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STAND-UP COMEDY: DISCUSSING RHETORICAL TECHNIQUES

Public speech, rooted in the art of rhetoric, a powerful form of communication, has been utilized throughout history to influence societal change, convey messages, inspire, and engage audiences. Audience engagement, or the

interaction between the rhetor and the audience, refers to the level of emotional connection between the rhetor and the audience. It measures how effectively the speaker grabs the audience's attention and motivates the audience to think, to behave or to feel in a certain way [1].

Entertaining speech, a recognized type of public speech that targets to captivate and amuse an audience through humor, storytelling, and engaging delivery, is an easy means to achieve audience engagement by boosting their energy level. The delivery style of an entertaining speech is energetic, animated, and engaging, with the rhetor utilizing vocal variation, gestures, and facial expressions to enhance engagement effect. A successful entertaining speech leaves the audience feeling entertained, uplifted, and connected to the rhetor. While the primary goal of an entertaining speech is to entertain, it also has the potential to persuade, subtly influencing the thoughts, beliefs, and actions of listeners. The key aspect of persuasive influence is the use of such rhetorical strategies as logos (the content of speech, its structure and internal argumentation, correlating with reason), ethos (establishing contact with the audience, correlating with moral standards), pathos (successful verbal expression of logos and ethos, correlating with feelings and emotions), kairos (the opportune moment), and topos (a theme or convention). The use of humor and wit connects the audience with the rhetor employing relatable anecdotes, jokes, and humorous observations to engage the audience's attention.

A unique genre of entertaining speech is stand-up comedy. At its core, stand-up comedy is a form of entertainment where a rhetor performs a solo act in front of a live audience. Unlike traditional entertaining speeches, stand-up comedy focuses on eliciting laughter rather than conveying a serious message. However, this does not undermine its significance as a genre of public speech. Stand-up comedians rely on their ability to connect with the audience, using humor as a tool to address various topics, challenge societal norms, and provide social commentary. With its origins rooted in vaudeville and variety shows, stand-up comedy has evolved into a distinct form of performance that centers around a single comedian commanding the stage with their wit, charisma, and comedic timing. What sets stand-up comedy apart is its ability to engage and connect with audiences on a personal level, often touching upon relatable experiences, social observations, and universal truths. Comedians use their comedic prowess to navigate a wide range of topics, including relationships, politics, social issues, and everyday absurdities. Through clever wordplay, sharp observations, and skilled delivery, stand-up comedians have the power to make audiences laugh, think, and reflect. The success of stand-up comedy lies in its ability to provoke laughter while simultaneously shedding light on deeper aspects of the human condition. It offers a unique platform for comedians to express their perspectives, challenge societal norms, and provide social commentary in a manner that is both entertaining and thought-provoking. Stand-up comedy performances often rely on the element of surprise, as comedians skillfully build tension and then release it through punchlines or unexpected twists. The intimate nature of stand-up comedy, with the comedian directly addressing the audience, creates a sense of shared experience and connection. It is this connection

that makes stand-up comedy such a powerful form of entertainment, as it allows individuals from diverse backgrounds to come together and find common ground through laughter. Stand-up comedy has become a beloved form of entertainment worldwide, with comedians becoming cultural icons and their performances serving as a source of joy, escapism, and social commentary.

Analysis of the linguistic manifestation of ironic meaning and the choice of stand-up as an object of study, which is characterized by reflection on modern everyday and global social problems, ridicule of human vices, emphasis on taboo topics, in our opinion, allows us to identify both general and specific characteristics of a speaker who speaks a certain language and shares the axiological expectations of the audience.

This paper is focused on some keyways in which a rhetor makes their idea and position appealing by expressing rhetorical strategies via verbal and non-verbal tools. These ways, further called rhetorical techniques, are employed in stand-up comedy to captivate, and persuade audiences, subtly influence the thoughts, beliefs, and actions of the latter. While the primary goal of stand-up comedy is to entertain, its potential to inform, motivate, criticize, persuade, and suggest, often leaving a lasting impact, is no less important to the understanding of this kind of public speech. Particularly, we aim to explore such peculiarities of the verbalization of speech influence in stand-up comedy as the verbal and non-verbal tools of the persuasive influence [2; 3].

One key non-verbal tool of stand-up comedy is the use of comedic timing. Comedians carefully craft their jokes and deliver them with precision, allowing for maximum impact and laughter. The timing of pauses, punchlines, and gestures plays a crucial role in building anticipation and creating comedic effect. This skillful use of timing keeps the audience engaged and enhances the overall comedic experience.

Another important tool of stand-up comedy is the art of storytelling. Comedians often share personal anecdotes, observations, or exaggerated experiences as part of their act. These stories serve as the foundation for their jokes and allow the audience to relate to the comedian's experiences. By weaving narratives into their performances, comedians create a sense of connection and familiarity with the audience, making the humor more relatable and enjoyable.

Furthermore, stand-up comedy relies heavily on the use of verbal tools such as irony, satire, and wordplay. Comedians employ them to create humorous twists, clever wordplay, and unexpected punchlines. Through the skillful use of verbal tools, stand-up comedians generate laughter by highlighting the absurdities and contradictions of everyday life.

Additionally, the ability to engage and interact with the audience is a crucial aspect of stand-up comedy. Comedians often involve the audience in their acts through improvisation, crowd work, and spontaneous banter. This interaction not only adds spontaneity and unpredictability to the performance but also creates a sense of camaraderie between the comedian and the audience. The ability to read and respond to the audience's reactions is a vital skill that allows comedians to adjust their act on the spot and ensure maximum laughter.

