ABC Western United States Regional Conference

March 1-5, 2020

Conference Chair: Peter Cardon

ABC Western United States Regional Vice President: Jolanta Aritz

ABC Western United States Regional Conference

March 1-5, 2020

Schedule at a Glance

Sunday, March 1, 2020

5:30 pm: Depart Long Beach (Los Angeles)

ABC Welcome Reception (Departure Day or Day at Sea - TBD by Carnival) Announcement to follow

Monday, March 2, 2020

7:00 am to 1 pm: Free time on Catalina Island

1:30 to 3:30 pm: *Virtual Reality Interactive Exercise*. Experience a VR learning exercise that will help us consider new ways of teaching with technology. **Location**: Mirage Piano Bar.

Robert McCarty, Miles Suleman, and Gita Govahi will lead us in a VR exercise about decision making. All participants will be provided with VR headsets and engage in a group de-brief experience that shows the latest in learning technologies.

3:45 to 4:45 pm: *Research Development Session*. These sessions are devoted to developing early-stage research projects. Researchers who have developed research designs and, in some cases, who have collected preliminary data will present their projects in roughly 5 to 10 minutes. Then, colleagues will spend 15 to 20 minutes discussing how to move the projects forward. **Location**: Mirage Piano Bar.

- Veronica Yijia Guo and Lindsey M. Bier, "Leadership framing and promoting the country image: The case of Jack Ma's communication at international business forums."
- Rebekka Anderson, "A Study of Professional Writing Internships Abroad: When Things Don't Go as Planned."

Tuesday, March 3, 2020

8 am to 3 pm: *Conference Industry Tour in Ensenada* (there is no cost to this tour for conference participants; please make sure to pay for your guests).

On this journey a few miles northeast of Ensenada to Calafia Valley, you will learn about the history of Ensenada and the Baja area as well as the local customs and traditions. We will take a 30-45 minute tour of two wineries and discover how they transform crushed grapes into wine, sherry, tequila and brandy. You will taste selected wines served with assorted cheeses and biscuits. Finally, you'll have the option to shop at Ensenada's main shopping district for Mexican handicrafts and imported merchandise, or return directly to the ship.

3 to 5 pm: *Free time in Ensenada*

Association for Business Communication (logo)

Wednesday, March 4, 2020 (Day at Sea)

ABC **9:30 to 11:00 a.m.** *Research Session*. These presentations involve completed research projects with empirical data about communication in the workplace. Research presentations will be 10 to 15 minutes in length with 5 to 10 minutes for discussion. **Location**: Shangri La Lounge.

- Marcel M Robles, "The Role of Soft Skills in Today's Business Environment."
- Nick Backus, "The Use of Narrative by 4ocean."
- Gail Fann Thomas and Kimberlie Stephens, "Developing Situational Judgment Tests to Address First-Line Supervisors' Responses to Gray Zone Sexual Harassment Behaviors."
- Carolyn Meyer, "An Analysis of Image Repair and Crisis Communication Strategies: Capital One's 2019 Data Breach Crisis Response."

ABC **2:00 to 3:20 p.m.** *Scholarship of Teaching and Learning*. These presentations involve completed research projects with empirical data from communication classes and training. SoTL presentations will be 10 to 15 minutes in length with 5 to 10 minutes for discussion. **Location**: Mirage Piano Bar.

- Amy Rubens, "Writing for the Hiring Process: Students' Perceptions and Attendant Teaching Strategies."
- Jeff Lewis, "Anatomy and Physiology of a 2020 Business Presentation Assignment."
- Scott Springer, Ann Springer, and Spencer Scanlan, "Who Improves More in Cover Letter Writing after a Business Communication Course: Native English Speakers or Non-Native English Speakers?"
- Lindsay C. Clark and Traci Austin (co-author), "Integrating User Experience in the Creation of an Oral Communication Lab."

ABC **3:30 to 4:30 p.m.** *Innovative Teaching*. These sessions involve 5-to-10 minute presentations about innovative teaching of business communication topics. **We'll conclude this session with the location unveiling of the 2022 ABC Western United States regional conference**. **Location**: Mirage Piano Bar.

- Craig Rinne, "Drafting and Grafting: Mutually Reinforcing In-Person and Online Presentations in Hybrid Courses."
- Dipali Murti, "Business Writing as a Collaborative Process."
- Robyn Walker and Peter W. Cardon, "Challenges, Processes, and Inclusion in Groups: Face to Face vs. Virtual Teams."
- Jolanta Aritz, Kristen M Getchell (co-author), Minna Logemann, Ann Springer, Scott Springer, Karen Woolstenhulme, Peter W. Cardon, and Anne Carolin Fleischmann (co-author), "Teaching team work, cross-cultural competence, and digital communication with the Virtual Business Professional Project."
- Georgi Ann Rausch, "Using Validation to Soothe Ethical Dilemmas."

