



Presentation: Self-Evaluation

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Description of Presentation

My presentation was on 'A Proposed National Theatre' and the focus was on the development of the National until 1963. It was structured into three sections. The first section was on the historical development of the company; here I used Powerpoint slides alongside an explanation of the chronology. I was aware that this section, which was about the rather complex history of the National Theatre committee, could potentially be quite dry and unengaging for an audience. To remedy this I tried to keep the pace quite fast and keep the pictures on the slides moving frequently. I avoided having text on the slides, and just relied on verbal explanation to illuminate the pictures and explain my points. I thought that this strategy would help to retain the audience's interest, as there would be constant visual stimulation. Also the reception would not be pedestrian; the audience would be forced to listen to understand what was going on, rather than having the information put in front of them.

In the second section I tried to engage the audience by asking them to read extracts from the debate over the National Theatre and to form opinions about what was being said. I hoped that this would get them to actively think about the points of the debate as well as engaging them on a simple physical level by getting them to actually read the words. I put this section in the middle so as to separate the other two sections which just relied on the Powerpoint, to avoid the audience becoming bored.

In the final section I returned to the Powerpoint and talked about the social changes over the century or so in which the National Theatre was coming into being. I thought this would provide analysis to compliment the information of the first section. There were three main points in this section which I set out on the slides and illustrated with a picture.

Critical Reflection

I think overall my presentation went well, but I am definitely able to identify features which could have been improved.

Drawing information from the feedback given by the audience, one primary thing that emerges is that length was an issue. I don't know how long my presentation actually turned out to be, but it probably did go over the 15 minute time slot. When practising, I could deliver it in 15-16 minutes but that was with a focus on delivering it within the time; inevitably under pressure and in front of an audience I was less concise in my speech! I had already cut a lot out of the presentation and was reluctant to cut more as I thought it would compromise the audience's understanding. In hindsight though I should definitely have been more ruthless in cutting down the first section. However, some people who commented on length also acknowledged the volume of information fitted into the time. A related point is that I spoke

too fast at times – this is something I myself felt that I could have improved, and one person commented on it.

The use of the debate cards in the second section was in general received very well; most people commented that it was an effective way of involving the audience. Someone wrote that I could have developed this idea further by asking the audience to discuss why they had reached their decisions – this is an interesting idea and something I might look to include if I was to do the presentation again. However I would also have to think about how this was affected by time constraints. One person had problems hearing the statements that were read by the audience and suggested I could have shown the transcript on the Powerpoint at the same time. This is a very valid point as the task relies upon the audience being able to hear all the arguments in order to form their own opinion.

Several people also commented that the introductory slide on which I outlined the different sections at the beginning was helpful. This was a late addition and something I added after I had started rehearsing the presentation – I am glad that it did help to clarify the content.

There are a few other points that I would include in an evaluation of myself. There was a limited number of people in the seminar, but I don't feel that this was a hindrance to my presentation – if anything it made the delivery easier and less intimidating! Initially I was concerned there wouldn't be enough people to read each of the debate cards but there were just enough. The debate section didn't quite turn out as I had expected – I wanted to get more of a sense of enactment and of opposition. I suggested that people stand up to read their cards but this didn't happen; however this is understandable in a 9am seminar! If there had been a fuller seminar I could have more clearly distributed the cards to people sat on opposing sides of the room, and thereby got more of the structural sense of a debate. In the end though I don't think these things had too much of a detrimental effect. The main purpose of the task was still accomplished.

Overall I am pleased with the way the task went and actually really enjoyed researching the topic and assembling the information in what was hopefully an interesting way. It has given me a new found fascination with the mechanics of financial management in theatres and government subsidy. It has also made me determined to actually visit the National Theatre, as I have never been! Picking a topic which I was really interested in helped infinitely because I never became bored or unenthusiastic about working on it. I also enjoyed the performance of the presentation itself. Presentations are quite a daunting prospect but I think that the most daunting tasks are the ones you gain the most from. Answering unseen questions at the end was something I was nervous about, but that actually provided fantastic practice at responding on the spot and organising thoughts in a coherent way. I feel that preparing and delivering the presentation has developed my confidence and I will look back on it as a very positive experience. It may well be the last time that I present as part of an academic course, and doing presentations over my time in education is definitely one of the things I feel has most prepared me for later life.

Bibliography

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