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Making messages memorable: the influence of rhetorical techniques on information retention

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Citation

Wackers, M. J. Y. (2021, June 24). *Making messages memorable: the influence of rhetorical techniques on information retention*. LOT dissertation series. LOT, Amsterdam. Retrieved from <https://hdl.handle.net/1887/3185773>

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Issue date: 2021-06-24

2. Rhetorical retention advice: classical and modern techniques

For memory is most necessary to an orator, [...] and there is nothing like practice for strengthening and developing it. (Quintilian, *Institutio Oratoria* I, 1.36).

People will remember what you have to say if you just make it so *incredibly simple* that they *can* remember it. A theme acts as a retention tool. (Walters, 1993, p. 52)

While “strengthening and developing” the orator’s memory was considered “most necessary” in ancient rhetoric, modern public-speaking textbooks seem to focus mostly on “retention tools” to help people “remember what you have to say”. A first step to find out more about possible retention effects of rhetorical techniques is to investigate what strategies or ‘tools’ are considered effective in in public-speaking textbooks and how this so-called retention advice is related to insights from memory psychology (see Section 1.2). As of yet, no overview exists of ideas in public-speaking textbooks on audience information retention, neither of retention advice in influential ancient rhetorical works nor of that in the abundant present-day presentation skills books. Therefore, this chapter answers the following question:¹⁵

What techniques to make a message memorable are advised in public-speaking textbooks?

Section 2.1 discusses ancient rhetoricians’ views on memory. It starts with an overview of the main ideas about the canon of *memoria* in ancient rhetoric (how a *speaker* can use memory skills to remember a speech). Although this dissertation focuses on the receiver’s end (how audiences retain information), strategies on enhancing the orator’s memory can provide valuable insights into ancient ideas on the memory process and information retention. After that, the section discusses classical ideas about influencing the audience’s memory.

From Section 2.2 onwards, the spotlight is on modern public-speaking advice about retention. Sections 2.2 to 2.7 present various aspects of a corpus analysis that included forty English-language and forty Dutch-language influential public-speaking textbooks from the period 1980–2009. First, Section 2.2 explains the construction of the corpus and the method that was used to analyse the textbooks. Next, Section 2.3 shows how the speaker’s memory skills, which are so prominently present in ancient rhetoric, are discussed in the corpus of modern public-speaking textbooks. After that,

¹⁵ The main results of the analysis of modern public-speaking textbooks were summarised in Wackers, De Jong & Andeweg (2016a), Wackers, De Jong & Andeweg (2016b) and Wackers (2021). See the Overview of author’s publications for the complete references.

Section 2.4 turns to the advice on the audience's information retention: it gives insight into the amount of advice that is related to audience retention in modern textbooks and it presents an overview of the most frequently advised retention techniques. These advised techniques are extensively described in Section 2.5, which forms the qualitative heart of this chapter. The connection to retention, characteristics of each technique, and possible contradictions between textbook authors are addressed. As its shorter counterpart, Section 2.6 then presents an overview and discussion of the main warnings of the textbook authors (*vitia*): strategies or applications of rhetorical techniques that possibly hinder information retention, which often indicate limitations of otherwise useful rhetorical retention techniques. Section 2.7 shows to what extent textbook authors support their claims about influencing audience information retention; it discusses the number of references and the types of references that were found in the textbooks.

The concluding section (2.8) reflects on similarities and differences between classical and modern public speaking advisory practice that are described in this chapter. Furthermore, it addresses the way in which retention advice in public-speaking textbooks is related to main insights from memory psychology. Lastly, it touches upon similarities and differences in the way that retention advice is addressed in modern English-language and Dutch-language public-speaking textbooks, which appeared noteworthy based on the content analysis of the textbooks.

2.1 Orator and audience memory in classical rhetoric

[Marc Anthony:] How great the benefit of memory is to the orator, how great the advantage, how great the power [...].
(Cicero, *De Oratore* II, 87.355).

This contemplation of Marc Anthony, one of Cicero's characters in *De Oratore*, underlines the important position memory had in this and other well-known ancient works about rhetoric. For this thesis, four works were selected to collect the ideas about the orator's and audience's memory in ancient rhetoric: Aristotle's *Rhetoric*, the *Rhetorica ad Herennium* (written by the unknown *Auctor ad Herennium*), Cicero's *De Oratore* and Quintilian's *Institutio Oratoria*. These works were selected because they can be seen as the most comprehensive works from Antiquity that form the classical basis of modern rhetoric. To some extent, they are the forerunners of modern day public-speaking textbooks, although the works vary in the emphasis that is placed on instruction and advice.¹⁶

¹⁶ The four selected ancient works can be divided into (1) books aimed to instruct (inexperienced) speakers and (2) books of a more reflective or philosophical nature (cf. Andeweg & De Jong, 2004, pp. 11–12). This way, the selection of works provides multiple classical-rhetorical perspectives. The works with a focus on instruction are the *Rhetorica ad Herennium* and Quintilian's *Institutio Oratoria*. Both works aim to put forward the complete

The *memoria* was considered to be one of the five canons of the orator, together with the *inventio* (collection of arguments), *dispositio* (arrangement or order), *elocutio* (style, embellishment) and the *actio* (delivery) (Corbett & Connors, 1999; Yates, 2014). As the *Auctor ad Herennium* puts it, the task of memory is “the treasure-house of the ideas supplied by invention” and “the guardian of all the parts of rhetoric” (*Rhetorica ad Herennium* III, 16.28). The classical authors on rhetoric were more interested in the orator’s capability to memorise the structure and words of a speech than in the audience’s ability to store information heard during a speech. Section 2.1.1 discusses classical *memoria* advice, which can provide valuable insights into ancient views on the memory process and the way in which these views relate to current memory theory. Section 2.1.2 recounts references to techniques that could enhance audience retention that were found in the classical works of rhetoric. Appendix A.6 provides an overview of the fragments related to retention that were found in the selected ancient works.

2.1.1 *Memoria*: places, images, and things

The art of memory is said to be invented by the poet Simonides of Ceos, whose story is recounted by the *Auctor ad Herennium*, Cicero and Quintilian (Danziger, 2008; Yates, 2014). The Greek poet attended a banquet of a nobleman and was called to meet someone outside. Just as he had left the house, the banquet hall collapsed behind him, killing everyone inside. In the ruin that was left of the building, relatives of the deceased could hardly recognise their family members; however, Simonides had remembered the exact order in which the guests had been seated and could thus help with their identification. According to Cicero:

[...] he is reported to have discovered, that it is chiefly order that gives distinctness to memory and that by those, therefore, who would improve this part of the understanding, certain places must be fixed upon, and that of the things which they desire to keep in memory, symbols must be conceived in the mind, and ranged, as it were, in those places; thus the order of places would preserve the order of things, and the symbols of the things would denote the things themselves; so that we should use the places as waxen tablets, and the symbols as letters. (*De Oratore* II, 86.353-354).

rhetorical system, e.g. with the five orator’s canons and the conventional parts of a speech. Although Quintilian also reflects on more theoretical concepts such as the ideal orator, the main part of the work is practically oriented and offers many examples for the early orator. The works of a mainly reflective nature are Aristotle’s *Rhetoric* and Cicero’s *De Oratore*. Although Aristotle’s *Rhetoric* contains some practical pieces of advice for the orator, its emphasis seems to be on philosophic and theoretical features of rhetoric (e.g. the nature of a good speech and a good orator are discussed, just as the notion ‘audience’). Cicero’s *De Oratore* is written in the form of a dialogue (inspired by Plato); it does not focus on rhetorical guidelines, but rather on the ideal orator (Andeweg & De Jong, 2004). Cicero’s well-known work *De Inventione* was not taken into account because it only focuses on a specific part of the orator’s tasks (the invention).

The metaphor of the memory as a wax tablet upon which letters could be imprinted was not new. Plato and later Aristotle regularly refer to memory in terms of ‘inscription’ (Danziger, 2008, p. 31). However, the Roman classical authors use the Simonides story to more elaborately acknowledge that an orator can train the ‘artificial memory’ to benefit from when preparing for and delivering a speech (Yates, 2014). The natural memory that everyone possesses could be improved upon by ‘mnemonics’: strategies to train the memory. The most prominent technique to do so, as described by Cicero, is known as the ‘method of *loci*’ (Danziger, 2008; Yates, 2014). When this method is applied, the orator imagines a set of places or locations in which information can be held in a specific order. By making a mental tour past those locations at a later time, the orator is able to recall the information.

The *Auctor ad Herennium* is most detailed and specific about the method of *loci*, providing specific guidelines for creating effective imaginary places or ‘backgrounds’:

Again, it will be more advantageous to obtain backgrounds in a deserted than in a populous region, because the crowding and passing to and from of people confuse and weaken the impress of the images, while solitude keeps their outlines sharp. Further, backgrounds differing in form and nature must be secured, so that, thus distinguished, they may be clearly visible; for if a person has adopted many intercolumnar spaces, their resemblance to one another will so confuse him that he will no longer know what he has set in each background. (*Rhetorica ad Herennium* III, 19.31)

The images created by the orator are also subject to specific criteria in the *Rhetorica ad Herennium*. So-called *imagines agentes*, striking images that stand out because of their unusual features or comic properties, are supposed to be retained in the memory the most effectively:

We ought, then, to set up images of a kind that can adhere longest in the memory. And we shall do so if we establish likenesses as striking as possible; if we set up images that are not many or vague, but doing something; if we assign to them exceptional beauty or singular ugliness; if we dress some of them with crowns or purple cloaks, for example, so that the likeness may be more distinct to us; or if we somehow disfigure them, as by introducing one stained with blood or soiled with mud or smeared with red paint, so that its form is more striking, or by assigning certain comic effects to our images, for that, too, will ensure our remembering them more readily. (*Rhetorica ad Herennium* III, 22.37)

Cicero underlines that the orator must take care in developing these images; he remarks that they must be “impressive, striking, and well-marked, so that they may present themselves to the mind, and act upon it with the greatest quickness” (*De Oratore* III, 88.360).

Quintilian perhaps offers the most accessible description of how we should imagine this mnemonic technique of *loci* in practice. After the speaker has organised the facts and has constructed the images or ‘symbols’ that function as a memory aid, a building or house can serve as an organising principle to memorise the order of these facts:

These symbols are then arranged as follows. The first thought is placed, as it were, in the forecourt; the second, let us say, in the living-room; the remainder are placed in due order all-round the *impluvium* and entrusted not merely to bedrooms and parlours, but even to the care of statues and the like. This done, as soon as the memory of the facts requires to be revived, all these places are visited in turn and the various deposits are demanded from their custodians, as the sight of each recalls the respective details. [...]

What I have spoken of as being done in a house, can equally well be done in connexion with public buildings, a long journey, the ramparts of a city, or even pictures. Or we may even imagine such places to ourselves. We require, therefore, places, real or imaginary, and images or symbols, which we must, of course, invent for ourselves. By images I mean the words by which we distinguish the things which we have to learn by heart: in fact, as Cicero says, we use “places like wax tablets and symbols in lieu of letters”.

(*Institutio Oratoria* XI, 2.20-21).

Although Quintilian extensively describes the method of *loci*, he is reluctant to attribute all too positive qualities to this memory strategy. He recognises the fact that such a mnemonic can be of assistance; however, he does not recommend to use the spectacular *imagines agentes*, but discusses more ‘basic symbols’—common images such as weapons or nautical objects. Quintilian also vouches for another way of improving memory: writing down the speech and learning parts by heart. According to Quintilian, applying the method of *loci* could certainly help an orator to remember important fragments of the speech, but it would not be the only method for memorisation. Yates (2014) is not quite sure whether Quintilian’s different views on the method of *loci* compared to Cicero and the *Auctor ad Herennium* are due to a mere individual preference or a sign of a changed societal perception of mnemonics over time.

All of the three Roman sources of classical rhetoric distinguish a ‘memory for things’ and a ‘memory for words’. ‘Things’ entail the topic, subject matter or information of the speech, whereas ‘words’ represent the exact language in which the speech is delivered. In practice, speakers who relied on a memory for words had to find an image that represented every single word of the speech. Although Cicero thought that an orator ideally would have a ‘firm perception in the soul’ of both things and words, he admitted that a memory of things might be sufficient for an orator in practice. The *Auctor ad Herennium* and Quintilian agree, with the latter specifically questioning the use of such mnemonics for words; for some words, he argues, an image can easily be formed in the mind, but what to do with conjunctions or connecting words (Yates, 2014)? For practical use by a speaker, the memory for words

seemed too cumbersome, while the memory for things can be a beneficial factor in delivering a successful speech, according to Cicero and the *Auctor ad Herennium*.

The classical authors' advice on how to train the orator's memory shows some similarities to modern memory psychology principles (see Section 1.2). Organisation and visualisation are highly important in ancient mnemonics: images are created and the order of placement in mental locations is decisive for the success of recall afterwards. Elaboration and association come into play as well, with the orator's use of familiar places and—especially for the *imagines agentes*—the memory strategy to connect the stored items and images, and provide them with some striking features.

Modern memory research into the method of *loci* has shown that it is effective (Baddeley et al., 2009, pp. 363–365): it increases recall and it appears to stimulate a more varied and extensive encoding process. As a disadvantage, to find a particular piece of information, the learner has to work through the sequence of items in the order in which they were remembered. The method's practical use is also questioned, since “the task of trying to remember a 2000-word text verbatim is not something any of us often tries to do!” (Baddeley et al., 2009, p. 365). This quotation pinpoints the difference between the ancient and modern attitude towards memorising a text or a speech (also see Section 2.3): in antiquity it was not uncommon and even recommended to use mnemonics and learn a long text by heart, as the four ancient rhetorical works point out. The question now rises to what extent classical rhetoricians referred to strategies to influence not just the orator's memory skills, but also to the audience's information retention.

2.1.2 Advice on audience information retention by the classical authors

The references to mnemonics and memory processes by classical authors might imply they also had clear views on how to influence the audience's memory. However, explicit references to the audience's information retention are needed to properly interpret the classical authors' views on that matter. This section discusses the explicit references to audience information retention that were found in Aristotle's *Rhetorica*, *Rhetorica ad Herennium*, Cicero's *De Oratore* and Quintilian's *Institutio Oratoria*. First it is explained how relevant passages were detected; afterwards, examples of retention advice are presented.

To detect references to audience information retention in the four classical works of rhetoric mentioned, digital versions of the works were searched using the following key terms: ‘memory’, ‘memorable’, ‘remember’, ‘recall’, ‘retention’ and ‘retain’. For each instance of the key term that was found in the text, I took the following steps into account to decide upon the fragment's relevance:

1. I interpreted whether the passage was relevant to improving memory or information retention (the key words by itself have various purports or could be used more generically);¹⁷
2. when applicable to memory, I interpreted whether the passage would refer to either the orator's or the audience's memory;
3. when related to the audience's memory, I determined the nature of the advice and whether it refers to a specific part of the speech or rhetorical technique.

Few explicit references are made to audience information retention (see Appendix A.6). Most of the fragments that contained one of the key words were either not specifically linked to memory or were focused on the orator's *memoria*. The fragments that do refer to audience information retention can roughly be divided into three categories: (1) abstract references, (2) references to specific parts of the speech and (3) references to specific rhetorical techniques or categories.

Abstract references to retention

The first category is that of the more abstract notions that, according to the classical authors, could influence retention. 'Abstract' here means that a concept is connected to retention, but the author does not explain how an orator can use it in a speech on the levels of style, technique or parts of the speech. For instance, Cicero discusses the positive effect on retention that visualisation can have in general (not limited to the orator's memory skills):

For Simonides, or whoever else invented the art, wisely saw, that those things are the most strongly fixed in our minds, which are communicated to them, and imprinted upon them, by the senses; that of all the senses that of seeing is the most acute; and that, accordingly, those things are most easily retained in our minds which we have received from the hearing or the understanding, if they are also recommended to the imagination by means of the mental eye; so that a kind of form, resemblance, and representation might denote invisible objects, and such as are in their nature withdrawn from the cognisance of the sight, in such a manner, that what we are scarcely capable of comprehending by thought we may retain as it were by the aid of the visual faculty. (*De Oratore* II, 87.357).

He relates this quality of the "visual faculty" to "us" and "our minds", which could be interpreted as applicable to people in general—in a public-speaking situation, the speaker and the audience alike. However, Cicero does explicitly note how a speaker

¹⁷ For example, the use of 'memory' in the following passage from *De Oratore* (I,1.8) would be qualified as 'generic', not relevant to *memoria*, mnemonics or audience information retention: "There have been many [orators] also in our own *memory*, and more in that of our fathers, and even of our forefathers, who had abilities to rule and govern affairs of state by their counsel and wisdom; while for a long period no tolerable orators were found, or scarcely one in every age".

can implement this in a speech to benefit from the retention effect of “imagination by means of the mental eye”; could it be achieved by using analogies, or metaphors perhaps? The link between the retention quality of visualisation and more practically applicable rhetorical strategies or techniques is not emphasised.

The same goes for the following, more philosophical passage by Aristotle:

Things that deserve to be remembered are noble, and the more they deserve this, the nobler they are. So are the things that continue even after death; those which are always attended by honour; those which are exceptional; and those which are possessed by one person alone—these last are more readily remembered than other. (*Rhetorica*, I.9)

For a speaker who is looking for advice about making a message memorable, these are not the most readily applicable fragments. Does Aristotle imply that a speaker should try to include “exceptional” or “honourable things” in the speech, or things possessed by a single person only? An inexperienced orator would probably be in need of some more context-specific advice that includes, for example, topic and audience. Although these passages are probably not intended to contain such detailed advice to the reader, they nevertheless contain some more abstract references to what is “retained” or “remembered” more easily.

Parts of the standard speech structure linked to retention

In the second category of references, parts of the standard speech structure are explicitly linked to retention, which makes this category more specific than the first category. Three parts of the speech are related to retention in particular: the statement of facts (*narratio*), the argumentation part (*confirmatio/refutatio*) and the conclusion (*peroratio*).¹⁸

The ‘statement of facts’ is connected to retention by Quintilian, the classical author who is most explicit in describing audience retention strategies and techniques:

The statement will be either wholly in our favour or wholly in that of our opponent or a mixture of both. If it is entirely in our own favour, we may rest content with the three qualities just mentioned [that it should be lucid, brief and plausible], the result of which is to make it easier for the judge to understand, remember and believe what we say. (*Institutio Oratoria* IV, 2.33)

¹⁸ Quintilian links the *partitio* (structure overview) to retention as well, but only by explaining how it might negatively affect the audience’s memory: “No doubt there is a danger, if our partition is too complicated, that it may slip the memory of the judge and disturb his attention” (*Institutio Oratoria* IV, 5.1). Section 2.6 more extensively discusses such warnings (how rhetorical techniques can negatively affect retention) in modern public-speaking textbooks.

Here, Quintilian states that a good execution of the statement of facts can make it easier for a judge to remember what is said. Even more specific, a statement of facts should be lucid, brief, and plausible to have an effect on retention. These qualities will suffice if the statement is in favour of the speaker's party. With this, he also links the stylistic qualities of 'clarity', 'conciseness' and 'probability' to information retention.¹⁹ The list of three "understand, remember and believe" is also remarkable: 'understanding' is required to remember information, 'remembering' to—in the end—believe it. In that respect, retention could be seen as part of the persuasion process a judge might go through.

A good argument structure, which would often be presented in the *argumentatio* (*conformatio* and *refutatio*) can be essential for remembering the argument, as explained in the *Rhetorica ad Herennium*. The author describes what happens when a speaker does not follow such a structure: problems occur such as elaborating too long on or repeatedly returning to the same issue, leaving a chain of argument before it is completed and not connecting arguments clearly. The *Auctor ad Herennium* then presents the order that should be followed:²⁰

By the following method, therefore, we can ourselves remember what we have said in each place, and the hearer can perceive and remember the distribution of the parts in the whole cause and also in each particular argument. The most complete and perfect argument, then, is that which is comprised of five parts: the Proposition, the Reason, the Proof of the Reason, the Embellishment, and the Résumé.
(*Rhetorica ad Herennium* II, 18.27-28)

Thirdly, next to the statement of facts and the structure of an argument, the *peroratio* or *epilogue* (conclusion) is also explicitly referred to as a part of the speech that could influence retention. In a discussion about when to remove or excite prejudice, Aristotle refers to the "close" as the part of the speech to include information that should be retained:

The defendant, when he is going to bring himself on the stage, must clear away any obstacles, and therefore must begin by removing any prejudice felt against him. But if you are to excite prejudice, you must do so at the close, so that the judges may more easily remember what you have said. (*Rhetorica*, III.14).

Quintilian emphasises the link between the peroration and retention even more firmly:

¹⁹ According to Quintilian (IV, 2.31) "it is of no importance if we substitute clear for lucid, or credible or probable for plausible".

²⁰ After the author of *Ad Herennium* has presented an example of a good argument structure he adds that in some situations this complete five-part argument structure is not necessary. For example, "there is a time when the résumé should be dispensed with—if the matter is brief enough to be readily embraced by the memory" (*Ad Herennium* II, 19.30)

I went on to point out that in all forensic cases speech consists of five parts, the exordium designed to conciliate the audience, the statement of facts designed to instruct him, the proof which confirms our own propositions, the refutation which overthrows the arguments of our opponents, and the peroration which either refreshes the memory of our hearers or plays upon their emotions. (*Institutio Oratoria* VI, Preface.11)

Rhetorical techniques related to retention

In the third category of advice, specific techniques or strategies are linked to information retention. Elaborating on his assertion that the peroration “refreshes the memory of our hearers”, Quintilian also explains which aspect of the peroration may cause that effect (VI, 1.1):

There are two kinds of peroration, for it may deal either with facts or with the emotional aspect of the case. The repetition and grouping of the facts, which the Greeks call ἀνακεφαλαίωσις and some of our own writers call the enumeration, serves both to refresh the memory of the judge and to place the whole of the case before his eyes, and, even although the facts may have made little impression on him in detail, their cumulative effect is considerable. (*Institutio Oratoria* VI, 1.1)

It is the enumeration (‘summary’ or ‘recapitulation’), which is the specific part of the peroration that deals with the facts, that refreshes the memory of the judges. Quintilian also points out that the “cumulative effect” of the repetition of the facts could lead to the judge being more impressed (it is not entirely clear whether the “cumulative effect” also refers to “refresh the memory”). The *Auctor ad Herennium* also attributes a positive effect on the listeners’ memory to the recapitulation or ‘summing up of the facts’:

The summing up gathers together and recalls the points we have made — briefly, that the speech may not be repeated in entirety, but that the memory of it may be refreshed; and we shall reproduce all the points in the order in which they have been presented, so that the hearer, if he has committed them to memory, is brought back to what he remembers. (*Rhetorica ad Herennium* II, 30.47)

Next to the summary, the *Auctor ad Herennium* connects another structure technique to retention: the ‘transition’. This figure reminds listeners of what has just been said and prepares them for what is to come:

Transition is the name given to the figure which briefly recalls what has been said, and likewise briefly sets forth what is to follow next, thus: “You know how he has just been conducting himself towards his fatherland; now consider what kind of son he has been to his parents.” Again: “My benefactions to this defendant you know; now learn how he has requited me.” This figure is not without value for two

ends: it reminds the hearer of what the speaker has said, and also prepares him for what is to come. (*Rhetorica ad Herennium* IV, 26.35)

The statement of facts, the transition and the recapitulation in the conclusion are parts and techniques of a speech that all appear to contribute to the rhetorical function of *docilem parare*: to enable the audience to understand the speech (Andeweg & De Jong, 2004).²¹

Another example of retention advice that concerns a specific technique is found in Aristotle's *Rhetoric*—in this case it is a stylistic feature: to make sure the audience remembers the speech, it is recommended to use a compact style (a periodic form that can be numbered) and apply verse.

Such, then, is the free-running kind of style; the compact is that which is in periods. By a period I mean a portion of speech that has in itself a beginning and an end, being at the same time not too big to be taken in at a glance. Language of this kind is satisfying and easy to follow. It is satisfying, because it is just the reverse of indefinite; and moreover, the hearer always feels that he is grasping something and has reached some definite conclusion; whereas it is unsatisfactory to see nothing in front of you and get nowhere. It is easy to follow, because it can easily be remembered; and this because language when in periodic form can be numbered, and number is the easiest of all things to remember. That is why verse, which is measured, is always more easily remembered than prose, which is not: the measures of verse can be numbered. (*Rhetorica*, III.9)

Here, Aristotle states that the compact style is easily remembered, mostly because of its periodic form.²² We even discover that “the easiest of all things to remember: is “number”. An interesting notion is that the compact style can be easily followed, “because it can easily be remembered”—not the other way around. Finally, this fragment suggests that verse is more easily retained. Whether applicable to all speech situations or not, this quotation from Aristotle is an example of the most specific audience retention advice that can be drawn from the classical authors.

²¹ This definition of *docilem parare*, enabling the audience to understand the speech, is derived from Andeweg & De Jong (2004) and most closely related to Greek authors' ideas about this introductory function. Andeweg & De Jong (2004, pp. 36–38) describe that Greek and Roman rhetoricians have a slightly different take on the *docilem* function. Greek rhetoricians (Aristotle, among others) believe that the speaker should enable the audience to understand the speech, whereas Roman authors (Cicero, Quintilian) add that the audience should also be made interested in the speech. The term ‘interested’ is somewhat problematic, as it blurs the distinction with the other two introductory functions *attentum* and *benevolum parare* (raising attention and establishing goodwill). The Greek definition is more focused on comprehension, which distinguishes the *docilem* function more clearly from the *attentum* and *benevolum* functions.

²² See Fahnestock (2011, pp. 210–213) for a description of periodic sentences and style.

2.1.3 Conclusion classical retention advice

In short, in the influential classical works of rhetoric most attention is given to the *memoria* task of the orator compared to the audience's information retention. The *memoria* task is often awarded a separate chapter or section by the author, which usually involves a discussion of the method of *loci* and the use of mental images and places to store 'things'. Such *memoria* strategies often involve visualising, organising and associatively connecting chunks of information (elaboration), which corresponds to insights from memory psychology into information processing and retention (see Section 1.2).

Strategies for a speaker to influence the audience's retention are discussed less frequently and extensively: only few explicit references on how to influence audience retention were found, distributed over different parts of the classical works on rhetoric. This suggests that influencing the audience's memory was considered less important than training the speaker's memory in ancient rhetoric. Another possible interpretation is that classical authors believed explicit attention to audience information retention was less necessary, due to the extensive attention to *memoria*. Finally, the judicial context in ancient rhetoric, in which judges formed a very specific audience, could play a role. However, such assumptions require corroboration by more thorough studies of the classical texts.

The following main ideas and techniques in the four classical works were found to be explicitly related to audience information retention:

- the speech function of *docilem parare* (enabling the audience to understand the speech);
- the concluding part of the speech, and more precisely the 'summary' or 'recapitulation of the facts' in the peroration;
- the 'statement of the facts' in the introduction;
- the figure *transitio* (transition sentence);
- the use of a compact style (a periodic form that can be numbered) and verse (specific stylistic advice by Aristotle).

Apart from Aristotle's style advice, all the specific ideas on audience information retention by classical authors can be related to organisation and structure of the speech. Compared to the *memoria* advice, techniques that can be linked to visualisation and elaboration processes appear to be absent in the scarce advice on audience information retention in ancient rhetorical works.

2.2 Method: construction and analysis of corpus modern public-speaking textbooks

Public-speaking textbooks are available in abundance to the modern reader; they form an almost inexhaustible source of rhetorical advice. Is there a clear-cut 'retention recipe' that a speaker can apply, according to the textbook writers? To be able to profile the modern retention advice, a corpus was assembled of the most influential English-language and Dutch-language public-speaking textbooks from the period

1980–2009. Section 2.2.1 discusses the construction of this corpus; it explains the selection criteria that were applied to form a collection of textbooks that is as representative as possible. Next, Section 2.2.2 explains the procedure for identifying and labelling ‘retention-related’ fragments in the textbooks.

2.2.1 Construction of the textbook corpus

The main objective was to select the most influential English-language and Dutch-language public-speaking textbooks from three decades, which together would provide a representative overview of retention advice.²³ The perspective of textbook users was guiding: the more readers have access to a textbook, the more influential it is considered to be. Ideally, the textbook selection should provide an overview of retention advice that an average reader or user would most likely find. Which techniques that are recommended to enhance information retention could a potential speaker encounter when taking a public-speaking textbook from a library’s bookshelf?

To select the most influential public-speaking textbooks in the period 1980–2009, it would probably be most reliable to consult publication and print figures of publishers. However, this method proved to be impractical for a corpus that spans three decades and eighty textbooks. For the same reason, an investigation into the number of references to specific public-speaking textbooks in relevant publications about the topic was dismissed. Instead, WorldCat, the largest online library catalogue, was used to construct a corpus of representative public-speaking textbooks. The underlying idea is that the books that are available in libraries have an impact on the public. Consequently, books that are present in more libraries have a higher impact in society. WorldCat facilitates an overview of a book’s presence in libraries worldwide.²⁴ Figure 2.1 shows a schematic overview of the corpus construction. The total corpus of eighty textbooks can be broken down into an English-language sub-corpus and a Dutch-language sub-corpus of forty textbooks each. Furthermore, the selection criteria for the sub-corpora are presented: for each year in the period 1980–2009 one book was selected based on the criteria of reprint, content and availability (geographical distribution). The corpus was completed with twenty prominent textbooks (ten for each sub-corpus) that were not included in the initial WorldCat draft. The procedure is further detailed below figure 2.1.

²³ The construction of the corpus took place in 2012, at the start of the PhD project that culminated into this thesis. This explains the focus on the period 1980–2009, which spans three decades.

²⁴ See the web page <https://www.worldcat.org/whatis/default.jsp> for more information on WorldCat.

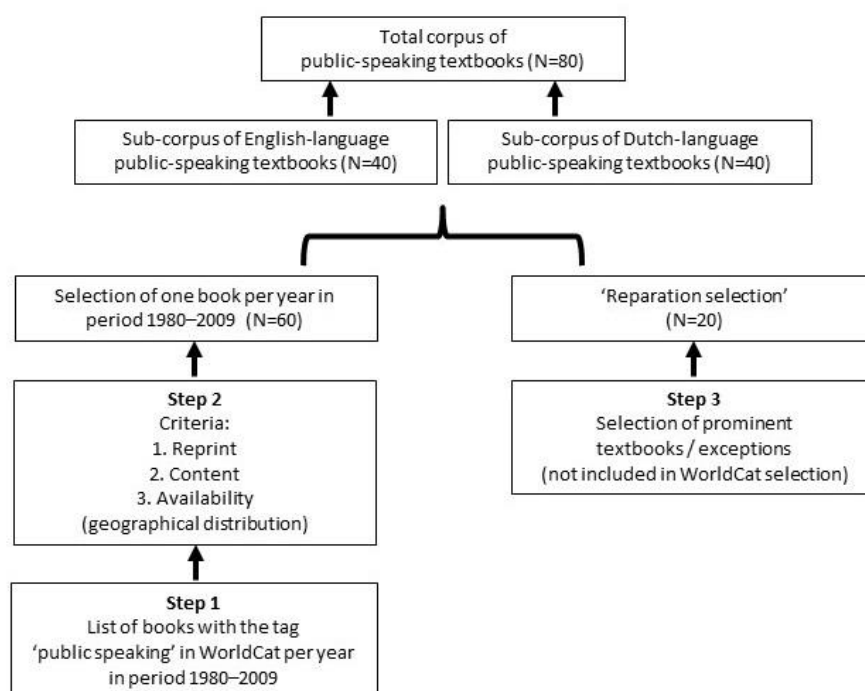


Figure 2.1: schematic overview of the construction of the corpus of public-speaking textbooks (N=80), consisting of the English- and Dutch-language sub-corpora, and the steps taken in the selection procedure of the textbooks.

The figure shows the three procedural steps that were performed. First, for each year in the period 1980–2009 a list of books about presenting and public speaking was compiled, using the tag ‘public speaking’ that is available as an advanced search option in WorldCat (step 1).²⁵ Next, three criteria were applied to narrow down the list of preliminary results (step 2). Adhering to the criterion ‘reprint’, books without a reprint were preferably dismissed. A reprint of a textbook suggests that it is popular and has a larger population of readers compared to textbooks that are not reprinted; thus, it appears to be more ‘influential’. Based on the ‘content’ criterion, results that seemed less relevant (books which did not or only partially covered public speaking) were removed. Following the availability (geographical distribution) criterion, for each year within the period 1980–2009 the textbook that was available in most libraries was selected (according to WorldCat, reference point: January 2012). In

²⁵ WorldCat provides the works in its catalogue with one or more ‘tags’, which indicate the overarching topic of the book and the category it belongs to. The tag ‘public speaking’ covers subtopics such as ‘oral presentation’ and ‘speeches’.

order to equally compare search results, the availability of English-language textbooks was checked in libraries in the United States of America (USA) only. For the Dutch-language corpus, the availability in Dutch libraries was taken into account. Using this procedure, sixty books were selected (thirty for both languages): the result of steps 1 and 2.

To this first selection of sixty books, ten English-language and ten Dutch-language textbooks were added to ‘repair’ possible side-effects of the selection method (step 3 in figure 2.1). As the criterion of availability for the English-language part of the corpus was based on American libraries, books with a more British or European perspective were added to the corpus, such as Atkinson’s *Lend me your ears* (2004). For the Dutch-language corpus, the list of thirty books obtained via the WorldCat selection was compared to a corpus of public-speaking textbooks constructed by Andeweg and De Jong in 2004. Books on Andeweg’s and De Jong’s list (2004) from the period 1980–2009 that did not yet appear in the thirty-book WorldCat selection were added to the Dutch-language corpus.²⁶

The procedure resulted in a final corpus of forty English-language and forty Dutch-language public-speaking textbooks from the period 1980–2009 (total number of pages: 13,326). All books were scanned and made digitally accessible via text-recognition. The Dutch-language sub-corpus differs from the English-language sub-corpus in two respects. First of all, it contains eleven textbooks that deal with communication skills in general, in which only a specific chapter or part is explicitly devoted to public speaking or presentation skills.²⁷ In the English-language sub-corpus, all textbooks are specifically about public speaking. Secondly, the Dutch-language sub-corpus contains six textbooks that were translated into Dutch from either English or German.²⁸ Section 2.8.2 pays more attention to differences in retention

²⁶ Andeweg & De Jong (2004, pp. 90–92) used a different approach to construct a representative corpus of Dutch-language public-speaking textbooks. They initially selected 136 textbooks published in the 20th century. Most books were from the final two decades of the 20th century. Next, a group of eight experts awarded scores to the works on this longlist, which resulted in a shortlist of 42 books.

²⁷ The following textbooks in the Dutch-language corpus are on communication skills in general, or on both writing and presentation skills: Moks & De Koning (1985), De Boer (1986), Luijk (1987), Tilanus (1988), Claassen-Van Wirdum et al. (1992), Oomkes (2000), Janssen et al. (2002), Cornelis (2002), Jansen et al. (2004), Piët (2005), Steehouder et al. (2006).

