Component Area Assessment Annual Report
Oral Communication Component Area
2006-2007 Academic Year

I.   Assessment Activities
      A.   Component Area Goals
            After completing the Oral Communication general education experience, students will be able to:
            1.   recognize communication as a transactional process by:
                  a. determining audience orientation toward a message
                  b. identifying the supporting material most relevant to the intended receivers
                  c. recognizing and adjusting to nonverbal feedback
            2.   demonstrate critical thinking in both the production and evaluation of spoken messages by:
                  a. identifying reasoning that links observations to conclusions
                  b. understanding the limitations of different types of evidence
                  c. differentiating between various types of supporting evidence
                  d. identifying weaknesses in reasoning
            3.   produce organized informative and persuasive messages by:
                  a. demonstrating the ability to capture audience attention
                  b. stating a thesis and previewing oral remarks
                  c. using signposts and transitions to clarify the organization of a message
                  d. concluding with a summary of main ideas or arguments
            4.   demonstrate effective extemporaneous speaking skills by:
                  a. maintaining eye contact with intended receivers
                  b. using gestures which complement the verbal message
                  c. using varied vocal cues in the oral delivery of a message

      B.   Learning Outcomes/Data Collection
            Outcome 1: Recognizing communication as a transactional process by a) determining audience orientation toward a message; b) identifying the supporting material most relevant to the intended receivers; and c) recognizing and adjusting to nonverbal feedback.

            This outcome is measured by students' strategic planning outlines, in which they describe their strategic planning activities. They discuss their audience analysis activities and relate that analysis to the selection of organizational patterns, arguments, and supporting material. The assessment criteria for examining sample speeches include a set of criteria which focuses on audience adaptation as a basis for determining the competency of the speaker. Results of the videotape review will be reported in Section I.C.

            Outcome 2: Demonstrating critical thinking in both the production and evaluation of spoken messages by a) identifying reasoning that links observations to conclusions; b) understanding the limitations of different types of evidence; c) differentiating between various types of supporting evidence; d) identifying weaknesses in reasoning.

            The focus on critical thinking in the course is reflected in all assignments, especially the outlines, brief speeches, and self-analysis assignments. In addition, exam scores can be used to test students' understanding of evidence and reasoning. Using exam scores on selected test items allows us to account for the performance of every student in the class. Although exam scores do not reflect the specific critical thinking activities associated with student' speeches, exam scores provide a reliable measure.

Outcome 3: *Producing organized informative and persuasive messages by a) demonstrating the ability to capture audience attention; b) stating a thesis and previewing oral remarks; c) using signposts and transitions to clarify the organization of a message; d) concluding with a summary of main ideas or arguments.*

The structural elements of speaking are evident in speech performances. To assess the basic competencies of students, video recordings of student persuasive speeches are collected. Each instructor collects 2-3 randomly selected student videos from each section of the CMM 103 course in the fall and spring semesters. This procedure yields a sample of approximately 10 percent of all final speeches delivered in the course each semester.

This year 90 usable speech recordings were collected. The sample speeches were evaluated using an assessment instrument sanctioned by the National Communication Association. The instrument measures eight basic competencies on a three-point scale (Unsatisfactory=1, Satisfactory=2, Excellent=3). A panel of three reviewers rated the videotaped speeches. Sample speeches were considered minimally competent if rated with a score of 16 out of 24. Where there was a difference between raters' scores, the speech was rated as competent if two of the three reviewers awarded a score of 16 or above. Results of this review will be reported in Section I.C.

Outcome 4*: Demonstrating effective extemporaneous speaking skills by a) maintaining eye contact with intended receivers; b) using gestures which complement the verbal message; c) using varied vocal cues in the oral delivery of a message.*

Students' competency in maintaining eye contact, using gestures and employing vocal variety are directly observable in their speech performances. These competencies were assessed by the instrument described in Section I.B.3. above. Results are reported in the following section.

C.   Results

   1.   *Review of student test scores related to critical thinking.*
            Critical thinking results show that students answer critical thinking questions on the exams at a rate of 64 percent for Fall 2006 and 47 percent for Spring 2007. These levels are below the standard of 75 percent and reflect an inconsistent performance from semester to semester. This calls into question the validity of the measurement method as well as the effectiveness of the course in accomplishing this goal.

