ADAPTING TO YOUR AUDIENCE AND SITUATION

Osborn and Osborn, 2002, Chapter 4
Lucas, 2001, Chapter 5

Content

- Adapting to speech situation
- Adapting to audience dynamics and demographics
- Meeting the challenges of audience diversity

ADAPTING TO YOUR SPEECH SITUATION

- Time
  - Time of day, time of year, amount of time allotted for speaking
- Place
  - Outside (unpredictable distractions), inside (size and layout of the room, possible distractions)
- Physical setting
  - Availability of lectern, electronic equipment
- Occasion
- Size of audience
  - Feedback, interactive communication, eye contact, volume, type of visual aid
- Context
  - Recent speeches and recent events

ADAPTING TO YOUR SPEECH SITUATION

- Checklist for Adjusting to the Communication Situation –
  - ✓ Will the time or timing of my speech present any challenges?
  - ✓ Will room arrangements be adequate?
  - ✓ Will I have the equipment I need for presentation aids?
  - ✓ What does the audience expect on this occasion?
  - ✓ Is there any late-breaking news on my topic?
  - ✓ Will I possibly have to adjust to previous speakers?
  - ✓ How large the audience be?

Adapting to Your Audience

Adapting to Audience Dynamics –

- Motivation and interest
- Attitude, beliefs and values

Adjusting to Audience Demographics –

➢ Age: used to predict audience reactions; for example, according to Aristotle,
  - ✓ young listeners are pleasure loving, optimistic, impulsive, trusting, idealistic and easily persuaded.
  - ✓ Older people, on the other hand, are more skeptical, cynical and concerned with maintaining comfortable existence.

  Therefore, Aristotle suggested to present a balance between youth and age, being confident yet cautious, judging cases by the facts, and taking all things in moderation.

➢ Gender
➢ Educational Level: estimate listeners' knowledge of and interest in a topic
➢ Group Affiliation: occupational, political, religious, social
➢ Socio-cultural Background

MEETING THE CHALLENGES OF AUDIENCE DIVERSITY

Stereotypes

Stereotypes are rigid sets of beliefs and expectations that prepare and predispose us toward good or bad, desirable and undesirable encounters with others. Our positive or negative stereotypes reflect the attitudes or biases we have toward the group.

When stereotypes dominate our thinking, we react more to them than to the people who seem to fit within them

People form stereotypes based on gender, race, age, ethnic identity, religion, occupation, or place of residence. Most stereotypes are formed indirectly from our families, friends, schools etc.

MEETING THE CHALLENGES OF AUDIENCE DIVERSITY

Ethnocentrism

Ethnocentrism is the belief that one's own group/culture is superior to all other groups/cultures.

Actually, ethnocentrism is not always bad, though, it has a darker side.

"When ethnocentrism goes beyond pride in one's own group to the rejection or derogation of others, it becomes real problem in human relations and a formidable barrier to cross-cultural communication."

You, to control ethnocentrism, must recognize any tendencies you may have to undervalue other cultures. Avoid offensive languages that put others down on the basis of their race or group affiliation.

Meeting the Challenges of Audience Diversity

Sexism

Sexism occurs when we allow gender stereotypes to control our interactions with members of opposite sex. Gender stereotyping involves making broad generalizations about men and women based on outmoded assumptions, such as "men don't know how to take care of children" or "women don't understand business".

Gender stereotyping is especially problematic when it implies that differences between men and women justify discrimination. It often reveals itself in the use of 'sexist language'. Sexist language involves making gender references in situations where the gender is unknown or irrelevant; for example, the generic use of masculine nouns/pronouns. This problem can be solved by saying 'she or he' or 'they'.

See: A note on nonsexist language in Lucas, 2001, p. 274

MEETING THE CHALLENGES OF AUDIENCE DIVERSITY

Racism

Although blatant racism and discrimination are no longer socially acceptable, we may still engage in 'symbolic racism'.

For example, if we say, "In our WHITE neighborhood, we believe in family values."

Adding such irrelevant references to race, and even to gender, ethnicity or sexual preference when none is needed, can be marked as 'Marking'.

MEETING THE CHALLENGES OF AUDIENCE DIVERSITY

Finding Common Ground:

Avoiding 'markers', we need to appeal some 'universal human values', termed by Institute of Global Ethics, like love, truthfulness, honesty, politeness, success, fairness, freedom, unity, tolerance, responsibility and respect for life.