Thursday, March 5, 2020 (Arrive in Long Beach at 7:00 a.m.)

Return home

Conference Abstracts by Session

Monday, March 2, 1:30 to 3:30 p.m.

Location: Mirage Piano Bar

Presenters: Robert McCarty, Miles Suleman, and Gita Govahi

Title: Virtual Reality Interactive Exercise

Abstract

Wild Flower – A VR activity that explores unconscious bias

For the longest time we had been interested in finding a way to tap into learner's unconscious bias as an effective way of providing interpersonal and communication training to our constituents. At the Experiential Learning Center we experimented with Virtual Reality as a medium to assist us in making this happen. Often times as we directly explore the concept of unconscious bias with the learner, we realize very quickly that notion is no longer considered "unconscious". So we had to look for ways in which we could have the learner experience his/her biases without being aware of them! Here is where the VR technology came to the rescue! The immersive nature of this technology aided us in creating an environment where the learner is focused on making decisions without giving much thought to "how" he/she is making these decisions. The activity revolves around a selection process and there are 5 candidates who are being considered for a position. The activity involves learners viewing videos, reading resumes and responding to questions on-line and in the VR environment. A special dashboard aids us in collecting the relevant information while easily looking for patterns and points of discussion. The variety of responses along with various explanations and justifications that participants offer in defending their own candidates and/or not selecting others, creates a great learning environment for participants to reflect on their own biases and think of ways of trying to overcome them.

Monday, March 2, 3:45 to 4:45 p.m.

Location: Mirage Piano Bar

Presenters: Veronica Yijia Guo and Lindsey M. Bier

Title: Leadership Framing and Promoting the Country Image: The Case of Jack Ma's Communication at International Business Forums

Abstract

The conceptualization and practice of public diplomacy are evolving as multiple actors, including companies and their leaders, now communicate directly and create relationships with foreign publics. Companies compete globally to generate brand admiration among international audiences. Previous research establishes the correlation between the company image and the country image. Favorable company images influence a country's soft power with advantages such as promoting exports, attracting investments, and negotiating policies.

Previous studies indicate prominent executives' images are linked to their respective company images. Executive communication serves a role in building an executive's international image and the company image but also potentially influences the country's soft power. Research about the relationship between leadership framing and public diplomacy is sparse. Thus, this study utilizes Jack Ma as a case to answer research questions focusing on executive communication as a context for managing the meaning of business practices and situations but also as a tool to promote simultaneously a company image and a country's soft power.

Data were collected from Ma's presentations at eight 2018 international business forums. China has been the focus of scholarship exploring new public diplomacy tools, but this study expands published research by investigating how a Chinese business leader's framing coincides with promoting China's image. Ma was selected since he co-founded Alibaba, one of the largest e-commerce businesses, and is currently ranked as China's wealthiest entrepreneur. Further, Ma presents a unique case since he is Alibaba's executive chairman and China's most prominent capitalist but is also a member of the Chinese Communist Party. Thus, he communicates about Alibaba but also represents the Chinese government when characterizing China to the global community. In 2019, Foreign Policy magazine listed Ma among the top ten global thinkers – and the only Chinese person – with the greatest impact in the previous decade.

The data were examined for commonly used language forms in leadership (e.g., metaphorical, story, contrast, spin, jargon/catchphrase, analogy, argument, feeling statement, category, three-part list, and repetition) and frames (e.g., metaphorical, simplifying, gain and loss, master frame, and believability). Ma's framing style was then connected to the constructs associated with the country image (e.g., physical appeal, heritage and culture, human capital, political appeal, social appeal, economic appeal, and emotional appeal). Data analysis is in progress, but preliminary results highlight the relationship between framing communication about business activities and promoting the country image with implications for leadership communication and public diplomacy research.

Presenter: Rebekka Anderson

Title: A Study of Professional Writing Internships Abroad: When Things Don't Go as Planned

Abstract

STUDY PURPOSE
The field of business and professional communication has long advocated for intercultural communication competence as a learning outcome for students completing degrees or specializations in this disciplinary area (e.g., see Andrew & Henze, 2009 and Starke-Meyerring, 2005). Study abroad

programs with writing internship components are ideal locations for students to gain this competence (e.g., see Ballentine, 2015and Salvo, Conrad-Salvo, & Rice, 2012). But scholarship in the field has yet to examine internships abroad; we thus know little about how internships abroad might best be structured to support student learning and the development of desired competencies.

In fall 2018, I collected data for an onsite qualitative case study of a professional writing internship abroad program in Sydney, Australia. The study, Professional Writing Internships Abroad: A Study of Student Learning and Program Efficacy, received financial support from the C. R. Anderson Research Fund.

Students enrolled in the program gained global experience by interning 20 hours a week and taking two professional writing courses and one course in Australian life and culture. This research project focused on the internship component of the program.

