Component Area Assessment Annual Report
Oral Communication Component Area
2008-2009 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 and speech proposals, 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 100 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 65% for Fall 2008 and 61% for Spring 2009. That is a decline from the previous year. Eight out of ten of the TAs are new this year and that may have contributed to the decline. More attention needs to be paid to the choice of questions for the exams. These have not been consistent in the past.

2.   *Review of videotaped student speeches.*

100 usable sample recordings were reviewed for this assessment report. This is an increase over last year's sample of 96. The review resulted in 65% of speeches being rated as minimally competent. This is a decline over last year's 77% result but is in keeping with results for previous years. Again the relative inexperience of the TAs and the difference in reviewers probably accounts for the decline.

Summary of Results
GER Assessment; Oral Communication Requirement
AY 2008-2009

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	65 percent of speeches pass (65 out of 100)	Decline from previous year. Additional TA experience will hopefully increase this number.
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: 65%f or Fall 2008 61% for Spring 2009	Definite decline Need for greater attention to critical thinking assignments and TA training Need consistency across semesters in terms of exam questions.
3. Produce organized informative and persuasive messages	Review of sample student speeches for minimal competence	Satisfactory performance on 8 evaluation criteria (average score = 16)	67% percent of speeches pass (67 out of 100)	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)	63 percent of speeches pass (63 out of 100)	Decline from previous year. 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 65% of student speeches reviewed met the minimum standard for competency in the course, 35% failed to meet the standard.

III.   Plan for the Current Year

1.   *Communication as a transaction.*

Emphasis needs to be placed on instructor feedback to improve this assessment. In particular, instructors need to become more involved in the invention stage of the speaking assignments. TA training in appropriate feedback for the proposal assignment should be emphasized.

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    2.   *Critical thinking.*

          Critical thinking has been assessed using selected questions from the final exams. However, the choice of questions to be used has not been consistent. A set of questions to be used consistently from semester to semester may help to better judge the outcome. In addition, the TAs who teach more than 50% of the sections were inexperienced instructors. More help in designing activities for the classroom to teach argumentation skills may be of help.

    3.   *Organization*
    4.

          No decline was observed in this measure however, TA training needs to emphasize the importance of appropriate feedback.

    5.   *Extemporaneous speaking skills.*

          More emphasis needs to be placed on delivery skills. This is difficult to do in the limited amount of time instructors have with students. However, instructors need to use more oral feedback in terms of helping students to recognize and change delivery behaviors which are distracting.

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.

VI.   **Learning Community Results.**

This year one class of CMM 103 was paired with one class of English 101. The results from the assessment of this group of students were consistent with the overall results of CMM 103. Although taught by a senior faculty member and attending English 101 with the same group of students, the 26 students scored 68% in Communication as a transaction, 67% on Critical thinking, 68% on Organization and 66% on Extemporaneous speaking skills.

English 101 and CMM 103 are really not compatible classes. The objectives and approaches are too dissimilar to be easily meshed. CMM 103 might be better paired with English 102 since the goals of these two courses appear to be more compatible. The emphasis CMM 103 places on audience analysis, organization, reasoning and oral delivery is not consistent with the English 101 emphasis on self expression through the writing. CMM 103 is a much stricter structured class and time constraints (because of the oral delivery of speeches) made it difficult to coordinate assignments. Dr. Kirkwood and I were unable to find assignments which could be effectively used in both classes.

However, students did seem to be more comfortable with one another which did decrease the amount of anxiety they experienced in speaking before an audience. They appeared to be more confident speaking before their classmates and were more encouraging of each other in oral critiques of each other. I think the students benefitted emotionally but not necessarily academically by sharing the same classmates in English 101 and CMM 103.

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