ED 318 018   CS 212 304

AUTHOR   Roen, Duane H.
TITLE   Synthesizing Current Views of Audience: Notes toward
                a Fuller Understanding of Audience.
PUB DATE   Mar 90
NOTE   19p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the
                Conference on College Composition and Communication
                (41st, Chicago, IL, March 22-24, 1990).
PUB TYPE   Speeches/Conference Papers (150) -- Viewpoints (120)
                -- Information Analyses (070)

EDRS PRICE   MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS   *Audience Awareness; Audiences; Communication Skills;
                *Cooperation; Rhetoric; Teaching Methods; *Writing
                (Composition); *Writing Instruction; Writing Skills;
                Writing Teachers
IDENTIFIERS   *Collaborative Learning; *Composition Theory; Writing
                Groups

ABSTRACT
                The concept of audience has emerged as a central
theme in many scholarly discussions. Walter Ong focuses on fiction
and believes that what has been said about fictional narrative
applies to all writing. Lev Vygotsky offers the view that students
work in the zone of proximal development and observes that thought
itself develops as a result of our social experiences. John Trimbur
has presented a convincing argument that by melding the work of
Vygotsky with the work of Mikhail Bakhtin, educators can understand
that writers can have the voices of many others in their heads and
can draw on these voices freely when they compose. All of this
suggests the concept of collaborative learning, in the vein of
Kenneth Bruffee's work, suggesting that an educator's task involves
engaging students in conversation among themselves at as many points
in both the writing and reading process as possible. James Reither
and Douglas Vipond explain that by developing claims cooperatively,
collectively, and collaboratively the members of such a
community-within-a-community learn from one another, teach, support,
and sustain one another. Thomas Kuhn has done much to describe the
ways in which specific discourse communities socially construct
knowledge. Stanley Fish calls these phenomena interpretative
communities." Educators need to give students opportunities to work
within the many discourse communities represented in any classroom.
In this way writing and reading become mutually reinforcing, and
writers and readers become mutually supportive. (Forty-two references
are attached.) (MG)

Synthesizing Current Views of Audience:
Notes Toward a Fuller Understanding of Audience
Duane H. Roen, University of Arizona

The poet Philip Levine, in his collection <u>A Walk with Tom
Jefferson</u>, considers audience in a poem titled "Picture Postcard
from the Other World" (45-46). The poem begins:

> Since I don't know who will be reading
> this or even if it will be read, I must
> invent someone on the other end
> of eternity, a distant cousin laboring
> under the same faint stars I labored
> all those unnumbered years ago. I make you
> like me in everything I can--

Rather than addressing an audience as Pfister and Petrick or
Mitchell and Taylor advise, Levine is clearly invoking or
fictionalizing his audience, as Walter Ong and as Russell Long
say writers must. And I suppose that fictionalizing an audience
might suffice for confident, highly accomplished writers such a
Phillip Levine. But those of us who work with student writers,
who usually possess much less confidence than published poets,
know that we need to do more than simply tell our students: "Now,
you just do what Levine does in his poem 'Picture Postcard from
the Other World.' Just fictionalize a reader who's just like
you." Such advice reinforces the pedagogically unsound 18th and
19th century vision of the writer, holed up in some poorly
heated, dimly lit, sparsely furnished garret. Images of Bob

Cratchet and Bartleby come to mind, even though they are not
writers, per se. Such advice leads students to believe in what
Kenneth Bruffee calls the traditional assumption that "writing
and reading [are] intrinsically individual, asocial activities"
("Writing and Reading" 160). The word asocial makes me shudder.

What, then, should we do to help our students experience
audience, and what should guide us as we try to help our students
understand audience? Let me offer my suggestions.

