[English summary of
*The First Minutes.
Attentum,Benevolum and Docilem in the introductions of speeches*]

De eerste minuten

Attentum, benevolum en docilem parare
in de inleiding van toespraken
(with a summary in English)

Een wetenschappelijke proeve op het gebied van de Letteren

Proefschrift

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Inhoudsopgave

Summary

Introduction

The beginning of a speech is of the utmost importance according to J.W. von Goethe: 'When with buttoning up the first button goes wrong the remaining ones cannot make up for it'. As everyone knows, an audience forms an image of the speaker and subject in the very first minutes of a speech. Assuming that the first blow is half the battle, it is remarkable how rare the speakers are who do really pay proper attention to those first few minutes. In this research we pose the following question: should speakers worry about the introduction of their speeches?

This research consists of three parts; each part answers a key question of its own and belongs to a specific research tradition.

1. What are speakers advised to do in the introduction of their speeches? This is a historic reconstruction of classical rhetorical recommendations from Aristotle to Quintilian and of Dutch twentieth century recommendations on introductions.
2. What do speakers do, or say they do, in the introduction of their speeches? Here we describe the ideas of two groups of present-day speakers: Dutch engineers (M.Sc.s) and speech writers of Dutch members of government; we also analyse the speech writers' actual introduction practice.
3. What effect do introductions have on the audience? This part contains the account of various experiments. Advisors predict that specific introduction techniques have certain effects on listeners. We examine the effects of a number of these much used techniques. Finally, we explore the solidity of the techniques used and look for explanations for their efficacy.

Part 1 What are speakers advised to do in the introduction of their speeches?

Recommendations on introductions in Classical Antiquity (chapter 2)

Greek and Roman rhetoricians already theorised at a high level on how an orator was to approach his subject in order to reach his aims. It helps one to understand the functions and techniques suggested at the time for the beginning of a speech when one takes into account the context within which classical advice on rhetoric developed.

We have analysed the classical manuals on rhetoric most important for our purpose. The corpus consisted of: *Rhetorica ad Alexandrum* (author unknown), Aristotle's *Rhetorica*; Cicero's *De inventione*; the *Rhetorica ad Herennium* (author unknown); Cicero's *De oratore* and his *De partitione oratoria; Quintilian's Institutio oratoria.* All the main passages about introductions have been localised; also occasional remarks and recommendations have been found. Eventually an overview of the functions and techniques of introductions was compiled listing all the recommendations on introductions found. All the relevant texts from our Greek and Latin sources are recent translations into Dutch (some specially translated for this research – present on CD).

This chapter outlines the classical culture of eloquence to clarify the very specific recommendations sometimes given as they were developed in an oral tradition. In the fourth century BC, in Sophistic recommendations on rhetoric, the introduction (the *prooimion*) was regarded as a separate item. The manuals on rhetoric handed down provide insights into the workings of introductions and numerous practical recommendations.

The common, direct introduction, the *principium,* had to fulfil three *functions*: first, the audience had to be made attentive, sympathetic and understanding (*iudicem attentum, benevolum, docilem parare*) in the introduction, for the whole speech to be received as favourably as possible. According to some authors the attentum and docilem functions are sometimes difficult to distinguish from each other: an understanding audience pays better attention and an attentive audience often understands more. We prefer not to interpret the function *docilem parare* as *making interested,* as the Romans mostly did, because it overlaps with the *attention* function, but with *understanding* or better still: *ability to understand*, which links up better with the docilem techniques mentioned earlier.

The rhetoricians regarded the introduction as an essential part of the speech, although a (full) introduction is not always thought necessary. In what measure what function must be dealt with depends on the kind of matter under discussion (the *doxa* doctrine): thus, an *honourable* matter does not really need an introduction, whereas a *dishonourable* one requires an introduction in which sympathy has to be won. Here, and in case the listener has already been convinced by the opponent or wearied out by listening to previous orators, an indirect introduction, the *insinuatio* or subtle approach, may even be the only option.

The *techniques* recommended most to fill the functions of the introduction aim at making the audience sympathetic, *benevolum parare,* such as: presenting oneself as credible, flattering the audience, depreciating one's opponent and mentioning the bright sides of the matter. There are fewer techniques that aim at creating an understanding audience, *docilem parare*, for instance: presenting the heart of the matter and/or the thesis. In second place come the attention drawing techniques, *attentum parare,* for instance: literally asking people's attention and especially stressing the importance to the public of the matter. As the occasion arises, *ordo artificialis*, also other parts of a speech, such as the narratio, the propositio and the partitio may be used in an introduction.

The manuals also contain recommendations on avoiding shortcomings, *vitia,* in introductions, such as: an impersonal, general, irrelevant or too long an introduction.

It is striking that some techniques can fulfil several functions simultaneously. For instance, the *stressing of the importance to the public of the matter* may be meant to draw people's attention, and simultaneously obtain their sympathy for the subject (*mentioning the bright side of the matter*).

Recommendations on introductions in the Netherlands in the twentieth century (chapter 3)

At the beginning of the nineteenth century a long tradition in the teaching of rhetoric existed. Freshmen, who at the time could only graduate in theology, law and medicine, received tuition in Cicero's theory of rhetoric and oratory. This tuition was generally provided by classics scholars and occasionally by theologian; the official language had been Latin for centuries, as is the case since the end of the eighteenth century with Dutch. In the second half of the of the nineteenth century rhetoric was marginalised academically and socially. What recommendations on introductions were twentieth century speakers– professionals and students in higher education – provided with in the Netherlands? An essential source for this knowledge are the published recommendations of professional tutors in presentation skills at universities and polytechnics and communications consultants.