STUDY RESEARCH QUESTIONS
I proposed to examine several research question clusters, which were as follows:

1.   What professional writing and intercultural communication competencies do students gain while interning abroad and how do targeted metacognitive interventions facilitate learning?

2.   During their internships, how do students come to understand and then participate in the communication practices of their organizations? How do students negotiate the rhetorical strategies of their organizations in their assigned professional writing work?

3.   How might the Sydney internship program be further developed to enhance the overall learning experience of the students and the host experience of the internship sites? How might other writing/communication internships abroad programs best be structured to support student learning and development of professional writing and intercultural communication competencies?

STUDY RESEARCH APPROACH
To examine my research questions, I employed qualitative, case study methodology, which allowed me to examine the students' internship experiences as they unfolded. I conducted a focus group and four interviews each with nine students. I also collected their reflective writings, process logs, and example internship projects. Research methods were also to include interviews and site visits with internship supervisors; however, the internship provider was unable to share supervisor or site information.

I will begin preliminary data analysis in early 2020 and complete a full analysis after the conference. At that point, I will report findings in an article targeted for Business and Professional Communication Quarterly.

CHALLENGES
I faced several data collection challenges in Sydney that impact the extent to which I can address my research questions and achieve the goal of the study (as proposed). The challenges, though, revealed telling insights into the way the internship program was structured and the effects of that structure on

student learning. At the conference, my hope is to receive feedback from peers on how I might best focus data analysis and on what story (or stories) I might tell given the challenges I faced.

Wednesday, March 4, 2020, 9:30 to 11 a.m.

Location: Shangri La Lounge

Presenter: Marcel M Robles

Title: The Role of Soft Skills in Today's Business Environment

Abstract

Introduction

The use of skills, both hard and soft, lead to advanced innovation and overall success of a business (Levasseur, 2013). However, it is often difficult to distinguish between these two skill sets and even more difficult to properly intertwine their use effectively. Research suggests that not only is the distinction between hard and soft skills imperative, but using both skill types together have led to improvements in training, risk management, project development, and overall business success (Rainsbury, Hodges, Burchell, & Lay, 2002).

It is necessary for employees to possess and successfully utilize both hard and soft skills. Hard skills are those "skills associated with technical aspects of performing a job and usually include the acquisition of knowledge" (Laker & Powell, 2011). In contrast, soft skills are focused on interpersonal skills and "place emphasis on personal behavior and managing relationships between people" (Laker & Powell, 2011). Soft skills determine an individual's ability to work in groups, communicate information, and organize a workforce.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to determine the critical soft skills that employers want from their employees so that business educators can promote these skills in their curriculum to improve the employability of graduating business seniors. This study is a replication of a study completed by Robles in 2012. It will be noted how much has changed in 8-10 years.

Methodology and Procedures

Business executives were asked about topics that they deemed important for business graduates today. Then, the ten soft skills that were listed most often by the executives were included in a survey to be rated by level of importance. All data will have been collected by the end of fall semester 2019.

Literature Review and Findings

While awaiting data findings, the literature review is ongoing and will be presented at the conference,

along with conclusions and recommendations.

Implications

If educators understand the importance of interpersonal skills for their students, they can include soft skills in their instructional strategies to promote and enhance the interpersonal skills of their students. Soft skills are critical in today's workplace and should be viewed as an investment (Robles, 2012). Either organizations need to train current employees to enhance their soft skills, or hire new business graduates from college with a well-rounded integration of hard and soft skills. As business educators, we have the opportunity to prepare business graduates for the soft skills needed in today's workforce Soft skills and hard skills should be integrated to create a well-rounded business graduate.

This presentation will discuss the progress of this current study, as well as compare it to a study, done by Jones, Baldi, Phillips, and Waikar (2016), of 51 recruiters from 37 different organizations who ranked the importance of 21 skills. Two other studies (Valavosiki, Stiakakis, & Chatzigeorgiou, 2019; Wilson & Marnewick, 2018) will also be presented that are significant for this research because they provide detailed information regarding the importance of quality soft skills in a business environment.

Location: Shangri La Lounge

Presenter: Nick Backus

Title: The Use of Narrative by 4ocean

Abstract

Alex Schulz and Andrew Cooper, were surfing in Bali, Indonesia. The behavior of local fishers led Cooper and Schulz to see a problem that they had not noticed previously. The fishers got into the water to push their boats. Schulz and Cooper identified the reason for this odd behavior—there was so much plastic pollution in the water that the fishers had to push their boats past the plastic so that they could fish. The result of Cooper and Schulz' insight is a for-profit company: 4ocean.

