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Unveiling Audience Engagement in Public Speaking: The Strategies

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ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
	Public speaking is not merely expressing the ideas in front of the audience. Public speaking should be engaging for the audiences and build trust and connection. This study aims to extend the strategies of engaging audience through the concept of logic (logos), emotion (pathos), and credibility (ethos). Participants of this study are 30 students in the Public Speaking Class who got to answer the questionnaire and be observed. The data will be classified into logical, emotional, and credibility approaches in audience engagement with thematic and descriptive analysis. The results show that, to engage the audience, a public speaker should give evidence in arguments, involve audience in activities, and present their credibility with their profile and research. However, there are other aspects such challenges that a public speaker does not expect, for instance, echnical problems and unexpected responses/questions. Also, engaging audience is considered achieved but, making an impact for the audience in public speaking is the bigger step.

1. INTRODUCTION

There are a lot of resources nowadays to help people build their confidence in public speaking. Public speaking is a skill that is addressed by many individuals because humans are social creatures. They need to interact with others and speak to tell something or deliver their ideas. The main goal of a public speaker is to present the message clearly and be received well by the audience (Nadia & Yansyah, 2018).

However, not every audience is ready or able to take the message. There are several reasons why it is difficult for them to receive. That depends on how the public speaker conveys the message and uses the language because the audience could just be lost within the narratives (Aminin, et. al., 2022). Therefore, the audience is also considered as one of the important aspects of public speaking because they can assess the credibility of the speaker based on their judgement.

On the other side, audience can be supportive as well to the speaker. Engagement is a sign that the audience is motivated to attend and enjoy their moment (Walmsley, 2021). If the

audience is engaged then the public speaker is successful in conveying his/her message. The audience would not leave the room because they were involved in the discussion.

The public speaker needs to arrange some strategies to know and to interact with the audience. Engagement is essential to maintain the communication with the audience and keep their interest up during the session (2023). Engagement makes the audiences feel involved in the discussion if the speaker builds some interaction. It also can be discussed from different disciplines as long as it encompasses interests, involvement, and interaction (Palo, 2023). Furthermore, the better the speaker delivers their ideas, the more the audience are influenced. The role of the speaker in the room is quite important to spread the massage and values for the audience.

An established public speaking is an activity that can affect the whole room in positive way. Self-confidence is the key factor for a public speaker to give impacts to the audience (Nurmalasari, Tahir, & Korompot, 2023). Speaking skill is very influential because the audience can receive the message and ideas from the great minds. Lacking of self-confidence and nervousness are still hampering individuals to speak in front of the public (Afna, 2018). Thus, not every single person could be an influential speaker and face challenges easily.

Previous research aims to study the link between student engagement and speaking skills of junior high school students (Istiara, Hastomo, & Indriyanta, 2023). The researchers applied quantitative approach in the design with 26 junior high school students whom they take the research sample from. The data were gathered with questionnaire and also speaking test. The outcome showed that the correlation between engagement and speaking skills was high with coefficient correlation 0,680.

Another research about public speaking appeared when it comes to enhancing the skill. Public Speaking is one of the keys to deliver effective communication in proper way and get more attention (Fathoni, et. al., 2021). This study applied Asset-Based Community Development (ABCD) method through innovative and creative training. The participants of this research are youth from Sragi, Ponorogo, East Java, who were not very confident in speaking in an open space. The results presented that the youth could improve their public speaking and performed as master of ceremony and public speaking skills.

This research will analyze how public speaking can be built on active engagement by exploring its strategies. The study will be examined with qualitative descriptive method throughout several student participants in public speaking class. The author did some observation and gathered the data through questionnaire. For further purpose, this paper can be a reference for research in education and communication studies, especially in mass or public communication area. Also, this paper could drive the teachers, lecturers, and also students to strengthen their public speaking skill.

2. RESEARCH METHOD

2.1 Research Design

To collect the information from the research participants regarding a phenomenon, researcher will use qualitative descriptive method to understand the case more carefully. The output of this method will be empirical and factual to explain how an event could occur (Fauzy, et. al., 2022). The task 'describing' is supposed to be executed by the researchers who experience the nature of the object or phenomenon. They did some observation in a way to collect and record the date while they are exploring. In this phase, researchers use their constructive thinking to find out the process and to learn the characters of topic.

