skills, and 3) relating to the topics or themes used in the materials is well accommodated by the learners themselves for real meaningful interaction. In short, compounded or collective experiences (be it from the book or direct human experience) create a new, better perspective or mindset in reasoning out various issues, depending on the impact of the interconnection of various experiences on a new argument. However, it also argued that reading books on the cause-effect phenomenon is not the only factor. Due to

educational materials integrated with technology, students can learn multiple skills and information that could be used to filter and judge information, depending on the circumstance.

Another facet of logical reasoning could influence such as friends or classmates who have traveled, studied, or lived abroad. These students have the potential to contribute to the critical thinking and reasoning of other students with their classroom material in Public Speech class. Coming into contact with individuals who have spent time studying abroad has the potential to help students who have not traveled abroad introduce different logical and cognitive processes when addressing a problem.

### 5.1.3 Applying Critical Thinking

Finally, a majority of students (55%, good; 23%, average) were able to effectively apply critical thinking to persuade people to believe what they said. As critical thinking is one important component in language learning, the students surveyed believe that credibility is a necessity. Quoting the opinions and facts of experts in any given field remains a popular option for giving credibility to any argument according to students surveyed in this study. This drives them to reshape their identity as a person and a public speaker and eventually, leadership skills will be developed or enhanced by exposing themselves further to public speaking undertakings. This is manageable in terms of leading people to converse in groups because Koreans are very collective culturally rather than individualistic. They generally feel more confident when they help each other to succeed (DeWaelche, 2015). This is supported by Ramos' (2014c) study that pointed out that "Earning collective points with groups is a form of learner's technique to survive in a class. Koreans always help each other and care so much about their fellowmen – that is one of their inculcated values" (p. 332).

However, it remains difficult for any given student to persuade another individual on an issue that a listening student is against, even when significant amounts of critical thinking are applied. The "how-to-apply" critical thinking in various twisted arguments remains very useful, and with that, strategic competence can be seen as an important tool to thrive in any competitive public speaking engagements. Strategic competence is "the coping strategies that communicators employ to initiate, terminate, maintain, repair, and redirect communication" (Richards & Rodgers, 2008, p. 160). Moreover, it is important to note that competition has an undesirable name in Korea; students easily give up even if they have a slight fall from healthy expectations, thus dropping their low self-esteem and confidence to a considerable amount.

## 5.2 *Organizing a Speech*

### 5.2.1 Utilizing Materials.

When writing a speech, a little over 90 percent (36%, excellent; 47%, good) of the total participants were able to effectively utilize materials without plagiarism. Generally speaking, it has been observed in other researchers' classes that plagiarism cannot easily be avoided by Korean students. Culturally, as a sign of respect, most young Koreans tend to copy and paste written texts of old and influential people who have written great pieces of knowledge (e.g. professional books) without considering paraphrasing and other forms of proper documentation. In light of this, these students have internalized and applied the value to Public Speaking ethics. Students made use of their prior knowledge and personal experience to appear more authentic in organizing their speech performance, along with adding direct

quotations, and these were all arranged according to their desired types of organization patterns. In other words, the students understand how substance and organization work together to satisfy their performance and credibility level.

However, other instances of guidance may be required for those who have difficulty organizing their thoughts. A teacher still retains the huge responsibility of processing inputs and actual training in this matter. In Ramos' (2014a) study, "both Canadian and Chinese professors agreed that personality (such as outgoing, personable, compassionate, and communicative) is also important. This gives justice to the belief that a good student can be a reflection of a good teacher" (p. 168). This means the teacher's personality traits could reshape the student's effort on improving skills such as organization, note-taking, etc.

### 5.2.2. Organizing a Speech Writing.

Learning the importance of variety retains two categories that need to be addressed: mind-based, which is the ability to perceive goals, and performance-based, which is the ability to carry out performance objectives. Whichever remains more effective, this learning has led many more students (32%, good; 30%, average) to effectively organize speeches with various sequential patterns such as comparison-contrast, cause-effect, etc. For instance, using various idioms, skills, grammatical devices, and comparison methods is instrumental in developing linguistic and communicative skills to achieve a certain level of fluency and accuracy. Without variety, one may tend to become redundant, not only with their words but also structure and content. At this stage, the students may have realized the value of prestige in hopes to appear more intelligent and appealing to Korean society as high competition (e.g. from class marking and ranking to finding a decent job) often remains a significant issue (Choi, 2008). Moreover, when too much emotion is involved, one may lose control in organizing his or her thoughts, because any prevalent emotions overpower the sequence of details as planned in a speech preparation stage. This notion similarly rings true with nervousness and anxiety which tend to overpower one's flow of delivery during a speech performance (Brown, 2014). This is because "public speaking anxiety represents a cluster of evaluative feelings about speech-making" (Daly, Vangelisti, Neel, & Cavanaugh, 1989, p. 40) "in which case speakers who are very anxious do not experience positive feelings related to the context of public speaking" (Gaibani & Elmenfi, 2014, p. 106).