More than a decade ago James Moffett, in a discussion with
James Squire, Dorothy Davidson, Janet Emig, Ted Hipple, Charlotte
Huck, and Dan Lindley, directly and forcefully announced the need
for greater attention to audience in composition studies. He
asserted, "If anybody is going to do anything about the teaching
of writing, the first priority is going to have to be the
rekindling of the sense of audience. Until that's done, nothing
else is going to happen" (Squire et al. 298). And, this
rekindling has occurred. For example, an on-line search of ERIC
abstracts from 1980 through the first few months of 1989 yields
449 entries, amounting to 675,661 computer bytes--roughly the
size of a typical scholarly book. And, perhaps it is an anomaly,
but two of the five articles in the October 1989 issue of
Research in the Teaching of English deal with audience. It is
clear that the concept of audience has emerged as a central theme
in many scholarly discussions. Current approaches to audience
include historical studies of classical rhetoric, studies of
writers' audience awareness during composing, the relation
between audience awareness and syntactic and lexical features,
and studies of audiences as discourse communities. Journals such
as Research in the Teaching of English, College English, College

<u>Composition and Communication</u>, <u>Rhetoric Review</u> and <u>Written Communication</u> have published articles on audience in increasing members. Studies of audience are scattered across numerous journals, anthologies, and book chapters, not only in the field of composition but also in literary studies, reading theory, education, cognitive psychology, philosophy, and linguistics.

Given this rebirth of interest in audience, we have a fairly large body of theory that might guide us. With what concepts, then, should we be familiar if we are to fully understand the intricacies of audience? And, of course, <u>why</u> should we know this work? I will, in the rest of the time available, note some of the "too-good-to-miss" work. And, I will try to explain why this work can be so useful to us as we prepare to work with our students.

I probably would begin with Walter Ong's notion of the fictionalized audience. As Ong puts it, the writer "fictionalizes in his imagination an audience he has learned to know not from daily life but from earlier writers who were fictionalizing in their imagination audiences they had learned to know in still earlier writers, as so on back to the dawn of written narrative" (11). Ong focuses on fiction, which is usually not the focus of students' writing in our courses, but Ong boldly announces that "what has been said about fictional narrative applies ceteris paribus to all writing" . . . . because "the writer's audience is always a fiction" (17). At one point in his well-known essay, Ong reveals a traditional view of writing instruction when he describes a classroom in which "[t]he student is not talking. He is writing. No one is listening. There is no feedback. Where does he find his 'audience'? He has to make his readers up, fictionalize them" (11). As you surmised, I begin with Ong work

not because it's pedagogically appealing, but because it sets up
a model of teaching writing to which I find it easy to object.
That is, I can't imagine a writing classroom in which the student
writer is not talking, in which not one is listening, in which
there is not feedback, in which the writer has to make up his <u>or</u>
her readers. (That is not to say, of course, that such classrooms
do not exist today.) I <u>want</u> my students to know their audiences
from daily life, especially daily life in the classroom, and I
would like to see them learn to address an array of audiences as
wide as that which James Moffett describes in <u>Teaching the</u>
<u>Universe of Discourse</u>.

Instead of the kind of writing classroom that Ong so briefly
describes, I want students to write and to know their audiences
in a context that Lev Vygotsky would endorse. Students work in
the <u>zone of proximal development</u>: ". . . the distance between the
actual developmental level as determined by independent problem
solving and the level of potential development as determined
through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration
with more capable peers" (<u>Mind</u> 86). [Incidentally, there is a new
Apple Computer radio ad that ends with a very Vygotskian
observation: "Without the right tools, your potential is
considerably less than you might imagine."] Vygotsky offered the
zone to help argue that we learn and perform various tasks better
when we work with other people. I would argue that this is
especially true for writing, because those peers, whether they
are more, less, or equally capable, encourage the writer to talk,
as they listen, as they offer feedback, and as they give the peer
writer many daily opportunities to know them--one set of readers,
one audience, or as Hymes puts it, one set of "auditors"

("Models"). These peers make it much easier for the writer to
revise her "writer-based prose" into what Linda Flower has called
"reader-based prose." In class, peers don't give lots of
summative, criterion-based based feedback; rather, they follow
the advice of Peter Elbow, Richard Koch, Bill Lyons, and others
to offer formative feedback, often in the shape of questions--the
kinds that real readers, real audience have. These questions, as
Marvin, Diogenes, Clyde Moneyhun, and I have mentioned elsewhere,
can help writers understand what more their audience needs
("Learning to Bunt"). John Trimbur, noting the important of such
work, suggests that: "The experience of 'reader's need' can
enhance audience awareness and promote habits of revision with
readers in mind" ("Collaborative Learning" 97).

