

Audience analysis

[Experience](#), [Belief](#)



Knowing your audience—their beliefs, attitudes, age, education level, job functions, language and culture—is the single most important aspect of developing your speech. Your audience isn't just a passive group of people who come together by happenstance to listen to you. Your audience is assembled for a very real reason: They want to hear what you have to say. In public speaking, the audience is the entire reason. This module helps you understand: The critical importance of understanding your audience. The various methods used in analyzing a given audience.

The five layers of any given audience analysis. you are giving the speech; thus, the audience is the most important component of speechmaking. We analyze our audience because we want to discover information that will help create a link between the speaker and the audience. We call this link identification. Aristotle loosely called it “ finding a common ground. ” This isn't a one-way process between the speaker and the audience; rather, it is a two-way transactional process. When you ask an audience to listen to your ideas, you are asking them to come partway into your experience as a speaker.

And, in return, it is your obligation to go partway into their experience as an audience member. The more you know and understand about your audience and their needs, the better you can prepare your speech. For example: Bob Mullins, a local bank officer, was preparing for a speech at the Rotary Club in Dallas, Texas on “ finding the right loan” for a diverse ethnic audience. He knew his topic extremely well, had put a lot of hard work into his research, and had his visual aids in order. One of the things he had not completely considered, however, was the audience to which he would be speaking.

On the day of the event, Mr. Mullins delivered a flawless speech on car and home loans, but the speech was not received well. You see, on this particular week, a major segment of the audience consisted of the “ Junior Rotarians” who wanted to hear about “ personal savings accounts” and “ college savings plans. ” It was a critical mistake. Had Bob considered the full nature and makeup of his audience prior to the event, he might not have been received so poorly. A hard lesson learned. This module is dedicated to understanding how a speaker connects with an audience through audience analysis.

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I. How Do I Analyze My Audience?

Whenever thinking about your speech, it is always a good idea to begin with a thorough awareness of your audience and the many factors comprising that audience. In speechcommunicationwe simply call this “ doing an audience analysis. An audience analysis is when you consider all of the pertinent elements defining the makeup and characteristics of your audience. There are many elements to consider, too, such as: age, gender, education, occupation, language, ethnicity, culture, background knowledge, needs and interests, and previously held attitudes, beliefs, and values. Of course, this is not an all-inclusive list. But, it does help you get a good general understanding of the demographics shaping up whom, precisely, you will be addressing.

From the Greek affix *demo* (of the people) we come to understand that demographics are detailed accounts of human population characteristics. These accounts are usually rendered as statistical population segments. Demographics are widely used by advertising and public relations professionals to analyze specific audiences so that their products or ideas will carry influence. However, all good public speakers consider the demographic characteristics of their audience, as well. It is a, if not the, fundamental stage of preparing for your speech.

So now you may be saying to yourself: “ Gee, that’s great! How do I go about analyzing my particular audience? ” Well, first you need to know that there are three overarching methods (or what we like to call “ paradigms”) for doing an audience analysis: (1) audience analysis by direct observation, (2) audience analysis by inference, and (3) audience analysis through data sampling. Once you get to know how these methods work a bit better, you should be able to select which one (or even combination of these methods) is right for your circumstances.

Audience Analysis by Direct Observation Audience analysis by direct observation, or direct experience, is, by far, the most simple of the three paradigms for “ getting the feel” of a particular audience. It is a form of qualitative data gathering. We perceive it through one or more of our five natural senses—hearing, seeing, touching, tasting, and smelling. Knowledge that we acquire through personal experience has more impact on us than does knowledge that we learn indirectly. Knowledge acquired from personal experience is also more likely to affect our thinking and will be retained for a longer period of time.

We are more likely to trust what we hear, see, feel, taste, and smell rather than what we learn from secondary sources of information. All you really need to do for this method of observation is to examine the broad composition of your audience working in its natural state. If you are lucky enough to be able to do this before speaking to your audience, you will be able to gather some basic reflective data that will help you arrange your thoughts and arguments for your speech. One excellent way to become informed about your audience is to ask them about themselves.

In its most basic form, this is data collection. In the classroom situation, you should have had ample time to get to know your fellow classmates and become familiar with who they are on a personal level. Through class conversations—and your unmonitored small-group conversations before and after class—you will be able to get to know and appreciate each class member as both a human being and an audience member. You will come to understand what interests them, convinces them, or even makes them laugh.

Do not discount even a simple form of data collection such as distributing a three- or four-item questionnaire before class. You might arouse interest and curiosity in your topic while you also gain valuable data. Knowledge acquired from personal experience is also more likely to affect our thinking and will be retained for a longer period of time. Clearly this cannot be done in every speaking situation, however. Often, we are required to give an unacquainted-audience presentation. Unacquainted-audience presentations are speeches where you are completely unfamiliar with the audience and its demographics.

