

Classroom Projects as Embodied and Embedded Outcomes Assessment

Garnet C. Butchart¹

Margaret Mullan²

Although educators already recognize the value in engaging student learning through classroom projects and service-learning, assessment of student learning through classroom projects may be accompanied by a shift of attention from mastery of ideas to embodied knowledge. We argue that embodiment is the basic semiotic condition of being human—of being both an expressive and perceptive (communicative) being among others. Linking this philosophy of communication principle to the topic of assessment, the article offers assessment research a focus of attention on learning settings: from embodiment as learning context, to the built environment of classrooms, as well as to group interaction. We describe assessment of student understanding, demonstrated by way of professional comportment, of communication as a reflexive and reversible relation. Attention to embodied learning encourages habits of being-before and being-with others in the shared world in a reflexive and co-creative manner.

Keywords: assessment, embodiment, communication, students, reflective attending

Educators have long explored developing, reforming, and honing student assessment in order to improve educational investments and outcomes. These explorations have unfolded within ongoing conversations between educators and the public. In the field of Communication, assessment has meant measurement of “communication competency” in a variety of contexts. Because communication takes place among persons, some scholars call for a shift of attention from assessing communication *effectiveness* to individual *ability* in communication with others. Thus, educators focus on working *with* students (McCroskey, 1982). In compliment to this perspective, and although educators already recognize the value of engaging student learning through classroom projects, we argue that assessment of learning through classroom projects may be accompanied by a shift of attention from mastery of ideas (or, performance of mastery) to *embodied knowledge*.

Our position is informed by *communicology*, the disciplinary name for the philosophical approach to human communication as a *conscious experience*, one that emphasizes the centrality of *embodiment* in communication. Embodiment is the basic *semiotic* condition of being human—of being both an expressive and perceptive (communicative) being among others. We bring this core tenet to bear on the topic of communication assessment, focusing analytic attention on embodied learning settings: from one’s own body as context, to the built environment of the classroom, as well as to interaction with other bodies (body as group and-or as individual). We offer a discussion of assessment of student understanding of communication as a reflexive and reversible relation, demonstrated in the classroom by way of professional comportment. Drawing from communicology, we argue that attention to embodied and embedded student learning improves habits of being-with others in the lived-world in a reflexive and co-creative manner.³

¹ Duquesne University

² Duquesne University

³ More technically, communicology is a tradition of scholarship that integrates semiotics and phenomenology in the study of human communication. Its major claim is that the conscious *experience* of communication cannot

The article begins with an overview of communication assessment literature relevant to embodiment. It then offers five discussion points about classroom projects as outcomes for assessment of student communication as embodied and embedded in lived-world experience. The discussion is drawn from experience teaching core undergraduate courses in communication theory, business and professional communication, and integrated marketing communication (IMC). Our goal is not to offer refinements of instruments of assessment but rather to invite reflection on assessment benefits to be gained from attending to embodied learning from a philosophy of communication perspective.

Assessment in Education: Historical Background

Assessment is an accepted policy and practice in higher education. Simply defined, assessment is “how we document our efforts to develop student learning [...] and the process of gathering and analyzing information from multiple sources in order to develop a deep understanding of what students know, understand, and can do with their knowledge as a result of their educational experiences” (Teaching and Learning Center white paper, quoted in Morreale, Backlund, Hay, & Moore, 2011, p. 267). In the United States, attention to assessment emerged in response to public demand for quality education. Educators and public groups proposed varying approaches to assessment.

Before 1975, assessment in the form of national educational standards grew alongside increased government funding for educational projects (Rosenbaum, 1994). Initial calls for educational accountability from higher education institutions sprung from uncertainty about whether educational products were financially efficient. A so-called “value-added” view of education measured an institution’s quality of education based on how much the student *changed* while attending the institution (Rosenbaum). From 1975 to the early 1990s, to ensure the quality of an undergraduate degree, a movement in higher education called for “a renewal of the faculty’s corporate responsibility for the curriculum” (Association of American Colleges, 1985, p. 38). During these same years, higher education institutions had already launched internal assessment projects to improve student assessment and so-called “customer satisfaction” (Rosenbaum). Institutions proposed increased student assessment to help students, to foster teamwork among faculty, to meet the demands of accrediting agencies, and to demonstrate commitment to student learning (Morreale et al., 2011). Public calls for educational accountability were translating into institutional improvements on student assessment.

