Topic Selection

2019-08-07

Course(s) Used:

- Public Speaking

  Goals and Objectives:

- Students understand how to analyze audiences, environments, and topics.
- Students learn the best ways to brainstorm topics.
- Students have a set of potential topics at the end of class.

  Rationale: The best presentations occur when the audience, the environment, and the topic all work together. Most of the time you can only influence some of these factors. It is important to be able to analyze the factors you cannot influence so you can choose the best fit for the aspects you can influence.

Materials Needed

Materials:

- None

  Technology:

- Classroom computer and projector

Outline of the Lesson

1. Review of previous session's content
2. Lesson opening

   1. Great presentations require an alignment of:
      1. Audience
      2. Environment
      3. Topic
   2. Typically, you will not be able to influence them all

3. Analyzing your audience

   1. Demographics
      1. Age[1]
      2. Gender

[1] When considering age, make sure you think about both the average age and the overall range of ages.

  3. Race
  4. Socio-economic status
  5. Education

 2. Psychological characteristics

  1. Attitudes
  2. Beliefs
  3. Opinions
  4. Experiences

4. Analyzing the presentation environment

 1. Size
 2. Noise
 3. Location
 4. Time of day
 5. Lighting
 6. Resources
 7. Ecology
 8. Context[2]
 9. Time available

5. Analyzing topics

 1. Right for you

  1. Interesting to you[ˆlike-on-an-aiplane]
  2. You have expertise (or you know how to get it)

 2. Right for your audience
 3. Right for your situation

6. Choosing a topic

 1. Come up with a large number of options (100+)

  1. Think in multiple sessions (10-15, 9x over 3 days)
  2. Talk with other people
  3. Consider personal experiences and interests
  4. Research current events

 2. Analyze the best options

7. Hands-on group work

 1. Group students into groups of 5 students
 2. Student brainstorm a large number of potential topics for an upcoming presentation
 3. Students select the best topics for this class, and also for hypothetical audience-environment pairs.
 4. Debrief the activity

8. Lesson closing

[2] Think about context from the perspective of the audience. Where are they coming from? Where are they going next? What current events are they thinking about?

Limitations

This lesson requires students to use notebook paper. Strategic grouping may be necessary for improved peer mentoring.

Variations and Accommodations

Follow guidance from local accommodation authorities.