   2.   *Review of videotaped student speeches.*
            Due to a decrease in the number of students willing to provide videotapes, 90 s ample speeches were collected. This is a significant increase in the size of the sample over previous years. The review resulted in 62 percent of the speeches being rated as minimally competent, almost the same total as the past two years (62.5 percent for 2004-2005 and 63 percent for 2005-2006).

Summary of Results
GER Assessment; Oral Communication Requirement
AY 2006-2007

Outcome	Method of Assessment	Standard	Evaluation	Conclusion/Action
1. Recognize public speaking as a transactional process	Global assessment on 7 of 8 review criteria	Minimum score of 14 on the 7 relevant criteria	62 percent of speeches pass (56 of 90)	Same. Further attention to strategic planning elements to improve scores on organization and audience adaptation.
2. Demonstrate critical thinking in both the production and evaluation of spoken messages	Review of exam scores on items related to critical thinking	Average score of 75%	Average scores: 64% for Fall 2006 47% for Spring 2007	Definite decline across semesters. Need for greater attention to critical thinking assignments in the course to promote better performance at exam time. Possibly refine the measurement instrument.
3. Produce organized informative and persuasive messages	Review of sample student speeches for minimal competence	Satisfactory performance on 8 evaluation criteria (average score = 16)	62 percent of speeches pass (56 of 90)	Same. Continued emphasis on basic organizational features of in class presentations.
4. Demonstrate effective extemporaneous speaking skills	Review of sample student speeches for minimal competence	Satisfactory performance on 3 evaluation criteria (average score = 6)	62 percent of speeches pass (56 of 90)	Substantial improvement. Continued focus on basic delivery skills.

II.   BOT Initiative Compliance

The assessment procedures described in this report are consistent with BOT Initiative 2. In particular, a randomly selected sample of student work in the oral communication component of the general education curriculum is reviewed to determine the level of competency in both oral communication and critical thinking. This year 62 percent of the student speeches reviewed met the minimum standard for competency in the course; 38 percent failed to meet the standard. This is very near the failure rate of the previous year (37 percent).

III.   Plan for the Current Year

     1.   *Communication as a transaction.*
The strategic planning outline assignment is designed to strengthen students' understanding of audience analysis and adaptation. This assignment is often looked at as busy work and students tend to focus more on the structural parts of the preparation outline than on the strategic planning elements related to topic selection, issue development, selection of an appropriate purpose and audience adaptation of content and supporting material. These planning elements will be emphasized in the instructor training workshop. A new Speech Proposal assignment was developed and piloted in the summer. The proposal assignment was designed to encourage strategic planning and audience analysis during the invention stage. The proposal is due two weeks ahead of the preparation outline, encouraging students and instructors both to focus more on   strategic topic selection, audience analysis and adapted research and organization. The proposal assignment was added to the workbook for the 2007-2008 academic year, so any effect it may have on assessment data will appear in the next assessment report.

     2.   *Critical thinking.*
The development of critical thinking and the measurement of critical thinking as an outcome continues to be a concern in the assessment process. Efforts to emphasize critical thinking in the instructor training sessions have not yielded improved scores on the exams. A specific week-long unit in critical thinking will be designed and targeted exam questions will be devised to test student competency at the end of the unit. Selected questions on the final exam will serve as a post test.

     3.   *Organization*
The data for this year are consistent with the level of performance over the past three years, but a decline from the three years prior to 04-05. Effective organization is strongly emphasized in the course. It is disappointing that the success rate for this goal is only 62%. It is important to reemphasize the need for clearly organized points in all speeches, short and long, formal and informal.

     4.   *Extemporaneous speaking skills.*
Data this year indicate a substantial improvement in scores over the past two years, but still leave room for significant improvements. The need to improve delivery skills was addressed in the TA training workshops. TAs were encouraged to give more detailed feedback regarding delivery skills on all speaking assignments and some simple practice exercises were suggest for use in the unit on delivery. It is not reasonable to attribute the dramatic increase in performance to these measures alone, but clearly we should continue to emphasize the need for students to present speeches with dynamism, directness, and commitment.

IV.   **Assistance needed**
The review of increasing numbers of speeches is labor intensive. We must have continued funding for reviewers to work on the videotape review project in the summer.

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