As education focused upon achieving standards, the demand for clear assessments of those educational achievements also emerged (Hay, 1992). Since the early 1990s, national and state education groups continued clarifying standards for assessment (Rosenbaum, 1994). These governmental agencies constructed an educational reform that encouraged student assessment by way of testing student ability to *apply knowledge in new situations* (Arnett & Arneson, 1997). According to Arnett and Arneson (1997), knowledge-linked-to-action has

be separated from the study of human communication (expression and perception) if *communication* is truly to be an object of study. Communicology upholds both the Husserlian proposition that the human life world is experienced through signs and codes, and Merleau-Ponty’s insistence that the human body is both an expressive and perceptive medium of communication. Lanigan et. al (2005) define communicology as follows: “Communicology is the study of human discourse in all of its semiotic and phenomenological manifestations of embodied consciousness and practices in the world of other people and their environment.”

been an American value voiced by proponents from Ralph Waldo Emerson through to John Dewey. Continuing this perspective into late modernity, public demands in assessment shifted from a focus on “educate us” to a focus on “show us” (Arnett & Arneson, p. 84). Public requests for demonstrations of student knowledge were expressed in the emergence of multiple national standards. In our five discussions points in the second half of the article, we address the problem of “demonstrating” versus “performing” communication competence (McCroskey, 1982).

Conversations between the Public and Educators

The public standard-setting for educators was not met without resistance among college educators. Educators, especially those used to educating within a private environment, did not welcome the publicizing of learning (Arnett & Arneson, 1997, p. 85). Conflict emerged between public interest in educational products and private concern for freedom in education (Arnett & Arneson). Professors approached this situation from the premise that “the integrity of the professorate to pursue knowledge and teaching is central to the continued discovery of truth” (Arnett & Arneson, p. 86). Assessment seemed to threaten educators’ freedom to seek knowledge and truth freely, free from a political or public measurement. Yet, educators also needed to listen attentively to the public’s demand for assessment (Arnett & Arneson). A public desire for assessment reflects a demand that educational goals be publicized. Intellectual exploration has migrated from the private to the public terrain. Arnett and Arneson offer the following perspective: “In this historical moment in higher education, wise communicators proactively need to encourage assessment as a base of dialogue with the public” (p. 84). If educators reflect on why assessment has emerged as a priority for the public, these same educators may come to share some level of appreciation for assessment. According to Arnett and Arneson, dialogue between the public and academia is possible when both share a rationale for perspectives. Both voices have a reason for participating in the assessment conversation.

A Turn towards Dialogue

Educators in higher education may extend the invitation to dialogue by welcoming conversation with those outside academia (Arnett & Arneson, 1997). Both the public and educators share a desire to increase student learning. Assessment’s role in college education may provide space for dialogue between the public and educators (Arnett & Arneson, p. 92). Arnett and Arneson propose a “*communicative foundation* for viewing the act of assessment, not as an intrusion into the academy, but as an opportunity for dialogue with a larger public” (p. 82, added emphasis). They focus on the conversation between college administrators and national assessment bodies, and suggest that this dialogue may include sharing and understanding rationale for actions, as well as attending to historical situations that help explain rationale, actions, and reactions (Arnett & Arneson). Educators and students seek better learning and true knowledge. By way of a dialogic approach, both educators and the public may discover that they in fact seek the same goal; namely, the publicizing of private ideas so as to mutually improve (or advance, promote, and serve) education (Arnett & Arneson). Below, we build on the emphasis these scholars place on *communication* as the foundation for student assessment.

The invitation to dialogue about assessment persists in higher education. As assessment has become firmly established in higher education, ongoing engagement between

all educational shareholders has provided critical reflection tools for educators, led to increased communication among faculty members, and fostered co-responsibility among university faculty and administrators (Backlund & Arneson, 2000, p. 92). This continued educational project invites ongoing and committed dialogue, as student assessment continues to provide material for public discussion.

Communication Assessment

In these initial calls for national educational standards, a particular national goal on literacy proved significant for the field of Communication. An oft-quoted higher educational goal was offered by the U.S. Department of Education: “By 2000, the proportion of college graduates who demonstrate an advanced ability to think critically, communicate effectively, and solve problems will increase substantially” (USDE, 1995). Communicative “effectiveness” appeared as an essential benchmark for higher education. Since the 1970s, the National Communication Association (NCA) had also provided a national assessment agenda (Morreale et al., 2011). NCA assessment research has focused on defining communication curriculum and student learning outcomes (Morreale et al.). The typical approach is as follows: The faculty member measures student learning according to student learning outcomes; professors set the objectives, assesses the learning, and then uses the resulting data to improve curriculum and future learning. Communication competence required clear defining so as to provide sharper objectives.