²⁸ The following books in the Dutch-language are translations: Quick (1980)—original version in English, Blum (1982)—original version in German, Kirchner (1983)—original version in German, Krusche (1986)—original version in German, Morse (1987)—original version in English, Witt (2009)—original version in English. These translations stem from the (early) eighties, with the exception of Witt (2009). This can be viewed in the light of the emergence of ‘taalbeheersing’ (applied communication or discourse studies) as an academic discipline and applied communication skills as a school subject in the seventies and eighties of the twentieth century (cf. Braet, 2000). Oral communication skills were not emphasised as much as writing skills, but gradually the attention for public speaking increased – hence the increase of public-speaking textbooks that originate in The Netherlands from the mid-eighties. The

advice between the sub-corpora and how these could be related to the corpus construction and public speaking tradition. The complete list of selected books per corpus per year can be found in Appendix A.1, together with a more extensive motivation to account for the textbook selection.

2.2.2 Identification, labelling and categorisation of rhetorical retention techniques

The corpus of public-speaking textbooks was carefully inspected to determine the amount of retention-related contents and the rhetorical techniques linked to retention. For each textbook a form was filled out with the following categories: (1) the number of pages connected to retention, (2) an overview of fragments with retention advice or *vitia* ('warnings') containing a preliminary label of the technique involved and (3) an overview of retention techniques that are connected to a specific part of a speech (see appendices A.2 and A.8 for examples of such a form). This systematic procedure was first performed for the English-language sub-corpus (N=40), and later for the Dutch-language corpus (N=40).²⁹ The reliability of the procedure was monitored by critically discussing the definition of techniques and the attribution of labels in case of doubt. In some instances a definition or label was adapted after such a discussion. No inter-rater reliability was determined. The procedure consisted of three main steps:

1. Identification of retention fragments. The first step was to scan the textbook from cover to cover and select so-called 'retention fragments' based on the presence of key words such as 'memory', 'retention', 'remember' and 'stick' in the text (a complete list is to be found in Appendix A.2). To be labelled as a retention fragment, a fragment was required to contain an explicit link to retention.³⁰ To check for any retention advice that may have been overlooked, a digital search of the documents was performed with the aforementioned key words as search terms. For each textbook the fragments linked to retention were counted and expressed in number of pages (rounded off to ¼, ½ or ¾ of a page). Whenever a technique was explicitly linked to retention, the text that was related to this specific rhetorical technique was considered to be related to retention.

influence of textbooks from the German public-speaking tradition in the early years of the Dutch-language corpus is noteworthy.

²⁹ The contribution of Bert Besterveld (English-language sub-corpus) and Shari Helderman (Dutch-language sub-corpus) to the analysis of the corpus has been indispensable. Both have written a Master's thesis on retention advice in public-speaking textbooks at Leiden University.

³⁰ For example, the following fragment contains an explicit reference to retention (bold-faced) and was therefore included in the analysis: "The close is really the most strategic point in a talk, what one says last, the final words left ringing in the ears when one ceases—**these are likely to be remembered longest**" (Carnegie & Carnegie, 1977, p. 203). An example of a fragment that was not taken into account is the following: "Statistics can give a speech a sense of precision if we **remember** to relate the statistics to known things and to make them meaningful to the audience" (Ross, 1980, p. 183). Although it contains a key word related to retention, 'remember' is not used here to refer to information retention—which is why the fragment was dismissed.

2. *Analysis of retention fragments and labelling of techniques.* The second step was to analyse each retention fragment to determine specific advice or warnings (*vitia* in classical rhetorical terms) for the speaker concerning retention, and to label the specific rhetorical technique that was connected to that advice or *vitium*. The point of departure was to stay as close to the author's description of the technique as possible. Therefore, the description or name of the technique used by the textbook author was used as a label, in case such a label was provided and clearly included in the fragment. For example, a fragment that referred to how the use of a graph can influence retention was tagged as 'graph'. The analysis of the retention fragments was user-centred and not author-centred; this means that it mainly focused on the contents of the retention advice as opposed to author or publication characteristics.

For attributing the labels to the fragments from the Dutch-language sub-corpus, the descriptions of the techniques acquired after analysing the English-language sub-corpus were used as a point of reference.³¹ To thirteen retention-related fragments distilled from the Dutch-language sub-corpus, a label was applied that had not yet been used for the English-language sub-corpus.

Furthermore, we took stock of advice that was explicitly linked to a specific part of the presentation, such as introduction and conclusion. Whenever a specific part of the speech or a broader category of retention techniques was said to influence retention, related techniques were assumed to be connected to retention as well.³² After this second step, a total of 92 different techniques were labelled.

3. *Categorisation of techniques.* As a final step, some labelled techniques were categorised to create a clearer overview. This was done for two reasons. First of all, some techniques were attributed to a broader category in the textbooks. For example, a variety of techniques were related to visual support, such as 'graph', 'presentation slides' and 'object/prop'. To avoid a scattered picture of advice on visual aids, these techniques were categorised into a broader category of 'visual aids' (see Section 2.5.1 for a more elaborate description of this process). Secondly, for categories such as 'visual aids' and 'humour', generic statements on retention were found in the textbooks (i.e. a general remark on the fact that visual aids or humour can influence retention, without mentioning specific techniques). Such statements were labelled as

³¹ An example: in the English-language sub-corpus, the technique 'imagery' is often connected to the use of concrete, vivid and ornate use of language. Whenever a retention fragment in the Dutch-language sub-corpus contained such descriptions, it was also labelled as containing the technique 'imagery'.

³² An example: in a random textbook, it is found that the 'conclusion' (the concluding part of the speech) is explicitly linked to retention. Next, the book discusses various rhetorical techniques to prepare a proper conclusion. In such a situation, all these techniques were considered to be retention techniques and included in the analysis.

fragments that relate to a broader retention technique (e.g. ‘visual aids’).³³ After this final step, a total of 77 different types of techniques were definitively labelled. Section 2.4 contains an overview of the most frequent retention techniques that were found in the corpus.

2.3 *Memoria* task of the speaker in modern public-speaking textbooks

Of course, you will be remembered if you tumble off the platform or split open your trousers. The unexpected and the embarrassing can be counted on to get the job done. Let’s concentrate in this chapter on more positive ways to make a lasting impression. (Urech, 1998, p. 31).

As a characteristic fragment from a modern public-speaking textbook, Urech’s quotation reveals a difference between the classical-rhetorical authors and the modern practice of presentation advice in the approach of retention. While classical rhetoricians mainly focus on the memory tasks of the speaker (*memoria*) and less explicitly discuss how to influence the audience’s or judges’ memories, the focus in today’s public-speaking textbooks appears to be on giving a memorable presentation—one for the audience to remember. Still, the *memoria* task of the speaker receives some attention in present-day public-speaking advice and practice.³⁴ This section addresses the considerations of modern textbook authors about the functionality of memorising a speech, and the memory aids they propose. Appendix A.7 contains an overview of the fragments related to the *memoria* task that were found in modern public-speaking textbooks.

2.3.1 To memorise or not to memorise³⁵

Should a speaker learn a speech by heart? Of the modern textbook authors in the overall corpus, 30% would advise against that strategy (English-language sub-corpus:

³³ A categorisation took place for ‘visual aids’ (general statements on the retention effect of visual aids and specific techniques), ‘humour’ (general statements on the retention effect of humour and specific techniques), ‘systematic order’ (the Dutch-language technique ‘kapstok’ was considered a form of systematic order), ‘rhyme’ (alliteration and assonance), and ‘repetition’ (‘redundance’ in the Dutch-language corpus was considered a form of repetition and was only found in fragments that already included a reference to repetition as a technique).

³⁴ The role of human memory and memorisation is not overlooked in today’s popular-scientific literature. Examples of recent books in which memory (skills) are the central theme are Joshua Foer’s *Moonwalking with Einstein* (2011), Frances Yates’s *The Art of Memory* (first published in 1966) and Douwe Draaisma’s *Metaphors of Memory* (2000, first published in 1995). Although these works touch upon the function of memory in public speaking, they aim to provide a more general perspective on memory and its applications.

³⁵ Naistadt (2004, p. 178) uses this exact title for a section on memorising in the chapter “You can’t dance until you know the steps: the power of rehearsal”.

37.5%, Dutch-language corpus: 22.5%).³⁶ They tend to take a more negative position towards the speaker's memory than classical rhetoricians. In most public-speaking textbooks, especially in the English-language sub-corpus, four main types of "speech delivery" are distinguished: 'impromptu' (completely improvised or "off the cuff"), 'extemporaneously' (well-prepared but not exactly committed to a written text), 'from a written text or manuscript', and 'from memory'. The extemporaneous approach is favoured by most authors; often described as a well-structured speech that still comes across spontaneously, it mitigates disadvantages of the other approaches. Or, as Wilson and Arnold (1983) phrase it:

Speaking extemporaneously allows speakers their best compromise between the cold mashed potatoes of rigidly learned talk and the haphazard mix of thoughts that impromptu speaking so often produces.
[p. 35]

The main drawback of the "speaking from memory" method is that it can damage a speaker's ethos in two ways: (1) it makes a speaker come across unnatural and boring and (2) it increases the chance of getting a black-out and forgetting (parts of) the speech. Five English-language authors describe the presentation of a memorised speech as "stilted": it often appears to be "artificial" and "rehearsed" due to a particular intonation pattern and an increase in pace.³⁷ Mertens (1992, p. 31) states that a speaker should not learn the presentation by heart unless he is an "actor or performer", otherwise he will sound like a "parrot", which is "a horror to listen to".³⁸ Braas et al. (2001, p. 69) agree that such a delivery sounds "forced". Moreover, speakers run the risk of forgetting parts of the speech, which could have a detrimental effect, according to Linkletter (1980):

... if you try to memorise a speech and forget one line, you're dead. You'll get flustered, flounder around, and may even find yourself standing before your audience unable to say a word. [p. 154]

³⁶ *English-language sub-corpus*: Carnegie & Carnegie (1977), Walter & Scott (1979), Ehninger et al. (1980), Linkletter (1980), Ross (1980), Kenny (1982), Gondin et al. (1983), Detz (1984), Cook (1989), Smith (1991), Walters (1993), Dowis (2000), Verderber (2000), Vasile & Mintz (2000), Laskowski (2001); *Dutch-language sub-corpus*: Krusche (1986), Van Eijk (1987), Korswagen (1988), Mertens (1992), Kruijssen (1993), Braas (2001), IJzermans & Van Schaaijk (2003), Wiertzema & Jansen (2004), Hertz (2005).

³⁷ Ehninger et al. (1980), Ross (1980), Detz (1984), Osborn & Osborn (1997) and Laskowski (2001).

³⁸ Mertens (1992, p. 31): "Spreek nooit uit het hoofd, tenzij u de talenten hebt van de acteur of de cabaretier. Beschikt u daar niet over, dan wordt u een papegaai, en een mens in die vorm is een verschrikking om naar te luisteren. U wordt dan het toppunt van gemaaktheid en, aangezien het spreken natuurlijk en authentiek moet zijn, kan dat echt niet."

Wiertzema and Jansen (2004, p. 104) talk about “panic” that “hits” and will create a “total emptiness of the mind”—all no light consequences of memorising a presentation.³⁹

2.3.2 Rehearsals, outlines and speaking notes

Instead of memorising the entire speech, almost half the number of public-speaking textbooks in the corpus (thirty-nine of the eighty textbooks) offer one or more preparatory strategies and memory aids that can help the speaker not to lose track of the storyline and speech content. The two most important preparatory strategies are ‘rehearsal’, and ‘the use of speech outlines and notes’.

A little over one third of the authors advise speakers to practice and rehearse their speech.⁴⁰ The practice or rehearsal process can consist of various stages: speakers are advised to read the speech out loud, practise without a paper or with notes only (possibly in front of a mirror), practise to a (critical) friend, rehearse in front of a group of people (dry run) and finally to have a “dress rehearsal”—preferably at the presentation’s location. Most authors only discuss a selection of these options. In addition, Naistadt (2004, pp. 184–185) discusses the “mental rehearsal”: going over the presentation in the mind. To illustrate this strategy’s effectiveness Naistadt recounts the anecdote of Liu Chi Kung, a Chinese pianist who practised mental rehearsal during seven years of captivity and was able to play a piece faultlessly upon his release.

About one out of five authors recommend speakers to design a speech outline and to keep it within reach during the presentation.⁴¹ Outlines can come in various shapes and sizes. Cook (1989, pp. 120–126) offers quite a complete set of options by distinguishing a word-for-word script, a “traditional outline” (short descriptions of each main point), an outline with keywords only and a “pictograph” (icons or pictures representing main points, possibly combined with keywords). In the Dutch-language corpus, the notions “sprekschema” (speaking scheme) and “bouwplan” (construction

³⁹ Wiertzema & Jansen (2004, p. 104): “De spreker loopt vast, de paniek slaat toe en er ontstaat een totale leegte in het hoofd. De black-out is dan een feit.”

⁴⁰ Advised in 36.25% of the overall corpus. *English-language sub-corpus*, 57.5%: Carnegie & Carnegie (1977), Walter & Scott (1979), Linkletter (1980), Kenny (1982), Wilson & Arnold (1983), Wilder (1986), Allen (1987), Mandel (1987), Lucas (1989), Smith (1991), Simmons (1996), Sprague & Stuart (1996), Osborn & Osborn (1997), Urech (1998), Verderber (2000), Laskowski (2001), McConnon (2002), Valenti (2002), Booher (2003), DeVito (2003), Atkinson (2004), Naistadt (2004), Anholt (2006); *Dutch-language sub-corpus*, 15%: Morse (1987), Van Eijk (1987), Wagenaar (1996), Van der Spek (1998), Hilgers & Vriens (1983), IJzermans & Van Schaaijk (2003).

⁴¹ Advised in 22.5% of the overall corpus. *English-language sub-corpus*, 30%: Walter & Scott (1979), Linkletter (1980), Ross (1980), Wilson & Arnold (1983), Allen (1987), Cook (1989), Lucas (1989), Rozakis (1995), Sprague & Stuart (1996), Qubein (1997), DeVito (2003), Anholt (2006); *Dutch-language sub-corpus*, 15%: Claasen-Van Wirdum et al. (1992), Kruijsen (1993), Janssen et al. (2002), Hilgers & Vriens (2003), IJzermans & Van Schaaijk (2003), Witt (2009).

plan) are popular. Occasionally, the advice on how to make an outline or “spreekschema” is accompanied by instructions on its design; these can include details such as the information that speakers should put in the margins of the scheme or the way in which they can graphically mark main points or words that need to be emphasised. A special kind of outline is based on an acronym, of which each letter represents a key point—helpful to both the speaker and the audience.⁴² Furthermore, the use of index cards or cue cards is regularly advised.⁴³ Advantages of such cards appear to be that speakers resist the temptation of writing down too much information, and that they are less distracting to the audience than a sheet of paper.

The rise of the autocue and teleprompter in public speaking appears to form a sharp contrast with the classical concept of *memoria*. Janner (1999, p. 39) covers this speaking technology and recommends to use it for important occasions in which precision is key. Although a speaker might save time not having to learn the speech by heart, advocates of the classical *memoria* task would probably argue that a speaker would not become familiar with the speech and would not come across convincingly and authentically. Janner (1999, p. 39) agrees that it “sounds easy, but you must know how to do it”. Therefore, Janner issues some basic guidelines, such as “do not be afraid to ad lib if you wish” in order to not “let the equipment turn you into a parrot or a zombie” (1999, p. 40).

2.3.3 Modern perspectives on *memoria*

Not all modern textbooks authors think memorisation can backfire. Some see a proper use of memory as an effective tool to become more acquainted with the speech, which is related to classical rhetoricians’ ideas on the benefits of having a trained memory. For example, Allen (1987, pp. 51–52) responds to Linkletter’s downright rejection of memorisation: “For most speakers Art’s [Linkletter] advice will be perfectly sound. However, as is the case with all rules, there are exceptions to Art’s rule, too.” Allen explains that a trained memory can help the speaker to be more familiar with the topic. He recommends to record the speech, play it back and then practise out loud.

About 19% of all authors in the corpus propose to only memorise essential parts of the presentation.⁴⁴ The introduction and conclusion of a speech seem particularly suited to be memorised. Osborn & Osborn (1997) explain why:

Because the introduction and conclusion of a speech are important in gaining audience attention and leaving a lasting impression, their

⁴² Advised by Walters (1993), Booher (2003) and Tracy (2008).

⁴³ Advised in 17.5% of the overall corpus. *English-language sub-corpus*, 27.5%: Ross (1980), Kenny (1982), Gondin et al. (1983), Allen (1987), Mandel (1987), Cook (1989), Rozakis (1995), Gurak (2000), Dowis (2000), Vasile & Mintz (2000), Tracy (2008); *Dutch-language sub-corpus*, 7.5%: Tonckens (1985), De Boer (1986), Hilgers & Vriens (2003).

⁴⁴ *English-language sub-corpus*, 27.5%: Walter & Scott (1979), Wilder (1986), Cook (1989), Rozakis (1995), Simmons (1996), Osborn & Osborn (1997), Vasile & Mintz (2000), Booher (2003), DeVito (2003), Naistadt (2004), Tracy (2008); *Dutch-language sub-corpus*, 10%: Blum (1982), De Boer (1986), Palm-Hoebé & Palm (1989), Pietersma (1999).

wording should be carefully planned. These are the only parts of most speeches that we would advise you to memorise. [p. 347]

Other speech elements that authors recommend to be memorised are transition sentences between main points in the speech. Simmons (1996, p. 100) explains that such a memorisation can work as a “safety net to avoid blanking out during a speech”, because speakers are able to pick up the storyline any time they forget information. Pietersma (1999, p. 33) recommends to learn jokes and anecdotes by heart, as their “success or failure depend on the way they are told”,⁴⁵

Three authors, Spolders (1997), Gurak (2000) and Khan-Panni (2009), even draw on *memoria* strategies from classical rhetoric (see 2.1.1), which makes them stand out in a corpus that can be characterised by its trend of rejecting memorisation. For instance, contrary to most authors, Gurak (2000) emphasises how memory can be advantageous to a speaker’s ethos:

Memory is related to ethos, because the more you know your material, the more credible and understandable you will be to your audience. Presenters who have material well organised and placed in memory will make a good impression on the audience. It is impressive to audiences to hear speakers who know the material well and do not need to turn constantly to their notes. Good use of memory is also important for you as the presenter, for it relieves you of having too many objects (such as notes, index cards, and so on) and lets you concentrate on the topic and the audience. [p. 30]

Next, Gurak (2000) proposes techniques to improve the memorisation process. She recommends to link information to familiar ideas and to use memory “based on space”:

You may wish to associate [...] with some sort of spatial memory device: perhaps the room in your house where you memorised what you were going to say or something in that room, like a clock. You can train yourself to think of that item and associate it with your presentation material. [p. 31]

This advice relates to the ‘method of *loci*’ discussed in the *Rhetorica Ad Herennium*, by Cicero and Quintilian (see Section 2.1.1). Gurak is not the only one to refer to these methods. Khan-Panni (2009, pp. 114–115) offers a detailed example of how to approach memorising a speech using the method of the memory palace.⁴⁶ What’s more, he also explains how a speaker should apply this to speechmaking:

⁴⁵ Pietersma (1999, p. 33): “Maak je gebruik van grappen of leuke anekdotes? Bedenk dat ze staan of vallen met de manier waarop ze worden verteld. Leer ze dus letterlijk uit het hoofd.”

⁴⁶ Khan-Panni (2009, p. 114–115): “Think of your home, an imagine yourself walking through your home picking out ten places. You could start at the front door or on the roof. YOU

Now, how is that relevant to speechmaking? It will help you to remember the sequence of your speech, but it will also encourage you to tidy it up. Here's how. Write out your speech. Then, in the margin, draw a line to mark the end of each section. In this way, break up your speech into 20, 30 or even 40 parts, and make up an image to illustrate each section. You may find that in some sections you have too many different little images. That will be a guide to the difficulty your listeners will have in visualising your messages, so simplify and group your images in pairs, placing them in your 10 locations. [p. 115]

Khan-Panni adds that “it is very important that you use your imagination, create outlandish images, and put in some action if possible” (2009, p. 115); this piece of advice appears to draw on the *imagines agentes* that the ancient rhetoricians discussed. Interestingly, neither Gurak nor Khan-Panni explicitly refer to the classical works. However, Khan-Panni (2009, p. 118) does provide a rare example of an explicit connection between the speaker’s memory and that of the audience:

The creation of images to help your memory could be a useful discipline in keeping your message consistent and easy for your audience to follow. As an old proverb puts it, *One hand washes another*. [p. 118]

Spolders (1997, p. 85) constructed her modern textbooks around the classical five canons of the orator, and she inevitably discusses *memoria* as the fourth. Offering a modern interpretation, Spolders dubs this canon “mental preparation”; she explains that speakers nowadays do not have to memorise a speech word by word, as we use more literal visual support. Spolders’s modern take on the *memoria* task comprises three steps: preparing the presentation text, preparing the presentation setting and preparing yourself as a speaker.

Spolders, Gurak and Khan-Panni illustrate how memory can still have a place in the tasks of a modern speaker: it is a matter of effective mental preparation, for which a trained memory can be a valuable asset. Still, such a perspective is exceptional

choose. If you have lots of rooms, each room could be a separate location. If you live in a small apartment, you might consider using each internal wall as a location. The only rule is that the locations should follow one another. Thus, front door would be followed by hallway ... then living room ... dining room ... kitchen ... stairway ... bathroom ... etc. If you are using the walls, be sure to go around the room either clockwise or anticlockwise, and do the same in every room. Visualise the locations. Now go back to the list and visualise each item, making exaggerated images and placing each air in one location. So, we have video and scissors as the first pair, and they will be place in the first location. For example, you might visualise a large sign on your front door, with a picture of a black videotape, with the brown magnetic tape spilling out and being cut by a red pair of scissors. Use colour and as much detail as you can. Make the images vivid. If the hallway is the next location, place a Mason Pearson hairbrush on a fancy barstool in the middle of the floor, so that, as you enter the hallway through the front door, you trip over the stool and just grab the brush as the stool crashes to the floor. Get the idea?”

in modern public-speaking textbooks. The orator's *memoria* task, once so prominently part of the speaker's speech preparation, has given way to other preparatory advice and to a focus on another kind of memory: that of the audience.

2.4 Amount of retention advice in modern public-speaking textbooks

From the role of the speaker's memory, this section moves to modern textbook advice on how to influence the audience's memory—the main focus of this thesis. Section 2.4.1 addresses the amount of retention advice: how many pages do the textbook authors explicitly devote to audience information retention? After that, Section 2.4.2 presents an overview of the most frequently advised rhetorical retention techniques in the English-language and Dutch-language sub-corpora.

2.4.1 Number of pages devoted to audience information retention

A little over 5% of the entire corpus comprises fragments in which a connection with retention is made (about 715 out of 13,326 pages). Considering the variety and scope of topics that are treated within most public-speaking textbooks, from preparation (invention), via style and visuals to delivery, 5% seems a sizeable portion.⁴⁷ To more precisely assess the value of this percentage and the role retention plays in public-speaking textbooks, this percentage should be compared with the attention for various other rhetorical functions and purposes in the corpus based on a similar analysis. However, the current analysis does show that establishing audience retention is regularly recognised in public-speaking textbooks as a function of giving a speech or presentation.⁴⁸

The English-language textbooks spend more explicit attention to audience retention than the Dutch-language textbooks (6.8% versus 2.1%, respectively—see table 2.1). A possible explanation for the quantitative difference in attention for retention between the two sub-corpora is that the selected Dutch-language textbooks are more concise: the sub-corpus contains less than half the number of pages than the English-language sub-corpus (3990 pages versus 9336 pages). The selected English-language textbooks are more elaborate and can therefore describe public-speaking strategies and techniques more extensively—including possible retention effects, so

⁴⁷ Van der Holst (2009) applied a comparable approach to investigate the frequency of humour advice in a corpus English- and Dutch-language modern public-speaking textbooks that largely corresponded to the corpus used in this dissertation. She found that 3% of the total number of pages were dedicated to humour—less than the percentage related to retention in this study. However, a valid comparison is difficult due to small differences in corpus construction.

⁴⁸ It should also be taken into account that the selected textbook fragments did not all explicitly elaborate on the retention function of a presentation or speech; some fragments were included because they were related to a broader retention category such as visual aids (e.g.: if the beginning of a chapter on visualisation contained a general statement on the memorable quality of visual aids, this meant that the visual techniques mentioned in the rest of the chapter were also included in the analysis).

it seems. The quantitative difference is also expressed in the number of techniques labelled in each sub-corpus: on a total of 77 types of retention techniques, 38 were found in the English-language sub-corpus only, whereas three were unique to the Dutch-language sub-corpus.⁴⁹

Table 2.1: Amount of retention-advice in the English-language and Dutch-language sub-corpora. Appendix A.3 contains an overview of the frequency of all retention techniques that were found in the corpus of public-speaking textbooks. More detailed information (e.g. the amount of advice per textbook and advice related to parts of the speech) can be found in the forms of analysis in Appendix A.8.

	English-language sub-corpus (N=40)		Dutch-language sub-corpus (N=40)	
Percentage of corpus dedicated to retention (pages related to retention / total number of pages)	6.8% (631½ / 9336 pages)		2.1% (83¼ / 3990 pages)	
Average number of pages devoted to retention per textbook	16		2	
5 textbooks with highest percentage of retention-related content	1. Detz (1984) 2. Atkinson (2004) 3. Leanne (2009) 4. Naistadt (2004) 5. Smith (1991)	17.7% 16.8% 16.6% 16.0% 15.7%	1. Claassen-Van Wirdum et al. (1992) 2. Wagenaar (1996) 3. De Boer (1986) 4. Bloch (1995) 5. Gerritsen (2008)	8.8% 6.5% 6.3% 4.5% 4.4%
5 textbooks with lowest percentage of retention-related content	1. Walter & Scott (1979) 2. Allen (1987) 3. Wilder (1986) 4. Gurak (2000) 5. Mandel (1987)	0.7% 0.5% 0.4% 0.2% 0%	1. Van der Spek (1998) 2. Jansen et al. (2004) 3. Maks & De Koning (1985) 4. Mertens (1992) 5. Kruijssen (1993)	0.4% 0.4% 0% 0% 0%
Textbooks with a distinct chapter or section on retention or memorability	Walters (1993) Simmons (1996), Osborn & Osborn (1997) Qubein (1997) Urech (1998) Dowis (2000) Leanne (2009)		Oomkes (2000)	

⁴⁹ Most of the 38 techniques limited to the English-language sub-corpus were not frequently advised. Section 2.4.2 more extensively discusses the frequency of the retention techniques.

Within the overall corpus quite a few differences between individual textbooks and authors exist, as table 2.1 points out. Of five textbooks in the English-language sub-corpus more than 15% of their contents is explicitly related to retention. This is quite a significant portion compared to the average. Seven textbooks contain a distinct chapter or section of which the title explicitly refers to retention or making a message memorable; remarkably, of these books only Leanne (2009) recurs in the list of works with the highest retention-related content. Except for Leanne (2009), the textbooks that spend most (quantitative) attention on retention do not categorise retention advice in a specific part of the book, but they contain references to retention throughout the book. This suggests that retention is connected to the wide range of topics that is usually covered in public-speaking textbooks, which is reflected in the variety of techniques that are related to retention.

2.4.2 Most frequently recommended retention techniques

A total number of 77 retention techniques were labelled, which suggests that a speaker can choose from a vast range of rhetorical techniques to influence information retention. However, not every technique is recommended equally as much. Table 2.2 presents an overview of the twenty most frequently mentioned rhetorical retention techniques in both the English-language and the Dutch-language sub-corpora. Appendix A.3 contains a complete list with all techniques, and the corresponding percentages, number of textbooks and fragments per technique. In table 2.2, the frequency of a specific rhetorical retention technique is expressed in a percentage of the total number of textbooks per sub-corpus. The total number of textbooks in which the techniques are related to retention is included in the table as well. Whenever a strategy or technique is advised in an equal number of textbooks, the number of fragments in which the technique is connected to retention determines its position in the table.⁵⁰

⁵⁰ For example, the techniques ‘circle technique’ and ‘quotation’ are both included in 25% of the English-language sub-corpus; however, the circle technique is mentioned in thirteen fragments, whereas the quotation recurs in twelve fragments. Therefore, the circle technique is listed above the quotation.

Table 2.2: The most frequently advised retention techniques in the corpus of public-speaking textbooks (N= 80). For each technique, the percentage and number of textbooks per sub-corpus is shown.

English-language textbooks 1980–2009 (N=40)				Dutch-language textbooks 1980–2009 (N=40)		
#	Technique	%	Text- books	Technique	%	Text- books
1	Visual aids	60	24	Visual aids	50	20
2	Anecdote	52.5	21	Repetition	40	16
3	Summary	52.5	21	Summary	32.5	13
4	Repetition	52.5	21	Systematic order	25	10
5	Imagery	45	18	<i>Partitio</i> (structure overview)	17.5	7
6	Chunking	40	16	Circle technique	17.5	7
7	Humour	35	14	Clear message	12.5	5
8	Rhyme (alliteration & assonance)	35	14	Chunking	10	4
9	Metaphor	32.5	13	Comprehensible language	10	4
10	One-liner / slogan / soundbite	32.5	13	Final statement (final sentence)	10	4
11	Connecting to the audience	30	12	Metaphor	10	4
12	Final statement (final sentence)	30	12	Example	7.5	3
13	Circle technique	25	10	Quotation	7.5	3
14	Quotation	25	10	List of three	7.5	3
15	Example	22.5	9	Imagery	7.5	3
16	Audience participation	22.5	9	<i>Propositio</i>	7.5	3
17	Rhetorical question	20	8	Connecting to the audience	5	2
18	Call to action	20	8	Anecdote	5	2
19	Parallelism	20	8	Audience participation	5	2
20	List of three	17.5	7	Call to action	5	2

The overview of frequently advised retention techniques points to three main trends in the overall corpus of public-speaking textbooks:

1. Visualisation is a key retention strategy. ‘Visual aids’, the category that includes literal visual support techniques such as images, graphs, or an object/prop, are most frequently recommended in both of the sub-corpora. A few other techniques mentioned imply the stimulation of mental visualisation (e.g. ‘imagery’, ‘metaphor’, ‘example’), which can be related to the principle of elaboration as well as to visualisation.
2. Organisation techniques related to structuring a presentation are very frequently advised in the overall corpus, such as the techniques ‘summary’, ‘chunking’, and ‘systematic order’.
3. The conclusion is seen as the most important part of the speech to influence retention. Fifteen of the techniques in table 2.2 are related to the concluding part of a presentation, the most frequent of which are the ‘summary’ (in 42.5% of overall corpus), ‘final statement’ (20%) and the ‘circle technique’ (almost 19%).⁵¹ In contrast: only four retention techniques were explicitly connected to the introduction, of which the *partitio* most often (10% of the corpus).

Besides general trends in the overall corpus, the overview in table 2.2 also indicates differences between the two sub-corpora. Some of these may be related to the fact that English-language textbooks spend more pages on retention and distinguish a larger number of retention techniques than the Dutch-language works (see 2.4.1). This quantitative difference accounts for the relatively low frequencies of retention techniques in the Dutch-language corpus compared to their counterparts in the English-language textbooks (see table 2.2, more precisely from the ‘summary’ downward to the ‘call to action’ in the Dutch-language sub-corpus). The most striking differences are the following:

- The technique ‘anecdote’ is considered one of the most important retention techniques in the English-language sub-corpus: it is advised just over half the number of textbooks (twenty-one, 52.5%). In contrast, only two Dutch-language authors connect it to retention (5%). Such a discrepancy between the sub-corpora exists for the technique ‘imagery’ as well (English-language corpus: 45%, Dutch-language corpus: 7.5%).
- The techniques ‘one-liner/slogan/soundbite’ and ‘parallelism’ are among the twenty most frequently advised retention techniques in the English-language sub-corpus, but they are not recommended by any author in the Dutch-language sub-corpus at all (see Appendix A.3). ‘Humour’ and ‘rhetorical question’ are

⁵¹ Other retention techniques that are explicitly related to the conclusion: quotation, call to action, rhetorical question, anecdote, repetition, humour, visual aids (object), list of three, imagery, one-liner, rhyme, example. See the forms of analysis in Appendix A.8 for the techniques connected to parts of the speech.

considered to be quite important retention techniques in the English-language sub-corpus, but are only mentioned in a few Dutch-language textbooks (the rhetorical question in two textbooks, humour only in one—Witt (2009)—which has been translated from English).

- To the contrary, the techniques ‘systematic order’ and *partitio* (structure overview in the introduction) are quite popular among the Dutch-language authors, but are not among the twenty most frequently advised techniques in the English-language sub-corpus. The same goes for the techniques ‘clear message’, ‘comprehensible language’ and *propositio*.

To provide more context and concrete examples, Section 2.5 expounds on each of the twenty-five retention techniques listed in table 2.2.

2.5 Description of twenty-five most frequently recommended retention techniques

Most of the labels of the techniques presented in Section 2.4.2 do not immediately reveal the content of the corresponding retention advice in the textbooks. Do authors agree on how these techniques should be deployed in a presentation or speech? To what extent do the descriptions and definitions of rhetorical techniques in various textbooks correspond? What particular aspects of the techniques make them effective regarding the audience’s information retention, according to the textbook authors?

In this section, the twenty-five most frequently advised retention techniques are described more elaborately. The descriptions of retention techniques are structured as follows. All descriptions start with an overview of the number of textbooks in which the technique is recommended, both in the total corpus and in the English-language and Dutch-language sub-corpora. Afterwards, the main characteristics of the technique and some possible points for discussion are presented, illustrated with examples from the textbooks (see Appendix A.4 for the collected fragments about a specific retention technique, in this case the ‘repetition’, which give an impression of all advice about a particular retention technique). Whenever applicable, warnings about how the technique might hinder information retention (so-called *vitia*) are also discussed.⁵² The order in which the techniques is presented is based on the frequency of techniques in the English-language sub-corpus, starting with the most frequently advised technique (Sections 2.5.1–2.5.20); after that, techniques are discussed that have a more prominent position as a retention technique in the Dutch-language sub-corpus than they have in the English-language sub-corpus (Sections 2.5.21–2.5.25).

2.5.1 Visual aids

Using visual aids is the most important retention strategy mentioned in the English-language and Dutch-language sub-corpora. In 55% of the total corpus, visual aids are

⁵² Section 2.6 addresses the *vitia* that could not be directly related to one of the advised retention techniques.

somehow connected to audience information retention (English-language sub-corpus: twenty-four textbooks, Dutch-language sub-corpus: twenty textbooks).⁵³

The category ‘visual aids’ contains retention advice on various levels of detail. Many textbooks contain a specific chapter or section that discusses a variety of visual aids that a speaker can use. These chapters usually contain an introduction in which the general concept of ‘visual aids’ is connected to retention, followed by a discussion of relevant visual techniques. However, these specific visual techniques are sometimes explicitly linked to retention as well. In a few cases, no general statement about the link between visual aids and retention is made, but only a particular visual technique is related to retention.

