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Edited by: William J. Wardrope
University of Central Oklahoma

Editor's Note

Once again, I am pleased to serve as editor of the *Refereed Proceedings* of the Association for Business Communication-Southwestern United States conference.

This year's conference includes presentations from professors at 24 institutions in Arkansas, Illinois, Indiana, Kansas, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, Ohio, Oklahoma, Pennsylvania, and Texas, as well as two presentations from Mexico. Eleven completed papers were submitted for publication in the *Proceedings* and appear in the following pages.

Special congratulations go to Dr. José Guadalupe Torres and Dr. Roger Conaway, both of Monterrey Institute of Technology, Campus San Luis, Mexico, for receiving the 2010 McGraw-Hill/Irwin Distinguished Paper Award for their manuscript, *Adoption and Use of New Communication Technologies in an International Organization: An Exploratory Study of Text Messaging*. My thanks go to Carolyn Ashe, Lana Carnes, Harold Hurry, Terry Roach, and Randy Waller for serving as reviewers for the *Proceedings.*

Please take the time to attend as many of these presentations as you can. I know each author has worked very hard to engage us in new venues for teaching and researching business communication.

William Wardrope
Proceedings Editor

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McGRAW-HILL/IRWIN DISTINGUISHED PAPER

Adoption and Use of New Communication Technologies in an International Organization: An Exploratory Study of Text Messaging

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ABSTRACT

Today, e-mail seems to have "reached a stage of maturity almost comparable to that of the telephone" (van den Hooff, Groot, & de Jonge, 2005, p. 4.) and is viewed as a ubiquitous medium in modern organizations. Yet Jennings, Wilson, and Biss (2009) assert that while "Baby Boomers are still just discovering e-mail, many members of the younger generation have already written e-mail off as an antiquated communication method" (p. 1). As younger generations adopt new technologies and become future employees, will these trends have anticipated or unanticipated effects on their employers?

Naturally, these trends and changes raise many new questions for business communication researchers and managers making strategic decisions. Reinsch and Turner (2006) posit several such questions to consider when investigating impacts of communication technologies. They ask, for example, how are "humans using and adapting in response to new communication technologies" and how do "companies decide to adopt, deploy, and manage new technologies such as text messaging" (Reinsch and Turner, 2006, p. 351-352), leading us to investigate what technologies already have been deployed and with what effect. Our study addresses these questions and considers strategic changes when managers consider using or adopting new technologies.

Today, e-mail seems to have "reached a stage of maturity almost comparable to that of the telephone" (van den Hooff, Groot, & de Jonge, 2005, p. 4.) and is viewed as a ubiquitous medium in modern organizations. Yet Jennings, Wilson, and Biss (2009) assert that while "Baby Boomers are still just discovering e-mail, many members of the younger generation have already written e-mail off as an antiquated communication method" (p. 1). Their study cites two sources from the Pew Internet and American Life Project that teens consider e-mail as an old-fashioned medium. Jennings, Wilson, and Biss' (2009) survey of over 1,000 secondary and post secondary students in the U.S. suggests a trend that e-mail is out and text messaging is in use by the "millennial" generation (those currently aged 8 to 28 years old).

In a Wall Street Journal article that generated considerable comment online, Vascellaro (2009) commented,

> Email has had a good run as king of communications. But its reign is over. In its place, a new generation of services is starting to take hold – services like Twitter and Facebook and countless others vying for a piece of the new world. And just as email did more than a

> decade ago, this shift promises to profoundly rewrite the way we communicate – in ways we can only begin to imagine (1st paragraph)

As younger generations adopt these new technologies and become future employees, will these trends have anticipated or unanticipated effects on their employers?

Jackson (2007) addressed the issue of unanticipated impacts of technology in organizations and applied Sproull and Kiesler's model of first-level and second-level effects to business communication research. Her analysis provides an effective framework when addressing technological impacts. First-level effects refer to the obvious "changes in the scale and the scope of available data" from increased technology, resulting from the large "amount of online communication archived on Web sites and available publicly" (Jackson, 2007, p. 5). First-level effects are enhanced by the high penetration of Internet access into rural areas and wide adoption of broadband. These changes attract the attention of media use researchers who now seek large amounts of data to mine, such as the message content of discussion threads in online discussion boards and blogs. First-level researchers may investigate preferences or behaviors of organizational members who use communication technologies, and investigate frequency of use of technology in organizations.

