TYPOLOGY OF AUDIENCES

Jamila Baier-Matthews
Vienna/New Delhi

Keywords: Type, prototype, system of groupings, similarity, difference, variable, transitional factor, order, interaction, growth, decrease, development, regularity, large, small, global, pattern, paradigm, exclusivity, representative, multi-disciplinarity, fluctuation, society, politics, culture, economy, hierarchy, intercultural, mainstream, sub-culture, avantgarde, convention, control, monitoring, construct, stratification, participation, mediation, authenticity, reception, perception, motivation, requirement, preference, inspiration, involvement, power of observation, examination, navigation, downloading, submission, search, curiosity, expression, internalisation, capability, expert, novice, responsibility, process, preservation, priority, shared realities, cultural competence

Contents

Summary

While it may be relatively easy to categorize an audience into typologies, e.g. large or small, international or national, and/or, active/passive etc, it is by far more subtle to define its (structural) features and their impact on a performance/performer/event.

1. Introduction

The term typology implies a system of groupings, a classification of similarities and differences, however, one that is not of static nature. Typologies are variables without precise borders, which, e.g. can be applied to a transitional situation, within a specific context or event. These may be set up to aid demonstration or inquiry of by establishing a limited relationship between phenomena. An audience, similarly, has its specific characteristics too, and, yet, cannot be seen in isolation, and needs to be understood by a significant difference, i.e. the people it is built up upon, no doubt with their own special

attributes, which in turn indicates its interactive nature. The audience comprises people who gather voluntarily for a common purpose and are in touch with the performance/performer/event, which it chooses to witness, observe/study listen to. The flow of information between performer and viewer which is crucial for a fruitful interaction, grants the audience a certain amount of freedom of judgement which again decides the sustainability/quality of the performance/performer/event.

In global terms, the increased interaction between groupings of different kinds with special attributes, operating from varying geographical locations, and the irreversible speed at which this takes place, decides the nature and quality of the eventually established communication.

New definitions would have to be worked out in order to demonstrate the relevance and impact which audiences and their typologies have on intercultural communication within a global context, depending on the availability and range of media in question.

1.1 Definitions

A **typology** is a system of groupings called type, i.e. a class or group of people or things that have similar characteristics.

1.2 Example A

A group of ten Asian businessmen meet at an international conference in Vienna to discuss issues related to trade with Austria and the Europe at the Vienna International Centre.

Categories/characteristics:

professional: businessmen
nationalities: Chinese , North-Korean, Indian, Mongolian
topic: trade relations between participant countries and Austria
countries addressed: China, North Korea, India, Mongolia, Austria (plus EU)
conference language: English ,
languages spoken by delegates: several, English and respective regional languages/dialects (one or many)
numerical values: number of participating delegates (4); countries represented (5) involved (+EU member states)
Venues: Vienna International Centre, Vienna

These are specified attributes (Asian/Austrian/trade experts) which may be singled out of a specific context of events. From the logical point of view they define classes. Types differ from classes and according to this there is an essential difference between classifications and typologies. Systems of classifications which are used to determine differing factors (countries addressed, nationalities of delegates) are, mostly, rigid factors. They may not be altered, once their borders are defined. Typologies on the other hand are no doubt also ordered systems, which are, however, not static. Similarities (common Asian/specific: businessmen, representing different business expertise,

according to the line of business they are engaged in) and differences (general: different nationalities/specific: language background of delegates, some members may be multilingual), can, however, be .identified without any difficulty. The inherent quality of a typology is that its borders cannot be strictly defined, leaving scope for analogies a (Vienna as an international centre for conferences of varying kind) and/or further development (above-mentioned conference may lead to further talks, which may or may not be bilateral or multilateral, respectively). This, in turn, points out to the variable and transitional nature of typologies, creating their very own dynamics of change (these talks may lead to the signing of treaties, the next round of talks need not take place in Vienna). This also implies that typologies may be connected to each other (overall topic) in order to create new typologies (altered direction). A process of growth or decrease can be released or set in motion through inherent qualities (all partners have voluntarily reached an agreement to come together to discuss pressing issues that are relevant to the them) or else even lead to their total dissolution (the talks may be discontinued due to strained relations among some partner countries). This may be the effect of one of the single or many particular factors that mark out the type of a specific phenomenon. (see *Interculturality and communication*)

The term typology is mostly applied in the field of social sciences and archaeology to typify representatives of groups and their set patterns. This can be applied to objects as well, which are generally identified according to particular shared features or significant attributes that would distinguish them from others.

