Maria Clara Meschini

Dr. Elif Guler

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A Rhetorical Analysis of Jill M. D'Angelo and Ann Wooley Sherry's "Technology in the Classroom: Friend or Foe"

Throughout the recent years, technology has become an important factor at the forefront of our lives. Nowadays, we strongly rely on technology even for the most basic tasks in our daily lives. Technological advances have completely changed the way we live, the way we socialize, and the way we travel, work and study. A recent article, "Technology in the Classroom: Friend or Foe", by Jill M. D'Angelo and Ann Wooley Sherry, discusses the impact of technology in the classroom by presenting the findings and thoughts of a research study about students' perceptions of having technology in the classroom. In this paper I will present a rhetorical analysis of the authors' arguments validity and reliability of the effects of technology in the classroom. The methods I will apply to develop the analysis will be using the Greek Philosopher Aristotle's Three Big Ideas: Ethos, Pathos, and Logos.

Method

By analyzing the artifact with the use of Aristotle's Three Big Concepts, it will help me identify if the article is a reliable source to obtain information and learn from, and it will provide me with a framework to present my views about the writers' effectiveness on message and content delivery. Aristotle's three distinctive methods of the art of persuasion are widely used across the

world, either written or spoken, to capture the targeted audience's attention and convince them of the message presented. It is not always necessary for an author or speaker to utilize the three elements but at least one of them is essential to achieve the end goal of persuasion. Also, there is no right or wrong way to utilize these methods, rather, each person can use them in a way that best suits their control over the audience's attention and emotions. To be able to identify these elements in the article is essential to understand their meanings and what they contribute to a written document or speech.

Aristotle's Three Big Concepts of the Art of Persuasion

Ethos is the element of persuasion that appeals to ethics. In other words, it is the degree of credibility and trustworthiness that an author or speaker establishes. Identifying this element in the text will help me evaluate how reliable the authors of the article are. Pathos is the element that appeals to the emotions or sensibility of the audience to be persuade in a certain direction of thought process or action. Recognizing pathos in the article will provide me with an idea of what the authors want the audience to think of. The last element is logos, which appeals to logical reasoning and behavior. Authors and speakers will convince their audience to use reasoning with the examples and facts given to help justify the author's claims. Identifying logos in the article will be very important so that the audience can understand to a higher degree the subject matter being presented. Furthermore, the use of the rhetorical situation of the article is very important as well as it will help me understand the overall delivery of the message. For example, a well written document with meaningful content adds value to the authors' knowledge validity and reliability.

About the Article

Before I start analyzing the article, I want to provide a short summary of the article itself. In the beginning of the artifact, the authors talk about how the role of technology has changed among the years. The writers state that technology has become very central for professors and students as a way of teaching and learning. In the case of professors, they utilize it as a method for delivering information, while students use it as a tool to acquire knowledge. The authors proceed to mention that even though there is a trend to use more technology within the classroom, its benefits are still being discussed among academics in universities.

After the introduction, the authors proceed to present both sides of the debate about the benefits of technology in the classroom. On the one hand, one argument questions whether the use of new technology really helps students improve their ability to learn and remember more information. The use of technology may act as an artificial barrier between professors and students, as students will become passive listeners and passive learners as technology might divert their attention somewhere else. On the other hand, the other argument states that utilizing more technology such as a Power Point to give a lecture, can provide a better structured, more organized, and a clearer way of delivering lecture content. Utilizing technologies as guidance, helps not only professors stay on track, but it also helps students at the time of studying as such technologies are tools for learning. The use of different delivery methods of information, such as Power Points, videos, visual images, overhead projectors, not only aid students but it also facilitates professors' efforts to keep their students focused for longer periods (D'Angelo and Wooley, par. 3). Then, the narration, follows with a brief description of the findings of the research study about the effects of technology in the classroom. In the end of the article, the authors present some of their views about such findings, which I will discuss later in this paper.

Pathos, Ethos & Logos

The authors' work of presenting both arguments acts as an appeal to pathos, which has an effect on the audience's emotional appeal. With the explanations of both views, the audience can understand the context and the reason why the research study was done. By knowing the reasons why this topic is discussed, readers can appreciate professors' and students' views at the time of utilizing technology inside the classroom. This is because, the audience might be able to put themselves in the teachers' or in the students' position, thus, they will be able make their own conclusions and further agree or disagree with the arguments stated before.

Furthermore, early in the article the authors make a strong appeal to ethos as they establish their credibility by saying: "This study explores students' perceptions of the value that technology brings to the classroom." (D'Angelo and Wooley, par. 1) and "In spite of the apparent trend toward increasing the usage of more modern forms of technology in the classroom, the confluence of technology in the classroom is being debated within academe." (D'Angelo and Wooley, par. 2). Both quotes from the article reflect the authors efforts to make themselves more reliable by utilizing a research study to support their conclusions. As the writers present their ideas in the article based on research findings, readers will be able to trust and believe what the authors are saying because they are based on a real-world situation rather than just thoughts that have not been tested.

In addition to the appeals to pathos and ethos, the writers use the research study procedures as an appeal to logos as well. This element reflects the logical procedures used and presented by the authors. For example, they explain the process researchers took in the study as well as the logical findings of the study results:

"A number of researchers (Ahmed, 1998; Mantei, 2000; Szabo & Hastings, 2000; and Frey & Birnbaum, 2002) have investigated PowerPoint presentations in the classroom. Ahmed (1998) and Sazbo and Hastings (2000) found no significant difference in the performance of students who were taught using PowerPoint and those who were taught without PowerPoint. They suggested that the difficulty of the material and the quality of the instructor may be more important. Frey & Birnbaum's study (2002) suggested that the use of PowerPoint did affect students' perceptions of the lectures and the instructor." (D'Angelo and Wooley par. 6).

This quote is an example of appeal to logos because of the research data they are presenting here. In this case, two different findings which supports both sides of the argument are being presented.

Conclusion

To conclude, even though the authors were clear about their intentions early in the beginning of the text, they were not able to make their point come across through the article. The elements of ethos and logos were the weakest within the article. The authors focused too much on the explanation of the study itself and did not emphasize their initial intentions about presenting their ideas about the experiment. Also, they did not describe the research study in a coherent way, instead, it looked like the information was put into paragraphs without a purpose. If they would have provided their facts or thoughts about technology in the classroom earlier in the text and then support their views with a good explanation of the research study along with the findings, then they would have been more successful in the delivery of their message.

Works Cited

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