Second level effects refer to the way human communication itself is potentially transformed by information technologies (Jackson, 2007). New terms related to second-level effects have entered our vocabulary. We may refer to communicators as "multicommunicating" (Turner and Reinsch, 2007), for example, when a manager who is talking on the phone while sending an e-mail, suddenly begins talking face-to-face with someone who enters the office. This manager engages in multiple conversations at one time and has become a "multicommunicator". Turner and Reinsch (2007) observe another dynamic inherent in simultaneous conversations that occur when an individual develops an "attention queue" and must decide which conversation receives the most attention, becoming a "presence allocator". They note that "a communicator's choice of medium may allow him or her to allocate presence and attention to second or additional conversation partners" (Turner and Reinsch, 2007, p. 40). This observation describes a second-level effect of technology and may suggest a fundamental change in how humans communicate.

Naturally, these trends and changes raise many new questions for business communication researchers and managers making strategic decisions. Reinsch and Turner (2006) posit several such questions to consider when investigating impacts of communication technologies. They ask, for example, how are "humans using and adapting in response to new communication technologies" and how do "companies decide to adopt, deploy, and manage new technologies such as text messaging" (Reinsch and Turner, 2006, p. 351-352), leading researchers to investigate what technologies already have been deployed and with what effect. Our study will address similar questions and consider such strategic changes when managers consider using or adopting new technologies.

LITERATURE REVIEW ON MEDIA CHOICE

When the Association for Business Communication published its first book on communication technology, e-mail was still new to universities (Williams, 1994). Articles of interest included, What is E-mail?, How Does E-mail Work?, and readers were advised that "While e-mail does not displace face-to-face communication, it may enrich face-to-face interactions by providing a channel through which minor details can be handled, thereby leaving more substantive issues for direct discussion" (Yates, 1994, p. 112). Text messaging and instant messaging were yet to emerge in the future, but these early writers' guidelines may still hold true today when we examine channel choices and impacts of technology.

<u>Media Richness.</u> The media richness model was first offered to explain the process by which organizational members make choices of communication media (Daft and Lengel, 1984; Trevino, Lengel, & Daft, 1987). Built on social presence theory (Short, Williams, & Christie, 1976), the media richness model refers to the number of verbal or nonverbal cues the communication medium carries, such as verbal feedback, vocal intonation, eye contact, gestures along with the message content itself. According to this model, the face-to-face interaction is the richest medium because it contains the greatest number of cues. Text messaging and e-mail are leaner mediums containing fewer cues. Some scholars even have ranked communication media according to the richness (Trevino, Lengel, & Daft, 1987) and suggested guidelines for media choice as a result (Alexander, Pendley, and Hernigan, 1991). These scholars suggest two important factors underlie media choice in the media richness model. First, the level of uncertainty or ambiguity (lack of information) of the message should match the level of richness of the medium. That is, a simple routine message communicating simple, clear information can be sent via text message or e-mail, but a complex message requires media richness. Second, the equivocality (Weick, 1995) or unpredictability of the information should match the choice of medium. Thus, highly equivocal messages, which have sufficient information, are complex and require greater media richness.

To refine the media richness model, researchers have investigated managers' media choices within particular organizations. Lee and Heath (1999) found oil and gas managers prefer to receive information through multiple media, a finding which contrasts with media richness theory. In their study, the managers believed the information they receive from multiple sources to be more comprehensive, credible and relevant, in contrast to information received from a single source. Other research findings also have added to the suppositions of the original media richness model. Timmerman (2003) addressed the issue of the media choices used during implementation of planned organizational change. He developed a predictive model to guide general patterns of media use during implementation. Sheer and Chin (2004) also modified media richness theory when finding that relational and self-presentational goals, rather than task efficiency alone related to the media, drive the manager's choice of media. Stephens, et al. (2008) expanded media richness theory by demonstrating in a cross-organizational setting that choice and use of information and communication technologies (ICTs) for persuasion is sequential, or process oriented, rather than discrete. Gordon and Stewart (2009) applied media richness theory to the performance appraisal interview and found support for media richness theory that a lean communication medium such as e-mail typically was ineffective for negotiating shared understandings in a multifaceted interview. In sum, the media richness model approaches channel choice and adoption and use of technology uniquely. This approach is identified theoretically as a contingency approach or prescriptive viewpoint that assumes organizational media "have inherent characteristics, task perceptions are presumed to be largely objective, and workers are seen primarily as autonomous, rational actors when assessing media and making media choice decisions" (Suchan, 2007, p. 248).

