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Assessment of the Repeated Speech Performance as a Pedagogical Tool: A Pilot Study

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“Good writing is rewriting.”
—William K. Zinsser

“Revising is a part of writing. Few writers are so expert that they can produce what they are after on the first try.”

—William Strunk, Jr. and E. B. White

In 1993, two clarion calls appeared in *Communication Education* to communication instructors. These two calls included a revitalized commitment to the teaching of communication (Hart, 1993) and to the research of communication education (Sprague, 1993). With those challenges in mind, as well as the interests of our students, we designed this research to add current thought to the public speaking pedagogy.

This project is not concerned with an overhaul of the traditional public speaking instruction. Rather, it hypothesizes that the fundamental assumption about revision, derived from writing pedagogy, would improve the performance and morale of students in public speaking classes. The typical classroom process asks the student to give a speech, review the instructor’s com-

ments, and give a new speech, often with a new topic and a new purpose. To improve delivery, students are told, "Practice, practice, practice," normally in private. Contrast this with other performing arts, such as music or theatre, where the instructor is regularly present to refine the practice. Public speaking students seldom have this advantage. However, by revising and repeating an assignment, students gain the opportunity to learn from the combination of their previous performance, the instructor's specific evaluations, and additional practice.

The repeated speech performance is reportedly used at some institutions yet there has been no published research on such an assignment. The contrast between the emphasis on revision within writing classrooms and revision and public speaking is glaring. Writing scholarship argues that revision is necessary to the writing process. Public speaking scholarship, on the other hand, rarely mentions revision as part of the pedagogical process and does not research its pedagogical impact.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Public Speaking Pedagogy

Research concerning public speaking pedagogy in the last 25 years has covered limited topics. Published research for public speaking over this period focussed on assessment (Hufman, 1985; Littlefield, 1975, Moreale, *et al.*, 1993), speech anxiety (Ady, 1987; Allen, 1989; Allen, Hunter, & Donohue, 1989; Ayers, *et al.*, 1993; Ayers & Raftis, 1992; Beatty, 1988a; Beatty, 1998b; Beatty & Andriate, 1985; Beatty & Behnke, 1991; Beatty, Forst, & Stewart, 1986; Beatty & Friedland, 1990; Behnke, Carlile, & Lamb, 1974; Behnke, Sawyer, & King, 1987;

Carlile, Behnke, & Kitchens, 1977; Daly, *et al.*, 1989; Hopf & Ayers, 1992; Kondo, 1994; Martini, Behnke, & King, 1992; Motley & Molloy, 1994; Pelias, 1989; Porhola, Istotalus, & Ovaskainen, 1993; Ralston, Ambler, & Scudder, 1991; Rose, Rancer, & Crannell, 1993; Sawyer & Behnke, 1990; Stanga & Ladd, 1990), the use of video or media to enhance teaching, gender and cultural bias (Mulac, Lundell, & Bradac, 1986; Powell & Cullier, 1990), and teaching different types of students (Vigliano & Sage, 1973). These studies looked at issues and difficulties that teachers and students face in attempting to deal with the symptoms of poor speechmaking. The research reported suggestions and connections to improve teaching and student learning. Articles that contend for paradigm changes in the approach to teaching public speaking are limited to feminist perspectives (Foss, 1992; Pederson, 1981; Thomas, 1991) or an emphasis on argumentation (Rowan, 1995).

This survey of the literature does not necessarily include research on the “hybrid course” that emphasizes a combination of skills and communication contexts, nor on public speaking training for business communication (the business and professional speaking course). Instead, the emphasis in this review has been on the public speaking course and the specific skills involved in preparing and presenting public speeches.