The approach of this section is as follows. First, it focuses on the textbook statements about the general relationship between visual aids and retention. Afterwards, it discusses examples of specific visual aids or techniques related to retention, divided into three categories: (1) presentation media, (2) graphics and video and (3) object and demonstration. Finally, it discusses warnings against the ineffective use of visual aids, which form the most frequently occurring category of warnings (*vitia*) in the textbook corpus.

Visual aids as a general retention strategy

42.5% of the textbooks contain a remark or paragraph in which the use of visual aids in general is linked to retention (nineteen English-language textbooks, fifteen Dutch-language textbooks).⁵⁴ These references vary from a brief remark that visual aids “help your audience remember” (Urech, 1998, p. 58) via authors who emphasise that retention is a function of visual aids (Ehninger et al., 1980) to more extensive explanations of the way in which visuals can contribute to information retention and

⁵³ *English-language sub-corpus*: Ehninger et al. (1980), Ross (1980), Linkletter (1980), Wilson & Arnold (1983), Lucas (1989), Smith (1991), Walters (1993), Rozakis (1995), Qubein (1997), Gaulke (1997), Osborn & Osborn (1997), Urech (1998), Janner (1999), Dowis (2000), Gurak (2000), Vasile & Mintz (2000), Verderber (2000), Laskowski (2001), McConnon (2002), Booher (2003), DeVito (2003), Anholt (2006), Tracy (2008), Khan-Panni (2009); *Dutch-language sub-corpus*: Tonckens (1985), De Boer (1986), Van Eijk (1987), Luijk (1987), Morse (1987), Palm-Hoebé & Palm (1989), Bloch & Tholen (1991), Eckhardt & IJzermans (1994), Wagenaar (1996), Spolders (1997), Angenent & Van Vilsteren (1998), Pietersma (1999), Braas (2001), Cornelis (2002), Janssen et al. (2002), Hilgers & Vriens (2003), Wiertzema & Jansen (2004), Hertz (2005), Piët (2005), Gerritsen (2008).

⁵⁴ *English-language sub-corpus*: Ehninger et al. (1980), Linkletter (1980), Wilson & Arnold (1983), Lucas (1989), Smith (1991), Walters (1993), Rozakis (1995), Gaulke (1997), Osborn & Osborn (1997), Urech (1998), Janner (1999), Dowis (2000), Gurak (2000), Vasile & Mintz (2000), Verderber (2000), McConnon (2002), Booher (2003), DeVito (2003), Tracy (2008); *Dutch-language sub-corpus*: Tonckens (1985), De Boer (1986), Luijk (1987), Morse (1987), Palm-Hoebé & Palm (1989), Eckhardt & IJzermans (1994), Wagenaar (1996), Spolders (1997), Pietersma (1999), Janssen et al. (2002), Hilgers & Vriens (2003), Wiertzema & Jansen (2004), Hertz (2005), Piët (2005), Gerritsen (2008). The passage in Hilgers & Vriens appears to be an exact copy of Pietersma (1999).

the role that visual stimuli play in the process of storing information, e.g. via an auditive and visual channel (Smith, 1991; Vasile & Mintz, 2000; McConnon, 2002; Booher, 2003; Wiertzema & Jansen, 2004; Hertz, 2005).⁵⁵ Lucas (1989) and Rozakis (1995) refer to the famous adage “a picture is worth a thousand words” to back up their connection of visual aids to retention.

Nine authors support these claims with statistics and/or references to research.⁵⁶ Interestingly, the presented statistics differ between the various textbooks. Morse (1987, p. 55) claims that we “normally remember only 10% of what we hear”, but that more than 50% sticks in memory when the “right visual aids” are used.⁵⁷ Gaulke (1997, p. 85) uses varying statistics regarding the percentage of visual information that is retained, referring to David Peoples from *Presentation's Plus* who states that “that people gain 75 percent of what they know visually” and to an unidentified study which states that “about 85 percent of the information stored in the brain is received visually”. Booher (2003) explicitly backs up the numbers with academic sources, although the exact references could not be located in the textbook:

At the University of Wisconsin, researchers determined that retention improves up to 200 percent when visual aids are used in teaching vocabulary. Studies at Harvard and Columbia revealed that presentations with visuals improve student retention by 14 to 38 percent over presentations without visuals. Studies at the University of Pennsylvania's Wharton School of Business demonstrated that the time needed to make a point could be reduced by up to 40 percent when visuals accompany an oral presentation. [pp. 115–116]

Smith (1991) is more precise in breaking down the percentages of what people remember when information is offered via various sensory stimuli—he even offers a table with retention percentages after three hours and three days:

We learn through our senses, using each one to a varying degree. Taste accounts for only one percent, and touch only one-and-one half percent. Smell is three-and-one-half percent, and hearing is a surprisingly low eleven percent. The remaining eighty-three percent of the data we gather is from sight! Learning is largely a visual phenomenon. In addition, some interesting statistics have been generated on retention, as shown in the table below.

⁵⁵ Of these exposes, only Hertz (2005) refers to a more specific source: studies by Mayer on multimedia use.

⁵⁶ Morse (1987), Smith (1991), Eckhardt & IJzermans (1994), Gaulke (1997), Pietersma (1999), Verderber (2000), Booher (2003), Hilgers & Vriens (2003), Tracy (2008).

⁵⁷ Morse (1987, p. 55): “Normaliter onthouden we maar zo'n 10% van wat we horen, maar bij gebruik van de juiste visuele hulpmiddelen blijft meer dan 50% in het geheugen hangen.”

Retention After ...		
	3 hours	3 days
Tell Only	70%	10%
Show Only	72%	20%
Show and Tell	85%	65%

[p. 58]

Pietersma (1999, p. 14) and Hilgers & Vriens (2003, p. 40) also refer to enhanced retention by visual aids and claim that a difference in retention effect exists between presentations with and without visual aids, particularly on a longer term:

Research shows that listeners can reproduce about 85% of a story with [visual] illustrations directly after the presentation. For a story without illustrations, that is about 75%. When tested after a longer period of time, the difference increases: 65% versus 10%.⁵⁸

It is well possible that these statistics vary due to developments in research over time and different interpretations of (academic) sources. Since there is hardly a detailed reference to be found in the textbooks, it is not easy to establish an overview of possible developments in studies that the textbook authors may have consulted (see Section 2.7, which is about reference use in the textbooks).

Presentation media

The visual aids category ‘presentation media’ contains advice about tools that enable visual support, such as an overhead projector and a slide show designed using presentation software or a flip-over and the ‘good-old’ blackboard. These means of visual support are linked to retention in thirty textbooks (37.5% of the total corpus; fourteen English-language textbooks and sixteen Dutch-language textbooks).⁵⁹ It is one of the few retention techniques or categories that are more frequently advised in the Dutch-language sub-corpus.

The presentation media are usually not directly linked to retention in the textbooks; more often, they are listed as optional visual aids after a more general remark about visuals as a retention strategy. Still, some presentation media are explicitly linked to retention. This section discusses examples of such explicit links,

⁵⁸ Pietersma (1999, p. 14) and Hilgers & Vriens (2003, p. 40): “Uit onderzoek blijkt dat luisteraars vlak na de voordracht een verhaal met illustraties voor zo'n 85% kunnen reproduceren. Bij een verhaal zonder illustraties is dat 75%. Bij een toets na langere tijd loopt dat verschil op tot 65% tegen 10%”.

⁵⁹ *English-language sub-corpus*: Wilson & Arnold (1983), Lucas (1989), Smith (1991), Rozakis (1995), Osborn & Osborn (1997), Verderber (2000), Gaulke (1997), Urech (1998), Janner (1999), Gurak (2000), Vasile & Mintz (2000), McConnon (2002), Booher (2003), Anholt (2006); *Dutch-language sub-corpus*: Tonckens (1985), Luijk (1987), Morse (1987), Van Eijk (1987), Tilanus (1988), Palm-Hoebé & Palm (1989), Eckhardt & IJzermans (1994), Wagenaar (1996), Braas (2001), Cornelis (2002), Hilgers & Vriens (2003), Wiertzema & Jansen (2004), Piët (2005), Steehouder et al. (2006), Van der Horst (2007), Gerritsen (2008).

and includes two examples of advice in which presentation media are connected to retention only in combination with another (structure-enhancing) technique.

The blackboard or whiteboard is considered to be a useful visual aid by quite a few authors. However, Osborn and Osborn (1997) are the only authors who explicitly connect this medium to retention—more specifically, the act of writing down important terms on a board:

A chalkboard or plastic marker board (used with broad-tipped markers) is a presentation medium available in almost every corporate conference room or classroom. These boards work well when you want to emphasise certain words or ideas, or clear up something the audience doesn't understand by creating a spontaneous presentation aid. Writing terms or names on the board calls the audience's attention to their importance and helps your listeners remember them. [p. 293]

Van Eijk (1987, p. 65) connects the retention-enhancing function of visual aids particularly to another presentation medium that enables writing, the flip-over, and also to a more modern tool for visual support than the blackboard: the overhead projector. Wagenaar (1996, p. 19) also explicitly refers to the overhead projector when he states that “with projection, you enable the visual memory as an extra aid”. However, he makes clear that projection is only of added value when “you show something that could not be easily said” (p. 19).⁶⁰

From the overhead projector, the textbooks move to “computer-assisted media”: electronic slides that are shown on a projection screen. Nowadays this type of visual support is inextricably linked with presentations, but within the three decades that the corpus of public-speaking textbooks spans its application clearly emerges in the final few years of the twentieth century. The first time that the nowadays renowned presentation software is mentioned in the English-language sub-corpus is in 1997 (by Osborn & Osborn); in the Dutch-language corpus it is first mentioned in 1999 (Pietersma).⁶¹

⁶⁰ Wagenaar (1996, p. 19): “De belangrijkste regel voor het gebruik van projectie is dat je iets laat zien wat niet net zo gemakkelijk gezegd had kunnen worden. [...] Met behulp van projectie schakel je het visuele geheugen als extra hulpmiddel in.”

⁶¹ Of all the retention techniques presented, the category of ‘presentation media’ perhaps best reflects the fact that the corpus contains public-speaking textbooks across three decades (1980–2009). Osborn’s and Osborn’s description of “computer-assisted presentation media” (1997, p. 297) offers an interesting insight into the early adaptations of this type of visual aids in presentations: “To make presentation aids on a computer you will need access to spreadsheet, word processing, graphics, and/or presentation software such as ClarisWorks, PowerPoint, Persuasion, or Harvard Graphics. The prototypes for many of the illustrations of presentation aids in this chapter were originally prepared using ClarisWorks and a Macintosh Performa computer. [...] To make a computer-assisted presentation you need specialised equipment in addition to the computer and software necessary to prepare the aids. You may need a CD-ROM

Three Dutch-language authors explicitly link the use of electronic slides (also referred to as ‘sheets’ in Dutch) or presentation software to retention. Cornelis (2002, p. 94) believes that the strength of slides is that they “make it possible to present complex information visually”; she adds that a speaker can use them to emphasise important information and “offer memory aids”.⁶² The two other Dutch-language authors view the use of slides as an additional retention tool in combination with a structural or organisational technique. Gerritsen (2008) connects the use of slides to the *docilem* technique of the *partitio* (see Section 2.5.23) to enhance retention:

The second element of the *docilem* is presenting the outline; this entails that you tell how your presentation is structured. Preferably use a slide to do this, because the outline will better stick to your audience with visual support. [p. 38]⁶³

Wiertzema and Jansen (2004) seem to mirror this advice when they apply it to the conclusion and link it to the summary of the talk (see Section 2.5.3 for more information on the summary):

The summary does not only provide them [the audience] with the repetition so desperately needed, but if you summarise with a slide, that repetition is also presented in their favourite way [visually]. Because of this, much more will ‘stick’. [p. 73]⁶⁴

Graphics and video

The category ‘graphics and video’ comprises all advised types of visual support that are projected on a screen or overhead projector but that do not involve a physical object itself or the media/software needed to show visuals, e.g. a picture, graph, diagram, drawing, map, handout or video clip. Twenty-three textbooks present one of these visual aids in connection with retention (about 29% of the corpus; fourteen

drive, an audioboard, and a color monitor for use in small group settings. You will need additional special projection equipment for use with large groups. The standard large group projection equipment includes LCD (liquid crystal display) projection panels that connect to the output port on a computer and are then sent through an overhead projector to a screen“ [p. 297-298]

⁶² Cornelis (2002, p. 94): “De sterke kant van sheets is dat ze het mogelijk maken complexe informatie op visuele wijze te presenteren. Je kunt er accenten mee leggen en geheugensteunen bieden.”

⁶³ Gerritsen (2008, p. 38): “Het tweede element van het *docilem* is de presentatie van de opzet, dit houdt in dat je vertelt hoe je presentatie is opgebouwd. Gebruik hierbij bij voorkeur een dia, want met visuele ondersteuning blijft de opzet beter bij je publiek hangen.”

⁶⁴ Wiertzema & Jansen (2004, p. 73): “De samenvatting verschaft ze niet alleen de broodnodige herhaling, maar als u samenvat met een sheet, komt die herhaling ook nog eens op hun favoriete wijze. Hierdoor blijft er veel meer ‘hangen’.”

English-language and nine Dutch-language textbooks).⁶⁵ Most authors list graphics, audio or video among the possible visual aids a speaker can choose from, after they have made a general statement about the positive effect that visual aids can have on audience retention. Some types of graphics, such as graphs and illustrations, are specifically related to retention.

Ehninger et al. (1980) connect a variety of graphics to retention:

Visual research has demonstrated that bar graphs, especially, make statistical information more accessible to an audience, that simple (as opposed to complicated) drawings enhance recall, and that charts and even “human interest” visuals (especially photographs) help an audience retain data. [p. 261]

Other authors focus more on a single type of graphics. Braas (2001, p. 53), for example, states that a listener will “remember information much better” if “numbers are visually presented in a graph.” It provides the listeners with “some time to take in the details”.⁶⁶

The use of illustrations is also explicitly connected to retention. Janssen et al. (2002, p. 355) argue that “functional illustrations do not only make the presentation more attractive, but also easier to remember.”⁶⁷ Angenent and Van Vilsteren (1998) advise a cartoon, a specific kind of illustration, to summarise key points; this will lead to a better recall than a verbal conclusion, they claim.⁶⁸ De Boer (1986) relates the use of colours in illustrations to retention, albeit indirectly via an increase of attention:

The use of colours in communication can make figures more attractive, but in itself it does not increase the chance that the we learn more.

⁶⁵ *English-language sub-corpus*: Ehninger et al. (1980), Wilson & Arnold (1983), Lucas (1989), Rozakis (1995), Gaulke (1997), Osborn & Osborn (1997), Urech (1998), Janner (1999), Vasile & Mintz (2000), Verderber (2000), McConnon (2002), DeVito (2003), Booher (2003), Anholt (2006), Tracy (2008); *Dutch-language sub-corpus*: De Boer (1986), Palm-Hoebé & Palm (1989), Eckhardt & IJzermans (1994), Spolders (1997), Angenent & Van Vilsteren (1998), Pietersma (1999), Janssen et al. (2002), Hilgers & Vriens (2003), Wiertzema & Jansen (2004).

⁶⁶ Braas (2001, p. 53): “Door *getallen* visueel te presenteren in een grafiek, heeft de luisteraar even de tijd om de details in zich op te nemen. Hij of zij onthoudt de informatie dan veel beter.”

⁶⁷ Janssen et al. (2002, p. 355): “Functionele illustraties maken de presentatie niet alleen aantrekkelijker, maar ook beter te onthouden.”

⁶⁸ Interestingly, Wagenaar (1996, p. 19) warns that using a cartoon (among other visuals) can be counterproductive (also see the subsection ‘Warnings: how not to use visuals’): “Don’t use the visual memory for something that is not related to the core of the message, such as a cartoon, a beautifully coloured image with your own name and institution, a detailed table with research results.” This warning can be related to Janssen et al.’s point that an illustration needs to be functional (2002, p. 355).

Indirectly, the ability to learn is influenced. Colours draw more attention than black and white; because of this, we spend more time looking at coloured pictures than we do looking at black and white pictures. And that opens up the possibility that we remember more. [p. 152]⁶⁹

Object and demonstration

To use an object (prop) or to give a demonstration is recommended in twenty textbooks (25% of the total corpus; seventeen English-language textbooks and three Dutch-language textbooks).⁷⁰ The techniques ‘object’ and ‘demonstration’ are more extensively connected to retention in the English-language textbook than in the Dutch-language textbooks. Some English-language authors explicitly link these visual strategies to retention, while Dutch-language authors usually only list the strategies as one of several possibilities for using visuals.

Three authors specifically describe a connection between the use of an object and retention’.⁷¹ While Linkletter (1980) talks about an “indelible impression of the major points”, Gaulke (1997, p. 46) mentions that the use of a prop can “create the lasting effect”. She lists the use of an object as a technique that can increase attention, which might lead to retention. Note that it seems to be the combination of the use of a prop and a powerful question that could lead to “an idea that sticks” in the following quotation:

Bring out a prop and watch your audience's eyes light up. At the beginning of a speech about the benefits of chemical sprays, a Dow Chemical executive held out a big shiny red apple and said, "How would you like to have the worm back in your apple?" . . . long pause . . . His audience was motionless—captivated. The attention level was 150 percent.

That's one speech I'll always remember. The Dow executive really made an impression. He left me with a thought that I'll never forget. That's what I call "making a dent." Not only was I paying attention for the moment, but that moment was so meaningful that it became permanent. That's the ultimate mission of a presenter: to plant

⁶⁹ De Boer (1986, p. 152): “Het gebruik van kleuren bij de communicatie kan figuren aantrekkelijker maken, maar vergroot op zichzelf nog niet de kans dat we er meer van leren. Indirect vindt beïnvloeding van het leren wel plaats. Kleur trekt meer aandacht dan zwart/wit: daardoor kijken we langer naar gekleurde afbeeldingen dan naar zwart/ witte. En daardoor bestaat de kans dat we er meer van onthouden.”

⁷⁰ *English-language sub-corpus*: Linkletter (1980), Ross (1980), Wilson & Arnold (1983), Lucas (1989), Smith (1991), Rozakis (1995), Gaulke (1997), Osborn & Osborn (1997), Qubein (1997), Urech (1998), Verderber (2000), Vasile & Mintz (2000), Laskowski (2001), Booher (2003), DeVito (2003), Anholt (2006), Khan-Panni (2009); *Dutch-language sub-corpus*: Morse (1987), Spolders (1997), Janssen et al. (2002).

⁷¹ Linkletter (1980), Gaulke (1997) and Laskowski (2001).

an idea that sticks. This speaker used both a prop and a powerful question to create the lasting effect. [p. 46]

Laskowski (2001) also discusses the retentive quality of the prop, but specifically links it to the conclusion (final part) of a speech:

Although your conclusion is short, its significance is important. This is your last chance to drive your message home and leave a lasting impression. In some instances I combine my closing remarks or statements with a theatrical closing, one that involves props or even a costume. When I do this, each time an audience member picks up that object they are reminded of my presentation. [p. 187]

Most authors discuss positive effects of props. “Nothing beats being able to point to exactly what you are talking about”, according to Osborn and Osborn (1997, p. 279). DeVito (2003, p. 80) agrees: “the best presentation aid is the object itself”. Smith (1991, p. 62) even provides four reasons why: “Added ‘reality’. High impact value. Versatility. Props and products are readily available.” Should the actual object be unavailable or impractical, the speaker can consider using a model; Rozakis (1995) explains why and how:

Models can be a great way to explain the structure, function, and design of something. They are especially useful when the original is too big, too difficult, or—as in the case of a DNA molecule, for instance—simply impossible to pass around. Be sure that the model is sturdy enough to withstand handling. If not, hold it up for display instead. [p. 209]

So, it seems that no harm can be done when using a prop. However, DeVito (2003, p. 80) adds that his statement is “a general rule (to which there are many exceptions)”. Osborn & Osborn (1997) and Verderber (2000) both set two important conditions for the use of props: (1) the speaker should be able to carry the object around and (2) listeners in the back of the room should be able to clearly see it. Urech (1998, p. 66) adds that the object should “illustrate your message”. So, if used wisely and under the proper conditions, an object can enhance audience retention.

In a demonstration, an object or several props are usually more extensively involved. Ross (1980) explains what a demonstration is and how it can be linked to retention:

The purpose of a demonstration is to show how a skill, a procedure, a process, or a device is used so that the audience will find it easier to learn the skill or acquire the knowledge. A demonstration combines *showing with telling*. Many grade schools have sessions called “show and tell”. These are essentially demonstrations and are excellent early speech-training exercises if conducted by teachers who have some basic speech experience. The value of demonstration is that the

audience can learn by seeing what is demonstrated. Demonstration helps speakers remember their material; it appeals to several senses of the listener; it reinforces the message; it saves time; and finally, it has dramatic appeal and is more concrete than just telling. [p. 201]

The value of a demonstration seems to increase when the audience can take part (an apparent combination of the technique object and audience participation—see Section 2.5.16). Qubein (1997) recounts how a demonstration that involved the audience to illustrate a key point in the presentation made a lasting impact:

Perhaps the most effective method of assisting an audience in understanding your image is to make them participants in its application. Once a speaker was cautioning his audience against compromising its stand against nudity and violence in movies. “Many times,” he said, “it’s tempting to say, ‘This movie is all right; it only has one or two questionable scenes in it.’” To dramatize his point, he held up a glass of clear water. “This water,” he said, “was taken from a pure mountain spring.” He took a drink to demonstrate its purity. Then he held up another glass, this one filled with a dirty-looking liquid. “This water,” he said, “was taken from a puddle in a pig sty.” His listeners crinkled their noses. Then the speaker used an eye dropper to extract some of the filthy water from its glass. He put two drops into the glass of clean water and stirred it until there was no visible trace of the filth. “Now,” he said, passing the glass among his audience, “who would like a drink from this glass?” It was a point the audience would not forget. The speaker had drawn his listeners into the experience. The application was unmistakably clear. [p. 217-218]

An object is not necessarily part of a demonstration. Five textbooks emphasise that people can be used to demonstrate an idea, process or principle.⁷² Such demonstrations could involve members of the audience or ‘accomplices’ of the speaker (who had helped to prepare the demonstration, cf. Osborn & Osborn, 1997), and it could also be the speaker himself or herself. Verderber (2000) describes how speakers can ‘become’ visual aids and when that might be effective:

On occasion, you can become your own best visual aid. What you do and how you look may well reinforce or supplement what you say. Through descriptive gestures, you can show the size of a soccer ball or the height of a tennis net; through your posture and movement, you can show the motions involved in swimming the butterfly stroke or administering artificial respiration; through your own attire, you can illustrate the native dress of a foreign country, the necessary equipment for a cave explorer, or the uniform of a firefighter. In every one of these

⁷² Lucas (1989), Osborn & Osborn (1997), Verderber (2000), Vasile & Mintz (2000) and DeVito (2003).

examples, what you do and what you look like help you get your point across. [p. 157]

Warnings: ineffective use of visual aids

As visual aids are the most frequently advised retention technique, it is perhaps not surprising that the most frequent category of warnings (*vitia*) comprises various forms of ineffective use of visual aids. The five most important warnings are discussed in this section.

Distraction. The most important disadvantage of using visual aids is that they can divert attention (22.5% of the overall corpus; English-language sub-corpus: 32.5%, Dutch-language sub-corpus: 12.5%).⁷³ Distraction appears to go hand in hand with irrelevance: a visual that is irrelevant is likely to distract the audience from the main message. Van der Meiden (1991, p. 120) says that it is “a fairy tale that visual presentation will stick longer in the audience’s mind than oral presentation”.⁷⁴ According to him, visuals can “sometimes seriously distract from the storyline”. Wagenaar (1996, p. 19) states that because the visual memory is so powerful, a speaker should select visual aids carefully:

Don’t use the visual memory for something that is not related to the core of the message, such as a cartoon, a beautifully coloured image with your own name and institution, a detailed table with research results. If you really want your audience to remember your name and institution, then show it at the end of the talk, so that there is no risk they will distract from the actual message. [p. 19]⁷⁵

Two visual aids that seems to be particularly prone to distraction are the prop and the handout. Rozakis (1995) meticulously explains the way to use a prop, so as to avoid the audience being distracted:

Props such as models and objects can be tricky to use. Be sure to display the object long enough for everyone to get a good look. Lift the object into the air, hold it steady for a few moments, and then move it slowly

⁷³ *English-language sub-corpus*: Ehninger et al. (1980), Allen (1987), Lucas (1989), Walters (1993), Rozakis (1995), Gaulke (1997), Osborn & Osborn (1997), Janner (1999), Dowis (2000), Vasile & Mintz (2000), Verderber (2000), Booher (2003), Anholt (2006); *Dutch-language corpus*: Van der Meiden (1991), Eckhardt & IJzermans (1994), Wagenaar (1996), Janssen e.a. (2002), Wiertzema & Jansen (2004).

⁷⁴ Van der Meiden (1991, p. 120): “Het is een sprookje dat onder alle omstandigheden de visuele presentatie beter in het geheugen van de toehoorder blijft hangen dan de mondelinge. Visuele presentatie kan, omgekeerd, soms ernstig afleiden van de gang van een betoog.”

⁷⁵ Wagenaar (1996, p. 19): “Gebruik het visuele geheugen niet voor iets wat met de kern weinig te maken heeft, zoals 'een cartoon, een prachtig gekleurde plaat met je eigen naam en instituut, een gedetailleerde tabel met onderzoeksresultaten. Als je per se wilt dat het publiek je naam en instituut onthoudt, vertoon die dan aan het einde, zodat er geen risico is dat dit afleidt van de eigenlijke boodschap.”

so that everyone in the audience has a chance to see it. Don't talk while people are looking at the object. This will ensure that people pay full attention to what you're saying. They also won't feel like they're missing something if they are studying the object and don't hear you. If the object isn't fragile or valuable, pass it around *after* the speech. This way, it won't distract from what you are saying. [p. 213]

Morse (1987) mentions the risk of distraction by props as well, while Verderber (2000) explicitly agrees with the advice to avoid passing round an object. Lucas (1989) recommends to cover or hide the object, only to reveal it or bring it on stage once it is needed in the presentation.

Osborn and Osborn (1997) agree with the possibility that objects cause distraction. They give a similar warning about handouts and explain how a speaker should use them to avoid attention loss:

There is one serious drawback to handouts—they can distract listeners from what you are saying. If you distribute a handout before your speech, it will compete with you for attention. The audience may decide to read the handout instead of listening to your speech. Therefore, distribute handouts before your speech *only* when it is absolutely necessary for listeners to refer to them as you speak and *only* when you are confident of your ability to command attention. Never distribute handouts during your speech: this is a sure-fire way to divert, confuse, and lose listeners. [p. 293]

Dominance. 12.5% of the authors in the overall corpus warns against using visuals that are too dominant (English-language sub-corpus: 17.5%. Dutch-language sub-corpus: 7.5%).⁷⁶ Janner (1999) formulates this principle as follows:

You are making a speech, illustrated by slides, not putting on a slide show, illustrated by speech. [p. 72]

Various authors refer to the meaning of the word 'aid' in the term 'visual aids', such as Eckhardt & IJzermans (1994, p. 40) who remind the reader that "it is about 'aiding' and that the means should never become an end or show by itself".⁷⁷

Gerritsen (2008) explains that all the design possibilities of presentation software such as PowerPoint can also lead to 'visual dominance'; speakers might spend much time and effort into creating an overload of visually attractive slides, which might have the following consequence:

⁷⁶ *English-language sub-corpus*: Gaulke (1997), Osborn & Osborn (1997), Janner (1999), Dowis (2000), Vasile & Mintz (2000), Verderber (2000), Booher (2003); *Dutch-language sub-corpus*: Eckhardt & IJzermans (1994), Piët (2005), Gerritsen (2008).

⁷⁷ Eckhardt & IJzermans (1994, p. 40): "Bij het gebruik van de middelen moet de spreker vooral niet vergeten dat het om 'hulp' gaat en dat het middel nooit doel of show op zich mag worden! Het gaat om ondersteuning, om het vergroten van de herinneringswaarde."

[...] nobody really understands and remembers your presentation, as it is quite difficult to quickly read and comprehend information on slides—especially if you are trying to follow the speaker as well. [p. 43]⁷⁸

Loss of audience contact. Another pitfall of using visual aids is the loss of contact between the speaker and the audience (mentioned in about 11% of the overall corpus, all English-language textbooks).⁷⁹ This loss of contact can be caused by the audience being distracted by the visuals, but most of the warnings in this category focus on the speaker's role, such as Verderber (2000):

Talk to your audience, not to the visual aid.

You may need to look at the visual aid occasionally, but it is important to maintain eye contact with your audience as much as possible—in part so that you can gauge how they are reacting to your visual material. When speakers become too engrossed in their visual aids, looking at them instead of the audience, they tend to lose contact with the audience entirely. [p. 174]

Janner (1999, p. 74) adds: “even if you are reading out what is on the screen, do not turn your back on your audience.”

Illegibility. Visual aids that are illegible obviously cannot aid retention. About 11% of the textbooks in the overall corpus mention problems with visibility or legibility as bad presentation practice (all English-language textbooks).⁸⁰

The warnings come in two flavours. First of all, the speaker can block visual aids by choosing an ineffective position. Anholt (2006, p. 106) for example brings to mind that it is “frustrating for an audience when the speaker stands in front of the board and obscures the information.” Secondly, visuals can be ineffectively designed, which makes them hard to read. Factors which play a part in legibility are, among others, the chosen font and type size (cf. Gaulke, 1997; Verderber, 2000). Too crowded slides can also pose legibility problems. Gaulke (1997, p. 86) labels the “tiny-cluttered-numbers syndrome” as the “number-1 problem with visual aids.” She cites an “unknown (but very wise)” author, who said: “A picture is worth a thousand words, but a picture of a thousand words ain’t worth much” (p. 87). Osborn & Osborn (1997)

⁷⁸ Gerritsen (2008, p. 43): “Een bijkomend nadeel is dat niemand je presentatie echt begrijpt en onthoudt. Het is namelijk vrij lastig de informatie op dia’s snel te lezen en te begrijpen, zeker als je ook nog probeert de spreker zelf te volgen.”

⁷⁹ *English-language sub-corpus*: Lucas (1989), Rozakis (1995), Gaulke (1997), Osborn & Osborn (1997), Janner (1999), Vasile & Mintz (2000), Verderber (2000), Booher (2003), Anholt (2006).

⁸⁰ *English-language sub-corpus*: Lucas (1989), Rozakis (1995), Gaulke (1997), Osborn & Osborn (1997), Dowis (2000), Vasile & Mintz (2000), Verderber (2000), Booher (2003), Anholt (2006).

share an example to underline the possible damaging effect of using illegible visuals on a speaker's ethos:

One of our students tried to illustrate a speech on baseball by showing the audience pictures from a book. He marked the pages that contained pictures he wanted to show with paper clips, so that he could open directly to them. Unfortunately, the order of pictures in the book did not match the order of ideas in his speech, so he kept opening to the wrong pages. The pictures in the book also were too small to be seen except by people in the front row. This presentation aid made his speech less effective and damaged his ethos. [p. 289]

Complexity. The risk of visuals becoming too complex for an audience to understand is mentioned in almost 9% of the overall corpus (all English-language authors).⁸¹ As Osborn & Osborn (1997) put it:

One major problem that often arises when using charts in oral presentations is that you may be tempted to load them with too much information. If they become too complex and "busy," they may compete with you for attention or confuse listeners. [p. 285]

Booher (2003, p. 124) agrees and states that "if listeners have to study the visual to understand it, the visual misses the target", as it is supposed to "simplify complex data". She also shares the two worst visuals, according to her: "a full page of text projected on the screen" and "a bulleted list of single words or topics" (2003, p. 119). Booher's problem with these crowded visuals is that "after a while, such charts all begin to look like your grocery list" (p. 119). Rozakis (1995, p. 211), who asserts that cluttering "too many statistics on a chart or graph [...] will make it too difficult for the audience to follow the visual", uses a culinary comparison to underline why a graph should not contain more than three lines: "after that, the graph starts to look like an Italian dinner special, not a mathematical display".

2.5.2 Anecdote

The anecdote is a remarkable retention technique. It is mentioned in twenty-three textbooks (about 29% of the overall corpus). In the English-language sub-corpus, it is the second most frequently advised technique to influence retention, mentioned in just over half the number of textbooks (twenty-one). In the Dutch-language corpus however, only two textbooks (5%) discuss the anecdote as a means to influence audience retention.⁸² The anecdote is not an ill-advised or unfamiliar rhetorical

⁸¹ *English-language sub-corpus*: Wilson & Arnold (1983), Lucas (1989), Rozakis (1995), Gaulke (1997), Osborn & Osborn (1997), Verderber (2000), Booher (2003).

⁸² *English-language sub-corpus*: Carnegie & Carnegie (1977), Ehninger et al. (1980), Linkletter (1980), Wilson & Arnold (1983), Detz (1984), Lucas (1989), Walters (1993), Sprague & Stuart (1996), Osborn & Osborn (1997), Gaulke (1997), Urech (1998), Dowis

technique in Dutch-language textbooks in general; Andeweg & De Jong (2004, 2006) showed that it is frequently advised as an introductory technique, for example. However, its retention function is emphasised much more frequently in the English-language textbooks. Atkinson (2004) describes the retention effect of anecdotes as follows:

However, of all the techniques described in earlier chapters, the one that really comes into its own in social and duty speeches is the anecdote. A well-chosen story that represents some key characteristic of a person can be so effective that it is often the only thing that anyone ever remembers about such speeches. [pp. 228–229]

The textbook advice that connects the anecdote to retention points to five features of the technique: it is a story, it is vivid, relevant and brief, and it can be humorous.

Story

An anecdote can be characterised as a specific type of story or narrative. According to Witt (2009), who considers the anecdote to be a type of story, stories have a positive retention effect:

Stories present abstract information or concepts in a simple, concrete way—such that people can picture it. Stories offer an overview over a large amount of information, so that it is coherent and easy to remember. [p. 114]⁸³

Linkletter (1980) attempts to uncover the reason why stories are of such memorable quality:

The important thing to remember here is that a story will be more memorable for your listeners than a series of abstract points because we human beings are all natural storytellers and story listeners. It's much easier to remember a point if it's connected to a yarn about a little girl who ran away from her mother than it is to remember the five steps necessary to sell a widget if none of those five points are related to some sort of anecdote. [p. 42]

So, a story seems to be a preferred format for humans to process information. The relationship between the concepts 'story' and 'anecdote' appears to be ambiguous in various textbooks: while authors such as Witt (2009) consider the anecdote to be a

(2000), Verderber (2000), McConnon (2002), Booher (2003), DeVito (2003), Naistadt (2004), Atkinson (2004), Tracy (2008), Leanne (2009); *Dutch-language sub-corpus*: Van der Horst (2007), Witt (2009).