The social information processing model. Researchers who have critiqued media richness theory have identified alternative theoretical approaches regarding use and adoption of communication technologies in organizations. Critics identify limitations and factors other than the capability of the medium itself that influence media choice. For instance, individual, task, and organizational factors (Yates, 1994), and social environment (Fulk, Steinfield, Schmitz, & Power, 1987; Fulk, Schmitz, & Steinfield, 1990) also affect media choice. These critics suggests media choice can be more fully explained by the social information processing model, which examines the social environment of the organization (Fulk, Steinfield, Schmitz, & Power, 1987) and contrasts with the rational approach of media richness theorists. The social information processing model suggests how organizational members relate socially, make recommendations about media channel use, and express preferences related to how messages should be communicated. Employees and employers may make media choices according to the influence of the *social environment* of the organization simply because the technologies are available to them in their particular workplace or are recommended by co-workers.

Dual Capacity Model. The dual-capacity model was offered as yet another alternative to the media richness model. Sitkin, Sutcliffe, and Barrios-Choplin (1992) believed organizational members must not only consider the data carrying capacity of the medium (similar to media richness), but they must also consider the symbol-carrying capacity. They assert that using a certain type of media may symbolize or represent the organization's true values and culture. A university, for instance, known for its technology may symbolically value technological media as its primary means of communication. An international organization known for its "family culture" may value family-like informal, face-to-face interaction as its primary means of communication. Thus, the symbolic nature of the medium in the organization itself influences how employees may make technological choices.

A Meta-Analysis Model. Van den Hooff, Groot, & de Jonge (2005), in an effort to understand the complex and growing body of research on media choice, conducted a meta-analysis of recent studies addressing the use and effects of technologies in organizations. Their results led them to develop a complex model that addresses the way many of these variables relate together. Their research insightfully synthesized the different approaches and theories concerning the adoption and use of communication technologies into one model and summarized previous theories. They succinctly critique contingency theory around its three key assumptions of objectivity, saliency, and the choice-making processes, and identify two key factors of the social environment that influence a user's choice of technology as 1) "overt statements about characteristics of media or tasks from coworkers, supervisors, or other members of social networks of which the individual is a part" and 2) "vicarious learning from observing the experiences of others and modeling behavior according to the consequences of certain choices by members of a user's environment" (Van den Hooff, Groot, & de Jonge, 2005, p. 8). Contrasting the objectivity or rationality of contingency theory as the first theory, Van den Hooff, Groot, &

de Jonge (2005) named the second theory in the social information processing model as subjectivist theory. Subjectivist theory identifies the social influence of perceptions, attitudes, and intentions of employees in an organization over the objectivity of matching richness or leanness of a medium with a task.

Finally, Van den Hooff, Groot, & de Jonge (2005) identified situational theory as the ability of technology to overcome organization constraints of geography, time and distance. That is, communication technology allows workers to work together despite dramatically different time zones and locations. They assert that the use and adaptation of technology may largely depend on the organizational situation and on the need to overcome these constraints or boundaries existing among employees or team members. Situational theory stresses the workers experience and expertise with the technology within the organizational environment. Thus, they theorize that organizational constraints and employees' knowledge and skill may override the social influence among employees in an organization and the objectivity of a medium's matching richness or leanness with a task. Specifically, "The opportunities offered by the technology, on the other hand, depend strongly on the user's experience and expertise with it and the organizational and social context. As users' expertise in using e-mail grows, perceptions of its relative richness change" (Van den Hooff, Groot, & de Jonge, 2005, p. 9).

Van den Hooff, Groot, & de Jonge's (2005) analysis received recognition as the outstanding article for the *Journal of Business* Communication and rightly points to the complexity of technology adoption and use in organizations. Their meta-analysis of 17 studies published in nine peer-reviewed journals in the areas of communication science, organization science, and management revealed 73 variables or relationships related to e-mail use in organizations. These variables crossed contingency, subjectivist, and situational theories. Understandably, when new employees make media choices, a range of factors determine the outcome. Certainly, an employee's choice of a medium of text messaging or e-mail does not reside solely on the rational choice of ambiguity or equivocality of the message.

<u>Media Choice in International Contexts.</u> Business communication research in multicultural contexts has focused primarily on Asian or European societies and rarely on issues in Latin America (Conaway and Wardrope, 2004). Moreover, such multicultural studies tend predominately to examine traits from Hofstede's (1983) cultural dimensions or Hall's (1976) high/low contexting model in business communication research, concepts later critiqued for their validity (Cardon, 2008). Few of these studies have examined use and adoption of technologies within the organizational context.