Revision and Writing Pedagogy

The research on revision and writing is extensive. Recent research reiterated the necessity of revision as one of the most important components in helping students to perceive themselves as writers (Stetson, 1994); the use of revision in teaching good writing

(Bauer, 1993; Beach & Eaton, 1984; Faigley & Witte, 1984; Fulwiler, 1987; Flower & Hayes, 1981; Graham, 1995; Hodges, 1994; Lehr, 1995; Lindeman, 1982; Murray, 1985a, Murray, 1985b; Peterson, 1993; Wong, 1994); revision as collaborative effort (Irby, 1995); and revision as an ethical act.

METHODOLOGY

In public speaking courses, it is expected that instructors grade and critique speeches and offer suggestions for improving student performances. New material is usually given as the course moves on; students continue to select topics and do research for their next round of speeches. However, the speech-specific suggestions noted in the previous evaluations may or may not appear in the succeeding speeches, because students rarely have the opportunity to revise and present again.

Although most educators realize the value of repetition as a learning tool, this practice is largely overlooked in communication pedagogy due to time constraints, fear of boredom for listeners, and lack of effort from the students. In designing this study, we considered these drawbacks.

Two questions dominated our concerns as we began. (1) What are the perceived and realized advantages students gain from repeating a speech? and (2) Is the repeated speech performance a viable pedagogical tool?

Participants

Participants were college first-year students, sophomores, juniors, and seniors enrolled in the public

speaking course at a Southeastern university. Ten class sections were used for the study. After omitting students who were unable or unwilling to complete the speeches required, 158 cases were used for analyses. Students from a variety of disciplines, academic levels, gender, ethnic origins, and age groups were represented in the sample.

Procedure

Participants were asked to present a three-minute informative speech citing three sources. The speaking assignment was part of the graded course. Students were told that their speech performance would be videotaped, and their consent to do so was secured. After listening to the speech, instructors returned written critiques that detailed the difficulties observed and their recommendations for revising it. Then the students were asked to repeat their speech with changes and improvements for their next grade. For this second assignment, students were told to lengthen the speech from three to five minutes, add one source (a total of four sources), and include a visual aid. They were encouraged to change or modify their attention-getting techniques to ensure a vital impact on their audience. These changes were included to address some of the possible disadvantages that could occur regarding listener boredom and lack of challenge for the presenter. Again, students were informed that they would be videotaped.

Upon completion of both assignments, the videotaped speeches were divided among the researchers. In order to avoid bias, researchers only evaluated the speeches of students who were not enrolled in their courses. To assess the student speeches, the researchers

used *The Competent Speaker* instrument (Morreale, *et al.*, 1993). This critique form was used for two reasons: (1) to give the researchers a recognized assessment tool to evaluate participant speeches and (2) to consider this instrument for our own departmental use.¹

The Competent Speaker assessment instrument employs eight competencies for evaluation:

1. Chooses and Narrows a Topic Appropriately for the Audience and Occasion,
2. Communicates the Thesis/Specific Purpose in a Manner Appropriate for the Audience and Occasion,
3. Provides Appropriate Supporting Material Based on the Audience and Occasion,
4. Uses an Organizational Pattern Appropriate to the Topic, Audience, Occasion and Purpose,
5. Uses Language that is Appropriate to the Audience, Occasion, and Purpose,
6. Uses Vocal Variety in Rate, Pitch, and Intensity to Heighten and Maintain Interest,
7. Uses Pronunciation, Grammar and Articulation Appropriate to the Designated Audience, and
8. Uses Physical Behaviors that Support the Verbal Message.

¹ Note that current research has noted that the type of assessment instrument did not have a significant change on how evaluators assessed student performance (Carlson & Smith-Howell, 1995).

Each competency was rated on a scale of 1-9, with a rating of 1 as the lowest and a 9 as the highest level of the competency.²

Interrater reliability (.9274 + .8578 for two sets of raters) was achieved by using a training tape provided by the Communication Assessment Commission before the research data were evaluated. Four researchers viewed and assessed these student speeches using *The Competent Speaker* assessment instrument to ensure that all evaluators were measuring the speech performances within the same standards. Once consistency was achieved, researchers split the data. Two researchers evaluated each initial speech and its repeated performance.