Schulz and Cooper clearly identify 4ocean as for-profit. They are not a charity and someone is making money off this venture. Broadly, the company sells items made from recycled plastic—clothing, bracelets, and other articles. 4ocean officials state that 1 pound of plastic pollution is removed for each bracelet bought. Publicly released statistics indicate a thriving company, working toward its social goals. 4ocean removed its 1 millionth pound of plastic pollution in 2018 and its 5 millionth pound in 2019. Forbes magazine named Cooper and Schulz to its 30 under 30 social entrepreneurs. 4ocean also engages in work with other groups with similar goals. This includes some international sports sponsorships and a large number of partnerships with other groups. 4ocean also recently unveiled a 135-foot plastic cleaning boat.

The story of Schulz and Cooper is an inspiring one. Analysis of the artifacts associated with communication on and on behalf of 4ocean reveals the inner working of this corporate communication. Specifically, Walter Fisher designed a theory of narrative and narrative analysis. The present examination utilizes the criteria for effective that Fisher laid out in his work. Fisher argues that Narrative Rationality is the end of communication. He maintains that Narrative Rationality has two components: Narrative Probability (or Coherence) and Narrative Fidelity (or Correspondence). These categories present the criteria for effective narrative, in the form of questions. Narrative Probability leads to two questions or criteria: Does the story hang together? and Is the plot free of contradictions? Narrative Fidelity is associated with two additional criteria: Logic of Reasons (soundness of reason according to standards of formal and informal logic; and Logic of Good Reasons (Relevance, consistency, values, etc.).

Through identification of the structural aspects of 4ocean' s narrative, we achieve a deeper understanding of 4ocean's communication. This examination should show us the narrative structures that indicate success. As we gain insight into this specific instance of narrative communication, we also gain a further appreciation of narrative in a broader sense."

Location: Shangri La Lounge

Presenters: Gail Fann Thomas and Kimberlie Stephens

Title: Developing Situational Judgment Tests to Address First-Line Supervisors' Responses to Gray Zone Sexual Harassment Behaviors

Abstract

Statement of Purpose

Sexual Harassment (SH) and Sexual Assault (SA) continue to be persistent problems for organizations. While numerous studies have addressed sexual assault and sexual harassment, fewer studies have addressed related behaviors such as sexist behavior and offensive behavior that are more ambiguous and may not clearly fit within the categories of sexual harassment or sexual assault. These more ambiguous behaviors are sometimes called the "gray zones or gray areas" of sexual harassment, and they, too, can affect organizational climate in an adverse manner. The research is clear that supervisors' responses to these behaviors can contribute to or detract from a healthy workplace.

The primary purpose of this study was to develop Situational Judgment Tests (SJTs) that would identify first-line supervisors' ability to appropriately address gray-zone behavior. Situational Judgment Tests are used with such occupations as police and physicians. SJTs are used to identify an individual's ability to read or view realistic work scenarios and make judgments about the most appropriate response to the scenarios. Often these SJTs deal with "soft" skills, particularly communication-related behaviors.

Research Approach

The research was conducted in three stages. Following a thorough literature review of SJT uses and measurement, we developed and refined 24 SJT items. These items were integrated into a pilot survey that included measures of individual differences and know-how in key areas. Following analysis of the pilot data, we developed a final survey that included a subset of SJT items, relevant individual differences, know-how, and organizational attributes.

Findings

We initially interviewed about 75 first-line supervisors and managers to obtain realistic scenarios of grey-zone sexual harassment. We used these scenarios to develop items for the SJT items. Possible responses to the scenarios invoked principles from the four categories of know-how that had been identified through literature review. For each situation, the options ranged in quality from most appropriate action to least appropriate action. The pilot survey included 24 SJT items included six organizational justice items, six perspective-taking items, six propensity for action items, and six interpersonal communication-related items. Each item had two variations, one in which male actor(s) offended a woman, and one in which female actor(s) offended a man. Both variants were included in pilot surveys.

Results

We are conducting the final analysis and preparing the final report for our research sponsors and for publication. Based on our literature review and conversations with subject matter experts, we have developed a conceptual model that addresses the antecedents and consequences of gray-zone sexual harassment behavior. The conceptual model underpins our Situational Judgment Tests.
We have tested our SJT to determines its validity and reliability and will report those statistics. We are comparing individuals' answers about how they believe they should respond vs. how they would respond in this situation. We will report demographic comparisons – gender, age, and education. We will also report the results any relationship between personality variables (measured with selected Big 5 scales) and our SJTs.

Implications

We believe that we will be able extend the literature on gray-zone sexual harassment behaviors and demonstrate potential first-line supervisor approaches for identifying and appropriately responding to these gray-zone sexual harassment behaviors. When one considers that entry-level and first-line supervisors might comprise as much as 60% of an organization, this approach has the potential of having an important impact.