⁸³ Witt (2009, p. 114): "Verhalen presenteren abstracte informatie of concepten op een eenvoudige, concrete wijze die mensen voor zich kunnen zien. Verhalen bevatten een grote hoeveelheid informatie op een overzichtelijke manier zodat het een geheel is en gemakkelijk te onthouden."

subtype of the overarching category ‘story’, Janssen et al. (2002) suggest that an anecdote is a type of ‘example’. However, most authors seem to use the notions ‘anecdote’ and ‘story’ interchangeably, without commenting on any hierarchical difference between the two concepts.

A story usually contains a main character, a topic, and a development of events. According to some authors, these features could play a part in the retentive quality of the anecdote. Quite often, the main character is the speaker or someone related to the speaker, thereby making the anecdote personal. Urech (1998, p. 36) states that for inspiration, speakers should turn to their own lives: “Often the material for an anecdote may be staring you in the face.” She gives an example of Nick Rosa, manager of a beverage company, who successfully used a personal anecdote in an important speech. “By adding a personal touch, Nick helped make his speech memorable” (Urech, 1998, p. 31). Booher (2003) elaborates on the selection of the main character and the topic in an anecdote: common experiences (experiences shared or recognised by the speaker and the audience) are more effective.

Particularly effective anecdotes are those the group can most identify with—those based on common feelings, predicaments, dilemmas, and decisions that we all experience as humans. Draw from your own experiences, those of “average” people you know, or those of the famous as related in their biographies or TV comments. [p. 71]

Vividness

An anecdote allows for the speaker to create a setting or a backdrop of the short story, which can contribute to its retention effect. Booher (2003) describes these qualities of the anecdote vividly in her “tip 122: add anecdotes to touch all five senses”:

The setting creates the visual. Dialogue engages the ear. And if you can add details that help listeners smell, taste, and feel the atmosphere, you have increased your chances dramatically that they will remember your story and the point it illustrates. If you have ever had music change your mood, then you understand that the senses reach the emotions beyond the intellectual level. [pp. 70–71]

Linkletter (1980, p. 40) adds that a speaker needs to take enough time to “set the stage”. To phrase a vivid anecdote, the technique of ‘imagery’ can be used (see Section 2.5.5).⁸⁴

Relevance

An anecdote is not just a story on its own, separate from the rest of the speech. It should be relevant and be clearly linked to the central idea(s) of the presentation or

⁸⁴ This characteristic of an anecdote resembles classical-rhetorical concepts such as *evidentia* and *enargeia*, which Quintilian viewed as vividly depicting a scene to the audience’s mind’s eye using words (Fahnestock, 2011, pp. 335–336).

speech, according to Ehninger et al. (1980), Wilson & Arnold (1983), Walters (1993), Atkinson (2004) and Leanne (2009). Walters (1993, p. 79) quotes Terry S. Paulson, who states that “they [the audience] remember and retell memorable stories and anecdotes that can often illustrate the points and themes you want to advance.”⁸⁵

Brevity

Linkletter (1980), Wilson & Arnold (1983), Atkinson (2004) and Leanne (2009) all agree an anecdote should be brief. This aspect of brevity sets an anecdote apart from a narrative that covers an entire presentation or speech. Some authors have very specific ideas about the length of anecdotes, although they do not appear to agree on the most effective duration. After attributing qualities to the anecdote in general, Linkletter (1980) elaborates on its ideal length:

Generally speaking, I'd recommend that amateur speakers stick to short stories. Get to the point as quickly as possible and then move on to the next phase of your speech. The average story should probably take about a minute and a half to tell, and should almost always run at least a minute. Anything shorter usually wouldn't qualify as a full-fledged anecdote. [...]

Just as a good story has a minimum time limit, it also shouldn't run on too long, especially if you're giving a relatively short speech of fifteen or twenty minutes. The longer your story runs, the better it has to be, so it's best to protect yourself and have an improved chance of keeping your audience's attention with something short. I'd recommend that you limit all your illustrative anecdotes to no more than two minutes in a fifteen-minute speech, and I'd have one story ready to illustrate each major point in your speech. In other words, if you have five major points in your fifteen-minute speech, you should tell five stories, each between one and two minutes. [p. 40]

Contrary to Linkletter's advice, Atkinson (2004, p. 242) warns that anecdotes that last longer than a minute can turn into “shaggy dog stories”.

Humour

Finally, anecdotes are often considered to be humorous. Ehninger et al. (1980, pp. 122–123) state that “humorous anecdotes [...] all may serve effectively to illuminate your central idea in an entertaining and memorable way”—a quotation that suggests that non-humorous anecdotes may not be memorable or that anecdotes are humorous by default. Atkinson (2004) suggests that there is a link between humorous anecdotes and the long-term memory:

⁸⁵ Here, the emphasis that textbooks place on the relevance of an anecdote within the overall speech shows similarities with the classical-rhetorical narrative form *chreia*, which often took the form of an story that was expanded on and concluded with a deed or “pithy saying” (Fahnestock, 2011, p. 379). Atkins and Finlayson (2013, p. 163) note the *chreia* usually has a (moral) message, therewith resembling a parable, but differs from the parable because it is rooted in reality – just as the anecdote.

“...if you illustrate a key point with an example or anecdote that makes an audience laugh, the laughter not only implies agreement with the point, but also increases the chances of it being remembered in the longer term.” [p. 33]

2.5.3 Summary

The summary is the third most frequent retention technique advised in the English-language public-speaking textbooks (52.5%) and it is often recommended as a retention technique in the Dutch-language public-speaking textbooks (32.5%) as well.⁸⁶ Laskowski (2001) describes it as follows:

To guarantee your audience walks away remembering the important points from your presentation, give a review or summary at the end of it. [p. 67]

Gaulke (1997, p. 33) even reserves a specific section to the summary’s connection to retention, titled “Make your summary memorable”. The summary can be viewed as a specific type of repetition that generally occurs at the end of a speech as a part of the closing statement. Audiences are said to like summaries: “audiences appreciate a linear repetition of what they have just heard” (Tracy, 2008, p. 166). This section covers the summary’s purpose, recommended speech genres, formulation and style, placement and contents.

Purpose of the summary

A summary serves several purposes. Primarily, the summary sums up the main points of a presentation.⁸⁷ “If the people in the audience remember the main points, they will find it easier to recall the details” elucidates Qubein (1997, p. 216). Ross (1980, p. 151) says that the summary “is intended to rekindle attention and to assist the memory.” A summary can “tie” the main points together (Gaulke, 1997, p. 138; see also Gondin, Mammen & Dodding, 1983, p. 69, and Sprague & Stuart, 1996, p. 157) and in a summary in the concluding statement a speaker “draws whatever inferences may be implicit in the speech as a whole” (Ehninger et al., 1980, p. 199).

⁸⁶ *English-language sub-corpus*: Carnegie & Carnegie (1977), Ehninger et al. (1980), Ross (1980), Kenny (1982), Gondin et al. (1983), Wilson & Arnold (1983), Lucas (1989), Smith (1991), Walters (1993), Rozakis (1995), Gaulke (1997), Osborn & Osborn (1997), Qubein (1997), Janner (1999), Verderber (2000), Laskowski (2001), McConnon (2002), Valenti (2002), Booher (2003), DeVito (2003), Tracy (2008); *Dutch-language sub-corpus*: Blum (1982), Kirchner (1983), Krusche (1986), Van Eijk (1987), Palm-Hoebé & Palm (1989), Van der Spek (1998), Angenent & Van Vilsteren (1998), Oomkes (2000), Janssen et al. (2002), Wiertzema & Jansen (2004), Van der Horst (2007), Gerritsen (2008), Witt (2009).

⁸⁷ Lucas (1989, p. 182), Janssen et al. (2002, p. 351), Braas et al. (2001, p. 41).

Genres

The summary is especially recommended to be used in informative speeches. Among others, Lucas (1989, p. 185) points out that the summary is useful when speakers aim to inform “because it gives you one last chance to make sure the audience remembers your main points”.⁸⁸ Still, several authors also recommend the summary for a persuasive presentation (see also: Verderber, 2000; Rozakis, 1995; Janssen et al., 2002):

In persuasive speeches it is important that the content stays in focus. In those cases you can close your speech with [...] a summary of your arguments. (Van der Spek, 1998, p. 27)⁸⁹

A summary does not seem effective in an inspirational speech, according to Gondin et al. (1983):

If the purpose of your speech is inspirational, however, a mere recapitulation may weaken its final effect. In that case you will find it more effective to end with a general re-statement of your theme in strongly inspirational terms. [p. 68]

Finally, Ehninger et al. (1980, p. 453) provide a recapitulation advice for a very specific genre: the group discussion. In that context, a final summary should not be exhaustive, as “its purpose is merely to review the more important points in a way that will cause them to be remembered and that will make clear their relationship to each other and to the general subject”.

Formulation and style

Authors can have specific ideas on how the summary should be phrased. Most importantly, the summary has to be short and concise. Qubein (1997) says:

Distil the essence of your message into three or four short memorable sentences, so that the audience leaves with your ideas ringing in its ears [p.175]

Several Dutch-language authors point out that a literal repetition of the information is not a good practice, such as Wiertzema and Jansen (2004) (see also Van Eijk, 1987):

⁸⁸ The following authors agree: Ehninger et al., (1980), Gondin et al. (1983), Lucas (1989), Rozakis (1995) Pietersma (1999), Verderber (2000), McConnon (2002), Booher (2003), Hilgers & Vriens (2003).

⁸⁹ Van der Spek (1998, p. 27): “Bij betogende toespraken is het belangrijk dat de inhoud centraal blijft staan. U kunt in zo'n geval afsluiten met [...] een *samenvatting* van uw betoog.”

A summary is not a mere repetition of what is said [...] the moment that speakers almost literally repeat what they have said earlier it is getting annoying.⁹⁰ [p.74]

Osborn and Osborn (1997) stress this stylistic advice as well:

Note that the [summary] statement does not simply repeat the main points verbatim. Rather, the speaker rephrases these points artfully so that listeners can picture themselves actually experiencing the message. [p.229]

Placement of the summary

The placement of the summary in the final part of the speech is a classical notion: Aristotle, Quintilian, and the *Auctor ad Herennium* situated the *recapitulatio* in the peroration (see Section 2.1.2). Almost all the authors in the English-language sub-corpus (90%) who advise the summary as a retention technique explicitly link it to the closing statements or conclusion. In the Dutch-language corpus this connection is somewhat less strong: just over half the number of authors (54%) who mention the summary as a retention technique connect it to the final part of a presentation.

Two other summary types can appear in the introduction and core of the presentation, respectively:

1. *The initial summary*. Some authors recommend the use of a summary in the beginning of a presentation (Ehninger et al., 1980; Valenti, 2002; Janner, 1999):

Most well-constructed speeches should begin with a summary of what is coming (Janner, 1999, p. 57)

This type of summary seems to be closely related to the retention technique *partitio* (see Section 2.5.23). It is not entirely clear whether such a summary would only have an announcing function or also contain a concise preview of the main points' contents (the latter would distinguish the initial summary from a *partitio*).

2. *The internal summary*. Summaries are also useful as transition between main parts of a presentation. Osborn and Osborn (1997):

An internal summary reminds listeners of the points you have already covered before you move on to the next part of your message. Internal summaries are especially useful in cause-effect and problem-solution speeches, where they can span the gap between the two dimensions of the design. An internal summary signals listeners that you have finished your discussion of the causes or problem and you are now ready to

⁹⁰ Wiertzema & Jansen (2004, p. 74): "Een *samenvatting* is iets anders dan een *herhaling* van wat net gezegd is [...] op het moment dat sprekers vrijwel letterlijk gaan herhalen wat zij net hebben gezegd, wordt het irritant."

describe the effects or solution. In addition, an internal summary condenses and repeats your ideas, which can help your listeners remember your message. [p. 216]

Kenny (1982, p. 16) claims that an internal summary can raise “the attention curve” and Atkinson (2004) points out that the internal summary can have a refreshing effect:

You might, for example, have seen signs of puzzlement or boredom emanating from the audience, in which case you may decide to add [...] a summary of the argument so far. [p. 56]

Contents of the summary

The heuristic ‘Tell them what you are going to tell them—Tell them—Then, tell them what you told them’ is often used to roughly indicate what should be in the summary.⁹¹ Next to main points, other speech elements can be repeated:

You may summarise your speech in a variety of ways. *Restate Your Thesis or Purpose. [...] Restate the Importance of the Topic [...] Restate Your Major Propositions* (DeVito, 2003, p. 140)

More details can be included as well, besides main points. The level of detail does not become very concrete in the textbooks studied:

The completeness or amount of detail you put into your summary or review will depend upon the complexity of the subject, the time allotted, and your purpose. (Ross, 1980, p. 190)

Some authors give examples of summaries, which can be divided into two types: outline summaries and main point summaries, as shown in the examples below.⁹²

Outline summary	Main point summary
Now that you know what cloning is and where the science stands at this point, you can make some decisions about the social consequences and how you can educate yourself for the future. (Gurak, 2000, p. 77)	To summarise, to deal with increased competition, we must improve the quality of our offerings and the speed at which we deliver them to our customers. To deal with shrinking markets, we must expand into new markets and increase our product offerings to attract new customers. [...] (Tracy, 2008, p. 13)

⁹¹ In the corpus the origin of this well-known speech formula is attributed to an “anonymous Irish politician” by Carnegie & Carnegie (1977, p. 204). Gondin et al. (1983, p. 68) ascribe it to an “old rustic [storyteller], with very little formal education”.

⁹² These two types of summaries are also known as indicative (outline) and informative (main point) summaries, a distinction made by Van Eemeren (1975) which I will use in chapter 4 (Section 4.2.1).

Gurak (2000) proposes the outline summary; according to her, the summary should not be redundant, but it should remind the audience of what the speaker just said. “By reminding them of what you’ve just covered, you help refresh their memory and get them ready for the final points of your conclusion”, she argues (p. 77). A characteristic feature of an outline summary is the use of verbs such as “to talk about”, “to show” and “to know”, but also the use of nouns such as “problem”, “outcome” and “solution”. Other example outline summaries can be found in Urech (1998, p. 27) and Sprague & Stuart (1996, p. 158).

Tracy’s example is a restatement of the main points. “You should never expect the audience to memorise everything that you have said the first time they hear it,” he states (2008, p. 13). Regarding the possible retention effect, the outline summary indicates the most important information to remind the audience of the main points, whereas the main point summary (concisely) restates the main information. A main point summary offers listeners, who may have missed (some of) the main points, another chance to take in the key information.

2.5.4 Repetition

Textbook authors frequently advise ‘repetition’ to influence retention: in both of the sub-corpora, it is connected to retention in thirty-seven textbooks (about 46% of the overall corpus; English-language sub-corpus: 52.5%, Dutch-language sub-corpus: 40%).⁹³ The high retention value of repeating information is reflected in the strong claims that authors make about the possible retention effect. Qubein (1997, p. 216) says “information that sticks goes up markedly [...] when we hear it repeated several times”. Oomkes (2000, p. 254) refers to studies that indicate that repetition of and practising with subject matter increases the chances that it will be stored.⁹⁴

Based on the description ‘repetition’ in the textbooks studied, the repetition is defined as using the same words, ideas, sounds or sentence structure more than once. Repetition can be used on various levels in a speech, according to textbook authors. They disagree on the ideal number of repetitions in a speech and some warn against overusing repetitions.

⁹³ *English-language sub-corpus*: Ehninger et al. (1980), Ross (1980), Detz (1984), Wilson & Arnold (1983), Cook (1989), Smith (1991), Walters (1993), Simmons (1996), Sprague & Stuart (1996), Osborn & Osborn (1997), Gaulke (1997), Qubein (1997), Urech (1998), Janner (1999), Dowis (2000), Vasile & Mintz (2000), Verderber (2000), McConnon (2002), DeVito (2003), Leanne (2009), Khan-Panni (2009); *Dutch-language sub-corpus*: Quick (1980), Blum (1982), De Boer (1986), Krusche (1986), Van Eijk (1987), Palm-Hoebé & Palm (1989), Claassen-Van Wirdum et al. (1992), Spolders (1997), Oomkes (2000), Janssen et al. (2002), Hilgers & Vriens (2003), Wiertzema & Jansen (2004), Hertz (2005), Van der Horst (2007), Gerritsen (2008), Witt (2009).

⁹⁴ Oomkes (2000, p. 254): “Als het gehoor de stof herhaalt en ermee oefent, blijft er er veel meer van hangen (Bligh, 1972, 62-63). Dit werd het meest overtuigend aangetoond door Bassey (1968).” The element of ‘practising with the subject matter’ could have the consequence for a speaker to actively expand the rhetorical strategy from a mere repetition of information to involving the audience and inciting it to apply or use the information (related to the elaborative technique of audience participation, see Section 2.5.16).

Various forms of 'repetitive language'

The concept of 'repetition' is an umbrella term for various forms of 'repetitive language'. An equivocal definition for 'repetition' as a retention technique does not appear to exist in the textbooks. Five forms of repetitive language are discussed and related to retention by the authors studied:

1. *Using the same sentence, phrase or combination of words a few times during the speech.* Detz (1984) advises this way to repeat information:

If you have an important word or phrase or sentence, be sure to repeat it. Again. And again. Jesse Jackson knew how to use this technique in his campaign speeches for the presidential nomination: "We must give peace a chance. We must give peace a chance. We must, we must!" (pp. 70–71)

Janssen et al. (2002) state that for a message to be "hammered" into the minds of the audience, literal repetition can be useful. They particularly advise this strategy for persuasive presentations; in advertisements for example, repetitions are a "magical force".⁹⁵

2. *Restating the information.* Another way to repeat information is to 'restate' it: a speaker will not use a verbatim repetition with the exact the same words, but rather formulates the information in a slightly different way. As Qubein (1997, p. 215) puts it, "the key is to repeat the ideas, but to frame them and state them differently." Ehninger et al. (1980) also discuss different variants of "reiteration" next to literally repeating information:

Reiteration, as we are using the term, is intentional repetition, especially of two kinds:
(1) rephrasing of ideas of concepts in more than one set of words or sentences, and
(2) re-examination of ideas of concepts from more than one point of view. [pp. 212–213]

In the Dutch-language corpus, the term "redundancy" is often used to refer to this type of repetitive language. Palm-Hoebé and Palm (1991), and Hilgers and Vriens (2003) explain that redundancy strictly speaking points to superfluous information, but that it is needed to repeat the information in various formulations in order for it to be retained. Spolders (1997, p. 68–69) reserves a spot for 'redundancy' in her own diamond-shaped model for effectively structuring short

⁹⁵ Janssen et al. (2002, p. 353): "Om een boodschap er goed in te hameren kan het nuttig zijn om deze verschillende keren letterlijk te herhalen. Vooral in overtuigende presentaties wil dat goed werken. Herhaling is de toverkracht van de reclame."

presentations. According to her, a speaker could emphasise the repeated information by an attention marker such as “remember (especially)...”.

3. *Repetition in different structural levels of a speech.* Sprague and Stuart (1996) advise to apply the use of repetition to the level of speeches, paragraphs and sentences:

Repeat key words or phrases to make your listeners feel that your points are snowballing to a certain conclusion. [...] Within a paragraph you can achieve a similar effect by starting a series of sentences with the same words, or by using a sentence as a connecting refrain. [...] Or, you may end several sentences with the same words. [...] Finally, for emphasis you can repeat key words or phrases within a sentence. [pp. 140–141]

4. *Repetition as a stylistic device.* The repetition of speech elements can also be a stylistic way of saying things. In her textbook that is dedicated to former president of the United States Barack Obama, Leanne (2009) explains how he uses repetitive figures to attain retention:

A notable hallmark of Barack Obama’s communication style is his use of unique variations of repetition. Obama draws on a wide variety of repetition techniques that give power to his oration—*conduplicatio*, *anaphora*, *epistrophe* and *mesodiplosis* among them. These rhetorical techniques help him to structure his key ideas and themes and drive key points home. [p. 107]

5. *Repetition of sound.* Wilson & Arnold (1983) highlight the use of repetitive sounds (e.g. the same word or words that sound alike) as a possible retention technique. This form of repetition shows a resemblance with the technique ‘rhyme’ (see 2.5.8).

Ideal number of repetitions

The number of repetitions that a speaker should apply to achieve a retention effect ranges from about one to six, according to the authors in the textbook corpus. Wilson and Arnold (1983), for instance, have a strong idea on the desirable number of repetitions:

Research on the usefulness of repetition suggests that with each of your first three repetitions of a thought or fact you further increase the likelihood that your listeners will actually grasp on what you say. It appears that after the third repetition, the gains achieved by each succeeding repetition diminish. There is also evidence that repetitions work best when you distribute them through other material rather than repeating the same item two, three, or more times in rapid succession. [pp. 138–139]

However, while Wilson & Arnold believe three repetitions is the maximum number, other authors such as Walters (1993) extend this number to six:

Retention is aided when you repeat the information. Another study quoted the following statistics regarding repeats and retention:

Number of Repeats	Amount of Retention
1	<10%
6	>90%

[p. 131]

Gaulke (1997, p. 31) appears to agree with Walters when she states that the message “should be repeated about six times during the presentation, most importantly at the end of the talk.” Interestingly, Gaulke adds that the end of the talk is a preferred position in the presentation to use a repetition. The authors provide no explicit references to studies to back up the various claims on the number of repetitions.

Remarkably, the exact number of repetitions that is most effective does not appear to be an important issue in the Dutch-language textbooks. Four authors explicitly encourage multiple repetitions, but they never pinpoint an exact number of repetitions.⁹⁶ Witt (2009) admits to support many repetitions: “the truth is that you can never say important stuff too often.”⁹⁷

Warning: overuse of repetition

Five authors warn against the overuse of repetitions.⁹⁸ Although Ehninger et al. (1980, p. 213) state that “reiteration [...] is a linguistic tactic which you may employ to clarify ideas and help your listeners remember them more readily”, they cautiously add: “if carefully handled.” Speakers should beware of “mindless repetition—too many restatements, especially restatements of ideas already clear to any alert member of your audience.” Ross (1980, p. 204) agrees: “too much repetition can be as harmful as too little.”

2.5.5 Imagery

The retention technique ‘imagery’ is mentioned in twenty-one textbooks (about 26%; eighteen English-language textbooks and three Dutch-language textbooks).⁹⁹ It can roughly be described as verbally creating a mental image in the minds of listeners. Simmons (1996) defines ‘imagery’ as follows:

⁹⁶ Blum (1982), Janssen et al. (2002), Hilgers & Vriens (2003), Witt (2009).

⁹⁷ Witt (2009, p. 120): “De waarheid is dat je belangrijke dingen nooit te vaak kunt zeggen.”

⁹⁸ Ehninger et al. (1980), Ross (1980), Wilson & Arnold (1983), Sprague & Stuart (1996), Verderber (2000).

⁹⁹ *English-language sub-corpus*: Ross (1980), Wilson & Arnold (1983), Detz (1984), Lucas (1986), Smith (1991), Simmons (1996), Sprague & Stuart (1996), Rozakis (1995), Osborn & Osborn (1997), Qubein (1997), Urech (1998), Noonan (1999), Dowis (2000), Vasile & Mintz (2000), McConnon (2002), Atkinson (2004), Leanne (2009). *Dutch-language corpus*: Krusche (1986), Van der Horst (2007), Witt (2009).

Imagery is writing that uses words which appeal to the five senses and create mental images. In other words, imagery helps your audience "see" what you are talking about instead of just hearing what you are talking about. [p. 239]

The label 'imagery' is most often used to refer to this technique, although some authors talk about "picture language" (McConnon, 2002, p. 88) or "paint a picture with words" (Urech, 1998, p. 38).

Important features of this technique are (1) the fact that a mental image is created—as opposed to visualisation via actual images or objects—and (2) that this can be achieved via concrete and vivid use of language. These two features are further elaborated on in this section. Note that many—but not all—textbook writers combine these two features when discussing imagery as a retention technique.

Mental image

A key aspect of imagery is that the speaker aims to create a picture in the minds of the audience, or to stimulate the audience to visualise information that is mentioned in the presentation or speech. Rozakis (1995) explains that creating a mental picture in the minds of the audience can lead to retention:

Imagery is important in speech because it can make your address memorable by telegraphing meaning. A memorable image can stay in your mind long after you have forgotten the rest of the speech. Good ideas can be expressed in visual terms. If you can get pictures rather than words floating through people's minds, your speech will be the one they remember. A striking image transforms a ho-hum address into an unforgettable experience. [pp. 90–91]

Wilson and Arnold explain that it is not a new idea that stimulating listeners to visualise information can be effective; according to them, Aristotle already noted that "people like communications that set pictures before their eyes" (1983, p. 135). A distinct feature of descriptive language is that it "usually sets the whole of something before a listener" as opposed to anecdotes, comparisons, contrast and definitions, which rather "emphasise the special details of whatever is being talked about" (Wilson & Arnold, 1983, p. 135). Interestingly, Wilson and Arnold explicitly connect the use of imagery to informative presentations:

When your primary goal is to provide information, not to argue, the best descriptions for you to use will be those that allow you to create clear and precise images in the listeners' minds. [p. 136]

Specific, vivid and colourful language

A second distinctive characteristic of imagery is that the visualisation is verbally infused: words are used to create an image, rather than literal visual aids such as

pictures on a slide. Leanne (2009) stresses the possible memorable quality of using visual language as follows:

In many cases, speakers present their talks in settings in which they cannot, or should not, use visual aids such as overhead slides or electronic presentations. For some speakers, the lack of visual aids might be a significant handicap. But outstanding orators master the art of using well-chosen descriptive words in lieu of visual aids. They paint pictures with vivid words, focusing at key points on words that call to mind rich images. When chosen carefully, rich language can affect a listener as significantly as any visual aid: a listener will visualise ideas and themes, which become more memorable. [p. 85]

In order to create an effective and memorable mental picture, speakers should use specific, vivid, and colourful language. Sprague and Stuart (1996, p. 239) argue that speakers should avoid using “dull, stale, and predictable language”, as “the message may never get past their [the audience’s] short-term memory if you do not infuse it with vigor and a sense of newness.” Colourful words, on the other hand, are “memorable because they stand out in our minds” (Osborn & Osborn, 1997, p. 332). Detz (1984, pp. 69–70) agrees:

Be specific, be vivid, be colorful ... and you will make your point. Even better, your audience will remember your point. Winston Churchill: "An iron curtain has descended across the continent."
Franklin Delano Roosevelt: "When you see a rattlesnake poised to strike, you do not wait until he has struck before you crush him."

Van der Horst (2007, p. 69) remarks that “specific, vivid, and colourful words” can create a kind of ‘aha-experience’: “the image is stored in memory in such a way that it is easily accessible.”¹⁰⁰

Some authors argue that colourful and vivid language is best achieved when it is connected to emotions and personal experiences. McConnon (2002) puts it like this:

Aim to use words that paint a picture your audience will never forget. By relating your own and your audiences' personal experiences, you can touch the minds and hearts of your audience. Illustrate with personal stories and reach the heart of your listeners so they can see, feel and touch what you are saying. As you prepare your words ask: What will my audience see in their imaginations if I say this? [p. 88].

¹⁰⁰ Van der Horst (2007, p. 69): “Indien u specifieke, levendige en kleurrijke beelden in uw betoog kunt verwerken, zal het publiek uw boodschap beter onthouden. Het beeld wordt zó opgeslagen in het geheugen dat het gemakkelijk bereikbaar is.”

Along this line, Leanne (2009) introduces the concept ‘embodiment’ (tying emotions or ideas to concrete images). She connects it to retention and explains how Obama uses it:

More often than employing a personification technique, however, Obama gives ideas physicality, such as when he sees “hope” in the “light” of eyes. In doing so, Obama ties emotions or ideas to concrete images. Giving ideas physicality is a highly effective way to present ideas in ways a listener will remember. The “embodiment” gives the imagery power; the words resonate at a deeper level and listeners are more likely to remember how the imagery makes them feel [...] the image is vivid. Similarly, when Obama ties the notion of hope to honored history, he makes the notion more memorable and enables it to resonate at a deeper level. Obama’s practice of conferring physicality to ideas serves his purposes very well. [p. 91]

Most authors are very positive about deploying imagery via concrete and vivid language. For example, Krusche (1986) recommends speakers to use the complete range of instruments available for “flowery language”:

[...] deploy the complete set of instruments for flowery language and your dry lecture will be more vivid and will be taken in and remembered considerably better by your auditorium. [p. 117]¹⁰¹

However, Simmons (1996) understands “flowery wording” to be an overuse of imagery techniques and warns against applying style mechanisms for concrete, colourful and vivid language throughout the speech:

Be careful that you do not overuse imagery techniques. This is sometimes called “flowery wording.” Consider this example:

As we walked down the lonely road, we noticed some tangled vines hanging from the trees like large ropes before us. The texture of the vines felt like soft rubber which was delicate to touch. I noticed that the vines felt very old and worn, such as a garment that has been in storage...

Now imagine an entire speech written like this. Imagery is a vital technique that can enhance your speech, but a little goes a long way. [p. 62]

¹⁰¹ Krusche (1986, p 117): “[...] schakel het hele instrumentarium voor bloemrijk spreken in, en uw droge vak-voordracht zal er door verlevendigd en aanmerkelijk beter door uw auditorium opgenomen en onthouden worden.”

2.5.6 Chunking

The strategy ‘chunking’ is recommended to influence retention in twenty textbooks (25%; sixteen English-language textbooks and four Dutch-language textbooks).¹⁰² In those textbooks, 30 excerpts are linked to chunking, which suggests that some authors discuss this technique rather elaborately. ‘Chunking’ is an organising or structuring principle, often explained as categorising or clustering information or subject matter into a limited number of main items. Verderber (2000) explains the technique as follows:

Since listeners are more likely to remember three steps with three or four subdivisions than ten individual steps, the effective speaker reorganises the multistep speech into one with three to five steps. This reorganising process of grouping like ideas is called chunking. [p. 240]

All authors are positive about the retention-enhancing quality of chunking. This section first expounds on chunking as a means of selecting and organising information and how this relates to retention. Second, the only point of divergence between authors regarding chunking is explained: the (maximum) number of points or ‘chunks’ a presentation’s main information should be divided into.

Organisation and selection principle

Most authors discuss chunking as a strategy for organising the subject matter of a speech. Speakers are often confronted with a large amount of speech material that needs to be organised in a clear way. Most textbooks authors see a solution in clustering information into a few main points to enhance retention. They usually support this with the argument that a few main points are easier to remember than many (minor) points, as the following quotations illustrate:

No listener can remember a dozen different points, and the likelihood is that if you have located that many points some are main points and others are secondary. (Wilson & Arnold, 1983, p. 178)

... three main points are much easier to understand and remember than twelve. (Lucas, 1989, p. 279)

... it is easier to remember two to four items under each of three subheadings than it is to remember eight separate items. (Verderber, 2000, p. 240).

¹⁰² *English-language sub-corpus*: Walter & Scott (1979), Wilson & Arnold (1983), Wilder (1986), Lucas (1989), Walters (1993), Rozakis (1995), Simmons (1996), Osborn & Osborn (1997), Sprague & Stuart (1996), Gaulke (1997), Vasile & Mintz (2000), Verderber (2000), Naistadt (2004), Khan-Panni (2009); *Dutch-language sub-corpus*: Krusche (1986), Wagenaar (1996), Angenent & Angenent & Van Vilsteren (1998), Cornelis (2002), Witt (2009).

How should speakers divide information into chunks that are easy to digest? Wilder (1986), Lucas (1989), Simmons (1996) and Osborn & Osborn (1997) all give examples. For instance, Lucas explains how eight subtopics can be re-divided into three categories:

So you have eight main points—which is too many. But if you look at the list, you see that the eight points fall into three broad categories: lasers in science, lasers in industry, lasers in medicine. You might therefore restate your main points in this way:
 I Lasers have many important uses in science.
 II Lasers have become indispensable to industry.
 III Lasers are revolutionizing the practice of medicine. [pp. 149–150]

Simmons (1996) explains that ‘reorganising information’ does not equal ‘discarding information’:

You want the audience to remember your speech, so this is the best approach. You may have more points, and that is fine, but make sure your points do not overlap. For example, if you were giving a speech about the care of dogs, you may have four main points such as (1) feeding, (2) health, (3) grooming, and (4) training. Although these are different areas, health and grooming can be combined. Grooming is a part of a dog's health because it controls pests and protects the hair and skin, so the speech could still function with feeding, health, and training. You have not cut any information; you have just organised it differently. [p. 27]

While most authors view chunking as the reorganisation of existing information without “cutting information”, others emphasise the selection of information. Walters (1993) discusses how a speaker should decide what main points to include in the speech.

Designing and Organising a Memorable Speech

When you're designing your presentation, decide what three or four points you want to make. These are the main points of your outline - the boughs of the tree. [p. 58]

Wilson & Arnold (1983) make a distinction between selecting main ideas and (re)organising into main points:

You will often find that you have too much material for the available speaking time. It is paradoxical but true that beginning speakers tend to fear that they will not have enough to say but end up belaboring their rhetorical situations with too much detail. Sifting ideas and paring them down is an important part of organising. If you discover that you have support for a dozen ideas that seem significant, you should discard the least fruitful points or organise the material in another way. [p. 178]

Three textbooks elaborate on the effect of chunking as an organisation strategy on memory processes.¹⁰³ Osborn & Osborn (1997) point out the difference between a randomly organised and a categorised list:

The way you organise your material also has an effect on retention. Suppose you were given the following list of words to memorise: north, man, hat, daffodil, green, tulip, coat, boy, south, red, east, shoes, gardenia, woman, purple, marigold, gloves, girl, yellow, west. It looks rather difficult, but see what happens when we rearrange the words: north, south, east, west - man, boy, woman, girl - daffodil, tulip, gardenia, marigold - green, red, purple, yellow - hat, coat, shoes, gloves. In the first example you have what looks like a random list of words. In the second the words have been organised by categories: now you have five groups of four related words to remember. Material that is presented in a consistent and orderly fashion is much easier for your audience to understand and retain. [p. 387]

Cornelis (2002, pp. 32–33) claims that our short-term memory can hold five to seven elements and calls chunking a “trick to enlarge memory capacity”, provided that a clear coherence exists between the chunks; according to her, providing a pattern to the audience works as a memory aid.

Number of main points

Whereas the authors mainly agree on the positive retention effect of chunking, they have different views on the number of main points that the information should ideally be categorised into—ranging from one to nine. “The fewer main points you have, the better”, according to Osborn & Osborn (1997, p. 205). Walter & Scott (1979) agree.