In this research method, the researcher describes the results gathered through their observation. They will find the information from their informants who go through the process. Interpretive study is not practically applied since the researcher will resume the process of an event in comprehensive way. The researchers will write qualitative texts in inductive approach. They will summarize the process from the specific information to the general one which helps explaining the complexity of the problem (Kusumastuti & Khoiron, 2019).

This study will explore the factors that boost the audience engagement in public speaking. Public speaking has been considered as one of the challenges of individuals because not every single person is confident enough to present and express themselves in society The author will analyze a group of students in public speaking class and he will identify the strategies in engaging audience through public speaking. This research will not focus on numeric data or figures. Whereas, qualitative approach in this study will evaluate the textual data resulted through the examination of participants' answers (Tobing, et. al., 2017).

To help explaining the strategies in engaging audience, the author will divide the techniques into three categories, such as *Logos* (Logic), *Pathos* (Emotion), and *Ethos* (Ethics) (Susanti, et. al. 2024). *Logos* means the strategies applied by building robust structure in public speaking which are opening, content, and closing. Besides, the delivery has to be supported with strong arguments, facts, illustration, or analogy to make audience easily understand the topic. *Pathos,* or emotion, is considered as public speaking strategy to get the audience's attention by touching their feelings and sympathy with certain words and tone. Meanwhile *Ethos*, which we refer as ethics, is public speaking strategy which underlines the credibility and confidence of the speaker by presenting the speaker's quality and doing some research.

2.2 Participants

Participants of this research are university students majoring Communication Studies at a private university who are studying in public speaking course. These 30 learners are young adults who still learn to be confident in delivering their opinion. The author determined university students as participants because they are still active learners who still grow their confidence and cultivate their skill, including oral presentation, which is applied in their assignments (Astuti, Iramadhani, & Muna, 2021). Also, in the age of early twenties, they are also eager to look into public speaking style and contents on social media which contributes to their knowledge in speech delivery techniques.

2.3 Instruments

To collect the data, the author used observation and questionnaire to get the feedback from research participants. These instruments are applicable in qualitative descriptive research because they can help describing the social phenomenon and reality (Prawiyogi, et.al., 2021). In this research, the author wanted to describe the strategies to enhance the audience engagement through the perspective of active learners.

There were 30 students of Public Speaking class had to answer the questions in their Learning Management System (LMS) regarding the strategies / techniques to enhance engagement in public speaking, including their reasons. One student could answer for more than one options for each question. The author also observed their progress during several meetings in the class to analyze their skill development in public speaking. In the class, they kept practicing their public speaking and applied the material with their peers as audience to give some feedbacks.

2.4 Data Analysis Procedures

According to Warsono, Astuti, & Ardiyansah (2022), there are some steps to analyze qualitative data in research. Firstly, the author read all data and see the pattern if there is a repetition in data collecting. Afterwards, form all of the information, the researcher finds the most significant ones which is supporting the study. The significant data will be classified into some categories.

When they are organized, the researcher can see the pattern and connection among the data. From there, the researcher can construct a framework to get the points of the data. When this step is done, the researcher can create an argument based on the data selected.

There are some aspects that can support the researchers' argument, for instance, participants' perspective and social relation and structure.

In this research, the author also applies analysis method to organize the data called thematic analysis. Thematic analysis is a process conducted by the researcher to identify, analyze, and report the data into themes and patterns (Najmah, et. al., 2023). On the next step, the data will be categorized and examined which will turn into conclusion and interpretation. The researcher has to read thoroughly the data transcript, interview result, group discussion, and observation result.

