

Lesson 3: Understanding Your Audience: Analysis Strategies for Public Speaking (Part 1)

Learning Objectives:

By the end of the lesson, students will likely be able to:

- Define key terms related to audience analysis.
- Explain the importance of audience analysis in public speaking
- Describe strategies for analyzing audience demographics, attitudes, motivations and knowledge levels
- Apply audience analysis strategies to develop audience-centered presentations
- Recommend solutions for managing challenging audience behaviors and scenarios
- Practice analyzing sample audiences and developing engagement strategies

Warmup

Have you ever been to a presentation that was so boring that you wanted to walk out? Or have you ever been to a presentation that was so difficult to understand that you felt completely lost? These are all examples of presentations that were not tailored to the audience.

When you are giving a presentation, it is important to know your audience. This means understanding their demographics (e.g., age, gender, education level, occupation), their interests and needs, their level of knowledge about your topic, and their attitudes towards your topic. By understanding your audience, you can tailor your presentation to meet their needs and interests and deliver a more effective presentation.

Content Explanation

What Is an Audience?

An audience is the group of people who are the intended recipients of a presentation.

Types of Audiences:

Public speaking audiences can vary greatly in size, demographics, education level, prior knowledge, interests, motivations for attending, attitudes, and more. As the speaker, it is critical that you understand your specific audience's unique profile rather than making assumptions. For example, an audience of 20 corporate managers will likely differ from an audience of 100 college freshmen in terms of knowledge, communication style preferences, motivations, and ability to understand complex ideas.

There are many different types of audiences, but here are a few common examples:

- General audiences: These audiences are made up of people with a wide range of interests and backgrounds.
- Specialized audiences: These audiences are made up of people who share a common interest or area of expertise.

- Diverse audiences: These audiences are made up of people from different backgrounds and cultures.

Importance of Audience Analysis:

Conducting audience analysis provides many concrete benefits, including allowing you to:

- Determine appropriate language choice and complexity for the audience's knowledge level
- Understand cultural values/norms to avoid offending audience members unintentionally
- Appeal to shared interests, concerns, motivations when framing your message
- Adjust tone based on attitudes - more formal for uninterested groups vs. casual for friendly groups
- Select relevant examples, stories, and explanations
- Choose appropriate visual aids based on preferences
- Anticipate questions and concerns
- Identify best delivery methods based on audience size and setting

Overall, audience analysis ensures your presentation will resonate with your listeners, making it more impactful and successful.

Who are your Potential Audiences as a 2nd Year Master's Student?

Current Master's Students' Mates

- Your classmates are other master's students who are knowledgeable about communication concepts but come from diverse cultural backgrounds. When presenting to them, you can incorporate more complex ideas but should avoid idioms or culture-specific references they may not understand.

Thesis Committee:

- The thesis committee will have extensive expertise in your field of study. Use formal academic language when presenting to them. Define any technical terms clearly and explain methodology thoroughly so they can properly evaluate your work.

Future Pupils:

- If you become a middle or high school English teacher, your students may range from beginner to advanced levels. Use simple language and define terms when presenting to ensure understanding. Incorporate home culture examples they can relate to.

Colleagues at Seminars Conferences:

- Conferences involve professionals who are experts in the topic area. Use some technical jargon but balance it with layman's terms when needed. Demonstrate your credibility through providing examples from in-field work and personal teaching experience.

Inspectors:

- Inspectors represent an authoritative audience assessing your teaching skills. Use a formal tone and provide evidence to back up your instructional choices when presenting to them. Adhere to time limits and organizational standards they expect.

The goal is to analyze each audience's specific needs based on their background knowledge, culture, goals, and relationship to you. Then you can tailor your presentation accordingly through language, examples, tone, and delivery style.

Lesson 4: Understanding Your Audience: Analysis Strategies For Public Speaking (Part 2)

Strategies for Analyzing Audiences

Demographics

- Identify the audience's age, gender, education level, occupation, income level, and other relevant demographic information.

Interests and needs

- What are the audience's interests and needs? What are they passionate about? What problems do they face? What are their goals?

Level of knowledge

- What is the audience's level of knowledge about your topic? Are they experts? Novices? Somewhere in between?

Attitudes

- What are the audience's attitudes towards your topic? Are they open-minded? Skeptical? Hostile?

Other considerations

- Are there any other cultural or contextual factors that you should consider when analyzing your audience? For example, if you are giving a presentation to an international audience, you should be aware of cultural differences.

Tips for Analyzing your Audience

- Conduct surveys or interviews with members of the audience.
- Observe the audience in a similar setting (e.g., at a previous meeting or training session).
- Review demographic data about the audience.
- Talk to people who know the audience well (e.g., your manager, a colleague, or a customer).

