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Lawrence W. Hugenberg
Editor

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The Editor and the Basic Course Commission invite submissions to the considered for publication in the *Basic Communication Course Annual.* The *Annual is* published by American Press (Boston, MA) and is distributed nationally to scholars and educators interested in the basic communication course. Articles are accepted for review throughout the year for publication consideration. Typically, the deadline for the next volume of the *Annual is* April 1.

Manuscripts exploring significant issues for the basic course, research in the basic course, instructional practices, graduate assistant training, classroom teaching tips, or the status, role, and future of the basic communication course are invited. It is incumbent on contributors to establish a position on how the work they seek to have published advances knowledge in the area of the basic communication course. Only the very best manuscripts received are published. Quality is determined solely by the qualified Editorial Board and the Editor. Manuscripts submitted should not be under consideration for other journals or have appeared in any published form.

All manuscripts must conform to the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association* or they will be returned to the author(s). Each submission must be accompanied by a 100-to 150-word abstract of the manuscript and a 50- to 75-word author identification paragraph on each author following the format of the *Annual.* Manuscripts, in general, should not exceed 30 pages or approximately 9,000 words (including references, notes, tables, and figures).

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Contents

The many skills taught in the basic public speaking class come together in three fundamental metaphors. The first of these, the speaker as builder, suggests we need to shape our surroundings through the spoken word. The second, the speaker as weaver, includes the arts of shaping symbols into the fabric of a speech, and of designing evidence and proofs into the tapestry of argument. The third, the speaker as climber, emphasizes overcoming interference. Barriers of fear, indifference, suspicion, and cultural variation recede as speakers and listeners learn to climb them.

The purpose of this study is to assess existing pedagogical assumptions about basic communication course textbook features. Two separate surveys were administered to students (N= 1,379) and instructors (N= 118) in basic communication courses at 15 colleges and universities. The findings of the study are twofold. First, students and teachers differ in their perceptions of usefulness of textbook pedagogical features. Second, students perceive basic course texts to be less difficult and less theoretical though more interesting, enjoyable, relevant, and practical than other introductory course texts. When making publication and text selection decisions, the findings help authors and teachers better choose and present textbook materials.

Although the issue of speech evaluation has been a mainstay in our discipline, an updated discussion of written feedback merits our attention. To revisit this topic, this two-part content analysis first reveals the type of written feedback instructors offer students in basic public speaking classes. Building on these findings, the second part focuses on student perceptions of the helpfulness of the written feedback. The findings are collectively discussed and their implications for written evaluations of students' oral performances are considered. Any instructor who has labored over written critiques, wondering whether students actually read and/or use the comments can value from this discussion.

Malaysian students comprise a large student group coming to the U.S. for higher education. Despite these numbers, however, there has been little attention given to their culture shock in the classroom. The present study investigates the concerns of Malaysian students in the basic communication course. Through interviews with Malaysian students, this study concludes that Malaysian students perceive having three major problems in presenting speeches in basic communication courses. The first problem is the language barrier. Another is that certain nonverbal behaviors such as gesturing and talking in a loud tone are seen as disrespectful in their culture. Third, they have not had opportunities to speak in classrooms in their culture, thus this is a novel and distressing situation for them. In light of these findings, several suggestions for instructors of the basic communication course are made.

This article describes how a critique of Susan Powter's "Stop the Insanity!" info-mercial provides educators with an effective, class-tested, and fun assignment to be included in the persuasion section of a basic communication course. This assignment provides students with an excellent example of a message from popular discourse that follows Monroe's Motivated Sequence. It also facilitates discussion of several key issues related to persuasion in general. Additionally, because this activity uses a popular discourse text, students enhance their critical thinking skills and become more critical consumers of messages they receive through popular discourse.

This article offers the instructional method, the simulation, as an alternative public speaking assignment in the beginning public speaking course. The three phases of simulation, play, debriefing, and journal writing, are described. Simulations should be realistic and relate to student goals, interests, or career aspirations. As a result, the assignment has two benefits. Simulation creates a clear rhetorical situations which aids students in the topic selection process. Further, its relevancy to the student increases the motivation to learn the art of public speaking.

Information technology is furnishing modes of accessing and manipulating knowledge which are radically different from those offered by the traditional curriculum. Teaching effectiveness in the basic course is likely to depend increasingly on understanding the nature, function, benefits and potential costs of computer-mediated communication. The purposes of this article are to: (1) review theory and research illuminating the potential benefits and costs of computer-mediated instruction, (2) suggest some starting points for implementing computer-mediated instruction, and (3) identify factors which are likely to influence the effectiveness of teaching in computer-mediated environments.

Establishing goals is central to the success of the basic course. The degree to which those goals are realized depends, in large measure, upon the manner in which they are established and reviewed. This article assists course directors and instructional staff by examining the process of defining objectives, a process which encompasses goals, mission, and vision and which benefits from widespread, active involvement. This article presents sample objectives for consideration, and it notes the conditions under which the process of defining objectives thrives or is threatened.

Three Metaphors for the Competencies Acquired in the Public Speaking Class

Michael Osborn

There is considerable cynicism loose in the land about revisions of basic public speaking textbooks. Every three years or so, commercial necessity commands that the phoenix rise again from the ashes, that there be a new edition of Osborn & Osborn (1997) or any of the other available textbooks. Books that style themselves as "the last word" on the subject somehow miraculously discover three years later that there is, after all, something new or different to say. Suzanne and I try to make a virtue out of such grimy necessity. Not only do we update the examples and the research base of our book, we also seek to improve it, to align it with new educational directions, and to speak to the immediate concerns of students. We track the trajectory of the evolving discipline, attempt to meet its needs, and — occasionally perhaps — lead it toward what we think are promising innovations. At its best (at least as we rationalize it) a revision can become a rediscovery of one's academic discipline.

This year's third revision of our book provided a good moment to "rediscover" our discipline and its possible meaning for students, teachers, and course and curriculum planners. As we worked through our revisions, we detected a basic pattern in the manuscript that had somehow eluded us before: *the many skills and sensitivities we try to cultivate in our students come together in three fundamental metaphors that may reflect deep tendencies in what we teach.* Thanks to the work of Burke (1935/1984), Richards (1936), Lakoff and Johnson (1980), and many others, we now understand that such depth metaphors represent perspectives on their subjects, ingrained tendencies or habits of thinking. They are also powerful inventional tools, because they affect how we think and act. They are symptoms of and may provide glimpses into the underlying elusive, otherwise hidden nature of the subjects they both present and represent.

These basic metaphors emerged as we discussed three subjects: organizing ideas into a cohesive pattern, combining symbols and persuasive elements into convincing presentations, and overcoming the personal challenges of communicating.

The first metaphor that emerged as we discussed organizing ideas was **the student as builder.** This is actually a traditional figure in the literature of our field, as Griffin pointed out (1960). But it is no less important for its familiarity. We express the spirit of this metaphor, and the vital cluster of skills and sensitivities it represents, as we introduce it in our book:

> Our home on the Tennessee River stands at the top of a ridgeline several hundred feet above the river. It is built upon ground that slopes down at about a 45 degree angle, so that while the front of the home rests upon solid earth, the back of it rises on posts some thirty feet above the terrain. You might think that the structure is flimsy, but actually it is quite strong. Our builders selected the finest wood, concrete, plastics, and steel available. And, they knew how to fashion and combine these materials into powerful supports.
>
> .... In these next chapters, we ... look at your speeches as a structure of ideas raised up on solid pillars of supporting materials. Like our builders, you must know your materials and what they can support. You need to know how to select them and how to use them wisely. Just as our home is built to withstand storms and high winds, your speech must be built to withstand doubt and even controversy.

> When you stand to speak upon it, you must be absolutely confident of its structural integrity. (chap. 6)

What are the implications of this metaphor? Its very familiarity may suggest that it has archetypal roots, that it may somehow express a basic communication motive. That motive, I suggest, is to shape the world around us to our needs and purposes — to impose order and purpose upon the chaos of sensations that surrounds us. This deep human impulse creates an instructional imperative as well: *we need to give our students the gift of a sense of form.* The arts of designing and building speeches, of learning the nature and range of supporting materials and what they can best support, the strategies of outlining all are central to this gift. Understanding the orderly development of ideas is surely central to that awareness we call a liberal education.

The second metaphor to emerge in our manuscript is at first glance more surprising: **the student as weaver.** Our students practice the art of weaving symbols into the fabric of a speech and evidence and proof into the tapestry of powerful arguments. They encounter the power of language in their own speeches, and must learn the techniques that make that power work. This introduction to "the loom of language" is related to the classical tendency to think of language as the clothing of thought. But the weaving metaphor is a more dynamic and productive expression of that theme. It helps students understand that speaking is (or ought to be) creative, and helps them realize the importance of certain vital tests — such as clarity, color, concreteness, and simplicity — that apply to the strands of the fabric they fashion. Moreover, they can see the practical importance of such creative uses of symbols around them every day.

Recently, while we were visiting at Pepperdine University, we affirmed that truism quite by accident. The morning of our presentation, I picked up the copy of *USA Today* that had been shoved under our hotel door, and began idly reading. The reader may recall that at one point in the Republican presidential primary campaign of 1996, Steve Forbes emerged as a leading contender, and other candidates were taking pot-shots at him. One of those candidates of the moment, Senator Phil Gramm of Texas, criticized Forbes' proposal of a flat tax on grounds that it would favor the wealthy by eliminating taxes on dividend and interest income. Said Gramm, "I reject the idea that income derived from labor should be taxed and that income derived from capital should not." (p. 4A)

A nice use of contrast, but look how candidate Pat Buchanan expressed the same idea: "Under Forbes' plan, lounge lizards in Palm Beach would pay a lower tax rate than steelworkers in Youngstown." (p 4A) Later he added that Forbes' plan had been drawn up by "the boys down at the yacht basin." While Gramm's words are a study in abstraction, Buchanan's language is colorful and concrete. The use of the animal metaphor, "lounge lizards," is striking. So also is the use of contrast, setting the "lounge lizards" against the steelworkers, Palm Beach versus Youngstown. It's sloth and privilege against character and virtue, and we know which side Buchanan is on. Whatever else one might think of him, Buchanan in these instances was a skilled weaver of words.

It's not a bad assignment to ask your students to look for similar examples of effective and ineffective style on issues of the moment in the daily newspaper. It will make them more conscious of the power of words in their lives, and may provide some interesting in-class analysis and discussion.

Woven also into the texture of an oral message is a rich paralanguage of gesture, voice, costume and staging, everything from the clothes we wear to the background photographs we display or music we play to affirm our message. Our students learn to work the loom of these many languages to design an effective message for their listeners.

We also teach our students how to weave evidence into proofs, and proofs into compelling arguments. The system of proofs Suzanne and I introduce, based on Aristotelian principles that have been reinforced and augmented by scholarship over the last generation, ties elements of proof to basic elements of human identity: Thus the logos reflects that we are — or like to think we are — *thinking animals* who must have our doubts dispelled before we buy into any position. The appeal of pathos reflects that we are also *creatures of feeling* who are susceptible to anger, sympathy, fear, and all the other great emotions that give color to our humanity. Ethos, proof arising from our impressions of the character, competence, attractiveness, and forcefulness of speakers, reflects our need for leadership as we wander through this life. Finally, our notion of mythos affirms that we are also *social creatures* who gain much of our identity from the groups that we form (M. Osborn, 1979, 1986). Proofs that tap into the traditions, legends, heroes and heroines of the groups that nourish our social nature can be quite powerful.

As our students learn how to weave a fabric that intermeshes these various elements of proof, they are also learning how to appeal to the very essence of what it means to be human. And this also is no small gift.

Now what are the implications of this second metaphor? I believe they underscore the neglected importance of creativity in the basic course. I would emphasize that *public speaking nourishes — or ought to nourish — creativity in students.* And here I think many of us may have missed a golden opportunity. We hear a lot about creative writing, and what it can do for students, but we hear very little about *creative speaking*. Creative speaking encourages originality of language, thought, and expression as students explore themselves and their worlds in classroom speeches. Unlike creative writing, which is usually quite private, creative speaking is a public, interactive experience, generated by speakers and listeners together, a deeply satisfying pleasure that is communal. A new emphasis on creative speaking could go along with our renewed interest in the importance of narrative, telling stories that engage listeners, reveal the speaker's humanity, and embody important values and ideals. I think we need to give more attention to this idea of creative speaking as a goal and a justification of the basic public speaking class.

The metaphors of building and weaving are both instrumental. As we master them, they make possible a third metaphor that arose quite surprisingly in our manuscript. This metaphor, that expresses the personal challenge of communicating, is **the student as climber.** This metaphor emphasizes the *interference* element of the traditional communication model. It recognizes that both speakers and listeners often raise barriers between them that, on the one hand, protect them from the risk of communication, and on the other, prevent them from enjoying its benefits. What are these barriers?

They are based, first, on *speaker's fears.* Beginning speakers, troubled by the strangeness of their first speaking experiences, often picture listeners as distant, unfriendly, or threatening. There has been, of course, valuable work with cognitive restructuring, systematic desensitization, and visualization techniques to combat such fears (Fremouw & Scott, 1979; Friedrich & Goss, 1984; Ayres & Hopf, 1989; Hopf & Ayres, 1992; Ayres, 1995; Ayres, Hopf, & Ayres, 1994), but perhaps we need to focus these techniques even more on picturing a friendlier, warmer, more receptive audience.

Another high barrier rises out of *listeners' suspicions.* In this time of cynicism and distrust, listeners may fear hidden agendas. They may be suspicious of a speaker's motives, cautious about accepting messages, or concerned that what a speaker asks of them may be costly or risky. But tragically, they may also fear the change, even the growth, that can result from genuine communication. They may believe that even desirable change can have unpredictable consequences that will present them with problems. Or, of course, they may have been wounded by some previous communication encounter.

Listeners may also be *indifferent* to a message or *distracted* by other concerns. Worries over money or an upcoming test, or dreams about the weekend ahead, can further block communication.

Finally, there are the high barriers of culture. What Burke called *identification* (1950/1962) has come to describe the crisis of our time. Stereotypes that can block us from joining in any genuine way with those of a different race, gender, or lifestyle clutter our heads. When that happens, as Suzanne has noted in a recent paper (1996), the rhetoric of division overwhelms any attempt at identification. And that is the stuff of communication tragedy.

As these barriers of fear, suspicion, indifference, distraction, and cultural prejudice combine, they form what we call *Interference Mountain* (1997, chap. 1). But we can help our students climb such mountains, especially as they master the complex skills of building and weaving. And that is perhaps the greatest gift of our course. It takes the best efforts of speakers and listeners to meet successfully at the summit of Interference Mountain. The pleasant thing to realize is that Interference Mountain is a magic mountain. As we climb, it recedes. Communication anxiety ebbs, trust starts to replace suspicion, involvement overcomes indifference, and respect reduces prejudice. Gradually the mountain we at first perceived transforms into a smaller and smaller hill. And those who stand astride it will have grown larger as they climbed.

It is interesting to note how this way of thinking about the personal challenge of the public speaking class is also rooted in an archetype: the sense of vertical space that dramatizes the striving of human life, as we attempt to lift our situation and to grow, and also the risk of that effort, as we place ourselves in danger of falling (M. Osborn, 1969, 1976). This archetypal grounding of the public speaking class simply confirms again that our course connects with the needs and desires of our students in a fundamental way.

The metaphor of student as climber expresses vividly a *transformational approach* to the public speaking class. Students — both speakers and listeners — grow and develop rapidly when the course works successfully. Moreover, their horizons expand as well, signaling the impact of successful communication on what Bitzer has called "public knowledge" (1978). Now, admittedly, the figurative conception of the student as climber is influenced by ideas already explored in interpersonal and intercultural communication, although the titles of several popular textbooks in these areas may signal a preference for another apt metaphor, that of the bridge (Gudykunst, Ting-Toomey, Sudweeks & Stewart, 1995; Stewart, 1995). This may simply indicate that the basic public speaking course of the future will borrow increasingly from and even blend with useful elements from these allied studies. It is our creative challenge to explore how this synergistic blend can best occur in the particular university setting in which we find ourselves teaching.

Now let's look at our three metaphors together: I submit that if we can teach students how to build ideas, weave symbols and evidence, and climb the barriers that separate them, we are doing more than teaching them how to speak: *we are teaching them how to live.* These after all are vital gifts: a sense of form and order in the expression of ideas, creativity, and sensitivity to the needs and feelings of others. One other implication is clear: if we are to seek such goals, *we must be careful not to define our subject too narrowly. Especially. we should avoid confining ourselves to a superficial skills orientation.* It's that kind of orientation that can trivialize all that we do, especially in the unfriendly eyes of some colleagues in other departments, and can make us vulnerable when the pressure to cut programs arises. In this sense lofty educational goals may not only be ethically attractive: they may also be quite practical.

Some years ago (1990), I responded to an attack on our discipline in *The Chronicle of Higher Education.* In my rebuttal to some quite unjust insinuations, I insisted that our classes provide "a form of empowerment that teaches people how to use language ethically and effectively so that they may exercise their freedom responsibly" (p. B2). Our look into the basic metaphors of such empowerment suggests that we should be able to defend our classes on profound personal as well as social grounds. We are not the first to envision such lofty goals: it was Cicero who insisted in his *De Oratore* that in teaching public speaking, we must develop the character and culture, as well as the fluency, of our students. Perhaps these stars may sometimes seem beyond our reach, but we must not cease grasping for them. The Oglala Sioux people have a saying that may suggest our theme: "the ability to make a good speech is a great gift to the people from their maker, Owner of all things." We should pursue our work in that sacral spirit.

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Perceptions of Basic Communication Texts: Factors in Student Learning and Textbook Adoption Decisions*

Donald D. Yoder
Roberta A. Davilla

Textbook selection is considered one of the most important pedagogical decisions that an instructor makes (Griffin, 1984). Mastery of a subject is believed to be guided, in part, by the texts used in the classroom. Traditionally, textbooks have been relied upon as instructional material with which to achieve learning and teaching goals (Berthul, 1978; Hess & Pearson, 1992). Lofty advice even suggests that "texts can be powerful servants" (Conners, 1986, p. 192). Course objectives, assignments, activities, and tests are developed in tandem with the adopted textbook. Yet, the selection and use of textbooks in basic communication courses are frequently based on untested pedagogical assumptions. One tacit assumption is that the textbook is instrumental in achieving student learning when, in fact, few studies exist to confirm that textbooks are actually helpful to student learning.

Communication instructors and textbook publishers operate with little empirical evidence to support the decisions made about the pedagogical soundness and marketability of textbooks. Surprisingly little research has assessed and evaluated the usefulness of textbooks and instructional materials. Instead, emphasis has been on specific classroom behaviors,

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primarily those of instructors (Andersen, 1979; Christophel, 1990; Frymier, 1993, 1994a; 1994b; Frymier & Thompson, 1992; Gorham, 1988; Gorham, Kelley, & McCroskey, 1989; Gorham & Zakahi, 1990; McCroskey & McCroskey, 1986; Powell & Harville, 1990; Richmond, Gorham, & McCroskey, 1987; Sanders & Wiseman, 1990).

Communication education researchers investigate a variety of topics and classroom behaviors that affect student learning. For instance, researchers have studied communication competencies (Ford & Wolvin, 1993; Muchmore & Galvin, 1983; Sorensen & Pearson, 1981); student motivation (Keller, 1979; 1983), teacher immediacy (Andersen, 1979); Christophel, 1990; Frymier, 1993, 1994b; Gorham, 1988; Gorham & Zakahi, 1990; Powell & Harville, 1990; Richmond, Gorham, & McCroskey, 1987; Sanders & Wiseman, 1990), teacher affinity-seeking (Frymier, 1994a; Frymier & Thompson, 1992; Gorham, Kelley, & McCroskey, 1989; McCroskey & McCroskey, 1986), question asking (Pearson & West, 1991a; West & Pearson, 1994), and assessment of student performances (Rubin, Welch, & Buerkel, 1995). Researchers have investigated the power relationships that exist in classroom settings as they relate to motivation (Richmond, 1990), and learning (McCroskey, Richmond, Plax & Kearney, 1985; Plax, Kearney, McCroskey, & Richmond, 1986; Richmond, McCroskey, Kearney, & Plax, 1987). However, the majority of pedagogical and instructional studies focus on specific teacher and student behaviors. The textbook, the fundamental component of virtually every course, has been largely ignored (Schneider, 1991).

Communication scholars challenge this research perspective by asserting that communication educators develop a "politics of teaching" (Hart, 1993, p. 97) that endorses theoretical frameworks that move away from generic education models and become more highly discipline specific to communication education. Hart suggests that communication scholars should "think harder" (p. 105) to understand why people communicate as they do and why they find it so difficult to communicate effectively. Training in communication is vital to survival in late 20th century society. The politics of communication instruction and the accompanying practices that develop should be a concern for communication educators. Sprague (1993) echoes this point of view by seeking "a renewed and reinvigorated study of the teaching of communication" (p. 106). Her challenge invites an assessment of underlying assumptions that communication educators already believe to be true.

Some studies have attempted to assess the content of basic communication textbooks. Doolittle (1977) concluded that the coverage of conflict in basic texts is not consistent with the most current research or thinking among scholars. Allen and Preiss (1990) found that current texts misrepresent the research on basic persuasion strategies. Other studies have compared the topics covered by competing texts (Hess & Pearson, 1992; Pilias, 1989). Pearson and Nelson (1990) and Trank (1976) suggest that teachers are undiscriminating in selecting texts that are well grounded in current research.

Other studies have investigated the writing style and approach of texts. Studies of sexism and androgyny in writing style (Dorris, 1981; Randall, 1985), use of humor (Bryant, Gula, & Zillmann, 1980) and readability levels of hybrid, public speaking, and interpersonal communication courses (Schneider, 1991, 1992) have focused on how texts are written and the rhetorical strategies used by basic textbook authors. Hubbard (1983) investigated the use of programmed texts in the basic course.

Most articles concerning methods and reasons for adopting textbooks (Patterson, 1969; Trank, 1976) are advisory and anecdotal rather than empirical. Some advice concerns the ethics of choosing texts (Miller & Wiethoff, 1980; Ochs, 1990) or the procedures for faculty involvement in the selection process (Griffin, 1984; Trank & Shepard, 1989). Much advice concerns choosing texts that have attractive layout and design

(Rousseau, 1968), are activity based (Patterson, 1969), and are well illustrated with pictures, charts, line drawings, and cartoons (Rickey, 1972). Schneider (1992) suggests that outlines, learning goals, chapter summaries, and glossaries may impact readability levels to increase learning. He further suggests that active voice, subheadings, illustrations and examples "may be just as important as the readability estimates when it comes to maintaining student interest and comprehension" (p. 403). The advice, however, has not been empirically justified.

Two assumptions arise from these studies and discussions. First, textbooks are believed to help students understand and remember information. Learning tradition dictates that students acquire and retain understanding of course material through repetition, examples, and highlighting to clarify and reinforce key information (Teague, 1961). Textbooks adhere to conventions of cognitive learning through chapter outlines, chapter headings, examples, summaries, glossaries, and activities (Patterson, 1969; Pearson & West, 1991b). Textbooks are also accompanied by ancillary teaching materials, including classroom exercises, chapter objectives, chapter outlines, test questions, transparencies, sample syllabi, and advice on instructional methods.

Textbooks must also entice the student to read the material. Textbooks attempt to create interest through the aesthetic appeal of full color layout, photographs, and a personal, simplified writing style (Schneider, 1992). For instance, several years ago cartoons were frequently used in textbooks to create and sustain reader interest. Cartoon use is now considered passé. This practice is not based on empirical research findings but solely on current preference and aesthetic appeal. In their study of types of humor in textbooks, Bryant, et. al., (1980) concluded that "whether such judicious use of humor in texts has educational benefits is the greater question which has to be addressed" (p. 134).

Second, textbooks include a number of activities and assignments that assume students will complete additional work that is not required. End-of-chapter exercises (e.g., watching CSPAN, talking to friends about the definition of communication, and interviewing a business person about communication skills needed on the job) and suggestions for additional readings are examples of such features. Reviewers criticize textbooks if these additional activities and exercises are not included in the book (Trank, 1976; Rousseau, 1968). However, no empirical evidence has tested whether these textbook features are actually used by teachers or students or whether they are helpful or necessary in learning the course material.