Each of the eight sections of the evaluation form was scored (1-9) for each student presentation. The eight scores were totaled, revealing how many of the possible 72 points (9 x 8) were awarded. Both the first speech and the repeat speech were evaluated in the same manner. Toward the end of the term, students were given a survey where they provided demographic information. In addition, they gave answers to four questions, requesting their reactions to the assignments and their perception of the value of the repeated speech (see Appendix, "Repeated Speech Performance Survey").

² The evaluators marked each competency as Unsatisfactory, Satisfactory, or Excellent. Then, within each category, the evaluator assessed a Low, Medium, or High level of the competency. Thus, a Low-Unsatisfactory was given a 1, a Medium-Unsatisfactory was given a 2, a High-Unsatisfactory was given an 3, up to a High-Excellent rating of 9.

RESULTS

Demographics

Age range in the test sample was 18-39 with 91% between the ages of 18 and 23. Males comprised 56.4%, females 43.6%. First year students made up 35.8% of the sample, sophomores 27.9%, juniors 18.2% and seniors 17.6%. Cumulative grade point averages, reported within given ranges, were based on a 4-point scale. Approximately 5% reported grades above 3.5; 19.8% stated grades of 3.0 to 3.49; 35% between 2.5 and 2.99; 31.5% between 2.0 and 2.49; and 8.6% below 2.0.

Competency Scores

To assess the outcome of the changes in competency scores, means were calculated and subjected to 2-tailed t-tests. The mean value of each of the eight competencies from the first and revised speeches and the overall scores are given in Table 1. The scores increased significantly ($p=.000$) on all competencies. On the average, students' scores increased 4 points or 11.8%. However, in reviewing the total data set, a number of cases were observed where the increase was as much as 13 points or a 38.3% increase.

In terms of the competencies that improved the most, the mean increase in Competency 2 (use of specific purpose) was 0.87 and Competency 4 (uses an appropriate organizational pattern) was 0.81 as shown in Table 1. Although these two competencies showed the greatest change, note that all of the competencies improved.

Table 1
Changes in Overall Competencies: Pre and Post Scores

Competencies	First Speech	Revised Speech
<i>Competency 1:</i> Chooses and narrows a topic appropriately for the audience and occasion	4.55	5.14
<i>Competency 2:</i> Communicates thesis/specific purpose in manner appropriate for audience and occasion	4.08	4.95
<i>Competency 3:</i> Provides appropriate supporting material for audience and occasion	3.66	4.38
<i>Competency 4:</i> Uses an appropriate organizational pattern for topic, audience, occasion, and purpose	4.25	5.06
<i>Competency 5:</i> Uses language appropriate to the audience, occasion, and purpose	4.71	4.93
<i>Competency 6:</i> Uses vocal variety in rate, pitch, and intensity to heighten and maintain interest	4.21	4.67
<i>Competency 7:</i> Uses pronunciation, grammar, and articulation appropriate to the designated audience	4.72	4.86
<i>Competency 8:</i> Uses physical behaviors that support the verbal message	3.81	4.15
SUM	33.97	37.96

Figure 1
 Mean of Competency Data for Group I:
 Comparison of Pre and Post Scores

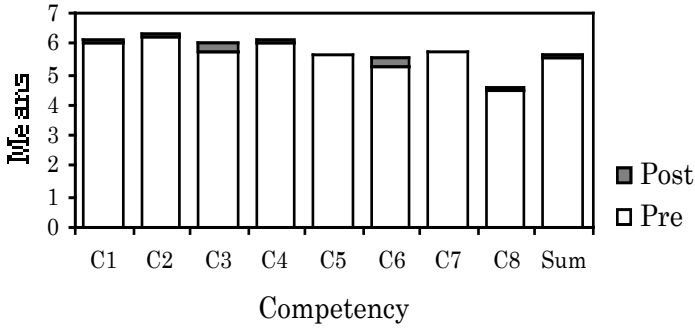


Figure 2
 Mean of Competency Data for Group II:
 Comparison of Pre and Post Scores