Strategies of Handling Challenging Audiences Before and During a Presentation Before the Presentation:

- Anticipate potential challenges. What are some of the concerns or objections that your audience might have? What are some of the ways that they might try to challenge you? Once you have anticipated these challenges, you can prepare responses in advance.
- Research your audience. The more you know about your audience, the better equipped you will be to handle them. What are their interests? What are their needs? What are their pain points? The more you understand your audience, the better you can tailor your presentation to them and address their concerns.
- Be prepared to answer questions. Think about the kinds of questions that your audience might ask and prepare answers in advance. This will help you to sound confident and knowledgeable during your presentation.
- Practice your presentation. The more you practice your presentation, the more confident you will be when it comes time to deliver it. This will help you to handle any challenges that you may face from the audience.

During the Presentation:

- Stay calm and collected. If you get flustered or defensive, it will only make the situation worse. Take a deep breath and remind yourself that you are prepared for this.
- Acknowledge the audience's concerns. Don't try to ignore or dismiss the audience's concerns. Instead, acknowledge them and address them directly. This will show the audience that you are listening to them and that you care about their concerns.
- Be respectful. Even if the audience is being challenging, it is important to be respectful of them. This will help to maintain a positive and productive atmosphere.
- Use humor. Humor can be a great way to defuse a tense situation and to connect with the audience. Just be careful not to overuse humor or to make any jokes that could be offensive to the audience.
- Take breaks. If the audience is becoming too challenging, you may want to take a break. This will give you and the audience a chance to cool down and reset.

Here are some Additional Tips for Handling Specific Types of Challenging Audience Members:

- **The disruptive audience member:** If you have a disruptive audience member, try to ignore them at first. If they continue to disrupt your presentation, you can politely ask them to stop. If they still refuse to stop, you may need to ask them to leave the room.
- **The hostile audience member:** If you have a hostile audience member, try to stay calm and collected. Do not engage with them in a personal way. Instead, focus on your presentation and on the rest of the audience. If the hostile audience member is becoming too disruptive, you may need to take a break or ask them to leave the room.
- **The know-it-all audience member:** If you have a know-it-all audience member, try to be respectful of their expertise. If they ask a question that you don't know the answer to, be honest and tell them that you will look into it and get back to them. You can also try to redirect the conversation back to your presentation.

Remember, even the most experienced presenters can face challenges from the audience. The important thing is to be prepared and to stay calm and collected. By following the tips above, you can effectively handle challenging audiences and deliver a successful presentation.

Practice

Review the example scenarios provided below depicting challenging audience behaviors, then suggest a solution as the speaker.

Challenging Audience Scenarios:

From Beebe et al. (2019):

You are presenting on a controversial topic to an audience that seems very hostile to your message. Audience members have their arms crossed, are frowning, and some are even booing your statements.

From Lucas (2012):

You are halfway through your 45-minute presentation, and you notice the audience is no longer paying attention. People are checking phones, whispering to each other, and you've lost their focus.

From O'Hair et al. (2013):

You prepared a 1-hour presentation expecting 50 people, but when you arrive, there are only 12 people in the audience.

Potential Solutions:

Beebe et al. (2019) solutions:

Remain calm and establish your credibility on the topic right away. Find common ground and acknowledge you understand their perspective. Use rhetorical questions to get them thinking critically about counterarguments.

Lucas (2012) solutions:

Change your volume, inflection, and speed to regain their interest. Add more hand gestures and move around the room. Go to the audience and directly re-engage them by asking an interactive question or starting an activity in pairs.

O'Hair et al. (2013) solutions:

Quickly restructure your talk for a smaller audience. Prioritize key points but adjust timing and activities as needed. Engage them in a discussion or Q&A session. Thank them sincerely for coming and focus your energy on individuals.

Further Practice

Scenarios for Analyzing your Audience Based on the Context of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) Education:

Objective of the Assignment

Apply skills for analyzing audience needs, knowledge levels, and interests to develop strategies for effectively communicating as an EFL teacher and researcher.

Instructions:

Choose two of the following audiences:

- Young middle or high school pupils who study English as a module only and not a major. English is a foreign language in their context.
- Current master's students in EFL education
- Thesis committee
- EFL teacher colleagues
- Inspectors

Part 1: Audience Profile

For each audience you choose, write a detailed profile that includes the following information:

- Relevant demographics (e.g., age, gender, education level, teaching experience, cultural background)
- Prior knowledge and experience with EFL education
- Potential cultural factors that may influence their communication needs and preferences
- Attitudes and expectations towards the presenter
- Reasons for interaction with the presenter (e.g., to learn about a new teaching method, to receive feedback on a research proposal, to be assessed on their teaching skills)

Part 2: Communication Scenario

For each audience you choose, develop a scenario where you would be presenting to them. This could be a scenario from any of the following contexts:

- Teaching an EFL lesson
- Leading a teacher training workshop
- Giving a research presentation
- Defending your thesis
- Being observed by an inspector

Part 3: Communication Strategies

For each communication scenario, explain at least three strategies you would use to effectively communicate with your audience. Consider the following factors when developing your strategies:

- Content, complexity, and vocabulary choice
- Examples, analogies, and cultural references
- Tone, formality, and rapport building
- Visual aids and activities

The Scenarios Are:

Current Master's Students' Mates:

Scenario 1: You are presenting a research paper on the use of mobile apps in the EFL classroom. Your classmates come from a similar cultural background and have similar levels of English proficiency. You can focus on the benefits of using mobile apps in the EFL classroom and provide specific examples of how to use them effectively. You can also discuss any challenges that students may face when using mobile apps and how to overcome them.