Anne Ruggles Gere notes that writing scholars have suggested
for more than a century that peer writing groups can do much to
enhance students' audience awareness. In particular, Gere cites
the work of Gertrude Buck and Elisabeth Woodbridge, Samuel
Thurber, Homer Watt, and M. H. Hedges.

We can draw further on the work of Vygotsky here. In Thought
and Language Vygotsky noted that "[t]he primary functions of
speech, in both children and adults, is communication, social
contact" (34)--to work with audiences, if you will. But more
important to us here perhaps is Vygotsky's observation that
thought itself develops as a result of our social experiences--
experiences with interactive audiences: "Thought development is
determined by language, i.e., by the linguistic tools of of
thought and by the the sociocultural experience of the child.
Essentially, the development of inner speech depends on outside
factors; . . ." (94).

John Trimbur has presented a convincing argument that by
melding the work of Vygotsky with the the work of Mikhail Bakhtin
we can understand that writers can have the voices of many others
in their heads. Writers draw on these voices freely when they
compose--even though they may not have explicit awareness that
they are doing so. Trimbur is drawing on Vygotsky's notion that
everything that we humans do is social first and individual
later--that "[o]ur mental lives . . . are extensions of social
experience inward" (216). Bringing Bakhtin into the equation,
Trimbur notes that there is a "polyphony of voices that resonate
in the writer's mind" (219) while at work. He notes further that
"writers negotiate [these] various languages they hear when they
sit down to write (220). Bakhtin himself referred to these
languages or voices as "social heteroglossia" or the "Tower-of-
Babel mixing of languages . . . " (278). As I speak now, for
example, my polyphony includes the words and thinking of Trimbur,
Vygotsky, Bakhtin, for whom I have served as an audience, as well
as some of my students and colleagues with whom I have discussed
the work of Trimbur, Vygotsky, and Bakhtin. Ede and Lunsford
suggest this Bakhtinian phenomenon in their 1984 article even
though they do not explicitly acknowledge the work of Bakhtin:
"[T]he term audience refers not just to the intended, actual, or
eventual readers of a discourse, but to all those whose image,
ideas or actions influence a writer during the process of
composition" (168). A friend of mine recently told me that he
hates to speak after the first day of the CCCC conference because
the polyphony of voices of the first day's speakers begins to
pound in his head, forcing him to do more last-minute revising
than he cares to do.

All of this, of course, suggests the concept of collaborative learning, in the vein of Kenneth Bruffee's work. Bruffee suggests that "our task must involve engaging students in conversation among themselves at as many points in both the writing and the reading process as possible, and that we should contrive to ensure that students' conversation about what they read and write is similar in as many ways as possible to the way we would like them eventually to read and write. The way they talk with each other determines the way they will think and the way they will write" ("'Conversation of Mankind'" 642).

Bruffee further explains the power of collaborative learning--learning with audiences--to help students become better writers: "[I]f we think of learning a social process, the process of socially justifying belief, then to teach expository writing seems to involve . . . . demonstrating to students that they know something only when they can explain it in writing to the satisfaction of the community of their knowledgeable peers" (652). Bruffee reminds us, by the way, that collectively a classroom full of students includes a wide array of knowledge-- more than we sometimes recognize or acknowledge.

James Reither and Douglas Vipond explain that "a primary benefit of collaboration [coathoring and workshopping] is that writers thereby establish and maintain immediate communities which function within the larger, 'disciplinary' communities where their knowledge claims might find a fit. Developing claims cooperatively, collectively, collaboratively, the members of such a community-within-a-community learn from one another, teach one another; they support and sustain one another" (859).

Bruffee has noted that "[c]ollaborative learning is related

to social construction in that it assumes learning occurs among person rather than between a person and things" ("Social Construction" 787).

To learn more about discourse communities and the social construction of knowledge, we can consider work in the history of science, philosophy, psychology, sociology, anthropology, and literary criticism.