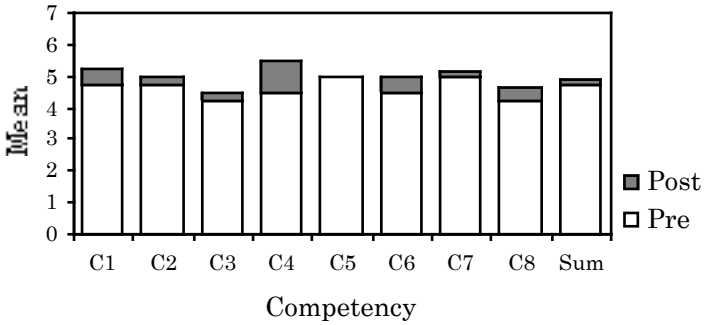


Figure 3
 Mean of Competency Data for Group III:
 Comparison of Pre and Post Scores

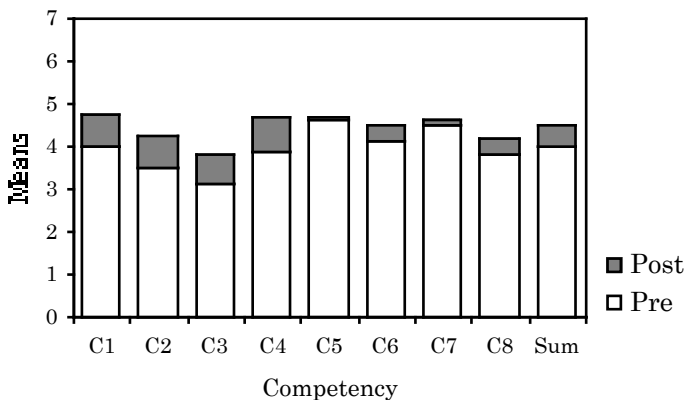
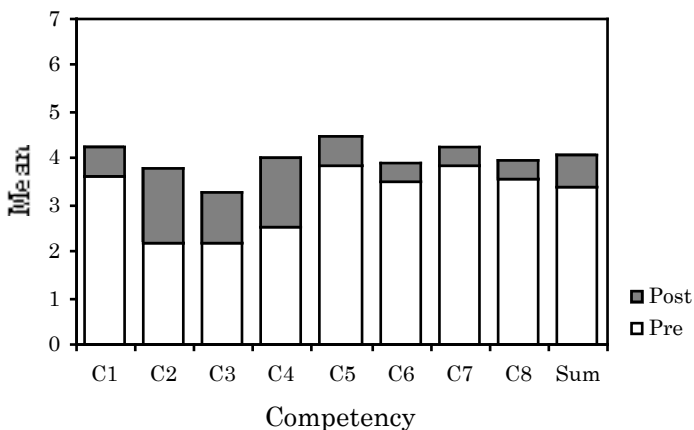


Figure 4
 Mean of Competency Data for Group IV:
 Comparison of Pre and Post Scores



Data also were ranked from the best to worst scores. These data then were separated into quartiles so that changes in competence could be observed for each level of initial evaluation. Figure 1 shows the changes for the best students. The greatest improvements occurred in Competency 3 (uses appropriate supporting material) and Competency 6 (uses vocal variety). For those students scoring in the high-middle range, Figure 2, Competency 1 (chooses and narrows topic), Competency 4, and Competency 6 were the most improved. Figure 3 illustrates the changes in those receiving low-middle scores. Competencies 1, 2, 3, and 4 were increased noticeably. Students who were rated least favorably on the first speech, Figure 4, demonstrated most improvements in Competencies 2, 3, and 4. One exception to the overall improvements should be noted, however. The average of the students in the top quartile actually went down slightly (from 5.77 to 5.73) for Competency 7 (uses pronunciation, grammar appropriately).