Although virtually all basic communication textbooks and instructors' manuals contain the above mentioned standard features, no research has specifically examined the utility of features for aiding student learning. Teachers may adopt textbooks assuming that the students are using particular pedagogical features to achieve learning goals. A gap in the research exists between the perceptions, assumptions, and expectations of the usefulness of textbooks and the actual achievement of learning. No research has confirmed that textbook features assist either teachers or students in their respective instructional or learning objectives.

The purpose of this study is to assess existing pedagogical assumptions about textbook features in public speaking, interpersonal communication, and hybrid basic communication textbooks. In particular, students' and teachers' perceptions regarding the helpfulness of textbook features for learning will be investigated. To this end, the review of literature on basic communication course textbooks leads to the following research questions:

RQ1: Which textbook pedagogical features do students and teachers perceive as helpful in learning the material in basic communication courses?

RQ2: Which textbook aesthetic features do students prefer in basic communication textbooks?

RQ3: How do students' perceptions of communication textbooks compare to their perceptions of textbooks for introductory courses in other disciplines?

RQ4: Which ancillary materials do teachers find useful in teaching the basic communication course?

RQ5: What textbook and instructors' manual features are important in teachers' decisions to adopt a textbook?

METHOD

To answer the research questions, a survey was administered to students (N = 1379) and instructors (N = 118) in traditional basic communication courses at 15 universities in the Midwest. Two different forms of the survey were given. Students in public speaking (n=590), interpersonal (n=287), and hybrid (n=462) basic communication courses in both public and state universities completed the Student Survey concerning their perceptions of the pedagogical and aesthetic features of basic communication textbooks (total n = 1318). Males (n = 627) and females (n = 733) were equally represented in each course.

The instructor sample included Basic Course instructors from the same schools as the students as well as a convenience sample of basic course instructors and directors attending a regional conference. Full-time (n=33), part-time and adjunct (n = 12), and graduate assistant instructors (n = 68) completed the Teacher Survey to ascertain their perceptions of the textbook features, their perceptions of ancillary pedagogical materials, and the basis for textbook selection. Female instructors accounted for 78% of the respondents. Textbooks used by the courses surveyed included

8 of the top ten most frequently used textbooks cited in previous research (Gibson, Hanna, & Leichty, 1990; Troester & McGukin, 1993).

Items for the Student Survey were generated by examining features of basic communication textbooks and discussions with faculty and students. A pilot study was conducted with six universities and 600 students to refine the questionnaire (Yoder & Davilla, 1993). Fifteen of the items concerned the perceived utility of textbook features for studying and learning the course material (1 = not at all useful; 4 = very useful). Ten items asked students which aesthetic features they prefer in a textbook (1 = not at all prefer; 4 = strongly prefer). In addition, seven four-interval semantic differential scales were used to compare student perceptions of basic communication texts with textbooks from introductory courses in other disciplines.

To allow for direct comparison of teacher and student responses, the Teacher Survey contained the same fifteen items concerning usefulness of textbook features for studying and learning the course material as the Student Survey. In addition, 14 questions asked about the usefulness of features found in ancillaries and teachers' manuals. Teachers were also asked to rate 24 features of texts and ancillaries as to their importance for adoption decisions (1 = not at all important; 4 = very important). Finally, teachers were asked to rank the three most important textbook features in their adoption decision. Items for the Instructor Survey were generated through examination of textbooks and ancillary materials commonly available.

All subjects completed the surveys after taking at least one exam. This ensured that subjects' perceptions were based on actual use of pedagogical features (or a conscious decision not to use the feature) and that students had an indication of their usefulness in learning the material. Respondents were instructed to rate the potential usefulness of any pedagogical feature not found in their specific texts.

RQ1, RQ2 and RQ3 were analyzed through descriptive statistics and a one-way ANOVA among types of courses. RQ1 was also analyzed through a one-way ANOVA between student and teacher responses. RQ4 and RQ5 were analyzed through descriptive statistics. Because of the number of statistical comparisons and the large sample size, significance for all statistical tests was set a *priori* at $p < .01$ to minimize Type I error.

RESULTS

The analysis of RQ 1 indicates that students perceive boxed or highlighted material, chapter summaries, chapter outlines, margin comments/explanations, sample speeches/ dialogues, and glossaries of key terms/vocabulary as the most useful textbook features (mean > 2.75) when studying and learning the course material (See Table 1). Students indicated that they find suggestions for further readings, author index, footnotes or endnotes, chapter exercises, and the text preface/introduction to be least useful (mean < 2.25).

Students' responses among public speaking, interpersonal, and hybrid basic courses were compared. The ANOVA indicated that students in the hybrid course found exercises more useful than students in the other courses but found sample speeches and dialogues less useful for learning the material. Students in the interpersonal course rated discussion questions and exercises less useful than did students in the other types of courses, but found sample speeches and dialogues more helpful. Students in public speaking classes found chapter outlines, preface, and discussion questions more helpful than did students in other classes.

To ascertain whether student demographic variables were confounding the results, several post hoc comparisons were performed. Student's year in school affected their perceptions

Table 1
Student Perceptions of Textbook Pedagogical Features
Total and Comparison by Type of Course

Text Feature	Total Population	Hybrid	Course Interpers.	Pub. Spch.
Pedagogical Aids				
Preface	1.97	1.96	1.90	2.07*
Unit Introductions	2.47	2.39	2.44	2.55
Chapter Objectives	2.71	2.69	2.68	2.76
Chapter Outlines	2.90	2.90	2.82	3.00*
Marginalia	2.92	2.92	2.94	2.91
Boxed Material	3.11	3.03	3.15	3.13
Discussion Questions	2.48	2.51	2.30	2.71**
Chapter Summaries	3.27	3.19	3.24	3.36
Glossary	3.10	3.05	3.08	3.17
Footnotes	2.06	2.12	2.18	2.08
Exercises	2.10	2.24	2.00	2.14*
Further Reading	1.71	1.77	1.66	1.73
Index Subjects	2.58	2.49	2.67	2.52
Index Authors	2.02	2.06	1.99	2.03
Sample Speeches	2.97	2.68	3.13	2.93**
Case Studies	2.66	2.72	2.61	2.68
Aesthetic Features				
Writing Style	3.23	3.21	3.25	3.23
Examples/Professionals	2.98	2.99	2.94	3.02
Examples/Students	3.10	3.06	3.09	3.12
Photographs	2.65	2.86	2.48	2.72**
Cartoons	2.66	2.74	2.51	2.79**
Headings/Bold Words	3.39	3.37	3.33	3.48**
Hardback Cover	2.35	2.50	2.48	2.09**
Short Chapters	3.39	3.42	3.42	3.34
Stories/Quotes	2.74	2.66	2.75	2.80

*$p < .01$; $F = 4.60$, df (2, 1367)
**$p < .001$; $F = 7.12$, df (2,1367)
Note: The higher the number, the more favorable the perception.

of three items with seniors being less positive about discussion questions, footnotes, and exercises than other classes of students. Females were significantly more positive about margin comments, boxed material, chapter summaries, and sample speeches and dialogues than were males. Student GPA made a difference only on the perceived helpfulness of footnotes and further readings; students with high GPA (3.0-4.0) found these features less useful than students with GPAs less then 3.0. Students expecting an A in the class differed from other students only by finding glossaries significantly more helpful.

RQ1 was also examined by asking teachers in the basic course to rate the usefulness of textbook pedagogy for student learning. Teachers agreed with students that the glossary, boxed material, chapter summaries, margin notes, sample speeches/dialogues, and chapter outlines were useful. In addition, teachers also perceived unit introductions, chapter objectives, discussion questions, subject indexes, and case studies to be useful learning aids for students. Teachers agreed that the preface, further readings and footnotes were least helpful of the pedagogical aids (See Table 2).

Interestingly, ANOVAs on each item indicated the teachers perceived most textbook features to be significantly more helpful in aiding student learning than did the students. Especially noticeable was the discrepancy between student and teacher ratings of exercises at the ends of chapters, case studies, author index, subject index, discussion questions, chapter objectives, and unit introductions. Students and teachers were equally favorable toward margin comments, boxed material, chapter summaries, and glossaries and equally unfavorable toward footnotes. No interaction among teacher, student and type of course was found for any of the items (See Table 2).

For RQ2, students rated their preference for the aesthetic features of textbooks. Students indicated the strongest preference for short chapters (fewer than 15 pages), frequent head-

Table 2
Teacher Perceptions of the Usefulness Textbook Pedagogical Features for Students' Learning

Text Feature	Teachers	Students
Preface	2.21	1.97**
Unit Introductions	2.84	2.47**
Objectives	3.17	2.71**
Chapter Outlines	3.17	2.90**
Marginalia	3.02	2.92
Boxed Material	3.22	3.11
Discussion Questions	2.78	2.48**
Chapter Summaries	3.30	3.27
Glossary	3.30	3.10**
Footnotes	2.18	2.06
Exercises	2.55	2.10**
Further Feading	2.10	1.71**
Index Subjects	3.07	2.58**
Index Authors	2.50	2.02**
Sample Speeches	3.25	2.97**
Case Studies	3.12	2.66**

** $p < .02$
(responses ranged from 1 = not useful to 4 = very useful

ings and bold face words, simplified, personable writing style and stories/examples about professionals and students (see Table 1). The only item that received an unfavorable rating was the use of a hardback cover, most likely because of the added cost.

A comparison of different types of courses indicated that students in the interpersonal course rated photographs, cartoons, and headings as less preferable than students in hybrid and public speaking courses. Students in public speaking classes were significantly less favorable about hardback covers than other students.

A post hoc analysis of student demographic variables found that seniors and first year students preferred hardback covers significantly less than other students. Females preferred simplified/personal writing style, student examples, headings, and short chapters significantly more than males. Students with GPAs over 3.0 and students expecting an "A" in the course preferred simplified/personal writing style significantly less than those with GPAs under 3. and those expecting lower than an "A" in the course.

For RQ3, students compared basic communication texts with their texts in other introductory courses (See Table 3). Students indicated that they perceived communication texts to be more practical, enjoyable, interesting and relevant. However, other introductory texts were perceived as more difficult, more scholarly, and more theoretical than communication texts.

When comparing texts for specific types of communication courses with texts in other introductory classes, the results indicated that hybrid texts were perceived as more interesting and enjoyable (compared to other introductory texts) than texts in public speaking or interpersonal classes. Among the three types of communication courses, interpersonal texts were perceived as the least interesting, scholarly, and theoretical compared to other introductory texts (see Table 3).

Analysis of RQ3 in terms of student demographic variables indicated that overall GPA made no difference in comparisons of basic course texts with those in other introductory courses. Students expecting an "A" in the basic communication course found the text less difficult compared to other texts than did students expecting less than an "A." Females perceived basic course texts as less difficult, more interesting, more relevant, more practical, and more enjoyable (compared to other textbooks) than did males. Seniors found the course less difficult than did other classes of students.

Table 3
Perceptions of BC Textbooks Compared to Textbooks in Introductory Courses in Other Fields
Total and Comparison by Type of Course

Comparison	Total	Hybrid	Inter-personal	Public Speaking
difficult	3.06	3.11	3.08	3.02
scholarly	2.71	2.67	2.77	2.68*
interesting	2.43	2.18	2.58	2.40**
relevant	2.21	2.16	2.23	2.21
theoretical	2.74	2.71	2.82	2.66**
practical	2.12	2.06	2.15	2.14
enjoyable	2.35	2.10	2.51	2.31***

* $p < .05$; $F = 2.99$; df (2, 1367)
** $p < .01$; $F = 4.60$; df (2, 1367)
*** $p < .001$; F - 7.12, df (2. 1367)

Note: The lower the number (1 is the lowest) the more that characteristic was associated with BC textbooks; the higher the number (4 is the highest), the more that characteristic was associated with textbooks in other introductory courses.

To answer RQ4, teachers were asked to rate the perceived usefulness for teaching the basic course of 14 types of ancillary materials which are typically available with the adoption of textbooks (See Table 4). Teachers rated multiple choice questions, class exercises, chapter outlines, chapter objectives, and overhead transparencies as the most useful materials. They perceived additional readings, true/false questions, essay questions, instructional material on pedagogy, sample syllabi, additional readings, media guides/ resources, assignment evaluation forms, and computerized testbanks to be moderately useful. GTAs found instructional materials on pedagogy and sample syllabi more useful than did full-time faculty and part-time faculty. Females found instructional material on pedagogy, sample syllabi, and assignment descriptions more useful than did males. Since most GTAs were female, post hoc analysis indicated an interaction effect between the variables.

Table 4
Teachers' Perceptions of the Perceived Usefulness of Ancillary Materials for Teaching the Basic Course

Teachers' Manual/Ancillary Material	Rating
Multiple Choice Questions	3.07
T/F Questions	2.52
Essay Questions	2.74
Class Exercises	3.31
Chapter Outlines	2.87
Overhead Transparencies	2.80
Instructional Materials on Pedagogical Practices	2.65
Sample Syllabi	2.52
Additional Readings	2.31
Media Guides/Resources	2.56
Chapter Objectives	2.90
Evaluation Forms for Assignments	2.68
Computerized Testbank	2.55

1 = not at all useful
4 = very useful

To answer RQ5, teachers were asked to rate textbook and pedagogical features concerning their importance in the decision to adopt a textbook (See Table 5). Highly rated features included simplified readability and personable writing style, the theoretical approach and definition of communication, the text's consistency with the current course design, stories/ examples about professionals, examples from/about students, frequent headings and boldfaced words, student enjoyment,

Table 5
Teacher Perceptions of the Importance of Text Features and Ancillary Material on Decisions to Adopt a Text

Text/Ancillary Material	Rating
Theoretical Approach/definition of Communication	3.18
Models of Communication	2.83
Consistency with Current Course Design	3.33
Stories/Examples about Professionals	3.01
Examples from/about Students	3.13
Simplified Readability and Personable Writing Style	3.26
Frequent Headings and Bold-Faced Words	3.00
Type of Cover (hardback, cloth, etc)	1.99
Student Enjoyment	3.00
Index of Authors and/or Subjects	2.76
Activities/Exercises at end of Chapters	2.86
Length	2.52
Cost	2.81
Sample Speeches/Dialogues/Interviews	3.22
Layout and Design (e.g., multi-color)	2.86
Photographs	2.52
Case Studies	2.82
Cartoons	2.33
Pedagogical Aids (e.g., glossaries)	3.06
Intercultural Examples	3.13
Teacher's Manual	3.20
Videotapes	2.88
Computerized Testbank	2.61

1 = not at all useful
4 = very useful

Table 6
Most Important Features
in Teachers' Decision to Adopt a Textbook

	Rank			
Text Feature	1	2	3	Total
Theoretical Approach/Definition of Communication	22	11	6	39
Models of Communication	4	7	0	11
Consistency with Current Course Design	21	10	7	38
Stories/Examples about Professionals	3	5	3	11
Examples from/about Students	3	6	6	15
Simplified readability, Personable Writing Style	22	12	12	46
Frequent Headings and Bold-Faced Words	1	2	7	10
Type of Cover (hardback, cloth, paper)	0	1	3	4
Student Enjoyment	2	6	6	14
Index of Authors and/or Subjects	1	3	5	9
Activities or Exercises at End of Chapters	5	6	3	14
Length	0	0	0	0
Cost	1	2	7	10
Sample Speeches/Dialogues/Interviews etc.	9	11	9	29
Layout, Design (e.g., multi-color printing)	0	2	4	6
Photographs	0	0	0	0
Case Studies	0	2	4	6
Cartoons	0	0	2	2
Pedagogical Aids (e.g., glossaries)	1	5	7	13
Intercultural Examples	2	8	7	17
Coverage of Specific Topics in text	7	4	6	18
Teacher's Manual	0	3	2	5
Videotapes	3	1	1	5
Computerized Testbanks	1	0	1	2
Other Ancillary Material	1	2	1	4

Teachers (N=115) were asked to rank order the three most important features in their decisions to adopt a text. Frequency of responses are given for each feature indicating how many teachers considered it the most important, second most important, and third most important in their adoption decision. The Total number of responses indicate the number of teachers who considered the feature as one of their top three criteria.

sample speeches/dialogues/interviews, pedagogical aids, intercultural examples, and a teacher's manual. The type of cover (hardback or cloth) and the use of cartoons were of little importance in text selection.

When asked to rank the three most important features considered in adopting a text, teachers indicated that readability and writing style was the most important consideration (See Table 6). The text's theoretical approach and its consistency with the current course design were the next most frequently used criteria. The number of chapters, type of cover, indices, length of the text, layout and design, use of photographs and cartoons, case studies, teacher's manual, videotapes, computerized testbanks or other ancillary material were seldom listed as the three most important considerations in adopting the text. Indeed, cognitive learning aids and aesthetic features of texts were seldom mentioned as one of the top three criteria in selecting a text.

DISCUSSION

The major implications of the study are twofold. First, students and teachers have different perceptions of the usefulness of textbook pedagogical features. While some parallel perceptions exist, teachers tend to think the text is much more helpful for learning the course material than do students. Specifically, teachers rated the usefulness of chapter exercises, chapter objectives, chapter outlines, indices, and case studies more highly than did students.

The results suggest that texts are written and used under assumptions that are not necessarily valid. Inclusion of pedagogical material that is not perceived as useful by the students seems a costly and futile practice. Since students perceive little utility of most pedagogical aids, they are unlikely to use them on their own. Perhaps teachers need to increase their emphasis on textbook pedagogy with in-class assignments, exercises, and discussions. Spending class time to show students how to use the pedagogical aids may increase their perceived usefulness.

Similarly, while teachers rate many pedagogical features as important to cognitive learning, they select textbooks on other bases. The consistency of the text with their current course design, the theoretical approach to the course material, and the writing style and readability of the text are mentioned by most teachers as the top three criteria for text selection. A teacher's manual, case studies, sample speeches or dialogues, pedagogical aids, intercultural examples, and examples from students and professionals were rated as important to text adoption but only as secondary considerations. This may suggest that teachers are more concerned with finding texts that students will read and that require little change from their current course structure than they are about the effectiveness of the text in helping students learn the material.

Second, students perceive basic course texts to be less difficult and less theoretical, though more interesting, enjoyable, relevant, and practical, than other introductory course texts. This result suggests that the often heard comment about communication is "common sense" may be unchanged by exposure to communication textbooks. While communication topics are perceived as directly impacting students' lives, basic course textbooks may be perceived as giving practical advice that is not grounded in rigorous scholarship. Students' comparison of communication texts with other texts may create erroneous impressions of the academic quality and rigor of our basic courses. While the simplified reading level and personable writing style are valued criteria by both teachers and students, they may also contribute to the perception of the texts being less difficult and less scholarly. For example, best selling texts are practically devoid of footnotes referencing the scholarship that is supposed to inform them, perhaps because students don't like them or find them useful for learning

(Pearson & Nelson, 1990). Increasing the scholarly appearance, rigor, writing level, and content of the text may improve students' perceptions of communication texts as they relate to other introductory texts.

Textbook design, content, and pedagogy might better reflect student preferences and use of the text. Neither teachers nor students find suggestions for further reading helpful, yet many texts continue to include this material. Why spend time, money, and textbook pages incorporating student exercises, further reading suggestions, author indices, and other aids that students don't find useful? Adoption decisions may need to refocus attention on criteria related to textbook features that are useful to students rather than useful to teachers.

This study is a preliminary attempt to identify student and teacher perceptions of basic course textbooks. With a non-random sample, it is difficult to generalize to all teachers, courses, and texts. Unavoidably, the specific textbook used by the respondents in their particular course may have influenced their perceptions of the value of a particular pedagogical or aesthetic feature. However, post hoc analysis indicated few significant differences among textbooks in each course, indicating that the specific textbook had little impact on student and teacher perceptions.

While no direct measure of actual learning was used in this study, subjects judged the helpfulness of the pedagogical features based on the results of at least one exam. However, to more directly study the impact of pedagogical features on student learning, controlled experimentation should be conducted to determine benefits of pedagogical features on actual, rather than perceived, learning outcomes. Even then, teachers might consider pedagogical features necessary even if only a few students find them beneficial.

Replication and extension of this study is necessary to discover additional factors affecting perceptions and use of textbooks and how teachers in a variety of courses and institutions make adoption decisions. When making publication and text selection decisions, these data should inform authors and teachers as to how to best choose and use the text material.

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Written Feedback in the Basic Course: What Instructors Provide and What Students Deem Helpful*

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As instructors of the oral communication course, we have a variety of specific goals to accomplish in our classrooms: for instance, we may want to develop students' cognitive abilities, assist students with career skills, help students find their own voices, or build student confidence. In reflecting upon these goals, we often turn to feedback and evaluation as primary tools for achieving these objectives. Although technological advances allow basic course instructors to use such innovative instructional resources as interactive video (Cronin, 1994; Cronin & Kennan, 1994) or computer-generated feedback (Behnke & King, 1984; Hallmark, 1992; Russell, 1992) to meet the previously mentioned goals, the basic communication course continues to demand a human element. One way this human element is exemplified is in the written feedback given to students. Our experience has shown that personalized written feedback continues to be students' most desired form of speech evaluation. Thus, when reflecting upon our instructional aims, we are reminded of Holtzman's (1960) timeless challenge, "What can I say (or write or do) that will result in this student's improving his [sic] communicative ability?" (p. 1). Any instructor who has labored over written

* Portions of this article were presented at the 1992 and 1993 meetings of the Speech Communication Association.

evaluations only to wonder whether students actually read, used and/or cognitively processed the comments, can value from revisiting the issue of written evaluations. Because written criticism is a permanent record which is often used for later reference, it should be thoughtfully constructed. Thus, attention to the types of comments we offer, as well as the way our written criticism is received, is warranted.

This two-part study goes beyond anecdotal evidence to reveal the types of written feedback instructors offer students in the basic communication course as well as students' perceptions of the helpfulness of written feedback. Booth-Butterfield (1989) writes, "Written criticism may seem clear-cut and supportive from the perspective of the instructor who creates it, [but] it may be interpreted in a very different manner by the student recipient" (p. 122). As professionals we have the responsibility to investigate our own teaching practices for evaluation and improvement. Part of this investigation should include the perceptions of those we educate, our students. The added dimension of addressing student perceptions of written feedback enriches our understanding of the process nature of communication and has the potential to aid in our teaching effectiveness by allowing us see if we are indeed accomplishing the goals we have set forth.

REVISITING THE ISSUE OF SPEECH EVALUATION

The issue of speech evaluation has been a mainstay in communication education scholarship, because it is generally accepted that, learning cannot take place without evaluation. However, written feedback merits additional study for a number of reasons. First, much of the feedback literature has focused on oral, rather than written criticism (Book, 1983; Bostrom, 1963; Dedmon, 1967; Preston, Mancillas & William, 1985; Roubicet, 1990; Staton-Spicer & Wulff, 1984). Second, the few studies on written feedback offer limited information on actual classroom practices or student perceptions of those practices (Book & Simmons, 1980; Miller, 1964; Palmerton, 1986; Rubin, 1990; Sprague, 1971; Vogel, 1973; Young, 1974). Third, studies in other disciplines such as English composition, business, and special education, have examined the educational benefit of written feedback (Bangert-Downs, 1991; Kulhavy, 1990; Leauby & Atkinson, 1989; Zellermayer, 1989); because of the unique circumstances of the public speaking experience, however, these studies cannot be generalized to the speech classroom. Fourth, of the limited studies on written feedback within our discipline, many were conducted one or two decades ago. In fact, in a eight-year review (1974-1982) of the research in communication and instruction, only seven of 186 articles dealt with the criticism or evaluation of student oral performance (Staton-Spicer & Wulff, 1984). This suggests a need to replicate these findings and confirm their applicability in the 1990's.