Location: Shangri La Lounge

Presenter: Carolyn Meyer

Title: An Analysis of Image Repair and Crisis Communication Strategies: Capital One's 2019 Data Breach Crisis Response

Abstract

In July 2019, Capital One, the fifth-largest credit-card issuer in the United States, announced that a security breach had exposed the personal data of 106 million credit card applicants in the U.S. and Canada. The hack was one of the largest security breaches of a major U.S. financial institution on record and propelled the company into the biggest crisis of its 25-year history, inflicting damage on its reputation and stock price. The hacker indicted in the incident was a rogue former employee of Amazon Web Services Inc., which hosts Capital One's tech infrastructure. Capital One CEO Richard Fairbank had foreseen the ripple effects of similar crises, such as the 2017 Equifax breach, on the credit card industry and backed his commitment to strategic boldness and risk averseness by ensuring his company became more adept at protecting itself from outside threats targeting personal data; however, the company was unable to protect itself from a single inside actor bent on sabotage. Improper configuration of a firewall had left the company vulnerable to data theft, heightening perceptions that it was at fault, putting its cloud-based technology into question, and inciting blame from stakeholder groups. Fairbank, however, perceived the crisis as a defining moment to display company values and demonstrate a capacity for swiftness, openness and empathy.

This study aimed to grow current understanding of breach communication by (i) examining how Capital One dealt with an unlikely data breach crisis that was both within and beyond its control, and (ii) by focusing on the initial situational crisis communication and image repair strategies used in the early and unpredictable stages of the crisis. RQ1. What crisis communication strategies did Capital One use in its initial response to its data breach? RQ2. How was the discourse of image repair constituted in the initial Capital One data breach response? Using taxonomies of image repair and Situational Crisis Communication Theory as interpretative frameworks, this study employed a textual analysis of Capital One press releases (an important means of creating and restoring image linked to agenda setting and issue framing) and news reports (a primary method of analysis in image repair studies). Sysomos social media management and analytic software was used to track public word-of-mouth and media perceptions of the crisis.

A mix of situational factors and crisis types associated with aspects of the incident shaped the crisis response strategies while presenting unique communication demands and challenges for crisis framing: causal responsibility and victimage; a threat that was both internal and external, short-term and long-term; and trust violations related to both competence and integrity. Capital One adopted instructing and adjusting information as its initial response. Its July 29th press release contained a delayed crisis acknowledgement, Fairbank's apology and vaguely-defined compensation plan. Accommodative strategies (corrective action, redress) aimed at rebuilding predominated; however, image repair strategies of bolstering and minimization were noted (e.g. referring to the breach as an "incident"). The findings have implications for how companies manage crises involving tampering or malevolent acts by individuals internal to organizations.

Wednesday, March 4, 2020, 2 to 3:20 p.m.

Location: Mirage Piano Bar

Presenter: Amy Rubens

Title: Writing for the Hiring Process: Students' Perceptions and Attendant Teaching Strategies

Abstract

This presentation outlines the results and teaching implications of an IRB-approved study of undergraduate business writing students' perceptions of writing for the hiring process. Writing for the hiring process involves traditional genres like resumes and cover letters but also informational interview requests, thank-you notes, and LinkedIn messages. Procedural knowledge of writing for the hiring process encompasses understanding the contextual norms, expectations, and purposes of specific writing genres.

The study was conducted during Spring Semester 2019 at a comprehensive university in the Southeastern U.S. Using qualitative and quantitative measures, it gauged the evolution of business writing students' procedural knowledge of writing for the hiring process based on their completion of (1) a fifteen-week, 300-level business writing course, and (2) a dedicated "writing for the hiring process" unit assigned the last three weeks of the aforementioned course. Students enrolled in the course for elective credit; others did so to satisfy either general education or major requirements. Course participants in the study (n=24) hailed from a range of academic majors, including Management, Art, Sports Administration, Accounting, Pre-Nursing, English, and Media Studies.

To discern students' perceived procedural knowledge in response to specific teaching interventions, the study consisted of several parts: (1) Pre-learning and post-learning surveys, which were distributed before and after the "Writing for the Hiring Process" unit, and (2) a reflective memo that accompanied students' final project for the course.

The scholarship on job seekers' perceptions of self-efficacy and preparedness regarding the job search is well documented (Lim, Lent, & Penn 2016; Moynihan, Roehling, LePine, & Boswell 2003). And, while previous studies have examined how graduate and undergraduate business writing students perceive their ability to look for jobs, obtain interviews, and secure employment offers (De Vos, De Stobbeleir, & Meganck, 2009; Smith, 2017), this study focused on students' perceived knowledge of writing practices at various stages of the hiring process. Specifically, it focused on undergraduate business writing students' confidence producing specific writing genres from within specific contexts or "rhetorical situations" (Bitzer, 1968).