Educators and scholars have sought to define communication competency. Yet, measuring communication aptitude has challenged educators and accrediting agencies alike (Hay, 1992). In general terms, communication competency is demonstrated through the capacity and motivation to share meaning with others (Littlejohn & Jabusch, 1982). Or, a competent communicator possesses “the ability and willingness to maximize the outcome of shared meaning” (Littlejohn & Jabusch, p. 29). Communication competency also includes understanding the communicative event, showing interpersonal sensitivity, using communication skills, and demonstrating ethical responsibility (Littlejohn & Jabusch). Yet, competence in these areas eludes strict empirical measurement (McCroskey, 1982). So, scholars continued to broaden communication’s scope to interpersonal, critical thinking, language, leadership, reading, research, oral presentation, cultural appreciation, writing, decision-making, theoretical, and ethical competences (Aitken & Neer, 1992). Some scholars developed particular competency measurements such as the Communication Competence Assessment Instrument (Rubin, 1982) or the Personal Report of Public Speaking Anxiety (McCroskey, 1983). National goals for educational skills included practical communicative skills such as, encouraging student “working on teams, teaching others, serving customers, leading, negotiating, and working well with people from culturally diverse backgrounds” (U.S. Department of Labor, 1993, p. 6). Thus, students would be assessed in their *capacity* to communicate effectively and to *apply* interpersonal communication skills.

Communication competence is primarily assessed through performance (Morreale et al., 2011). That is, students *express* knowledge, skills, and attitudes (Hay, 1992), while demonstrating ability to apply these expressions in various communicative settings such as, public speaking as well as in group (interpersonal and intercultural) and organizational contexts (Morreale et al.). Educators must also attend to the broader cultural frameworks within which the particular communicator performs (Morreale et al.).

From this perspective on assessment, evidence that a student possesses and acts from communication competence will emerge (or not) in various expressions, contexts, and

situations. For the purpose of assessment, evidence of communication competence may appear as: speaking effectiveness; reading comprehension; organization in writing and speaking; critical thinking demonstrated by information synthesis and argument development; theoretical analysis; demonstration of capacity to lead and decide; collaboration in teams; informed interpretation of an event; enunciation of sensitivity and responsibility; and attending to the other by way of careful listening. The competent communicator can and does act from these skills and habits in a variety of contexts.

Communication educators set objectives for student demonstration of aspects of this competence, and student learning outcomes attest to achievement of these objectives. According to Morreale et. al. (2011), assessment particular to Communication is “the systematic process of determining educational objectives, gathering, analyzing, and using information about student learning and learning outcomes to make decisions about programs, individual student progress, or (institutional) accountability” (p. 257). Institutional accountability to external agencies has, and continues to call for, concrete information about student learning. Learning outcome design that is informed by student assessment can help shape more achievable classroom objectives for communication competencies, attitudes, contexts, and evaluation.

That being said, it is worth quoting Spitzberg (2000) who questions whether or not “communication competence” can be measured in the first place. She asks:

Is competence best defined by understanding, clarity, efficiency, effectiveness, appropriateness, or satisfaction? Is competence a set of behavioral abilities or a set of impressions attributed to those abilities? Is competence a set of specific skills, or is it comprised of more general abilities? Is competence a state or a trait? If competence is contextual, cultural and relational, how can we hope to develop, much less teach, general principles of competence? (103).

Spitzberg (2000) argues that communication is often measured in terms of effectiveness, appropriateness, satisfaction, verisimilitude in meaning, or task achievement. She proposes turning from communication skills or behaviors and instead to attend to context, to the agents involved in the process of communication, and to judgment of a speaker’s expression. In so doing, assessment broadens into an evaluation of the *possibility* of communication taking place among participants. Spitzberg’s approach to assessment shifts attention from individual competence to the process of shared communication.

Engaging Student Learning

According to Barr and Tagg (1995), student learning has shifted from a teacher-centered model to student construction of personal knowledge and praxis. In this shift, students actively take part in learning by assuming responsibility for personal learning (Nicol & Macfarlane-Dick, 2006). Students grow through self-regulation, while educators may enhance this self-regulation with appropriate feedback. Yet, educators continue to bear the primary responsibility for assessment (Nicol & Macfarlane-Dick, 2006). If instructors continue as sole providers of assessment for students, students may not develop effective self-regulation skills. According to Nicol and Macfarlane-Dick (2006), for a student to benefit from feedback, the student must first be *aware* of the learning goals, know how to *evaluate* if his/her current performance measures up to those goals, and be challenged to find

ways to close the gap on performance and goals (p. 6). The educator's feedback would then facilitate student reflection throughout the learning process. Educator strategies, such as requesting student feedback on assignments or asking student groups to produce discussion questions, are examples to help facilitate student involvement (Nicol & MacFarlane-Dick). Educators who establish formative assessment into the course and request feedback provide a space where students may learn self-regulation.