Despite the paucity of current research, Book and Simmons (1980) claim that written feedback can motivate student achievement and can induce significant change in speech performance. To test this claim empirically, this study explores the types of comments instructors provide and how students perceive the helpfulness of written evaluation by addressing the following research question:

RQ1: What forms of written comments do basic course instructors use in their evaluations of speeches?

Specifically, the following types of comments were examined: positive vs. negative comments; content vs. delivery comments, and one-word vs. multi-word comments. These categories were adapted from the work of Sprague (1971) who proposed a category system based on four dichotomies: 1) content-delivery, 2) positive-negative, 3) personal-impersonal, 4) and atomistic-holistic. Sprague's categories have been utilized in earlier speech evaluation research: evaluation from instructors (Vogel, 1973), evaluation from peers (Book and Simmons, 1980), and evaluation of student preferences for written comments (Young, 1974). Specifically, Sprague (1971) found that comments given by instructors most frequently involved content (75%), were atomistic or specific (95%), were impersonal (99%), and were almost equally divided in valence. Because of the general tendency of instructors to provide impersonal and atomistic feedback (Book, 1983; Book & Simmons, 1980; Preston, Mancillas & William, 1985; Sprague, 1971), the current study focuses on the more debated categories of content-delivery and positive-negative feedback. Additionally this study examines instructors' use of one-word vs. multi-word comments for two reasons: first, we wanted to asses the degree of detail provided by instructors; and second, we wanted to learn about students' preferences regarding length and detail of instructors' written feedback.

Regarding the second part of this study, previous research has produced limited findings specifically related to students' perceptions of the most and least helpful written feedback, whether students actually read the comments, and how they used them. These concerns provided four additional research questions:

RQ2: What types of written comments do basic course speech students find most helpful?

RQ3: What types of written comments do basic course speech students find least helpful?

RQ4: Do students read written comments in the basic speech course?

RQ5: Do students use written comments to help improve their public speaking skills?

Accordingly, Sprague (1991) challenges basic course scholars to study and report findings related to student perceptions of classroom criticism. Book's (1983) review suggested that the "common-sense folklore" about providing feedback is not always congruent with results of feedback research. For instance, instructors may think that positive comments are perceived by students as more helpful than negative comments, when this is not always the case. Specifically, Preston, Mancillas & William (1985) found that positive feedback promoted good feelings, but was limited in fostering improvement. Young's (1974) study showed that students regarded positive criticism more helpful than negative criticism when directed toward speech content but negative criticism was more helpful than positive criticism when directed toward delivery. No preference was given for content or delivery comments, since students found both equally important (see also Bock & Bock, 1981). Additionally, students regarded specific comments more useful than general comments and the impersonal approach significantly more helpful when addressing delivery, while the personal approach was seen as significantly more helpful when discussing content. Although the results of this research are valuable, they are difficult to generalize because of small sample size (Preston, Mancillas & William, 1985), the use of peer critiques (Book & Simmons, 1980), and the hypothetical nature of some studies (Young, 1974). Thus, the current study seeks to enhance generalizability by relying on actual teacher comments from actual student evaluation forms, and by asking students to indicate, in their own words, why comments were or were not helpful.

METHOD

Sampling Procedures

The sample of 114 students from a large, midwestern university was drawn from ten sections of the basic communication course. Volunteers ranged in age from 18 to 21, with a mean age of 19. Participants supplied a photocopy of their speech evaluation form which included written comments. Evaluation forms were gathered from 48 males and 66 females, all of whom read and signed informed consent statements ensuring their confidentiality.

The evaluations provided a representative sample of comments from ten course instructors (teaching assistants) as well as speeches across the entire grading scale. Eleven to twelve forms were gathered from student volunteers in each of the ten participating sections. Evaluation forms were collected from the third of five speeches of the semester, a 5-7 minute informative presentation. The third speech was selected for study because of the potential for atypical written comments in the first or final speech evaluations. The first speech is a "trial run" for both the student and the instructor, since both are assessing the student's capabilities and potential; thus, these first comments may be exceedingly encouraging or general and therefore not representative. The final speech may be equally unrepresentative, since it often exemplifies greater polish, and may therefore garner disproportionately more positive comments from the instructor. Consequently, the middle speech appeared to be an appropriate selection for our research since a certain level of mastery is expected, yet comments also focus on future goals and improvement.

In addition to providing their evaluation form, the students also completed a survey which asked them to respond to the following items: (1) With regard to this speech evaluation form, identify three comments made by your instructor which you found to be the most helpful. (2) With regard to this speech evaluation form, identify three comments made by your instructor which you found to be the least helpful. (3) Do you read all the comments written on your speech evaluation form? Please explain your answer. (4) Do you use the comments on your speech evaluation form to help improve your public speaking skills? Please explain your answer. Students answered these questions by referring directly to the instructor's comments written on their own evaluation form; this eliminated the need to recall feedback from a previous speech.

Identifying Categories

The coding scheme used for this study was adapted from the work of Sprague (1971).

Since observation indicates that some instructors provide comments including general remarks, as well as observations about outlines, bibliographies and time, Sprague's (1971) content-delivery dichotomy was adapted to accommodate these additional references. Because written evaluation comments also reflect a variety of forms and lengths, we included an analysis of these dimensions as well. Given these adaptations, this study explored comment type, valence, length and form (see Table 1 for operational definitions). Specifically, the following types of comments were examined: positive vs. negative comments, content vs. delivery comments, and one-word vs. multi-word comments.

Coding Procedures

The unit of analysis for this study was the topical phrase, that is, a comment that can stand alone (a word, phrase or

Table 1
Operational Definitions for Coding

Unit of Analysis — A topical phrase that stands alone; such as, a word, phrase or clause that relate to one topic in the evaluation. Examples: Fine; Interesting topic; Polish for greater fluency.

Comment Type:

1) *Content* — Any comment dealing with ideas, reasoning, supporting material, organization, or language. Examples: Appropriate selection and use of support materials; The main points were difficult to distinguish.
2) *Delivery* — Any comment dealing with the physical and vocal elements of communication such as eye contact, gestures, posture, poise, dynamism, sincerity, confidence, rate, volume, fillers, inflection, articulation and pronunciation . Examples: Excellent eye contact; Work on articulation.
3) *Outline, Bibliography, Time (OBT)* — Any comment which addresses the outline, bibliography or time constraints. Examples: Outline has nice structure; Bibliography needs to be alphabetized.
4) *General* — Any comment which views the speech as a whole. Examples: Your efforts are appreciated. More preparation would have resulted in a stronger speech.

Comment Valence:

1) *Positive* — Any comment which compliments or expresses approval of the speaker or the presentation. Examples: Professional stance; Great enthusiasm; Original topic.
2) *Negative* — Any comment which expresses disapproval or makes a suggestion for improvement. Examples: Work for greater vocal variety; Use more transitions so audience is able to follow your speech.

Comment Length:

1) *Single-word* — Any comment which is limited to one word. Examples: Strong; Great; Weak; Focus.
2) *Multi-word* — Any comment which uses two or more words. Examples: Solid credibility; Incorporate visual aids earlier.

clause that relates to one topic in the evaluation). The comments were then content analyzed for type, valence and length. Thus, a statement such as (1) good introduction, (2) but you needed more eye contact, (3) and a clearly stated thesis, would be coded as three, separate constructs: (1) content/positive/multi-word/statement, (2) delivery/ negative/multi-word/statement, (3) content/negative/multi-word/ statement.

In the first part of the study, the number of comments per evaluation ranged from 5 to 54 with a mean of 24 comments. The mode was also 24. Three trained coders were familiarized with the coding categories and purpose of the study. A total of 2,933 comments contained on 114 evaluations were coded for all three dimensions. Intercoder reliability, calculated according to Holsti's (1969) formula, was .91.

In the second part of the study, each question in the survey was content analyzed by two independent coders with a .88 reliability. The operational definitions for coding the constructs were identical to those in part one. Student responses for Question 1 (Which three comments did you find most helpful?) and Question 2 (Which three comments did you find least helpful?) were coded according to the operational definitions and further defined for specific characteristics. For instance, negative content comments were broken down into specific aspects of content (such as thesis, main points, support materials, conclusion). For Question 3 (Do you read all the comments?) and Question 4 (Do you use the comments to help you improve?), a classification scheme was created and responses were coded according to such categories as comments were read for improvement, to get a better grade, to focus on weaknesses, and the like.

Table 2
Frequencies of Written Feedback Categories

Category/Example	Number of Constructs (2933 total)	Percent of Total
Content "Good job on research;" "Nice work on transitions;" "Where is your preview?"	1849	63%
Delivery "Don't lose your eye contact;" "Good gestures;" "We can't hear you!"	822	28%
General "In all, this was an effective presentation;" "Work harder in all areas;" "Your effort is noticed and appreciated."	90	3%
Outline, Bibliography, Time (OBT)	172	6%
TOTAL		100%
Positive "Relevant information;" "You have nice eye contact;" "Your outline looks great."	1520	52%
Negative "Need transitions;" "Where are your sources?" "The visual aid is too small to see."	1413	48%
TOTAL		100%
One-word "Good;" "No;" "OK;" "Nice;" "What?" "Long."	318	11%
Multi-word "You related the topic to us well." "What was the thesis?" "Vivid examples."	2615	89%
TOTAL		100%

RESULTS

Part 1: Instructors' Written Feedback

RQ1 asked what forms of written comments basic course instructors used in their evaluations of speeches. Results show that instructors provided significantly more written comments directed toward content (63%) than toward delivery (28%), outlines, bibliographies, and time constraints (6%) or general comments (3%) (x^2 (3) = 2,702, $p < .001$). Additionally, positive comments (52%) were slightly more prevalent than negative remarks (48%) (x^2 (1) = 3.9, $p < .05$). The evaluations also contained significantly more multi-word (89%) than single-word (11%) comments (x^2 (1) = 1,800, $p < .001$). Table 2 represents a summary of these frequencies as well as examples from each category.

Part 2: Student Perceptions of Written Feedback

RQ2 asked which instructor comments students found most helpful (see Table 3). This research question was examined from several perspectives. First, attention was paid to frequencies from broad categories, specifically content and delivery, and valence of positive and negative. In addition, more detailed sub-categories assumed under each of the broader categories were examined, such as introductions, conclusions, transitions, and support materials (content) as well as eye contact, gestures, posture and movement (delivery). (Authors can be contacted for a complete list and results of sub-category analyses.)

Regarding the categories of content and delivery, students selected proportionately more delivery comments, 17.5% (144 out of 822), as more useful than content comments, 8% (151

Table 3
Frequencies of Constructs and Percent Selected as Most Helpful and Least Helpful Comments

	Produced		Most Helpful		Least Helpful	
Construct	Frequency	%	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
Content	1849	(.63)	151	(.08)	98	(.05)
Delivery	822	(.28)	144	(.18)	68	(.08)
General	90	(.03)	0		0	
OBT	172	(.06)	3	(.02)	0	
Positive	1520	(.52)	37	(.02)	39	(.03)
Negative	1430	(.48)	258	(.18)	127	(.09)

out of 1,849). Thus, findings indicated that, despite the fact that instructors provided nearly three times as many content comments, students noted delivery comments as most helpful.

Considering the helpfulness of positive and negative comments, students selected 18% (258 of 1,413) of negative comments as more useful than positive comments, 2% (37 of 1,520). Again, despite the fact that instructors produced more positive than negative feedback, students selected proportionately more negative comments as most helpful. When content and delivery comments were crossed with valence, students found negative comments aimed at delivery to be the most valuable of all. Outline, bibliography or time comments, as well as general comments comprised only 2% (3 of 172) of the feedback deemed most helpful.

RQ3 asked what types of written feedback basic course speech students found least helpful. Findings revealed that, of the content comments provided, students selected 2% (39 of 1,520) as not useful. Of the delivery comments given, students declared 8% (127 of 1,413) as least helpful. (See Table 3.) It should be noted that although students were asked to provide three comments they found least helpful, some chose to provide only one or two. This may imply that students regarded most comments as having merit.

RQ4 asked whether students read all the comments written on their evaluation form. Eighty-six percent of the responses indicated "Yes —Because . . . . " Students cited reading the comments for general improvement (30%), for helpfulness (28%), for grade improvement (11%), and because they respected the instructor (8%). Additionally, comments were read to focus on weaknesses (6%) and for encouragement (3%). Fourteen percent of the responses were justified by a "Yes — But . . ." statement. Specifically, these students

Table 4
Students' Reasons for Reading Comments

Category	Number of Constructs (n-96)	Percent of Total
86% Indicated "Yes — Because . . ."		
In order to improve skills	23	30%
Comments perceived as helpful	27	28%
To get a better grade	11	11%
Respect for teacher	8	8%
Want to focus on weaknesses	6	6%
For encouragement	3	3%
14% Indicated "Yes — But . . ."		
Desired more comments	5	5%
Comments were too negative	4	4%
Comments were irrelevant	2	2%
Comments were read only later	1	1%
Comments were illegible	1	1%

remarked that they did read the comments, but they desired additional feedback (5%), the comments were too negative (4%), the comments were perceived as irrelevant (2%), the comments were read but only later (1%), and the teacher's penmanship was difficult to read (1%). (See Table 4.)

Finally, RQ5 asked whether students used the written feedback to help improve their public speaking skills. Eighty-six percent indicated they did use the feedback. Students specifically cited using comments for improvement (43%). Twenty-two percent simply stated "yes" but offered no explanation. Additionally, students indicated using comments to focus on weaknesses (5%), to get the teacher's opinion (5%), and to get a better grade (4%). Students also revealed that the comments were used because they were helpful (4%) and that they would be used for later speeches or presentations outside the classroom (3%). Eight percent of the responses revealed that the comments were sometimes used for improvement. Only 6% of the responses indicated that the feedback was not used for improvement. (See Table 5.)

Table 5
Do Students Use Instructor Comments? And How?

Category	Number of Constructs (n-97)	Percent of Total
Yes, for improvement	45	47%
Yes, used comments (no explanation)	21	22%
Sometimes	8	8%
No	6	6%
Yes, to focus on weaknesses	5	5%
Yes, out of respect for instructor	5	5%
Yes, to get a better grade	4	4%
Yes, but not immediately	3	3%

DISCUSSION

The results illuminate a variety of issues concerning instructors' written speech evaluations and students' feedback preferences. To begin, the finding that instructors offer more positive comments than negative comments reflects previous research that recommends the use of positive feedback. Specifically, comments that are encouraging and personalized tend to be perceived by students as most effective and yield more positive attitudes toward the speaking experience. Yet the negative comments are also beneficial. For example, learning theory indicates that allowing undesirable behavior to continue without comment reinforces the behavior (Young, 1974). Also, some might argue that excessive praise may have damaging effects, resulting in a lack of further motivation and/or overconfidence. The current study found that instructors are offering virtually the same proportion of positive and negative comments today as twenty-five years ago (Sprague, 1971). Perhaps this is due to an ongoing belief that negative comments should be balanced with positive remarks.

Positive comments in large quantity, however, are not necessarily desired by students. For example, 88% of the comments cited as most helpful were negative. This was among the most striking conclusions of the study and perhaps can be explained by Farson (1963) who indicates that praise, while often appropriate, is not always the greatest motivation for improvement. He suggests that too much positive feedback may have a damaging effect resulting in complacency, overconfidence, and restricted creativity. Instead, students desired feedback that focuses on weaknesses and that offers specific suggestions for improvement (See also Albright, 1967; Preston, Mancillas & William, 1985; Young, 1974.) In fact, Levie & Dickie (1973) reported, when instructors point out incorrect or inappropriate behaviors and provide students with recommended alternatives, students are more inclined to learn from the experience and correct those behaviors in subsequent speeches. In addition, Young's (1974) results showed that anxious students perceive instructor criticism as particularly helpful. Further, Preston, Mancillas and William (1985) found that complimentary feedback promoted good feelings, but was of limited value in helping students improve their speaking skills. It may also be true that, for some students, positive comments lose their impact when given in quantity and are taken less seriously than fewer negative comments.

In addition to the findings on valence, this study indicates that speech evaluations tend to have significantly more content comments than any other type. This may mirror the emphasis placed on content at the university under investigation. Still, these findings are consistent with Sprague's (1971) research which reported that 73% of the content-delivery comments focused on content. Since one goal of a basic public speaking course is to teach students to develop a well-organized, well-researched speech, this finding is encouraging and not surprising.

Interestingly however, although more content comments were provided, students regarded delivery comments as proportionately more helpful. This finding is inconsistent with Sprague (1971) who found that critiques with significantly more content comments were rated by students as the most helpful. Perhaps the current finding can explained by Young (1974) who discovered that from a student's perspective, delivery is often a reflection of their total being. Hence, for the students who place great importance on appearance and peer acceptance, delivery comments may be most salient. Thus a focus on physical presentation may actually override substantive content for some students.

Third, this study revealed that written evaluations contained significantly more multi-word than single-word comments. This indicates an awareness on the part of instructors regarding the need to clarify feedback by providing detailed remarks. This finding was welcomed since students demonstrated a definite preference for detailed evaluation. In contrast to the above mentioned categories (content-delivery, positive-negative), it appears that, only in the category of multi-single word, are instructors providing the type of comments students find most helpful.

Overall, it is affirming to know that students do indeed read written feedback. This study found the majority of the students read the comments in order to improve their speaking skills. Perhaps more revealing were those students who qualified their statements. The "Yes — But . . . " comments were directed toward instructors and how they can make the feedback more useful. Further, instructors should be pleased to know that the majority of the students not only read, but also indicated incorporating teacher suggestions into subsequent speeches. It is heartening to find that students indicated a genuine desire to improve and, in order to do so, read comments which focused on their weaknesses. Considering students' preoccupation with grades, it is interesting to note how few students mentioned grade as a motivating force for reading and employing teacher feedback in future speeches.

INSTRUCTIONAL IMPLICATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

Helping students improve their oral communication skills is a main objective in the basic course, and written criticism is a permanent record for helping students achieve that end. One way we can accomplish this instructional objective is to write criticism with a purpose instead of merely pointing out what a speaker has done well or has done poorly; that is, to have the student feel some satisfaction with his or her performance and, in turn, move toward improving some particular aspect of his or her communicative behavior. With this in mind, the current study sought to understand the nature of such satisfaction by focusing both on instructors' evaluations as well as students' perceptions of that written feedback.

When comparing the types of comments instructors provide with the types of comments students find most helpful, there were two important distinctions. First, part one of this study revealed that instructors provided more content than delivery comments. After reviewing students' perceptions of the most helpful comments, it was determined that students actually desire more comments directed toward delivery. Perhaps students feel the need to receive a greater number of delivery comments because their physical presentation is so much a part of their personal identity.

In an effort to achieve personal improvement, students in this study overwhelmingly desired written comments aimed at problems and weaknesses in their oral presentations. Further, students cited the lack of specific comments regarding their weaknesses and the need for teachers to provide more detailed suggestions on how to improve. As previously noted, 88% of the comments students deemed as most helpful were negative. In contrast, it was revealed that instructors offered only 48% negative comments in an average evaluation. Additionally, much of the "positive" criticism that instructors provided, and that students found least helpful, merely listed behaviors, such as "stated thesis," or "used gestures," rather than stating how or why such behaviors were effective.

Young (1974) proposed that "a student's receptivity to criticism and, perhaps [the] utilization of that criticism, may greatly be affected by the degree to which the criticism meets [student] needs and preferences" (p. 234). The results of this study should invite us to reflect on how we teach the basic course and how we train our teaching assistants or new instructors. Specifically, there are two main implications for how instructors might provide written feedback that is perceived as most helpful. First, students rarely identified positive statements as useful, thus indicating that instructors should avoid giving exclusively positive criticism and include more negative, constructive comments in their evaluations. The same findings also suggest the need for these negative comments to be more specific and detailed, offering concrete suggestions for improvement. Second, it is clear that instructors are writing more content comments, while students are citing delivery comments as most helpful. Instead of reducing the number of content comments, instructors might offer an additional number of delivery comments or at least provide more descriptive delivery comments in order to meet students' needs. Overall, considering written comments as a whole, students should be left with the impression that speaking well is not beyond their abilities; rather, speaking effectively is a skill which they can master.

Exploring the types of written comments we offer, as well as the way our criticism is received, is advantageous when reflecting on our instructional goals and their achievements. Can instructional goals be accomplished in part through the use of written feedback? Can a teacher develop students' cognitive abilities, assist with their career skills, help students find their own voices, and/or build student confidence? These findings suggest, regardless of the instructor's objective, goals may be better achieved when instructors study the feedback they give as well as learn about their students' expectations for and perceptions of those written comments.

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Culture Shock in the Basic Communication Course: A Case Study of Malaysian Students

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INTRODUCTION AND RATIONALE

Despite the increasingly large number of international students in the United States (Scully, 1986), few studies have been carried out on the topic of international students (Altbach, 1985). Existing literature on international students concentrates on areas such as the adaptation process typically undergone by the international student in a new cultural environment and on the relation between academic success and such various factors as age, sex, marital status and language proficiency (Altbach, Kelly & Lulat, 1985).

The research literature examining international students generally deals with language proficiency. Lack of proficiency in the English language is considered to be one of the reasons why some foreign students show unsatisfactory academic performance (Heikinheimo & Schute, 1986; Altbach, Kelly & Lulat, 1985; Putman, 1961).

Besides these difficulties in general academic work due mainly to linguistic differences there is the specific requirement in many classes to speak in front of native speakers, which, according to the literature, poses a problem for international students. International students manifest a fear of appearing foolish in front of peers and teachers, and feel stripped of their real selves and their real language capacities (Ludwig, 1982) Hull (1978) states that clearly the area most students perceived difficulties was related to speaking in the classroom A young woman from the former Federal Republic of Germany states that it is hard for international students who cannot speak and act spontaneously and who cannot express their thoughts accurately to speak in front of native speakers of the language (Hull, 1978).

In addition to speaking in classes, there are courses which specifically require students to present speeches. Speech courses are mandated by most universities as a general education requirement for all students. Regardless of their national origin or major specialization, students have to take the basic communication course. These courses are feared even by native speaking students and can pose more of a problem for the international student.

PURPOSE AND SCOPE OF STUDY

The purpose of this article is to examine international students from one cultural background, Malaysia, in the American basic communication course in order to identify the areas which they are apt to find most difficult International students constitute a significant factor in U.S. institutions of higher education. Malaysian students are chosen as the focus of study because according to statistics, Asian students comprise more than half of the total international student population at 56%, and Malaysian are one of the largest groups among the Asian student groups (Snyder, 1992). Many of these students are enrolled in departments that require speech classes in their programs of study. Therefore, a study of the concerns of Malaysian students in the basic speech course merits our attention.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

There is a spattering of literature on international students in the speech performance class (Yook, 1993; Yook & Seiler, 1990) and some research on the role of accents on perception of nonnative speakers (Giles, 1971; Giles, Henwood, Coupland, Harriman & Coupland, 1992; Gill, 1994; Yook 1996). However literature on the academic performance of international students in public speaking classes is generally still lacking, except for a few articles on Native American students' speeches, which should not be included in the category of literature on international students in the strict sense. Yook and Seiler (1990) conducted a study of the concerns of Asian students in speech performance classes. However, the focus was on Asian students in general, and not on Malaysian students specifically. As Malaysian students are one of the largest Asian student groups, Malaysian students merit particular attention. To the author's knowledge, there is to date no studies focused specifically on Malaysian students' concerns in the basic communication course. Therefore, the present study is an exploratory study that can potentially yield important insights into culture-specific differences that will be useful for communication scholars and educators.

Culture Shock in the Classroom

It seems logical that not only linguistic factors, but also cultural factors play a large role in international students' speech performance (Yook & Seiler, 1990). Language and culture are intrinsically related (Hall, 1983; Hofstede, 1980). The main theme of this article is that culture shock, due to unfulfilled expectations, in turn caused by a ignorance of teach others' cultures, can be prevented in students and teachers in public speaking courses. The key word to avoidance of culture shock is awareness, or knowledge on the part of the teacher and student, of each other's cultural rules and expectations.

Culture shock can be seen as having two components. The first pertains to the inability of the student to fully understand and relate to the intricacies of the host culture, so that the students lack adequate control of what happens to them in their new environment. The second component is the gap between international students' expectations of the host culture and the realities they observe (Royeen, 1981).