In these cases, it is always best to try and find some time to sit down and talk with someone you trust (or even multiple parties) who might be familiar with the given audience. These confidantes can be very constructive in helping you understand the context in which you will be speaking. You see, not understanding the basic demographic characteristics of an audience, or further, Who is it that I am going to be talking to? that audience's beliefs, values, or attitudes about a given topic, makes your presentation goalshaphazard, at best.

Look around the room at the people who will be listening to your speech. What types of gender, age, ethnicity, and educational-level characteristics will you be appealing to? What expectations does your audience have for your presentation? These are all important questions you should be asking yourself before you begin doing your research and drafting your outline. Who is it that I am going to be talking to? What, exactly, makes them, as listeners, tick? Audience Analysis by Inference Audience analysis by inference is merely a logical extension of your observations drawn in the

What, exactly, makes them, as listeners, tick? method above. It is a form of critical thinking known as inductive reasoning, and another form of qualitative data gathering. An inference is when you make a reasoned tentative conclusion or logical judgment on the basis of available evidence. It is best used when you can identify patterns in your evidence that indicate something is expected to happen again or should hold true based upon previous experiences. Do you need to learn how to interpret information and draw conclusions? Absolutely! We make inferences—or reasonable assumptions—all the time.

For example, when we hear someone speaking Arabic, we infer that they are from the Middle East. When we see this person carrying a copy of The Koran, we infer that they are also a follower of the Muslim faith. These are reasoned tentative conclusions that we make based upon the evidence available to us and our general knowledge about people and their traits. When we reason, we make connections, distinctions, and predictions; we use what is known or familiar to us to reach a conclusion about something that is unknown or unfamiliar for it to make sense. Granted, of course, inferences are sometimes wrong.

Here's a familiar example: Some of your classmates recommend a particular course to you, telling you that it is relatively simple. You've heard similar things from other students, so you take the course and discover that they were, indeed, right. These same classmates recommend another course allegedly just as trouble-free as the last one. Only this time, you discover the opposite to be true. The course was insanely difficult. You inferred, or made a reasonable assumption based on information from your fellow classmates, that the course they recommended would be easy. Hey! You aren't alone in this regard.

Everybody makes these types of mistakes. It's a normal part of processing information. Audience Analysis by Data Sampling Unlike audience analysis by direct observation and analysis by inference, audience analysis by data sampling uses statistical evidence to quantify and clarify the characteristics of your audience (data is the plural form of datum). These characteristics are also known as variables, and are assigned a numerical value so we can

systematically collect and classify them. They are reported as statistics, also known as quantitative analysis or quantitative data collection.

Statistics are numerical summaries of facts, figures, and research findings. Audience analysis by data sampling requires you to survey your audience before you give your speech. You need to know the basics of doing a survey before you actually collect and interpret your data. The Basic Questionnaire There are a great number of survey methods available to the speaker. However, we will cover three primary types in this section because they are utilized the most. The first type of survey method you should know about is the basic questionnaire, which is a series of questions advanced to produce demographic and attitudinal data from your audience.

You can easily gather information from your audience, using questions similar to these below: My academic level in college: I currently have: no children 1 child 2 children 3 or more children I can best be classified as being: Caucasian Black or African American Hispanic of Asian descent other My marital status is: single married divorced/separated widowed These questions probe more deeply into the psyche of your audience members, and will help you see where they stand on certain issues. Freshman sophomore junior senior My age is: less than 18 years of age between 18-21 years of age between 21-25 years of age over 25 years of age Clearly, audience members should not be required to identify themselves by name on the basic questionnaire. Anonymous questionnaires are more likely to produce truthful information. Remember, all you are looking for is a general read of your audience, you should not be looking for specific information

about any respondent concerning your questionnaire in particular. It is a bulk sampling tool, only.

While you can gather basic demographic data (as shown above) easily, we need to adjust our questions a bit more tightly, or ask more focused questions, in order to understand the audience's "predispositions" to think or act in certain ways. For example, an attitudinal extension on the basic questionnaire might ask some of the following questions: I regard myself as a: conservative liberal socialist independent I believe that: there is a God there is not a God there might be a God, but I'm unsure none of the above. These questions probe more deeply into the psyche of your audience members, and will help you see where they stand on certain issues. Of course, you may need to change these questions a bit to get to the heart of your specific topic. But, once you do, you'll have a wealth of data at your disposal which, ultimately, will tell you how to work with your target audience.