However, ‘three’ seems to be the number most authors settle for. Khan-Panni (2009, p. 74) provides the straightforward advice to “limit yourself to three main points”; similarly, Simmons (1996) advises to use “no more than three points”. Nine textbooks leave a little more margin up or down, but all mention the number three (see Section 2.5.20 for more on the ‘list of three’).¹⁰⁴

Sprague & Stuart (1996) and Cornelis (2002) advise the largest number of main points: seven, with a minimum of five and a maximum of nine. Sprague and Stuart seem to refer to a well-known study by Miller (1956) titled “The Magical Number Seven, Plus or Minus Two: Some Limits on Our Capacity for Processing Information” (not with an explicit reference, though):

¹⁰³ Sprague & Stuart (1996), Osborn & Osborn (1997) and Cornelis (2002).

¹⁰⁴ Two to three main points: Wilder (1986) and Angenent & Angenent & Van Vilsteren (1998); Three to four main points: Wilson & Arnold (1983), Walters (1993) and Rozakis (1995); three to five main points: Krusche (1986), Verderber (1988), Simmons (1996) and Naistadt (2004).

Bear in mind the information-processing principle known as *seven plus or minus two*. Research suggests that this is how many points the average person can comprehend at one time, so select just a handful of points to develop. [p. 287]

2.5.7 Humour

Using humour to aid audience retention is advised in about 19% of the total corpus of public-speaking textbooks.¹⁰⁵ In English-language textbooks, it is a prominent retention technique: fourteen authors connect the use of humour to retention (35% of the English-language sub-corpus). The Dutch-language advice on humour as a retention technique forms a sharp contrast: only one textbook (Witt, 2009) mentions humour as a retention technique—a textbook translated from English. It seems that the Dutch-language authors focus more on making readers aware of the risks involved when using humour. These risks are acknowledged by English-language authors, as explained later in this section, but they discuss possible (retention) advantages of humour as well.

This section first elaborates on the alleged memorable quality of humour. Afterwards, it zooms in on a particular point of discussion that several textbooks address: does the audience only retain a humorous element, such as a joke, or (also) the key message of the presentation? Next, the section discusses specific parts of the speech and genres to which some authors connect humour, and it ends with possible drawbacks of this technique.

Memorable quality of humour

Walters (1993), Rozakis (1995), Sprague & Stuart (1996), Osborn & Osborn (1997), Verderber (2000), Booher (2003), Atkinson (2004) and Witt (2009) are all outspoken about the fact that humour can positively influence retention. Booher (2003, p. 106) and Witt (2009, p. 185) say it straight and clear: “Humour makes your message memorable”. Sprague and Stuart (1996, p. 240) dedicate an entire chapter to the “attention factor” humour, in which they see retention as one of its assets:

An infusion of humour into any speech can break tension, deflate opponents, enhance the speaker's image, and make points memorable.
[p. 240]

Humour is regularly related to a ‘story’—perhaps not surprising, as humour was already described as a feature of anecdotes in Section 2.5.2. Walters (1993) and Verderber (2000) explicitly refer to humour in relation to a story:

¹⁰⁵ *English-language sub-corpus*: Ehninger et al. (1980), Ross (1980), Smith (1991), Walters (1993), Rozakis (1995), Sprague & Stuart (1996), Osborn & Osborn (1997), Gaulke (1997), Urech (1998), Dowis (2000), Verderber (2000), Laskowski (2001), Booher (2003), Atkinson (2004); *Dutch-language sub-corpus*: Witt (2009).

Use humour to stress key points. Our own experience shows that of all the forms of presenting information, we are most likely to remember information in humorous story form. (Verderber, 2000, p. 232).

Osborn & Osborn (1997, p. 503) support their claim that humour can influence retention; they explicitly refer to a study that “has discovered that the use of humorous illustrations helps audiences remember the message of the speech.”¹⁰⁶

Retention of humorous element or key message

From the textbooks that discuss humour as a retention technique, the following question arises: will the audience remember the humorous element, such as a joke or punchline, or the key point in the speech that it is supposed to illustrate? Several authors explicitly refer to humour as a strategy to help the audience remember the key point, such as Atkinson (2004):

If you illustrate a key point with an example or anecdote that makes an audience laugh, the laughter not only implies agreement with the point, but also increases the chances of it being remembered in the longer term. [p. 33]

Rozakis (1995, p. 144) specifically adds that “audiences might forget the actual joke, but they remember the point it was meant to reinforce”.

To the contrary, some authors suggest that it is the joke or humour itself that will be remembered instead of the content of the speech. Walters (1993, p. 132) suggests that “you may not remember the exact information, but chances are you'll remember the joke or the story.” Furthermore, although Booher (2003, p. 106) states that “humour anchors key points”, she also adds that “a humorous story may be the only part of your presentation the audience remembers”. With this, she indicates that the use of humour does not necessarily mean that the audience will retain the intended information. She illustrates this with a story that shows the precarious relationship between humorous examples, retention, speaker intentions and the actual outcome:

This fact has hit me hard several times over the years. For instance, in our business-writing workshops for corporate clients, our instructors make the point that a careless change in verb tense and mood can alter the meaning of a document completely. For reinforcement, we show a 30-second video clip and close with a brief story about a frequent airline comment to passengers. Several years after attending a particular workshop, a participant saw me in the building lobby when I returned to do another workshop for his organisation and commented on the value of the training program to his career. I was about to pat

¹⁰⁶ Osborn and Osborn (1997) refer to the study of Kaplan and Pascoe (1977). Kaplan's and Pascoe's findings appear to be more nuanced: in their study, specific humorous examples that were used in lectures were retained well, but the use of these examples did not increase recall of the lecture's contents. See Section 2.7 for a discussion on textbook authors' use of references..

myself on the back about all the valuable concepts that he probably remembered and was using daily—things tips for managing high volume e-mail. Then he added this comment: “Yeah, I’ll never forget that story about the flight attendant always saying, “We would like to thank you for flying with us today.” And then he quoted the exact punch line from my story of three years earlier. (Now, while I agree that the one-liner works in a way that is truly memorable, it unfortunately illustrated one of the least important concepts of the entire workshop.) [p. 106]

Humour related to specific genres or parts of the speech

Some authors connect humour to specific speech genres and parts of the speech. Osborn & Osborn (1997) specifically discuss humour as a vital element of an after-dinner speech. Laskowski (2001) discusses humour as a possible ingredient in the presentation’s conclusion. He refers to a particular type of humour, the “comic verse”, that appears to be suited for the wrap-up of a talk:

I don’t usually use comic verse in my presentations; however, when I do use a comic verse, it’s at the end of my presentation to leave the audience with something to remember. [p. 137]

Warnings: humour is a precarious rhetorical technique

Humour can be a speaker’s best friend or worst enemy. The delicate nature of this retention technique is illustrated by the fact that authors who advise positively on using humour to enhance retention also report quite a number of pitfalls. Apart from the issue that the humorous content might be retained instead of the key message, a number of warnings recur.

First of all, a speaker needs to be careful with jokes that can be offending to (a part of) the audience. Urech (1998, p. 44) specifically mentions that speaker should refrain from using jokes or comments with “cultural, sexual or racial slurs”. Sprague and Stuart (1996) summarise it as follows:

As important as humour is, a laugh should always be secondary to keeping the goodwill of your listeners. [p. 281]

Secondly, the effect of humour heavily depends on the quality of its delivery. Sprague and Stuart (1996, p. 282), who see quite a few obstacles for speakers that want to be humorous, state: “Do not tell jokes unless you have mastered the techniques of joke telling”. Among the possible things that could go wrong, they list “telegraphing the punchline”, “laughing hysterically at one’s own joke” and “apologising (“Well, it was funny when I heard it” or “I guess you had to be there”).” Smith (1991) handily provides a ‘self-assessment’ for a speaker to determine whether or not to start telling jokes in a presentation:

You already have an idea of whether you can tell a joke well. Do you keep your friends in stitches when you bridge or poker group gets together, or at the office, or at cocktail parties, or in the clubhouse? If

the answer is no, then don't start to think you will turn into a Whoopi Goldberg or Steve Martin the moment you stand up in front of a group of strangers. [p. 40]

Finally, a joke should not be overused or a cliché. Both Sprague and Stuart (1996) and Urech (1998) believe that humour will backfire if it is not original for the audience.

2.5.8 Rhyme

The rhetorical technique 'rhyme' can be seen as a similarity of sound in words that are not too far apart (Braet, 2007, p. 119). The technique comprises 'alliteration' (repetition of the initial consonants of words) and 'assonance' (repetition of stressed vowels). In 15 textbooks of the total corpus (19%), it is connected to retention. The frequency of retention advice on rhyme shows quite a discrepancy between the English-language and Dutch-language sub-corpora: fourteen English-language authors advise the technique, as opposed to only one Dutch-language author (35% versus 2.5% of the respective sub-corpora).¹⁰⁷ Alliteration is considered to be the most important type of rhyme related to retention; fourteen authors refer to it. Assonance or the term 'rhyme' is mentioned four times. Some authors discuss both alliteration and assonance; when authors use the more generic term 'rhyme', they often provide examples with end rhyme (e.g. "stride and glide" by Urech (1998, p. 40)).

This section first discusses alliteration and assonance as retention techniques. Afterwards, it addresses 'crossover functions' of alliteration, as this type of rhyme is sometimes explicitly connected to other retention techniques. Finally, the possible risks of using rhyme are expounded on.

Alliteration and assonance affirm audience retention

Spolders (1997) offers an explanation of the retention effect that similarity in sound could have, drawing on the famous Winston Churchill quotation "blood, toil, tears and sweat" as illustrative material (she is not the only author who refers to this quotation):

Similarity in sound makes sure that the message sticks in the mind of the hearer. 'But blood' shows similarities in consonants but also in vowel sounds, 'toil, tears' continues the effect and 'sweat' follows as a final blow. [pp. 83–84]¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁷ *English-language sub-corpus*: De Vito (1981), Wilson & Arnold (1983), Wilder (1986), Cook (1989), Lucas (1989), Smith (1991), Sprague & Stuart (1996), Osborn & Osborn (1997), Urech (1998), Verderber (2000), Laskowski (2001), Booher (2003), Atkinson (2004), Leanne (2009); *Dutch-language sub-corpus*: Spolders (1997).

¹⁰⁸ Spolders (1997, p. 83): "Overeenkomst in klank zorgt dat de boodschap blijft hangen in het hoofd van de hoorder. 'But blood' heeft overeenkomst in medeklinker-, maar ook in klinkerklank, 'toil, tears' zet het effect voort en 'sweat' komt er dan nog als een soort klap op de vuurpijl achteraan."

The alliteration is the type of rhyme that receives the most attention of textbook authors. According to Lucas (1989, p. 223), “by highlighting the sound of words, alliteration catches the attention of listeners and can make ideas easier to remember.” This description of the alliteration’s possible retention effect covers the consensus of the fourteen authors who refer to it as a retention technique. The attention-drawing function of the alliteration, which could be a condition for a retention effect, is mentioned by Wilson & Arnold (1983), Smith (1991), Osborn & Osborn (1997) and Atkinson (2004) as well. Almost all authors provide examples to illustrate the possibilities of the alliteration, such as “democracy’s dilemma” (Wilder, 1991, p. 177), “refilling, reusing and recycling” (Urech, 1998, p. 13), “carat, clarity, color and cutting” (Verderber, 2000, p. 232) and, to top it off, Laskowski’s “nine P’s: Prior Proper Preparations Prevents Poor Performance of the Person Putting on the Presentation” (2001, p. 124).

Fewer authors focus on assonance or ‘end rhyme’. Urech (1998, p. 40) implicitly offers an explanation for this lower frequency: rhyme at the end of words may sound a bit as if the speaker were composing a poem. With this, she suggests that end rhyme may have an unwanted effect on the speaker’s ethos (image). Still, she would advise the use of assonance, as “it is easy on the ear and perforates our memories, too.” Urech is particularly proud of her own creation “stride and glide”, since “it is short, sweet and memorable.” Osborn & Osborn (1997) use a concrete example of a case that had great societal impact, in which rhyme played a part:

During the O. J. Simpson murder trial, the prosecution asked Simpson to try on a glove allegedly worn by the killer during the crime. It was a high moment of the trial, but a low moment for the prosecution, when Simpson struggled to put the glove on. Who then can forget how defense attorney Johnny Cochran, in his summary to the jury, impressively intoned: “If it doesn’t fit, you must acquit.” [p. 314]

Alliteration as a repetitive retention technique to structure a speech

Two authors combine the alliteration with organisational retention techniques. Osborn & Osborn (1997, p. 314) state that “rhythm may also be paired with rhyme to make oral language even more memorable” and give an example of a presentation’s purpose statement or *propositio* (see Section 2.5.25) that includes alliterations: “Today, I will discuss how the Mississippi River meanders from Minnesota to the sea.” Here, two retention techniques could reinforce one another. Furthermore, Cook (1989, p. 71) provides an example in which alliteration and the *partitio* (structure overview, see Section 2.5.23) are combined:

The head of a large hospital was asked to give a speech on “Marketing the Nursing Profession.” She broke the topic down into the classical subparts of marketing—product, price, place, promoting. She then discussed how well the profession was being “sold,” from the perspective of each of the four—in other words, are nursing services available in the right places? For the right price? And so forth. [p.71]

Warning: use alliteration with moderation

Authors point to ‘excessive use’ as the main risk of applying rhyme. Lucas (1989) describes that a fine line exists between the right number of alliterations and its excessive use:

Used sparingly, it is a marvelous way to spruce up your speeches. Used to excess, however, it can be laughable and draw too much attention, so that listeners get more involved in waiting for the next alliteration than in absorbing the content of the speech. [p. 223]

Atkinson (2004, p. 242) agrees with the idea that moderation is key, as “too much alliteration or rhyme is likely to be so obvious that it deflects the audience’s attention away from the message to the technique itself, and can therefore be counter-productive”. He gives the example of the famous orator Jesse Jackson, who could sometimes be a little too enthusiastic in his application of alliteration: “my constituency is the desperate, damned, disinherited, disrespected and the despised.”

2.5.9 Metaphor

Using metaphors to aid retention is advised in sixteen textbooks (20% of the total corpus; twelve English-language textbooks and four Dutch-language textbooks).¹⁰⁹ A metaphor is a form of figurative speech. Often, the metaphor is discussed together with other forms of figurative speech, such as the simile or analogy. Rozakis (1995) provides a good example of the way that ‘metaphor’ is regularly treated in the corpus:

A *simile* is a figure of speech that compares two unlike things. Similes use the words “like” or “as” to make the comparison. “A dream put off dries up like a raisin in the sun” is an example of a simile. A *metaphor* is also a figure of speech that compares two unlike things. However, metaphors do not use the words “like” or “as” to make the comparison. “The rush-hour traffic bled out of all the city’s major arteries” is a metaphor. [p. 91]

In this section the link between the use of metaphors and retention is addressed first. Second, the preferred position for deploying metaphors in a presentation is discussed.

Link between metaphor and retention

Cook (1989), Gurak (2000), Janssen et al. (2002), Booher (2003) and Wiertzema & Jansen (2004) all mention the function of a metaphor to make complex and abstract information more conceivable. Gurak (2000) uses a metaphor herself to explain this principle:

¹⁰⁹ *English-language sub-corpus*: Wilson & Arnold (1983), Cook (1989), Smith (1991), Rozakis (1995), Sprague & Stuart (1996), Osborn & Osborn (1997), Gurak (2000), Verderber (2000), McConnon (2002), Booher (2003), DeVito (2003), Atkinson (2004); *Dutch-language sub-corpus*: Krusche (1986), Janssen et al. (2002), Wiertzema & Jansen (2004), Witt (2009).

Often, you can help yourself remember a new or complex idea by linking it to something with which you are familiar. If you are seeking to understand and explain how a computer organises information, you might mentally compare an electronic file system to an old-fashioned file cabinet. A file cabinet has drawers, and each drawer contains items related to a specific topic. Each drawer is then subdivided into folders. If you can find a particularly useful metaphor, it will not only help you remember the concept, it will help your audience, too. [p. 31]

Krusche (1986), Verderber (2000) and DeVito (2003) emphasise that the metaphor enhances vividness or can leave a ‘striking image’ in the audience’s minds. Metaphors can connect two concepts in an unexpected way, as is stressed by Rozakis (1995), Sprague and Stuart (1996), Osborn and Osborn (1997) and DeVito (2003). Osborn and Osborn (1997, p. 232) state that the combination of “two apparently unlike things” makes us “see unexpected relationships”.

While most authors list the metaphor as a form of figurative speech, McConnon (2002) includes the technique in a different category, which is called “whole brain wrapping”:

This multi-sensory approach involves more of the brain and, hence, learning is more effective, retention is enhanced and spare capacity is utilized. [p. 88]

The metaphor is presented as a technique that enables the audience to use various brain processes, such as visualisation and association (e.g. with existing information). Cook (1989, p. 101) mentions the metaphor as a technique that can aid comprehension and retention and that works “exceptionally well in introducing new ideas” as it refers to ideas that are already familiar to the audience.

Position in the speech

In what particular part of the speech should the metaphor preferably be used? Osborn and Osborn (1997) and Witt (2009) advise the technique to create an effective conclusion. Witt (2009) suggests that it is also effective as an opening technique, as a means to establish some sort of ‘circle technique’ (also see Section 2.5.13):

Use a technique to capture attention as you did in the introduction. [...] For instance, if you used ‘hunger’ as a metaphor in your opening story, your wrap-up story should be about something like ‘food’. [p. 131]¹¹⁰

Wiertzema and Jansen (2004) and Booher (2003) suggest that a metaphor could be used as a theme or ‘allegory’ throughout the entire speech. Booher (2003) elaborates

¹¹⁰ Witt, (2009, p. 131): “Gebruik een techniek om de aandacht te vangen zoals je in je inleiding deed. [...] Als je in je openingsverhaal bijvoorbeeld honger gebruikte als metafoor, moet je afsluitende verhaal gaan over zoiets als eten.”

on this idea by providing suggestions for transition phrases that fit within a theme, for example by using the same metaphor:

Look for a theme or metaphor to use as a transitional hinge between presentation segments. For example, consider this one built around the theme of myths: “The first competitor myth that I’d like to dispel among our sales team is that. . . . Another myth that we need to allay is. . . . Another pervasive myth in the marketplace is that. . . .” A second example: “Our department has been holding onto security blankets far too long to generate revenue. One security blanket for last year was our income from product X. . . . Another security blanket that we came to depend on in the third quarter was. . . . Then there was the security blanket of revenue from product Y that we grabbed and clung to in the fourth quarter. . . .” In addition to providing excellent transitions, these metaphors create memorable images in listeners’ minds. [p. 79]

2.5.10 One-liner, soundbite and slogan

“A catchphrase or short sentence that reflects the themes a speaker wants people to remember”: that is how Leanne (2009, p. 124) defines the *slogan* and links it to retention. She provides a few examples of Barack Obama’s effective slogans: “Yes we can”, “Change we believe in” and “Our moment is now” (Leanne, 2009, p. 124). Together with Leanne, twelve English-language authors advise a similar technique to influence audience retention: a few words, a brief sentence or a couple of short lines that leave a lasting impression, often called a ‘one-liner’, ‘soundbite’ or ‘slogan’ (advised in 32.5% of the total corpus).¹¹¹ Although the one-liner, soundbite and slogan are all mentioned in the Dutch-language corpus, they are not explicitly connected to retention—contrary to the English-language sub-corpus.

This retention strategy is ill-defined in the textbooks, which is most notable in the descriptions of the term ‘soundbite’. A soundbite can vary in length from about twenty seconds (Osborn & Osborn, 1997, p. 18), to thirty seconds (McConnon, 2002, p. 84) or even a very specific twelve seconds (Khan-Panni, 2009, p. 80). Noonan (1999), who has included a complete chapter about soundbites, puts in perspective the variety of ‘buzzwords’ to label this retention strategy:

What is now called a sound bite was once called a “sentence” or “paragraph” or “phrase.” Great sound bites of political history are great *sentences* and *phrases* of political history: “Gentlemen may cry peace, peace, but there is no peace.” “With malice toward none, with charity for all . . .” “I have nothing to offer but blood, toil, tears and sweat.” “We have nothing to fear but fear itself.” Those are four of a hundred that would come to mind if you sat down and thought for an hour or two. [p. 95]

¹¹¹ *English-language sub-corpus*: Ehninger et al. (1980), Linkletter (1980), Wilson & Arnold (1983), Detz (1984), Osborn & Osborn (1997), Gaulke (1997), Urech (1998), Noonan (1999), McConnon (2002), Valenti (2002), Booher (2003), Leanne (2009), Khan-Panni (2009).

Although the textbook authors studied do not agree on the definition, they do agree that a one-liner, soundbite or slogan can have a powerful retention effect. However, some warn against possible negative side-effects.

Retention effect

Most authors seem to feel very strongly about the one-liner's or soundbite's possible retention effect, judging from their use of adjectives and the concrete descriptions. To name a few, Valenti (2002, p. 168), views "these pithy two- and three-word phrases that people can store up in memory" as "the essence of vivid indelible speechmaking". Gaulke (1997, p. 35) states that "one word, one phrase, one sentence" is "a great way to plant an everlasting memory" that can "stick forever". Booher (2003, p. 106) talks about how the one-liner can work in a way that is "truly memorable". All authors agree that a one-liner or slogan should not be about just any information, but they feel that it should capture the central idea or key points in a concise way.

How might a one-liner or slogan work? A few authors articulate their ideas on this matter. Ehninger et al. (1980), Linkletter (1980) and Wilson & Arnold (1983) all believe repetition is a factor of influence (remarkably enough, all three sources are from the early eighties). Wilson and Arnold (1983) explain it as follows:

Any repetition—whether in the same or in different terms—increases the probability that the repeated idea will be perceived by a listener. [...] You see and hear this principle used much in advertising, as slogans are repeated, sometimes in the same way and sometimes in different ways. [p. 139]

The reference to advertising slogans is also made by Gaulke (1997) and Khan-Panni (2009).

Noonan (1999) and Khan-Panni (2009) think that it is the idea itself that must be clear and original. Only then the one-liners, slogans or soundbites will be effective. As Khan-Panni (2009) puts it:

They are not merely clever ways with language. They are clever ideas. Find clever ideas and the phrases will take care of themselves. [p.81]

Noonan (1999, p. 95) claims that the most effective soundbites and phrases are those that "are natural", that "bubbled up from the creative process", and "naturally emerged from the process of thinking and writing".

Warnings

Two authors signal possible negative side-effects of using a one-liner or advise against a speaker forcing himself to find a one-liner. Booher (2003) warns that a one-liner connected to unimportant information or contents can backfire, as the retention effect can be so strong that it could overrule the retention of key points. She experienced this herself, she explains, when she bumped into someone who followed one of her workshops some time ago; she discovered that he remembered a one-liner that

“unfortunately illustrated one of the least important concepts of the entire workshop” (Booher, 2003, p. 106).

As a consequence from her idea that effective soundbites are “natural”, Noonan (1999, p. 95) does not recommend to “self-consciously fashion a phrase that would grab the listener”. She emphasises that the best soundbites “were all created—they came to live in history because their writers weren’t trying to write ‘a soundbite’ or ‘a line’.”

2.5.11 Connecting to the audience

“Listeners remember information best when they see it as relevant and useful to their own needs or goals” (DeVito, 2003, p. 205). This quotation summarises the retention principle behind the advice ‘connecting to the audience’: speakers should put effort into making the information relevant, useful and interesting to the audience. In fourteen textbooks, this technique is linked to retention (17.5%; twelve English-language textbooks and two Dutch-language textbooks).¹¹² Five other authors use statements similar to DeVito’s quotation.¹¹³ How do the authors believe the relationship between connecting to the audience and retention is established, how can this connection take shape in a speech and in which part of the speech should it be applied? Those questions will be addressed in this section.

Connection to retention

A few authors expand on the connection between relevance to the audience and retention. Osborn & Osborn (1997)¹¹⁴ and Verderber (2000) both use the term “filter” to explain this principle:

Relevance is also important to retention. Our minds filter new information as we receive it, associating it with things we already know and unconsciously evaluating it for its potential usefulness or importance. (Osborn & Osborn, 1997, p. 388)

Rather than acting like sponges that absorb every bit of information, most of us act more like filters: We listen only to that information we perceive to be relevant. Relevance is the personal value that people find in information when it relates to their needs and interests. Relevance might be measured by an audience’s “need to know.” (Verderber, 2000, p. 230).

¹¹² *English-language sub-corpus*: Ehninger, Gronbeck & Monroe (1980), Ross (1980), Walters (1993), Osborn & Osborn (1997), Gaulke (1997), Dowis (2000), Vasile & Mintz (2000), Verderber (2000), McConnon (2002), DeVito (2003), Naistadt (2004), Khan-Panni (2009); *Dutch-language sub-corpus*: Morse (1987), Witt (2009).

¹¹³ Ross (1980), Walters (1993), Osborn & Osborn (1997), Verderber (2000), McConnon (2002).

¹¹⁴ Osborn & Osborn (1997) consider this to be an important retention technique, judging by no less than 9 excerpts in which they refer to it.

Following these explanations, audience members often unconsciously retain information that is connected to their own interests, knowledge or needs. McConnon (2002) formulates this most explicitly:

Juries remember only 60% of what they are told. Why? The case is not about them. No matter how hard they try, people have difficulty paying attention to presentations that aren't about them. People are primarily interested in themselves. [pp. 83–84]

So, according to these authors, it is in a speaker's best interest to make the relevance clear to the audience and help the information be processed.

Speaker strategies to make relevance clear

How can speakers make this relevance clear to the audience? Authors discuss several options. According to Morse (1987), thinking about the relevance should be part of the preparation for a presentation. A speaker should be able to answer the question which points are most important for the audience to remember. Naistadt (2004) underlines the importance of taking the audience's perspective when preparing the speech:

Just as a perfect hostess knows whether to serve dinner guests an exotic meal of Tibetan yak or simple American steak and potatoes, communicators must know their audience in order to deliver an effective message. This requires an intimate understanding - of your listeners' needs and concerns - an understanding you acquire by investing some time analyzing your audience up front, and using the information you gather to tailor your message so that it speaks to the values and interests of that audience, thereby giving it a reason to want to hear you. [p. 105]

After the preparation phase, a speaker can clarify the relevance in the speech itself by relating information to examples that the audience is familiar with, as Verderber (2000) explains:

[...] always ask yourself in what way the material you plan to present is truly important to the audience, and emphasise that connection in your speech. For example, in a speech on Japan, a topic that may seem distant from the audience's felt needs and concerns, you can increase the perception of relevance by focusing on the importance of Japanese manufacturing to the U.S. economy and local jobs. In a speech on the Egyptian pyramids, you can increase perception of relevance by relating their construction to contemporary building construction. In any speech you give, it is up to you to show how the information relates to the audience's needs and interests. [pp. 230–231]

Osborn and Osborn (1997, p. 388) also advise to choose “examples close to the lives of audience members”. McConnon (2002) opts for a more direct approach for involving the audience:

Talk about them, their problems and their concerns. The more times you can add the words 'you' or 'yours' the more interest you create for your audience. While it is your presentation, it is all about *them* and for *them*. [p. 84]

Part of the speech

Some authors prefer specific parts of the speech to connect to audience. Osborn and Osborn (1997) and Gaulke (1997) point to the introduction and conclusion to most effectively connect to the audience. Both textbooks recommend to make the relevance clear in the beginning of the speech and to refer to it once more in the conclusion (“reinvolve” the audience, as Osborn and Osborn call it—p. 233).¹¹⁵ Verderber (2000) and DeVito (2003) think establishing the relevance is most important in the introduction. Lastly, Khan-Panni (2009) sees the core message (or *propositio*) as the main part of the speech for connecting the speaker’s intentions to the audience’s needs:

The core message is a single sentence that summarises your speech or presentation and states your main purpose. That last bit is most important: you must have a purpose that links your passion with the value or benefit that your listeners will derive. Both must be present for it to be meaningful. [p. 71]

2.5.12 Final statement

The final statement is attributed to retention in 20% of the corpus (twelve English-language and four Dutch-language textbooks).¹¹⁶ In the textbooks, it is unmistakably connected to the concluding part of a presentation. This final position in the speech may explain its ‘retention value’. Detz (1984) emphasises the pivotal position of the final sentence:

If you wrote a good speech, your final words were strong and memorable. In fact, your ending was probably the best part of the whole speech. Allow it to sink in. [p. 124]

Korswagen (1988) underlines this importance as well:

¹¹⁵ This particular advice is closely related to the circle technique (Section 2.5.13.2.5.13).

¹¹⁶ *English-language sub-corpus*: Gondin et al. (1983), Wilson & Arnold (1983), Detz (1984), Wilder (1986), Lucas (1989), Rozakis (1995), Simmons (1996), Osborn & Osborn (1997), Urech (1998), Atkinson (2004), Anholt (2006), Leanne (2009); *Dutch-language sub-corpus*: Korswagen (1988), Oomkes (2000), Steehouder et al. (2006), Van der Horst (2007).

Be sure to use a resonating final sentence, which, owing to a concise or witty formulation, attaches itself to your audience's memory. [p. 108]¹¹⁷

Connection to main message

Ten authors who link the final statement to retention also recommend to connect it to the main idea or message of the presentation.¹¹⁸ With this strategy, the speaker kills two birds with one stone: the presentation has a clear wrap-up, and a preferred position to influence memory is used to reinforce the central idea. The authors studied use a varied terminology, from “drive home the central idea” (Wilson & Arnold, 1983, p. 184) via “help the audience to remember the essence of the message” (Osborn & Osborn, 1997, pp. 90–91) and “a [...] statement that encapsulates the key message” (Atkinson, 2004, p. 291) to “take-home message” (Anholt, 2006, p. 64); these are all variations on the theme ‘linking the final statement to the main message’. Simmons (1996) is the most detailed and elaborate about the “final punch”:

Basically, this is a one-sentence statement that hits the audience with the most important idea of your speech. It is your last chance to influence your audience, and this statement is one of the main ones it will remember. [p. 38]

Furthermore, Urech (1998) suggests that this strategy can help the audience to remember it over a longer period of time (two weeks):

What one fact or word do you want your audience to remember for two weeks? It might be the name of your company or your desired end result. Phrase it as the very last sentence of your presentation. [p. 4]

Preferred rhetorical techniques for the final statement

The final statement first and foremost refers to a part of the presentation that is strongly connected to influencing retention—the conclusion. Textbook authors describe it as “the final punch”, the “final sentence” or the “last words”. This way, this strategy shows a resemblance to the ‘one-liner’ or ‘soundbite’, a retention strategy discussed in Section 2.5.10; the main difference is that the ‘final sentence’ is explicitly connected to the concluding part of the presentation. ‘Final sentence’ can be seen as an umbrella term; it is a rhetorical strategy that can be applied via various rhetorical techniques. Atkinson (2004) describes this as follows:

Given that this [the final statement] is the last thing the audience will hear, every attempt should be made to package it in as punchy and

¹¹⁷ Korswagen (1988, p. 108): “Zorg ook voor een klinkende afsluitende zin, die zich door kernachtige of geestige formulering vasthaakt in het geheugen van uw publiek.”

¹¹⁸ Gondin et al. (1983), Wilson & Arnold (1983), Wilder (1986), Lucas (1989), Simmons (1996), Osborn & Osborn (1997), Urech (1998), Atkinson (2004), Anholt (2006), Oomkes (2000).

memorable a way as possible—which can often be done by using the rhetorical toolkit described earlier. [p. 291]

The “rhetorical toolkit” that Atkinson refers to contains a large variety of rhetorical techniques, some of which are highlighted in the textbooks. Lucas (1989, pp. 182–183) for instance advises to use a “brief quotation that [...] captures your central idea” or a “dramatic statement”. The dramatic statement contains a significant portion of pathos in Lucas’ view; he gives the example of a student who gave a speech on the topic of suicide; only in the final sentence did he reveal that the “friend” that he had talked about during the speech was in fact himself.

Osborn and Osborn (1997, p. 229) state that “to provide some concluding remarks that stay with your listeners” and to “develop memorable conclusions”, the speaker can use “many of the techniques that create effective introductions”. They explicitly refer to the circle technique—“using the same technique to close a speech that you used to open it can balance your speech”—which, in turn, is a rhetorical strategy that can entail a variety of rhetorical techniques (e.g. tropes and figures—see Section 2.5.13).

2.5.13 Circle technique

“Refer to the opening”, “come full circle”, “tie the speech together”, or the Dutch “cirkelstructuur”: textbook authors use various descriptions for the technique in which the speaker refers to the opening of the presentation in the concluding part. In this thesis, I refer to this rhetorical technique as ‘circle technique’ (following Andeweg, De Jong & Wackers, 2008). In almost one fifth of the textbooks (fifteen in total; eight English-language and seven Dutch-language textbooks) authors relate such a reference to the introduction to information retention.¹¹⁹ Regarding frequency, the English-language and Dutch-language sub-corpora seem to be rather balanced.

Most authors explicitly connect the concluding part of the speech (*peroratio*) to retention and consider the circle technique to be an element of an effective conclusion. In doing so, they establish a somewhat indirect link between the circle technique and retention. However, some authors connect the circle technique more explicitly and directly to retention, such as Bloch and Tholen (1991):

You can finish powerfully by restating your initial idea in more or less the same words. By doing so, your listeners will better recognise your message and will remember it more easily. This ‘round’ structure of your presentation will help you to keep applying the same style, as it

¹¹⁹ *English-language sub-corpus*: Kenny (1982), Wilson & Arnold (1983), Detz (1984), Lucas (1989), Osborn & Osborn (1997), Gaulke (1997), Urech (1998), Laskowski (2001); *Dutch-language sub-corpus*: Bloch & Tholen (1991), Oomkes (2000), Janssen et al. (2002), Wiertzema & Jansen (2004), Hertz (2005), Van der Horst (2007), Witt (2009)

were to draw the bow with which you will release the arrow—your message. [p. 28]¹²⁰

Urech (1998) agrees and provides an example of an effective circle technique—returning to an analogy used in the introduction:

The last words out of your mouth are the most important words you utter because they have the best chance of being remembered. The most elegant and satisfying way to end your speech is to refer back to your beginning. In his speech to EDS managers, Dick King began by talking about the magnificent Swiss Alps and mountain climbing. In his conclusion he returned to his analogy to illustrate how his group had reached the summit. [pp. 28–29]

The circle technique could have an attention drawing function, since the technique to which the speaker refers in the conclusion is often applied to draw the attention in the introduction. Gaulke (1997, p. 33) argues that the conclusion is “a flip-flop of the introduction”: it should end with grabbing the attention one last time and an ideal way to achieve this is to “return to the theme of your opening”.