It is possible that teachers with international students in their classes who have cultural backgrounds unknown to them can also experience the same culture shock through interaction with these students. If expectations of international students are not fulfilled, and teachers are unable to fully understand and relate to their students, then it is possible that teachers will feel a lack of ability to control interaction with foreign students, thus resulting in a form of culture shock.

Classic studies on the effect of such nonverbal behavior as maintenance or avoidance of eye contact, interpersonal distance, and participation patterns on teacher/student interaction show that negative evaluations can result from ignorance of the rules of the other culture. There is a certain grammar of nonverbal communication that enables members to achieve or avoid a certain "personal relatedness." Incompetence, due to lack of knowledge, in this type of communication can bring serious consequences. One example is presented in an article on Indochinese students. When Indochinese students keep their eyes down while talking to parents or teachers as a sign of respect, teachers who are not knowledgeable in their cultural grammar may become frustrated, thinking that the students are not paying attention.

In addition to the language barrier and differences in nonverbal norms, there may be an additional factor to consider when considering the difficulties that foreign students face when giving a speech. The act of speaking may itself differ from the US view of this concept.

Different cultures may attribute different values to the communicative act of speaking (Yook, 1993). This needs to be understood by the teacher in order to be able to help the international student learn the skills of public speaking, as it may be the underlying cultural values ingrained in the international student that is the main obstacle to performance in the public speaking class (Byers & Byers, 1972).

To give an example of the cultural differences in views of the act of speaking, the Paliyans of South India communicate very little throughout their lives and even become almost completely silent by the age forty. "Verbal, communicative persons are regarded as abnormal and often offensive" (Gardner, 1966, p. 368). For Native Americans, speech constitutes an unnecessary intrusion in the learning process and the culture stresses the importance of observation and participation. African American culture also seems to make greater use of direct observation, rather than expanded verbal explanations in their classrooms (Edwards, 1983). Understanding culture-specific rules for how, why and when the act of speaking is valued becomes important in identifying international students' concerns and needs in the basic communication course.

Hofstede (1991) states that in certain cultures with high "power distance", the teacher is considered a "guru" who shares knowledge with the students.[1] In high power distance

[1] Hofstede (1980), found four such dimensions of cultural programming. In his study of over 100,000 subjects, he identifies these dimensions as power distance, uncertainty avoidance, masculinity/femininity, and collectivism/individualism. Briefly stated, power distance is the extent to which those of lesser status in a society accept that power is distributed unequally, and uncertainty avoidance is the extent to which members of a society avoid ambiguous situations. Masculinity refers to the competitiveness and rigidity of gender roles reflected in a society, as compared to its nurturing characteristic and tendency to have overlapping gender roles. Collectivism is the extent

cultures, the teacher is expected to initiate communication in the classroom, with students indicating deference to authority through silence. Malaysia is categorized as a culture that is very high on the power distance scale (Hofstede, 1980). Malaysian students may encounter culture shock by the mere fact that they are to take on the novel role of a speaker in the classroom context. Such knowledge about cultural differences may help the instructor and student avoid some aspects of culture shock in the basic communication course.

Malaysian Culture

Background information about Malaysian culture is important in studying students from that culture. The following information about Malaysia was gathered through written sources and students who were Malaysian nationals. There are three ethnic cultures in Malaysia (Gullick, 1981). The Malays for the most part tend to the agriculture of Malaysia and receive governmental assistance to help them improve their standards of living. Chinese Malaysians make up roughly one third of the Malaysian population. Many Chinese Malaysians work in the business sector and tend to be economically well off (Jain, 1990). Most of them believe in Buddhism, rather than the Moslem religion, which is the dominant faith of the Malays. Indian Malaysians for the most part make their living through labor (Jain, 1990). Only a few among them are well off economically. While the three ethnic groups may be different in a number of ways, they have some commonalties that cannot be ignored when juxtaposed with other cultures. For example, they all share the same

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to which needs and goals of the collective are valued higher than individual needs and goals.

governmental and educational systems, and all of these groups learn English as a second language (Gullick, 1981).

English is taught as early as second grade of primary school, but the emphasis is on reading and writing, not on spoken English. Religion plays a significant role in Moslem believers' lives, affecting them in many ways. The influence of religion seems less for Buddhist believers because the interviewees state "If I have to pick a religion, it would be Buddhism." In both of these religions, norms advocate that women be subjugated to men. As one student says, "Women should not work and should obey to their husbands." The Moslem religion, however, seems to have stricter norms concerning sexual propriety, especially for women. For example, one student said "You need a distance of about three feet [between opposites sexes] because of sexual attraction."

In general, Malaysian students state that there are individual differences in how one viewed the act of speaking in their culture. However, most of them agree that there is a certain difference in the older and younger generations' views of speaking. They state that the older generation tend to dislike verbose people, more than the younger generation. Many also believe that their culture endorses speaking "indirectly", while the Western culture views outspokenness as a virtue (McCroskey, 1980).

Evaluation of International Students

These are only a few selected examples of cultural differences that affect classroom communication. Knowledge of these differences are important in the evaluation of international students and can help all parties avoid culture shock in the basic course. Without knowledge of the culture-specific differences in attitudes toward speaking in general and public speaking in particular, the instructors are missing fundamental information that they need to posses to be able to make a fair evaluation.

The ultimate problem lies in holding one standard for all students of diverse cultures and evaluating them according to this uniform yardstick. Siler and Labadie-Wondergem (1982) state "if minority students fail to measure up to acceptable standards of the overculture, they are penalized" (p 93).

On the other hand, however, a different argument can be voiced on this issue. One may say that by overcompensating for the handicaps of the international student, the purpose of the course may become meaningless. In other words if students enroll in public speaking classes, there is a certain level of performance that is expected of them. This is the dilemma that instructors face in evaluating international students in speech performance classes (Yook, 1995).

To effectively deal with this dilemma, instructors may need follow Scafe and Kontas' (1982) suggestion:

> In a bicultural or multicultural class, effective instruction and constructive feedback is dependent upon 1) the teacher's awareness of his or her own expectations as being culturally based and 2) the expansion of these expectations to adapt to students from differing cultures, with the explicit affirmation that several alternative ways of speaking are valid, depending on the situation (p. 252).

In other words, international students should be taught the same skills as the U. S, mainstream students with an understanding of different expectations. Some factors such as accent and grammatical perfection are largely uncontrollable given their cultural and linguistic backgrounds. International students should, however, be shown the appropriate communication skills for the various contexts and be expected to understand and be able to apply those skills for the purposes of the class.

While U. S. students will find the skills acquired in the basic communication course important for almost all aspects of their future lives, the skills may be important in a different sense for international students. As the skills learned in the basic communication course are largely ones acceptable in the U S mainstream culture, they may not necessarily be appropriate nor useful in other parts of the world. The skills will become part of temporary communicative strategies to be employed by international students for interactions with the U S culture.

One solution to speech instructors' dilemma suggested in Yook (1995) is to help students become aware the cultural differences in rhetorical style or delivery and to allow them to make the choice to adapt the acceptable style of the mainstream U. S. culture for the purposes of the class. Dauplinais (1980) states that if students are provided specific instruction about styles appropriate in both cultures and then given the opportunity to practice these styles, they can make decisions regarding the appropriateness of communication behavior and can discern the consequences of the lack of appropriate behavior. A useful starting point for fair evaluations of Malaysian students in the basic communication course is to understand some of their concerns.

RESEARCH QUESTION

The focus of this study is the analysis of Malaysian students' experiences in the basic speech course to discern potential areas of difficulty. The research question for this study is:

RQ: What are Malaysian students' concerns in the basic communication class?

METHOD

Quantitative methods are useful in establishing credibility in terms of numbers, and can thus be considered more generalizeable than qualitative methods. However, for the purposes of this study, the qualitative method seems to be more appropriate. The qualitative approach was chosen, rather than the quantitative because the difference between the Malaysian and American cultures precluded the use of surveys for this research. This is because concepts and operational definitions may differ because of linguistic or cultural differences. A Malaysian may have a different view of the concept of a speech to begin with, thus leading to an answer that may be irrelevant to the question. This study used focus group and individual interviews to seek to answer the research question..

Participants

Malaysian students were contacted through the instructors who had these students enrolled in their basic speech classes, through word of mouth, and also by contacting the Malaysian Student Association. Instructors were given minimal information and asked not to disclose the specific purpose of the study other than that it was an interview to find areas of concern for international students in speech classes.

A total of seventeen interviews were carried out. While the number of interviewees is not large, the sample is considered adequate for the exploratory nature of this study. Most of them were Malays and Chinese Malaysians. Only one student was an Indian Malaysian. Indian Malaysians tend to be less numerous as international students, according to Malaysian student sources. There were only a mere handful on the two large Midwestern college campuses where the interviewees were recruited at the time the present study was conducts.

The students interviewed were mostly business majors, with twelve majoring in finance, business administration, international business and accounting. Five of the seventeen students were civil engineering or electrical engineering majors.

Nine female students were interviewed, all of them being Malays except for three Chinese Malaysians. Eight male students were interviewed. Three were Malays who were of the Moslem faith, while four were Chinese Malaysians who were Buddhists. One male student was Indian Malaysian of the Moslem faith.

As mentioned earlier, the ethnic groups are distinct groups within the Malaysian culture. However, they share enough similarities in terms of educational systems and cultural beliefs about speaking. Consequently the distinctions were not considered relevant for this study. The ethnic and gender composition of the interviewees was considered appropriate for the purposes of the present study.

Individual Interviews

The interviews were all conducted in the author's office, with prior permission to use the tape recorder, and an outline of the topics to be covered during the interview. Five female (three Malay and two Chinese Malaysian) students and five male (two Malay and three Chinese Malaysian) students participated in the individual interviews. The interviews ranged from thirty minutes to over one hour. These interviews all took place within the same semester. An average of two or three interviews were conducted each week during the six weeks of interviewing.

While carrying out the interviews, the interviewer felt she had made a good choice in choosing the interview format instead of asking them to fill out survey instruments. Their fluency in English was overall very good when compared to other foreign students, but misunderstandings frequently occurred, making it necessary to probe for inconsistencies, in order to collect valid data. The interviewees were in general quite willing to be interviewed, and answered questions freely and fully.

Focus Group Interview

Two focus group interviews were held. One focus group interview took place in the interviewer's office and the other in an empty classroom. An effort was made to get at least one member of each ethnic group, religion and sex. During the first focus group meeting three female students, two Malay and one Chinese Malaysian, and one Chinese Malaysian male student attended the meeting. The Malay male student who had missed his appointment before had agreed to attend, and failed to a second time, resulting in an absence of a male Malay representative. The second focus group interview was attended by one female and two male students. The female student was Chinese Malaysian, the male students were Malay and Indian Malaysian. The interviews were audiotaped with prior consent of the interviewees.

RESULTS

All of the Malaysian students interviewed took Speech class because they were required to do so. According to the interviewees, students are not typically given any opportunities to present their ideas before others under the Malaysian educational system. This seems to greatly influence the Malaysian students' performance in speech classes since the role reversal, from that of a passive recipient of knowledge to that of an active proponent of ideas, leads to awkwardness. American students, on the other hand, are already acquainted with having an active speaking role in classroom situations at a very early age (Yook & Seiler, 1990).

The problem that the majority of students interviewed stated as their "biggest problem" in giving speeches was the lack of fluency in English. As one student put it, "I'm happy if I can get through to them usually, I have to try twice. restructuring sentences." Many of them professed they thought in their own language and tried to translate their thoughts into English when giving speeches. This inevitably led to awkward pauses when students were searching for words. It also took several trials to get the sentence structure just right. Students also had trouble with pronunciation and intonation, and found themselves searching for synonyms to avoid repeating the same words. In short, for a majority of Malaysian students, their greatest fear is linguistic inadequacy. As one student put it, "I am afraid they won't understand".

Some students declared proudly that they had found a way out of the dilemma by memorizing the entire speech text. In reality as most speech teachers warn, memorization only serves to exacerbate the problem because once students forget their place they tend to panic and to do poorly on the rest of the speech.

Students seemed to feel that the organization of ideas was not problematic at all for them. All of them asserted that they already had much practice in the organization of ideas in their Malay and English language classes, where composition or "essay-writing" was required regularly. They also felt that the volume of their voice did not pose problems.[2]

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[2] Three instructors were asked to comment on this information. Among them two felt that the Malaysian students "wandered" from point to point in their speeches and that Malaysian students tended to speak too softly. One student said, "I thought I spoke loud, but the instructor said he could not hear me." This could be an area that Malaysian students could be guided to work on in the future.

On the subject of using natural gestures to accompany and stress what is being said, students said that using gestures was viewed by their culture as being disrespectful, as was talking loudly. This could have been the cause for Malaysian students' unnatural gestures and inaudible tone. One student stated, "I put hand in pocket and the other was going round and round." After talking to the students individually, it was still hard to find a pattern to explain why some students perceived the use of gestures while giving speeches as problematic, while others did not seem to do so. After much thought, a pattern was discerned. Problems in using gestures decreased as a function of the time spent in the United States. One student asserted that she used "more gestures now than before."

Interpretation of students' perceptions of eye contact as a potential problem area was more complex. In general, for female students of both ethnic backgrounds, eye contact proved to be a problem. One female Moslem student said "When I see American face, I start nervous. I just talk, talk, talk, without looking any point. When I stopped, I tried to look but I don't know what I am looking [at]." Difficulties with eye contact for female students seemed to stem from two sources.

First, according to the Moslem religion eye contact is associated with sexual promiscuity, while in Buddhism, direct eye contact is seen as a challenge to superiors. Therefore, in order to avoid being promiscuous or challenging to males, who are deemed "superior", eye contact is avoided. The second, is that eye contact is seen as a means of feedback from the audience, and since Malaysian students are understandably more apprehensive about their speech performance, they fear looking at their audience. One student stated:

> "If you say something, you expect the audience will give some.. let's say feedback. Seeing from their face we can see whether they understand what we say, so it's kind of the

> audience may reflect what you feel ... When I'm giving a speech and I look at their face, if they look miserable, I know that they don't understand what I say so I feel depressed and kind of affect what I'm going to say ."

Among male Malaysian students, Chinese Malaysians stated that they had no problems with eye contact during speech presentations, while Malay students had mixed perceptions. One asserted that avoiding eye contact was "part of our culture," while others denied having any problems at all with eye contact. This may be another area that needs further investigation in the future.

DISCUSSION

Interviews with Malaysian students lead to the conclusion that Malaysian students perceive that they have three main handicaps they have to deal with when presenting speeches in American basic speech classes. The first is the language barrier. Many students cited language as the biggest problem they had in giving speeches. Another handicap is that they come from a different culture where gesturing and talking loudly are seen as "disrespectful", especially for women. When these are some core aspects that instructors focus on when evaluating speeches, it becomes problematic to use the same yardstick to evaluate these students, because the evaluations could penalize the students for having attributes of their own culture ingrained in them. The third is that students have not had opportunities to present ideas orally in their own country. This lack of training could lead to an inferior level of performance, and consequently a lower grade, when compared to those who have received prior training.

Several suggestions can be made in consideration of these perceived handicaps. For example, remedial classes for English proficiency can be suggested as necessary to correct specific patterns of errors (Yook, 1995). The instructor can also coach these students individually, on how to concentrate on getting the general message across. Suggestions may include giving up a long search for a particular word and settling for a substitute word or set of words that convey a similar meaning. Additionally meeting with international students and getting to know them by name early in the term may be ways in which instructors can make international students more comfortable in speech classes (Yook, 1995). McCroskey (1980) states that one can help students from minority cultures to learn, by first becoming acquainted with the cultural norms for communication of that person, and following up with steps that include avoiding evaluation on factors such as accent or dialect, which cannot be easily nor rapidly changed (p. 241).

More importantly, sharing expectations that instructors have of Malaysian students may serve to both ease the discomfort of culture shock for Malaysian students and serve as a fair basis for evaluation for speech instructors. That is, instructors' expectations of having the skills be integrated into the everyday lives of U.S. mainstream students cannot be rigidly held for Malaysian students. Malaysian students may not see the need to acquire these skills beyond the limits of the speech course or the U S. classroom. They may feel uneasy with the rhetorical styles and the expectations of the class regarding delivery and organization of material. Acknowledging that linguistic fluency and accented speech will not disappear in a short time and that Malaysian cultural rules may not dictate using these skills in their own culture will lay a useful groundwork for the Malaysian student's understanding of what is expected of the class. However, Malaysian students should be brought to understand that the skills learned in the basic communication course are ones that they may find useful in enlarging their repertoire of communicative behavior for use in various U S. cultural contexts.

This article reviewed some of the perceptions of Malaysian students on their public speaking experience in the basic course. Some suggestions for instructors regarding practices in the classroom and for evaluation of Malaysian students are offered. There are several shortcomings of the paper, including the relatively small number of students interviewed. However, this paper is an important exploratory first step in the process of understanding cultural differences in the basic communication course. If instructors are made aware of these potential problem areas for Malaysian students, this will help prevent culture shock in the speech communication classroom from occurring for both instructors and students alike. In macro-perspective, the present study is a step closer to ensuring that students, whatever their cultural background may be, are helped to learn to their fullest potential.

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The Em-Powter-ing of America: Using Info-mercials to Teach Persuasion and Popular Discourse in the Basic Communication Course

Daniel W. Heaton

"... the usual defense consumers have in our over-communicated society is to develop... a mind that largely ignores most of the information to which it is exposed."

Charles Larson, *Persuasion*

"You guys ready to stop the insanity? In a big way!"

Susan Powter, *Stop the Insanity*

Consumers devour television to such an extent that several scholars have examined a variety of effects and uses of television by consumers (Best & Kellner, 1987; Fiske, 1995, 1989a, 1989b, 1987; Heaton, 1990; Larson, 1995; Schudson, 1984; Vestergaard & Schroeder, 1985; Zeuschner, 1993). Today's college students — as consumers of material goods, visual images, verbal and nonverbal texts, and intellectual property — spend approximately 85 percent of their free time watching television (Zeuschner, 1993). Yet despite their almost addictive pursuit of this "product," many students ignore the impact and importance their conspicuous consumption of television has on their daily lives. As a result, they are in danger of developing "a mind that largely ignores most of the information to which it is exposed" (Larson, 1995, p. 392). Therefore, communication educators need to develop teaching methods and assignments that not only take into account the persuasive messages to which our students are exposed everyday, but that also help our students become more critical consumers of messages.

This article describes my attempt to help students become more critical consumers of the popular discourses to which they are exposed everyday. The assignment I use to teach persuasion and popular discourse focuses on one particular instance of popular discourse, Susan Powter's *Stop the Insanity!* info-mercial. I will first discuss why I chose this particular text as the object of student critique. Next, I will describe the assignment and then discuss its goals. Finally, I will relate my observations of student responses to the assignment formulated from qualitative student responses, personal conversations, and interviews about this assignment. Since this is not a quantitative study, my interpretations of student responses are necessarily subjective and impressionistic.

WHY "STOP THE INSANITY"

When I first began teaching the basic communication course, I was anxious to get to the section about persuasion. I realized how important a knowledge of persuasive tactics and strategies could be to anyone, no matter what their line of work, major in college, or relational goals. But when I asked my students what they thought about the persuasion chapter, many replied that they thought it was boring. Boring? Boring!

At first I thought there was something wrong with me as a teacher, but then I made an amazing discovery. I re-read the chapter about persuasion. It *was* boring. I will not mention which text we used, but the way the book's author explained persuasion made an exciting, life-changing topic sound like the recipe for burnt toast. I realized that I had been so excited about teaching persuasion that I gathered quite a bit of supplementary material and ignored the textbook.

At that moment I was determined to salvage what I could of my favorite topic — I mustered all my persuasive energies to try to convince my students that, in spite of our textbook, the world of persuasion really was interesting and worthy of our attention. I decided that I would try to devise a way of teaching persuasion that my students understood and would accept. I knew they spent a great deal of time watching television, so I wanted to find an instance of persuasive discourse that was closely related to that activity. That is when I saw Susan Powter's 30-minute long paid advertisement "Stop the Insanity!"

Powter, "a woman whose own disappointing experience with the diet and fitness industry led her to discover the truth about taking back her life and becoming lean, strong, and healthy" (Powter, 1992) developed the "Stop the Insanity!" weight loss system for herself and decided to mass market the idea. The video is a combination of a lecture/sales presentation Powter gave to a large audience in the Mall of the Americas in Dallas, Texas, testimonial vignettes from people who have successfully used the product, "one-on-one" segments with Susan supposedly "at home" directly addressing the camera (and thus the home viewer), and opportunities for the home viewer to call a toll-free number to order the system. When her info-mercial first aired, it was usually broadcast around 1:00 a.m. or 2:00 a.m. As she gained popularity, her info-mercial began to air during prime-time hours on cable channels and on the weekends during the day, thus increasing her exposure to millions of viewers.

I was intrigued by the info-mercial because the organizational pattern of the entire advertisement was a very obvious example of Monroe's Motivated Sequence — Attention, Need, Satisfaction, Visualization, Action (Gronbeck, McKerrow, Ehninger, & Monroe, 1994). As Beebe and Beebe (1994) state, the motivated sequence uses a cognitive dissonance approach designed to "first disturb your listeners and then point them toward the specific change you want them to adopt" (p. 385). I thought that such an explicit example of a persuasive t strategy already discussed in class might prove more stimulating to my students than a video tape of a sample persuasive speech. Also, by using an example of persuasion from popular discourse, I thought my students would make the connection between what we discussed in class and the messages they encounter everyday.

THE ASSIGNMENT

Students watch the video of "Stop the Insanity!" in class. The assignment involves both solo and group critiques of the video. Students analyze the video to discover what persuasive strategies are used to get the home viewer to call the toll-free number and buy the product. After watching the video in class, they write a description of the content of the text and answer a set of directed questions (see Appendix) to guide their critique of Powter as a speaker. Students answer questions in six categories: choice of topic, organization, content, language/style, delivery, and effectiveness. They then provide examples from the video supporting their critiques. They also identify their criteria for evaluating the effectiveness of the video as a persuasive piece of popular discourse.

Students bring their written critiques to class and we discuss them as a large group. Students are then assigned to small discussion groups. Each group is given a specific area of importance to persuasion to apply to the video. For example, one group will examine how Powter's delivery positively and/or negatively affects the video's persuasive ability. Another group will explore the ethical issues raised by Powter's persuasive tactics. Yet another group will articulate how the different segments of the video, such as the public lecture, the

"Susan at home" segments, and the testimonials, affect its overall effectiveness.

Once each group assesses the video and forms its critique, each group presents their findings to the class. Often, this part of the assignment is more like a debate than a discussion. Sometimes groups form very different opinions of the ethics and effectiveness of Powter as a speaker. For example, several groups over the years have questioned Powter's credibility to speak on this subject because they do not believe she actually once weighed 260 pounds. Their reasons for doubting her credibility have varied from "her 'before' picture doesn't look anything like her — it could be anyone," to "I read somewhere that her family denies she was ever that large." Other students viewed her as extremely credible because "she comes across as someone who has been large before — she seems to care about getting people to make a change in their lives." But whatever the particular disagreement in a class might be, I then encourage them to discuss their disagreements further so the group discussions themselves become exercises in formulating persuasive arguments.

After the group debates/discussions we begin follow-up discussions about what the students have learned about persuasion by completing this assignment. For me, this is one of the most crucial parts of the assignment because this is where I, as the instructor, receive direct feedback about an assignment's effectiveness. If I discover during the follow-up discussion that some concept pertaining to persuasion is generally misunderstood or warrants further discussion because of its impact on the students, I will adjust my schedule for the following class periods to clarify or expand an issue.