I believe that abortion is: wrong, and should be illegal wrong, but should remain legal okay, but should be illegal okay, and should remain legal none of the above. Value Hierarchy by Ordered Categories. Another method of finding out your audience's value set is to survey them according to their value hierarchy. A value hierarchy is a person's value structure placed in relationship to a given value set. The way to determine a person's value hierarchy is to use the ordered categories sampling method. In ordered categories, the surveyor lists a number of values on a piece of paper, and asks the respondent to order them on another piece of paper, according to

their importance to the respondent (the respondent is the person who fills out the questionnaire).

What occurs is that the respondent takes a series of values and, in turn, develops them into a concrete self-ordered list. The way to determine a person's value hierarchy is to use the ordered categories sampling method. Each response is different, but when analyzed by the speaker, common themes will present themselves in the overall data. Accordingly, the speaker can then identify with those common value themes. See the example below for a given speech on "homeland security initiatives:" Targeted Value Set Life Liberty Safety Freedom Justice Family Faith Patriotism Democracy Likert-type Testing of Attitudes The final method of assessing your audience's attitudes deals with Likert-type testing.

Likert-type testing is when you make a statement, and ask the respondent to gauge the depth of their sentiments toward that statement either positively, negatively, or neutrally. Typically, each scale will have 5 weighted response categories, being +2, +1, 0, -1, and -2. What the Likert-type test does, that other tests do not do, is measure the extent to which attitudes are held. See how the Likert-type test does this in the speech example on "unsolicited email" below: UNSOLICITED EMAIL 1. Unsolicited email should be illegal 2. Making unsolicited email illegal would be fundamentally unfair to businesses 3. Making unsolicited email illegal would be a violation of the First Amendment (Free Speech) 4. I usually delete unsolicited email before ever opening it 5.

I sometimes open unsolicited email when I am bored Strongly Agree 1 Agree
Neither agree nor disagree 3 Disagree Strongly Disagree 5 Ordered Value
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Set 1. Freedom 2. Democracy 3. Liberty 4. Safety 5. Justice 2 4 1 2 3 4 5 1 2
 3 4 5 1 2 3 4 5 1 2 3 4 5 A small Likert-type test will tell you where your audience, generally speaking, stands on issues. As well, it will inform you as to the degree of the audience's beliefs on these issues. The Likert-type test should be used when attempting to assess a highly charged or polarizing issue, because it will tell you, in rough numbers, whether or not your audience agrees or disagrees with your planned advocacy. ... re your audience members literally “ speech captives” who have somehow been socially or systematically coerced into hearing you? II. The “ Five Layers” of Audience Analysis No matter which of the above inquiry methods you choose to do your audience analysis, you will, at some point, need to direct your attention to the five “ layers” of audience analysis. These are the five layers through which you will learn to better appreciate your audience. Let's now examine these layers and understand the variables and constraints you should use to estimate your audience's information requirements. Layer 1: The Situational Analysis The situational audience analysis layer considers the situation for which your audience is gathered.

This layer is primarily concerned with why your audience is assembled in the first place. Are they willingly gathered to hear you speak? Have your audience members paid to hear you? Or, are your audience members literally “ speech captives” who have somehow been socially or systematically coerced into hearing you? These factors are decisively important, because they place a major responsibility upon you as a speaker, whichever the case. The entire tone and agenda of your speech rests largely upon whether or not your audience even wants to hear from you. Many

audiences are considered captive audiences in that they have no real choice regarding the matter of hearing a given speech. In general, these are some of the most difficult audiences to address because these members are being forced to listen to a message and do not have the full exercise of their own free will. Consider for a moment when you have been called to a mandatory work meeting. Were you truly happy to listen to the speaker, in all honesty? Some might say “ yes,” but usually most would rather be doing something else with their time. This is an important factor to keep in mind when preparing your speech: some simply do not want to listen to a speech they believe is compulsory. The voluntary audience situation, in stark contrast, is completely different. A voluntary audience is willingly assembled to listen to a given message.

As a rule, these audiences are much easier to address because they are interested in hearing the speech at hand. To visualize how this works, reflect upon the last speech, concert, or show you’ve attended of your own accord. While the event may or may not have lived up to your overall expectations, the very fact that you freely went to the occasion speaks volumes about your predisposition to listen to—and perhaps even be persuaded by—the information being presented. There’s something else to be said about captive versus voluntary audiences, as well. Modern communication researchers have found that captive audiences are more heterogeneous and that voluntary audiences are more homogeneous.