Student learning also takes on new dimensions within the context of service-learning. Researchers such as Muhtaseb (2009) propose that adding a service-learning component to courses helps increase success rates in learning outcomes. Service-learning provides opportunities for students to apply knowledge, critique and take part in the enactment of practices, and to grow as citizens within a democratic society (Soukup, 1999). In a service-learning situation, the student works “not as a community volunteer, but as a learner, seeking knowledge from the community and through reflection on experience, as well as from more traditional textbook study” (Soukup, p. 8). As service-learning involves human interaction, the student communicates *in-person* and *in-action*. Service-learning offers students a learning context beyond their own personal context, opening opportunities for students to reflect on their lived-experiences of communication. It is to an understanding of communication as an embodied experience—and not merely a skill set in information sharing—that we focus in the discussion sections below.

An Ontological Turn

In higher education, knowledge-acquisition has focused primarily on the faculty of understanding and not as much on embodied knowledge. However, Dall'Alba and Barnacle (2007) outline key ideas that could broaden a conversation about the importance of embodied knowledge, assessment, and student success in higher education. Building on Heidegger's idea that we mainly access the world “through being immersed in activities, projects and practices with things and others” (681), Dall'Alba and Barnacle propose shifting the primary goal from knowing the world to being in the world—a calling of attention to lived-experience of embodied being. Educators could foster student reflexivity by engaging Heidegger's proposal that human beings move beyond just facing a thing to allowing things to reveal themselves (Dall'Alba, 2005) and thus, “when the familiar is made unfamiliar, we can facilitate transformation of the self” (Dall'Alba, 2005, p. 366). A Heideggerian approach to education involves an “ontological turn” in which an educator “teaches us to dwell there, transforming us in the process,” and the student attentively and responsively answers with “receptive spontaneity” (Thomson, 2001, p. 256). Encounter with unfamiliar experiences, situations, and contexts can cultivate self-reflection in students—a key component in the process of *learning to learn* (or, “deutero-learning”).

Barnett (2005) proposes that many college students experience the world as contingent in its “contestability” and its “challengability” (p. 794). Education could benefit from the experience of a fluctuating world that “requires human subjectivities that not only tolerate strangeness but can even produce it” (p. 794). Barnett offers the idea of “living with strangeness” (p. 794). He argues that “through the strange and unfamiliar we engage with difference: the possibility that things could be otherwise” (Dall'Alba & Barnacle, 2007, p. 685). Encounters with difference, and not simply reading about difference, could help students learn by reflecting on learning. By integrating student experience of the world into the process of learning about it, educators could take an ontological turn. As Barnes argues, “instead of knowing the world, being-in-the-world has to take primary place in the

conceptualizations that inform university teaching” (p. 795). In addition to assessment of skills, educators could also promote student commitment to learning outcomes by broadening the assessment focus to include *the process of learning*. In the context of Communication education, an ontological turn would acknowledge communication learning not only as student analytical competence but also as embodied experience.

Embodied Learning

Merleau-Ponty (1945/1962) argued famously that embodied knowledge is “is knowledge in the hands, which is forthcoming only when bodily effort is made, and cannot be formulated in detachment from that effort” (p. 144). Knowledge is not only cognitive-analytic; it is also embodied. As we know from daily experience, cognitive knowledge is more than just problem solving; it involves what Varela, Thompson, and Rosch (1993) call “knowledge how” or “readiness to hand.” They propose human cognition as embodied action when cognition includes “information processing as symbolic computation” (p. 40) and is perceived by “emergent properties” that link to cognitive skills (p. 99). Varela et al. suggest that cognition becomes *embodied* when a learner becomes part of an existing world or begins a new one (p. 207). Thus, they argue, “learning is conceived and acted out as an organic, embodied process based on the ‘inseparability between a particular way of being and the way the world appears to us’, so that ‘every act of knowing brings forth a world’” (quoted in Horn & Wilburn, 2005, p. 747). According to Horn and Wilburn (2005), learning happens in the process of making distinctions, and “this reflective turn, too, points learners to the realization that all learning is enacted as emergent phenomena that are self-directed, self-produced, autonomous” (p. 748). Horn & Wilburn (2005) argue further that learning “is predicated on the embodied merging of mind and body that remains *embedded*, as an autonomous system within an *environment* that constitutes the learning ecology” (p. 748–749, emphasis added). Learning ecology points to systems- and communities-interactions in spaces and contexts.