THE GOALS

The goals of this assignment are varied and extend beyond the critique of this particular instance of popular discourse. Cultural theorist and media critic Douglas Kellner (1995, 1989) proposes that viewers of television need to become more critical consumers of the images and ideologies to which they are exposed. Kellner (1995) contends that "critical literacy in a postmodern image culture requires learning how to read images critically and to unpack the relations between images, texts, social trends, and products in commercial culture" (p. 252). He suggests that viewers perform "ideology critiques" of the popular discourses encountered in their daily lives. Kellner, (1995) further stresses the importance of critiquing advertisements when he states, "many ads are multidimensional, polysemic, ideologically coded, open to a variety of readings, and expressive of the commodification of culture and attempts of capital to colonize the totality of life" (p. 257). By critiquing the "Stop the Insanity!" info-mercial, students put into practice "critical literacy" skills that effect their performance in not only the basic communication course but also across the curriculum and in a broader cultural context.

Many goals of this assignment are directly applicable to the basic communication course. By using Monroe's Motivated Sequence in their critique of "Stop the Insanity!" and by answering the directed questions students learn to apply the terminology used in the course and develop the ability to effectively articulate the principles of effective communication. By assessing and discussing Powter's use of high energy delivery and the amount and quality of sources she does and does not cite for her information, students explore the relationship between content and delivery in persuasive speaking. By debating Powter's credibility, naming the type of ethical standard she uses in her arguments, and establishing criteria for evaluating her use of ethics, they recognize which tactics used by speakers are ethical and which tactics are not. Furthermore, they not only gain experience evaluating the persuasion that occurs in a variety of settings (public speaking, mass mediated, verbal, and nonverbal) but they also gain experience formulating persuasive messages in a variety of setting — intrapersonal (the solo critique), small group (the group critique), public (the in-class discussion), and mass media (watching the video).

Many goals of this assignment also apply across the curriculum. First, students employ critical thinking skills, which are useful no matter what courses they take. Additionally, since students discuss their views of the video individually and in groups, and since they must support their views with specific examples from the video, students get practice verbalizing their opinions and interpretations of a text in a very specific, concrete, well-supported form. Of course, as with assignments in any course, the crosscurricular value of this assignment manifests itself when (and if) students apply skills and knowledge gained in this course to their other courses. Although I have not conducted a quantitative study to assess the extent to which students apply their knowledge gained from this assignment cross-curricularly, I have spoken with many students over the years who have told me that the skills and knowledge they acquired in the basic communication course did have a direct impact in their other courses. Several mentioned this assignment specifically.

In addition to specific course goals and cross-curricular goals, this assignment fosters skills and awareness that have broad societal/cultural impact.

After completing the assignment, students should be able to identify the strategies used to persuade audiences of popular discourse. Also, by gaining experience as cultural critics, they become more critical consumers of popular discourse. Since "advertising sells its products and view of the world through images, rhetoric, slogans, and their juxtaposition in ads to which tremendous artistic resources, psychological research, and marketing strategies are devoted" (Kellner, 1995, p. 251), students in basic communication courses need to develop the ability to critique the often overlooked, but ever-present media messages that impact their lives in some form everyday.

STUDENT RESPONSES TO THE ASSIGNMENT

Over the period I have used this assignment in class, I solicited qualitative student responses concerning the effectiveness of the assignment, how useful they felt it was in class and how much they felt they used the skills fostered by this assignment in other courses. Some responses were gathered through personal conversations with students after class, others were gathered during class discussions, and the rest were gathered from their written critiques of the video.

One positive outcome of using this assignment noted by several students was a decrease in the amount of overall communication apprehension felt when students presented their own persuasive speeches in class. As one student told me, "I think I was less scared to talk in front of the class after the group work; I kind of knew people a little better, could judge how they think a little better than I could just from talking to them." Students said they felt more comfortable speaking in front of each other after this assignment because they knew each other's opinions more than they did before and the group work helped bring them closer together. Also, because they understood the art of persuasion more than they did before the assignment, they felt more confident in their ability to be effective persuasive speakers. As one student stated, "Once we did the critique [of Powter's video] I could see what you meant by the different types of appeals and about how to structure your arguments to be more persuasive. I think that helped my persuasive speech — I guess it did; I got an A!"

Some students also expressed how valuable the assignment had been to them beyond the basic course. When asked about this particular assignment, several students cited the "Stop the Insanity!" written critique as their first instance of actually taking time to analyze a message received via television. One student's response was typical:

> I grew up with TV, so I guess I didn't really think about it affecting me one way or the other. But seeing the video and talking about it really made me focus on something that I do everyday, but I just don't think about, you know. Until you take the time to sit down and really figure out, "this show is trying to influence me this way," and "this show is trying to influence me to do this other thing." I started [critiquing television shows] at home now, too. It's fun. Interesting to see how persuasion really works outside of speech class.

I know several students from different classes who became speech majors after taking the basic course. Five of them mentioned the "Stop the Insanity!" assignment as one of the inciting incidents that sparked their interest in learning more about rhetorical criticism and mass communication. Still other students have told me how they now take more time to formulate their opinions and support their arguments more fully in all their courses than they did before they understood how to be an effective persuader. According to one student who is currently in law school:

> I've noticed myself consciously making an effort to think before I speak now. I used to just say what I thought regardless of what people might think. But I realize now that every time you speak you have some sort of persuasive effect on other people, and that's sort of a scary realization.

Another student, who became a speech major after taking the basic course, told me, "When we watched the Powter tape in class and critiqued it, I got a chance to practice debating my views with other people. I learned very quickly how to support my arguments because someone always calls me on them."

The assignment has been so successful in my classes that I have even had former students request copies of the video for use in a variety of other classes as a way of encouraging in-class discussions about such topics as: fad dieting in a Health class; use of persuasive language in an English Composition class; truth in advertising in a Business class; use of gender stereotypes in a Women's Studies class; and the culture of weight loss in a Sociology course. Many disciplines are concerned with how popular discourses affect viewers, and students who major in those disciplines are using their skills to offer critiques of those discourses.

From my perspective as the instructor of the course, I have noticed several positive outcomes. I did not use the assignment in every section of the basic communication course that I taught so I could compare outcomes between classes that did use the assignment and classes that did not use it. In classes where the assignment was not used, students watched tapes of persuasive speeches from speech contests and by students from previous semesters. In classes where the assignment was used, student awareness of the persuasive structure of popular discourse increased as compared to classes where the assignment was not used. Those students also demonstrated the ability to distinguish between types of persuasive appeals used by a speaker more quickly than students who did not watch the video. On tests and in class discussions of their own persuasive speeches, students who completed the assignment could better articulate the relationship between content and delivery than students who did not complete the assignment. Those students also demonstrated the ability to apply knowledge gained from this assignment to other popular discourses, such as thirty-second commercials, popular magazines, song lyrics, and films, thus demonstrating their skills as critical consumers of popular discourse.

CONCLUSION

Variations of the assignment have also been successful in class. I began providing students with a written transcript of Powter's info-mercial so they could focus more closely on her use of language. Also, I recently began using thirty-second and one-minute long commercials in class as precursors to this particular assignment. In one class, I switched to a different info-mercial, Don LaPre's "Making Money," and discovered that it works almost as well with this assignment as "Stop the Insanity!" does. I even ordered the "Making Money" package that I bring to class for us to critique. Still, I prefer to use "Stop the Insanity!" because of Powter's dynamic delivery, her clear organization, and, as noted in several student discussions, her questionable credibility and ethics.

The critique of Susan Powter's "Stop the Insanity!" info-mercial provides educators with an effective, class-tested, and fun assignment to be included in the persuasion section of a basic communication course. Not only does this assignment provide students with an excellent example of a message from popular discourse that follows Monroe's Motivated Sequence, but it also facilitates discussion of several key issues related to persuasion. Among these key issues are: the persuasive effect of a high-energy delivery; speaker ethics and credibility; the relationship between content and delivery; how to detect logical fallacies; and the importance of supporting materials. Additionally, because this activity uses popular discourse, students enhance their critical thinking skills and become more critical consumers of messages they receive.

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APPENDIX

Directed Questions

The following is a list of the major categories I wanted student critiques to address and the directed questions I asked them to consider within each category:

Choice of Topic —
- Describe the speaking occasion.
- Where was the speaker?
- Who was her target audience?
- Did her topic seem appropriate for her target audience?
- Did her topic seem appropriate for her?
- Evaluate her choice of topic based on what you perceive her goal to be.

Organization —
- Identify each part of her speech and tell how it follows Monroe' Motivated Sequence.
- Introduction —
  - How did she arouse interest and gain your attention?
  - Did she use a preview?
  - Did she establish her credibility?
  - Did she make her topic clear?

Body —
Did she use transitions between her main points?
What were her main points?
Conclusion —
Did she summarize what she wanted her audience to receive from her speech?
Did she conclude on a strong note?
Was her organization easy to follow and to remember?

Content —
What types of evidence did she use?
What types of proof did she use?
What types of arguments did she use?
Did she cite her sources?
Were they credible?
Did she use any persuasive techniques you were told to avoid?

Language/Style —
Did she use vivid language?
What are some examples?
Did she ever use abstract language?
Did she use concrete language?
Was her style formal or informal?
How did this affect her credibility?

Delivery —
Bodily —
Describe what she did with her body that was effective.
Describe what she did with her body that was distracting.
Vocally —
Describe what she did vocally that worked.
Describe what she did vocally that did not work.
What types of visual aids did she use?
Did she use them effectively?

How was her delivery different for the "home" audience?

Effectiveness —

Did she accomplish her goal of persuading her target audience?

Was she ethical?

If so, in what ways?

If not, what did you perceive as unethical?

Was she interesting?

Was she honest?

What could she have done differently to improve her speech?

The Use of Simulation in the Beginning Public Speaking Classroom: Let's Make It Realistic, Relevant and Motivating*

John J. Miller

The beginning public speaking course typically consists of students with diverse backgrounds, academic pursuits and career goals. Students usually present several speeches to demonstrate their speaking competency. According to Gibson, Hanna, and Leichty (1990), oral performances determine 61% of their grade (p. 244). These performances normally compel the selection of topics which relate to the disparate classroom audience. When constrained in such a way, however they may see the course as irrelevant to their goals and become frustrated. Not surprisingly, the Gibson *et al* survey cites inadequate preparation and apathy among the ten major problems faced in the basic communication course (p. 249). Weaver and Cotrell (1989) contend that student motivation is the speech instructor's greatest battle (p. 184).

The use of simulation in the beginning public speaking classroom encourages students to select topics which resemble those of possible future presentations. They are free to choose more parochial subjects, but audience adaptation remains a requirement. This topic selection process heightens the significance of public speaking, which may motivate students to learn. Simulation offers an alternative teaching technique which necessitates the utilization of the student rhetors' pur-

* An earlier edition of this article was presented at the Southern States Communication Association Convention in Memphis, TN, 1996.

suits while concurrently providing instruction in the appropriate skills.

SIMULATION AS A SPEECH ASSIGNMENT

The instructional technique of simulation has been employed for many years. In fact, *Simulation and Gaming*, a journal dedicated to the study of games and simulation as a teaching method, recently celebrated its silver anniversary. The ability of this exercise to not only include the necessary skills but also a stronger sense of reality, makes it an effective speech assignment.

Simulation is composed of three phases: playing, debriefing and journal writing (Petranek, Corey, & Black, 1992, p. 175). The first phase involves the creation of the situation and its corresponding presentation. For example, a sophomore with an environmental technology works with an instructor to develop an appropriate situation. The student's situation involves a local chemical company recently charged with dumping dangerous chemicals into the town's river. The EPA cleared the company, but the townspeople are still very wary. Attempting to improve relations, the board of trustees has asked for proposals aimed at enhancing the local environment. The student works in the company's research and development division, and must make a presentation before the board. Relying on both material learned in other classes as well as personal interests in the subject, the student creates the appropriate speech and presents it to the board of trustees (the class).

For students who are unsure of their career aspirations, instructors should create a simulation based on students' hobbies, interests, or goals. For example, with a freshman who does not have a major and is interested in baseball, the situation might resemble a city government presentation. In this simulation, the city is considering the closing of a local park to build a maintenance building, resulting in the end of little league baseball. The city contends that no other location is available for the building. As a supporter of little league, the student is asked to defend the institution at a public hearing. In this simulation, the student declaims in a realistic situation, employing personal interests and knowledge.

The second phase is the debriefing. An instructor provides an evaluation of the simulation. Petranek *et al.* (1992) explain:

> The professor's role during the debriefing is very different from the role of lecturer. The debriefer sets the tone by being open and accepting new ideas. In debriefing, the professor is a facilitator and encourages all to offer opinions...He [sic] encourages student to see patterns of behavior and proposes associations from the simulation to the real world. The debriefer's role is a two-way street instead of the one-way street of lecturing (p. 177).

The debriefing enables students to learn from the experience by providing insights to their solution (Lederman, 1994, p. 218).

This phase is similar to an oral evaluation, but also involves class participation. The board of trustees or city council provides feedback concerning the speech's resolution of the problem. Other areas for feedback could include, but are not limited to, the speech's structure and order, the proposal's workability, and suggestions for improving the presentation.

The class must act within the situation as the board of directors or the city council, and the instructor must become a facilitator. In this way, the dynamics of the situation are also included in the critique. Such dynamics could be the board of trustees' emotions and motivations or the citizen's outrage over the park's closure. Further, the entire class becomes active participants in the situation. Therefore, they learn how situations affect speech presentations.

The last phase requires reflections, from the play and debriefing, to be recorded in journals. Petranek *et al.* (1992) contend that "participants integrate theories into their experiences ... allowing participants to think about things and write about them helps them interpret events" (p. 181). Students should respond to the evaluation and contemplate their performance, noting areas for improvement as well as positive advancements from the previous assignment. This phase reinforces the debriefing, as students must integrate the comments into their perceptual frameworks.

This assignment has some drawbacks. The biggest difficulty is the preparation time. Instructors must develop simulations for all their students. While the student helps to create the situation, the instructor still provides the finished product. As a result, this assignment may only replace one of the speeches given throughout the term.

Besides preparation time, the debriefing session also requires a considerable amount of class time, as the rest of the class participates in the critique. The teacher must be a skilled facilitator to stimulate class participation and encourage all comments. Through this participation, both the speaker and the remaining class members learn from the activity.

Further, during a simulation, the class members must portray an audience found in the situation. The classroom audience is transformed into one more likely to be encountered by a speaker. The current assignment, on the other hand, requires speakers to pretend to be someone else by delivering a speech they would normally not present. Simulation reverses who mirrors reality by faulting in favor of the speaker. Despite these problems, the use of simulation has two significant benefits: the creation of a clear rhetorical situation, and increasing student motivation.

THE CREATION OF A CLEAR RHETORICAL SITUATION

Bitzer (1968) describes the rhetorical situation as:

> A complex of persons, events, objects, and relations presenting an actual or potential exigence which can be completely or partially removed if discourse, introduced into the situation can so constrain human decision or action to bring about a significant modification of the exigence (p. 6).

The central component of the rhetorical situation is the exigency or "an imperfection marked by urgency" (Bitzer, 1968 6). For Bitzer (1980), two components comprise the exigency: the factual and the interest. The factual component consists of observable objects or events; the interest component consists of the speaker's perceptions (p. 24). Therefore, the rhetor examines the context of the situation in order to determine the speech's expectations and constraints.

As Bitzer demonstrates, the exigency of the situation becomes the basis for the speech. The factual condition of the current assignment (choose a topic which relates to the entire class) may not provide clear "dimensions or conditions" which students can examine for their subject. The context of the speech classroom is that of how to prepare a speech which does not lend itself to a readily available subject for speaking. Therefore, a search occurs outside of the factual condition to locate a topic. As a result, tried and true topics such as drinking and driving are chosen for classroom orations rather than more realistic models of future presentations.

With the use of simulation, students may endure less stress from their topic search. The simulation creates a clear rhetorical situation consisting of an exigence and the necessary factual components. In essence, it suggests the topic; the identification of the exigence is tantamount to discovering the subject of the speech. Students no longer select a subject from the typical list. They choose topics as a speaker would outside of the classroom, by examining a situation. In the previously described environment simulation, the student must create an environmental program that would improve a company's image.

Aside from easing the topic selection process, simulation has educational benefits. A realistic simulation assists students in learning the processes involved in recognizing a controlling exigency. In order to create a "fitting" response, speakers analyze a hypothetical situation, and take into consideration not only the attending audience, but also the subject's historical context, the exigence's clarity, and the factual components. Through this analysis, they develop the speech's subject. The examination encourages students to discover proper methods of topic selection. This topic selection method closely resembles the process employed in a public forum.

SIMULATION AND MOTIVATION

Proponents of cognitive and active learning theories maintain that students attend class "with their own perceptual frameworks intact" (Myers & Jones, 1993, p. 6). Explaining active learning, Fuhrmann and Grasha (1983) claim that, "Teachers must not merely transmit, but must also involve and engage students in the activities of discovery and meaning making" (p. 12). Thus students must actively engage the subject being addressed.

In order to apply course material to their daily lives, speakers need to select realistic topics. However, topics which more closely resemble those subjects would less likely relate to the entire audience. For example, the accounting major who works in a bank might possess a desire to speak about the need for a different accounting system at the bank, a topic which would be more realistic for the student. However, the attending audience is probably not interested in accounting systems. Fearing a poor grade, the speaker chooses a more secular topic which fulfills the requirement of the assignment, but does not exercise the student's perceptual framework. Simulation, however, requires the selection of a topic related to the student's interest.

Simulation has long been viewed as an effective teaching technique. According to Diulus and Baum (1991) :

> A simulation reflects life; a simulation abstracts reality without reproducing it. In an educational simulation reality-based elements are offered in an initial scenario description; at once, players are asked to be engaged in everyday life experiences. . . . Simulation is an active learning experience usually requiring of the participants not only thought but also feelings, choices, communication and movement (p. 35) .

Students become active players in the simulation, learning how actions interact within and affect a situation. Diulus and Baum further explain, "By its very nature, a simulation asks a participant to make-believe, to fantasize, and to apply principles of creative problem-solving" (p. 36). Applying the information revealed to them, students perform within a realistic situation to learn the skills taught by the course.

As students apply material, simulation may increase the motivation to learn the facets of public speaking. Motivation is acknowledged by scholars to be a major contributing factor to the learning process (Weaver & Cottrell, 1988, p. 22). Weaver and Cottrell (1988) contend that motivation "arouse(s) and stimulate(s) students ... gives direction and purpose ... and leads students to choosing or preferring a particular behavior" (p. 22).

Although motivation is very complex and comprised of both internal and external components, the subject's relevancy to the student is an integral part of overall motivation. Relevancy relates to the fulfillment or potential of fulfilling a personal need, motive or value (Keller. p. 407). Frymier and Shulman (1995) explain that relevancy is the "linkage between content and a student's interest and goals" (p. 41). Although difficult to ascertain empirically, as a course's relevancy increases, motivation to study appears to increase (Frymier & Shulman, p. 46). Likewise, Weaver & Cottrell, (1988) posit that "people are more likely to listen and respond if they feel there will be some personal gain from the experience" (p. 28). When students believe that the course material will be relevant, they are more likely to learn.

The use of simulation may increase student motivation. For example, in the situations previously described, the rhetor employs personal experiences and knowledge to create a solution appropriate to the board of trustees or a city council. This student has an opportunity to learn the importance of speech to their possible career. Rather than speaking to earn a grade, they are declaiming in a realistic situation related to their aspirations. This heightens the relevance, as the course material concerns an important career skill. In a review of studies concerning educational games and simulations, Randel, Morris, Wetzel and Whitehill (1992) found that in classes lacking motivation, games and simulations promote active participation (p. 270). The personal involvement encourages students to learn

CONCLUSION

As instructors of public speaking continue to explore methods to more effectively educate, simulation should be considered as a method of teaching the art of public speaking. Simulations have been found to increase retention and understanding of tested material (Specht & Sandlin, 1991, p. 207).

The traditional mode of assessment fails to consider the need of solving an exigence and adapting to a situation. Simulation requires the creation of a situation where the student must learn to identify the exigence in order to speak. The appropriateness of the response becomes an important component of the overall assessment as well as an important skill gained through the activity.

As the population of higher education continues to change, instructors must adapt to the diverse experiences and goals of students. The current speech assignment may encourage an impersonal speech that ignores the disparate student body and the importance of relevancy. Simulation, on the other hand, actively engages personal experiences and interests to teach the skills of public speaking. This utilization demonstrates the importance of the course, increasing the motivation to learn.

Simulation offers much, but it demands much in return. Instructors must take the time to learn about their students and create engaging, relevant and realistic situations. Students must actively partake in the discovery of necessary principles by solving the problem of the situation. However, simulation, as an alternative speech assignment, can instruct students to recognize the importance of a situation and motivate them to learn the art of public speaking.

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Computer-Mediated Learning Environments Theory and Research into Practice

Chris R. Kasch

In their seminal book in entitled *The Network Nation: Human Communication Via Computer* (1978), Hiltz and Turoff accurately predicted that by the mid-1990s computer-mediated communication (CMC) would emerge as a medium capable of transforming individual and social behavior. Without question computer-mediated learning is beginning to emerge as an alternative teaching architecture (Berge & Collins, 1995; Coombs, 1993; D'Souza, 1992; Hiltz, 1994; Kuehn, 1994; McComb, 1994; Metz, 1993; Philips & Santoro, 1989). Harnessing the resources of this medium and enhancing our own level of computer literacy depends, in part, on understanding insights from current theory and research and their implications for guiding computer-mediated instruction. The purposes of this article are to: (1) review theory and research illuminating the potential benefits and costs of computer-mediated instruction; (2) suggest some starting points for implementing computer-mediated instruction; and 3) identify factors which are likely to influence the effectiveness of teaching in computer-mediated environments. Currently, the use of CMC in instructional contexts takes four primary forms: the use of electronic messaging (E-mail), infomatics, asynchronous conferencing, and synchronous conferencing. The integration of these forms results in the possibility of creating the "virtual classroom" (Hiltz, 1994).

COMMUNICATION TOOLS FOR THE VIRTUAL CLASSROOM

Electronic Messaging

Electronic messaging (E-mail) is perhaps the most accessible and utilized form of computer-mediated communication. Research suggests that electronic messaging is being utilized as an instructional tool for: (1) transmitting course resources (e.g., syllabi, bibliographies); (2) the submission and evaluation of students' written work; (3) for course management (e.g., reporting absences, clarification of assignments; 4) structuring interaction and cooperation among students working on small group projects; and (5) facilitating distance-learning enabling students to gain cross-cultural knowledge and experience (Bailey & Cotlar, 1994; McComb, 1994; Philips & Santoro, 1994).

Informatics

Informatics refers to access to remote learning resources such as on-line course lectures, Internet resources, simulations, and data-bases. The primary vehicle for increasing access to information and delivering resources to learners efficiently is establishing a presence on the World Wide Web. The development of a basic course web page is perhaps the first step in the process of implementing computer-mediated instruction. A basic course web page creates and might include representative models of required course assignments, a list of frequently asked questions, and deeper insights into the process of message construction which extends beyond the space limitations of our basic textbooks. Although creating a presence on the web is a time-intensive process, there are a number of excellent points of departure for utilizing the web as an instructional resource (Delivering Instruction on the World Wide Web) and web pages for particular course (Plawson & Sypher, 1996; *Rhetorical Resources,* 1996).

Asynchronous and Synchronous Conferencing

Asynchronous conferencing provides access to shared files and creates the possibility for students to write, read, and respond to common information (Archee, 1993; Bump, 1990; Kuehn, 1993). Although asynchronous conferencing has a range of instructional applications (Berge & Collins, 1995), the most accessible for instructors may be collaborative tools such as Hypernews which is discussed below. Synchronous conferencing occurs when users log-on to their computers simultaneously and send and receive messages in "real time" (e.g. IRC (Internet Relay Chat), GDSS (Group Decision Support Systems) (Jessup & Valacich, 1993; McGrath & Hollingshead, 1994).

WHY COMPUTER-MEDIATED COMMUNICATION?

There are a number of reasons to begin harnessing the resources of computer-mediated communication in our basic course.

At the program level, utilizing computer-mediated instruction may assist in the process of developing students level of information literacy and increase coordination and integration. At the classroom level, implementing computer-mediated instruction may enhance instructional effectiveness by creating increased opportunities for collaboration, fostering engagement, and enhancing the chances of skill development.