Four authors¹²¹ propose to use a structure marker to explicitly indicate the reference to the introductory technique, such as “when I began my session today ... Let’s go back and review...” (Laskowski, 2001, pp. 186–187) or “in the beginning of my presentation I asked myself...” (Wiertzema & Jansen, 2004, p. 62).¹²²

A side-effect of the circle technique appears to be that the audience will appreciate its use. Six authors who relate the circle technique to retention also use various phrases to describe its affective effects.¹²³ They refer to the circle technique as “elegant and satisfying” (Urech, 1998, p. 28–29), mention its ability to provide a “sense of closure” as it creates symmetry (Osborn & Osborn, 1997, p. 233) or state that it gives the speech “psychological unity” and an “extra touch of class” (Lucas, 1989, p. 183). So, the circle technique does not only remind the audience of the speech structure, but is also particularly effective as a pathos technique in the *affectus*—the final part of the conclusion which is traditionally reserved for an emotional appeal to the audience. It

¹²⁰ Bloch & Tholen (1991, p. 28): “Zo kun je ook een krachtig eind aan je verhaal maken door je beginidee met ongeveer dezelfde woorden te herhalen. Je luisteraars herkennen je boodschap daardoor beter en ze zullen hem gemakkelijker onthouden. Deze ‘ronde’ opbouw van je presentatie helpt jou om dezelfde stijl te blijven hanteren, en om als het ware de boog te spannen waarmee je de pijl – je boodschap – afschiet.”

¹²¹ Detz (1984), Laskowski (2001), Wiertzema & Jansen (2004) and Van der Horst (2007).

¹²² Wiertzema & Jansen (2004, p. 62): “ ‘Aan het begin van deze presentatie vroeg ik mij af of ...’ ”

¹²³ Kenny (1982), Lucas (1989), Osborn & Osborn (1997), Gaulke (1997), Urech (1998), Laskowski (2001) and Wiertzema & Jansen (2004).

is not clear whether this aspect of the circle technique could also be related to information retention.

2.5.14 Quotation

“Certain words and phrases you hear or read are so forceful and unforgettable that you exclaim ‘I wish I’d said that’”—here, Sprague & Stuart (1996, p. 183) express why they advise speakers to “use short quotations to make ideas clear and memorable”. They are not alone: the quotation is connected to retention in twelve other textbooks (in 32.5% of the total corpus; ten English-language textbooks, three Dutch-language textbooks).¹²⁴

The ‘quotation’ is a rhetorical technique that is suitable for clarifying or illustrating abstract ideas, which accounts for its quality to make a message more memorable, according to four authors.¹²⁵ Ironically, Walters (1993, p. 131) uses a quotation by motivational speaker and author Mark Sanborn; he mentions the quotation as one of his favourite illustrative techniques, as illustration “is what makes the point understood and memorable”. Booher (2003, p. 83) describes the quotation as one of the “extras” that “make your key points memorable”. In case a speech is too long, Booher advises to cut some key points rather than extras such as quotations.

Eight authors list the quotation as one of the techniques to design an effective conclusion—the part of the speech they believe the audience remembers best.¹²⁶ Osborn & Osborn (1997) give the most elaborate example of how a quotation can be embedded in the conclusion:

Brief quotations that capture the essence of your message make effective conclusions. For example, if one literary quotation opens a speech, another on the same theme can provide an elegant sense of closure. Susie Smith opened her speech on job satisfaction with a quotation from William Faulkner that linked work and unhappiness. She closed the speech with a more positive quotation from Joseph Conrad that summed up the meaning of satisfying work:

I like what is in work - the chance to find yourself. Your own reality - for yourself, not for others - what no other can ever know.

These concluding remarks put the seal on Susie's message: that the search for work must be much more than finding a job; rather, that we must prepare ourselves for an occupation that will help us find, define, and create ourselves and our world. [p. 231]

¹²⁴ *English-language sub-corpus*: Wilson & Arnold (1983), Detz (1984), Walters (1993), Sprague & Stuart (1996), Gaulke (1997), Osborn & Osborn (1997), Laskowski (2001), Booher (2003), Anholt (2006), Tracy (2008); *Dutch-language sub-corpus*: Blum (1982), Van der Horst (2007), Witt (2009).

¹²⁵ Blum (1982), Wilson & Arnold (1983), Walters (1993), Booher (2003).

¹²⁶ Detz (1984), Gaulke (1997), Osborn & Osborn (1997), Laskowski (2001), Anholt (2006), Van der Horst (2007), Tracy (2008), Witt (2009). The example by Osborn and Osborn (1997) is reminiscent of the circle technique (see Section 2.5.13).

2.5.15 Example

In order for the audience to remember key points of the presentation, the speaker should use examples to clarify and animate them. At least, that is advised in 15% of the textbooks in the total corpus (English-language sub-corpus: nine textbooks, Dutch-language sub-corpus: three textbooks).¹²⁷ Most authors connect the example to concepts such as *illustration*, *anecdote* and *story*. “Illustration” and “example” appear to refer to similar techniques. According to Lucas (1989), “example” is an overarching category; he considers illustrations, anecdotes and narratives to be “extended examples”. However, Rozakis (1995), Osborn and Osborn (1997) and Booher (2003) suggest that the example is a specific type of illustration (e.g. Booher, 2003, p. 153: “Example: specific illustration that will clarify and make the key points memorable”). For this overview of retention techniques, I have assumed that the terms ‘example’ and ‘illustration’ refer to the same category. This category does not include ‘anecdote’, ‘story’ or ‘narrative’ (for those, see Section 2.5.2).

This section first focuses on the possible retention effect of the example, which occasionally appears to be ascribed only to specific types of examples. Second, it addresses how the use of the example that might establish an unwanted (retention) effect.

Various types of examples connected to retention

Examples influence retention because they clarify the more content-specific information and offer a varied way of explaining and detailing the key points of the presentation. Naistadt (2004) explains that examples can be used to balance out the presentation (in this case the example is a form of “anecdotal support material”):

If a recipe calls for two tablespoons of curry powder and you add one cup, you are in danger of sending your gourmet meal down the drain and your dinner guests for the water jug. Public speaking works the same way. The body of your communication puts forth the key ideas or messages you want your audience to take away and act upon. Therefore, you must ask yourself, "How can I present them in a way that is both credible and memorable?" The answer is to balance the nuts-and-bolts data (statistics, factual evidence) in your case with enough anecdotal support material (examples, personal stories, analogies) to engage and convince your listeners so they'll want to remember and act upon what you've told them. [p. 128]

Oomkes (2000, p. 255) proposes to “try and come up with an example for every essential point in the speech: they could be the only things people remember.”¹²⁸

¹²⁷ *English-language sub-corpus*: Ehninger et al. (1980), Lucas (1989), Osborn & Osborn (1997), Rozakis (2005), Simmons (1996), Verderber (2000), Booher (2003), Naistadt (2004), Atkinson (2004); *Dutch-language sub-corpus*: Blum (1982), Oomkes (2000), Janssen et al. (2002).

¹²⁸ Oomkes (2000, p. 255): “Probeer bij ieder essentieel punt in de lezing een treffend voorbeeld te bedenken: het zouden wel eens de enige zaken kunnen zijn die men onthoudt.”

Authors distinguish quite a few subtypes of examples. Osborn and Osborn (1997) first connect the general technique *example* to retention, after which they discuss the specific types of brief, extended, factual and hypothetical examples:

Examples serve as verbal illustrations. They help arouse interest, clarify ideas, sustain attention, personalize a topic, emphasise your major points, demonstrate how your ideas can be applied, and make it easier for listeners to remember your message. Brief examples mention specific instances. Extended examples contain more detail and give the speaker more time to build impressions. Factual examples are based on actual events and persons. Hypothetical examples are invented by the speaker to represent reality. Use people's names to personalize examples and magnify their power. [p. 197]

Some other authors only link a specific subtype of the example to retention. Simmons (1996, p. 156) only attributes a memorable quality to so-called “qualifying examples”, which “qualify, or make significant, statements or content in your speech”. Atkinson (2004) however believes only humorous examples will do the trick.

Warnings

Just as with the use of anecdotes (Section 2.5.2) and humour (2.5.7), a speaker who uses examples to illustrate a key point runs the risk of the examples being remembered instead of the message. Janssen et al. (2002) illustrate this warning with an example:

Avoid that people will only remember the example and not what it intended to illustrate. Think of the marketing expert who asked all present to stare at their zipper. He would have failed when the audience would have only remembered the staring and would have forgotten that it was all about increasing brand awareness. [p. 356]¹²⁹

Lucas (1989, p. 125) believes “the easiest way to ruin a fine example is to read it dully from your notes”. To prevent this, he recommends to “‘talk through’ your extended examples without relying on your notes” while practising.

2.5.16 Audience participation

Actively involving the audience in the presentation can increase retention. Hertz (2005) promotes it as follows:

¹²⁹ Janssen et al. (2002, p. 356): “Voorkom dat men zich later alleen het voorbeeld nog herinnert en niet meer weet wat daarmee geïllustreerd werd. Denk bijvoorbeeld aan de marketingdeskundige die alle aanwezigen naar het lipje van de ritssluiting van hun gulp liet staren. Hij zou gefaald hebben als het publiek zich later alleen maar het staren zou herinneren en vergeten zou zijn dat het om het belang van naamsbekendheid ging.”

When you can motivate the audience not to listen and look passively to what you are presenting, but actively participate, you will keep them more attentive and they will better remember what it is about. [p. 23]¹³⁰

In almost 14% of the textbooks in the total corpus, this technique is explicitly linked to retention (nine English-language textbooks, two Dutch-language textbooks).¹³¹ The authors of these textbooks generally feel that audience participation is a promising retention strategy and present a great deal of possible activities to stimulate it, but they also feel that it is a challenging and time-consuming technique.

Retention effect of audience participation

The retention effect is often related to the fact that an active participation will increase learning effects.¹³² Walters (1993) is most explicit about this connection between active learning and retention:

Get the audience to experience the concepts themselves through audience participation. Audience participation is—in my humble opinion—the best learning tool. Listeners explicitly remember the things you have them do themselves. [p. 128]

She also presents some statistics by the scholar Edgar Dale, which suggest that “people will remember 80 percent of what they hear, see, and do” (Walters, 1993, p. 131). In this case, the “doing” represents the audience participation and it is the superlative—the addition of “doing” to “hearing” and “seeing” would provide the highest retention effect. McConnon (2002) also presents numbers to back up the idea that audience participation leads to an increased retention. Although Walters and McConnon both draw the conclusion that “doing” enhances retention most, McConnon’s figures differ:

People remember: [...]
+ 70% of what they read, hear, see done and explain to someone else.
+ 90% of what they read, hear, see done, explain and do themselves
[p. 92]

Walters’ and McConnon’s statistics suggest that audience participation is one of the most effective techniques to enhance retention, which makes it all the more remarkable that this strategy is not advised more frequently.

¹³⁰ Hertz (2005, p. 23): “Als je ervoor kunt zorgen dat je publiek niet passief luistert en kijkt naar wat je presenteert, maar zelf actief meedoet, dan houd je hun aandacht beter vast en zij onthouden beter waar het om gaat.”

¹³¹ *English-language sub-corpus*: Ross (1980), Smith (1991), Walters (1993), Gaulke (1997), Vasile & Mintz (2000), Laskowski (2001), McConnon (2002), Booher (2003), Anholt (2006); *Dutch-language sub-corpus*: Hertz (2005), Witt (2009).

¹³² This is discussed by Ross (1980), Walters (1993), Laskowski (2001), McConnon (2002), Hertz (2005) and Anholt (2006).

Strategies for audience participation and related warnings

Audience participation may not be frequently advised for two reasons: it takes considerable effort and involves risks. Gaulke (1997, p. 49) underlines that it “takes a little more time to use audience involvement than to give a straight lecture”, but he states that “the increased attention and retention factors are worth it”. As in most other textbooks that discuss audience participation, Gaulke uses the term as a container for more specific rhetorical techniques and activities to establish audience involvement. He lists no less than fourteen activities, of which “discussion”, “audience-initiated questions” and “brainstorming” are a few. Smith (1991) and Laskowski (2001) both suggest that the activity of a “final exam” or “summary by the audience”, in which the audience will be asked to put forward the most key points of the presentation rather than the speaker listing them. Smith (1991, p. 45) advises that “the questions should deal with those points that you particularly want the audience to remember”, and even proposes to reward the audience with prize money: “If you gave a good presentation, you should have no money left over at the end of the test.”

Although such activities can increase retention, textbook authors warn against the risks. Atkinson (2004) is particularly critical on audience participation and sees quite a few possible bumps in the road, most often caused by a lack of preparation and management by the speaker. For example, if not managed well, a discussion could lead to a digression from the key points or make audience members feel ignored. Furthermore, when audience participation is overdone it could harm a speaker’s ethos, as the listeners might feel that they have to put in too much work themselves.

2.5.17 Rhetorical question

Asking a rhetorical question—a question that encapsulates the answer or that the speaker does not expect the audience to answer—is advised to enhance retention in 12.5% of the textbooks in the corpus (English-language sub-corpus: 20%, Dutch-language sub-corpus: 5%).¹³³ The memorable quality of the rhetorical question lies in the fact that it involves the audience and makes the listeners think, according to most of the textbook authors. Leanne (2009, p. 105) mentions the rhetorical question as one of the “practices” that make Obama “excellent at driving points home”. The former US president “raises rhetorical questions as a useful technique for focusing attention on key information”; these questions “help to emphasize points and crystallize attention around important issues” (p. 106). Atkinson (2004) explains the elaborative effect of a rhetorical question as follows:

The fact that questions in everyday conversation put us under pressure to come up with a response means that, even though members of an audience know that they are not actually going to have to answer the speaker’s question, it will still make them sit up and start wondering what’s coming next. [p. 192]

¹³³ *English-language sub-corpus*: Detz (1984), Cook (1989), Gaulke (1997), Osborn & Osborn (1997), McConnon (2002), DeVito (2003), Atkinson (2004), Leanne (2009); *Dutch-language sub-corpus*: Van der Horst (2007), Witt (2009).

Two authors link the retention function of the rhetorical question to the conclusion. Van der Horst (2007) claims that what is said at the end of a speech will be remembered best and consequently advises readers to end with a rhetorical question as an invitation for a follow-up presentation.¹³⁴ Osborn and Osborn (1997) show that a rhetorical question can make the end of a presentation more memorable with the following example:

Annette Berrington opened her speech on the use of seat belts with a rhetorical question, "How many of you buckled up on your way to school this morning?" Her final words were "Now that you know what a lifesaver seat belts are, how many of you will buckle up on the way home?" This final question echoed the beginning and served as a haunting reminder to use seat belts. Had she closed with "Remember, seat belts save lives," the effect would not have been as dramatic and memorable. [p. 230]

2.5.18 Call to action

Inciting the audience to do something, to get involved or to undertake some form of action is mentioned as a retention technique in 12.5% of the textbooks (English-language sub-corpus: 20%, Dutch-language sub-corpus: 5%).¹³⁵ In almost all cases (nine out of ten textbooks), the call to action is explicitly restricted to the concluding part of the speech. As Tracy (2008, p. 165) says:

A call to action is the best way to wrap up your talk with strength and power. [...]
Drive the final point home. Regardless of whether the audience participants agree with you or are willing to do what you ask, it should be perfectly clear to them what you are requesting. [pp. 165–166]

The remaining advice about the call to action is generally quite similar to Tracy's. A few authors specify their advice. Verderber (2000) and Booher (2003) indicate that the preferred genre for a call to action is the persuasive speech. Gaulke (1997) is the only author who does not limit the use of a call to action to the wrap-up of the speech. She lists the advice "make them do" as one of the three ways to "reach into their souls", which is an important overall strategy in order to achieve retention:

How many presenters have you heard over the years? What do you remember from what was said? If you're like most people, you don't remember much. Most presenters fade quickly from our memories. The

¹³⁴ Van der Horst (2007, p. 55): "Wat u aan het einde zegt, wordt onthouden. [...] Eindig met een sterke retorische vraag; u zet daarmee uw publiek aan het denken en uw toespraak krijgt hoe dan ook een vervolg: 'Zal de toekomst een andere ...?'"

¹³⁵ *English-language sub-corpus*: Ross (1980), Detz (1984), Gaulke (1997), Verderber (2000), Laskowski (2001), McConnon (2002), Booher (2003), Tracy (2008); *Dutch-language sub-corpus*: Van der Horst (2007), Witt (2009).

ultimate connection for any speaker is to have some type of long-lasting effect on the audience. Here are three ways to reach into their souls:

[...]

Make them do. Give them the “how to” tools to make the change.

Tell them how. Tell them why. Tell them to go do it. If they're not going to change in some way after your presentation, why bother making it in the first place? Give them a pat on the back. Give them encouragement.

[p. 21]

2.5.19 Parallelism

“Phrase your ideas in parallel (similar, matching) style for ease of comprehension and memory” (DeVito, 2003, p. 177) —a similar advice can be found in seven other textbooks (10% of the total corpus, all English-language textbooks).¹³⁶ All eight authors treat parallelism as a stylistic device, defining it more or less as Simmons (1996) does:

Basically, parallel structure groups words or phrases that “copy” or echo each other for emphasis and impact. [p. 62]

As this rather abstract definition might be difficult to grasp for most readers, six out of seven authors back up their advice with examples.¹³⁷ Detz (1984, p. 69) relies on a few presidential phrases to make her point clear, such as the following Richard Nixon quotation: “Where peace is unknown, make it welcome; where peace is fragile, make it strong; where peace is temporary, make it permanent.”

While Detz’s examples discuss parallelism as a ‘local’ stylistic phenomenon, three other textbooks advise a parallel formulation of the presentation’s overarching main points. Lucas (1989) provides the following example:

Try to Use the Same Pattern of Wording for Main Points

Consider the following main points for an informative speech about the benefits of running.

Ineffective	More effective
I Regular running increases your endurance.	I Regular running increases your endurance
II Your sleeping pattern is improved by regular running.	II Regular running improves your sleeping pattern
III It is possible to help control your weight by regular running.	III Regular running helps control your weight

The set of main points on the right follows a consistent pattern of wording throughout. Therefore, it is easier to understand and easier to remember than the set on the left. [p. 156]

¹³⁶ *English-language sub-corpus*: Wilson & Arnold (1983), Detz (1984), Lucas (1989), Simmons (1996), Sprague & Stuart (1996), Osborn & Osborn (1997), Dowis (2000), DeVito (2003).

¹³⁷ Only Wilson & Arnold (1983) do not provide an example of parallelism.

Sprague and Stuart (1996, p. 135), who claim that “ideas that are phrased in concise, colorful, parallel language are more likely to be remembered both by speaker and by listeners”, also emphasise this link to the overall speech structure; they state that the use of parallel sentence structures “augments the techniques of signposting, previews, and reviews [...], all of which you use to make your organisation clear to your listeners.” Osborn and Osborn (1997) believe that parallel phrasing as a “strategic repetition helps listeners remember the message” (p. 206). In two other fragments in their book, they explicitly connect formulating key points in a parallel structure to retention.

2.5.20 List of three

According to Fahnestock (2011, p. 248), “...many memorable phrases have just three elements, usually ordered by increasing syllable length”. The retention advice to use a ‘list of three’, also referred to as ‘tricolon’ by some authors, is found in 12.5% of the overall corpus (English-language sub-corpus: 17.5%, Dutch-language sub-corpus: 7.5%).¹³⁸

Authors seem to agree with the general remark that “descriptive phrases, lists, and adjectives are more memorable when they travel in threes” (Cook, 1989, p. 176), but some authors emphasise more specific variants of the list of three. Atkinson (2004) even dedicates a few pages to this technique and discusses a variety of types and subtypes, such as a list of three identical words (Tony Blair’s “education, education and education”), different words (*liberté, égalité, fraternité*), phrases, clauses and sentences. Leanne (2009) introduces the term “triadic extension”, with which she refers to variants of the ‘tricolon’:

When seeking to drive points home and paint clear pictures, Obama sometimes uses three words, three phrases, or even three parallel paragraphs, to underscore his points. These practices are variations of “tricolon.” I will refer to them here as “triadic extension.” For example, on the night of his Iowa Caucus win, Obama stated: I know how hard it is. It comes with *little sleep, little pay, and a lot of sacrifice*. [p. 119]

Favourite sources for exemplary lists of three appear to be Caesar (“*veni, vidi, vici*”, mentioned in two books), Lincoln (e.g. “government of the people, by the people, for the people”, mentioned by three authors) and—the source that is cited most frequently—Churchill (four authors).¹³⁹ The authors studied seem to be keen on the well-known “blood, sweat and tears” anecdote to explain the force of the series of three, as this quotation from Cook (1989) illustrates:

¹³⁸ English-language sub-corpus: Detz (1984), Cook (1989), Urech (1998), Dowis (2000), Atkinson (2004), Tracy (2008), Leanne (2009); Dutch-language sub-corpus: Spolders (1997), Janssen e.a. (2002), Van der Horst (2007)

¹³⁹ Caesar: Detz (1984), Janssen (2002); Lincoln: Detz (1984), Cook (1989), Atkinson (2004); Churchill: Cook (1989), Spolders (1997), Janssen (2002), Atkinson (2004).

So great is the ear's affection for triplets, that it altered Winston Churchill's most famous line. People remember Churchill as having said "blood, sweat, and tears." But he didn't. He actually said, "I have nothing to offer but blood, toil, tears, and sweat." [p. 177]

Van der Horst (2007, p. 68) moves away from the word or sentence level by referring to the memorable effect of tripartite division in the overall speech structure. He claims that "this stylistic device [...] will be easier remembered by the audience." He gives the example of dividing a speech into "thesis, antithesis and synthesis".¹⁴⁰ Although he refers to it as a "stylistic device", Van der Horst's take on the list of three seems to be closely related to the technique 'systematic order' (see Section 2.5.22).

2.5.21 Comprehensible language

Keeping it short and simple is advised as a retention technique in nine textbooks of the overall corpus (English-language sub-corpus: 12.5%, Dutch-language textbooks: 10%).¹⁴¹ According to the authors, speakers can make their text more comprehensible on various levels: by keeping their sentences short and by choosing words that are easy to understand.

Keeping it short

According to DeVito (2003, p. 177) short sentences are "more forceful and economical", "easier to comprehend" and "easier to remember". Detz (1984) and Cook (1989) explain that the effectiveness of short sentences lies within the context of public speaking: a presentation is meant to be listened to, which means that the sentence length should be limited. Kirchner (1983) warns against using long sentences, as they can ask too much of the listeners' ability to absorb information and can unnecessarily complicate the speech delivery by the speaker as well.

Keeping it simple

The use of short sentences goes hand in hand with the use of comprehensible vocabulary. Oomkes (2000) explains its relationship with retention as follows and supports it with a reference:

A listener remembers meaningful information more easily. [...] People can remember normal sentences two to five times better than nonsense sentences (e.g. "rich pencils have learnt to sniff!" (Marks & Miller, 1964)). That is an argument for each speaker—and certainly the more intellectual one—to use comprehensible language. [p. 254]¹⁴²

¹⁴⁰ Van der Horst (2007, p. 68): "Dit stijlmiddel ligt gemakkelijk in het gehoor en de structuur wordt door het publiek ook sneller onthouden."

¹⁴¹ *English-language sub-corpus*: Detz (1984), Cook (1989), Noonan (1999), Dowis (2000), DeVito (2003); *Dutch-language sub-corpus*: Kirchner (1983), Krusche (1986), Oomkes (2000), Witt (2009).

¹⁴² Oomkes (2000, p. 254): "De toehoorder onthoudt gemakkelijker informatie die betekenis heeft. Uit het hoofd leren van nonsenswoordjes (fieg, ijft, sli, gnop, enz.) is veel

The idea that using an easily accessible ‘register’ or vocabulary can influence retention is shared by several authors. Cook (1989) gives the following example of making a complex sentence easier to understand:

Both comprehension and retention can be increased by following the same rules.
[...]
Complex:
I wish to underscore the necessity of adopting a frugal mentality.
Simpler:
I want to stress the need for greater care in spending.
Simpler Yet:
We’ve got to be more careful about how we spend our money. [p. 96]

Detz (1984, pp. 49–50) quotes Mark Twain, who revealed that he rather used “city” and “cop” instead of “metropolis” and “policewoman”: “If most of your words have three, four, or (God forbid) five syllables, your writing will be too weak to impress your audience.” Additional advantages of simple language are that it is usually shorter, and that one will still receive the same price if one is paid by the word—according to Twain (in Detz, 1984). Noonan (1999) rigorously refutes the riposte that simple language is not eloquent. She cites part of a speech from the film *The Godfather part II*, which is short and to the point, and states:

It is simple, unadorned, direct, declarative. There isn't anything in it that is “eloquent”, and yet taken as a whole it is deeply eloquent: It tells you something big in an unforgettable way. [p. 50]

2.5.22 Systematic order

To aid the audience in remembering important information, the speaker should provide a logical, comprehensible structure of the presentation. According to 17.5% of the authors in the overall corpus, such a ‘systematic order’ of a speech can increase retention (English-language sub-corpus: 10%, Dutch-language sub-corpus: 25%).¹⁴³

According to quite a few authors a systematic order will enable the audience to follow the storyline and allows them to see the coherence between key points, which causes a possible retention effect. Interestingly, in the Dutch-language corpus a specific variant of the systematic order is found: the ‘kapstok’ (literally: hall stand

moeilijker dan van bestaande woorden. Mensen kunnen twee tot vijf keer zo goed normale zinnen onthouden als onzinnigen (b.v. ‘rijke potloden hebben snuiten geleerd!’ (Marks & Miller, 1964). Dat is een argument voor iedere spreker - en zeker van belang voor de meer geleerde - om begrijpelijke taal te gebruiken.”

¹⁴³ *English-language sub-corpus*: Ross (1980), Cook (1989), Rozakis (1995), Naistadt (2004); *Dutch-language sub-corpus*: Krusche (1986), Luijk (1987), Van der Meiden (1991), Claasen-Van Wirdum et al. (1992), Bloch (1995), Braas (2001), Cornelis (2002), Wiertzema & Jansen (2004), Steehouder et al. (2006), Van der Horst (2007).

or coat rack, more generally translated as ‘something to hold on to’). Some authors already offer some templates for a logical order.

Enabling the audience to connect the key points

A systematic order helps the audience to understand the relationship between key points and the main message. Ross (1980, p. 190) supports this view with a reference to a study which, according to him, shows that “audiences listening to well-organised speeches score higher on retention tests than audiences hearing poorly organised speeches”—with the nuance of “other things being equal”.¹⁴⁴ Ross stresses that a systematic order can be useful for both the audience and the speaker:

A well-organised message and outline should help give you the confidence that results from the knowledge that you have done your homework and that you have a system. The systematic structure should make it easier for you to remember your material and easier for the audience to understand and retain it. [p. 127]

Quite a few authors refer to the limited human capacity to process information to explain why a systematic order is an effective retention strategy. Cornelis (2002) explains that speakers should categorise the information and create patterns as a memory aid for the audience, also on the level of overall speech structure.¹⁴⁵ Speakers should not rely on listeners to deduce such patterns and make logical connections themselves, Claasen-Van Wirdum et al. claim (1992, p. 255). As soon as listeners are trying to do so, they will no longer have attention for the speech. Therefore, speakers should design a “building plan” for an informative speech, draw up a clear structure and provide enough reference words and connecting sentences to allow the main points to “stick better”.

Van der Meiden (1991, p. 10) adds a historical perspective to the effectiveness of a systematic order: the eras in which rhetoric and science “flourished” were characterised with a strong emphasis on the spoken and written word, as opposed to our current “massive visual culture”. Most performances were “live”, which caused speakers see the importance of a clear structure and to stress that structure of their story in a speech. This way the “subject matter would be easier to remember”. The speaker could still employ structural varieties, but the “building” would “remain intact”. It is not quite clear whether he feels that speeches still benefit this much from such a structure nowadays.

¹⁴⁴ Ross (1980, p. 190) refers to Thompson (1960) as one of the studies that support this advice.

¹⁴⁵ Here, the similarity of ‘systematic order’ and ‘chunking’ (Section 2.5.6) becomes evident. As a nuance, chunking appears to be more related to the process of information selection, whereas systematic order is more about a logical organisation of the key points. Still, authors also refer to a logical order when they discuss chunking. Both techniques underline the importance of organisation as an overarching rhetorical retention principle.

Offering the audience a 'kapstok'

In the Dutch-language corpus, four authors mention what seems to be a specific form or interpretation of a systematic order: offering the audience a *kapstok* (literally a hall stand or coat rack, in English).¹⁴⁶ In short, it means that the speaker gives the audience a few mental 'hooks' to 'hang the speech to'. Wiertzema and Jansen (2004, p. 48) explain that people "cannot absorb 'new' information limitlessly". They state that the relationship between "old" (familiar) and "new" knowledge in a speech should be 70% to 30%. The audience can use the old knowledge as a "kapstok" to understand and interpret new information.

Cornelis (2002) uses the term when explaining the importance of a clear speech structure:

A good structure takes into account how people absorb and process information. [...] Hence, structuring means combining the elements, the information. You can organise these by putting together what belongs together and labelling their coherence. You can consider such 'overarching' message as the 'kapstok' the details hang on to. In jargon, it is also called 'synthesis'. [p. 23]¹⁴⁷

She explains that the "kapstok" of a story is not the same as its summary: "... a summary is a collection of miniature jackets; without a coat rack, they would fall to the floor" (Cornelis, 2002, p. 23).¹⁴⁸ Bloch (1995, p. 83) connects this technique to the main message of the speech: once a speaker has established what message the audience needs to "take away", it needs "stepping stones" or a "carrier". Bloch explains this idea with a few examples, such as the following:

Situation: Saturday afternoon before the official opening of the Floriade [large agricultural/horticultural exhibition]. I have the task to harmoniously motivate all employees.
I start by sweeping the floor with a broom and telling the story of my recent visit to Cape Kennedy. In a huge hangar I bump into a man who is sweeping that large space all by himself. "What are you doing?" "Can't you see I am busy helping or astronauts to set foot on the moon?" The 'kapstok' is a combination of the broom (a visual element) and the words (an auditive element). At the end of my presentation I

¹⁴⁶ Bloch (1995), Cornelis (2002), Wiertzema & Jansen (2004), Steehouder et al. (2006).

¹⁴⁷ Cornelis (2002, p. 23): "Een goede structuur houdt rekening met de manier waarop mensen informatie tot zich nemen en verwerken [...] Structureren betekent dus het samennemen van de elementen, de gegevens. Je ordent deze door bij elkaar te zetten wat bij elkaar hoort en de samenhang te benoemen. Die overkoepelende boodschap kun je beschouwen als de 'kapstok' waaraan de details hangen. De vakterm ervoor is ook wel 'synthese'."

¹⁴⁸ Cornelis (2002, p. 23): "Een kapstok is dus niet hetzelfde als een samenvatting. Een samenvatting zou slechts een korte weergave van de resultaten zijn, juist zonder toevoeging van dat betekenisvolle kader. Om in de metafoer te blijven: een samenvatting is een verzameling verkleinde jasjes; zonder kapstok vallen die op de grond."

return to the broom, to indicate that everyone—from ticket salesperson to guide, from gardener to hostess—contributes to the success of the Floriade. [p. 83]¹⁴⁹

Standard structures for a speech

Some authors do not only state that a logical structure could help to increase retention, but they also offer a few frequent structure templates. Rozakis (1995, p. 95) advises that “in order to help your audience understand your points and recall them with clarity and pleasure, you need to organise your speech into a recognisable and easy-to-follow pattern”; she discerns the largest variety of standard structures a speaker could adhere to, such as a chronological, numerical, spatial, cause-effect or topical order. Cook (1989) relies on the well-known philosopher Kant to provide the most effective structures for enhancing retention:

Well, twentieth-century psychologists say Kant was right, at least to this extent: Information that comes to us pre-organised according to *when* things happen (time), *where* things happen (space), or *how* things happen (cause/effect) is much easier to understand and remember than information that is not organised at all. [p.71]

2.5.23 *Partitio*

The *partitio* can be described as the overview of the speech structure or indication of its main points, often provided in the introduction. It is considered to be a retention technique in twelve textbooks. Dutch-language authors advise the *partitio* more often than their English-language counterparts: the technique is connected to retention in 17.5% and 12.5% of the respective sub-corpora.¹⁵⁰ Remarkably, most English-language textbooks that refer to the *partitio* as a retention technique are published between 1983 and 1995, whereas most Dutch-language textbooks are from a more recent period (2002–2008). The technique seems to be closely related to ‘chunking’ (see Section 2.5.6) and ‘systematic order’ (see Section 2.5.22).¹⁵¹

¹⁴⁹ Bloch (1995, p. 83): “Situatie: de zaterdagmiddag voor de officiële opening van de Floriade. Aan mij de taak om het voltallige personeel eensgezind te motiveren. Ik begin door met een bezem het podium te vegen, en het verhaal te vertellen over mijn recent bezoek aan Cape Kennedy. In een enorme hangar kom ik een man tegen die in z'n eentje die grote ruimte veegt. 'Wat bent u aan het doen?' 'Ziet u niet dat ik bezig ben te helpen onze astronauten op de maan te zetten?' De kapstok is een combinatie van bezem (een visueel element) en woorden (het auditieve element). Aan het einde van mijn presentatie kom ik terug met de bezem, om aan te geven dat iedereen – van kaartjesverkoper tot gids, van tuinman tot gastvrouw – een steentje bijdraagt aan het succes van de Floriade.”

¹⁵⁰ *English-language sub-corpus*: Ross (1980), Lucas (1989), Walters (1993), Rozakis (1995), Verderber (2000); *Dutch-language sub-corpus*: Palm-Hoebé & Palm (1989), Bloch (1995), Janssen et al. (2002), Jansen et al. (2004), Hertz (2005), Van der Horst (2007), Gerritsen (2008)

¹⁵¹ The retention techniques *partitio*, ‘chunking’ and ‘systematic order’ are related, as they all emphasise the importance of the organisation of a speech. However, while chunking and

Tell them what you are going to tell them

Textbook authors often link this technique to the well-known three-step “Tell them” principle, to which Lucas (1989) refers in the following fragment:

...follow the old maxim: “Tell ‘em what you’re going to say; say it; then tell ‘em what you’ve said.” In other words, preview the main points of your speech in the introduction, and summarise them in the conclusion. This will make your speech not only easier to understand but also easier to remember. [p. 284]

Four more authors refer to this adage, in which the *partitio* is the first of the three steps.¹⁵² Among those authors is Hertz (2005), who also explains why announcing the main points and repeating them throughout the presentation is very important—even though it might seem superfluous:

... listeners find it very difficult to follow the main storyline well and remember what is told when all that is offered is spoken information. [p. 19]¹⁵³

Part of the introduction

Not surprisingly, the *partitio* is closely linked to the introduction of the speech. Nine authors explicitly make that connection.¹⁵⁴ In classical rhetoric, the *partitio* was one of the techniques to fulfil the *docilem* function in the introduction (enabling the audience to understand the core of the presentation, cf. Andeweg & De Jong, 2004). Gerritsen (2008) is the only advisor to use this classical jargon:

The second element of the *docilem* is the presentation of the organisation; this means you will tell how the presentation is structured. Preferably use a slide for this, as with visual support the organisation will better stick with your audience. [p. 38]¹⁵⁵

systematic order deal with the general structure principles ‘categorising related bits of information into main points’ and ‘logically ordering main points’, the *partitio* is specifically concerned with the explicit announcement of those key points or the speech structure, preferably in the introduction.