3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

3.1. Sub Findings

The data are collected and classified into three categories in public speaking, such as *Logos* (Logic), *Pathos* (Emotion), and *Ethos* (Ethics). Thirty students of Public Speaking class already answered the questions and the researcher put them on the table based on the cluster. These Here are the table presenting each category and the number of the answer:

Table 1. Logical approach to increase public speaking engagement

Components of *Logos*	Number of Answers
Providing arguments with valid facts, examples, and illustration	21
Presenting robust structure in presentation	5
Speaking understandable language to audience	4

The information told us that 70% of students believe in giving supporting evidence as the key point to engage with audience. Less than 20% answered that structure and language are important factors contributing to audience engagement. Below is the table showing the emotional factors or *Pathos* that can build up audience's engagement:

Table 2. Emotional approach to increase public speaking engagement

Components of *Pathos*	Number of Answers
Building Interaction with Audience (Games, Activity, Discussion, Collaboration, and Question-and-Answer session)	28
Giving interesting examples or humor	5
Having choices of words and tone in speaking	1

From the figures, it shows that the majority of the students considered making conversation with the audience will grow intimacy and involvement. More than 90% of students believe that doing activities with audience will build trust and encourage to create questions. Activities can be conducted in various forms, such as games, discussion, or the collaborative ones. The rest assumed that using examples and choices of words could contribute as well even though those are not as strong as interactive action.

One more factor that subscribes to engaged public speaking is how ethics play the role in convincing the audience. Ethics or *Ethos* in this context represents the credibility and confidence of the public speaker in front of the audience. Here are the facts that ethics support the engagement:

Table 3. Ethical approach to increase public speaking engagement

Components of *Pathos*	Number of Answers
Building credibility as speaker/facilitator	7
Doing research on the materials and audience	4

The data show that, from ethical approach, credibility holds important factor to make engagement. Moreover, other than credibility, research participants thought that research before presentation can affect how the speaker engage the audience. However, this ethical aspect does not appear as much as the logic and the emotional ones. On the next chapter, this paper will elaborate why these factors are necessary for audience to participate in public speaking.

3.2 Discussion

3.2.1. The Importance of Evidence in Engaging Audience

Audiences attend a seminar or public discussion to hear and to get new information. They come for a reason. If they are interested for a topic, they will find any place or occasion that open a discussion about it. If the material is presented well, they will have trust and engagement about the topic as additional values to the knowledge they get.

A complete presentation itself must be started with extended preparation, including research. In order to get trust, a public speaker or presenter has to be someone who has credibility to collect the facts and information about their topic. If it is undergone well, the audience will pay some respect to the work of the presenter.

Audience will understand easily once the presenter or speaker could explain the ideas and concept from their mind. One way to manifest the ideas or concepts are through examples. Examples make the audience comprehend about the topic and the concepts applied in the material. Consequently, audience can get the point quite easily.

Evidence or examples are the bait to persuade the audience. Evidence is something that makes the speaker look more convincing in front of audience. For instance, if the speaker is a marketer or salesperson, they will make their audience trust by showing testimonies, results or figures about the product to have new customers.

When the audience can be persuaded, it is considered that the goal of the speaker must be achieved. This speaker could maintain audience's attention throughout the speech because they are able to explain something a little bit difficult with stories or anecdotes. Even they sound entertaining, but those are what make the audience stay and engaged.

Instead of defining an object in complicated manner, audience need to be told the way it works in daily understanding. Audience needs to hear a relatable story that can be accepted simply by demonstrating the real-world situations. Giving illustration is one of the effective techniques to arouse the audience' interest. It will be better if the substance of the speech/presentation could be delivered captivatingly which is more impactful for the audience. This also could be the best opportunity for the speaker and audience to build connection and trust which will be beneficial for doing discussion. According to Morris et al. (2019), audiences are more likely to retain information delivered in story form when a connection is made between them and the characters they observe on screen.

Besides giving examples or illustration, presenting case studies also triggers the audience to be engaged. They could imagine themselves in the situation and ask question for more interpretation. It will be easier for the speaker to transfer the message and describe something relatable to the audience. They will believe more in the speaker's content without so much questioning. Due to the vast amount of information obtained through language communication, the issue of process reliability inevitably arises. This issue is crucial to the relatively new philosophical discipline of epistemology of witness (Shieber, 2015).

One last work that evidence do in public speaking is anticipating disapproval from the audience. With evidence, the speaker's argument will sound stronger. The speaker could incorporate different perspective as well about an issue which prompts discussion. This is the way to make a speech more impactful and also persuasive.