Information Literacy

Shapiro and Hughes (1996) suggest that information literacy involves acquiring knowledge and skill in a number of different domains including: (1) resource literacy — ability access network information resources; (2) tool literacy — the ability to understand the use of computer applications that are relevant to the areas of work and professional life a student expects to inhabit; 3) publishing literacy — the ability to publish research and ideas electronically, including use of the various forms of computer-mediated communication; and 4) critical literacy — the ability to evaluate critically the potential strengths and limitations of information technologies. Because the basic course is the first course in communication, often both for majors and non-majors, it furnishes an appropriate vehicle for beginning to enhance students level of information literacy.

Coordination

A continuous challenge in the supervision of the multi-section basic course is balancing the competing goals of instructor autonomy and achieving consistent instruction and coordination across sections. CMC can be most usefully viewed as a coordination tool which enables people to find diverse ways to coordinate their work. The creation of course web pages and the construction of asynchronous learning environments may have considerable potential for helping to furnish students with increased opportunities for collaboration with other students, and create the possibility for a more integrated and consistent program of instruction (see Sloan Center for Asynchronous Learning).

Instructional Effectiveness

Although we are still in the "horseless carriage stage" in terms of understanding the relationship between computer-mediation and learning, there is emerging research suggesting that computer-mediation may increase studentteacher contact, enhance the quality of the teacher-student relationship, foster engagement, and enhance the chances of student skill development.

CMC as a tool for increasing student-teacher contact. There is considerable case study research suggesting that CMC liberates the student from the constraints of time and distance and in doing so increases access and contact with the instructor. For example, Hartman, et. al. (1995) compared interaction in writing classes that had access to networked communication tools with interaction in classes using traditional modes of communication. They found the use of CMC to support collaborative learning and writing did not replace traditional forms of communication with teachers, but increased the total amount of teacher-student communication about writing. Ory, Bullock, and Burnaska (1995), in a post-course survey of 1,118 students enrolled in 19 different courses utilizing asynchronous learning, found that 41% of the students reported an increase in communication with the instructor and 43% reported an in the quality of their interaction with instructors. It appears that CMC can furnish convenient access to teaching-learning resources, and for a certain percentage of students may increase teacher-student contact. Hiltz (1994) argues that increased teacher-student contact is the single most important factor in creating a collaborative teaching and learning environment.

CMC as a tool for relationship management. CMC may create a instructional context which facilitates increased affiliation, affinity, mutual sharing of power and control, and reduced social distance. It has been suggested that computer-conferencing in organizations may create greater equality of participation, less dominance, and greater status equality in comparison to face-to-face group discussions (Jessup & Valacich, 1993; McGrath & Hollingshead, 1994). The creation of more egalitarian spaces for communication may increase motivation to communicate, stimulate desire for affiliation, and enhance the quality of the teacher-student relationship (Dubrovsky, Kielser, & Sethna, 1991; Metz, 1993). Frymier (1994) found that the affinity-seeking strategies most predictive of liking in the classroom were: (a) assume equality (teacher presents self as equal and does not appear superior); (b) facilitate enjoyment (develop a learning environment which is enjoyable and interesting); (c) elicit other's disclosure (teacher inquires about student's interests and opinions); and (d) provides positive reinforcement. In a qualitative case study of the uses and functions of electronic mail in teaching the basic course, Kasch (1995) argues that computer-mediation may increase the opportunity for instructors to construct messages which offer and elicit increased levels of self-disclosure and enhance student self-esteem in ways that may not always be possible in the conventional classroom. The time pressure to transmit both knowledge and develop skill in our basic courses and the increasing class size often restrict the time instructors can devote to encounters where the primary interactional goal is relationship development and self-esteem enhancement. The development of a positive student-teacher relationship increases the likelihood of cognitive and affective learning (Richmond, 1990).

CMC as a tool for fostering engagement. Sprague (1993) argues that teaching works best when students are fully engaged in the class, engaged with each other, and deeply engaged in the subject matter. It may be that the creation of a computer-mediated learning environment fosters engagement by: (1) enhancing learner's level of active involvement; (2) increasing the level of participation by freeing the student from the constraints on communication present in face-to-face encounters in the classroom; and (3) fostering collaboration between students. Research suggests that the creation of computer-mediated learning environments can facilitate discussion and active involvement of students in the subject (Hiltz, 1986; Hiltz, 1990; McComb, 1994). Time is always a precious resource in introductory communication courses which have both a knowledge and a skill component. The time necessary for skill development, individualized instruction, or in-depth discussion (particularly in the hybrid course) is necessarily limited.

Asynchronous conferencing may enable an instructor to simulate and extend classroom discussion of concepts, focus more attention on the process of skill development, and create simulations which enable students to apply concepts and principles. For example, Hypernews is a web-based collaboration fosters asynchronous discussion. Hypernews is designed for users to post messages to a computer-mediated bulletin board on issues and themes relevant to the course. These messages then furnish the basis for creating discussion "threads" which can subsequently be extended and elaborated on by other users. These messages can be edited, categorized, and tracked by the instructors who function as the moderators of the list. Hiltz (1994) argues that computer-mediated learning environments are well suited to fostering collaboration by facilitating group work in which the entire class works together to master the subject matter and teach it to one another.

Enhance equality of participation. Various factors may lead to classroom discussions which favor certain learners over others. Teacher-led discussions often limit students' participation, focus student attention on the teacher's agenda, and thus, do not promote active involvement or question-asking (Daly, Kreiser, & Rogharr, 1994;

Smagorinsky & Fry, 1993). Unless teachers are maximally competent discussion leaders and are adept at involving shy, reticent, or unmotivated students, discussion can often be dominated by the most vocal members. The creation of computer-mediated learning environments may facilitate interaction involvement and heighten participation (D'Souza, 1992; Dubrovsky, Kiesler, & Sethna, 1991; McComb, 1993; Phillips & Santoro, 1989).

Enhanced chances for skill development. With the emergence of a new medium of communication, it is important to ask how the use of CMC can contribute to a course whose primary aim is to enhance skill in oral communication? It is possible that the increased collaboration between teachers and students afforded by computer-mediated contact may be particularly useful in enhancing skill in message construction. The important influence of new technology may not be that it allows us to disseminate information more efficiently, but rather that it allows students and teachers to collaborate more closely in the process of message construction. Consider the text from a teacher-student exchange via electronic mail aimed at enhancing the learner's ability to organize and structure messages:

STUDENT E-MAIL AND INSTRUCTORS RESPONSE

Dear Chris; I hope you have had a good Tuesday so far. This is my preliminary outline of my first main point.

General Purpose: When I am done speaking I want my audience to know the signs of low self-esteem and how one can use communication to enhance or improve another person's self-esteem.

I. What are the signs of low self esteem?

I would like to begin by showing pictures of three different people and giving a short description of them.

1. Jamie — a female, hunched over, glasses, no friends
2. Holly — cheerleader, boyfriend, Homecoming Court
3. Scott — wants to be a dentist. smart, popular, football

I will ask the audience to vote for the ones that have a low self-esteem.

I will try to dramatize that one's self-esteem is independent of surface level feature.

INSTRUCTOR RESPONSE
Tell me what you going to say, not what your going to do. How is the audience supposed to infer a person's self-esteem only by looking at their picture? What idea or concept are the photos going to be used to develop or dramatize? Might have the audience what their impressions are and use this as a bridge to the signs of low self-esteem. Might move this "chunk" back to your introduction.

A. Physical Signs
   1. Posture — Have everyone stand up and check own poster — one person walk across room
   2. Dress — Statistic — women who wear make-up higher esteem
   3. Eye Contact Audience Partner — stare game

INSTRUCTOR RESPONSE
Can you make your answers a tad more concrete? For example, what kind of posture, what kind of dress what kind of eye contact? Is staring a sign of high or low self esteem? Message construction is a process of asking and answering questions. Try to provide as concrete as answers as possible to the questions you pose i.e. what are the physical signs of low self-esteem?

B. Social Signs — take it to streets — Holly story
   1. Leader or Follower? Do you stand for your own beliefs?
      A. leader/followers
      B. personality in group setting

INSTRUCTOR RESPONSE
Can you make you answers a tad more concrete at the subpoint level? For example, what social behaviors are typical of low self-esteem? I see what you are getting at, but do you see that, when you ask What are the social behaviors which typify low self-esteem and you answer leader/follower, this is not really as concrete as answer as it needs to be to build message structure...what concretely are you trying to say?

   2 Personality in Group Settings- try to be someone you are not? Ask how many went out drinking on weekend to try to enhance or create a different personality
   3. What social activities make a person happy?

C. Emotional Signs
   Tell story about Scott
   Quote: *"Happiness is inward and not outward, and therefore does not depend on what we have, but on who we are,"* — Henry Vandyke
   1. Lack of Confidence — how much critical attention you give yourself
   2. Lack of Happiness (Depression) — feel like sleeping a lot, withdraw from social settings,
   3. Lack of Energy — I know this is a stretch — I'll

INSTRUCTOR RESPONSE
OK you pose the questions what are the emotional signs of low self-esteem or what emotional states may be typical of a person with low self esteem?

A. lack of confidence and critical attention to yourself are not really the same thing, what are you trying to say?
B. depression (good concrete answer here) Some theories of depressions suggest that low self-esteem can be a contributing factor....might take a look at a couple of outlines on the course web site for additional insights.

Can you connect this "stuff " a little closer to a college aged audience? Have you ever been depressed? What caused college students to be down or depressed? How does one feel about oneself when on is depressed?

This structure looks potentially workable, but also consider that low self-esteem may be manifested and hence spotted by looking for changes or signs in their communication behavior e.g. less talk/social withdrawal, negative self-talk. When your building message structure try to keep the question and answer structure tight. For example, when you use a general organizing scheme like physical, social and emotional than, for example:

What are the signs of low self-esteem?
A.
B. Social
What are the social-behavioral consequences when one's self-esteem is damaged or under assault?
1) social withdrawal
2) negative self talk

That's all for now. Your suggestions are always helpful, thank you for taking the time to really read and respond — I appreciate it. Have a nice night. See you on Thursday! *Laura E.*

Although it might be argued that our task in the basic course is to teach speaking not writing, composition is a large part of oral proficiency, indeed three of the canons of rhetoric are focused on compositional issues. It may be that electronic messaging can facilitate message construction skill, particularly the ability to organize messages and understand the interrelationship between ideas. Having collected over 3,000 E-mail to and from students, it has been my experience that the use of electronic messaging to evaluate student work increases the volume of instructor feedback, the immediacy of feedback, and the level of collaboration.

POTENTIAL CONSTRAINTS ON COMPUTER-MEDIATED LEARNING

Just as individuals who have positive experiences with computer-based technical innovation in organizations often function as "cheerleaders" (Schmitz & Fulk, 1991), perhaps it is not surprising the discussion of CMC in instructional contexts has been rather optimistic. It is suggested that CMC can create a learning environment which: (a) makes possible a "round-the-clock learning community" (Hiltz, 1994); (b) creates a "community of scholars among students" (Selfe & Eilola, 1988); (c) liberates the disenfranchised less able students in a class by increasing the level of teacher and peer attention thus, enabling them to become more active participants (Hartman, Neuwirth, & Kiesler et. al. 1995; and (d) will even likely result in higher ratings in selected areas of one's teaching evaluations (Ellsworth, 1995). Listening only to voices of expectation and anticipation may be unwise if we are to enhance our own level of "critical literacy'" regarding computer-mediated learning (Hawisher & Selfe, 1991).

Loss of Social Presence/Immediacy

CMC may create learning environments which lack social presence and immediacy. Social presence refers to the extent to which communication exchanges are sociable, warm, personal, sensitive, and active (Short, Williams, & Christie, 1976). Concern is often expressed about the de-personalizing effects of CMC due to the lack of social context and nonverbal communication (Sproull & Riesler, 1991). Immediacy has been defined as the degree of perceived physical or psychological closeness between people (Mehrabian, 1967). CMC may lack the richness of face-to-face communication and create psychological distance, hence it might be expected that some students may resist computer-mediated instruction, perceiving it to be impersonal and lacking immediacy. Research suggests that immediacy, motivation, and learning are interrelated (Christophel, 1990; Christophel & Gorham, 1995). Should we move toward the creation of learning environments in which factors thought to be connected to motivation and learning might be less likely to operate?

Computer-Mediated Learning Environments as Comfort Zones?

It is often argued that the creation of computer-mediated learning environments can increase interaction involvement by liberating students from the fear or inhibition of talking to instructors or participating in class (D'Souza, 1992; McComb, 1993; Philips & Santoro, 1989). For example, in a qualitative study of students' impression of computer-mediated instruction, Kasch (1995) found that a number of students believed that the context created by CMC created a comfort zone for discussion (e g. "when one uses electronic messaging there is less fear of being evaluated by other students in the class"; "I think it is easier to talk to an instructor over e-mail because it takes away the fear or anxiety I may have when talking directly to him or her."). It may be that for many students "interpersonal transactions via computer-mediated channels cost less" (Ellsworth, 1995). The creation of computer-mediated learning environments may create more egalitarian communication environments which liberate muted voices. However, if our primary mission in the basic course is to enhance skill in face-to-face communication, is the creation of computer-mediated "comfort zones" likely to lead toward or away from this goal?

Constraints on Participation

Although computer-mediated instruction has the potential to support an active learning process beyond the walls of the classroom (Berge & Collins 1995; Nalley, 1995), there may be factors peculiar to computer-mediated learning environments which may constrain involvement and participation. In computer-mediated environments the loss of social context cues may make the politeness norms governing talk less visible, leading to violation of appropriateness rules and "flaming" (Spears & Lea, 1992). For example, Berge and Collins (1995) have suggested that in computer-mediated environments, the non-reticent personality may be encouraged to become overly zealous in their responses, or to become publicly inflammatory and aggressive on a personal level in ways that generally do not occur in other media. Interjecting messages in asynchronous conferences may also involve risk for some students and create apprehension. Participating in electronic conferences fosters a need for response, and for one's contribution to the discussion to be ignored is to be rejected (Feenberg, 1987). It is certainly possible that "flaming" and fear of rejection may be potential threats to self-esteem which may decrease participation in computer-mediated environments.

Marginalization

It may be that computer-mediated learning environments create a more egalitarian space for instructional communication. For example, Hartman, *et al* (1995) have suggested that because less able students are often the most disenfranchised members of the classroom, a technology which redistributes teacher and student attention so that less able students can become more active participants may have a significant impact on learning outcomes. However, Hiltz (1994) suggests that the "virtual classroom" is a self-activated mode of learning in which the minimum level of motivation and academic skill required to be a successful student is higher than the minimum level needed to get by in a traditional classroom. Should we create computer-mediated learning environments in order to motivate the uninvolved and less able student by employing a technology which may require a higher level of motivation and academic ability to begin with?

STRATEGIES FOR IMPLEMENTING COMPUTER-MEDIATED INSTRUCTION

Current research suggests that the degree to which the promises of computer-mediated learning are realized is contingent on the interaction of a number of variables and processes (e g., technology, nature of the course, access, and student characteristics) (Hiltz, 1994).

TECHNOLOGY

Access

Access is always an issue which needs to be considered in conceptualizing the goals of a course utilizing computer-mediated instruction. For example, Hiltz (1994) reports that 13% of students enrolled in an asynchronous learning network indicated that access to a personal computer is a serious problem, and 40-50% experience serious problems with access to the university modem pool. Wide variation in the degree to which students have access to technology may significantly privilege certain learners over others and constrain computer-mediated instruction.

Utilizing Tools Designed to Foster Collaboration

Research generally suggests that the perceived effectiveness of computer-mediated instruction depends on the instructors ability to harness the resources of the medium in ways which create shared spaces for communication. The use of electronic mail is a necessary but probably not sufficient condition for fostering the goals of collaborative learning (Shedletsky, 1993a, 1993b). The promise of computer-mediated instruction is less likely to be realized unless technology which is explicitly designed to foster engagement and collaboration is adopted. Useful starting points for beginning the process of constructing computer-mediated environments are *The Virtual Classroom* (Hiltz, 1994) and *Learning Networks* (Harasim, Hiltz, Teles, & Turoff 1995); and on the Internet (Ball, 1996; Schank, 1996; the Sloan Center for Asynchronous Learning; and the Basic Course Home Page).

NATURE OF COURSE AND COURSE MANAGEMENT

Anticipatory Learning

Students involved in asynchronous learning environments often express a desire for more or better training (Ory, Bullock, & Burnaska, 1995). Research in organizational contexts suggests that the two factors which influence the use and perceived usefulness of CMC systems are experience with computer-mediated communication and social influence (influence of peers and supervisors) (Hunter & Allen, 1992; Schmitz & Fulk, 1991). Given that students will have different levels of experience, classroom time normally needs to be allocated to enhance learner's level of "tool literacy."

We Can Build It, But Will They Come?

Technologies are not easy to impose on people, and students may resist learning in computer-mediated learning environments. Resistance is likely to increase if instructors are not perceived to be highly enthusiastic about the instructional innovation and if the innovation is not deeply integrated into the course (Ory, Bullock, & Bunaska, 1995). It is important to weave CMC deeply into the fabric of the course (Bailey & Cotlar, 1994; Norton, 1992). For example, Shedletshy (1993a) found that, without structure, the use of electronic mail to create a shared discourse space results in talk which is primarily social rather than intellectual and collaborative. Hiltz (1994) agrees that learning outcomes in the "virtual classroom" will depend on willingness of teachers and students to take advantage of its potential to support an active learning process that incorporates extensive interaction among students and between instructor and students). In organizational contexts, the adoption of computer-mediated communication has been found to be a function of the degree to which high status people utilized the medium, evaluation feedback (e.g., rewarding electronic contributions) and establishing routines and expectations so that computer-mediated interaction becomes normative behavior (Sproull & Kiesler, 1991). Unless courses are structured in ways which encourage students to harness the resources of the medium, the potential benefits of computer-mediated instruction are less likely to be realized.

Instructor attitude and ability are also likely to be important in realizing the potential benefits of computer-mediated instruction. For example, given the loss of social presence when interacting in most computer-mediated environments, instructors may want to think about ways in which to maximize verbal immediacy in their computer-mediated interactions with students (e.g., managing topical intimacy, employing less formal forms of address, increasing use of first person plural, and so forth) to substitute or even overcompensate for the loss of the nonverbal context (Walther, 1992; 1996).

The most important effect of technology may not be to let people do old things more efficiently but to allow people to do things that were not even feasible or possible with the old technology (Sproull & Kielser, 1991). For example, Riel (1993) suggests computer networking can be used creatively as a tool for global education designed to promote multi-cultural sensitivity through the creation of learning circles. However, the "medium is not necessarily the message", and realizing the promise of computer-mediated instruction will ultimately depend on the creativity of the teacher and the context for learning created by the interaction between teacher and student.

Will the creation of computer-mediated learning environments liberate the voices of students who would otherwise be silent, break down the walls of the classroom and promote "round-the-clock" learning, and give students responsibility for the management of learning? It is not yet clear the degree to which these promises will or can be realized through computer-mediated instruction. What is clear is that information technology will furnish modes of accessing and manipulating knowledge which are radically different from those offered by the traditional curriculum. Teaching effectiveness in the basic course is likely to depend increasingly on understanding the nature, function, benefits and potential costs of computer-mediated communication.

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Two Heads Are Better Than One? Setting Realizable Goals in the Basic Course

Glen Williams

Conventional wisdom holds that two heads are better than one for analysis and decision making. Additionally, we likely have encountered the sage's observation: "If you don't know where you're going, how will you know when you get there?" Advice and counsel abundantly exist for how to pursue our affairs. When it comes to applying these instructions, though, we sometimes falter.

This article explores the context of the basic course, examining the usefulness of establishing goals and how to proceed so that they are more likely to be realized. It probes beyond the musings of philosophers to the studies of social scientists and the recorded experiences of directors and staff of the basic course. What emerges are some specific insights for overseeing the basic course. What is discovered, in short, is that directors of the basic course not only can benefit from establishing goals but also can profit from involving staff ill identifying goals and in sensing how goals complement principles and larger objectives.

This article first discusses the desirability of identifying goals and clarifies common terms and concepts associated with establishing goals and the greater process of defining objectives. Next, it examines the benefits of involving staff, explores ways to inaugurate involvement, and contemplates central elements the group likely will need to address while establishing goals and defining objectives. The final section notes the conditions necessary for the collaborative identification of goals and objectives.

DEFINING OBJECTIVES: AN ASSESSMENT OF THE LITERATURE

Much has been written about establishing goals, and authors on the subject agree that identifying goals is central to success. Studies indicate that, among other things, goals allow the individual and the group to know what needs to be done; they lessen frustration. empower people to act expeditiously, motivate performance, and they foster commitment, loyalty, and morale (Larson & LaPasto, 1989; Mills, 1995; Morrisey, 1988; Simpson & McConocha, 1991). In addition, goals allow a group to determine progress and achievement (Matejka, Kurke & Gregory, 1993). And if the goals are published (on a syllabus, for example), they can acquaint external audiences with the group's endeavors and might then foster appreciation and support (see Morrisey, 1988).

Although unanimity exists as to the value of establishing goals, little agreement exists regarding the process involved or how goals relate to vision and mission. Authors have randomly defined goal, vision, and mission, and often use the terms interchangeably (Larson & LaFasto, 1989, p. 121; Morrisey, 1988, p. 50). To consider goal, mission, and vision as synonymous is to obfuscate their specific functions and their overall relationship. A more productive view is to recognize them as counterparts within the process of defining objectives. *Goals* are most specific and are particular ends to be accomplished. *Vision* is most abstract and is what a group envisions itself to be and to be doing, and what it aspires to become and to do (see Williams, in press). *Mission* is a sense of purpose that reflects both the vision and the goals, and it is philosophical — often formalized into a *mission statement.* A mission statement helps attune a group to a vision as well as to a set of *principles*, and it helps the group identify specific goals.

In terms of defining objectives, vision embodies a "dream of greatness" (Matejka, Kurke, & Gregory, 1993, p. 34), but as Nanus (1992) observes, "It is a special kind of dream built upon information and knowledge" (p. 34). Given its viability, then, the vision also instills the self-confidence and motivation necessary for pursuing the overall objective residing in the "dream." Goals are specific objectives that must be identified and accomplished so to advance toward fulfillment of the vision and to keep it alive. Mission is a sense of responsibility to the overall objective as well as an accountability to achieve the specific objectives along the way. Even so, though, mission is not perceived as a burden but is undertaken willingly and enthusiastically (see Nanus, p. 135; Larson & LaFasto, 1989, p. 121) — so much so, in fact, that it may attract others to the enterprise. As Hoffer (1951) observed, people may "find elements of pride, confidence, and purpose by identifying themselves with the efforts, achievements and prospects" (p. 20) of a group.

As to which is constructed first — vision, mission, or goals — no one can rightfully say. Authors (Conger, 1989; Madsen & Mermer, 1993; Matejka, Kurke & Gregory, 1993; Nanus, 1992) often describe the process as a linear one which begins with a vision or a set of principles, from which a mission is derived which, in turn, allows specific goals to be discerned and specified, and which, finally, allows *strategies* (i.e., specific ways and means calculated to achieve goals) to be devised. As with any act of composition, though, the process is not linear but is recursive; there is constant movement to and fro between each of the elements as they are juxtaposed and checked for their "fit" and alignment, and reflection upon any one area may assist invention with another (Weyer, 1994, p. 68). Just as a writer uses a thesis statement, main points and data recursively, so will individuals and a group contemplate, incubate, exchange and evaluate information and ideas pertaining to mission, principles, goals, strategies, and overall vision. Once in motion, the process never ceases and occurs intrapersonally, interpersonally, and as a group.

Within this process leaders may "occupy a first-author type status" (Williams, in press). Ultimately, though, objectives are authored by multiple voices and any member of the group can contribute an idea that will "catch on" (Bormann, 1972, p. 398). To encourage contributions, "any formally designated leader should employ a participative style of leadership" (Williams, in press). By suscitating involvement, the leader can derive the benefits from teamwork, an area to which this paper now turns.

