Advertising is a speaking-intensive industry. Good communication skills are necessary for both internal and external purposes. First, a successful advertising campaign is a result of good teamwork. You have to be able to communicate effectively with your colleagues during numerous brainstorming sessions, lunch discussions, and “war room” meetings before the campaigns. You can’t be afraid to express your opinions because that is how you contribute to the team. Secondly, good oral communication ability is also essential in acquiring and maintaining clients. Advertising is a highly competitive industry. Before the clients sign the work contract, you need to present your campaign strategies to them to gain their trust. That’s what we call the “pitch.” This oral presentation is extremely important, especially when you are competing with other agencies. During the campaign, you also need to keep in touch with the clients, give them updates on the campaign through telephone or in meetings.

What is unique about the speaking in advertising is that it is persuasive in nature. You need to persuade your colleagues and your boss to accept your ideas; you need to persuade the clients and the media to accept your campaign plan; and you need to persuade the audiences to accept the products. Very often it is the speech that seals the deal. To deliver a convincing speech, it is important to have not only great speaking skills but also a good understanding of the target audiences so you can customize your messages specifically for them.

To help students work on their oral communication skills, we incorporate speaking component into every advertising course offered in the School of Mass Communication and Journalism. Class discussions and presentations account for at least 20% (higher in senior level courses) of the final grade in all courses. We also have group projects and

The basics of speaking are, for the most part, consistent across disciplines. Knowing the expectations of a discipline is an important part of adapting to your audience, however. The papers in the “Speaking, in my opinion…” series do not represent an official statement from the department. They do, however, give you an introduction to different faculty opinions on effective speaking.
presentations in media planning and advertising campaign courses to help students learn how to work as a team. To give students a taste of the "real life" situation, on the last day of our campaign course, we usually have three or four competing student agencies formally present their campaign plans to the clients (local business owners), and the winning agency gets highest grades and cash rewards from the clients. Upon graduation, advertising students should have:

1. Overcome their fear of public speaking;
2. Improved their speaking skills through practice such as class discussions, project presentations and mock campaign pitches;
3. Increased their knowledge of market and consumer research and learned how to effectively speak to a diverse group of target audiences;
4. Become familiar with various presentation technologies such as PowerPoint, online streaming audio and video.

For advices on how to improve presentation skills, please read the Speaking Center handouts at http://www.usm.edu/speakingcenter/handouts.htm.