Embodied learning requires spaces that are, or can become, open to spontaneous events and experiences. Student learning assessment benefits from attending to a learning *ecology* that fosters and values embodied knowledge. As Horn and Wilburn (2005) share:

For embodied learning to become a viable alternative for the learning-on-demand varieties that continue to direct our focus toward making myths of reified pasts or of reified futures (we call utopias), and thus away from our full and reflective observing of our own process of creating, then learning, and the evidence of learning must be represented, surely, in ways that reach beyond the ‘enforced mechanisms of stabilization’ (Maturana & Varela 1998), inherent in predefined outcomes to pre-given problems that effectively impair today’s learning ecologies and the learners that constitute them. (p. 758)

Lawrence (2012) outlines how “intuitive knowing” includes holistic learning in the mind, heart, *and* body. He invites educators to attend to embodied learning by focusing on such basic communicative features as: body language; student expression of ideas through performance; and student participation in social movements (Lawrence). In sum, students demonstrate learning by way of its embodiment. Acknowledgement of embodied learning broadens the horizon of how we talk about communication assessment. It places the

experience of communication in the learning process at the very center of the discussion and invites an ecological perspective on the communication learning environment.

The Praxis of Embodied Learning in the Classroom: Embodied and Embedded Outcomes Assessment

Assessment of student learning is typically a matter of perception. Educators attempt to perceive (or, to observe) evidence of learning in order for outcomes to be properly evaluated. For that reason, assessment calls for development and-or refinement of instruments of perception. Quizzes, exams, essays and rubrics to name only a few, offer insight into what students know and how that knowledge changes. In contribution to improving assessment of student learning, we propose a shift of attention to embodied *expression*. We argue that student learning is not merely an externality revealed in abstraction by an assessment instrument. Student learning also may be located (experienced) *in the classroom*—it is perceptible in the expression of students throughout the course of a semester of project work. Classroom learning is both perception and expression. It is a conscious, embodied *experience* of communication. We argue that demonstration of student learning outcomes can be perceived in embodied expressions. Classroom projects are concrete, embodied expressions of Communication student learning outcomes.

Shifting focus from perception (objective, analytic measurements) to expression-perception (the *communication* of student work and its personal, subjective experience) is consistent with communicology’s perspective on human communication as a *reversible relation*. Butchart (2014) characterizes the relation as follows:

Although we typically take it for granted that one’s consciousness of world is acquired in the company of others, [...] it isn’t until human being obtains awareness of itself as a *signifier* in the discourse of others [...] that he or she will attend reflectively to what it means to be a person for others as well as for oneself. [...] For that reason, *self-expression* is bound to *other-perception*, just as *other-expressions* become the objects of *self-perceptions*. Theory of the reversibility of human communication (in contrast to unidirectional sending/giving and receiving of information) refines our understanding of subjectivity as *intersubjectivity*.

With classroom projects as *expressions* of course learning outcomes, we recognize that students are “*perceptive* body-subjects capable of knowing the lived body experience” (Lanigan, 1972, p. 146) of their learning environment *and* of the course objectives.⁴

Having reviewed relevant literature on communication assessment, and by way of a philosophy of communication (communicology) response to the call for “making assessment meaningful as a tool for improving pedagogy” (Rosean, 2013), we now turn to five discussion points about classroom projects as embodied and embedded outcomes for

⁴ Roman Jakobson describes the semiotic principle of the reversibility of human communication by reference to the constructs of encoding and decoding: “Encoding starts with the selection of constituents which are to be combined and integrated into a context. Selection is the antecedent, whereas building up the context is the consequent or aim of the *encoder*. For the decoder this order is inverted. First the decoder is faced with the context, second, he must detect its constituents; combination is the antecedent, selection is the consequent, that is, the ultimate aim of the decoding process” (quoted in Holenstein 1974, p. 145). In short, the analysis of a statement (expression) takes place in reverse from the order of its experience (perception).

assessment: (1) Room for embodied learning; (2) Space for shared creativity; (3) Project execution; (4) Attending to others in groups; and (5) Attending to Me, a subject. Discussion is drawn on experience teaching courses in communication theory; integrated marketing communication (IMC); and business and professional communication.