In other words, when captive audiences are gathered, the audience is typically heterogeneous or characterized by many demographic differences among individuals. On the other hand, when voluntary audiences assemble,

by and large, they are populated by homogeneous groupings, or, audiences which are characterized more by their demographic similarities than their differences. Sometimes audiences are mixed in their situational settings, too. For instance, take the everyday classroom situation. While college is pronounced to be a voluntary listening situation in that students choose to attend higher education, many people in the college classroom environments sadly feel as if they are still “trapped” in school, and would rather be elsewhere. Obviously, this exception colors how information is being processed—and in some cases, not being processed. On the other hand, some students in college are truly there by choice, and attentively seek out knowledge from their teacher-mentors. What results from this mixed audience situation is a hybrid captive-voluntary audience, with those who are only partially interested in what is going on in the classroom and those who are genuinely involved. Of course, this leaves you with a difficult set of circumstances when preparing for your class speeches. Both you and your professor are well aware that the audience you will be speaking to. Would you be more inclined to talk to issues bearing upon if you did not enroll in the course to hear from you, specifically. However, this difficulty of speaking to a hybrid captive-voluntary audience does present you with an excellent opportunity: you will have the good fortune of speaking to people who do and do not, fully, want to hear from you. What a prospect! You literally get to hone your speech skills on both types of audiences, thereby learning a skill set that many never get to exercise. You should begin this wonderful opportunity by considering ways to inform, persuade, and humor a mixed situation

audience. Think of it as a learning occasion, and you'll do just fine. Layer 2: The Demographic Analysis those gender, age, and race qualities?

The second layer of audience analysis is demography. As mentioned before, demographics are literally a classification of the characteristics of the people. Whenever addressing an audience, it is generally a good idea to know about its: age, gender, major, year in school, race, ethnicity, religious affiliation, et cetera. There are two steps in doing an accurate demographic analysis: (1) the gathering of the demographic data, and (2) the interpretation of this demographic data. Sometimes, this information is gathered by the questionnaire sampling method, and is done formally. On other occasions, this information is already available in a database and is made available to the speaker.

Some noteworthy speakers even have “scouts” who do demographic reconnaissance on an audience prior to a speaking event, and make ad hoc interpretations on that audience based upon key visual cues. For example, congresspersons and senators frequently make public appearances where they use stock speeches to appeal to certain audiences with specific demographic uniqueness. In order to know what type of audience he or she will be addressing, these politicians dispatch staff aides to an event to see how many persons of color, hecklers, and supporters will be in attendance. Of course, doing ad hoc interpretation of demographic characteristics is, indeed, more an art form than science. Still, it is a common practice among many professional speakers.

Consider for a moment how valuable knowing that your audience will be mostly female, between the ages of 25 and 40, predominantly married, and

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Caucasian, could be to you as a public speaker. Would you change your message to fit this demographic? Would you be more inclined to talk to issues bearing upon those gender, age, and race qualities? Or, would you keep your message the same, no matter the audience to whom you were addressing? Frankly, the smart speaker would shift his or her message to adapt to the audience. And, in a nutshell, that's the purpose of doing demographics: to embed within your message the acceptable parameters of your audience's range of needs.

This, of course, raises an extremely important ethical issue for the modern speaker. Given the ability to do demographic data analysis and interpretation of an audience, does a speaker shift his or her message to play to the audience entirely? Or, on the other hand, does a speaker not shift his or her message so as to remain true to his or her motives? It is a delicate balancing act, for certain. Demographic information not only has the ability to truly enlighten a speaker, it also has the ability to modify a speaker's original intent. Only you will be able to alleviate the tension between a speaker's need to adapt to an audience and his or her need to remain true to form.

Some political critics have even argued that our modern leadership no longer "leads," it merely speaks according to demography and issue polls. Layer 3: Psychological Description: On Attitudes, Beliefs, and Values Unless your selected speech topic is a complete mystery to your audience, your listeners will already hold "attitudes, beliefs, and values" toward the ideas you will inevitably present. As a result, it is always important to know where your audience stands on the issues you plan to address ahead of time. The best

way to accomplish this is to sample your audience with a quick questionnaire or survey prior to the event. This is known as the third layer of audience analysis, or psychological description.

There are three things you seek to identify when performing a description: the audience's (1) attitudes, (2) beliefs, and (3) values. They are your calculated allies ... it is always important to know where your audience stands on the issues you plan to address ahead of time. In understanding how your audience thinks.

1. Attitudes What exactly is an attitude? In basic terms, an attitude is a learned disposition to respond in a consistently favorable or unfavorable manner with respect to a person, an object, an idea, or an event. Attitudes come in different forms. You are very likely to see an attitude present itself when someone says that they are "pro" or "anti" something.