3.2.2. More Involved Audience Strengthen Engagement

Public speaking is not supposed to be one-way communication. It goes in two directions from sender (the speaker) to the receiver (audience) and vice versa. Audience can be

included in the conversation through various activities, such as discussion, asking questions, or games. When the audience are involved, the room will be much more active.

The participation of audience creates connection between them and speaker which cuts the gap and it makes them closer. When the connection is attached, audience will be comfortable and open to ask questions or give comments. The conversation gets more livened up and it motivates the whole room to join as well. Furthermore, the more the audience listen, the more they remember the ideas.

Once the audience joins the discussion, speaker can resonate with the topic. The speaker can gather a lot of interests from the audience since they may come from different backgrounds or disciplines. Speaker can also manage the time and flow of discussion so the audience can be well-driven in participating the forum. This opens more chance for audience to give feedback based on their interests and needs.

When the audience join the activities, it is helpful for them to build effective communication. Audience can learn communication well, in terms of listening, empathy, and responsiveness. Besides, joining activities can avoid them from distraction so their interest can grow within the discussion. They can fully pay attention to the material and join the flow.

Overall, audience can be more democratic and confident in speaking whenever they participate in the conversation. If audience are able to master it, their public speaking/presentation will be more dynamic. Confidence can bring success in public speaking and take the audience to the deeper level, not just on the surface. Lastly, the audience participation is the best opportunity to create impressions to others.

3.2.3. Being Credible in Engaging Audience: Researching and Presenting

Credibility can make the audience trust and respect the speaker. Credibility is not only presenting the speaker's profile, but also the way they research the material. It is the preparation that completes the whole performance. All supporting evidence have been completed and that is the moment when credibility plays an important role in engaging audience.

Credibility is also shown from educational background or expertise. Audience will put a lot of trust to the speaker. Knowledge is the power of the speaker and that symbolizes authority in presentation room. If the speaker has adequate knowledge about the topic, audience will pay attention and take the message seriously.

If the speaker is capable, audience will focus on the material more. The speaker will be the center of attention when the audience are not easily distracted. Credible speakers use persuasion to their audience, but the speech is very substantiated. They have weighty arguments that can influence widely. Therefore, audience will be moved to take some space.

Because credible speakers have proper knowledge, they will be ready to accept feedback from the audience. If the feedback session is open, the audience will feel comfortable to engage in communication. Zhang et al (2022) describe that to take the persuasive speech as an example: students are expected to make a strong persuasive argument with ethos (establishing credibility of the speaker), logos (messages conveyed in a logical manner), and pathos (building an emotional connection between the speaker and the audience). Credibility also leads to successful reputation and authority in career, opportunities, and influence in society. When the speaker maintains their credibility, they will keep presenting accurate and valuable message. Afterall, the audience will continue to follow.

Credibility gives respect to the speaker and also attention from the audience. Reputation and influence will be established in a way to bridge the connection with the wide audience. The connection will go deeper and more meaningful. Impactful presentation is the ultimate result of credible speech because audience can resonate with the message.

4. CONCLUSION

From the discussion above, there are strategies to engage the audience in public speaking. Thirty students have answered the best ways to participate and get involved. This descriptive study explained the strategies in three aspects, *logos* (logic), *pathos* (emotion),

and *ethos* (ethics). With logic, providing examples is one of the best ways to convince the audience because they can resonate with the real events or illustration. Meanwhile with emotional approach, speaker can involve the audience in activities, such as games, discussion, or conversational activities so the audience are confident. One more, with credibility (*ethos*), the speaker will perform as someone who is competent and preparation must be done beforehand. With these three components, a public speaker will be able to engage the whole audience in the room.

However, there are other factors that challenge a public speaker in engaging their audience. For instance, technical issues and unexpected response/question. These factors are out of speaker's control and the room need an assistant to handle the issue. Also, not every audience has similar response to the topic. Speaker cannot handle every response and of attention to the strategy they apply in public speaking.

Audience should be engaged with messages that resonate them. Beside engagement, a public speaker should make an impact. To be impactful, speaker should motivate the audience with spirit. Being impactful is further goal in successful public speaking which could be considered as added value.

Acknowledgement

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