### 5.2.3 Incorporating Strategies.

Internalizing the skills of writing a speech led most students (47%, good; 26%, average) to effectively incorporate strategies (such as personal stories, quotes, statistics, anecdotes, etc.) where necessary in a speech manuscript. This indicates that students gained enough knowledge and skills to implement writing strategies for emphasis, elaboration, and clarity purposes. Additionally, reading, writing, and telling stories are contributing factors in making a speech more interesting and colorful, because most Korean classrooms' practices are centered on reading and writing activities provided by local teachers in elementary, middle school, and high school which is a result of negative washback from high-stakes testing (Whitehead, 2016; Choi, 2008). Reading and stories are believed to be reflections of real human interaction that could teach us to carry out decision-making, concept development, and critical and creative thinking skills; while, at the same time, they are remedies to enlarge diction proficiency, fluency, and organization skills.



Difficulty in applying these strategies comes across due to a lack of training and personality development. Good personality helps reshape one's interest, motivation, and effort to make a difference in any undertakings.

### 5.3 Actual Written Speeches

#### 5.3.1. Research Analysis

Most student respondents (45%, good) had good research analysis, compared to the other 28% who showed poor quality. Those well-written speeches having clear and convincing command of facts and information with insightful explanations that help to illustrate the speaker's inspirational ideas and arguments followed documentation inputs and applied them to their speeches that were driven by their emotions and insights. This has relevance to their statements in applying critical thinking and organization skills. Students believed that very relevant supporting details give sense to their points. Student AW even stated: "At this point, studying the very basics of philosophy is crucial for logical reasoning." (sic)

#### 5.3.2 Organization

Most students (57%, excellent; 36%, good) executed organization skills that carry out an engaging introduction, a logically sequenced body, and a clear and convincing conclusion with accurate transition markers. This is a reflection of their essay writing activities in their previous English courses as they were required to complete written reports, which was supported by their statements in organizing their thoughts. Student AW said: "I have learned the natural flow of speech is quite important." (sic) He added saying: "Writing a speech is a matter of transforming my personality into an adequate form of material." (sic)

#### 5.3.3 Language

Most students (53%, excellent; 32%, good) were able to apply sophisticated and varied language with conciseness, originality, and proper tone in writing speeches for their audience. As they are English majors, most of them must have enough skills in using language effectively in both written and spoken communication, especially in carrying out critical thinking that was stated in their comments. Student A supported: "Because it comes from my brain and experience." (sic)

#### 5.3.4 Tropes and Schemes

Most students (45%, excellent; 34%, good) made use of fluidly and naturally scattered throughout the speech and aided in the persuasion or argumentation. This means that they were absorbed or emotional in the process of writing the inspirational and/or persuasive speeches that made them go beyond ordinary words or expressions, which coincides with their statements in how they make use of critical thinking. Student AQ mentioned: "Yes, I can use various idioms and skills." Student L also asserted: "I write my personal stories but in the introduction, I quote some sentences to interest listeners." (sic)

#### 5.3.5 Appeals

Most students (49%, excellent; 38%, good) were able to incorporate all three rhetorical appeals: ethos (ethical), logos (logical), and pathos (emotional) in their speech writing. They have understood the lecture or discussion the professor made before they were asked to write their speeches, and this is evident in their statements in organizing their speeches. Student M commented saying: "Yes, I have tried to write my script much more interesting and I also realized through this class that personal experience is one of the best materials." (sic) Also,



student I revealed: “I know a lot of things like different cultures.” (sic) In other words, students know various manners in dealing with people in general.

5.3.6. Grammar and Conventions. Most student participants (47%, good) showed well-written ability with some minor spelling, punctuation, capitalization, grammar or usage errors, and some sentence variety. Following these made their speeches clear enough in laying out their ideas and opinions which are driven by critical thinking and organization skills. For instance, student AT stated: “Because I learned a lot of grammars and comparison ways when I was in senior high and university.” (sic) However, those errors are common among students from non-English speaking countries due to their mother tongues that interfere with the usage of the target language. In some cases, the lack of practice of the target language use would always cause errors in writing speeches.

## 6. Conclusion

In Table 3, most students did an excellent job of applying their actual written speech skills such as organization, language, tropes and schemes, and appeals; while others manifested good research analysis and grammar and conventions. However, only a few numbers of the students had poor research analysis. With all these, their written speeches in preparation for actual speech performance were generally managed to fit the standard.