But, above all else, attitudes are learned and not necessarily enduring. Attitudes can change, and sometimes do, whereas beliefs and values do not shift as easily. Let's examine a sample list of attitudes below: Pro-war Anti-affirmative action Pro-choice Pro-business Anti-discrimination Anti-war Anti-slavery Pro-gaming Anti-government Pro-capital punishment Pro-diversity Pro-life Anti-gambling Anti-drugs Anti-capital punishment These are just a small range of issues that one can either be "for" or "against." And, while we are simplifying the social scientific idea of an attitude considerably here, these examples serve our purposes well. Remember, attitudes are not as durable as beliefs and values.

But, they are good indicators of how people view the persons, objects, ideas, or events that shape their world.

2. Beliefs Beliefs are principles. Beliefs are

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more durable than attitudes because beliefs are hinged to ideals and not issues. For example, you may believe in the principle: “ what goes around comes around. ” If you do, you believe in the notion of karma. And so, you may align your behaviors to be consistent with this beliefphilosophy. You may not engage in unethical or negative behavior because you believe that it will “ come back” to you. Likewise, you may try to exude behaviors that are ethical and positive because you wish for this behavior to return, in kind. You may not think this at all, and believe quite the opposite.

Either way, there is a belief in operation driving what you think. Let’s now turn to examine some sample beliefs: - The world was created by God. - Marijuana is an addictive gateway drug. - Ghosts are all around us. - Smoking causes cancer. - Anyone can acquire HIV. - Evolution is fact, not fiction. - Marijuana is neither addictive nor harmful. - Ghosts are products of our imagination. - Smoking does not cause cancer. - Only high-risk groups acquire HIV. 3. Values A value, on the other hand, is a guiding belief that regulates our attitudes. Values are the core principles driving our attitudes. If you probe into someone’s attitudes and beliefs deep enough, you will inevitably find an underlying value.

Importantly, you should also know that we structure our values in accordance to our own value hierarchy, or mental schema of values placed in order of their relative individual importance. Each of us has our own values that we subscribe to and a value hierarchy that we use to navigate the issues of the world. Truth be known, we really aren’t even aware that we have a value hierarchy until some of our values come in direct conflict with ... we make decisions small and grand, based from our value

hierarchies. each other. Then, we have to negotiate something called cognitive dissonance, or the mental stress caused by the choice we are forced to make between two considerable alternatives. For example, let's assume that you value "having fun" a great deal. You like to party with your friends and truly enjoy yourself.

And, in this day and age, who doesn't? However, as a young adult now experiencing a significant amount of independence and personal freedom at college, you have many life options at your disposal. Let's also say that some of your close personal friends are doing drugs. You are torn. Part of you wants to experience the "fun" that your close friends may be experiencing; but, the more sane part of you wants to responsibly decline. In honesty, you are juxtaposed between two of your own values—having "fun" and being responsible. This real life example is somewhat exaggerated for your benefit. Realize that we make decisions small and grand, based from of our value hierarchies.

Let's look at some basic values common to people around the world: Accomplishment Aesthetics Authority Competency Creativity Learning Flexibility Health Independence Intellectual stimulation Leisure Material Status Peace Power Security Teamwork

Layer 4: Multicultural Audience Analysis Demography (as outlined in Layer 2) looks at issues of race and ethnicity in a basic sense. However, we believe that in our increasingly diverse society, it is worthy to pay particular attention to the issue of speaking to a multicultural audience. Odds are that both your classroom audience and any real world audience that you encounter will have an underlying multicultural dimension.

As a speaker, you need to recognize that the perspective you have on any given topic may not necessarily be shared by all of the members of your audience. Therefore, it is imperative that you become a culturally effective speaker. Culturally effective speakers develop the capacity to appreciate other cultures and acquire the necessary skills to speak effectively to people with diverse ethnic backgrounds. Keep these issues ever-present in your mind: Language: Many people speak different languages, so if you are translating words or phrases, make sure that your translations are correct and that you are using concrete language instead of slang or jargon, which can be confusing.