This research started with a first inventory of all the available advisory literature. The final overview with 136 works on recommendations emerged to be too expansive to analyse fully within the framework of this research. A selection has been made with the aid of ten experts. The 42 sources selected were then analysed. We decided on a fixed analytical model in order to realise some intersubjectivity. The basis of this model consisted of the inventory of classical introduction techniques organised according to introductory function. Part of the material was doubly analysed to enhance inter-rater reliability. These recommendations were then analysed anew and placed within the model. That is how a compilation was gathered of tenths of recommendations, organised ac-

cording to introductory function, introduction techniques and other recommendations on introductions.

Functions. From the research it emerges that seven introductory functions can be distinguished in the twentieth century. The three classical introductory functions mentioned by far the most are *attentum, docilem et benevolum parare*. Moreover, new introductory functions are suggested occasionally: *make contact*, *enable familiarisation, forge the audience into a unity* and *make the speaker relax.*

The function mentioned most (81%), so probably the most important one, is the *attentum parare*: the drawing and focusing of people's attention. Almost as important (74%) is the docilem function: informing the audience (on the subject, purpose and development of the presentation), for the audience to be able to follow the discourse. The benevolum function, finally, the one most extensively elaborated on in classical antiquity, has a ratio of 45% in the advisory books researched.

Why is attention a central concept in modern advisory practice? Kerssemakers (1947, 36) finds it in the restlessness of twentieth century audiences and that needs to be conquered: 'Especially their roaming fantasies and the straying spirits in audiences, often cause their mental absence, even if they are physically present in the very first row'. The speaker must, as Van der Meiden (1991) states, compete with all those other transference media that can present a technically more superior story. The fact that advisors stress especially the *docilem* function may be the result of the kind of eloquence that has reached a more central position in this century: that of informing eloquence (the *docere*) where the speaker primarily gives an account of the research or findings and explains and illustrates rather than captivates, convinces or sensitises . Apparently, in the eyes of half the number of authors, *sympathy* is not an essential condition for a successful introduction. Benevolum recommendations often include warnings not to exaggerate. Modesty (some self criticism is regarded as positive), authenticity and sincerity are then recommended 'Emotions are best palatable when they are expressed honestly and simply' (Van der Spek 1995, 35). Another recommendation is: strive for the feeling of togetherness.

Less than half the number of advisors in the corpus attribute *all three classical functions* in one form or another to the introduction. Only a small number of them present the classical threesome as such; most recommendations on functions have been presented casually. The majority attributes at least two of the three functions to the introduction.

In de 20th century a few fresh – non-classical – functions are attributed to the introduction. Over twenty-five per cent of the authors mentions *make contact*; for instance: a recognisable personal anecdote is regarded as a technique to make contact with one's audience.

One fifth of the authors suggests as an introductory function to the speaker *to allow* the audience *to familiarise itself with* the speaker and their present situation. The elaboration of the function is limited: with a vitium and a few actio recommendations. One must avoid coming straight to the point with an excess of important information. Besides, speakers must allow their audience to get used to their appearance and manner of speech by speaking slowly and clearly at the beginning.

Techniques. This research into modern recommendations shows the following picture of the techniques. A third of the total of 421 recommendations that can be characterised as attentum, benevolum or docilem techniques, has been described as introductory techniques in classical rhetoric. When we also regard the narratio and partitio techniques as exordial ones (much is to be said for this), then the total percentage shifts from 33% to 46% of all the recommendations on introductions. Table 1 provides a survey of the collection of modern and classical introductory techniques.

Table 1: ABD-survey of introduction techniques

Attentum techniques	Benevolum techniques	Docilem techniques
Classical recommendations	Classical recommendations	Classical recommendations

Attentum techniques	Benevolum techniques	Docilem techniques
Stress the importance of the subject for the audience	*Ab nostra persona*	Present the essence of the matter (thesis or opinion)
Literally ask for attention	Present oneself as credible	Announce the main points (partitio)
Promise to be brief	Praise one's own side	Briefly present previous history of the matter (narration)
Present something witty	Make the impression to be improvising	**Modern recommendations**
Limit the use of stylistic devices	Take away prejudices against speaker	Mention the subject
Address third parties	Take in the underdog position	Present definition
Introduce imaginary person	*Ab adversariorum persona*	Speech routine statements
Historic example	Depreciate one's opponent	From general to specific (funnel opening)
Comparison and metaphor	Praise suspect characteristics	
Irony	*Ab iudicum persona*	
Puns	Flatter and praise	
Modern recommendations	Stress common points	
Anecdote	Scare or reassure the audience	
Make a challenging statement	*A causa*	
Quote	Mention bright sides to the subject	
Question	Shift responsibility for unfavourable matter onto someone else	
Current point of view	*Other classical benevolum techniques*	
Salutation	Ask for understanding for inadequate speech	
Circumstances, time, place, persons	Praise a praiseworthy person	
Riddle	**Modern recommendations**	
Image and sound effects	Thank introductory speaker	
Example		
Role play and pantomime		
Title		
Proverb		

Attentum techniques. The attention drawing techniques most advised are the modern ones: the *anecdote* – 'People love stories' –, *challenging statement*, *quote*, *question* and *current point of view*. Of the classical techniques only *present something witty/wittily* and *stress the importance of the subject* are recommended by just under half the number of authors. Wit (humour) is a much recommended attention drawing technique in the twentieth century. However, also their risks are discussed. There are hardly any books (7%) that do not mention attention drawing techniques at all.

Benevolum techniques. The most important benevolum technique is *presenting oneself as credible*. The *flattering* and *praising* techniques and those of *stressing common points* are the most frequently mentioned ones within the relatively rare benevolum techniques.