Perceived Value of the Repeated Speech Performance

Students also were asked to report their estimation of the value of the repeat performance opportunity. The reactions to the four statements answered on a 5-point Likert-type scales where 1 represented “strongly disagree,” 2 “disagree,” 3 “neutral,” 4 “agree,” and 5 “strongly agree,” are shown in Table 2. In Statements 1, 3, and 4 students indicated their agreement that this learning tool was helpful, valuable, and recommended. Statement 2 asked about the assignment presenting difficulties and students gave an average of 2.67, indicating that whatever problems may have been associ-

Table 2
Student Responses to Qualitative Questions

Statement	Mean Response	Std. Dev.
1. "I believe the repeated speech assignment was helpful."	3.96	0.89
2. "I believe the repeated speech assignment presented some difficulties."	2.67	1.14
3. "I believe the repeated speech assignment is a valuable learning tool."	3.87	0.85
4. "I would recommend that instructors use the repeated speech assignment in public speaking classrooms."	3.93	0.95

ated with this assignment were not particularly distracting.

Qualitative responses were solicited as well to the above statements. Most comments were favorable. However, there were those who expressed some objections. Samplings of the comments are below.

Statement 1. “I believe the repeated speech assignment was helpful.”

- It helped me to evaluate my performance and correct mistakes the instructor may have noticed and myself as well.
- Since it was the first speech, and everyone was nervous, the second (repeat) speech was something of a redemption speech which allowed speakers to focus more on improvement.
- I felt much more comfortable giving the speech a second time.
- I made sure I corrected my obvious mistakes from the first speech.
- I felt that repeating the speech gave me a chance to find out how the professor graded and to get used to the situation.
- It helps one understand what they did wrong and it gives an individual the opportunity to fix the problems by the next speech.

Negative comments:

- I would have rather done a new topic.
- I did not feel motivated.
- It helps you in some ways, but it is hard to get enough information for the second and not make it sound exactly the same.

Statement 2: “I believe the repeated speech assignment presented some difficulties.”

- Most of the difficulties were before the speech was given – the research, choosing the topic and polishing; the second speech just needed slight changes and more polish.
- That’s just it, I don't think it presented difficulties. It improved the second time around.
- Other than originality, there were no problems for me.
- I don’t think there was ANYTHING negative about repeating the speeches.
- The second speech was less difficult.

Negative Comments:

- Repeating the "same speech" was a little nerve racking. I kept thinking, "They've already heard this part!"
- Had to come up with new things to make it interesting.
- Was difficult to cover topic twice/making it different the second time-I guess this is a challenge.

Statement 3: “I believe the repeated speech assignment is a valuable learning tool.”

- It helped us see where we messed up and gave us a chance to do better the second time around.
- It's difficult to know what is "expected of you" on your first attempt. The critique showed in "green [color of instructor's ink] and black and white" what was wrong and what was right.
- If students try to learn from the repeated speech, it is a valuable learning tool.
- You see what you did wrong, and you can fix it, or work on it.
- I did much better on the 2nd speech because I got a feel for the room and the grading system.
- There was not a huge point value for the 1st speech, so it gave me plenty of leeway.

Negative Comments:

- It was helpful. It would have been a little more complementary if the visual aid was used in the first speech.
- I'm not sure that I learned more giving the second speech.
- It was helpful but I easily could have done what I learned on a different topic.

Statement 4: “I would recommend that instructors use the repeated speech assignment in public speaking classrooms.”