In what follows, our goal is not to speculate on instrument development for measuring classroom projects as embodied and embedded outcomes. Human consciousness of communication is dynamic and unique to one's own lived-experience as embodied. Static instruments for its measurement often tell us more about instruments themselves than about the dynamic classroom experience of communication as embodied and embedded. Our goal is to emphasize the semiotic phenomenology of human communication not as objective but as existential and subjective—communication learning *as an experience*. In so doing, our intent is to broaden perspective from idea mastery to embodied knowledge.

1. *Room for Embodied Learning*

The space of learning matters. There is an embodied experience of learning that is not only shaped but also largely determined by the built environment—classrooms have a material effect on learning. For instance, sitting in rows facing a lecturer is an entirely different learning experience when compared to sitting in small groups at tables, with the ability to get up, to move around, enter into and leave conversations occurring at other tables. Communication systems and cybernetic theorists have examined embodied learning in the context of so-called “World Café” group interaction—stations (tables) where conversations are held about multiple topics and issues, facilitating a process of interaction that not only promotes interactive learning but also invites reflection on the overall group process of communication and decision making (Jorgenson & Steier, 2013). In the context of communication education, the World Café model facilitates student encounters with difference mentioned above (e.g., different student perspectives and backgrounds, different styles of argumentation, different levels of competency, different ways of speaking, etcetera). The outcomes of learning in this interactive, mobile, and fluid environment (versus traditional, rigid and often inflexible models) is that students do not simply read about communication perspectives on the importance of difference, and the importance of being other-centered, they *experience it concretely*—they embody it.

The benefits of learning through interaction in the classroom continue to develop in the workplace. In preparation for face-to-face encounters in business and the communication professions, students benefit from learning the praxis of *dialogue*. In so doing, they embody professional communication habits for future work environments. Embodied learning through dialogue is particularly important today for students who are more comfortable with the controlled communication environments facilitated by electronically mediated interaction, such as SMS, email, and-or use of social media networks. One of the most important learning outcomes of the World Café classroom project is student confidence in *being present* and interacting *in person*, an embodied knowledge of difference and a skill set in dialogue they can walk into the marketplace.

Assessment in these contexts is always flexible, always contingent on the dynamics of groups to facilitate and sustain conversation rather than on the skills of individual students to perform mastery of ideas. What may be assessed is student and group reflection, by way of written and oral appraisals, of the process and experience of engaging with difference. We return below to benefits of self- and group- assessment reports.

2. *Space for Shared Creativity*

Thinking about how one comports oneself in groups does not have to be limiting or restrictive, but rather, freeing. The embodied knowledge that obtains from being and working with others builds student confidence in bringing individual creative perspectives and experiences into classroom conversations, and confidence integrating perspectives into the problem-solving process.

A relevant example of a classroom project we have used in teaching communication theory draws on the classic essay by Thomas Sebeok (1985) describing the *semiotic* problem presented to him as a consultant for the United States Government: How to create a message to clearly warn the public about the location of underground nuclear waste storage sites, a message that must persist for the duration of the radioactive life of the hazardous waste—10,000 years into the future. To engage this communication problem (the problem of linguistic drift, differences of interpretation, channel deterioration, etc.), we provide students with large sheets of butcher-block paper and colored markers, asking them to work in teams to create original signs and generate communication strategies. The challenge is not simply to come up with the most effective way to communicate “Go away!” Rather, the challenge is to identify and then focus on solutions to a *common* problem and draw on *individual* strengths to solve it.

Although student creativity and imagination find expression in words and visual images, it is the *practice* of being- and working with others that is the main communication learning outcome promoted by, and assessable through this classroom project. We find that working with creative materials significantly enhances the process of *learning* to comport oneself to others in groups. Working toward shared goals is a concrete, assessable expression of understanding communication as a reversible relation (*not* that what one says means what one says, but rather, that what one says will mean *what another perceives it to mean*). This semiotic principle of the reversible relation of communication applies not only to the activity of communicating a message 10,000 years into the future but also to individual student comportment within the presence of others within a group.

3. *Embodied Learning in Project Execution*

Another concrete example of the expression of embodied learning is to be found in the presentation of classroom projects. In the Business and Professional Communication course, student projects are research intensive. To succeed, teams must divide the responsibility in research, examine findings and prepare individual reports, then meet and work together to integrate findings and produce team deliverables that appear unified and cohesive. This seems like a basic task. From the assessment perspective of business communication research and report writing, it is not only basic but also essential. We have found that embodied student learning occurs, and is expressed, by way of student *attending* to the importance of shared work—working not only for oneself (that is, working for grades), but also working with others.

