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Contents

Recommended Citation

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1991 Speech Communication Association Basic Course Committee Award Winning Papers

Past research has identified communication apprehension as a causal agent for academic success. This investigation focused on the relationship of apprehension to success in a basic communication course. Additional demographic variables, including age, sex, grade in school, previous communication courses taken, and accumulated grade point average were included in a stepwise regression analysis. Self-reported grade point average and classification in school were found to be positively related to the final grade. Experience with previous communication courses and with extracurricular communication activities were negatively related to apprehension levels. Results confirm basic beliefs regarding public speaking experience and also support the "earlier the better" notion regarding public presentations.

Although the basic communication course has become more widely investigated in recent years, the basic course

textbooks have not enjoyed the same attention. The purpose of this study was to examine the twelve most popular basic public speaking texts. The primary principles included in these books were determined as was the relative importance given to each principle. This information should be useful for instructors and administrators of basic public speaking courses as well as for authors of similar textbooks.

Articles on the Basic Communication Course

> *This study addressed the effects of a basic communication course on students' perceptions of their communication skills. Students enrolled in a basic course were asked via a pre- and post- course questionnaire to assess changes in their perceptions of their communication skills. An analysis of the questionnaire results revealed that the basic course did have a positive effect on students' perceptions of their communication skills, particularly in presentation and interviewing skills, and on their comfort in communicating. The results also illustrate that the effects on communication skills were stronger in those areas (especially public speaking) where students perceived the greatest need to improve. While there are limitations to this self-report data analysis, the study does provide some evidence that a basic communication course can have a positive effect on students' communication skills.*

> *This essay argues for the place of critical thinking in the basic communication course. Included in the argument is a discussion and critique of traditional modes of critical thinking, an analysis of an alternative approach to critical thinking, the grounding of this alternative approach in a classical*

communication model, a discussion of why the basic course in communication is the most appropriate home for the teaching of critical thinking, and a sample approach to teaching critical thinking in the basic course.

This research examined the impact of video-modeling on basic communication course students' public speaking apprehension. Students were confronted with successful and unsuccessful video model presentations of their first public speaking assignment. The viewing of the video models preceded in-class live performances. Results indicate that students who were confronted with both of the video models experienced increased public speaking apprehension, while students who viewed neither video model did not.

We focused on three problems that evolve over time for veteran basic course directors. After briefly commenting on the state of basic course literature, we discuss dealing with tradition, motivating students for the long term, and maintaining our own motivation for the course — three areas quite distinct from those addressed in an earlier article. The ideas and issues discussed here have arisen as a result of eighteen years of directing a basic communication course.

Although men and women may be the victims of sexual harassment, the majority of women will experience harassment in the classroom and/or on the job. Harassment in the classroom occurs often out of ignorance of knowing what constitutes harassing behaviors. Those feeling harassed often are not the only victims in these situations. Many "victims" of harassment are the inexperienced instructor or graduate assistant who realize too late that their well intended actions have been received differently. The specific parameters of what constitutes harassing behaviors and its prevalence are examined. A training module is offered which presents guidelines for the basic course director to use in acquainting his or her staff with appropriate actions to guard against sexual harassment complaints.

The Public Speaking Basic Course

The public speaking course has changed little during the past two decades, despite the rapid and profound changes that have occurred in rhetorical scholarship. By contrast, the basic composition course in English Departments has undergone transformations that more closely reflect the development of the scholarship. One reason for this difference may rest in our failure to regard the public speaking course as a serious part of our mission as teachers and scholars. By concentrating on the rhetoric of composition, we might not only generate innovative and theoretically interesting approaches to pedagogy, but we might improve our rhetorical scholarship by connecting it more directly with our common experience as teachers of public speaking.

Most contemporary public speaking texts contain some reference to the effective use of humor by public speakers.

ix

This advice tends to reflect common assumptions o n the role of humor in public speaking and the ability of the novice speaker to incorporate humor in a speech. A review of 27 contemporary texts explores the trend in humor instruction and offers 11 categories which summarize the treatment of humor: (1) theories of humor, (2) rationale for the use of humor, (3) guidelines for the use of humor, (4) sources of humor, (5) humor as a factor of attention, (6) specific humorous techniques to employ in a speech, (7) injunctions on the use of humor, (8) who should use humor, (9) the use of self-deprecating humor, (10) how to deliver the humor, (11) humorous speaking.

Can the introduction predict the success or failure of the speech? Does anything predict a successful speech?
First, textbooks were examined to see what is being taught about introductions. Then the results of the first speeches given by freshman and sophomores in a hybrid communication were studied to see if successful introductions predicted successful speeches. Finally, some other predictors to speech success are discussed, including public speaking experience and the verbality of the student's chosen major.
This comparison of the introduction of the speech and the subsequent grade on the speech was done as a preliminary "think piece," so no attempt was made to determine statistical significance. The study asked, "What's out there?", and will hopefully lead to more controlled statistical analyses.

> *This study investigated the use of role models as an instructional strategy in public speaking classes. The subjects in this study were 24 college students in two communication classes. One group viewed a videotape of seven informative speeches given by upper-division speech students and representing a range of ability. The other group did not view the video. Both groups were videotaped presenting their own speeches and these speeches were rated by a group of senior speech majors at another college. Means of the ratings for each speaker were analyzed using a two-sample t-test. Results did not support the hypothesis that watching the role models would help the students prepare and present better speeches. Findings are explained in terms of the critical role of the instructor, the possible bias of the raters, and the difficulty in controlling classroom content.*