Docilem techniques are among the most popular introductory recommendations in the twentieth century. The time-honoured technique of *introducing the main points* is suggested by almost all advisors. The majority of authors also recommends the technique of *stating the heart of the matter*. Books without a docilem recommendation are as rare as books without any attentum recommendation (7%). The classics generally placed the *narratio* technique after the exordium; in the twentieth century this technique of the *brief previous history* has become well rooted in the introduction.

Other recommendations on introductions. Most of the other recommendations on introductions relate to the phenomenon *fear of speaking*. We find attention paid to this frame of mind throughout the twentieth century. The general recommendations most given are: prepare yourself well (train), see it through as your fear will then disappear and think positively. Focusing more on the introduction are: take a deep and slow breath just before making your appearance, try to consciously relax your body, take your time for the first sentence: wait for attention. Other recommendations refer to, for instance, *actio* (see to it that your appearance and initial body language are calm and self-assured, carefully put papers or speech cards down, make proper eye contact, make calm and subdued gestures) and the production *process* (recommendations for writing the introduction out in full and learning it by heart).

Most authors do not go into problematic situations during the presentation. They assume the audience to be fairly attentive and harbouring no extreme antipathy towards either the speaker or the subject. Only one third of the authors discusses difficult situations. The classical *insinuatio doctrine* or the taking of "oratory precautions" when the subject of the speech is unpopular with the audience, or when they are already convinced opponents, or have been tired out by previous speakers, was only handed down (somewhat diluted) in the first part of the twentieth century.

Finally, the advisors do not only recommend but also discourage certain approaches. Eight out of the 21 noted discouragements (vitia) are of classical origin (for instance: avoid an irrelevant, too long or impersonal an introduction). However, we have also found 13 new vitia. The most important ones are: *avoid a cliché introduction and avoid apologies*.

Summarising, we can state that the characteristic twentieth century recommendations on introductions consisted of the *anecdote* attentum technique and the *announce the main points* partitio technique. Generally, the advisor also pays some attention to fear of speaking. The recommendations usually leave out benevolum techniques.

Part 2: What do speakers do (or state they do) in the introduction of their speeches?

There is a comprehensive catalogue of classical and modern ideas and recommendations for the introduction of speeches (see table 1). The next question then is: do speakers apply these techniques? For want of preliminary studies we decided on a wide, inventorising research among two relevant groups of speakers, supplemented by detailed analyses of their introductory practices. The choice for the first group of speakers, Dutch engineers, can be motivated as follows: they form a group of professionals in socially important positions whose presentation skills are fairly important. Also, there is this widely ranging and tenacious misconception that the communicative qualities of this group are negative; they often have the task to share complex knowledge and strategic choices with other parties concerned by means of their presentations. Weller & Stuiveling (1961, 207) state:

Many engineers are incapable of expressing their thoughts properly, so legitimise them due to a lack of language skills and concentration.

Besides this group of *speeching professionals*, whose profession requires them to speak in public fairly regularly, we chose another one: the *professional speakers* (see chapter 5). They form a group of speakers whose essential professional skills include presentations and who present a number of speeches per week. Truly professional speakers are the members of the Dutch government: the ministers and deputy ministers. A better insight into their opening repertoire provides us with the opportunity to find out in what measure the classical and modern recommendations on introductions have been adopted in the practice of this latter group of pre-eminent speakers.

Introductions in their speeching practice: the engineers (chapter 4)

What opinion do engineers have about the introduction of a speech (generally called a 'presentation' by them)? This research needs to take into account the professional context - how important are speeches for their professional functioning; how have the engineers been trained for these tasks? It is also important to check what kind of presentations are held (purpose; length; language). In co-operation with the professional associations of the Dutch engineers *KIvI* and *NIRIA* a comprehensive, large-scale survey has been done among Dutch engineers (academic: *Ir.* and polytechnic: *ing.*) to be able to answer these questions (stratified [age/education] random sample; N=4000; response: 25%). The survey (130 open and closed questions) were pretested. A number of the respondents (13%) indicated they did not do any speeching. Compared to American research among American engineers (Scheiber & Hager 1994), only 2% of the respondents did not hold any presentations, whereas a much larger number of Dutch engineers states not to hold any presentations. Fear of presenting proves not to be an explanatory variable; most of the non-speakers indicate that their job does not require any such communicative activities.

Analysis procedure:
- The closed survey questions (multiple choice; five-point Likert scales) have been analysed with the help of the SPSS statistics computer programme. The so-called non-speakers have not been included in this analysis. The questionnaires of a total of 891 engineers have been used in this research.
- Analysis of the statements on appraisal (open questions): the respondents were asked to express what they appreciated and what irritated them in the presentations of others. The full set of data consisted of 4359 answers; an average of 4.9 per respondent (inter-rater reliability Cohen's kappa in between .75 - 83).
- Analysis of introductory components (open questions). To get an insight into the speakers' working methods for their presentations, the respondents were asked to indicate how they acted in their two latest presentations. Data of a total of 1181 presentations were received and analysed. (inter-rater reliability Cohen's kappa: .80).

Professional context. The engineers in this research present quite regularly, about once per two to three weeks. They regard it as an important task and an enjoyable activity. They regard all the aspects of preparation and presentation submitted as important. Generally, the respondents do not find their realisation terribly difficult. A limited number of aspects is regarded as both important (minimum 4 on five-point scale) and relatively difficult (minimum 3); see table 2. At the top are the choosing of *relevant information* and attuning it to the audience.