THE BENEFITS OF INVOLVING STAFF

Defining objectives collaboratively is linked to a number of positive outcomes. Not only does the process intensify the benefits associated with having goals, principles, mission, and a vision (Coblentz, Gerber & Pribble, 1987, p. 12), but it produces additional benefits (see Chemers, 1993) for the individual, the group, and the enterprise. Actively involving the staff facilitates better understanding of an objective, the reasoning behind it, and its importance (Hersey & Stinson, 1980). This clarity, in turn, enables performance and satisfaction; if people know what is expected and why they are able to perform expeditiously and confidently, knowing that they are contributing and likely will be recognized for their contributions (see Nanus, 1992). But people do not merely want clear directives, they want to help decide and determine objectives. Such participation helps satisfy the needs for "freedom of communication and self-concept affirmation"

(Infante & Gorden, 1991, p. 301; Barge, 1994, p. 40). These individuals feel valued and important, and they view the workplace as a place where they can grow and expand their capabilities (Jaffe, Scott & Orioli, 1986).

Supervisors and staff in the basic course report similar outcomes as well as additional benefits for the staff member. Buerkel-Rothfuss, Fink, and Amaro (1994) support findings that collaborative defining of objectives can provide the clarity necessary for performance, and Madsen and Mermer (1993) reaffirm that morale increases if instructors are involved in "significant decision making" (p. 106). Dixson (in press) adds the observation that arrivedat goals constitute "boundaries" which allow supervisors to empower staff to "use their own strengths and teaching style to create a classroom conducive to learning." Empowerment, in turn, Dixson maintains, helps the staff to feel important and respected. Additionally, as Williams (1995) observes, involvement and empowerment help to nurture competence, confidence, and the ongoing development of instructors.

In addition to personal benefits, identifying objectives collaboratively can foster healthy relations and collegiality. Collaboration "promotes team building" (Coblenz, Gerber & Pribble, 1987); workers who are free to state their ideas, concerns, and opinions become more involved in the enterprise and with one another (Miller & Monge, 1986). Simpson and McConocha (1991) explain that defining object we can "bring about improved relations" because each objective that the group considers becomes a 'common bond for communication and negotiation! (p. 11), also Zarefsky, 1989, p. 22). Furthermore, a sense of team and team spirit often intensifies once objectives are defined and understood as interrelated and worthwhile. Larson and LaFasto (1989) observe, objectives can engender 'intense emotional bonding and identification" (p. 77). In addition to improved relations with peers these people enjoy a significantly better relationship with their supervisors" (Wayne, Liden, & Sparrowe, 1994, p. 697). And the exchanges between leaders and subordinates — inherent to collaboration — are positively related to a number of outcomes, including performance ratings, job satisfaction, retention, promotions and perceptions of organizational climate" (p. 698).

Literature pertaining to the basic course provides further evidence for these findings. In the context of the basic course, Buerkel-Rothfuss, Fink, and Amaro (1994) find that collaborative defining of objectives can assist socialization, a factor which they identify as integral to the success and well-being of instructors, particularly inexperienced staff. Dixson (in press) likewise observes that involving staff in determining objectives instills a sense of belongingness and builds community, an observation Williams (1995) also makes.

Collaboration also promotes excellence. For one, the identification of objectives (as with any type of group activity or decision making) is improved. Barge (1994) summarizes the repeated findings that "decisions that . . . have many possible solutions require increased participation in the decision-making process. Multiple perspectives are generated about a problem, ideas and viewpoints are challenged by others, and increased scrutiny of proposed solutions occurs" (p. 40). In addition, discussion can kindle imagination and innovation (Larson & LaFasto, 1989, p. 31) and, as a result "more creative and meaningful goals are set and achieved" (Coblenz, Gerber, & Pribble, 1987, p. 12). Furthermore, participants often are more committed to the undertaking (Miller & Monge, 1986).

A meaningful goal/objective improves performance by the team and its members. If an objective is "clear, worthwhile, and challenging, team members will probably do a better job of energizing and commanding themselves and fellow team members than will sources above or outside the team" (Larson & LaFasto, 1989, p. 139). In addition, such an objective "can enhance individual performance" because it may "require more of individuals than they would probably require of themselves" (p. 97).

Collaboration produces other benefits as well. Participants model how to participate, and the leader models leadership that facilitates participation and healthy exchange. Plus, the people see that their input is expected and appreciated and it receives just consideration and perhaps integration. They come to know that they, as much as the leader, are the architects of a new, improved enterprise. Furthermore, because of collaboration, people "gain a better understanding of each other's roles and contributions" (Coblenz, Gerber & Pribble, 1987, p. 12) which, in turn, can lead to a greater appreciation of other team members and the leader, as well as a transcendent optimism.

Clearly, the benefits of collaboration are many. Perhaps Larson & LaFasto (1989) summed up these benefits best: "When people believe in each other, when they believe that each team member will bring superior skills to a task or responsibility, that disagreements or opposing views will be worked out reasonably, that each member's view will be treated seriously and with respect, that all team members will give their best effort at all times, and that everyone will have the team's overall best interest at heart, then excellence can become a sustainable reality" (p. 71).

Types of Involvement

Collaboration, as described above, seems to equate involvement and participation with discussion. If communication is understood as *transactional,* though, it broadens the conception of involvement (see Barnlund, 1970). Even when one person (leader or otherwise) presents a message, those receiving the message participate in creating its meaning. Hence, involvement occurs not only when one is producing a message but also when she or he is receiving and reflecting upon a message. Perhaps, though, the degree to which others participate as listeners is related to how much they are encouraged to be involved — another potential benefit of collaboration.

Leaders who collaborate with their staff can still be highly influential in deciding objectives. In fact, objectives that they propose can be *as* effective and motivational as any devised in a more cooperative fashion (Barge, p. 156). The degree to which the group perceives that the leader has articulated "something significant, something that will last, and something that renders the expenditure of time and energy worthwhile" (Larson & LaFasto, 1989, p. 140) will determine the success of what is advanced. To be compelling, the message should resonate with the members "own deepest feelings about what is right and worth doing" (Nanus. 1992, p. 135). Similarly. when a member contributes, the leader who paraphrases the idea accurately and in a manner that displays appreciation for the contribution can assist understanding and promote serious consideration by the group.

The leader will want to encourage every staff member to participate in discussions. Obviously, even the most careful and perspicacious leader cannot think of everything. The leader needs to tap the experiences and creativity of others, and to encourage active reflection and contribution and to attend carefully to their ideas, perceptions, and feelings. Hugenberg (1993) acknowledges this reality, observing that the "skilled" director of the basic course understands the importance of involving instructors and thereby drawing upon their "skills and knowledge" (p. 172). For a group to excel, ideas must come from within as well as from above. In this view, leadership that is "enlightened" is that in which "bottom-up input is solicited" (Simpson & McConocha, 1991, p. 9). And each participant must be encouraged to take a lead role from time to time, emulating the leadership of the leader (see Larson & LaFasto, 1989, p. 128).

GETTING DOWN TO BUSINESS: THE CONTEXT OF THE BASIC COURSE

In order to establish a comprehensive and clear set of goals for the classroom, the staff of the basic course can benefit from engaging the entire process of defining objectives — devising a vision and a sense of mission as well as principles and goals with an understanding of how each are interrelated and can inform and check the others. As noted above, the process of establishing goals is akin to the writing process; it is recursive, i.e., continually evolving through modification and adaptation. In addition, like any act of public discourse, goals, mission, and vision are cooperatively "written," the degree to which depends on the level of involvement by each member of the staff as they reflect individually and as they collectively pool their insights, review information, and discuss ideas.

The group will need to attend to each of the counterparts that, together, constitute objectives. To begin the process the course supervisor might take what could be termed a *formative approach* and draft tentative goals, a mission statement, a set of principles, and an overall sense of vision for the group to critique and consider. Or, the director may wish to pursue what could be called a *facilitative approach*, perhaps having each participant author his or her own statement of goals, principles, mission, and vision which they will bring to the group for comparison and consideration. Or, the director could facilitate proceedings by having participants respond to a series of questions related to principles and objectives. It may prove most fruitful for the course supervisor to combine these two approaches. The supervisor might also vary the approach from occasion to occasion.

A Formative Approach for Defining Objectives

In a formative approach the supervisor (mindful of the parameters of the curriculum) presents her or his own ideas of what constitutes the group's goals, mission, vision, and set of principles. The group critiques what the director presents as to whether it is comprehensive, precise, and complementary among its parts. This approach can get the process quickly underway, particularly if what is presented is well-contemplated and well-structured and if it resonates with the group. A director, for example, might present the following for consideration for a basic course in public speaking.

Vision: To develop and grow a basic course that enriches the lives/education of students and instructors alike and that achieves widespread appreciation and renown.

Mission: To work together with the commitment to provide a high quality educational experience for undergraduates that helps to nurture the communication competence that is vital to their academic, professional, and relational success and to instill a sense of civic responsibility and moral accountability that is vital to the well-being of society while simultaneously nurturing the professional and scholarly growth of instructors.

Principles

1. To meet our moral and ethical accountability to our students, department, institution, and supporters.
2. To inform our instructional efforts with scholarly rigor.
3. To be animated by team spirit — characterized by common goals, mutual respect, and ready assistance.
4. To be characterized by success and professionalism.

5. To merit recognition as one of the top programs at our institution and in our field.
6. To be ever watchful for what we can do better and to be proactive and progressive.
7. To operate with a set of standards that promotes excellence.
8. To operate with a set of principles that unleashes our talents and creativity.
9. To operate efficiently but never at the expense of quality.

Goals: To enable students to:

1. understand the principles of verbal and nonverbal communication
2. apply these principles through the preparation and presentation of speeches
3. apply these principles critically to evaluate the communication of others and of self
4. acquire the technological expertise and artistic know-how to utilize the latest presentational technologies effectively (e.g., computer assistance)
5. cultivate the power to think: to reason, to investigate, to test new ideas, to evolve new concepts, to make decisions on the basis of pertinent data, to distinguish fact from opinion, to analyze persuasion, to form sound judgments, to solve problems, to organize and compose ideas effectively
6. develop as an *articulate* human being who is aware of her or his accountability for any ideas expressed
7. gain an appreciation for American public address and its role in our socio-political world

8. gain an appreciation of writing and visual design as thinking

Since objectives likely transcend programs, the director and staff might assist their invention by viewing others' goals, mission statements, and other expressed objectives. The group would simply need to make into their own any of these that they find appealing, something that can be accomplished via analysis and discussion.

A Facilitative Approach for Defining Objectives

Morrisey (1988) provides suggestions for a facilitative approach. He suggests that the leader construct a worksheet "designed to get team members to look at the big picture" (p. 50) which each individual will complete and bring to an "off-site" meeting." The worksheet will facilitate discussion at the meeting, and the leader should post everyone's answers to every item and discuss everything that is posted. When the group reaches a consensus about what best answers every item, they can then begin drafting and refining their objectives (i.e., goals, vision, and mission) and the principles that underlie the objectives (p. 51).

The director of the basic course could follow Morrisey's lead, perhaps making slight modifications. An "off-site meeting" or retreat, for example, may not be feasible, but even if conducted in-house, the director might benefit from informality (Larson and LaFasto, 1989, p. 57). In addition, the director could distribute a questionnaire which prompts the staff to contemplate, comprehensively (i.e., not merely the "big picture"), the objectives of the group that suggest goals, principles, mission, and vision. The director would need to be careful to define any ambiguous terms. For example, the director might define *stakeholder* (from number four, below) as "anyone who suffers by the failure of the enterprise" (Covey, 1991, p. 298). Items for a questionnaire about the basic course might include:

1) Why do we exist? i.e., What is our value to the curriculum?
2) What exposure and training do we provide our students?
3) What assistance should we provide our students?
4) Who are the stakeholders of our enterprise? (i.e., who is affected by our performance or nonperformance?)
    a. What special considerations do we have for each group?
    b. What ranking would you assign to the groups? (and why?)
5) What are the current strengths of our team?
6) What is (or should be;) unique about our group?
7) What can we do to enhance our performance?
8) What are we doing differently from previous terms? (and why?)
9) What should/will we be doing differently in future terms? (and why?)
10) What philosophical issues must we contemplate and address'?
11) What constraints do we face and how can we operate effectively within those constraints?
12) If you could discuss one issue with the group, what would it be? (and why?)
13) What would you preserve in terms of the current leadership? (and why?)
14) What changes would you make in leadership style or practices? (and why?)

During the meeting, the director might detect how the questionnaire could be modified to be more comprehensive and/or to enhance involvement. For example, number ten might need to be clarified with an example or two of philosophical issues, such as "In the instruction of speechmaking, what degree of emphasis should be given to content and what degree to deliver) "What is the proper mix of theory and practice?" Likewise, item eleven might benefit from an example of a constraint, such as "What skills and training is desired by those departments who require their majors to take our course?" In addition, the course supervisor may wish to have staff members answer only a portion of the item — perhaps assigning items or allowing them to choose.

The facilitative approach can prove very worthwhile. It can help instructors sense the interplay between goals and strategies, and those who imaginatively and enthusiastically take on their role often devise impressive strategies. For example, during her first semester as a Teaching Assistant, Katherine DeMaria encountered a student with extreme communication apprehension. The day before the presentation, DeMaria had the student to present the speech to her and a few other TAs — all very supportive audience members. The student struggled through, nearly fainting once or twice, but was encouraged by all to continue. The student presented her speech three times to the small group who applauded the content and the delivery. When the student presented her speech to the class, she rose to the occasion. Not only was her speech among the best written, but she also presented it very well — even better than she had done in the practice sessions. DeMaria's assistance provides insight for item three of the questionnaire (i.e., what assistance do we provide?), and it also provides further support to Ayres' (1996) recent findings that apprehensive students need to practice their speeches before an audience. Rather than leave it up to the highly anxious student to find an audience and to conduct such sessions on his or her own, DeMaria shows how an instructor might intervene and assist.

The imagination and creativity of new staff also can help to achieve the objectives of the course. For example, when contemplating item two (i.e., what exposure and training we provide) I had expressed an interest in establishing a public speaking contest for the end of the term. I knew it would provide good exposure, but I also knew that it would present a logistical nightmare. One of my first-year TAs, Nate Baxter, suggested that we could conduct the contest during the final meeting of the mass lecture. Everyone immediately understood the brilliance of Nate's idea. During the last meeting I had administered student evaluations of teaching, but attendance waned because the last exam already had been administered. The contest, for which we would require attendance, would constitute a worthwhile experience for speakers and audience alike, provide us with a new set of sample speeches that we might use in instruction and in TA training, and provide a good finale to the term. In addition, if I administered student evaluations during the review session for the last exam I would have a larger sample. Nate's idea has worked brilliantly.

New instructors also can provide insights on how to prepare them for their teaching role. For example, when contemplating item 14 (i.e., changes they would recommend in leadership), I asked what they would like to see included in orientation. Some responded that it would be helpful to see the actual classrooms where they would be teaching and the equipment they would be using. Some also wanted to see, on video, what a typical class of students might look like and to see some of our instructors in action. As a result, I now include in orientation a tour of classroom facilities, hands-on experience with the overhead projector and video camera, and brief, videotaped clips of actual classes in session. In ongoing sessions, at their request, I spend less time discussing assigned readings and instead integrate what we have read into hands-on activities. For example, after they have read what Ruud (1992) has to say about providing in-class oral critiques of students' speeches, we view a sample speech on video and afterwards list their various criticisms on the board. We then can classify each item in terms of its perspective (i.e., rhetorical, expressive, mimetic, formalistic) to gain a sense of how various perspectives can be used productively. Instructors can then review the various comments they made in order to "sort out their own instructional priorities" (p. 73) so to help them gain a better sense of their own instructional goals and principles. Similarly, when discussing the construction and design of a multiple choice exam, we critique a set of sample items in light of what we read regarding testing with the multiple choice exam. These suggestions for training and development have proven insightful and effective.

A Combined Approach

The course supervisor might fuse the two approaches discussed above. For example, the supervisor might utilize a questionnaire but supply tentative answers for some or all items. In addition to newly composed answers, some answers might be borrowed from previously completed questionnaires or from sources outside the group. Consider, for example, the following sample responses to some of the items presented in the questionnaire above. (The source of the response is indicated in brackets.)

Item three: Who are the stakeholders of our enterprise?
Response: '"Students are stakeholders, and since each stakeholder 'has and shares equal responsibility" (Covey, 1991, p. 298) for contributing to the success of the enterprise, one principle is to expect, emphasize, and hold students accountable, in part, for their education." [a lecturer]

Item four: What are the current strengths of our team?
Response: "We possess a good work ethic and are characterized by collegiality!" [a TA

Item six: What can we do to enhance our performance?
Response: "To continue to improve the program, adding better ideas and procedures every semester, never being completely satisfied with what has been done and always searching for ways to do a better job next semester." [the course supervisor]

Item nine: What philosophical issues are important to our future and how will we address them?
Response: "By emphasizing teaching quality to TAs, we can produce graduates who are better prepared to be professors or communicators in other careers" (Sheridan, 1991, p. 27). [a dean — from a published source]

Item twelve: What would you preserve in terms of the current leadership? (and why?)
Response: "I like it that the director is not seeking to clone himself but to operate with a reflective type of supervision, which Sprague describes as a mode of supervision that 'has as its goal the development of expertise; the supervisor functions to surface puzzlements and to encourage reasoned experimentation' (Sprague, 1992, p. 2). Because of this, I have become a better teacher and more confident, too." [a TA]

Item thirteen: What changes would you make in leadership style or practices?
Response: "To not tolerate slackers because nonperformance by one hurts us all!" [a TA]

The questionnaire will help the group to gain a sense of their principles and objectives. Once questionnaires have been completed, the director and staff can begin to classify and discuss the responses and to extract principles and objectives.

Another approach that blends the formative and facilitative would be for each newcomer to identify, briefly in writing, what he or she detects as the vision, mission, and goals of the basic course that underlies the various documents provided by the department and supervisor. For example, the new staff member might re-examine the letter of appointment and other communications from the department head and the director of graduate studies as well as the various communications from the course supervisor and any orientation materials that the supervisor has provided. The writer could critique what is identified and could note anything that deserves greater emphasis or inclusion. This assignment might also direct the writer to contemplate how and to what extent the objectives that she or he detects for the group complements and promotes her or his own goals.

Regardless of whether the basic course director uses a formative, facilitative, or a combined approach, the activity can yield valuable contributions, and it can prove worthwhile in other ways as well. For one, it can help to acclimate the newly arrived individual to the nature of the enterprise and the culture of the group and the department. For another, as with any group activity, it can promote communicative exchange and relational development. In addition, it can set a precedent for involvement, participation, interdependency, and mutual respect. The activity might also prove highly motivational if the individual identifies with the objectives of the group, finding them personally meaningful and worthwhile.

Reviewing Objectives

Morrisey (1988) suggests that "organizations should review formally their mission statements at least once a year" (p. 52), and the same schedule seems applicable to all objectives. How the director proceeds with the review could draw upon any of the approaches listed above. If, for example, the director wants the staff to approach the process independently and anew, she or he would engage a facilitative approach, first soliciting input and then, in a brainstorming session with the staff, create objectives and identify principles. The group would then juxtapose what they had created afresh with those previously established. Or, the director may approach the endeavor as purely a review, considering it to be more of a revision than a new draft. In this manner, the group would size up the existing statements and artifacts (e.g., statement of goals on a syllabus, mission statement, catalog description) and whether they adequately suggest action that is responsive to actual as well as anticipated needs. This approach would utilize the input from former staff members plus (as noted above) likely prove more efficient. When examining existent objectives the leader might wish to review not only what is expected but also explain or recall "why." Doing so, according to Simpson and McConocha (1991), might "encourage workers to suggest new ideas and new ways of accomplishing tasks" (p. 10). Regardless of approach, though, the group will have reflected upon their principles and objectives, and the improved understanding can translate into personally more meaningful objectives for each member.

To encourage reflection and active contribution, the director can utilize more than a questionnaire to begin the process. Prior to holding an open forum, for example, the director could have staff members campaign for a new procedure or policy, including an explanation of how it meets objectives and principles that the group has or should have. These ideas could be published in the usual mediums of a group mailing with e-mail, distribution of a memo, and personal contact. In addition to conveying respect and trust, modeling the process, and inciting involvement, a campaign allows the group time to reflect upon whatever is being suggested, and perhaps discuss it informally with others, prior to the meeting. At the same time, though, the group should be reminded to think critically about any proposal and its ramifications. The group should attempt to identify any advantages that have not been mentioned as well as any disadvantages or drawbacks.

The course director, obviously, will need to ponder and perhaps research *each* item carefully so to gather her or his thoughts and give them expression. For example, when contemplating a response to item three of the questionnaire above (i.e., Who are the stakeholders of our enterprise?), the director might have read about studies that indicate that workers must believe that "what they are doing is more important than anything else" (Larson & LaFasto, 1989, 97) and note the implications of those findings for a teaching staff of graduate assistants. The director might contemplate how that directors and departments cannot encourage a dichotomous view of the teaching assignment and graduate study but must emphasize how the two are complementary: For TAs who plan to remain in academe, the experience is helping them to develop as professionals who can teach and still have time for research and publication. For TAs who plan to pursue other career tracks, the skills they are developing as instructors will transfer to other contexts as well as comprise an important entry on their resume and material for a letter of recommendation that emphasizes those skills and their personal mastery. In either case, the director might emphasize, as Jo Sprague (1992) suggests, that the classroom provides an opportunity to test the various theories and principles they are learning in their coursework, as well as their ability to communicate those concepts effectively and in a manner that promotes understanding and appreciation.

Directors can read widely to inform their thinking and can encourage their staff to do likewise. As a result of such wide reading and careful scrutiny of objectives, the director and staff are more able to identify topics and issues that require further exploration — many that are worthy of the attention of a wider audience. They likely will want to pursue some of these formally and present their findings at a conference or a convention or to get them into print.

CONDITIONS FOR SUCCESSFUL COLLABORATION IN THE BASIC COURSE

Hackman and Johnson (1991) note that the only significant drawbacks to democratic leadership are that democratic techniques are time consuming and can be cumbersome with larger groups" (p. 27). Perhaps, though. they oversimplify. These conditions *and* a few more are worth noting and contemplating.

Time certainly is a condition. Covey (1991) acknowledges the amount of time required to involve and empower staff, noting that it does "take more time in the beginning, and many who feel they are now pushed to the hilt simply won't take this time to explain, to train, to commit" (p. 237). Hence, the director must have the time available and also must be willing to expend the time necessary for collaboration. But as Covey suggests, this time is spent principally in the beginning. Once the director has taken the time to devise and locate materials that provide basic explanations, and once the director has compiled materials and established procedures that can be used in the training and development of staff, and once the staff has become accustomed to and somewhat proficient with collaboration, the dividends can be sweet — including time saved in the long run and fewer crises and problems.

Another condition for collaboration is that it requires a participative style of leadership and some degree of autonomy for the staff. Mills (1995) holds that "setting goals for empowered individuals or teams is very different than giving task assignments to subordinates, and it takes experience f or an executive or manager to develop the skill" (p. 254). By collaborating, though, the supervisor does not have to be all-knowing and does not have to be especially skilled in handing down directives; the group can work together to define objectives and discern principles. To do so, the leader will need to engage a participative style of leadership, a style in which he or she will "solicit opinions and ideas from followers for the purpose of involving followers in decision making" (Hackman & Johnson, 1991, p. 51). Engaging a participative style, even if it is not their usual mode of leadership, should not prove overly difficult; supervisors can learn to alter their leadership style with relative ease (Coblentz, Gerber & Pribble, 1987).

Participative leadership, though, involves more than learning a new style; the director must also be willing to cede some authority. Larson and LaFasto (1989) note perceptively that "getting people involved and giving them autonomy is what promotes collaboration" (p. 94). Nyquist and Sprague (1992) likewise identify these conditions for successful collaboration in the basic course, as does Williams (1995). The director and staff will need to understand that autonomy is not complete liberty but is regulated by the objectives and principles defined by the group and by the curriculum. In this manner, individuals are not independent but are interdependent; the freedom they enjoy is that of empowerment, which Mills (1995) explains is "the explicit grant of authority to make decisions and take actions — usually in the context of a broad set of rules and frameworks" (p. 255).