2. Audiences

Similarly, an **audience** comprises a group of people who have either voluntarily gathered together to watch or hear something/someone. An audience may also be defined as such when a group of people wish to express an opinion at a given location or are doing so from various locations (TV,Radio/Internet). They may be representatives from the world of arts (music, theatre, film and/or dance) or have a preference for a specific media form (TV, Radio, Internet, printmedia etc.), and, to a certain extent overlap.

-
-
-

TO ACCESS ALL THE **12 PAGES** OF THIS CHAPTER,
Visit: http://www.eolss.net/Eolss-sampleAllChapter.aspx

Bibliography

ABERCROMBIE, NICOLAS und LONGHURST, BRIAN: *Audiences – a sociological theory of performance*, London, 1998 [on the sociological function of audiences in the performing arts]

ALTENDORF, WOLFGANG: *Das entmündigte Publikum*, Freudenstadt-Wittensweiler (Selbstverlag) 1969 [on the audience as passive consumerm]

ARBEITSKREIS STUDIUM POPULÄRER MUSIK: *Mainstream, Undergroung, Avantgarde: Rockmusik und Publikumsverhalten*, Karben:CODA, Musikservice und Verlag, 1996 [on the audience of popular music]

BLAU, HERBERT: *The Audience*, Baltimore, Md. (u.a.): John Hopkins University Pr., 1990

BOHME DÜRR, KARIN (Hrsg.): *Auf der Suche nach dem Publikum: Medienforschung für die Praxis*, Konstanz, 1995 [on audience and media research]

BROOK , PETER: *There are no secrets: Thoughts on Acting and Theatre*, London , 1993

BARWISE PATRICK, and ANDRES EHRENBERG: *Television and its Audience, Sage Publications*, London, 1988 [on audience and media research, specifically television]

DOCHERTY, DAVID, DAVID E. MORRISION, MICHAEL TRACEY: *Keeping faith?: Channel Four and its audience*, London, 1988 [religion, modern media and their audience]

GUDYKUNST, WILLIAM B., WILLIAM B. & TSUKASA NISHIDA, *Theoretical perspectives for studying intercultural communication*. In: Molefi Kete Asante et al. (eds.), *Handbook of International and Intercultural Communication*, Newbury Park, Sage 1989

GUREVITSCH, MICHAEL, TONY BENNETT, JAMES CURRAN, JANET WOOLLASCOTT (eds.), *Culture and Society and the Media*, Methuen & Co. Ltd., London 1982

INGLIS, FRED: *Cultural Studies*, Blackwell Publishers, Oxford 1993

STEINER, GEORGE: *Real Presences*, Faber & Faber, London 1989 [on audiences in live performance]

RUPRECHT-KARLS-UNIVERSITÄT HEIDELBERG (Hrsg.): *Kunst heute und ihr Publikum*, Heidelberg, 1990 [art and its audience today]

WILLIAMS, JANET, and TANA WOLLEN: The neglected Audience (Hrsg.),British Film Institute, London, 1990

YILDIZ, EROL: *Fremdheit und Integration*, Domino Verlag, Bergisch Gladbach 1999 [alienation and integration]

Biographical Sketch

Jamila Baier-Mathews, born in 1955 in Kabul, Afghanistan to parents of Indian origin, exposed to different cultural contexts (Europe, West Asia, Afghanistan and India) since a very young age; 1976: completion of schooling in Germany; 1980: Master of Arts degree from the Centre for German Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi, India; 1980-1998: employment as a cultural operator at the Austrian Embassy, New Delhi, India; 1999/2000: co-ordination of a project involving networking multicultural events in Vienna and Lower Austria for the Afro Asian Institute, Vienna (duration of project: four months); married since 1999, one son; based in Vienna, since 1998.