Table 2: important and simultaneously relatively difficult aspects of preparation and presentation

	Important	Difficult
Attuning the information to the audience	4.57	3.25
Determining the relevance of the information / data	4.50	3.04
Smooth and clear formulation	4.38	3.14
Convincing presentation of the arguments	4.31	3.16
Selection of convincing arguments	4.28	3.31
Relaxed, not nervous, presentation	4.03	3.01

(1 = hardly important / not at all difficult; 5 = highly important / very difficult)

Argumentation (both *the selection of convincing arguments* and the *convincing presentation of arguments)* also takes a prominent place in this table. This is especially striking as the engineers call their two most recent presentations mainly *informative*. The engineers appreciate an enthusiastic and witty speaker who presents his story to the point and above all clearly structured. Engineers commonly use slides and PowerPoint. They find this important and easy, in their preparation as

well as in its actual use, but they get irritated by unprofessionally designed audiovisual means (layout). Moreover, they apply these means as a kind of speech scheme for their presentation. Fully written presentations are rare.

The engineers state that they spend neither much nor little time on an introduction while they prepare a presentation.

Kinds of presentations. An explanation for the high percentage of informative presentations might be based on the respondents' opinion of their own tasks. The respondents' description of the presentation in the related open question, underscores the impression that the opinion of the engineers involved on the presentations may not be similar to that of a communications consultant. It is remarkable that engineers often characterise *persuasive* presentations as *informative* ones - aimed at the presentation of recommendations or the selling of services or products - such as 'Presenting strategic plans in management'. Scheiber & Hager (1994) have observed similar effects in relation to the researched American engineers' statement of their presentation purposes: the respondents typify their speeches mainly as informative ("to inform, to share data") and instructive. On the basis of these results they recommend tutors in presentation skills to pay less attention to persuasive presentations. We have come to a different conclusion. On the basis of supplementary data about the character, contents and audience at the presentations held, we have established that technicians often wrongly characterise their presentations as informative.

Attentum parare. Asked after their *opinions,* engineers do not regard attention drawers as very important. From their reported *practice* it emerges that the number of attention drawing techniques falls far short of the other introductory techniques. In only 15% of the speeches one or more attention drawing techniques have been used. These occur most in the shorter presentations. The most popular attentum techniques are the *stressing the importance of the subject to the audience* (even so only 5%), followed at a distance by a *challenging statement*, *current point of view* and *image and sound effects.*

Benevolum parare. According to the engineers, an introduction need not necessarily contain a passage about the speaker and his professional background. It is striking that in practice, as described by themselves, one in three includes benevolum techniques in the introductions to their presentations (specifically: introducing themselves and the organisation they work for). Apparently, this is seen as a substantial part of their introductions. *Introducing the people present to each other* appears to be a new technique with obvious benevolum effects.

Docilem parare. Various questions in the survey make clear that engineers find the *docilem parare* the most important introductory function. A clear presentation structure is highly appreciated by engineers and any lack of it is mentioned most as an irritant. The engineers also assess a clear structure as the best quality of a presentation (besides the determining of its purpose) and they fully agree with the statement that an *indication of the structure, or the purpose* form part of a good introduction.

Docilem techniques are reported most in practice: in two-thirds of all the presentations. It is significant that the *narratio* technique is used the most: in just over one in three presentations. Together with the relatively frequent *indications of its structure* and *purpose,* the engineers enable the audience to quickly comprehend the subject and/or the outline of the presentation. It is striking that, in absolute numbers, these parts regarded as highly important occur only occasionally.

In short, engineers take care that from the introduction the audience can usually gather what the presentation covers (the reason for it or its framework) and to a lesser extent who the speakers are and what company they represent; catchy opening sentences with audience friendly attention drawing techniques are rare.

Introductions in the speeching practice: speech writers and members of the Dutch government (chapter 5)

Ministers and deputy ministers belong to the most productive and professional speakers in the Netherlands. These officials hold their speeches at all kinds of events: at the opening of bridges and congresses, during state dinners or abroad when visiting other members of government. Their speeches are written by speech writers. Within the framework of this research into the introduction of speeches it is interesting therefore to find out what starting points professional speech writers use in the set up and formulation of their speeches, and their introductions specifically.

Under discussion is, parallel to the research into the opinions of the Dutch engineers, the research into the *speech writers' opinions on speech introductions.* To be able to answer the question, two supplementary researches have been carried out: one questionnaire, with questions aimed at all the ministerial speech writers and a focus group meeting (in which the ministries were well represented), for clarification and more profound answers to the questionnaire. The basis for the set up of the questionnaire in this research was formed by the survey on the engineers. The majority are open questions, as opposed to the engineers' questionnaire in which the majority of the questions were closed ones. The questionnaire was pretested and then spread among *all* the ministerial speech writers (N=29). In the instruction to the list, the fillers-in were asked to enclose two speeches of their own. A total of 21 questionnaires were received, which is a satisfactory 72% response.

The purpose of this research was to get an insight into the opinions of Dutch speech writers on the functions and techniques (used) in speech introductions. The results of the research are represented in a thematic description of the data. These data are mainly qualitative in character: most of the questions in the questionnaire are open ones.

The aims strived after in the speeches produced by this group of writers diverge: *clarify policies, sign decisions, announce measures*. Compared to the engineers' speeches, so-called informative speeches seem to occur hardly or not at all. The co-operation between speaker and writer emerges to be a typically official one in the Dutch governmental context. Here there are no 'political appointees', unlike America. In practice - through lack of proper rules -speech writers find it difficult to draw the line between policy speeches (that form part of their field of work) and speeches with a party political bias (these do not form part of it). Intensity of contact between writer and speaker differs greatly. The Dutch speech writers in this research have diverging backgrounds. They (three quarters are male) seem to have been appointed for their writing skills that have not necessarily been trained in a specific study programme. They are relatively experienced text writers, initiated into the finer tricks of the speechwriting trade by senior colleagues or their heads of department. This could be called the traditional master- apprentice training structure.