Finally, stand-up comedy is a distinct genre of public speech that combines humor, storytelling, and audience engagement. Comedians utilize comedic timing, storytelling, and various verbal tools to entertain and amuse their audiences [4]. Stand-up comedy serves as a platform for social commentary, challenging societal norms, and providing a much-needed escape through laughter. By understanding the unique characteristics of stand-up comedy and appreciating the verbal and non-verbal tools employed by comedians, we can gain a deeper appreciation for this genre of public speech.

An excellent source of rhetorical techniques, in our opinion, can be the episode "Stewart Lee VS The Internet," examining which can help gain insights into how stand-up comedy strategically employs persuasion to provoke thought, challenge societal norms, and navigate the complexities of online audiences.

Stewart Lee, born on April 5, 1968, is a celebrated English stand-up comedian renowned for his distinctive comedic style. His performances are marked by the use of repetition, callbacks, and a deadpan delivery, where he maintains a stoic expression while delivering humorous content, often feigning seriousness. His knack for regaining the audience's favor following unconventional comedic experiments serves as a cornerstone of his appeal.

Stewart Lee released the episode under analyses on February 24, 2014, which is a very *opportune moment as i*n 2014, there was a consistent increase in internet use. Notably, Statista, recognized as a German online portal dedicated to the collection of data, revealed that approximately three-quarters of the global 3 billion internet users were accessing the internet through portable gadgets. This trend was on an upward trajectory, especially as data connectivity improved in developing countries. According to a report by the United Nations, the global population stood at 7.2 billion in the year 2014.

Clearly, the title of the speech not only divulges its theme but also significantly influences the audience's prospective expectations, engagement, and focus, correlating with the audience's moral standards, feelings, and emotions.

Anaphora is effectively employed to establish contact with the audience and draw the audience's focus to Stewart Lee's critical view of the internet, as evidenced by his repeated declarations: *I hate the Internet. I hate everything about the Internet. I hate, sir* [5].

The use of ellipsis injects energy into the discourse, as seen in the truncated statement: *I've just seen* [5].

In this instance, the speaker employs atticism, showcasing a style that is marked by simplicity and a straightforward approach to argumentation, thus correlating with reason: *8:30 a.m. I can't believe it. I've just seen Stuart Lee taking his son to school on the 470 bus, he looked depressed. 10 a.m. I can't believe him I'm sitting next to Stuart Lee in the Clock Tower Hybrid Café. He's eating a muffin. He looks fat I can't believe it. I've just seen. 11:30. I've just seen Stuart Lee walking around Dolton Junction eating a falafel in the street* [5]. Here, atticism refers to the use of language that is both succinct and polished in nature.

The emotional and semantic core of the speech is encapsulated in the pivotal sentiment of disdain, reaching its zenith with the statement: *I hate Twitter, it's like a state surveillance agency staff by gullible volunteers* [5].

The narrative concludes in an open-ended manner, leaving some of the audience's questions unanswered, primarily because of a mismatch in shared knowledge and experiences between the speaker and the audience: *It's a Stasi for the Angry Birds generation and that's you the Angry Birds generation* [5].

By eschewing the conventional setup-punchline structure typically used to generate laughter, this aspect of his performance not only demonstrates his indifference toward traditional comedic formulas but also underscores a recurring motif in Stewart Lee's stand-up routine, where he continuously deconstructs his own act.

The punchline, being the final sentence or phrase that delivers the humor in a joke or funny story, plays a crucial role. It's important to recognize that the punchline often disrupts the established ethos, kairos, and topos, thereby subverting the audience's anticipations: *Imagine the shame of being the Angry Birds generation* [5].

It is evident that the episode discussed is captivating and thought-provoking. In this episode, renowned comedian Stewart Lee delves into the challenges and opportunities presented by the internet for comedians and their craft. With his trademark wit and intellectual humor, the comedian dissects the impact of online platforms, social media, and viral content on the art of stand-up comedy. Through insightful commentary and personal anecdotes, Stewart Lee navigates the complexities of the digital landscape, addressing issues such as censorship, cancel culture, and the democratization of comedy. "Stewart Lee VS The Internet" serves as a poignant reminder of the ever-evolving nature of comedy in an era dominated by technology, while showcasing the stand-up comedian's ability to adapt and thrive in this new comedic landscape.

The key aspect of Stuart Lee's persuasive influence is, on the one hand, his choice of verbal and non-verbal tools, and his rhetorical stance, on the other hand.

Stuart Lee communicates a clear message based on complete set of rhetorical strategies. The logos is built in accordance with the fact that the issue of internet addiction is widespread and can inflict harm comparable to other addiction types. The ethos is found in the comedian's trustworthiness, respect, and reputation. The pathos is developed by the explanation that the issue at hand involves the relentless tracking anybody due to an overreliance on technology. The kairos reflects the pertinent content which was made available on February 24, 2014, and the topos makes sure that the discussion is timely, acknowledging the evident benefits of technology, yet also highlighting its significant drawbacks.

Without question, the harmony between the form and substance of the episode clearly straddles both comedy and drama, with its depth of emotion mirrored in the choice of expressive phonetic, lexical, and grammatical elements, which makes it

possible to state that the stand-up comedian's employment of diverse linguistic and vocal cues serves to invigorate the monologue, sustaining the audience's engagement throughout. Moreover, it serves as a compelling case study for understanding the evolving landscape of today's stand-up comedy.

Stand-up comedy studies are important for rhetoric as they offer a unique lens to analyze and understand persuasive communication. Stand-up comedians employ various verbal and non-verbal tools such as humor, irony, satire, and storytelling to engage and influence audiences. By studying stand-up comedy, we can gain insights into the art of persuasion, audience reception, cultural critique, and the power of language. It provides a rich source of rhetorical analysis that expands our understanding of effective communication in both comedic and non-comedic contexts.

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