Understanding what undergraduate business writing students believe they know about the conventions of specific writing practices for the hiring process—as well as how these conventions might evolve in response to contextual factors—will better guide business writing instructors in their teaching. First, it

will help instructors effectively focus their teaching of specific genres. Second, it will aid instructors in improving students rhetorical sensibilities. Third, a better grasp of students' perceptions will help teachers facilitate learning transfer, or students' ability to synthesize their knowledge of business writing, professionalism, and the job search from prior contexts and then apply it to new ones (Beaufort, 1998; Schieber 2016).

The study's findings suggest that teaching writing for the hiring process is a worthwhile pursuit in business writing classes, even if students report learning about it elsewhere or initially feel highly confident about their procedural knowledge. The study's findings have considerable implications for undergraduate business writing instructors who teach outside of business schools and whose students vary widely in terms of academic major, age, job experience, and previous assistance with the job search. In particular, the study suggests students' experiences and assumptions as well as the extent to which manifest cognitive dissonance be centered in as many teaching activities as possible, particularly in terms of class discussion and independent, research-based inquiry activities.

Location: Mirage Piano Bar

Presenter: Jeff Lewis

Title: Anatomy and Physiology of a 2020 Business Presentation Assignment

Abstract

Ready or not, the year 2020 is upon us. How well have presentation assignments in undergraduate business communication courses kept pace with workplace norms and technology? This session provides an in-depth examination of comprehensive business presentation assignments that involve practice with artificial intelligence coaching, presentations incorporating more than a PowerPoint projector, and guided peer review that is automatically tracked and graded.

Business presentations are central to most business communication courses (Moshiri & Cardon, 2014; Lucas & Rawlins, 2015; Cyphert et al., 2019). But the skills gap recognized by employers (Brink & Costigan, 2015) and the rapid change of workplace norms present a challenge to business communication instructors.

In an attempt to modernize the tried and true business presentation assignment, one instructor worked with software developers to establish a program where students are challenged and supported to improve their presentation skills.

Participants attending this session will be led through the lifecycle of a business presentation assignment from the perspectives of the instructor and the students. The purpose is not to promote specific commercial software or learning technology, but to envision how business presentation assignments can be modernized using technology and other methods. Participants will also be asked to

share their strategies for encouraging presentation practice and extracting value from the peer review process during the session discussion period.

Location: Mirage Piano Bar

Presenters: Scott Springer, Ann Springer, and Spencer Scanlan

Title: Who Improves More in Cover Letter Writing after a Business Communication Course: Native English Speakers or Non-Native English Speakers?

Abstract

We asked 83 undergraduate business communication students at a university in the Western U.S. to complete a cover letter writing assignment as a pretest and again as a posttest in the same semester. The pretest and posttest cover letters were then evaluated by three reviewers with expertise in cover letter writing. The purpose of this study was two-fold: a) to determine whether the proportion of satisfactory vs. not satisfactory performance on a cover letter writing assignment change significantly after completing a business communication course, and b) to identify to what extent, if any, do changes in the proportion of satisfactory vs. not satisfactory performances vary by students who have and have not completed coursework in English as an International Language (EIL). Of the 83 students, 30 had completed EIL courses in grammar, written and oral proficiency, and academic writing before advancing to regular major coursework. All 30 of the EIL students were international students and non-native English speakers (NNES), primarily from countries in Asia. Using McNemar's Test (McNemar, 1947; Adedokun & Burgess, 2012), the evaluators' scores of the pretests and posttests in the categories of Format, Writing Techniques, and Customization were analyzed to identify the statistically significant differences in EIL and non-EIL students. The three categories subdivided into 12 subcategories such as Respectful Closing (Format), Concise Sentences (Writing Techniques), and Uses Keywords from Job Posting (Customization). Seven of these 12 subcategories showed significance with a p-value of .05 or lower when comparing pretests and posttests. In six of these seven categories, the changes in proportions were most pronounced for students who had no prior enrollment in EIL courses at BYU Hawaii p<.001, indicating that NNES students who completed EIL courses did not improve as much from the pretest to the posttest as those with a greater command of English. These results suggest that learning the task of writing a professional cover letter may be more difficult for international and NNES students because the Western approach of cover letter writing differs from that in their countries of origin. In addition, international students must master these new concepts of cover letter writing on top of the ongoing challenges of comprehending and communicating in English. International and NNES students in business communication courses may benefit from additional instruction or guidance throughout the cover letter preparation process. This may include a more thorough explanation of the purpose of the Western approach to cover letter writing along with identifying specific ways in which the Western approach differs from the application process of which they are more familiar.

References

Adedokun, O. A., & Burgess, W. D. (2012). Analysis of paired dichotomous data: A gentle introduction to the McNemar Test in SPSS. Journal of MultiDisciplinary Evaluation, 8(17), 125-131.

McNemar, Q. (1947). Note on the sampling error of the difference between correlated proportions or percentages. Psychometrika, 12(2), 153-157.