The speech writers indicate that they spend much energy on introductions. They find an introduction important and the writing of it – in relation to other aspects of speech writing –one of the hardest tasks. They base their choice of introductory techniques and aspects on the kind of speech they have to write.

Attentum parare. Drawing people's attention in the introduction is a conditio sine qua non for speech writers. This function is so important that an attention drawer can even be separate – when needs be – from the speech itself (although it would pique the writers' pride to really use a separate attention drawer such as an irrelevant anecdote). The anecdote and quotation (also called *reference*) technique stop the list, followed at some distance by the question and provocative statement. Visual means, such as PowerPoint, are seldom used. This would not do for ministers.

Benevolum parare. The benevolum function is not mentioned in any form as a function for an introduction by half the number of writers. Techniques mentioned regularly are: flattery and praise

(complimenting and thanking), followed at a distance by indicating involvement. The group is of mixed opinion on the use of benevolum elements. Many regard flattery as essential. The techniques mentioned do not include the one enhancing the speaker's expertise. Speech writers generally regard this as unnecessary or even irritating.

Docilem parare. The docilem function is not mentioned by half of the writers as a function for the introduction. Docilem techniques mentioned regularly are: indicating the point of view or purpose of the speech, presenting its outline and the previous history of the subject. Speech writers do regard the determination of the purpose for the complete speech and its structuring as highly important. Yet, they do not automatically include the purpose and structure in the introduction itself.

So, what do speech writers aim at in an introduction? They say that they specifically want to draw the audience's attention. They are less concerned with making contact with the audience or starting with the explanation of the purpose and structure of the speech.

Introductions in the speeching practice: speech introductions (chapter 6)

Ministerial speech writers regard introductions as essential. *Attentum parare* emerges to be their motto. The *anecdote* and *quote* are the most popular techniques in their introduction repertoire. How they apply these tools, what specific form they give to the exordial potential, has not yet come to the fore. This is a pity as the speech writer's métier comprises more than the schematic placing of one introductory topos after the other. What counts is the right word in the right place. It is therefore worthwhile to further examine (deputy) ministers' practice, as they are prominent speakers in this country. What writers state they think is not necessarily similar to what they actually do. This is another reason for researching in what measure the reported speech writers' opinions correspond with their practice as we have found them in the introductions to the speeches the ministers are provided with. In other words: which introductory functions and techniques advised are *visible* in the professional speech writers' speeches?

A corpus of speeches has been composed for this research. The questionnaire research among speech writers resulted amongst other things in a corpus of speeches. With each speech the respondent was also requested to answer a number of questions. From the speeches received (38), a corpus of 21 speeches was composed, paying attention to the spread of speakers.

The exordium model (see table 1) was used as a starting point for our analysis. In principle, all the text available of an introduction was classified. The reliability of the analysis was increased by having the speeches analysed separately by two researchers (both authors). The determination of the introduction to the text of the speech emerged not to be self-evident. We have taken into account two possible introductory limits: the limit indicated at our request by the writers in the text of the speech and the line we ourselves drew on the basis of a number of explicitly determined criteria (speech signals, text signals and changes in subject). Generally, this limitation was not problematic; though sometimes a discussion was needed to come to a statisfactory limitation. In half the number of cases we agreed with the limits drawn by the speech writers, in the remaining cases our limitation resulted in a longer introduction. This is primarily due to the fact that we include *the announcement of the main points*– the partitio (or a structural transition sentence) – in the introduction, whereas the speech writers did not.

What techniques do speech writers working for ministers actually use in their introductions? How classical-rhetorical is their approach?

Attentum techniques are used in almost every introduction. A large variety of both classical (*comparison, stressing the importance of the subject*) as modern attention drawing techniques are applied. The modern techniques *opening, provocative statement* followed at some distance by *question* and

quotation are used most. It is remarkable that speech writers like to use provocative statements, often combined with defiant contrast or number. *Polder speech* may be the political language of this country, according to Van Mierlo (2000), 'Rambling, flat, dull, and especially aimed at consensus', but speakers tend to slightly provoke their audiences in their introductions. Humour however is a rare commodity; apparently speech writers prefer to avoid the risks involved with this technique. The use of slides or PowerPoint (*image and sound effects*) only occurs once. Moreover, a certain non-exhaustive use of the attentum potential can be established in the techniques used: *(historic) example, riddle, role play, promising to be brief* and – perhaps most remarkable in the *occasional speeches* of these very well informed speakers – with *circumstance, time, place, persons* and *current point of view.*

The use of *benevolum techniques* is mainly limited to *flattering and praising* the audience. Most of the speech writers feel little enthusiasm for this obligation, often resulting in hardly elaborated compliments and thank-yous. Regarding that meagre enthusiasm, its common usage - in two-thirds of the speeches - is rather surprising. This means that the speech writers do more than they indicate as necessary.

The use of *docilem techniques,* mentioning both the key point of view and the build up of the speech, occurs only occasionally. In practice, the speech writers hardly ever choose a detailed notification of the structure; they prefer to completely ignore this indicator and use the more limited form of a transitional sentence.

Part 3 What effect do introductions have on the audience?