Advancement Affiliation Broadminded Competition Economic Return Family Freedom Helping others Influence Intellectual status Loyalty Moral fulfillment Physical work Prestige Self-expression Variety Adventure Appearance Community Cooperation Education Fast Pace Friendship Honesty Integrity Leadership Management Order Pleasure Recognition Travel Wisdom Cognition: Realize that different cultures have different cultural-cognitive processes, or means of looking at the very concept of logic itself. Accordingly, gauge your audience as to their diverse ways of thinking and be sensitive to these differing logics. Ethnocentricity: Do not assume that your culture is dominant or better than other cultures. Ethnocentrism is the belief that one's own culture or ethnicity is superior to others. Remember that, in many cases, you will be appealing to people from other cultures. Ethnocentric viewpoints have the tendency to drive a wedge between you and your audience. Knowing that culture does play a major role in interactions between you and your audience is a good step in becoming an effective communicator. and

your audience. Values differ greatly: Not only do individuals have value systems of their own, but societies promote value systems, as well. Keep in mind the fact that you will be appealing to value hierarchies that are socially-laden, as well as those that are individually-borne. Communication styles differ greatly: While you are trying to balance these language, cognition, cultural, and value issues, you should also recognize that some cultures prefer a more animated delivery style than do others.

The intelligent speaker will understand this, and adapt his or her verbal and nonverbal delivery accordingly. Audience Analysis and the Multicultural Audience Today's speakers face many cultural challenges. These challenges include ethnocentrism, stereotyping, verbal and nonverbal misinterpretations, differences in information processing, and translation difficulties. Ideally, it would be wonderful to be able to master every culture and language, but we cannot be superhuman. Still, there are some universal cultural attributes you can identify through audience analysis that will give you a basic understanding about your multicultural audience.

Knowing that culture does play a major role in interactions between you and your audience is a good step in becoming an effective communicator. The key is for you to find alternative approaches to delivering your message, with both verbal and nonverbal elements of communication, that are more in line with your audience's cultural instincts. There are three areas of cultural orientation we will explore: (1) cognitive styles: how we organize and process information; (2) decision-making: what we accept as evidence; and (3) communication patterns: how we communicate verbally and nonverbally. 1.

Cognitive Styles The word cognitive means thought. So, “cognitive styles” refers to thought patterns.

Studies of cognitive styles suggest that people fall into open-minded and closed-minded categories. The open-minded person seeks out information before making a decision. They are more likely to see the “relatedness of issues.” They admit that they don’t have all of the answers, and they need to learn more before they can draw a conclusion. The closed-minded person has tunnel-vision—he or she sees only a narrow range of data and ignores the rest. They accept information only if it conforms to their established mindset. Another aspect of cognitive styles is how people process information. We divide such processing into associative and abstractive characteristics. A person who thinks associatively is filtering new data through the screen of personal experience, such as in direct observation. New data can be understood only in terms of similar past experiences. This person’s mind is generally closed to all information that does not reflect established values. Individuals that display abstractive characteristics think very analytically, and concepts are abstracted quickly. Innovation often takes precedence over tradition. So you can see how understanding these differences will help you develop your speech. And a third cognitive process is how we actually link information in a chain to come to a conclusion or decision. Generally, there are two types of thinking: linear and systemic.

Linear thinking means that we process information by creating an associative link, that is, we first begin with A, then go to B, then to C, and so on, until we have created a chain of reason in order to come to a conclusion. Individuals who process information systemically consider all of the

information at one time, mulling it over. This type of person may holistically consider A, B, C, and D, at the same time in order to come to a conclusion. Each type of cognitive process requires a different style of organization and delivery of your speech. The trick is to know how. If they think that you are a credible speaker, chances are you can influence their decision-making process. and when to use both styles, and that's where audience analysis comes in. 2.

Decision-making Members of different cultures arrive at decision-making in different ways. These ways can be described as faith, fact, and feeling. The person who acts on the basis of faith is using a belief system which can be a religion or political ideology. Presenting facts in your speech that do not reflect religious or political beliefs can be a waste of time. His or her faith operates independently from facts. People who believe in facts want to see evidence to support your position. They can be the most predictable to persuade. People tend to accept scientific evidence rather than question or reject it. And finally, people who believe in feelings are the most common throughout the world.

These are the people who “ go with their gut instincts. ” If they think that you are a credible speaker, and they develop a “ liking” for you, chances are you can influence their decision-making process. 3. Communication Patterns

Verbal Communication Each culture has a system for communicating. Hall has indicated that these systems can fall into two categories: low-contextual communication and high-contextual communication. Cultures that express themselves in a high-context communication system emphasize how intention or meaning can best be conveyed through the context (e. g. , social

roles or positions) and the nonverbal channels (e. g. , pauses, silence, tone of voice) of the verbal message.

The high-context system is also known as an indirect verbal style, or indirect communication, verbal statements tend to camouflage the speaker's actual intentions and are carried out in a softer tone of voice. Rules for speaking and behavior are implicit in the context. What this means is that much of the communication is expressed through nonverbal behavior—a slight nod of the head, a simple hand gesture as acknowledgement, a brief smile. Compare this to a low context communication system, where exchange of facts and information is stressed. Information is given primarily in words and meaning is best expressed explicitly. The lowcontext system is also known as a direct verbal style, or direct communication, verbal statements tend to reveal the speaker's intentions with clarity and are enunciated with a forthright tone of voice.