The *embodied commitment* to the group process of research and preparation of deliverables is manifest, and assessable, in the form of the professional delivery of presentations that appear *seamless*—presentations that are visually consistent (e.g., employment of consistent font), that include balanced communication of content and tone of speaking (e.g., each team member standing before the class and speaking professionally for an agreed upon length of time), and an articulation of a thesis that effectively integrates

the parts of individual student perspectives into a unified whole (i.e., a shared perspective that *orients* the process of individuals working-on-the-whole toward a shared end). These projects can be assessed as demonstrating *other-centeredness*, one of the core communication learning outcomes of the business and professional communication course designed to enhance student success in professional marketplace contexts.

4. *Attending to the Others in Group*

When we say that students may succeed by learning to work well with others, what we are pointing to is the fact that students can succeed by learning to work well *with themselves-working-with-others*. Students possess the ability—albeit perhaps not yet the skill—to reflectively attend to the ways in which they approach not only course content and other students, but also themselves *with others*.

For example, in a recent student group project, one member failed to appear on the day of a major team presentation, and did so with no prior warning. The four other students in the team had to adjust quickly to the unforeseen contingency. They “performed well under pressure” as we commonly say. However, what we mean by that phrase is not that the students were skilled at performing (unthinkingly and unreflectively) what was expected of them, but rather, that they demonstrated knowledge of a core *embodied* skill set in professional communication. The students were not derailed but stayed on task; they adjusted speaking times; and, together, appeared composed and calm. The missing student eventually returned to class but was faced with the challenge not only of having to overcome the new team dynamic, but also overcoming *himself*.

To be sure, calling attention to student recognition of oneself-working-with-others as an embodied learning outcome is consistent with organizational communication theories (Andrews & Baird, 2012) and with communication philosophies (Fritz, 2013) that emphasize the professional benefits—the goods—of working to meet the goals of the group, and not merely the individual. In contribution to this philosophical organizational communication perspective, we are calling attention specifically to the embodied experience of communication. Successful teamwork requires reflective attending to the very process of group learning, and being flexible within that process, by way of attending to how the individual orients him- or herself in the world of others in a working group.

5. *Attending to Me, a Subject in Group*

The assessment practices of *self-* and *group-performance appraisals* offer key examples of techniques to encourage student reflection about the learning outcomes of classroom projects. The appraisals also offer concrete outcomes for assessment.

In the business and professional communication course, completion of team projects is followed by written peer appraisals of individual team member performance. In our experience, students consistently offer honest appraisals of strengths as well as weaknesses, both of themselves and fellow team members. For example: “He showed up but didn’t say anything”; “she showed up but was texting”; “I had a lot on my plate at the time, so I didn’t help as much as I should have.” Others express perceptions of professional commitment: “She was vital to the group”; “she consistently contributed ideas”; “they came prepared, never complained, and contributed,” and so on.

When students are aware that others in the team will appraise their individual performance, changes may be observed, and assessed, in the *professional comportment* of the

student working within the group. Embodied learning outcomes in this example appear in such basic and foundational practices of student professionalism, such as: being present (attending, listening); participating (sharing the workload, contributing ideas); and developing skills to work productively (staying on task, focusing on solutions rather than on personalities)—practices in professional comportment that are expressed by each team member, and can be observed in class for the purposes of assessment.

Self- and group-assessment not only motivate productivity, but these instruments also bring the abstraction of assessment *back into the classroom*. This is key. Student conceptions of communication competence in others are linked to and shape conceptions of communication competence in each student him- or herself. Seen from this perspective, assessment may be thought of as a practice of attending to *habits*. Habits are usually invisible, embedded to oneself. One of the goals for outcomes assessment can be to lead students to discover their own professional communication habits, thereby encouraging ongoing reflection on the comportment of oneself in the process of working-with-others.