Scenario 2: You are giving a presentation on a new teaching method for teaching EFL grammar. Your classmates come from a similar cultural background and have a good understanding of EFL teaching concepts. You can focus on the theoretical underpinnings of the new teaching method and how it can be used to improve student learning. You can also provide specific examples of how to use the teaching method in the classroom.

Thesis committee:

Scenario 1: You are defending your thesis on the impact of cultural factors on EFL learner motivation. Your thesis committee members are all experts in the field of EFL education, but they may have different areas of expertise. For example, some of your committee members may be more interested in teaching EFL in a specific context, such as business English or academic English. Be sure to tailor your presentation to their interests and needs. For example, if you are presenting on the impact of cultural factors on EFL learner motivation in a business English context, you could focus on how to create a more culturally inclusive learning environment for students.

Scenario 2: You are presenting your thesis on the effectiveness of a new teaching method for teaching EFL vocabulary. Your thesis committee members are all experts in the field of EFL education, but they may have different theoretical perspectives. For example, some of your committee members may be more interested in cognitive theories of learning, while others may be more interested in sociocultural theories of learning. Be sure to tailor your presentation to their theoretical perspectives. For example, if you are presenting on the effectiveness of a new teaching method for teaching EFL vocabulary from a cognitive perspective, you could focus on how the method helps students to learn and remember vocabulary words more effectively.

Future Pupils:

Scenario 1: You are teaching a beginner EFL class to a group of young students with no prior knowledge of English. Your students come from a similar cultural background. You can use visuals and realia to help students understand new concepts. You can also incorporate cultural elements into your lessons to make them more relevant and engaging for students. Be sure to use simple language and avoid using any idioms or jargon that students may not understand.

Scenario 2: You are teaching a secondary EFL class to a group of high school students with intermediate English skills. The students share the same cultural references. Use slightly advanced vocabulary tailored to their interests like pop culture, social media, and technology. Foster a fun and supportive classroom culture using interactive games, discussions, and group work.

Colleagues at Seminars and Conferences:

Scenario 1: You are presenting a paper at a conference on the use of technology in the EFL classroom. Your audience is made up of EFL teachers with a variety of experience levels. You need to tailor your presentation to their needs. For example, you could provide more specific examples for newer teachers or discuss more advanced strategies for experienced teachers. You can also use a variety of teaching methods to engage your audience, such as interactive activities, polling, and Q&A sessions.

Scenario 2: You are giving a presentation at a seminar on the best practices for teaching EFL reading. Your audience is made up of EFL teachers from different countries. Be sure to be mindful of the different cultural backgrounds of your audience members. For example, avoid using any cultural references that they may not understand. You can also use a variety of teaching methods and materials that are relevant to all of your audience members.

Inspectors:

Scenario 1: You are being observed by an inspector during a lesson on EFL listening comprehension. You need to use clear and concise language when explaining the task and answering student questions. You should also provide students with adequate support and scaffolding.

Scenario 2: You are being observed by an inspector during a lesson on EFL speaking. You need to create a safe and supportive environment where students feel comfortable speaking English. You should also provide students with opportunities to practice speaking English in a variety of ways, such as through pair work, group work, and whole-class activities.

Example of Analysis

Here is a sample response for the first scenario analyzing an audience of current master's students:

Part 1: Audience Profile

My audience is a group of current master's students in an EFL education program. They are adults in their mid-20s to early-30s pursuing advanced EFL teaching qualifications. Their cultural background is similar to mine since we are classmates in the same program. They have a strong educational background and solid knowledge of EFL theories and methods from the program's coursework. Their goal in attending my presentation is to learn about using mobile apps to teach EFL.

Part 2: Communication Scenario

I will be giving a research presentation to my classmates on using mobile apps to teach EFL listening skills. As fellow master's students, they are interested in learning about innovative teaching techniques. However, they may have limited experience actually implementing mobile apps in the classroom if they have not taught before.

Part 3: Communication Strategies

Strategy 1: I will focus my content on the pedagogical benefits of mobile apps for EFL listening skills in order to connect with their academic interests. I will cite recent studies on mobile learning outcomes.

Strategy 2: I will incorporate specific examples of popular EFL mobile apps and demonstrate how teachers can effectively apply them in lessons to model this approach.

Strategy 3: I will invite questions and discussion about potential challenges of implementing mobile apps so we can brainstorm solutions together, leveraging the group's shared knowledge.

References

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