

# Writing or speech?

Sociology, Communication



Traditionally, writing has often been referred to as the superior mode of communication. Since the Middle Ages, when more than half the population was illiterate, one who held the ability to write was considered to be part of the elite upper social class- and those who had this ability generally garnered a secured future with further education. However due to the major influx of technology in the recent years, the significance of speech has been increased- mainly because more and more people are using mobile phones; presenting on radio stations or acting on television. When discussing whether speech or the written word is superior, it is a difficult question to answer as peoples' thoughts on what makes one superior will be different from one another. These two modes of communication each have their own uses and appropriateness. Despite writing being relatively recent in comparison to speech, the majority of humans can name more authors than they can of famous speakers- this is because when authors convey their point or message it is considered to be permanent and there are clear records of it, whereas until the recent development of technology there was no way of recalling speech apart from one's own personal memory. Jane Eyre; Charles Dickens, JK Rowling, Dr Seuss, Dan Brown, William Shakespeare etc- these are all well-known authors whom many can recollect their written works, this is in comparison to the fact that most people can't even name more than three famous speakers. One reason as to why these authors appeal to a larger audience than speakers is due to the fact that speakers only target a specific audience at a specific period of time rather than broadening the gap to anyone at anytime. Nowadays though some consider speech equal if not superior to speech, as they argue that speech

can be flexible and adaptable meaning that it can be backed up by body language and facial expressions not just the style of tone and its graphology. Typically, this mode of communication is often preferred by politicians as they feel that they can achieve more with a speech than they can with that of a written communication. Martin Luther King Jr was a prime example of a politician who would use spoken language to his advantage because despite being a very well educated man and having the ability to produce a well written piece if he wanted to, his preferred method of communication was speech as through using this mode he was able to show off his creative freedom by adding intonation to distinguish his words, something that the written communication lacked. However there is a key problem with the spoken language especially when speech is concerned, when a grammatical mistake is made there is no time to correct or reedit it unlike writing a book or a piece of text- as writers and authors have lots of time to reedit and change the way their points are presented before it is released to the public. Although there are further suggestions that prove that writing is superior to speech, such as the reader is able to follow at their own pace and can re-read or return to the piece of text in order to refresh and better their own understanding. This cannot be done when listening to a speech as speech is progressive and normally does not have any written evidence of such. Another reason as to why speech is considered inferior to speech is over half of speech tends to be transient which means speech has a greater risk of points and information being misunderstood or misheard, whereas the majority of written pieces tend to be in standard English meaning that there is no evidence of regional dialect. To conclude, although speech is becoming

more recognised due to the influx in technology such as YouTube; Television and Radio- there are still many who enjoy reading and regard written works as the superior mode of communication due to its reign throughout history as the ultimate form of communication.