The theory on the introductory functions *attentum, benevolum* and *docilem parare* was established more than two millennia ago. The classical ideas on introductory functions were based on the experience of trainers in rhetoric and professional legal counsellors. From the previous parts it becomes clear that those ancient ideas still play a role in speeching practices. In recent scientific literature empirical studies into the workings of the functions and techniques mentioned earlier, are rare. An orientation on the literature researching the differences between oral and written communication makes it clear that we cannot directly transpose the results of empirical research from *readers* of texts to *listeners* to speeches. The key question in this part of the book is: *what effect do introductions have on audiences?*

### Effects of introduction techniques (chapter 7)

Speakers always get too little speaking time allotted. Should they also yield some minutes of their sparse time to incite the audience to listen? One of the options to obtain an answer to this question is to find out whether the introductory techniques recommended result in the effects predicted by today's consultants. In other words: does an attention drawing technique result in a more attentive audience and does a sympathy enhancing one make the audience accept the speaker as more credible? We here limit ourselves to three types of introduction that do not only occur often in advisory literature, but also in the presentation practice: the *anecdotal introduction* – a short, smart, complete story in which the subject of the speech is introduced in a lively manner; the *your problem introduction* – the speaker promises to deal with or solve a problem of the audience –and the *ethos introduction* – primarily aimed at positively influencing the image that the audience has of the speaker.

We constructed three different introductions and showed them to various groups of listeners. Each introduction was concluded by an outline of the presentation. This outline consisted of a combination of the following docilem techniques: *present the essence of the matter (thesis or opinion)* and *announce the main points (the partitio).* Following on this, measuring instruments (questionnaires) were put together to measure possible effects. The questionnaire consisted of three parts, among which an assessment of each of the introductions for the factors *captivation, credi-*

bility, comprehensibility (five point Likert scale; factors extracted by means of factor analysis; .75). The testees (N=278) saw the three introductions on video. The order of display was changed systematically. Each of the six possible display sequences was presented to part of the total group.

Effects directly after having attended the introduction

In how far do the three distinct introduction techniques sort different effects with the audiences? **figure 1** shows that the different introduction techniques have a clear profile in relation to the aspects researched.
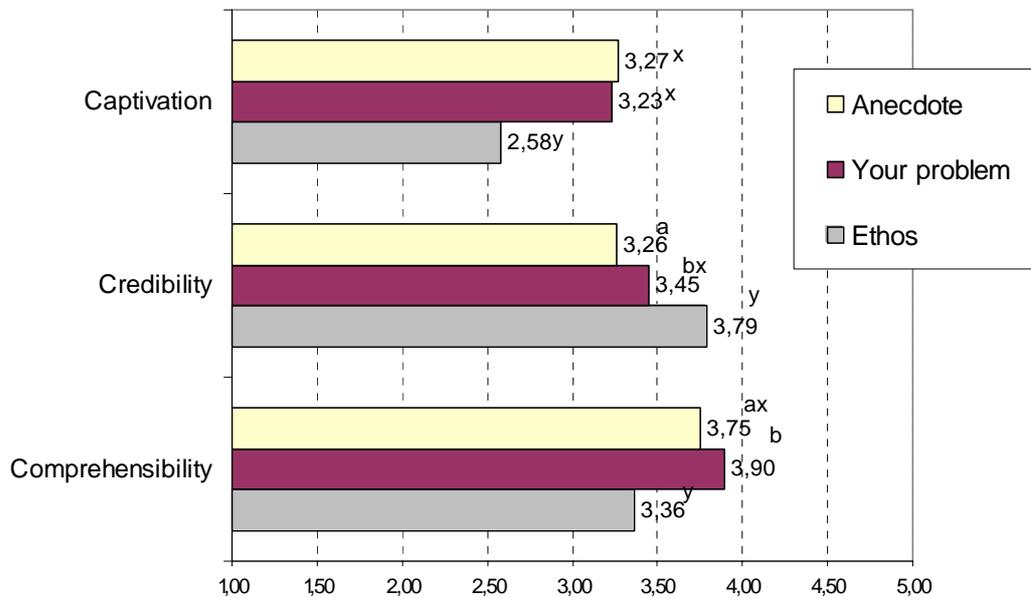
Figure 1 : differences in introduction techniques (N= 278) [values with different subscripts differ significantly - Paired sample t-tests; a/b/c : p<.01; x/y/z: p<.001]

The anecdote and the your problem techniques are assessed as equally *captivating*, although they are not highly appreciated in the absolute sense (3.3 on a five point scale). The ethos technique scores significantly lower. Concerning *credibility* a clear ranking order can be discerned. The speaker in the ethos introduction is appreciated as the most credible one (and assessed as such afterwards). The speaker with the your problem introduction in his turn is regarded as more credible than the person using the anecdote introduction. The audience reacts to what the speaker tells about himself. Also, the ethos introduction diverges for the factor comprehensibility and this technique is the least appreciated one. Besides, the differences between the anecdote and the your problem introductions significantly favour the your problem introduction.

In short, the various introduction techniques influence the audiences in different ways. The way in which this happens, is in line with what the consultants state. The technique *presenting oneself as credible* enhances the speaker's credibility, but is less useful to captivate the audience than the other two techniques. The audience also finds the use of *presenting oneself as credible* in an introduction less easy to comprehend. The your problem technique emerges to be the most many-sided one: the easiest to comprehend, as captivating as the anecdote technique and creating a higher regard for the speaker's expertise.

Effects directly after having attended the whole speech

Traditionally the introduction covers only a small part of the speech, an average of some ten per cent of the complete speech. How important is this minor part of the speech when we look at an

attentive audience's assessment? Does an effect realised in the introduction have an impact on the complete speech? To be able to answer these questions it was necessary to have a complete, true to life presentation at our disposal. We developed a presentation that could follow on the three introductions researched earlier and we then pretested it. The speech was presented by the same speaker as the one in the first experiment. Three different presentations were created by prefixing the three introductions of the first research to the presentation put on video. A fourth presentation was created with a presentation that started with the second, fixed part of the introduction; we called this the direct approach variant. A three-part questionnaire was also developed for this presentation. One of the parts consisted of a comprehension test (open questions).