Moreover, the findings outlined in Tables 1 and 2 reveal that the Korean students in Public Speaking courses at a Korean university are to some extent receiving critical thinking skills and organizing speeches that were also confirmed in their written speeches. However, to further remedy the issues on implementing critical thinking and organization skills in Public Speaking courses in South Korea, one should highly consider the relevance of supporting details; culture and practices; reading books on cause-effect, comparison-contrast, and other reading development methods; basic philosophy, if not higher, to gain expert knowledge; interest or enthusiasm; credibility projection; strategies or techniques such as quoting expert's opinion, personal stories, accumulated knowledge, statistics, etc.; ethics awareness of Public Speaking; the importance of variables such as grammar, idioms, and other forms of rhetoric; teacher's supervision; reading and writing skills; and desirable personality transformation. These factors will lead the students to use their voice to effectively persuade audiences to follow whatever objectives a public speaker (a student) wants to achieve. Besides, the factors will now serve as a basis for creating a set of criteria in curriculum design or syllabus or for designing a Public Speaking training program intended to orient novice teachers who will be teaching the Public Speaking course.

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## Appendix

Based on students' feedback in this study, a sample of the Public Speaking training program matrix has been developed for novice teachers.

|              |  |
|--------------|--|
| Description: | The training program matrix considered as an exit workshop guides English majors with the knowledge of Public Speaking which will help them if they happen to pursue teaching. This includes timeline, topics, objectives, learning activities, and expected outcome to process knowledge and skills with the newest trend of language teaching. |
|--------------|--|

|           |   |
|-----------|---|
|           | The program addresses the needs of Korean English majors in terms of critical thinking and organization skills. Thus, this will support their professional quality towards developing a language curriculum and a sound pedagogy. |
| Goal:     | At the end of the course, the learners will be able to internalize the Public Speaking approaches in response to students' real needs at current and future states.   |
| Duration: | 4 hours per session; 5 sessions   |

### *Session 1. Public Speaking Skills: Critical Thinking*

| Timeline | Topics                                | Objectives  | Activities                  | Expected Outcome                        |
|----------|---------------------------------------|---|-----------------------------|---|
| 4 hours  | Critical Thinking (CT)                | identify the advantages and disadvantages of CT   | SWOT analysis               | CT skills listed at a certain level     |
|          | CT Based on the Findings of the Study | discuss the findings to come up with a conclusion | discussion and presentation | the CT findings presented and concluded |

### *Session 2. Public Speaking Skills: Organization Skills*

| Timeline | Topics   | Objectives  | Activities                  | Expected Outcome   |
|----------|--|---|-----------------------------|--|
| 4 hours  | Organization Skills                                    | identify the advantages and disadvantages of organization | SWOT analysis               | organization skills enumerated at a certain level        |
|          | Organization Skills Based on the Findings of the Study | discuss the findings to come up with a conclusion         | discussion and presentation | the organization skills findings presented and concluded |

### *Session 3. Principles of Public Speaking*

| Timeline | Topics            | Objectives  | Activities       | Expected Outcome  |
|----------|-------------------|---|------------------|---|
| 4 hours  | Choice of Content | discuss and enumerate contents to be included in the course | group discussion | contents finalized following the principles of Public Speaking finalized for the course |

|  |                     |   |        |  |
|--|---------------------|---|--------|--|
|  | Content Arrangement | identify the sequence of topics for effective internalization | debate | syllabus content arrangement with logical sequence finalized for the course syllabus |
|--|---------------------|---|--------|--|

*Session 4. Situational Analysis of Public Speaking: The Korean Case*

| Timeline | Topics  | Objectives   | Activities       | Expected Outcome  |
|----------|---|--|------------------|---|
| 4 hours  | Sociocultural Approach in Teaching Public Speaking                        | discuss and decide teaching strategies and techniques to encourage students to fulfill the tasks | group discussion | importance of sociocultural approach internalized   |
|          | Sociocultural Implications in Teaching Public Speaking to Korean Learners | identify do's and don'ts in Korean students' perspective   | report           | sociocultural implications in compromise with the general principles of Public Speaking carried out |

*Session 5. A Mock Teaching to Carry Out Class Objectives*

| Timeline | Topics  | Objectives  | Activities                                  | Expected Outcome   |
|----------|---|---|---|--|
| 4 hours  | Lesson Planning of a Chosen Public Speaking Topic | write effective component of lesson planning for a teaching demo                | choice of materials and lesson plan writing | a content presented and agreed for implementation  |
|          | Teaching Demonstration                            | demonstrate one topic under the corollaries of the above inputs in sessions 1-4 | peer critiquing                             | teaching styles considered for teaching Public Speaking content which is student-centered and teacher-friendly |

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