Location: Mirage Piano Bar

Presenters: Lindsay C. Clark and Traci Austin (co-author)

Title: Integrating User Experience in the Creation of an Oral Communication Lab

Abstract

Much current research has shown that young professionals often do not have the oral communication and speaking skills required of them in the workplace (e.g., Chan, 2011). Additionally, many employers report frustration at what they see as a lack of proficiency with oral communication in employees (Bauer-Wolf, 2018). Oral communication laboratories are one tool universities use to develop students' professional speaking skills. Modeled on writing centers, the goal of an oral communication lab is to "enhance opportunities for pursuing speaking proficiency" (Hobgood, 2000, p. 3). In the Spring of 2019, our college of business piloted an oral communication laboratory as part of an initiative to bolster our students' oral communication skills. While administrators and instructors alike were enthusiastic about the opportunities that the oral communication labs promises, no amount of cutting-edge technology is going to work on its own. When creating--and, later, managing--an oral communication lab, it is important for business communication faculty to continually ask the following question: What can we as instructors do to ensure that oral communication labs have the impact on student skills, knowledge, and confidence that we desire?

This presentation reports the findings of a study on a piloted communication lab initiative, with research questions focused on technology, impact, and usability:
- How familiar are students with the technology necessary to use the Lab's services effectively?
- Were the instructional strategies we used effective and necessary for helping students learn how to use the technology in the Lab?
- What challenges and affordances exist when integrating user experience into the creation of an oral communication lab?
- How do our assumptions as instructors align with the experiences of our students?
To address our research questions, we developed tools to gather, interpret, and implement the feedback from the ultimate users—our students—to understand their experiences with technology, presenting, and the piloted Communication Lab program. Our goal was to develop appropriate instructional materials, as well as to determine, at the end of the semester, the success of our instructional strategies and the feasibility of expanding the lab services to all students in the business school.

We share how, as we engaged in a cycle of implementation, reflection, adjustment, and re-implementation, we observed how our assumptions of the students' wants and needs were challenged by including students in the process of developing the lab and its services and activities. We will also discuss the challenges and affordances of researching the potential users of the Lab and the importance of user-centric design. In the end, the integrated, iterative process we and our students went through can offer valuable lessons to other instructors and institutions looking to create effective, student-centered oral communication laboratories.

Wednesday, March 4, 2020, 3:30 to 4:30 p.m.

Location: Mirage Piano Bar

Presenter: Craig Rinne

Title: Drafting and Grafting: Mutually Reinforcing In-Person and Online Presentations in Hybrid Courses

Abstract

Purpose: To teach and compare both in-person and video presentation delivery styles in a hybrid course.

Objectives

Examine the differences between 3 modes: live video, recorded video, and in-person presentations.
Practice presentations in all 3 modes; prepare formal recorded and in-person presentations.
Provide peer feedback and self-evaluations of presentations.

Outcomes

Students will:
Provide evidence of practice through 3 rehearsals (of the same content) in multiple modes.
Give written and oral feedback to their peers.
Present the same content in both recorded videos and in-person, in 5-6 minutes.

Description

As video conferencing proliferates, Business Communications courses must address both recorded and real-time video presentations alongside traditional "face-to-face" presentations. Luckily, the hybrid classroom encourages both video and in-person presenting.

My assignment reinforces each delivery mode by "drafting" (requiring 3 rehearsals of the presentation) and "grafting" the various formats onto the same presentation content (repeated multiple times) as follows:

First Rehearsal: In-person, students present their introductions and receive peer and instructor feedback.

Second Rehearsal: Online, students pair up and practice their full presentations and receive immediate peer feedback.

Third Rehearsal: Online, students record presentations and submit them for written peer review.

Live Presentation: In-person, students present and receive written and oral (small group) peer feedback and instructor evaluation.

Video Presentation: After absorbing all feedback, students record a final video version submitted for instructor evaluation.

Self-Evaluation: Students then evaluate their work in memos, exploring their progress at each iteration and comparing the live video, recorded video, and in-person modes.

Location: Mirage Piano Bar

Presenters: Dipali Murti

Title: Business Writing as a Collaborative Process

Abstract

The purpose of this presentation is to describe the teaching strategy I use in my business writing courses to teach students why writing in the business world benefits from collaboration with others.

The learning objectives addressed with this teaching strategy and series of assignments are:
•   learn to collaborate successfully in teams
•   learn to effectively provide and receive constructive feedback
The outcome related to both objectives is that the students understand, effectively participate and recognize the benefits of the group writing process--one that involves not only the project team but also the larger class group.

Assignment Description:
The students are put in teams of 4 and assigned to research, develop and write a business proposal. As part of the process, I assign a series of 4 step assignments. At each step, students receive constructive feedback from the rest of the class and myself.

STEP 1 asks that they decide how they will collaborate as well as asks them to define their topic and develop their research questions.