Self-reflection and peer-reflection, especially in written form, when combined with performative assessment, are among the most common and practical ways to assess professional communication competencies. Recent research relevant to our findings (Nicol & Macfarlane, 2006; Howe, 2003; Spitzberg, 2011) confirms the value of self- and peer assessment. Ross et. al (2002) note how students, performing self-assessment in writing, share critical information that paints for the educator a more complete picture of the student. Forensic team members who did self-reflection about practice and performance reported deeper educational experiences (Walker, 2014). This kind of self-assessment may also involve performative aspects undertaken with a community of peers. Describing self-assessment as a communicative practice, Agne (2010) argues that private, self-assessment may not entirely align with actual comprehension, or skills (p. 308). However, if self-assessment is spoken before peers, as a public report, it involves the group members in the personal appraisal (Agne, 2010). Such a self-assessment practice involves evaluation and acceptance and experiencing dilemmas in the process (Agne, 2010). The communal involvement in the self-assessment helps to bring the reversible nature of communication to the student's awareness. Spitzberg's (2011) combination of self-reflection with peer-reflection also makes this type of assessment more complete.

Finally, conversation about student self-assessment in the United States may be broadened to include global discussions. Pintrich (2004) notes a difference between North American versus European and Australian perspectives, arguing that North American educators, attentive to psychological factors, have focused on student's "information processing" (p. 385), while European and Australian educators have studied student approaches to learning (SAL). Pintrich calls for a combined approach of "self-regulated learning (SRL)" (p. 386) that not only considers the cognitive aspects of learning but also the motivational, affective, and social-contextual aspects. Pintrich offers various objectives for assessing and describing a learner's self-regulation, focusing on process and not merely on the product. The SRL model takes into account phenomenological approaches to the student's self-reports, along with broader psychological analyses that provide more complete insight into the student's behavioral and cognitive expressions, though the model requires a more intensive analysis of students (p. 403). Providing educators with broader approaches to student learning, inclusive of phenomenological insights, behavioral assessment, and cognitive expressions enriches the precision of assessment.

Implications and Conclusion

In 1992, J. M. McCroskey published an article (by now a citation classic) that set up a dichotomy between what he calls “communication competence” and “communication performance.” In it he points out that the latter is not equivalent to the former. We agree with McCroskey. However, with respect to the basic communication competencies expected in business contexts and in the professions of the 21st century (Fritz, 2013), we wish to add that communication performance *is* a mark of communication competence if we define “communication competence” (as we do) as both *skill and ability to reflect upon oneself* in interaction with others. The ability to attend reflectively to one’s comportment is far from an innate skill. It is a core feature of understanding human communication as reversible, an ability—skill *and* competence—to recognize self-expressions as the perceptions of others. Students demonstrate recognition of expression (self) as perception (others) not by unthinkingly adhering to professional communication standards (what McCroskey might call “performance”) but by protecting and promoting these standards as common goods (what McCroskey might call “competence”). Students demonstrate this competence (professional communication skill and ability) by way of the basic student practices communication educators typically assess, and that we have discussed above: E.g., regular attendance in class and in group working meetings, preparedness for meetings, contribution to projects, placing group needs before individuals, and so on.

Rather than speculate on improvements to instruments for assessing the demonstration of communication competence⁵, our goal as communicologists is to draw attention to learning outcomes as embodied (students as perceptive and expressive beings) and embedded (the classroom as environment of shared lived-world experiences). From this practical philosophical point of view, “putting oneself into a classroom project” takes on new meaning. Classroom projects aren’t simply external deliverables; they involve communication practices that are lived-through and shared—subjective experiences *within* the learning environment. As our examples demonstrate, peer and self-appraisals, collaborative and self-regulating group work, and interactive learning activities draw student attention to the student him- or herself *in the process of reaching course objectives*. Communication assessment is always, in part, self-assessment.⁶

Not only does the approach to assessment offered in this article help to broaden common perspective on the value of content retention, but also it may help us to cultivate among students a conscious awareness (embodied knowledge of the experience) of communication that is essential to personal and professional success. As Merleau-Ponty (1962) argues, the body is *in* the world. This means that the person is engaged in and with the world in which he or she dwells. We are embedded within our worlds. To have a world is to experience it. Just as the body is in the world, so too is learning in the classroom. Classroom learning is embodied *and* embedded. Attention to it may expand the foundation for students to feel at home with communication as an *experience*, and to embody learning rather than merely demonstrate (or perform) their mastery of ideas.

⁵ McCroskey (2007) proposes measuring affective learning by using a “General Belief Measure” and by measuring affect toward the teacher (512).

⁶ Self-reflection and peer-reflection, combined with performative assessment, are the most common, and practical ways to assess communication competencies of the kind discussed in the present article. McCroskey (2007) proposes measuring affective learning by using a “General Belief Measure” and by measuring affect toward the teacher (512). See also Pintrich (2004) for strategies for assessing student motivation and self-regulated learning.

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