

A study on the technique used by dr. lidke to support a speech

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Dr. Jeffrey Lidke was the speaker of an in-progress lecture about the religious tied of ritual and synesthesia. It was held on a Tuesday morning between 11:00-12:00 p. m. in Evans classroom 121. Though it was open to everyone, the majority of the audience was faculty from the Religion and Philosophy department as well as the Dean of Evans. There were, however, professors from the Physics department as well, members of the Rome community, and several students. Overall, the speech given by Dr. Lidke was effective as an informative speech, but I cannot help but wonder how much of the appeal from the speech was derived from a general awe towards the foreign and the mystical. This is an idea I will revisit later. For now, let's look at the specific aspects of Dr. Lidke's speech in order to view more clearly its strengths and weaknesses.

The delivery of the speech was extemporaneous. Though often time Dr. Lidke spoke from his own knowledge, he did have a PowerPoint and written notes to keep himself on track. The feeling of his lecture was very conversational, as he knew most of the audience personally and could direct his tone and subject matter to some members specifically. The articulation was good as well, other than the fact that the main subject of his speech was something very much so foreign to many of the people in the audience. This made some topics difficult to articulate without previous knowledge. But Dr. Lidke is fluent on the matter and could pull from a pool of his own knowledge to better fit the specific difficulties of his presentation. He moved about the front of the room in order to not remain stiff and stationary. He was able to use hand motions, generally as gestures towards the image of the

PowerPoint to emphasize points being made. Overall, Dr. Lidke was obviously enthusiastic about the topic and was knowledgeable on the subject as well.

Dr. Lidke used a good variety of supporting material, but even then it was somewhat restricted given the nature of the presentation. Statistics would not do any good in a presentation like this, nor would inspirational quotes. Thus, the support came mostly from his own research and that of other scholars in various fields. That being said, the topic was very interesting* and brought about some interesting implications for religion, science, and even synesthesia. I do, however, wish that the scientific aspects of his presentation, in which he discussed the different regions of the brain and the apparent effects seen in religious practices, had been more “scientific.”

Though I know that Dr. Lidke is no neuroscientist, it seemed that his knowledge of the neurology of the brain was not as fluid and dependable as his knowledge of religious practices. But he presented the information in a way that was convincing, regardless of the lack of fluency in the dialect of neuroscience. Todd Timberlake asked a question after the presentation about whether participating in an activity that activated multiple senses was defined as synesthesia. The issue was that that isn't exactly the strict definition, but it was the context in which Lidke had been using the word. Apart from this, however, Lidke's logic was sound and easy to understand.

When Dr. Lidke began the presentation, he believed he was going to be introduced by someone. He was not, in fact, and had to make up an introduction on the spot. This made the introduction a little rough, but he quickly got into the flow of things and sounded more fluid. His thesis was

clear, that synesthesia could be cultivated through the Sri Vidya religious practices of the Sri Yantra mandala meditation. He worked his way logically through all of his main points, progressing from basic definitions of Sanskrit terms and practices as well as scientific information concerning the brain before moving on to more specific studies to back up his thesis. The transitions from one subject to another were more or less smooth, though I wish it had seemed less like bullet points and more like one coherent, flowing idea. Again, I wish the scientific evaluation of his own claim had been stronger, but for his understanding of the material, he seemed to make it work.

Stylistically, Dr. Lidke always seems to maintain a particularly charismatic tone though his work never seems to be intentionally stylistic. There is never much personification or alliteration or anything like that, but the meaning was clearly expressed and easy to follow in a way where the style seemed natural. Colourful might be too strong of a word to describe this speech, but that too is understandable given the academic atmosphere in which the speech was given. Dr. Lidke did seem to use a lot of Sanskrit terms that may have made it difficult to follow for anybody outside of his specific field of interest, but he did at least define them before using them in the lecture. Other than that technicality with which he used the Sanskrit words, the rest was easy to follow and made sense.

One could tell that this presentation was definitely suited for the audience. At one point in the presentation, Dr. Lidke even pulled up a picture of the Dean on the PowerPoint, who was sitting in the room, in which he was

standing in a funny way that made the audience laugh in a lighthearted, relatable way. The evidence he used was scholarly, which was perfect for the academic audience. Even though he explained the Sanskrit terms before using them, they often did seem to go above his audience's heads, which brings me back to a statement I made earlier in this work. I wonder how much of the appeal of this presentation was due to the element of the foreign?

People love that which is foreign. We love to travel. See exotic lands. Eat interesting food. Seek new ideas. And, to some extent, we often fall victim to the shock and awe of the foreign to such an extent that we cannot seem to see the distinctions between the valid and the invalid. Statues of the Buddha and hanging dream catcher would not be seen as out of place on the desk of your average teenager, though a devotion to that particular tradition would make you an outside party. The foreign is exciting as long as we don't invest too fully. Now, do not get me wrong. I'm not saying this is necessarily the case for this presentation. It simply seems to me that the only reason someone could get away with using Sanskrit in excess in a presentation is that people are mesmerized by the foreign and ancient nature of the text and terms themselves. However, as someone who has been working with this "foreign" tradition for a while now, I do see much validity and strength in Dr. Lidke's presentation, hopefully past my own veil of ignorance and awe towards the foreign. It is simply a good thing to keep in mind when listening to bold claims in dead languages.