¹⁵² The final step, “tell them what you told them”, is often used to describe the retention technique ‘summary’ (see Section 2.5.3).

¹⁵³ Hertz (2005, p. 19): “...dat het voor toehoorders heel moeilijk is om de draad van het verhaal goed te volgen en te onthouden wat er wordt verteld, als ze alleen gesproken informatie aangeboden krijgen.”

¹⁵⁴ Ross (1980), Lucas (1989), Walters (1993), Bloch (1995), Rozakis (1995), Verderber (2000), Jansen et al. (2004), Van der Horst (2007), Gerritsen (2008).

¹⁵⁵ Gerritsen (2008, p. 38): “Het tweede element van het *docilem* is de presentatie van de opzet, dit houdt in dat je vertelt hoe je presentatie is opgebouwd. Gebruik hierbij bij voorkeur een dia, want met visuele ondersteuning blijft de opzet beter bij je publiek hangen.”

Although Gerritsen refers to such a classical introductory function, she links the retention quality of the *partitio* to the modern presentation strategy of visual support. Gerritsen is not alone in this: Hilgers & Vriens (2003) also suggest that a visual display of the main points might increase retention.

Warning

Not all authors agree that announcing the key points of the presentation in the introduction helps the audience to remember them. Angenent & Van Vilsteren (1998) are outspoken in their warning against using the *partitio*:

Don't use the introduction to tell how the presentation is structured. It is boring to tell and the audience will not remember it anyway. [p. 74]¹⁵⁶

However, Gerritsen (2008) has anticipated this objection against the use of the *partitio* and confidently refutes it:

Experienced speakers sometimes think that presenting the structure is 'didactic'. They feel a well-structured presentation does not need to be introduced with an explicit overview of its structure. Practice shows otherwise. I have never experienced that the audience could follow the presentation effortlessly whenever the structure was not indicated in advance, even if the presentation was clear in terms of structure. The essence is that, apart from the goal, the audience also needs a 'stepping stone' when listening. The concrete expectation of what is to come, makes it easier to follow and remember the story. [p. 38]¹⁵⁷

Bloch (1995), finally, states that an effective structure overview should be not be too extensive:

Provide the tenor of your talk in a short sentence.
Take the following metaphor: "Today, we will drive our black company vehicle from Groningen to Venlo, and we will go via Den Bosch [three Dutch towns]"
The inexperienced speaker would already explain in the introduction how he would get into the car, start the engine, turn left here and right there, before stopping to get some coffee... Anyway, all unnecessary

¹⁵⁶ Angenent & Van Vilsteren (1998, p. 74): "Gebruik de inleiding niet om te vertellen hoe de presentatie is opgebouwd. Dat is namelijk saai om te vertellen en het publiek onthoudt dat toch niet."

¹⁵⁷ Gerritsen (2008, p. 38): "Ervaren sprekers vinden soms dat het weergeven van de opzet 'schools' is. Zij vinden dat een goed opgebouwde presentatie niet hoeft te worden ingeleid met een expliciete aanduiding van de opzet. De praktijk weerspiegelt dit echter. Ik heb nog nooit meegemaakt dat het publiek de presentatie moeiteloos kon volgen als vooraf de opzet niet was aangegeven, hoe helder de presentatie qua structuur ook was. De crux is dat het publiek naast het doel als kapstok bij het luisteren ook de opzet nodig heeft. De concrete verwachting over wat gaat komen, maakt het eenvoudiger het verhaal te volgen en te onthouden."

and superfluous. Who would remember? Allow yourself the freedom to change course while you talk. A concise overview offers this possibility. [p. 74]¹⁵⁸

2.5.24 Clear message

To make sure that the audience will retain the main information, the speaker needs to determine a clear message of the presentation—this is a paraphrase of the advice that was found in seven textbooks (English-language textbooks: 5%, Dutch-language textbooks: 12.5%).¹⁵⁹ Two views on determining a clear message can roughly be found in the advice: the first is oriented on the selection of the most important information, the second is focused on the formulation of the main message.

Selection of information

The orientation on the need for the speaker to select key information is mainly found in the Dutch-language textbooks. Eckhardt and IJzermans (1994) describe it as follows:

...it is important that you clearly establish which purpose you prioritize. If you emphasise the transfer of information, you will have to choose what information should be most important. A selection is necessary, because the human ability to absorb and the memory are limited. [p. 20]¹⁶⁰

Tonckens (1985), Bloch (1995), Wagenaar (1996) and Braas (2001) discuss similar advice. Wagenaar (1996) is most specific and states that a speaker should never present more than two basic ideas in a presentation. Braas (2001) provides the reader with a simple rule of thumb for selecting the key message:

You should be able to formulate the answer to your central question in a few sentences: it represents the core idea of your presentation. Moreover, it indicates what listeners should have remembered afterwards at the very least. [p. 25]

¹⁵⁸ Bloch (1995, p. 74): “Geef in een korte zin de strekking van uw presentatie aan. Bij wijze van metafoor: ‘Vandaag rijden we in onze zwarte bedrijfsauto van Groningen naar Venlo, en wel over Den Bosch. De onervaren spreker zou tijdens zijn inleiding al vertellen hoe hij de auto instapt, hem start, hier linksaf slaat, daar rechtsaf, waar hij stopt voor een kopje koffie... Enfin, allemaal onnodig en overbodig. Wie onthoudt het? Gun uzelf de vrijheid om van koers te veranderen terwijl u praat. Een beknopt overzicht biedt deze mogelijkheid.”

¹⁵⁹ *English-language sub-corpus*: Allen (1987), Walters (1993); *Dutch-language sub-corpus*: Tonckens (1985), Eckhardt & IJzermans (1994), Bloch (1995), Wagenaar (1996), Braas (2001).

¹⁶⁰ Eckhardt & IJzermans (1994, p. 25): “.....is het belangrijk dat u duidelijk vaststelt welke doelstelling u voorop wilt stellen. Als u de nadruk legt op informatie-overdracht, zult u moeten kiezen welke informatie er uit moet springen. Een selectie is nodig, omdat het menselijke opnamevermogen en het geheugen beperkt zijn.”

Formulation of the main message

The English-language authors—Allen (1987) and Walters (1993)—are not so much concerned with the way to select a main message, but rather focus on its “clear” or “simple” formulation. Allen (1987) explicitly connects the clarity of the message to human memory:

Sometimes members of your audience won't seem to get any of what you are saying. Others may retrieve it correctly at the moment, but the human memory is so poor that only minutes later several components of the message will have simply been lost and no longer available to a listener's consciousness.

[...]

To return to our point: Since your message is going to have to get through a number of psychological roadblocks, you would be well advised to keep the message itself as clear as possible. [pp. 40–41]

For Walters (1993), it is all about keeping it simple. She explains that ‘simplicity’ is connected to memorability and clarity, and emphasises in clear lists of three that the word ‘simple’ should have a positive meaning:

They will remember your talk, if they can. So make sure they can. Try the "kiss" system: keep it sweet and simple. Simple does not mean insignificant, foolish, or childish. It means memorable, clear, and understandable.

[...] People will remember what you have to say if you just make it so *incredibly simple* that they *can* remember it. [p. 54]

2.5.25 *Propositio*

In classical rhetoric, the *propositio* formed an important part of the speech order. The *propositio* was considered to be the central thesis of the speech around which the remainder of the speech revolved and for which the speaker provided arguments. This rhetorical strategy is connected to retention in 7.5% of the overall corpus modern public-speaking textbooks (both in the English-language and Dutch-language textbooks: 7.5%).¹⁶¹ The modern terminology for techniques similar to the *propositio* varies, but it is often referred to as ‘central idea’ or ‘purpose statement’.

Wilson and Arnold (1983) explain that stating a purpose or central idea has been shown to positively affect retention:

All experiments testing what happens when speakers assert their central ideas and purposes in so many words show that this practice helped the listeners to understand and retain what they heard. This argues that you ought to tell your listeners exactly what your purpose is, unless

¹⁶¹ *English-language sub-corpus*: Wilson & Arnold (1983), Walters (1993), Khan-Panni (2009); *Dutch-language sub-corpus*: Oomkes (2000), Braas e.a. (2001), IJzermans & Van Schaaijk (2003).

more will be lost than gained from early revelation of your central idea.
[p. 109]

The important role that is attributed to the purpose statement suggests that the speakers should take enough time to formulate the main idea of the presentation when they prepare their presentation. Walters (1993, p. 54) states that, as a speaker, “you need to make a decision on what you want them to *remember*”. That decision will then evolve into a purpose statement:

First decide what your mission is—what you want your listeners to do differently after they hear you. What main thought *must* they remember to accomplish that? That is the core of your presentation. [p. 54]

After formulating the central idea, the speaker needs to decide where in the speech to include it. What is the preferred position for the *propositio* or purpose statement? The retention advice on the *propositio* shows that it can be included in the entire speech, with a preference for the introduction and conclusion. IJzermans and Van Schaaijk (2003, p. 131) refer to Wagenaar (1996), who claims that it is best to start a presentation with the conclusion of a study, as “that is the core of the message and it is most important that this message will stick”.^{162,163} As an answer to the question “what do you want them to remember and apply?”, Khan-Panni (2009, p. 71) advises to “write down your core message and refer to it constantly”. Oomkes (2000, p. 270), treats the *propositio*—in relation to retention—as a concluding technique. He states that the audience usually recalls the concluding part best, and therefore a speaker can wrap-up with “a sentence that represents the contents of the purpose statement and possibly with a playful or humorous paraphrase of such purpose statement”.¹⁶⁴

¹⁶² IJzermans & Van Schaaijk (2003, p. 131): “Volgens Wagenaar kan een wetenschappelijke voordracht het best beginnen met de conclusie van uw onderzoek. Dat is immers de kern van de boodschap en het belangrijkste is dat deze kern blijft hangen.”

¹⁶³ The quotation by IJzermans & Van Schaaijk (2003) shows that the retention advice on the *propositio* needs to be treated with nuance and that the technique’s effect might depend on various factors. For one, genre seems to be important: in the quotation, it is advised to start a presentation with the conclusion of a study, which then should be treated as the core message. That points to the genre of informative or—more specific—research presentations. However, in another presentation genre, e.g. in a persuasive context, it might not be advised to start with the conclusion or core message. Furthermore, it shows that the definitions of purpose statement and core message are closely related and sometimes seem to overlap, as a quotation from Khan-Panni (2009, p. 72) underlines: “the core message is a single sentence that summarises your speech or presentation and states your main purpose”. However, a purpose statement does not always have to be similar to the concluding statement of the presentation. The purpose of a presentation could be announced in the introduction as “the intention to answer main question X”, whereas the conclusion would be the actual answer to such main question. This shows that definitions of specific rhetorical techniques are not always clear and can vary per advisor.

¹⁶⁴ Oomkes (2000, p. 270): “Sluit dan de lezing af met een zin, die de inhoud van de doelzin weergeeft en eventueel met een speelse of humoristische parafrase daarvan.”

The *propositio* is not connected to retention very frequently, which can be seen as remarkable considering its historical significance and the outspoken way in which some authors stress its retention effects. The overlap between the *propositio* and retention techniques as ‘summary’, ‘repetition’ and ‘clear message’ (see Sections 2.5.3, 2.5.4 and 2.5.24, respectively) might account for this. In the summary, it is often advised to repeat the core message of the speech. The current section discusses advice that is dedicated to the *propositio* as a ‘stand-alone’ technique; in such advice, it is not categorised as part of another, related retention technique.

2.6 Warnings (*vitia*): how information retention can be hindered

Next to advice on techniques that can positively influence retention, authors also regularly issue warnings about how audience information retention can be hindered (*vitia*, in classical rhetorical terms). As Andeweg & De Jong (2004) described in their study into speech introductions, warnings are conceptually closely related to techniques. The didactic function of warnings can be described as making readers more sensitive for the limitations of a technique and for the circumstances in which it can be applied effectively. This way, the discussion of *vitia* shows that public speaking can be an exercise for a speaker in preparing a balanced speech.

Section 2.6.1 first presents a general overview of the warnings that are most frequently mentioned connected to audience information retention. For the retention techniques to which it applied (such as visual aids or humour), relevant warnings were already discussed in Section 2.5. Therefore, the sections that follow discuss warnings which could not (completely) be connected to specific rhetorical techniques that are discussed in Section 2.5: information overload (Section 2.6.2), ineffective conclusions (Section 2.6.3), complex language use (Section 2.6.4), and two warnings less frequently given: ineffective delivery skills and ineffective use of style (Section 2.6.5). Appendix A.5 contains a collection of textbooks fragments related to one specific warning (information overload), to give an impression of all text fragments related to a single warning.

2.6.1 Overview of most frequent warnings

The most important warnings are listed in table 2.3 and can be characterised as ineffective variants of some of the most important techniques advised in the overall corpus (see Section 2.4.2): an ineffective use of visual aids and an ineffective structure and organisation (information overload, ineffective conclusion). The warning categories ‘ineffective conclusion’ and ‘ineffective visual aids’ contain various subtypes of warnings. Some textbooks contain references to multiple subtypes. Table 2.3 also shows that the techniques which are specifically related to one of the sub-corpora (e.g. ‘humour’ in the English-language sub-corpus or ‘clear message’ in the Dutch-language sub-corpus) have their counterparts in the most frequent types of warnings per sub-corpus (‘ineffective use of humour’, ‘complex language’).

Table 2.3: Overview of most frequent warnings in the total corpus of public-speaking textbooks from the period 1980–2009 (N= 80). See Appendix A.5 for a complete overview.

English-language textbooks 1980–2009 (N=40)			Dutch-language textbooks 1980–2009 (N=40)		
<i>Vitia</i>	%*	Text-books	<i>Vitia</i>	%*	Text-books
Information overload	50	20	Ineffective use of visual aids	17.5	7
Ineffective use of visual aids	35	14	<i>Visuals: distraction</i>	12.5	5
<i>Visuals: distraction</i>	32.5	13	<i>Visuals: dominance</i>	7.5	3
<i>Visuals: legibility</i>	27.5	11	Complex language	17.5	7
<i>Visuals: complexity</i>	22.5	9	Information overload	15	6
<i>Visuals: loss of contact with audience</i>	22.5	9	Ineffective conclusion	10	4
<i>Visuals: dominance</i>	20	8	<i>New information in conclusion</i>	7.5	3
<i>Visuals: sloppiness</i>	12.5	5	<i>Abrupt ending</i>	5	2
<i>Visuals: boring</i>	10	4	Focus on details	7.5	3
<i>Visuals: ineffective variant</i>	7.5	3	Speech is too long	5	2
<i>Visuals: no variation in titles</i>	2.5	1	Unbalanced time distribution	5	2
Ineffective conclusion	32.5	13	<i>Partitio</i>	2.5	1
<i>Postponed ending</i>	22.5	9	Ineffective delivery skills (reading the speech)	2.5	1
<i>Abrupt ending</i>	15	6	Using jargon	2.5	1
<i>Details in conclusion</i>	10	4	Euphemisms	2.5	1
<i>Summary</i>	2.5	1	Abbreviations	2.5	1
<i>Announcement of the conclusion</i>	2.5	1	Non-supportive language	2.5	1
Ineffective delivery skills	17.5	7			
Ineffective use of humour	12.5	5			
Ineffective use of style and figures of speech	7.5	3			

* Bold-faced are the frequencies for the main categories of warnings. The warning categories 'ineffective conclusion' and 'ineffective visual aids' contain various subtypes of warnings; the frequency for the main category is based on the number of textbooks that contain at least one warning related to that main category. Some textbooks contain references to multiple subtypes of the main categories 'ineffective visual aids' and 'ineffective conclusion'. For a complete overview of the *vitia* and examples of fragments from the corpus related to a specific type of warning, see Appendix A.5.

Table 2.3 indicates differences between the corpora as well. First of all, it shows a difference in quantity: the English-language sub-corpus contains more warnings, which is probably related to the fact that a larger part of the English-language sub-corpus is devoted to retention (see Section 2.4.1). In line with this, the English-

language sub-corpus contains a greater diversity of warnings. An example is the category ‘ineffective use of visual aids’: while the English-language sub-corpus discusses nine variants, the Dutch-language sub-corpus only refers to two subtypes of warnings.

2.6.2 Information overload

The most important retention-related warning that was found in the corpus of textbooks is not to overload your audience with information (32.5% of the overall corpus; English-language sub-corpus: 50%, Dutch-language sub-corpus: 15%).¹⁶⁵ Roughly, two subtypes of information overload warnings can be distinguished: a general warning against using too much information in the speech and a more specific warning against using too many main points in the speech. Both are addressed in this section.

Too much information in general

Authors who warn against information overload usually make a general remark on the danger of a knowledge overflow. Ehninger et al. (1980) pour this idea into a paragraph that is quite representative for similar warnings by other authors:

Whatever form your speech takes, however, your purpose remains the same: to help the audience grasp and remember important data and ideas about your subject. Hence, you should not view an informative speech as an opportunity to parade your knowledge; nor should you try to see how much ground you can cover in a given period of time. Rather, you should concentrate on securing understanding and on presenting materials in such a way that they will remain firmly planted in listeners’ minds. [pp. 274–275]

Atkinson (2004, p. 95) underlines the significance of this warning by calling it “the biggest single problem I have come across since starting to study speeches and presentations”. Audiences that are “subjected to massive and painful information overload” will “at best, [...] retain no more than a fraction of what was said” and “at worst [...] give up making the effort to pay attention altogether, fall asleep and end up no wiser than they were at the start” (Atkinson, 2004, p. 95).

Two authors use the metaphor of a bombardment in this respect. Van der Spek (1998, p. 5) states that a speaker should “limit the information on offer”; a presentation should be aimed at making an audience “understand, accept and

¹⁶⁵ *English-language sub-corpus*: Carnegie & Carnegie (1977), Walter & Scott (1979), Ehninger et al. (1980), Ross (1980), Wilson & Arnold (1983), Cook (1989), Lucas (1989), Walters (1993), Rozakis (1995), Simmons (1996), Sprague & Stuart (1996), Osborn & Osborn (1997), Urech (1998), Verderber (2000), McConnon (2002), DeVito (2003), Booher (2003), Naistadt (2004), Atkinson (2004), Khan-Panni (2009); *Dutch-language sub-corpus*: Bloch (1991), Wagenaar (1996), Angenent & Van Vilsteren (1998), Van der Spek (1998), Hertz (2005), Gerritsen (2008).

remember” a single proposition which is supported by “two or three arguments”, and an “information bombardment is not the road to follow” (Van der Spek, 1998, p. 5).¹⁶⁶ Booher (2003, p. 73) focuses on statistics and states that a speaker should be “wary of using too many”, as “bombarding your listeners with numbers confuses them, reducing their chances of recalling any”.

Too many main points

Authors in the English-language sub-corpus seem to particularly advise against using too many main points. This type of warning is closely related to the retention advice on the techniques ‘chunking’ (2.5.6) and ‘systematic order’ (2.5.22); most authors discuss it together with the advice to be selective in choosing key points or to turn a list of many sub points into a limited number of main ideas.

Interestingly, this warning can be found across the whole English-language sub-corpus, spanning all three decades studied. Carnegie & Carnegie (1977) give a detailed example of how overloading your talk with information can lead to an unfeasible and undesirable presentation situation:

In one of his talks to teachers, Professor William James pauses to remark that one can make only one point in a lecture, and the lecture he referred to lasted an hour. Yet I recently heard a speaker, who was limited by a stop watch to three minutes, begin by saying that he wanted to call our attention to eleven points. Sixteen and a half seconds to each phase of his subject! [...] If, for example, you are to speak on Labor Unions, do not attempt to tell us in three or six minutes why they came into existence, the methods they employ, the good they have accomplished, the evil they have wrought, and how to solve industrial disputes. No, no; if you strive to do that, no one will have a clear conception of what you have said. It will be all confused, a blur, too sketchy, too much of a mere outline. Wouldn't it be the part of wisdom to take one phase, and one phase only, of labor unions, and cover that adequately and illustrate it? It would. That kind of talk leaves a single impression. It is lucid, easy to listen to, easy to remember. [pp. 120–121]

One of the more recent works in the English-language sub-corpus, Naistadt (2004), provides a similar warning and vividly sketches the listeners’ mood and condition when they are subjected to an overloaded message:

A client of mine had to give an update on departmental progress to the president and CEO of his organisation. I was invited to listen to a demonstration of the presentation and provide feedback. The presentation was to last twenty minutes and, in that time, cover all of

¹⁶⁶ Van der Spek (1998, p. 5): “Beperk de informatie die u wilt aanbieden. Een duidelijke stelling, geschraagd door twee of drie argumenten, is meestal al voldoende voor een toespraak. Uw presentatie moet erop gericht zijn dat de toehoorders die ene stelling begrijpen, accepteren en onthouden. Een informatiebombardement is daarvoor niet de aangewezen weg.”

the department's achievements (approximately fifty) over the past year, and go through each one. After the first few, I became distracted. After the tenth I found myself trying to keep my eyelids from visibly drooping. By the time the demonstration was finished, I had mentally itemized all of my Christmas gifts, birthday presents, and vacation plans for the upcoming year! It was impossible to remain engaged, although the department had indeed accomplished much to be proud of, I had no idea what was truly important. The message was lost in the details. [...] We are on information overload and cannot process, let alone remember, all that you may want to give us, which is all the more reason why you have to be selective and make it easy for us to digest your ideas. [pp. 112–114]

The examples by Carnegie and Carnegie (1977), Naistadt (2004) and most other authors who warn against using too many points show that the consequences could be serious: the audience is hardly able to absorb any information and it will not be able to take home the presentation's main message.

2.6.3 Ineffective conclusion

The importance of the conclusion as a part of the speech in which retention can be influenced was highlighted in Section 2.4.2. It is also reflected in the number of warnings about ineffective conclusions. In just over 21% of the corpus, authors warn against an ineffectively executed conclusion (English-language sub-corpus: 32.5%, Dutch-language corpus: 10%).¹⁶⁷ A speaker can ineffectively conclude a speech in various ways: by postponing the conclusion, by ending abruptly, or by including details or new information in the conclusion.¹⁶⁸

Postponing the conclusion

Ten authors recommend not to postpone the conclusion (12.5%; English-language sub-corpus: 22.5%, Dutch-language corpus: 2.5%).¹⁶⁹ Kenny (1982) and Rozakis

¹⁶⁷ *English-language sub-corpus*: Carnegie & Carnegie (1977), Ehninger et al. (1980), Kenny (1982), Wilson & Arnold (1983), Rozakis (1995), Simmons (1996), Osborn & Osborn (1997), Urech (1998), Gurak (2000), Verderber (2000), McConnon (2002), Anholt (2006), Tracy (2008); *Dutch-language sub-corpus*: Wiertzema & Jansen (2004), Steehouder et al. (2006), Van der Horst (2007), Witt (2009).

¹⁶⁸ When discussing the conclusion, most authors include a general remark about the conclusion's aptness to make a memorable statement. The warnings are often treated in the same section or chapter, which suggests that an ineffective conclusion will consequently not positively influence audience retention—according to the authors. This should be kept in mind reading the textbook quotations in this section: to quotations that do not contain a direct reference to retention, it applies that a general remark on the connection between conclusion and retention was already made in the textbook.

¹⁶⁹ *English-language sub-corpus*: Carnegie & Carnegie (1977), Ehninger et al. (1980), Kenny (1982), Rozakis (1995), Simmons (1996), Urech (1998), Verderber (2000), McConnon (2002), Anholt (2006); *Dutch-language sub-corpus*: Witt (2009).

(1995) call this phenomenon the “false ending”. Rozakis (1995) explains how it works and why it can have such a negative effect:

Few things annoy an audience as much as a false ending. Sensing that the speech is coming to a close, the audience begins to gather up its psychological and physical belongings only to find that the speaker has taken a deep breath and started anew. False endings cheat the audience and destroy much of the effect of a speech. An effective conclusion ties together all the strands of your speech while telegraphing to the audience that the end is indeed in sight. [p. 136]

Kenny (1982) agrees that “If you have already said ‘and finally...’ three times”, a speaker should not be “surprised if some of the audience are already chatting among themselves.”

Urech (1998) compares conclusions of speeches with endings in “real life”:

Don’t end by saying, “In conclusion” and then not concluding. Endings are tough. In speeches as well as in real life. Far too many speakers just do not know how to get those final words out. They wander farther and farther down the path of indecisiveness hoping against hope that someone or something will intervene. These are the same people who linger at your front door after a dinner party and cannot bring themselves to say “good night” and leave. [p. 28]

McConnon (2002, p. 50) can relate to Urech’s comparison and describes the situation of a postponed ending as a speaker “who can’t get the landing gear down” and therefore “keeps looping”.

Anholt (2006, p. 64) suggests that such postponed endings could also be linked to problems with the organisation of the speech: the speaker cannot select the main points to address in the conclusion and ends up including “a diverse array of conclusions” which is “impossible for an audience to absorb”. Anholt also gives a clear account of audience behaviour that can be the result of an ineffective conclusion: “They started to look at their watches, and some sheepishly sneaked out of the room when the speaker turned toward the screen” (2006, p. 66).

Abrupt ending

At the other end of the scale are presentations that do not contain a conclusion at all, or in which speakers do not clearly indicate to the audience that the concluding part has started. Such presentations often end abruptly, leaving the audience “startled” (Verderber, 2000, p. 126). Such an abrupt ending is considered as a missed opportunity to influence retention. Overall, nine authors warn against such a sudden

ending (a little over 11% in the overall corpus; English-language sub-corpus: 15%, Dutch-language sub-corpus: 7.5%).¹⁷⁰

McConnon (2002, p. 50) observes that abrupt endings by speakers are often accompanied by a so-called “emergency stop”: “you can almost hear the screech of the brakes as he or she says: *It's 4 o'clock. That's all I have time for. So I'll stop.*” Gurak (2000, p. 75) recognises the practice of speakers who suddenly end with an uninspired final sentence: “all too often, a presenter will give an excellent introduction and a great presentation but then fall flat at the end saying something such as ‘Well, that's all I have for you today’”.

Osborn and Osborn (1997, p. 228) suggest that an abrupt ending is a common problem for inexperienced speakers, who often “end their presentations awkwardly”. “Saying ‘That's it, I guess’ or ‘Well, I'm done,’ accompanied by a sigh of relief, suggests that you have not planned your speech very carefully” and such endings “violate the audience's need for closure” (Osborn & Osborn, 1997, p. 228). Steehouder et al. (2006, p. 280) also connect the abrupt ending phenomenon to poor planning and preparation, which could lead to a speaker uttering “‘that's it’, or a similar cliché”.¹⁷¹

Details and new information in the conclusion

According to Kenny (1982, p. 37), in order for the listeners to remember the concluding remarks “to their dying days”, speakers should “resist the temptation to add something extra”. This means that a speaker should not “thank the audience” or “offer any apologies of any kind” (Kenny, 1982, p.37). Three other authors agree that speakers should not include details such as extensive acknowledgements in the conclusion (5% of the overall corpus; all English-language authors).¹⁷² Anholt (2006, p. 65) prefers “to show the names of [...] collaborators on slides just before I discuss their contributions to the overall work”, in order to “prevent the credits from diluting your final take-home message”.

Remarkably, while the warning not to include distracting details in the conclusion is only discussed in the English-language sub-corpus, the warning against adding new information in the conclusion is only treated by Dutch-language textbooks (just under 4% of the overall corpus, 7.5% in the Dutch-language corpus). Wiertzema and Jansen (2004), Van der Horst (2007) and Witt (2009) all state that the conclusion is the part of the speech that is remembered best, before adding a concise warning

¹⁷⁰ *English-language sub-corpus*: Carnegie & Carnegie (1977), Osborn & Osborn (1997), Gurak (2000), Verderber (2000), McConnon (2002), Tracy (2008); *Dutch-language sub-corpus*: Wiertzema & Jansen (2004), Steehouder et al. (2006), Witt (2009).

¹⁷¹ Steehouder et al. (2006, p. 280): “Een goed slot blijft het best bij de toehoorders hangen. Om voldoende zeker te zijn dat er op dit punt niets verkeerd gaat, is het verstandig om ook het slot volledig uit te schrijven. Dat geldt in elk geval voor de uitsmijter: als u die niet van tevoren hebt bedacht, is de kans groot dat u op het moment van de presentatie niets meer weet te bedenken dan ‘dat was het’ of een soortgelijk nietszeggend cliché.”

¹⁷² Wilson & Arnold (1983), Urech (1998) and Anholt (2006).

such as “the conclusion should never contain new subject matter or new arguments” (Wiertzema & Jansen, 2004, p. 61).¹⁷³

2.6.4 Complex language

The *vitium* not to use complex language is more popular in the Dutch-language textbooks than in the English-language works (mentioned in 17.5% versus 10% of the sub-corpus, respectively).¹⁷⁴ This warning can roughly be divided into two subtypes: the use of complex, long sentences, and the use of incomprehensible words (e.g. jargon). It appears to be the counterpart of the technique ‘comprehensible language’ (Section 2.5.21).

Firstly, speakers who would like their message to be retained should not use complex sentences. Complexity is often connected to sentence length, as Detz’s quotation (1984) illustrates:

Try this experiment: Take a sample page from your draft and count the number of words in each sentence. Write the numbers down and average them. If you average twenty or more words per sentence, you’d better start cutting. Why? Because an audience can’t follow what you’re saying if you put too many words in a sentence. Your message just gets lost. If you don’t believe me, read your longest sentence aloud, then read your shortest sentence aloud. See which one is more powerful—and more memorable. [p. 62]

Kirchner (1983) and Hilgers & Vriens (2003) agree and point to the cognitive load of an audience: as they can only absorb a limited amount of information, audience members will only selectively remember information when long and complex sentences are used.

Complex language also refers to using a register that is not familiar to the audience, often labelled as ‘jargon’.¹⁷⁵ Walters (1993) explains why using jargon may hinder retention:

One barrier to learning may be the presenter’s use of unfamiliar terminology. We like to use big words so people will think we’re smart. Unfortunately, your listeners don’t want you to know just how

¹⁷³ Wiertzema & Jansen (2004, p. 61): “Mensen onthouden van een presentatie het beste de dingen die zij het eerst en het laatst horen. Het middengedeelte wordt minder goed opgepakt. Daarom moeten in de afsluiting de belangrijkste punten van de kern kort maar krachtig worden herhaald. Het slot mag nooit nieuwe stof of nieuwe argumenten bevatten.”

¹⁷⁴ *English-language sub-corpus*: Carnegie & Carnegie (1977), Detz (1984), Walters (1993), McConnon (2002); *Dutch-language sub-corpus*: Kirchner (1983), Krusche (1986), Palm-Hoebé & Palm (1989), Oomkes (2000), Hilgers & Vriens (2003), Hertz (2005), Van der Horst (2007).

¹⁷⁵ Five textbooks advise against jargon: Detz (1984), Walters (1993), Oomkes (2000), Hertz (2005) and Van der Horst (2007).

“unsmart” they are. They’ll nod with a sage expression on their faces and a fog in their minds. [p. 5]

Van der Horst (2007, p. 67) adds that even when “playing a home game” speakers should be “careful using jargon”.

2.6.5 Less frequent warnings: ineffective delivery skills and ineffective use of style

Finally, textbooks contain a few less frequent warnings regarding retention. This section discusses two of those: the warning categories ‘ineffective delivery skills’ and ‘ineffective use of style and figures of speech’.

Ineffective delivery skills

Distracting the audience’s attention from the main message by an ineffective delivery or appearance is mentioned as a *vitium* by 10% of the authors in the corpus.¹⁷⁶ Allen (1987) suggests that the audience’s attention should be on the subject matter, not on the speaker as a person:

If you are a blurt-it-all-out type, it may occur to you that you ought to let the audience know that you’re nervous. I recommend against it. A comedian can do it, for his own unique purposes, but others ought to just get down to work and concentrate on the subject matter, not on self. Since the audience, too, ought to be attending to the subject matter, you should not deliberately distract them by making them think of you. Naturally they’ll be reacting to your physical self, but after the speech you certainly won’t want them to recall nothing but your nervousness, your hairdo, your attire, and your eyeglasses. You’ll want them to recall what you said. [pp. 12–13]

In line with this example, Walters (1993, p. 106) quotes Judi Moreo—a well-known personal trainer/coach/speaker—who “watched a famous woman golfer speak once” that “carried a huge white handbag loaded with junk and plunked it on the lectern”.¹⁷⁷ As Moreo puts it: “I don’t remember a word she said, but I do remember the handbag”. Other habits a speaker should avoid as they might distract the audience from the speech content are making too many or repetitive gestures (with a nervous tic as the ultimate problem), moving around too much or not varying the tone of voice (using a ‘mechanical’ intonation). Laskowski (2001) and Khan-Panni (2009) pay most attention to these delivery issues.

¹⁷⁶ *English-language sub-corpus*: Ross (1980), Kenny (1982), Wilder (1986), Allen (1987), Laskowski (2001), Anholt (2006), Khan-Panni (2009); *Dutch-language sub-corpus*: Wagenaar (1996).

¹⁷⁷ According to her personal website, Moreo is a “one of the most recognised personal growth trainers and coaches in the world.” (Meet Judi. <https://judimoreo.com/>, retrieved October 3rd, 2018).

Ineffective use of style and figures of speech

An ineffective use of style and figures of speech could create a confusing or distracting effect as opposed to enhance retention. This warning is mentioned in 7.5% of the corpus, only in English-language textbooks.¹⁷⁸ Simmons (1996) highlights how antithesis and parallelism can be counterproductive:

Both parallel structure and antithesis are effective techniques, but again, use them sparingly. Remember to only use these techniques on points or sections that are most important for your audience to remember. [p. 63]

Laskowski (2001, p. 124) states that an overuse of stylistic elements can “become distractions for your audience and may steer them away from listening to your message”. Kenny (1982) does not mention specific stylistic techniques, but he explains that an inappropriate word choice can backfire:

The result of trying to be informal can be disastrous. The address can degenerate into conversation, the audience will interrupt and talk among themselves, and the speaker can wander from his theme. Timing goes astray and the event is anything but memorable. [p. 122]

2.7 Support for advice and warnings: references and sources in the textbooks

Sections 2.4.2, 2.5 and 2.6 described the various retention techniques and warnings covered in the English-language and Dutch-language sub-corpora of public-speaking textbooks. It is not always easy to assess the value of recommendations and warnings: to what extent are they supported by references? To find out, the use of references in the public-speaking textbooks was included in the analysis. This section first discusses the number of references that were used (Section 2.7.1); next, it turns to the quality of the references and the way in which sources are integrated into the advice (Section 2.7.2).

