

Believable Analysis and Source Selection in Extemp

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The world of extemporaneous speaking began in 1931, in a very different Nation Forensic League, and as a very different event. With the advent of extemporaneous speaking, it was undoubtedly the speaking part which was emphasized. Speakers who spoke well were the ones who won—not the ones who could analyze a topic. Tournament final rounds, including the final round of the NFL national tournament, were populated with speakers who were incredibly eloquent, but who would often cite three or less sources, would never state their topic question, never answer the question, never supported an answer they gave, used introductions lasting well beyond two minutes of their speeches, and included obvious factual errors [1]. The art of extemp has always required talent in speaking, persuasiveness, presentation, and personality. Since the early 1980's, the role of source quality has changed and expanded significantly in nationally successful extemp speaking. This paper considers that change, and then the function and impact of source selection and analysis. The article further evaluates possible alternatives in selecting sources, and offers suggestions on how to improve the quality, clarity and depth of analysis. Through this, the article serves as one possible guide for both beginning and experienced extempers. To understand how to find good sources, and develop quality analysis, an extemper must know what s/he is looking for. Analysis and source selection may seem like simple issue, but it is important to know the criteria to best use in order to critique sources. Initially, source selection is often the more complex issue, on what an extemper might want, and when. The foremost concern is addressing the bias of a new source. A common problem with the selection of sources is a fear of bias. The Nation Magazine, for example, has historically been considered socialist magazine, and so many extempers will shy away from using it. In some regions, however, the bias of a magazine such as The Nation will be understood, but the quality of analysis is also recognized. For a similarly thoughtful conservative view extemper might use the National Review. The bias of a magazine can actually become very useful in an extemp speech, for it could aid in the strength and depth of analysis — when used appropriately. An extemper who uses a biased source may make note of the bias, and use this not only to reflect a point, but to also relay to the judge a point about media censorship, the beliefs of a group of people, or about government control of media resources. An extemper must also not forget think-tanks, which will reflect a well researched, analytical, but legitimate biased report. A primary example of such is the Cato Institute. This libertarian think-tank is highly regarded in extemp, especially due to great quantity and variety of analytical tools. By correctly using a biased source, the content of a speech may be significantly improved. There exists, unfortunately, a risk to using a biased source, even a lightly biased source. A primary example of this is seen in west Texas. Extempers in this region have been given poor marks in a round for using "the diet cola of media bias," the New York Times. While considered by some to be one of the best newspapers published in the US, the New York Times often reflects light bias to the left. While extempers may make use of biased sources, they must keep in mind to use such a tactic in moderation, and to know their region—for the expectation for "good extemper" change in every region of the nation. Another strategy of extempers, usually more prevalent in college extemp but emerging in High School, is the extensive use of foreign sources. A report from The Japan Times will often sound more prestigious in an extemp speech than another citing of The Economist. A second purpose of foreign sources is to demonstrate to a judge the hard work put in by the extemper. Just as recently dated articles will show audiences that an extemper has been working hard, so too will using more obscure foreign sources. A third reason to use foreign sources near the topic area subject is credibility. When all extemper uses a source from the nation they are talking about, there is an air of primary source believability. But the source must be geographically relevant. If an obscure Russian newspaper is cited in an article about the Brazilian economy, the extra credibility can be lost. The foreign source quickly becomes just another obscure paper - not added to, but actually damaging the credibility of the source, and the speaker. Foreign and biased sources have an important role to play in extemp, but the final type of source is merely the unbiased, credible, western source. Using these sources is the safe road. There are also more western sources that must be considered. Journals, quarterlies, and studies will contain less bias and add to the content of a speech, due to their often renowned prestige (and they usually have cool sounding names). Regardless of the type of source — foreign, domestic, biased, nor biased—the role of sources should and does always remain the same. A good source, when used properly, will establish better ethos for a speaker, the judge will believe the speaker to be more credible. This is vital in an event that is based on persuasion. Beyond establishing the ethos of a speaker, the selection of sources used by all extempers will demonstrate the work, which goes into the event outside of your thirty minute prep-time. Extemp is won and lost outside of tournaments. In a statistical study of the national tournament's final round, N. Andre Cossette found that extempers who used more sources and more quality, varied sources were the extempers who performed the best [2]. Of the finalists, the average sources per speech were 5.8 however non-finalists averaged only 3.4 sources. The study also found that finalists cited common sources 14.2% of the time, while non-finalists cited such sources 46.8% of the time. The number and quality of sources has a direct correlation to the results that will come back on an extemper's ballot. There is more to extemp than sources, especially in the realm of analysis. An extemper must keep in mind that the

eventual goal of an extemp speech is to have clear and deep analysis, which convinces the judge. The goal of analytical content is very similar to the goal for source quality and quantity. Analysis demonstrates, as sources do, a wealth of knowledge, and hard work outside of the round. Good analysis aids the extemporaneous speaker several ways. The first is depth of analysis. Very simply, superficial analysis will not be convincing to a judge, and will not convince them as well as would in depth analysis. Extemp is an event that requires practice, especially to establish a fluent, smooth and c speaking style. To develop that, most successful extempers will have practiced hundreds of speeches during one speech season. The problem is that often, the extempers will develop too much of a ‘cookie cutter’ style of analysis. To solve problems, all questions are answered with social, economic, and political changes. While such an approach may have advantages, often it will overshadow the true depth of analysis. Could all of the United States’ economic w be solved with one change? The clear answer is no. Neither will the economic problems of Zimbabwe. However, often (especially in international extemp) an extemper will act as if they would answer ‘yes. The depth of analysis is truly important to providing real solutions, to the all too real problems proposed in extemp rounds—and avoid the ‘extemper’s magic wand.’ The next goal of analysis is much like the first, to have specific solutions to the problems in an extemp speech. Just as all problems don’t necessarily break into superficial organization there are also problems which have their own difficulties. One economic principle does not govern all the policies of a nation in their analysis. must learn from this, and ensure that they lre looking into the specific problems of a nation in their analysis. If these two analytical techniques are followed, then the analysis of an extemper will be greatly strengthened. Coupled with good source citation, an extemper may be on heir way to success, and national recognition. The new world of extemp, one which is based on sources the analysis supported by those sources, is one which most extempers must adapt to. In achieving these goals, the extemper will appear, and be, more practiced—and likely gain the trophies, experience, and knowledge to prove it. The following is a sampling of some of the best sources currently available. It is not meant to be a complete list but these entries are a good place to start:

Free

CDE (click on “free links” and then click on “Extemp”) www.cdedebate.com

Think Tanks

The CATO Institute: www.cato.org
The Heritage Foundation: www.lieritage.org

Magazines

The Nation: www.thenation.com
The National Review: www.nationalreview.com
The Economist: www.economist.com
‘The Ear Eastern Economic Review: www.fcer.com

Newspapers

The Washington Times: www.washingrontimes.com
The New York Times: www.nytimes.com

News Services

ALL Africa Global Media: www.allafrica.com
Al Jazeera: <http://englkb.atjazeera.net>

Books for analysis

Diplomacy by Henry Kissinger
The Lexus and the Olive Tree by Thomas L. Friedman
Resource Wars by Michael T. Klare
Globalization and its Discontents by Joseph E. Stiglitz Notes

[1] “Questions and Concerns about Extemporaneous Speaking,” Rostrum, ed. Mar. 1999,
<http://debate.uvin.edu/N Fljrostriun>

[2] ‘Do Sources in Extemp make Extempers Break," Rostrum, Jan. 1994, July 17 2004
‘brpp://debate.tivn, .edu/N FL/rostrtinilib/exrempcosseteo 1 94.pd