Thomas Kuhn, best known for his work on the nature of changing paradigms in physical science, has done much to describe the ways in which scientific communities, specific discourse communities, socially construct knowledge. In both The Structure of Scientific Revolutions and in The Essential Tension, Kuhn talks about the tremendous influence that a scientist's audience, her specific discourse community can have on her work. In Kuhn's earlier work, for example he notes that "there are no other professional communities in which individual creative work is so exclusively addressed to and evaluated by other members of the profession." He adds that "[j]ust because he is working only for an audience of colleagues, an audience that shares his own values and beliefs, the scientist can take a single set of standards for granted" (Structure 164). In his later book, in which he reflects more fully on the nature of scientific communities and in which he notes work done on communities in other disciplines, especially the social sciences, Kuhn characterizes the difficulty that members of a scientific community can have if they attempt to communicate with an audience outside that community: "Because the attention of different communities is focused on different matters, professional communication across group lines is likely to be arduous, often gives rise to misunderstanding, and may, if

pursued, isolate significant disagreement" (Essential 296).

 Closer to home, Stanley Fish, has used the term interpretive communities to denote the phenomena described by Kuhn. Fish demonstrates the difficulty that a seemingly simple question such as "Is there a text in this class?" can present if the audience for the question is not of the same interpretive community as the person asking the question. The thrust of his sometimes humorous, sometimes long-winded commentary is that "language is always perceived, from the very first, within a structure of norms. That structure, however, is not abstract and independent but social; and therefore it is not a single structure with a privileged relationship to the process of communication as occurs in any situation but a structure that changes when one situation, with is assumed background of practices, purposes, and goals, has given way to another" (531 in Adams and Searle).

 My own favorite example of the power of interpretive communities involves a short list of groceries. Assume for a moment that I cannot, for one reason or another, go to the grocery store to buy the four items, which appear on my list as

> coffee
>
> bread
>
> cereal
>
> milk

I won't belabor the discussion of this list as Fish belabors his former student's now famous question to one of Fish's colleagues, but I will point out that you and I belong to the same interpretive community for grocery lists if you decided that I

wanted

    decaffeinated whole coffee beans,

    frozen loaves of whole wheat bread dough,

    Post Raisin Bran, and

    2% milk in a half-gallon <u>paper</u> container.

My example was carried to a greater extreme in a recent episode of <u>Newhart</u>, in which Dick took Joanna's list of abbreviations to the local grocery. Her list included two items that Dick asked Joanna about:

> Dick: Joanna, I can never make out your lists. Here, what's T.P.? Toilet paper?
>
> Joanna: "No. Toothpaste.
>
> Dick: "What about C.J.?"
>
> Joanna: "Canned giblets.'
>
> Dick: "I'll have you know that <u>giblets</u> begins with a <u>g</u>."
>
> Joanna: "I know, Dick, But I can't put that down. That would be crunchy granola, and we have a whole box of that."

Later, at the grocery store, Dick asked Michael to help him. The conversation went something like this:

> Dick: "Michael, can you help me with this list. I can never figure out Joanna's abbreviations."
>
> Michael: "Sure, Dick. Shoot."
>
> Dick: "S.G."
>
> Michael: "Seedless grapes.
>
> Dick: "D.P."
>
> Michael: "That would be dill pickles."

Dick: "G.P."

Michael: "Grey Poupon."

Dick: "What about P.O.?"

Michael: "Well, that could be pitted olives or pearl onions.
    Why not be safe and get both. Gee, Dick, do you and
    Joanna exist on a diet of condiments?"

Dick, Joanna's husband, assumed to be member of her interpretive
community, at least on household matters, can't interpret her
discourse, as abbreviated as it is. Michael, however, who
throughout the history of the television series has lived in his
own little discourse community of cutesie language, does not
hesitate a second to interpret Joanna's abbreviations. Ah, the
joys of studying interpretive communities.