Generally speaking, low-context communication (LCC) refers to communication patterns of direct verbal orientation: straight talk, nonverbal immediacy, and sender-oriented values (i. e. , the sender assumes the responsibility to communicate clearly). In the LCC system, the speaker is expected to be responsible for constructing a clear, persuasive message that the listener can decode easily. In comparison, high-context communication (HCC) refers to communication patterns of indirect verbal orientation: self-humbling talk, nonverbal subtleties, silence, and interpreter-sensitive values (i. e. , the receiver or interpreter of the message assumes the responsibility to infer the hidden or contextual meanings of the message).

In the HCC system, the listener or interpreter of the message is expected to “read between the lines,” to accurately infer the implicit intent of the verbal message, and to decode the nonverbal subtleties that accompany the verbal message. Nonverbal Communication As the global village continues to shrink and cultures co-mingle, it is essential for public speakers to become more sensitive, more aware, and more observant to the nearly limitless numbers of motions, gestures, and body language that surround us every day. And as we cross over cultural borders, we should learn to respect, learn, and understand more about them. Nonverbal communication is a powerful form of human expression. It is everywhere.

People all over the world use their hands, heads, and bodies to communicate expressively. Nonverbal messages are often the primary means of relating our emotions, our attitudes, and the nature of our relationships with others. Eye contact is an important channel of communication. Nonverbal messages can express what verbal messages cannot express and are assumed to be more truthful than verbal messages. Some major areas of nonverbal behaviors include: eye contact, facial expressions, gestures, posture and body orientation, proximity, paralinguistics, and humor. Eye contact is an important channel of communication. It signals interest in others and for some, eye contact with your audience increases the speaker’s credibility.

You’ve heard the statement “Look at me when I’m speaking to you,” or you are taught in public speaking to make “eye contact” with your audience. This is another culturally dependent orientation. Among the Japanese, one way to show that you are listening is to close the eyes in contemplation and nod the head slightly, up and down. The Japanese are not ignoring the

speaker nor are they taking a nap. It is one way to show concentration and attentiveness. The Japanese prefer indirect eye contact; they avoid direct or prolonged eye contact as much as possible. Making eye contact with your audience is important, but knowing who to make that eye contact with is equally as important.

Remember, some audience members expect you to look them directly into their eyes, while others may prefer indirect eye contact. What about something as simple as a hand gesture - say the “ thumbs up” with a closed fist? In the U. S. it can mean support or approval, “ O. K”. or “ Good Job! ” It is also used for “ hitch-hiking” in the U. S. In France this same gesture means zero. In Japan it means money or coins. In Nigeria it is a rude gesture. In Australia, if pumped up and down, is an obscene gesture, and in Germany and Japan it is the signal for “ one. ” Here’s where you walk a fine line—if you fail to gesture while speaking, you may be perceived as boring, stiff, and unanimated.

A somewhat lively and animated delivery may entertain your audience and demonstrate your confidence about your knowledge of the speech material. On the other hand, if you emphasize certain nonverbal gestures that one or more segments of your audience find offensive, you may wind up alienating them. We can make some general assumptions about Low-Contextual and High-Contextual cultures. The exchange of facts and information is stressed with members of Low-Context cultures. Information is given primarily in words and meaning is expressed explicitly. There is a stress on task performance, and the communication style is considered to be unemotional and impersonal, with a high degree of objectivity.

Low-Context individuals are also informal communicators, where dispensing with ceremony and rigid protocol is accepted, if not the norm. Reasoning is deductive; based on theory and logic. And members prefer analytical thinking, which breaks problems into small chunks. Direct eye contact is expected from both the speaker and audience. In High-Context cultures, shared experience makes certain things understood without them needed to be stated explicitly. Rules for speaking and behaving are implicit in the context, as is the preference for implicit communication. The communication style is emotive and personal, with a high degree of subjectivity and a stress on relationships. There is a high emphasis on protocol and social customs.

Reasoning is based on experience and experimentation, with a preference for holistic thinking that is focused on the big picture and interrelationships between components. Indirect eye contact is expected from both speaker and audience. Remember that no two people behave in precisely the same way. Nor do people from the same culture perform exactly the same gestures and body language uniformly. For almost any nonverbal gesture there will probably be someone within a given culture who might say, “ Well, some might attach that meaning to it, but to me it means...” and then they will provide a different interpretation. It is not only what you say in your speech that is important, but it’s how you say it that can make a difference to a multicultural audience.