2.7.1 Number of references

For each piece of advice or warning mentioned in the public-speaking textbooks, it was registered whether the authors referred to a source. The authors studied tend to use various types of sources, which differ in the extent to the information referred to can be verified. Four different types of references were distinguished: (1) academic sources, (2) other public-speaking textbooks, (3) ‘third-party experiences’ (e.g. the experience of a specific speaker, well-known or unknown—not the author) and (4) authors’ personal presentation experiences. Academic sources can be considered most trustworthy and transparent in order to support public-speaking advice, when based on relevant studies. References other public-speaking textbooks can be checked and to some extent indicate agreement between authors, but the advice is usually not based

¹⁷⁸ *English-language sub-corpus*: Kenny (1982), Smith (1991), Simmons (1996), Sprague & Stuart (1996), Noonan (1999), Atkinson (2004).

on academic studies. References to a presentation experience of a third party and to the author's personal experience are usually comparable to anecdotal evidence—they can be valuable, but are more difficult to verify.

Table 2.4 gives an overview of the total number of references used in the English-language and the Dutch-language sub-corpora. The number of references is broken down into the four types of references mentioned above. The forms of analysis in Appendix A.8 contain an overview of the reference use in each textbook.

Table 2.4: overview of the total number of references used in the English-language and the Dutch-language sub-corpora, and of the percentage of references related to the four source types distinguished. For each source type the percentage of textbooks in the total corpus or sub-corpus containing at least one reference to the source type concerned is represented.

Reference use when providing retention advice/warning	Corpus overall (N=80)	English-language textbooks (N=40)	Dutch-language textbooks (N =40)
Total number of references	257	241	16
% references to an academic source*	15.6%	12.0%	68.8%
% references to a public speaking textbook*	8.2%	8.7%	0
% references to a third-party experience*	69.6%	73.9%	6.2%
% references to personal experience (of the author(s))*	6.6%	5.4%	25%

* Percentage of textbooks in the (sub-)corpus that contain at least one reference to the source type concerned

Overall, in half the number of public-speaking textbooks at least one reference is given to support a recommendation or warning related to retention. A third-party experience is most frequently used as a reference, followed at some distance by references to academic sources. In absolute figures, quite a large gap exists between the number of academic sources and the number of references to a third-party's experiences. Other public-speaking textbooks and the authors' personal experiences are the source types that are least frequently used.

Within the two sub-corpora, a different pattern of reference use can be recognised. The English-language sub-corpus contains thirteen times as many references compared to the Dutch-language corpus. The Dutch-language authors do not seem to value references as highly as the English-language authors, although this claim should be nuanced when taking into account the number of pages dedicated to retention per sub-corpus (see Section 2.4.1). In the English-language sub-corpus, a reference is found in every two and a half pages dedicated to retention, as opposed to

a reference in about every five pages in the Dutch-language sub-corpus. Dutch-language authors prefer references to academic sources. In doing so, they seem to be more selective than their English-language counterparts, who prefer references to other people's experiences. Still, the English-language sub-corpus contains a larger number of references to academic sources than the Dutch-language corpus (twenty-nine versus eleven).

2.7.2 Quality of references

Table 2.4 gives a general impression of the way in which sources are used, but it does not reveal the way in which authors apply references in their textbook. On one end of the spectrum, references are explicitly mentioned and highlighted, but on the other end of the spectrum, sources used are described in an abstract way. How are the various source types integrated into the public-speaking textbooks? This section explores that question by providing examples of reference use of the four source types that are distinguished.

References to academic sources

References to academic studies in the public-speaking textbooks are roughly applied in three ways: (1) a reference to author and year and (sometimes) the full reference in a reference list, resembling common academic practice, (2) an incomplete reference to one or a few source elements (e.g. author, place or research institution), and (3) a generic reference to 'studies' without any details of the source provided.¹⁷⁹

First, an example is given of an extensive reference to an academic source. Here, Atkinson (2004) refers to the authors in the text and provides a complete reference in a footnote. Atkinson also uses the study's results to support his retention advice about the use of anecdotes:

Anecdotes too can be used as illustrative examples to get key points across in a vivid and memorable way, a point that has been underlined by the results of research by Tim Clark and David Greatbatch* into presentations by business gurus such as Tom Peters, Rosabeth Moss Kanter and Gary Hamel. A main finding was that all of them make very extensive use of carefully selected stories, many of which are designed to prompt laughter from the audience. They show how the gurus play on the laughter to make the audience feel part of an 'in-group' that shares the line of criticism or praise being meted out by the speakers to different styles of management. And humour tends to be deployed at those points where an audience might disagree with them, so that it has

¹⁷⁹ Studies that are frequently referred to are Ehrensberger (1945) and Miller (1966) —not the most recent studies. Lucas (1989) provides the most complete references to various academic sources. He refers to Houston (1966) for the technique 'chunking', to Dooling & Lachman (1971) for 'title', to Berg & Paivio (1969) and Jorgensen & Kintsch (1973) for 'imagery', to Quinn (1982) for 'antithese', to Levin & Lesgold (1978) and Jabusch (1982) for 'visual aids', and to Lefferts (1981) for the warning 'visual aids: too complex' (more elaborately described in Besterveld, 2012).

the effect of deflecting any possible dissent. As a result, the world's leading management gurus are never booed from the stage and typically generate very positive audience reaction and a high feel-good factor. [p. 272]

Although it is possible to question the translation of the research results into advice, Atkinson explains the studies quite elaborately and uses cautious language (e.g. “main finding”, “tends to”), which implies a critical and careful interpretation of the source.

Extensive use of references, as shown by Atkinson, is scarce in the corpus of public-speaking textbooks. Even when academic sources are used, the conversion of the study's content into practical public-speaking advice can sometimes be questioned, which is illustrated by the following example (Oomkes, 2000):

A listener remembers meaningful information more easily. [...] People can remember normal sentences two to five times better than nonsense sentences (e.g. “rich pencils have learnt to sniff!” (Marks & Miller, 1964)). That is an argument for each speaker—and certainly the more intellectual one—to use understandable language. [p. 254]¹⁸⁰

Oomkes regularly refers to academic sources in his textbook and his way of integrating references reflects academic practice: a claim is supported with a reference to the author(s) and year of publication; the full reference can be found in the reference list. Such transparent referencing allows a reader to consult the source used—a positive side-effect, for which Oomkes is applauded.

However, in its transparency, it also reveals a possible problem with the translation of research results into public-speaking advice. Related to the example above, Marks & Miller (1964) indeed suggest that syntactically and semantically correct phrases are better recalled than nonsense sentences; however, Oomkes's immediate connection to “understandable language” and reference to “more intellectual speakers” seems a bit hasty. Oomkes appears to refer to comprehensibility on the level of linguistic or stylistic register: using complex, more ‘intellectual’ terms rather than simpler, ‘everyday’ synonyms. Although this line of reasoning might be sensible, such a piece of advice cannot directly be based on Marks's and Miller's study. Just as in Atkinson's example, Oomkes could have used more cautious language instead of affirmative and positive language. Still, Oomkes's reference practice is transparent: it is possible to consult the original source and critically reflect on this rhetorical strategy.

¹⁸⁰ Oomkes (2000, p. 254): “De toehoorder onthoudt gemakkelijker informatie die betekenis heeft. Uit het hoofd leren van nonsenswoordjes (fieg, ijft, sli, gnop, enz.) is veel moeilijker dan van bestaande woorden. Mensen kunnen twee tot vijf keer zo goed normale zinnen onthouden als onzinnigen (b.v. 'rijke potloden hebben snuiten geleerd'! (Marks & Miller, 1964). Dat is een argument voor iedere spreker - en zeker van belang voor de meer geleerde - om begrijpelijke taal te gebruiken.”

A second practice of source use, public-speaking textbooks contain incomplete references to academic sources. For example, authors only refer to a location or institution where the study was performed. This practice is more abstract and less transparent, as it is more difficult to check the original source. The following, rather long, excerpt of Booher (2003) about visual aids contains such ‘circumstantial’ references (the references are bold-faced for clarity reasons):

Why all the visual stimuli? Two reasons — retention and impact. [...] Visuals clarify ideas, aid listener retention, and create audience interest that is difficult to generate any other way [...] Some learn more by what they see, others learn better by what they hear, and still others by what they feel or experience. However, no one would disagree that using all three techniques increases retention and impact dramatically. University studies suggest the same results. **At the University of Wisconsin**, researchers determined that retention improves up to 200 percent when visual aids are used in teaching vocabulary. **Studies at Harvard and Columbia** revealed that presentations with visuals improve student retention by 14 to 38 percent over presentations without visuals. **Studies at the University of Pennsylvania’s Wharton School of Business** demonstrated that the time needed to make a point could be reduced by up to 40 percent when visuals accompany an oral presentation. [...] ***Presentations* magazine and 3M Corporation sponsored a study** to measure the effectiveness of multimedia presentations specifically. The study gauged the reactions of audiences to the same information presented with three different kinds of visual support: electronic slides, overhead transparencies, and text only. Here is what they discovered about information recall, comprehension, and fact recognition: Multimedia presentations were more successful in helping listeners recognise facts, slightly superior for recall of all types of information generally, and markedly superior in helping audiences actually comprehend what the presenter was explaining. [p. 131]

The fragment shows quite a few references to what seem to be academic sources. However, details are absent, which makes the references less transparent and, at first glance, less trustworthy. A reader interested in these studies would have to conduct a small literature study to find them, using the limited amount of information Booher provides. The final reference is an interesting case: it only mentions the sponsors of a study, which leaves the reader to question whether this is an academic study and, if so, how trustworthy it is.

Thirdly, textbooks refer to ‘research’ or ‘studies’ in general, without providing any details whatsoever. Readers will just have to take it for granted that the author has consulted sources on a particular issue; the following examples—by Luijk (1987) and Korswagen (1988), respectively—reflect such a reference practice:

Research shows that we forget \pm 50% of the transferred information within 24 hours. In the following days we forget another 25%. If you

would listen to the same story next week, you would hear many new aspects. A classic example is that of a message that is passed on by five persons in a company, from top to bottom. 22% of the message reached its final destination.¹⁸¹ [p. 50]

Research shows it is ‘normal’ that a human being forgets about 50% of the total amount of offered information within 24 hours, even when listening attentively. In the following 14 days to 2 months he forgets 15 to 25% of the remaining information. So, a very large portion of the offered information will not travel farther than the immediate memory, the so-called short-term memory.¹⁸² [p. 53]

Both Luijk and Korswagen seem to refer to the same studies, as they mention similar numbers.¹⁸³ Korswagen is a bit more precise in paraphrasing the results. However, a reader is not informed about who conducted the study and where it was performed, making it difficult to assess the quality of such a reference.¹⁸⁴

In some fragments, the use of an academic source is only implied: the word ‘research’ or ‘study’ is not mentioned, but the statistics presented by the advisor suggest that some form of empirical research was used to back up advice. An example is Smith’s advice (1991) on retention via visual aids:

We learn through our senses, using each one to a varying degree. Taste accounts for only one percent, and touch only one-and-one half percent. Smell is three-and-one-half percent, and hearing is a surprisingly low eleven percent. The remaining eighty-three percent of the data we gather is from sight! Learning is largely a visual phenomenon. In addition, some interesting statistics have been generated on retention, as shown in the table below.

¹⁸¹ Luijk (1987, p. 50): “Onderzoekingen tonen aan dat wij \pm 50% van de overgedragen informatie binnen 24 uur vergeten. In de daarop volgende dagen vergeten we nog eens 25%. Als je de volgende week hetzelfde verhaal beluistert, hoor je veel nieuwe aspecten. Klassiek is het voorbeeld van een boodschap die mondeling in een bedrijf van boven naar beneden werd doorgegeven door 5 personen. 22% van het bericht bereikte de uiteindelijke bestemming.”

¹⁸² Korswagen (1988, p. 53): “Onderzoekingen hebben uitgewezen dat het ‘normaal’ is dat een mens binnen 24 uur zo’n 50% van het totaal aan aangeboden informatie vergeet, zelfs als hij aandachtig luistert. In de daarop volgende 14 dagen a 2 maanden vergeet hij 15 à 25% van de rest. Een zeer groot gedeelte van de aangeboden informatie komt dus niet verder dan het onmiddellijke geheugen, het zgn. korte-termijngeheugen”.

¹⁸³ Korswagen and Luijk appear to refer to the work of Herman Ebbinghaus, first published in 1885, who carried out an experiment that is considered to be a ‘classic’ in the field of memory psychology (Ebbinghaus, 1913). Being the subject of the experiment himself, he learned lists for a period of 70 hours and attempted to ‘relearn’ the list items with after 20 min, 1 hour, 9 hours, 1 day, 2 days, or 31 days. The results of this led to the well-known Ebbinghaus ‘forgetting curve’ (Murre & Dros, 2015; Baddeley et al., 2009, pp. 193–194). Ebbinghaus’s experiment has been successfully replicated by Murre & Dros (2015).

¹⁸⁴ Remarkably, these two quotations are from textbooks in the end of the 1980s, which might suggest that the study at hand had received some publicity in that time period.

Retention After ...		
	3 hours	3 days
Tell Only	70%	10%
Show Only	72%	20%
Show and Tell	85%	65%

[p. 58]

References to other public-speaking textbooks, third-party experience and personal experience

References to other public-speaking textbooks are made by English-language authors only. Gaulke (1997, p. 85) for instance refers to advisor David Peoples, who “in his book *Presentation Plus*, says that people gain 75 percent of what they know visually, 13 percent through hearing, and 12 percent through smell, touch, and taste.” Walters (1993) takes up a special position in this category, as she collected quotes from interviews she had with—amongst others—presentation experts and uses them to support her advice.

However, academic sources and other public-speaking textbooks are the source types to which English-language authors refer to most frequently; they use third-party experiences most often. These ‘third parties’ can roughly be divided into two categories: well-known and ordinary people. The first category contains ‘usual public speaking suspects’ such as Martin Luther King, John F. Kennedy, Winston Churchill and Barack Obama. In fact, Leanne’s work (2009) is completely about Obama (*Say it like Obama*), so it is not surprising that he is the most frequently quoted speaker in the corpus. The following passage by Noonan (1999) gives an impression on how such celebrity is used as a ‘reference’—in this case Bill Clinton in a warning against using clichés:

A cavalcade of clichés. But the problem was not that it was written badly. It was thought badly. No one left the Capitol that day knowing what Clinton had said, as they knew what Lincoln had said, and Kennedy, and FDR, and Reagan.

Clinton himself didn’t seem to know what he wanted to say in his speech. Perhaps he calculated that if he just said sort of pretty phrases it would sound as if he were communicating big thoughts. But he wasn’t. And so his speech will be little noted and not long remembered. This is unfortunate, because every inaugural address is an opportunity to locate and define the truth, or a truth, of one’s age. Which is, among other things, a public service. [p. 81]

Not only celebrities are included as examples. Urech (1998) for instance uses the experiences from lesser known speakers such as Jan Bergman, President of NutraSweet AG, and more abstract examples such as “a French sales representative” or “a California fitness expert”.

Finally, the authors sometimes explicitly include their own presentation or public-speaking coaching experience to back up their recommendations or warnings.

Quite often, these are examples of anecdotal evidence. Naistadt (2004) takes this very literally, as she presents a personal anecdote to support the memorable quality of anecdotes:

I have discovered through my own experiences as a public speaker that people will remember a well-told story related to a point I've made in a seminar or other speaking engagement for a long time. In some cases, they've come up to me years later and said, "I am still thinking about that story you told! Every time I get into a particular situation, I am reminded of that story." What they are really saying is: they are reminded of the point I was making, which that story I told supported. [p. 129]

2.8 Conclusion and discussion: retention advice in public-speaking textbooks

This concluding section sketches the landscape of rhetorical retention advice. Section 2.8.1 provides an answer to the main question:

What techniques to make a message memorable are advised in public-speaking textbooks?

The section categorises the main retention techniques from the perspective of key concepts in memory psychology. After that, the results of the English-language and Dutch-language sub-corpora are compared (Section 2.8.2).

2.8.1 Retention in modern public-speaking textbooks and ancient rhetoric

This section first summarises the main insights on retention advice and retention techniques that were found in modern public-speaking textbooks and ancient rhetoric, and relates these to insights from memory psychology. Next, it addresses the role of the speaker's memory (*memoria*) and reflects on the public speaking advisory practice (the way techniques are described and the use of sources in textbooks).

Main retention advice and techniques

Just over 5% of the total number of pages in the corpus of modern public-speaking textbooks and a total number of 77 techniques are related to audience information retention. The amount of retention advice and the variety of retention techniques suggests that retention is an important function of a presentation that can be related to almost all steps required in the process of preparing and delivering a presentation. The most frequently mentioned techniques are 'visual aids', 'summary', 'repetition' and 'anecdote'.¹⁸⁵ Furthermore, according to the textbooks consulted, the conclusion is the preferred part of a presentation for a speaker to apply techniques that influence retention.

¹⁸⁵ See Section 2.4.2 for an overview of the twenty most frequently mentioned retention techniques in both the English-language and the Dutch-language sub-corpora of public-speaking textbooks and Section 2.5 for the descriptions of these techniques.

Audience information retention receives less attention in the classical works than it does in the modern public-speaking textbooks. Ancient rhetoricians focus more extensively on the speaker's memory. The few retention techniques advised in classical works can be linked to the classical speech function *docilem parare*: enabling the audience to understand the speech. Similar to the modern textbooks, the concluding part of the speech and the summary (*recapitulatio*) are referred to as influencing listeners' memory. Other ancient retention techniques are the 'statement of the facts' in the introduction, the 'transition', the 'use of a compact style' and the 'use of numbers' (the final two are specifically mentioned by Aristotle).

Upon closer inspection, the overview of frequently advised retention techniques shows similarities to encoding principles from memory theory—visualisation, organisation and elaboration (cf. Baddeley et al., 2009, see Section 1.2). These principles offer a helpful organising perspective (a systematic order) to discuss the varied collection of techniques that was found, and to divide it into three digestible chunks. Such a perspective offers more insight into how the recommended techniques could affect audience retention. At the same time, the classification is a step towards bringing public-speaking advice, rhetorical theory, and memory psychology closer together.

Visualisation. The most frequent strategy to influence audience information retention is the use of visual aids. The retention category 'visual aids' comprises techniques to support a presentation with visuals, such as presentation media (e.g. presentation slides, flip-over), graphics and video (e.g. pictures, graphs) and objects or props (possibly to be used in a demonstration). Next to specific visualisation techniques, the use of visual aids in general is also regularly promoted in the public-speaking textbooks (see Section 2.5.1). Furthermore, techniques linked to mental visualisation are promoted ('metaphors', 'imagery', 'concrete examples'). Warnings on how ineffective use of visual aids can hinder retention are the most frequent *vitia* in the corpus.

Organisation. Secondly, quite a few retention techniques are linked to structuring and organising the presentation. For example, one of the most frequently advised techniques is the 'summary' (see Section 2.5.3). The summary concerns the recapitulation of main points, usually in the conclusion. The summary (or *recapitulatio*) is also one of the few retention techniques that were found in ancient rhetoric. It represents the important retention function that is attributed to the conclusion: both in modern public-speaking textbooks and ancient rhetoric the conclusion is considered to be the part of a speech that is most relevant to influence retention (see Section 2.4.2). The summary can be seen as a specific form of 'repetition', which is another organisational retention technique that is often advised. Repetition forms a broader category that includes repetitive language on various levels in a presentation, such as literal repetition of words, restating information in other words, or using stylistic devices that include repetition (e.g. *anaphora*; see Section 2.5.4). The technique 'repetition' shows some overlap with techniques such as

‘summary’ and ‘parallelism’ (on a stylistic level); this is a consequence of taking the textbook descriptions of techniques as a point of departure to label the techniques.¹⁸⁶ Other frequently advised organisational retention techniques are ‘chunking’, ‘systematic order’, *partitio*, ‘circle technique’ and ‘final statement’. The focus on organisation and structure is also reflected in one of the most important warnings related to retention issued in the modern textbooks: ‘information overload’. Speaker who does not carefully select and order information, run the risk of hindering audience information retention (see Section 2.6.2).

Elaboration. Finally, the overview of retention advice contains techniques that can be associated with the encoding principle of elaboration. Such techniques seem to encourage the audience to associate new information with existing knowledge, to actively participate in the presentation or to make an effort in processing the information. As examples, I will briefly discuss four frequently advised retention techniques that can be attributed to elaboration: ‘anecdote’, ‘audience participation’, ‘rhetorical question’ and ‘metaphor’. The anecdote is a narrative technique, which requires the audience to understand the situation that is explained, the main characters that are involved, the story development and the anecdote’s relevance to the presentation’s key point(s). Audience participation, for example by answering questions, taking part in a quiz or carrying out a physical assignment (clapping, singing), requires the audience to actively work with the information presented. When the speaker asks a rhetorical question, it is said to incite the audience to think of a possible answer, thereby processing the information. Finally, metaphors usually require some mental effort to understand the similarity between the compared elements—especially when it is an original metaphor a listener is hardly ever confronted with in daily language.

The aim of the classification according to encoding principles is to provide a clearer overview of the main retention techniques that were found in the modern public-speaking textbooks and highlight underlying relations between rhetorical ideas and memory psychology. The criteria for the categories are not clearly defined; some techniques could be classified in various categories. For example, anecdotes and metaphors often require the audience to visualise and elaborate on information. In the case of the anecdote, which is classified as an elaboration technique, the relevance of its connection to the main message or key point of the speech could also be considered as an organisational aspect.¹⁸⁷ Compared to the visual and organisation retention techniques, the way in which elaborative retention techniques could influence information retention seems less straightforward. Still, the classification points to a

¹⁸⁶ Section 2.5 shows that textbook descriptions of techniques related to retention diverge. Therefore, definitions and (textbook) examples of retention techniques that are closely related to each other, such as ‘summary’ and ‘repetition’, are likely to show some overlap.

¹⁸⁷ This confirms the perception of modern public-speaking textbook authors that the anecdote is a ‘jack-of-all-trades’, as reported on by Andeweg & De Jong (2005) in their study into the anecdote as an introductory technique.

relationship between existing rhetorical ideas on retention and memory theory, which could prove to be insightful in further stages of studies into information retention.

Role of the speaker's memory (*memoria*) in textbooks

The memory focus has shifted from the speaker in antiquity to the audience in modern times (1980–2009). In the classical rhetorical works the speaker's memory is a central theme, as it is the subject of one of the five orator's canons (*memoria*—see Section 2.1.1). Influential rhetoricians such as Aristotle, Cicero, Quintilian and the *Auctor ad Herennium* elaborately discuss techniques for an orator to memorise the speaking notes, which often deal with visualising information, associating it with existing knowledge and placing it in a logical order. These techniques culminate in the use of mnemotechniques such as the memory palace and *imagines agentes* (striking images).

In modern public-speaking textbooks, the *memoria* task of the orator seems to play a marginal role (see Sections 2.3.1 and 2.3.2). The general stance towards memorising the whole speech in the modern textbooks appears to be negative: it can do more harm than good. Authors usually advise other memory aids and strategies to prepare for delivering the speech, such as using outlines, cue cards and various strategies for rehearsing the speech. Parts of the speech that are viewed as eligible for exact memorisation are the introduction, conclusion and transition sentences.

Only a small number of modern authors stress the advantages of training memory and refer to classical techniques such as the 'method of *loci*' and the use of *imagines agentes* (see Section 2.3.3). They do not claim that a speech should be entirely memorised; they also advise strategies such as notes and cue cards, just as Quintilian did not rule out the use of some speaking notes. However, these authors consider a well-developed memory as a valuable tool that could be beneficial for the speaker's ethos: when speakers are completely familiar with the speech, they can focus on other aspects such as delivery and audience contact. By presenting it as a helpful and powerful alternative in preparing the delivery of a presentation, these few authors take a more nuanced position towards the use of memory and try to put it in a modern context—a rather refreshing perspective in the light of the warnings against almost any type of memorisation that are found in most modern textbooks.

Reflection on advisory practice

The attention given to audience information retention varies between public-speaking textbooks in the corpus. While some authors do not or hardly refer to retention, other authors spend 15% of their textbook on retention. Eight textbooks even include a reference to retention (e.g. 'memorable') in a chapter or section title (see Section 2.4.1). Furthermore, the level of detail with which retention techniques are described in the textbooks varies, as the descriptions of frequent techniques in Section 2.5 show. On the one hand, some authors such as Osborn & Osborn (1997) and Atkinson (2004) often provide examples of techniques connected to retention and explain that factors such as audience and genre need to be taken into account. On the other hand, some textbooks only contain a brief reference to retention ("technique X makes your talk memorable").

The analysis of retention technique descriptions brought to light differences and contradictions between textbooks. For instance, some authors advise to repeat the main points of the presentation in a summary, whereas other authors believe that this redundancy is not necessary and that the audience only needs to be reminded of the outline of the talk. Another example of contradictory advice: the *partitio* (structure overview) in the introduction is recommended by several authors, but the analysis also revealed a warning against its use. Furthermore, textbooks sometimes vary in the distinct features that they attribute to retention techniques. Various characteristics are connected to the versatile anecdote, such as narrative elements, vivid language, brevity, a relevant point and humour, but which of these characteristics are discussed depends on the textbook that is selected. Such variations in definitions and descriptions of techniques make it difficult for users to assess the value of distinct features of retention advice.

The analysis of public-speaking textbooks showed that retention advice is rarely supported by references to academic sources. Authors generally opt for other source types, such as (anecdotal) experiences from well-known speakers, to corroborate their advice. Moreover, textbooks regularly provide advice about retention without any indication of the source or knowledge it is based on. It is possible that authors with a relevant (academic) expertise (e.g. a background in communication studies) rely on academic sources to back up their advice without providing any references. However, such an approach is not reader-friendly; textbook users benefit from a clear insight into the sources used, regardless of the author's background or nature of the publication.

Therefore, the relationship of textbook authors with (academic) sources and knowledge can be qualified as ambivalent: supporting the advice with clear references to trustworthy sources is good practice, but it can also pose the authors with practical problems such as correctly interpreting the source and upholding the readability of the textbook. At the heart of this ambivalence towards reference use might be the nature of the public-speaking textbook as a genre: it is not an academic treatise in the first place, but it should be accessible and easy to read for a general audience.¹⁸⁸ This means that authors have to find a balance between transparency and readability—this is a tight rope to walk, as results from academic studies are usually not straightforward, let alone the fact that (empirical) research on effects of public speaking strategies hardly exists. Moreover, academic studies are often specialised and focus on a particular (presentation) situation, leaving textbook authors with the challenge to extrapolate the results to a broader presentation context. Within the

¹⁸⁸ Keith and Lundberg (2014, p. 140) offer possible explanations on the lack of theory and academic references in textbooks: "Of course, if current textbooks are theoretically barren, there might be structural reasons for it. Their writing is driven in part by market forces that value imitating successful books (even the less sensible parts of successful books), and it is a market that responds to instructors who don't easily decide to change their teaching; since almost everyone learns to teach public speaking by apprenticing in graduate school, without their pedagogy being particularly informed by the scholarship studied in their coursework, there is little training or motivation to reflect about the public speaking course."

corpus, examples of textbooks exist that attempt to be accessible while acknowledging the sources used via in-text references or an extensive notes section (e.g. Osborn & Osborn, 1997; Oomkes, 2000; Atkinson, 2004).

2.8.2 Differences in retention advice in English-language and Dutch-language textbooks

The analysis of the corpus public-speaking textbooks (N=80) indicated differences between the English-language (N=40) and Dutch-language sub-corpora (N=40). This section first discusses three main differences—the (quantified) attention for retention, the focus on elaboration techniques and the use of references—and wraps up with a reflection on how both sub-corpora focus on retention. However, this study did not intend to systematically compare Anglo-Saxon and Dutch public speaking culture. The differences between the two sub-corpora are impressions based on the content analysis of the textbooks; the differences and their interpretation can therefore only be attributed to this study's selection of textbooks and not to cultural attitudes towards public speaking or rhetoric.¹⁸⁹

Main differences: quantity, elaboration, source use

First, the two sub-corpora contain a different amount of retention advice: about 88% of the number of pages devoted to retention in the overall corpus was found in the English-language sub-corpus. Two aspects must be kept in mind: (1) the English-language sub-corpus is more comprehensive overall and comprises about 70% of the total number of 13,326 pages in the corpus, and (2) the Dutch-language corpus contains a few 'general communication textbooks' which only partially focus on public speaking, whereas the English-language corpus only contains works on presentation skills.¹⁹⁰ Still, the quantitative difference in the focus on retention is remarkable. The English-language public-speaking textbooks that were selected in this study tend to attribute a higher value to the function of information retention and dedicate more explicit attention to retention.

As a second main difference, retention techniques linked to elaboration are more prominently represented in the English-language sub-corpus. This is illustrated by the position of the anecdote as an elaborative retention technique in both of the sub-corpora. The characteristics of the anecdote, such as a narrative structure and vivid style, can be said to incite audiences to elaborate on information. In more than half the number of English-language textbooks (twenty-one) it is linked to retention,

¹⁸⁹ The approach to the textbook analysis is user-centered and therefore focuses on the contents of the retention advice. A systematic investigation into possible cultural differences between (corpora of) public speaking textbooks requires a different approach, for example an approach as described by Tieken-Boon van Ostade (2020) in her study into usage guides and usage problems in British and American English.

¹⁹⁰ The English-speaking market for public-speaking textbooks is larger; consequently, for the period 1980–2009 a larger number of English-language textbooks are available for selection than Dutch-language textbooks. Furthermore, in the Dutch-speaking world of professional communication, advice on effective oral communication traditionally appears to have received less attention than advice on writing skills (Janssen, Jansen & Jansen, 2000).

compared to a mere two textbooks in the Dutch-language corpus. Another example is the position of ‘humour’ as a retention technique. The audience generally interprets a situation as humorous when it is out of the ordinary or contrary to what was expected in advance, which requires elaboration or association (a connection to existing knowledge, cf. Martin, 2007). The authors in the English-language sub-corpus recommend humour in relation to retention quite frequently and also warns against its ineffective use. In the Dutch-language corpus however, the retention role of humour is almost non-existent (see Section 2.5.7). Next to the anecdote and humour, other techniques that can be linked to elaboration such as ‘imagery’ and ‘rhetorical question’ are also more prominently connected to retention in the English-language sub-corpus.

The third main difference concerns the use of references in both sub-corpora: English-language authors mainly refer to experiences of other (well-known) speakers, whereas the Dutch-language authors mainly refer to academic sources. The nature of the Dutch-language textbooks seems such that they either refer to an academic source or—to a lesser extent—to their own experience; using experiences of other people to support advice does not appear to be common, whereas English-language authors frequently use such experiences to make their advice come across more trustworthy.

Characterisation of English-language and Dutch-language sub-corpora

Although the sub-corpora to quite some extent contain similar retention advice, they appear to have their own retention focus. The Dutch-language sub-corpus is structure-driven and organisationally oriented. ‘Clarity’ is a key concept throughout the most frequent retention techniques in the Dutch-language corpus. The Dutch-language textbooks appear to be more aimed at transferring information; they tend to contain relatively more references to academic sources than to other source types (other textbooks and other speakers’ or authors’ personal experience).

English-language textbooks are more diverse and extensive regarding retention. Quantitatively, they dedicate more space to retention advice; qualitatively, they cover a wider range of alleged retention techniques—not only techniques that are mostly linked to informative speeches, but also strategies that are closely related to persuasive speeches. Moreover, the retention techniques discussed in the English-language textbooks appear to correspond more evenly to encoding principles from memory psychology.

The differences in the retention focus of English-language and Dutch-language public-speaking textbooks may be explained by the approach of rhetorical or applied communication education in The Netherlands and the United States (and to a lesser extent the United Kingdom, as most textbooks in the English-language sub-corpus are of a US origin). In The Netherlands, the academic study of ‘taalbeheersing’ (applied communication or discourse studies) traditionally emerged in the 1970s of the 20th century. In its early days it mostly focused on texts and informative genres, with a strong emphasis on text qualities such as ‘clarity’ and ‘correctness’ (Braet, 2000; Janssen et al., 2000). Influenced by this focus, the educational practice of and textbooks on communication skills appeared to focus most on writing clear and

cohesive texts and oral communication skills received less attention (Janssen et al., 2000). Rhetorical theory has long played a marginal role in Dutch educational practice of applied communication (Jansen, 2016a). Recent years have shown a renewed interest in and appreciation for the ancient rhetorical perspective; Jansen (2016b, p. 142), for example, advocates a revaluation of classical rhetoric in language and communication education, because it can serve as “a basis for conscious language proficiency”.¹⁹¹ The emergence of Minor programmes in rhetoric at the universities of Groningen, Nijmegen and Leiden and the attention for rhetoric at University colleges in for example Amsterdam, Utrecht and Middelburg (University College Roosevelt) reflect the recent increase of interest in rhetoric in Dutch (academic) education.

In the United States, public speaking and rhetorical theory seem to have a more established position in (higher) education curricula (cf. Keith & Lundberg, 2014; Rood, 2013; Benson, 2011). American textbooks appear to focus more on persuasion; public speaking is related to the public debate and the notion of ‘civility’ (Rood, 2013; Rood, 2016).¹⁹² Keith and Lundberg (2014, p. 144) distinguish between a humanistic public speaking tradition, which focuses on the speaker as part of a community in which mutual influence between the speaker and the audience exists, and a social science tradition, which views public speaking as a form of communication and as the transfer of knowledge or information from the speaker to the audience. Roughly speaking, the English-language public-speaking textbooks appear to be more in line with this humanistic tradition, whereas the Dutch-language textbooks in the corpus tend to emphasise the social science tradition.

¹⁹¹ This increased attention for rhetoric in the landscape of Dutch communication studies already revealed itself with the introduction of ‘strategical maneuvering’; this approach takes into account a rhetorical perspective in the pragma-dialectical argumentation theory (Van Eemeren & Houtlosser, 1999). However, the more recent focus on ancient rhetoric in Dutch applied-communication education is more clearly visible in educational material, for example in the attention for rhetoric in the most recent (seventh) edition of the popular communication textbook *Leren communiceren*, published in 2016 (Steehouder, Jansen, Van Gulik, Mulder, Van der Pool & Van Zeijl)—see Jansen (2016a). The fifth edition of *Leren communiceren* (2006) is part of the Dutch-language sub-corpus of public-speaking textbooks that is used in this study.

¹⁹² Although Rood (2016) signals a gap between rhetorical education and civic discourse in the United States, the discussion about public speaking as a civic act indicates that such conceptualisation of knows a richer and longer tradition in the English-language public-speaking domain (mostly in the United States). The vivid scholarly tradition of American research into the role of rhetoric in democracy and civic discourse (cf. Asen, 2004; Zarefsky, 2014) underlines this idea. Although this tradition differs from the general approach in Dutch-language public-speaking textbooks, it appears to be more relevant elsewhere in Europe. For instance, Kock and Villadsen from the University of Copenhagen have published influential works on rhetoric and citizenship (e.g. Kock and Villadsen, 2012). With the emergence of the Rhetoric Society of Europe (RSE), such different traditions in the European rhetorical discipline have become more visible.