What we can learn from the scholarship in discourse
communities or interpretive communities is that we need to give
our students opportunities to work within the many discourse
communities represented by students in any classroom. That work
can help them to recognize not necessarily that "there are no
determinate meanings and that the stability of the text is an
illusion" (529 in Adams and Searle), as Fish suggests. I think
that such thinking can be pretty scary stuff for young writers
producing texts. What they can learn, though, is that they do
have to adjust texts in different ways for members of different
interpretive communities.

In addition to the work of Thomas Kuhn, in the history of
science, the work of Stanley Fish, in literary criticism, and the
work of Kenneth Bruffee in our own field, we can turn elsewhere
to learn much about about "communities" and the interactions of

writers and readers, speakers and listeners, encoders and decoders, addressers and addressees, producers and consumers--you choose the terms. Ben Rafoth, for example, has recently drawn on work in sociolinguistics to trace the roots of the concept of discourse community. Rafoth has also collaborated with Don Rubin to co-edit an anthology that focuses on the social construction of written communication. And, of course, Karen Burke LeFevre has recently offered that writing, or at least "[i]nvention," rather than being a private act, "is better understood as a social act, in which an individual who is at the same time a social being interacts in a distinctive way with society and culture to create something" (1).

One of the most important anthropological studies that can give us better understanding of the nuances of language use within communities is, of course, Shirley Brice Heath's Ways with Words. Heath doesn't give us lots of quotable material, but she does offer one of the most thorough "thick descriptions" of language use in two communities, Roadville and Trackton, and their schools.

My favorite term for community comes from Anne Ruggles Gere in her wonderful book on writing groups. She uses the term "communities of literacy," noting that "literacy does not function in isolation" (123). She ends her book: "In writing groups, people can become part of a community that takes aesthetic pleasure in a fine sentence, distinguishes between a convincing argument and one that fails to convince, and delights in clear and effective presentation of an idea. The product of writing groups, the polished prose, has importance, but even more significant is the process of the group, the means which

individuals experience and eventually become part of a literate community" (123).

I'd like to mention briefly some possible ways that post-structuralist literary criticism might also help us consider audiences for our students' text. For the most part, I think that much post-structuralist criticism presents too many frightening and confusing issues for students producing texts. After all, how comforting can it be to a writer to be told that meaning is unstable; that, as David Bleich suggests, words can mean almost anything, as they did to Humpty Dumpty, and therefore, "'meaning' can never be transferred from one person to another except by repetition of mere dumb signifiers" (111). And if you are a writer, how comforting can it be to hear from Roland Barthes that you are dead?

But I do think that Marshall Alcorn, to name one reader-response theorist, has found a way to breathe life into post-structuralist criticism for our pedagogical purposes. He admits that too much reader-response criticism has promoted "projective occlusion," which is "a subjective replacing or deleting of an objectively present signifier (an avoidance of the perceptible features of the object)" (145). On the other hand, though, responsible reader-response criticism, like that practiced by Louise Rosenblatt, can be characterized by "projective idealization," "the subjective interpreting and contextualizing of signifiers actually encountered" (145). Alcorn explains that 'projective idealization acknowledges the presence of the sequence of material signifiers constituting the text. Rather than ignoring the signifier in deference to its own fantasies, it attempts to use the signifiers to embody, articulate, and even

recursively reflect upon its values" (146). Further, [p]rojective
idealization refers to the process by which material for the
internal world [of the reader] encounters material in the
external world and becomes modified by it" (146). This process
sounds a lot like Piaget's concept of "accommodation" as opposed
to the the ring of "assimilation" that projective occlusion
suggests. Incidentally, I think that Louise Rosenblatt has
consistently done the most of any of the reader-response
advocates to promote responsible reading, reading that is always
directed back to the features of the text under consideration.

I think that Alcorn's projective idealization, if done in
the presence of student writers, may help writers to witness how
readers adjust to their texts and the ease or difficulty with
which readers make such adjustments. Such witnessing can help
writers see ways that they might make their readers' task just a
little less trying. Conversely, I think that writers can help
readers find strategies for negotiating meaning suggested by the
signifiers in their texts. In such a setting, writing and reading
become mutually reinforcing, and writers and readers become
mutually supportive. They talk, they listen, they offer feedback-
-a far cry from the classroom that Walter Ong describes.

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