Gestures and body language communicate as effectively as words, and at times, even more so. Do we expect other cultures to adopt our customs or are we willing to adopt theirs? We may not have time to study a language, but taking time to learn the nonverbal signals is a powerful communicator.

We want to create a safe, inclusive environment for all audience members. Even though we have these cultural differences, people come together because they share similar interests. The success of your speech depends upon you, your research, and the quality and accuracy of your information. ... you want to put your best work forward, and let your audience see your confidence and preparation shine through.

Remember, communication always takes place between individuals, not cultures, but understanding cultural orientations will always help you become an effective speaker. Without nonverbal communication, our world would be static and colorless. Layer 5: “Topic Interest” and “Prior Knowledge” Analysis Finally, you want to query your audience for their interest in, and prior knowledge of, your topic. If the goal of your speech is to deliver a unique and stirring presentation (and it should be), it would make perfect sense to know ahead of time if your audience: (1) is interested in what you have to say, and (2) has any prior knowledge regarding your topic.

It stands to reason that you do not want to give a boring or trite speech. That much is clear. Instead, you want to put your best work forward, and let your audience see your confidence and preparation shine through. And, it also stands to reason that you don't want to make a speech that your audience already knows a lot about. So, your job here is to “test” your topic by sampling your audience for their topic interest and topic knowledge. Defined, topic interest is the significance of the topic to a given audience; oftentimes related precisely to the uniqueness of a speaker's topic. Likewise, topic knowledge is the general amount of information that the audience possesses on a given topic.

These are not mere definitions listed for the sake of argument; these are essential analytical components of effective speech construction. Unlike multicultural audience analysis, evaluating your audience's topic interest and topic knowledge is a fairly simple task. There are two ways to go about doing this: (1) through informal question and answer dialogue in class, or (2) more formally through an actual survey. Either way, it is best to have some information, rather than none at all. Imagine if you will, the laundry list of topics that people have heard over and over and over, ad nauseam. You can probably name some yourself, right now, without giving it much thought.

If you started listing some topics to yourself, please realize that this is the point of this section of this module; your audience is literally thinking the same exact thing you are. Given that, topic preparation is strategically important to your overall speech success. Again, do not underestimate the power of asking your audience whether or not your topic actually interests them. If you find that many people are not interested in your topic, or already know a lot about it, you have just saved yourself from a potentially mind-numbing exercise. After all, do you really want to give a speech where your audience could care less about your topic—or even worse— they know more about the topic than you do yourself? Not at all!

The purpose of this section is to help you search for the highly sought-after public speaking concept called uniqueness, or when a topic rises to the level of being singularly exceptional in interest and knowledge to a given audience. We know that you wish to excel in giving your speech, and indeed you shall. But first, let's make sure that your audience is "turned on" by your topic and hasn't already heard the subject matter so much that they,

themselves, could give the speech without much (if any) preparation. One final note: There's an old adage in communication studies that reasons: "know what you know; know what you don't know; and, know the difference between the two. In other words, don't use puffery to blind your audience about your alleged knowledge on a particular subject. Remember, there is likely to be someone in your audience who knows as much about your topic, if not more, than you do. If you get caught trying to field an embarrassing question, you might just lose the most important thing you have as a speaker: your credibility. If you know the answer, respond accordingly. If you do not know the answer, respond accordingly. But, above all, try and be a resource for your audience. They expect you to be something of a de facto expert on the topic you choose to address. Conclusion Obviously, when thinking about what kind of topic you are going to select, it is compulsory for you to keep your audience in mind.

Not doing so will put your speech at risk of not corresponding " Fail to plan, plan to fail. " with the information needs of your audience and further jeopardize your credibility as a speaker. In this module, we have covered (I) how to analyze an audience and (II) the five layers of audience analysis. In sum, this information equips you with the foundational knowledge and skill-set required to ensure that your topic complements your audience. And, after all, if we are not adapting to meet the needs of our audience, we are not going to be informative or convincing speakers. There's a contemporary maxim that runs strong: " Fail to plan, plan to fail. We, your authors, believe that if you have failed to fully consider the nature, make-up, and characteristics of your audience, you are—for all intents and purposes—

neglecting the spirit of the public speaking exercise. Confidently speaking to audiences can be somewhat addictive. The experience, when properly executed, can be empowering and help you succeed personally and professionally throughout your life. But, you must consider whom you are addressing first, and take their every requirement into account. We are linked to, joined with, if not bound by, our audiences. And, your main speaking ambition should be to seek identification with them, and for them to, likewise, seek identification with you.

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