Still, any allowance of autonomy involves risk. and it requires patience as well as a willingness by the course director to allow mistakes. Directors may need to remind themselves of the positive outcomes. For one, some degree of autonomy via empowerment, as Williams (1995) notes, is necessary for growth. For another, the director might also recognize how experimentation by individuals supplies experiences that the group can share, reflect upon, and find instructive.

Of course, the director can also remind himself or herself — as well as the staff — that allowing mistakes is not the same thing as tolerating or accepting mediocrity or indolence. If workers are empowered, Larson and LaFasto (1989) suggest that the supervisor should adopt an achievement orientation, which means "never accepting excuses for a lack of results" and "creating consequences for failure and rewards for excellence" (p. 100). They emphasize the importance of demanding performance and a sense of interdependency and cooperation, quoting one prominent CEO who observed: "'One person who doesn't work well with others . . . can ruin a team. When that happens, you give feedback to that individual and help them make the necessary changes. But if they can't adapt, then you have an obligation to remove them from the team. Otherwise, the rest of the team can become pretty resentful" (p. 71).

The ability to collaborate and the results of such efforts also requires participation by all participants; the entire staff must be involved. Various factors determine the level and degree of involvement. For example, the attributes of the leader influence participation and, as such, constitute a condition. The leader, obviously, must be perceived as competent and must be respected (see Larson & LaFasto, p. 64; also Sprague, 1992). Other attributes of the leader include patience, an ability to work well with others and to coordinate efforts, some native intelligence, an openness to new ideas and perspectives, and an ability to communicate skillfully and to appreciate and utilize the eloquence of others. Each of these attributes constitutes a condition under which the process thrives or is threatened.

Involvement by the staff is also contingent upon the intellectual ability of members, their level of experience, their interpersonal skills, and their ability to work collaboratively and to communicate effectively (Salazar, 1995). The ability of the group to collaborate should improve as a result of engaging the process, and involvement that requires reflection can nurture their development (Williams, 1995). Hence, the group not only learns to collaborate by collaborating, but they likely will grow intellectually as well, which also will make them more able collaborators.

Individuals must also be psychologically prepared to be involved. To promote the proper mindset, the director can help the staff sense the personal benefits of involvement. They need to understand that there is enough success to go around and "if the team is a winner, then the individual is successful and a winner" (Larson & LaFasto, 1989, p. 69). In this manner they can sense the overlap between the needs and goals of the enterprise and their own individual needs and goals and capabilities (see Covey, 1991, p. 191).

Individuals may also lack an appreciation of collaboration which may prompt some reluctance. As Larson and LaFasto (1989) note, the willingness to collaborate depends on "understanding . . . how one's objectives can be integrated with those of others, how one's own point of view can be advanced at the same time that other points of view are understood and acknowledged" (p. 18). Course directors might have to describe the process beforehand and be careful to include everyone once proceedings and discussions are underway. To do so, of course, the director will need to acknowledge, fully and diplomatically, any input an individual provides and to convey appreciation of what is contributed. In other words, the director will need to provide what some authors term interpersonal leadership" (Hackman & Johnson, 1991).

Madsen and Mermer (1993), in discussing proceedings in the basic course, emphasize the importance of "mutual respect (106). Hence, course supervisors may need to hone their sensitivity. Kalbfleisch & Davies (1993) remind leaders that self-esteem affects involvement/participation. they find that individuals with higher self-perceptions of value and self-worth may be better able to perceive themselves . . . with skills to contribute" (p. 403). The director may have to help people along, allowing individuals to have successive successes (Williams, 1995). I might have them to assist, as Hugenberg (1993) suggests, for example, in the construction of exams and assignments. If they see one of their items appear on the exam or on a common syllabus (even if the item has been revised) their confidence can rise.

Finally, other conditions exist outside the group that affect their ability to collaborate. Most notably, perhaps, the director must have departmental support (see Sprague, 1992, p. 5). The director needs to be respected and supported by the chair and the faculty and must be empowered to act, whether in a participative mode or, when situations demand, in a directive manner. To build respect and sustain support, the director may benefit from keeping the department regularly informed on the objectives, progress, and activities of the group.

CONCLUSION

This article challenges the perspective of authors who describe the process of defining goals and objectives as top-down, never acknowledging the group processes that often characterize the enterprise, nor recognizing the benefits of leadership that fosters and facilitates widespread participation. A leader cannot merely present goals and expect for them to be understood, appreciated, and carried out. To have full impact, goals cannot merely be handed down nor transplanted, intact, from one context to another. What happens in the process is as important or moreso than what emerges in verbal form. It is the thought, reflection and exchange that fosters improved understanding and steadfast support. It is the appreciation and incorporation of the members' ideas that strengthens morale and relations and builds community. And it is the pooling of talent that improves and invigorates the enterprise. In addition, active involvement assists an individual's development. Clearly, "two heads" *are* better than one for establishing goals in the basic course .

Collaboration is not all that is important. In order to establish goals that are more meaningful worthwhile, and significant, the director and staff must contemplate how the goals complement other, larger objectives as well as how they complement the principles and values identified and shared by the group. Supervisors of the basic course can prompt such thinking and reflection by employing what has been described as a formative approach, a facilitative approach, or some combination of the two. Helping the staff to sense the relationship between goals, mission, vision, and the set of principles around which they revolve is what makes goals more compelling and, hence, realizable in the basic course.

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A Commentary: The Basic Communication Course, General Education and Assessment*

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This commentary provides ammunition to arm our communication colleagues on campuses where the issue of including the basic communication course is being debated. This is an important issue on all campuses because of pressures from accrediting agencies to include specific goals related to oral communication competence. The issue is also important because there tends to be resistance from the body politick on campus to including specific courses in oral communication. This commentary suggests important communication skills recognized in a body of literature that can be taught in basic communication courses. An ancillary to the identification of specific goals in these five skill areas is the importance of reinforcing specific communication competencies in other courses throughout the individual student's undergraduate education. Therefore, we also suggest the importance of a Communication Across the Curriculum (CAC) program.

"IN THE BEGINNING" — A RATIONALE

Basic communication course program general education program. The ability for students to learn competent commu-

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nication skills to help them in diverse situations should be one of the central goals of every general education program. The difficulty arises from our inability to identify and agree upon specific communication skills for undergraduate students in the body of communication research and scholarship. This is clearly evidenced in basic course programs across the country when some programs emphasize public speaking, others emphasize the hybrid or blend communication course, some focus on interpersonal communication, others teach communication theory, some basic course programs integrate both writing and speaking skills, while still others use their basic communication course program to teach rhetorical theory with little communication skill training.

Our inability to define these essential communication competencies leads to integration problems for communication programs seeking inclusion of a basic course in a general education program. The necessity of identifying and then teaching appropriate communication competencies to students is the central role for faculty interested in beginning communication education. Shamefully, faculty frequently rely on their own views of what communication skills should be taught undergraduates, with little regard to existing results in the literature. Although faculty views need to be incorporated into any basic course program, results of research exist, or can be completed, to guide the selection of specific skills needed by undergraduate students before graduation.

Logical questions from any general education committee on any campus is, "What skills should undergraduate students learn in an oral communication general education requirement?" *and* "How were these skills identified?" How these questions are answered has implications for basic courses, a student's general education program, and for assessment of communication competence to meet accrediting agency demands.

This commentary includes a perspective on the issue of what should be taught in beginning oral communication skill courses. First, we establish a foundation by discussing the requirements of our accrediting agencies. Second, we explain the skills that are identified through research published in communication journals and beyond. Finally, we discuss the benefits of such a program to enhancing students' abilities to communicate throughout their undergraduate studies and the logical benefit to the assessment of communication skill development.

ACCREDITING AGENCIES ON ORAL COMMUNICATION SKILLS

All college and university accrediting agencies in the United States emphasize oral communication skills as central to a bonifide general education. The importance of teaching basic communication skills *beyond or in addition to* public speaking is reiterated in all national college and university accrediting agencies (Middle States Association of Colleges and Schools, New England Association of Colleges and Schools, North Central Association of Colleges and Schools, Northwest Association of Schools and Colleges, and Southern Association of Colleges and Schools). The skills highlighted in their reports and guidelines include interpersonal (relational) communication skills, group decision making and leadership skills, listening skills, and presentational (public speaking skills). Each accrediting agency articulates a clear position regarding the importance of communication in a student's undergraduate education.

The North Central Association of Colleges and Schools (1994) suggested, "If a general education program is based on cognitive experiences, it will typically describe its programs in terms of the college-level experiences that engender such competencies as: capabilities in reading, writing, speaking, listening" (p. 21). The emphasis in speaking and listening by North Central provides clear guidance regarding the types of communication skills undergraduate students need. Simply stated, students need to learn to speak competently and listen effectively in a variety of communication situations.

The Northwest Association of Schools and Colleges (1994) guidelines stated, "General education introduces students to the content and methodology of the major areas of knowledge — the humanities, the fine arts, the natural sciences — and helps them to develop the mental skills that will make them more effective learners. ... Programs of study ... must contain a recognizable body of instruction in program-related areas of 1) communication, 2) computation, and 3) human relationships" (p. 57). The Northwest Association's focus on communication skills and skills in human relations provide additional import to the inclusion of communication skills training in general education.

The other three accrediting agencies reiterate the emphasis on communication skill training in a student's undergraduate education. The New England Association of Schools and Colleges (1992) indicated that, "Graduates successfully completing an undergraduate program demonstrate competence in written and oral communication in English" (p. 12). The Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (1992) concluded, "Within this core [of general education courses], or in addition to it, the institution must provide components designed to ensure competence in reading, writing, oral communication and fundamental mathematical skills" (p. 24). Finally, the Middle States Association of Colleges and Schools (1994) pointed out, "Programs and courses which develop general intellectual skills such as the ability to form independent judgment, to weigh values, to understand fundamental theory, and to interact effectively in a culturally diverse world" (p. 4). This emphasis on communication skills is central to all college and university accrediting agencies in the United States. Our focus on how students may be trained in communication in pursuit of education is germane and timely.

The emphasis on oral communication skill development by each accrediting agency highlights an important problem facing basic course directors and communication educators of beginning communication programs. The problem or challenge is for communication faculty to develop programs in oral communication skills where students learn necessary skills and receive helpful assessment of these skills throughout their undergraduate educational careers.

COMMUNICATION RESEARCH ON COMMUNICATION SKILLS

The research literature about communication education is substantial and consistent (Vangelista & Daly, 1989; Rubin, Graham & Mignerey, 1990). Studies have repeatedly found that "giving information and making decisions with another person" (interpersonal communication) and "providing information to groups of individuals" (group communication and public speaking) are the most important self-identified skills for students. The focus on communication be central to any general education. Seiler (1993) concluded, "In fact, surveys of alumni (DiSalvo, 1980; Pearson, Sorenson & Nelson, 1981) have consistently found that interpersonal communication, giving information and making decisions with another person, or providing information to groups of individuals to be more important than strictly public skills" (p. 51).

Interestingly, the notion that beginning communication courses, those founded on the principles of teaching applicable communication skills, should be broad in nature and not too context specific in scope is not new. Over thirty years ago, Dedmon (1965) wrote, "Our traditional approaches have blinded us to the real objective of the required first [basic] course: To teach a general education course in oral communication" (p. 125).

SPECIFIC SKILLS

As mentioned earlier, our inability as communication scholars and educators to identify specific communication competencies needed for undergraduate students is a problem. It has left the door open for interpretation by others in other disciplines to determine the contents and goals of basic communication instruction (Hildebrandt, et al., 1982). Communication educators are the experts in skill instruction and training. Our discipline needs to take hold of this important issue and make some determinations about the essential nature of the beginning communication course.

The National Center for Educational Statistics (1994), in a report issued by the U.S. Department of Education, summarized a set of seven communication competencies for communication skills development. These included situational appropriateness, appropriate involvement and responsiveness, adaptability and flexibility in communication with others, clarity in communicating with others, efficiency of communication, goal accomplishment, and politeness (pp. 132-133).

In a DELPHI study reported by Hugenberg, Robinson and Owens (1982), employers and communication educators were asked to identify vital communication skills for college graduates. The top ten skills include: giving clear directions, listening well, listening to what the other person is really saying and feeling, establishing and maintaining open lines of communication with others, articulating accurately your position, collecting information before drawing conclusions, selecting the proper way to communicate a message to others, dealing with communication anxiety, identifying a logical format for organizing and presenting information to others, and communicating information upward and downward competently in the organization.

These results have been corroborated by the College Placement Service whose 1993 report revealed that in addition to one's proficiency in a field of study, employers most highly value oral communication and interpersonal skills, followed by demonstrated teamwork and analytical skills (p. 3). Also, Curtis, Windsor and Stephens (1989) identified the top skills which young people need to become managers. Their survey of over one thousand personnel managers isolated these communication skills: work well with others one-on-one, gather accurate groups, listen effectively, and give effective feedback. The importance of good communication skills for job applicants is reported in studies prepared by business organizations, communication scholars, and the United States Government.

In another attempt to identify competencies needed by college graduates, Career Services at Bowling Green State University (1995) identified a six page list of learned and transferable skills. These skills include: planning and organizational skills, oral and written communication skills, decision making skills, leadership skills, management skills, supervisory skills, critical thinking skills, problemsolving skills, conflict resolution skills, teamwork and teambuilding skills, ethics and tolerance skills, personal and professional management skills, information management skills, design and planning skills, research and investigation skills, communication skills, human relations and interpersonal skills, management and administrative skills, valuing skills, and personal and career development skills. Each of these skills areas is further delineated with specific tasks and/or activities students currently do or should learn to do to be competitive in today's job market and for their ongoing career development. One can easily identify the skills from this list routinely taught in basic communication courses.

These studies and reports taken together suggest that the communication skills which undergraduate students need to learn may be grouped into five, sometimes obviously overlapping, skill areas. These skill areas are developed later in this article into specific objectives related to student communication competencies. The skill areas are:

1. Listening Skills
2. Interpersonal Communication Skills
3. Group Communication Skills
4. Presentational Speaking (Public Speaking) Skills
5. Strategies for Being A Competent Communicator

These skill clusters, determined through analysis of available literature add impetus to the need for inclusion of oral communication skill training in general education.

STUDENT ORAL COMMUNICATION COMPETENCIES: RECOMMENDATIONS

By further reviewing the literature and available instructional materials in communication, communication faculty can identify specific skills which ought to be included in any general education program. These skills are within the normal teaching purview of communication faculty; they are discrete and lend themselves to progress and outcome-based assessment; and they can be explained to non-communication instructors so as to enable faculty to monitor whether and how students in upper-level courses continue to use them, or not.

Below are a series of recommended student oral communication competencies, taken from the skills noted in the literature, to include in an oral communication requirement within a general education program. The competencies may be attained at one level in a basic communication course and later, through a Communication Across the Curriculum (CAC) program, at a higher level as the student nears graduation.

I. Listening

1. Students can overcome barriers to effective listening.
2. Students can perform cognitive listening skills.
3. Students can perform expressive listening skills.
4. Students can perform transactional listening skills.

II. Interpersonal Communication

1. Students can communicate specific levels of trust in their interpersonal communication.
2. Students understand the appropriate use power in their interpersonal communication.
3. Students can self-disclose appropriately.
4. Students understand the role of attraction in their interpersonal relationships.
5. Students know the skills and strategies for initiating effective interpersonal relationships with others.
6. Students know the skills and strategies for maintaining effective interpersonal relationships.
7. Students know the skills and strategies for terminating interpersonal relationships.
8. Students can exhibit the skills and strategies for conflict management.

III. Group Communication

1. Students can demonstrate appropriate leadership skills in a group.
2. Students can evidence appropriate member roles in a group.

3. Students can demonstrate a variety of decision-making strategies.
4. Students can participate in constructive conflict resolution.
5. Students can express their ideas clearly to the group.
6. Students listen to all group members.

IV. Presentational Speaking (Public Speaking)

1. Students can assess her or his listeners and use that assessment in preparing a speech.
2. Students can appropriately organize a speech.
3. Students can begin a speech appropriately.
4. Students can effectively conclude a speech.
5. Students can use transitions when delivering a speech.
6. Students can appropriately use supporting materials during a speech.
7. Students can prepare a competent informative speech.
8. Students can prepare a competent persuasive speech.
9. Students can deliver a speech competently.
10. Students can use visual aids competently during a speech.

V. Strategic Communication Skills

1. Students can manage the communication context competently.
2. Students can use the strategies of persuasive communication competently.

3. Students can use nonverbal communication appropriate to her or his message and the situation.
4. Students use appropriate strategies understand the verbal and nonverbal messages.
5. Students use appropriate strategies remember her or his message.
6. Students use appropriate verbal communication strategies to accomplish the goals of communication.

In developing arguments for the inclusion of an oral communication requirement in general education, it might be beneficial also to tie the associated skills taught in basic courses to other goals of a general education program. For example, students in basic communication courses also might learn writing skills through analysis and outlining, or they learn critical thinking through analyzing information for speeches or listening to assess another student's assignment, or students learn research and library skills by conducting searches for information to complete assignments.

ORAL COMMUNICATION SKILLS: EXAMINING THE MYTHS

One myth needs to be dispelled: we *"naturally" communicate well through speaking and hearing.* This commonly-held, but false, belief takes root because we start talking almost before we start walking: hence, one may think that effective communication through talking is "easier than walking," certainly easier than writing. It is not.

Second, there is no physical artifact of the oral/aural communication process. Speaking and listening are effervescent; and, while harder to do well (in the absence of written correspondence), one's impression is the contrary. Said differently, written communication seems more difficult to do well because the message is available for public examination and reflective study. One's written work is designated, engineered, created, edited, and documented. One's oral expressions, though, must be arrived at in the mind. If written communication is like chess, oral communication is like chess without board or pieces.

It is not difficult to find a corresponding flaw in the suggestion that to improve a person's oral/aural communication competence, one simply needs to be encouraged to "do it more," to engage in more communication-type activities. That flaw is that practice in the absence of instruction tends to produce not competence, but well-practiced incompetence. In other words, practicing the wrong skills is just that, practicing the wrong skills.

THE FOUNDATION OF COMMUNICATION COMPETENCE: THE BASIC COURSE

To set the stage for the ongoing communication skill development in students, the General Education Program must establish solid foundations during the first year of college. Seiler (1993) wrote, "Because of the diversified nature and multi-plural society we are living in, the hybrid course has the flexibility and structure to adapt to change better than any of the other introductory speech communication courses" (p. 52). If we can agree that the interpersonal, group, listening, public speaking and strategic communication skills noted earlier are important, the hybrid or blend communication course introduces students to specific communication competencies in each skill cluster.

The basic communication course sets the all-important academic and skill foundation for students to develop their communication skills. In setting this foundation during the student's first year of academic life, assignments in other courses (other general education courses, courses in a student's major or minor, additional communication courses, etc.) can be used to further develop a student's communication competence. These additional communication assignments in follow-up courses are best utilized after specific communication skill training. This foundation must be established by the best qualified faculty with specific training in communication skill development and evaluation. In establishing these foundational skills in a basic communication course, faculty in more advanced (intermediate) courses in other departments can reinforce these competencies instead of having to try to teach them at the expense of teaching the content of their own courses.

COMMUNICATION ACROSS THE CURRICULUM

The second part of an oral communication component in the general education is a communication across the curriculum program (Cronin & Glenn, 1991; Palmerton, 1991; Weiss, 1988). This element of the program relies heavily on the use of basic communication course as the foundation for communication skill development.

In identifying competent communication as a specific set of skills, it is important to integrate communication skill training throughout the student's college experience — similar to the reinforcement of writing skills intertwined in a writing across the curriculum program. With a strong foundation of oral communication skill competencies *and* appropriate training of faculty across the university, the quality of our students' communication will increase in recognizable ways. By teaching a basic course incorporating fundamental communication competencies during a student's first year, they will be better able to practice appropriate skills and receive informed feedback from trained faculty in approved intermediate and upper-level courses — regardless of major.

In discussing a communication across the curriculum program, Davilla, West and Yoder (1993) wrote, "The basic communication course in communication serves as a template for the development of a CAC [Communication Across the Curriculum] program. ... The CAC continues, expands, and embellishes the knowledge and skills learned in the basic communication course. This model works best when the basic course is a prerequisite for other CI [Communication Instruction] courses. Students learn the basic skills and knowledge from communication faculty and then continue to practice those skills in a variety of settings" (p. 86).

A communication faculty should stand ready to provide the necessary training for faculty across the campus who want to participate in a communication across the curriculum program. The skills in evaluating specific communication competencies are identifiable and can be taught. This training program establishes the importance of reinforcing the appropriate competence or correcting communication weaknesses where expected student competence levels are not achieved.

COMMUNICATION COMPETENCIES: A TEST-OUT ALTERNATIVE

With an identifiable set of communication competencies and body of knowledge, students can demonstrate an acceptable mastery of the communication competency knowledge base by passing a proficiency test. They can also demonstrate a mastery of the oral communication skills noted above through a series of communication assignments. If students demonstrate sufficient understanding of the course content and possess acceptable levels of the oral communication competencies, they should proceed to upper-level coursework to continue the development of their communication skills.

ASSESSMENT OF COMMUNICATION COMPETENCIES

A two-phase communication requirement as part of general education permits a logical assessment plan to be developed. Assessment of communication skills is currently of major importance on campuses across the country and in the research published (Hay, 1992; Angelo & Cross, 1993; Banta, *et al.,* 1993; Jones, 1993; Christ, 1994). Student competencies can be assessed at the beginning and end of the basic communication course. The initial assessment established the students' starting points, the end-of-course assessment highlights changes in students' competencies.

Based on the fact that communication competencies are reinforced throughout the student's undergraduate program through the CAC program, their communication competencies can be assessed again near graduation. Communication competence data for comparative assessment can be created easily. These data are important in demonstrating to accrediting agencies how the goals of the oral communication competence program are met by students.

The execution of student competence assessment is accomplished in two areas: at the student's completion of the basic communication course *and* as the student nears graduation. Assessment data collected at these points accomplishes two things. First, the assessment of students' communication competencies at the end of the basic course provides faculty with data to evaluate course goals, objectives, and instruction. These data can be accumulated in several different ways or in combination. Students can be administered pre- and post-tests using one of several valid and reliable measures (i.e., one or several versions of *The Personal Report of Communication Apprehension,* the *Willingness to Communicate Scale,* etc.)

A second way to accumulate assessment data in the basic course is to develop an assessment of student communication competency performance by a jury of communication faculty. Tapes tracing student performances from the beginning to the end of the basic course can be used to demonstrate their improvement (hopefully) in specific competencies identified in course goals and objectives. Both sets of data provide baseline performance information for comparison with data collected as students near graduation.

As students progress through their other coursework, their communication performances in other courses as part of the CAC program are taped and kept, portfolio style, for assessment near graduation. The assignments are reviewed by a jury of communication faculty for ongoing communication competence development. These tapes provide evidence of student mastery of specific communication competencies. Finally, students can also take the same paper-and-pencil instruments administered during their enrollment in the basic course for comparison purposes. The comparison data offers additional documentation of communication competence development through the CAC program.

DISCUSSION

Hopefully this commentary reinforces the importance of instruction in the basic communication course in a student's education. We also believe that the competency areas and accompanying objectives, although soundly grounded in literature, might cause some discomfort and, perhaps, disagreement with basic course directors and instructors. However, there are compelling needs to identify a body of knowledge and a set of competencies that basic communication course programs can deliver and can be reinforced in a CAC program. This commentary serves as a starting point for the discussion of this issue within our discipline — whether it be at the department level or within the discipline as a whole.

Finally, this commentary provides basic course directors, fighting battles on their campus regarding the importance of oral communication skill training, with useful data and a starting point to develop a coherent argument or defense, whichever is necessary. Communication programs remain under careful scrutiny from within and outside the academy. Those of us interested in the basic course must be prepared to meet the scrutiny of accrediting agencies, legislators, boards of trustees, and faculty from across our campuses head on.

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