STEP 2 asks them to identify which research they will use from secondary sources and to develop a survey.

STEP 3 asks each of the individual members to create a first draft of their section of the report and compare approaches with others who have written the same section of the report.

STEP 4 has them work in peer review groups with students from other teams.

I have found that this process of having students work in smaller teams on their own projects through these step assignments while following the project development of other teams and receiving feedback from a diversity of perspectives at the same time improves the overall project outcome. It also significantly improves their team and collaboration skills in the professional world."

Location: Mirage Piano Bar

Presenters: Robyn Walker and Peter W. Cardon

Title: Challenges, Processes, and Inclusion in Groups: Face to Face vs. Virtual Teams

Abstract

The purpose of this study is to compare students working in face-to-face groups with those using an electronic communication system as to their effectiveness and satisfaction with their process. Studies have generally shown that those who use virtual communication as the basis of their group work typically are less satisfied and less effective than those who work face-to-face. Cardon and Marshall (2015) describe the growing adoption of enterprise social networking platforms by organizations in an attempt to foster better team communication and collaboration. However, their study results indicate that traditional communication channels are used more frequently and considered more effective for team communication.

This project compares students working in groups and using IBM Connections as the mode of communication with those working face to face to complete a project that involves analyzing the online reputation management practices of an organization. Students were from diverse backgrounds and first languages. Those working virtually were dispersed across the globe. The project extended for six weeks and used a project management approach in which students were required to meet weekly for the first four weeks. Students were asked to first prepare for the weekly meeting and submit a summary of their individual preparation and then to submit a summary of their team meeting during this period. Each meeting required students to complete certain steps such as introducing themselves to the group, completing a team charter, selecting an organization for their study, and submitting a progress report on their work.

Participants were asked to complete surveys before the project began and at its end. The pre-survey asked participants to identify the challenges they expected to face in the project. The post-survey asked participants to identify the challenges they faced in the project, the effectiveness of team meetings, and their inclusion in the group process.

The results of the study show that as would be expected in-person teams are significantly more satisfied in just about every way possible than the virtual teams involved in the project. However, there was no difference on some items, such as the following:

- I was included in the group discussion and decision making
- I was valued for my contributions to the group discussion and decision making
- My group members supported me and my ideas

Given the virtual teams are not only confronting technology challenges but also cultural and language barriers, those working virtually felt as included in their group process as those working face to face. This result implies that with the proper processes in place, those using virtual communication platforms can feel as included in group work as those working in in-person teams, potentially enhancing their satisfaction with the overall experience.

Location: Mirage Piano Bar

Presenters: Jolanta Aritz, Kristen M Getchell (co-author), Minna Logemann, Ann Springer, Scott Springer, Karen Woolstenhulme, Peter W. Cardon, and Anne Carolin Fleischmann (co-author)

Title: Teaching Teamwork, Cross-cultural Competence, and Digital Communication with the Virtual Business Professional Project

Abstract

The participants in this panel will discuss the challenges and opportunities involved in teaching teamwork, cross-cultural competence, and digital communication that includes students from different universities working in multicultural teams on a single consulting project. All panel instructors participated in a virtual global project called Virtual Business Professional (VBP). The project is designed for students and instructors around the world who want to engage in a global virtual team experience with students and instructors from other universities and other countries. The primary purpose of the VBP is to help students develop virtual and cross-cultural collaboration skills using state-of-the-art collaboration tools. Students are able to add valuable skills to their resume. They learn how to communicate effectively in virtual work environments, use social and AI-driven collaboration tools, navigate cross-cultural team processes, and hone their leadership skills. The panel will offer different perspectives on teaching teamwork, cross-cultural competence, and digital communication in a virtual environment and offer insights into how you can successfully incorporate these elements in your own classes.

Location: Mirage Piano Bar

Presenter: Georgi Ann Rausch

Title: Using Validation to Soothe Ethical Dilemmas

Abstract

In this session, I will discuss the tendency for people to become defensive in ethical dilemmas. Defensiveness is one of Gottman's 4 Horsemen of the Apocalypse, and this research has germane application to relationships at work. Defensiveness is also a natural physical reaction to a perceived threat, which is often the case in ethics cases.

I will discuss how defensiveness is communicated which involves a closing and tightening of the body and communication.

Then, I will explain how I teach verbal and nonverbal validation as a tool to soothe emotional reactions so people can get to a logical place to be able to better solve dilemmas. I will explain a listening exercise where I ask people to suspend judgement, advising, comparisons and interruptions in order to let people tell stories. Then, I talk about story vs. fact and how our stories lead to our emotions. We do not have to believe stories in order to validate emotions. Rather, we can remain neutral as a leader and still express understanding of how others feel. I offer verbal validation ideas and then discuss potential next steps once people have calmed down.