The testees (N=195) saw one of the four videos in groups averaging 48 testees. The open questions test resulted in a comprehension score of (Cohen's kappa: .77). The multivariate analysis showed up a general effect (F(15, 514)=2.99 p<.001) of the kind of introduction. Further univariate analysis indicated that the effect could be localised in the comprehension score: the direct approach scored lower than the two attentum variants anecdote and your problem. The ethos approach takes in middle position. The *comprehension score* with the direct approach was lower than of the other variant. A multivariate analysis did not indicate an effect for the other factors *captivation*, *credibility* and *comprehensibility*.

From the experiments described it emerges that effects are noticeable when we measure directly after the presentation of the introduction. The effects are then in line with the ideas that exist among classical and modern advisors. When we measure at the end of the presentation, after eighteen minutes, then the differences created by the three techniques emerge to have largely disappeared. The effects peter out. However, at the end of the presentation differences still exist between the direct approach and the three variants. The audience listening to the direct approach speech remembers less of the speech than the other audiences in our research. Summarising, we can state that for the eventual effect on the audience, it does not make much of a difference whether the speaker chooses a captivating anecdote, an activating your problem opening or underlines his own ethos. The effects prove to be local and any differences have disappeared at the end of the speeches.

Follow-up research

One of the considerations related to the conclusions on the experiments regarding introduction techniques touched the actual putting into practice of the technique used. Although some experts evaluated the introductions constructed in a pretest as realistic and consistent with what they come across in practice, both in a positive and negative sense, this does not necessarily imply that we would have booked the same results with another, as realistic an anecdote. Also a different approach to the ethos introduction might have a different effect from the form chosen. That is why, in a supplementary research, we wanted to do a first attempt at researching the possibility of generalising the results. We have examined whether a different way of putting into practice the anecdote and the *presenting oneself as credible* technique would result in comparable results to those in the previous chapter.

Relevance of the anecdote

The previous research showed that an audience regards an anecdote in the introduction as captivating; at any rate much more so than a story about the speaker's own qualities. At the end of the speech we found out that the audience remembered and understood a little more of the speech when it was preceded by a combination of an anecdote and an outline of what was to come, than when the outline was presented without an anecdote (the direct approach). With that the use of the anecdote technique seems to support the recommendations of many modern consultants . The analysis of the books with speeching recommendations showed that not just any story is regarded as suitable to serve as an anecdote. An important requirement for the story was that its

contents had to be *relevant* to what followed in the speech. That is why, in a limited supplementary research, we have examined whether a less relevant variant of the anecdote used induces other effects than the original one.

A new irrelevant anecdote was videotaped with the speaker of our previous experiments and placed before the speech developed by us on the Sick Building Syndrome. With this a fifth variant was created besides the existing four versions. The speech taped was shown to an audience (N=49) comparable to those of the previous experiments.

T-test analyses show that the two anecdote groups largely react in the same way to the various factors. Speeches that are introduced by either of the variants, are experienced as equally captivating and comprehensible. Besides, the speaker is regarded as comparably credible in both cases. The audiences characterise both introductions as equally successful. What have we ascertained? A less well connected introduction proves to have a similar effect to that of the relevant variant. This sounds contra-intuitive, but one must keep in mind that also the differences existing directly after the introduction between, for instance, the anecdote and the ethos opening had ebbed away at the end of the speech. It remains imaginable that the differences increase with an even less relevant anecdote. It is important to further research the solidity of the anecdote technique.

Stressing one's own expertise: from underdog to braggart

It proves possible for a speaker to enhance his expertise in the eyes of the audience. The outcome for the speaker with an ethos opening was to be regarded as the most expert one, more expert than, for instance, a speaker who begins with an anecdote opening – assessed as being a more captivating one. So, a speaker himself can enhance his expertise in the eyes of the audience (corroborated by literature), but runs two risks doing so. On the one hand it seems dangerous to boast, on the other it may be dangerous to fill the ethos introduction with too much self-criticism. That is why in this follow-up research we enter into the question whether a speaker comes across as more credible when he stresses his own expertise in the introduction or when he does the opposite and understates his expertise. And, doing either is it possible to minimalise the risks mentioned above?

Three situations have been researched. First, we checked the effects of introductions in which the speaker points out his expertise in different measures. This varied from a modest to a boastful approach. Second, we examined whether a stylistic intervention could neutralise the side-effects of the most boastful approach. Is the speaker regarded as highly credible, but not boastful? Third, we checked whether a specific form of self-criticism – taking in the underdog position– is regarded as more credible or less so.

Five opening variants were set up: three openings differing in the measure in which the speaker stresses his expertise. One variant in which the strongest measure of stressing it is combined with a stylistic trick (*praeteritio*) to play down the boastful character of the introduction and a fifth variant in which the speaker takes in an underdog position by indicating that he replaces the speaker originally invited. The testees (n=105) were split up into five groups, each of which was shown one of the five opening variants.

Does a speaker come across as more credible when he clearly shows off his own expertise than when he is modest? A multivariate analysis shows a main effect for the kind of introduction ($F(12, 259.6)=3.18$ p<.001). The analysis indicated that the effect occurs with the assessment of the credibility and boastfulness factors. The speaker is regarded as the most credible when he emphatically stresses his own expertise and the least credible when he hardly stresses it. Expertise enhances a person's credibility, while simultaneously enhancing the boastfulness experienced by the audience.