- To give the students a chance to work extra hard after making mistakes in the first speech, it really gave someone a chance of knowing what is expected during the speech.
- It helps the students' grades, and speech is not an easy class and the students need as much help as possible.
- It was a good thing.
- In the case of first time speech givers, the repeated speech assignment gives people more confidence in their performance.
- In my opinion, the best way to learn is from your mistakes. This allows the student to do that without counting against them.
- It's good to give people a second chance on a speech.

Negative Comments:

- I'm not sure about this idea -- Yes, I was challenged -- but, I just don't know how effective this was overall.
- It would not hurt to use it maybe once.
- Speech teachers will do what they want, as most teachers do.

DISCUSSION

After studying the raw data, the statistical analysis, and the qualitative remarks made by students, the global impression was positive concerning the use of the repeated speech assignment. Overall grades improved for 81.6% (n=129) of the students. With this size effect, this tool appears to be worthy of class time and students' efforts. Many of those whose grades did not improve gave positive comments on being allowed to refine their processes and on gaining a greater self-confidence.

In reviewing Figures 1 through 4, all of the students whose scores did not change or fell slightly were in the highest scoring group (Group 1, Figure 1). Very little change was noted in Competencies 2, 5, 7, and 8. This indicates that the better performing students have a grasp of conveying specific purpose, use of appropriate language, proper use of pronunciation, grammar, and articulation, and the effects of physical behaviors on their speech. Other explanations for the minimal change in the Group 1 may be that the addition of a visual aid may have hampered their efforts in some way.

It is interesting to note the increasing differences in pre- and post-scores in Groups 2, 3, and 4. Group 4, those with the lowest initial scores, improved the most across all competencies as well as the overall average. Their largest area of improvement was in Competency 2, conveying specific purpose. Competency 3, providing supporting materials, and Competency 4, appropriate organizational pattern, also increased notably. The instructor-specific comments given after the first presentation evidently helped these students understand these requirements better and were able to apply them directly in their follow-up efforts. With this

evidence of improvement, it is reasonable to think that the repeated speech performance would profit the majority of students but most especially those who begin the course with the fewest public speaking skills.

The answer to our second question regarding pedagogy is positive, yet preliminary. Educators and researchers must test the repeated speech performance further to affirm its worth. As with revising techniques in writing, the manner of teaching, coaching, and practicing must be examined and refined to produce the best presentations.

Implications for Future Studies

Although this study reveals a positive response toward the assignment and a statistically significant improvement in the scores, additional research needs to compare the students who do the repeated speech assignment with a control group that does not. A common, follow-up speech performance given by both groups should be compared.

Other research questions might include: Do students in the repeated speech group improve significantly in their overall understanding of the speech-making process? How does their overall performance compare with the performance of students who do not repeat any assignments? How would scores change if no additional requirements were demanded? Would learning be more permanent if only specific instructor comments were evaluated in the repeated speech?

However tentative these findings, the repeated speech gives researchers and educators encouragement that the reiterated speech, like revising an essay, promotes learning and successful outcomes.

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APPENDIX
REPEATED SPEECH PERFORMANCE
SURVEY

DIRECTIONS: Please consider each of the following questions carefully and answer honestly. Use the back of the sheet for responses if necessary. Do not put your name anywhere on the survey.

Age: _____

Gender (Please Circle): M F

Classification (Please Circle): FR SO JR SR

Major: _____

GPA (Please Circle): below 2.0
 2.0-2.49
 2.5-2.99
 3.0-3.49
 3.5-4.0

Race: _____

Home State or Country: _____

Have you previously taken a public speaking course?
 YES NO

If yes, where? _____

1. I believe the repeated informative speech assignment was helpful. (Please Circle):

Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree

Please explain your response:

2. I believe the repeated informative speech assignment presented some difficulties. (Please Circle):

Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree

Please explain your response:

3. I believe the repeated informative speech assignment is a valuable learning tool. (Please Circle):

Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree

Please explain your response:

4. I would recommend that instructors use the repeated speech assignment in public speaking classrooms. (Please Circle):

Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree

Please explain your response: