Analyzing Your Audience

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Analyzing an audience is key to delivering a speech that successfully delivers the abstract objective of the orator to the minds of its listeners. Joshua Gunn has repeatedly used the term “response-ability” with respect to the craft of delivering a speech. In this context, it relates to the capacity of an audience to respond to what is being said to them. In encouraging this response-ability in the audience, the orator finds their purpose. Gunn has declared that we generally repress our response-ability when speaking while something as innocent as stuttering can disclose it. (Gunn, 2009)

A speech simply acts as a medium for transferring ideas. Therefore, in order to do it comprehensively and effectively; it must be aided. The medium should be modified in ways to accommodate the audience. To purposefully do that, an extensive analysis of the audience can help.

Analyzing the audience works on three stages. A significant part is the analysis that the orator does before delivering a speech. This involves carrying out research on the demographic and a general ideological stance of the audience. The research can be undertaken involving various methodologies. A simpler version can involve hitting a library or the internet to learn about the views and demographics if the speech is being delivered to people of a certain organization. People from a certain area, ethnicity or religion can also have sensitive points that the orator needs to take care of. A level up from this research comes in the form of surveys. Simple survey forms can be handed out to the audience before a speech so the orator can derive a general sense of their opinion on seemingly sensitive issues. Another level to this research can be in the form of interviews. However unrealistic, these can be the best way to understand the audience. Speaking to a subset can also be informative if done right.

All the knowledge pre-emptively gained about the audience can only be turned into a tool if used properly. This essentially translates into the idea that analyzing the audience should continue during the speech as well. Audiences can be egocentric so speaking about what they want to hear can be imperative. The easiest way to do this is through gauging the response of the audience to what the orator is saying in real time. If the audience looks confused, explaining the topic in simpler terms could help. If they look bored, involving the audience or spicing the speech with a joke could help. Facial expressions can be a good indicator, but mental presence can also be judged by asking a question and seeing if they response. During the speech, adapting to the audience is key.

This analysis of the audience continues even after the speech has been delivered. Although a long-term effect of the speech manifests in the behavior of attendees after the speech, short term responses also indicate how well the orator did. Whether the audience applauded after the speech or if they were nodding can all be accurate in terms of dictating the effectiveness of the speech. A survey after the speech can also do wonders in telling the orator whether their speech acted as the right medium to transfer ideas to the audience.

# References

Gunn, J. (2009). About Face/Stuttering Discipline. *Communication and Critical/Cultural Studies*, 215-219.