The use of a rhetorical technique such as the *praeteritio* is an interesting phenomenon. The *praeteritio* does not harm the credibility created by the speaker. However, the analysis shows that through the use of the *praeteritio,* the speaker is regarded as less of a braggart. Apparently, it is

possible to create as much credibility using relatively simple and perhaps even transparent techniques as using the most boastful introduction and still come across as significantly less boastful. The (false) use of modesty proves to compensate the negative side-effects of bragging.

Finally, taking in the 'underdog position' seems to have to be approached with some reserve. This technique – as presented in this experiment – results in a low credibility score. So, here the variant with medium emphasis is stronger than the underdog variant. Also the effects on the factor captivation are worrying as the underdog technique scores very badly in two out of three central introductory functions, namely: creating attentiveness and sympathy. This confirms the idea that a speaker strongly undermines the impression of his expertise and with that his credibility when he admits that he is not an expert in the field. If even the speaker does not regard himself as an expert, why should the audience think he is? Starting off with an apology is rightly reputed to be an introductory vitium.

Thought explorations

A remarkable outcome of the previous research is that the audience proves to remember more of the presentation when it is preceded by a somewhat extensive introduction than with a direct approach one. The introduction technique presented did not prove to be a specifically distinguishing one. How can the effect observed be explained? It is clear that in the first few minutes *something* happens in the heads of the audience. And that something causes differences in retention at the end of a speech when the direct approach is used or the other introduction variants. The aim of our explorative follow-up research is to find out what takes place in the head of a listener during the first few minutes of a speech. We do this by trying to catch the audience's cognitive activities, called *cognitive responses*, *straight after* the listening to (a fragment of) the speech. The research method developed to present the cognitive responses (thoughts) is the *thought-listing* method (Cacioppo & Petty 1981).

For this research we selected three introduction variants: the direct approach, the your problem introduction and the ethos introduction. We measured at three different points in time (straight after the introduction technique – after one minute), after the introduction as used in our first research (after about two minutes) and after six minutes (totalling 8 conditions). After having seen the fragment, the testees (N=303) were asked to indicate on a form all the thoughts that had come up. Immediately after, they themselves classified the thoughts written down according to a scheme presented.
Classification scheme:
A. thought about the contents of the story
B. thought about the speaker (manner of presentation, expertise, outward appearance, etc.)
C. thought about the test situation (video; lecture room; course; etc.)
D. thought about a personal matter (not A, B, of C)

First we did a multivariate analysis, in which time of measuring and the kind of opening were taken as independent and the thought responses (As, Bs, Cs, Ds) as dependent variables. The question was in how far effects of the direct approach and the two other conditions which we combined in our calculation, can be observed in a general sense. This analysis provided a main effect for measuring moment $(F(4, 201)=4.75 \ p<.01)$. The effect for the introduction technique used was weak (p=.052). From further analysis it emerged that the total numbers of responses differ between introduction variants per measuring moment. A two-way variance analysis indicates that there is an effect for the moment of measuring. A t-test procedure indicates that at the *six minutes after* measuring moment the average number of responses reported is smaller with the direct approach than with the your problem and ethos introductions. The two variants mentioned last hardly differ from each other.

Does the research indicate, for instance, that a member of an audience uses the first few minutes of a speech to *focus his attention* on the contents of the presentation? We found that especially the A-type response (thoughts about the contents of the presentation) differs least per condition and that it appears to remain the same in time. Also, the results do not really corroborate the twentieth century idea of the introductory function that an audience needs to get familiarised to the actual listening situation (speaker, surroundings and such). On the basis of that idea we would suppose thought patterns in the audience to fluctuate greatly immediately at the start aiming at various types of thoughts. And at the end of the introduction the audience would have to be more concentrated on the contents. That is not what we have observed. What actually happens? The total number of thoughts given does not increase significantly with extensive introductions. From our observations we conclude that the audience increasingly devotes thoughts to matters less directly related to the contents of the speech. The audience appears to be more and more distracted. The distraction proves to increase most with the your problem technique– the introduction technique making the audience remember most. Possibly that distraction is a sign of a fully increased cognitive activity of the listener. In other words, an introduction that contains both a docilem and an attentum or benevolum function proves to activate the audience even more.

Conclusion

Is it advisable for speakers to pay special attention to the introduction of their speeches? That was the key question in this book. Certainly, as Quintilian and his Greek and Roman colleagues stated two centuries ago. A speaker must seriously consider what he wants to achieve with his audience in the first few minutes of his speech and what means he should deploy. According to them, only in very special circumstances can a speaker start with a direct approach: starting out with the purpose of the speech or the mentioning of the key points. To the modern consultant writer the introduction is a fixed item in every speech. Some explicitly state that leaving an introduction out is "a proof of someone's incompetence". Modern *speeching professionals* (Dutch engineers) do not worry about an introduction; it is not an essential part of their presentation. They do find the thinking up and presenting of an introduction the most difficult presentation task. As opposed to speech writers who state that they never send their commissioners (*professional speakers*) off without an attention drawing introduction; some even regard the introduction as the most attractive part of a speech, which they can get credit for. From analysis it emerges that, besides using the attention drawer, they also deploy the two other classical introductory functions. Finally, experimental research also proves that it makes sense for speakers to take the introduction to their speeches seriously. Introduction techniques have an observable and distinguishing effect, especially straight after the introduction. A speaker's exordial choices prove to have consequences also at the end of his speech.

Why make a fuss about the first few minutes? For the simple reason that not every beginning is a proper introduction.

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