Finally, we must assume several outcomes or effects will exist when modern organizations widely adopt information technology (Conrad and Poole, 2005). First, technology opens up communication and increases accessibility of people in organizations. Thus, e-mail or text messaging would extend horizontal communication and increase personnel contacts compared to face-to-face communication, traditional written memoranda, and other vehicles. Second, technology increases spatial dispersion of organizations, enabling employees to work efficiently in significantly different time zones and locations across their country or the globe. Third, technology tends to foster inter-organizational linkages, including joint ventures, alliances, and collaborative agreements with other organizations. These beneficial effects, of course, are countered by issues of employee privacy and security of organizational networks when technology is adopted widely. Miller (2006) emphasized "that technologies do not *determine* particular outcomes and that the effects of any communication technology will depend on the manner in which it is employed or appropriated by the users" (p. 296).

Research Questions

The preceding discussion of business communication literature concerning media choice highlights the complexity of employee adoption and use of new technologies in organizations. The following questions were addressed in this study. Specifically, to what extent does a multinational manufacturing organization adopt and use new technologies? How well does an adaptation of Van den Hooff, Groot, & de Jonge's (2005) questionnaire assess media choice variables in a multinational manufacturing organization? Finally, must managers adopt new policies and strategies to address these new technologies in their organization?

Methodology

A multinational kitchen design company was chosen for this study. The company's headquarters and one of its manufacturing plants were located in the same city as our university, and we contacted the company's General Director or owner about participating in our study. The Director has maintained a close relationship with our School of Business and he was interested in a technological use and adoption study. The support of top management was deemed necessary for this study. The company designs and manufactures professional kitchens for world-wide recognized franchises, commercial organizations, and hotels, and has been in operation since 1987. It operates plants in nine countries located in the Americas, including Canada, the United States, Mexico, and Central and South America. We believed the organization represented a cross-section of international workers in the Americas and the workers in the local plant would be representative of those who use (or do not use) modern technology.

Once we obtained agreement to gain access to the workers and conduct surveys on-site, we recruited and trained undergraduate students to help with survey distribution and administration. The researcher, a university staff member, and five undergraduate students conducted the survey onsite at the plant in a single day. While one team of students administered the questionnaire with personnel in the administrative offices, other teams of students conducted surveys on the production floor during a rotating lunch hour among the floor workers. Three shifts of workers came to a centrally located table on the production floor and took time to answer survey questions in one-on-one interview fashion with students. Although the printed surveys were translated into the Spanish language, bi-lingual students were available with individual workers to answer questions if necessary. In some cases workers were unable to read and students simply read the instructions and questions. Over 60 questionnaires were completed and 59 were usable.

<u>Questionnaire.</u> The survey itself was based on an adaptation of Van den Hooff, Groot, & de Jonge's (2005) questionnaire, which reflected a composite of variables that determine media choice. The first seven questions of our 62-item survey were demographic. Question 8 was strategically positioned as a logic or directional question and asked respondents if they had used

text messaging sometime in the last month. If respondents indicated yes, they continued the survey. If respondents indicated no, they were directed sent to Questions 61 and 62 to rank communication methods most used and to respond about frequency of use. This logic question allowed an "out" if text messaging was not used by the respondent.

Frequency and Use. Questions 9-11 were adapted from Jennings, Wilson, and Biss' (2009) survey to assess how often respondents typically used text messaging and their reasons for use.

Range of tasks. Questions 12-22 addressed the range of tasks for which text messaging is perceived to be appropriate. These task-appropriate questions were adapted from Van den Hooff, Groot, & de Jonge's (2005) survey on e-mail, and we assumed text messaging would be used for similar tasks as e-mail. Respondents were asked to indicate on a 5-point frequency scale, 1= never to 5 = always, to what degree they used text messaging for certain tasks. The first five questions were identified by Hooff, Groot, & de Jonge (2005) as lean-medium communication tasks and the last five variables as rich-medium communication tasks. We expected our exploratory factor analysis to produce similar results along rich and lean dimensions.

Perceived usefulness and value. Questions 23-49 addressed the perceived usefulness and perceived value of text messaging for an individual's work. Van den Hooff, Groot, & de Jonge's (2005) noted an important finding from their meta-analysis of e-mail usage that "the perceived applicability of e-mail (in terms of the range of tasks for which it is perceived to be appropriate and its perceived usefulness for a user's tasks) is a central variable in explaining e-mail use" (p. 17). Similarly, we assumed perceived usefulness and value to be central variables in explaining text messaging use. Respondents were asked to indicate to what degree they agreed or disagreed with the statements on a 5-point scale, 1= strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree.

Communication methods most used. Finally, respondents were asked to rank 10 methods the way they communicate with people on a daily basis. The 10 items randomly appeared on each survey: home telephone line, cell phone (not Nextel), instant messenger (IM), video conferencing, Nextel international call, text messaging, e-mail, typed or handwritten note, Facebook or similar web site, or through Twitter, LinkedIn, or Plaxo. Second, respondents were asked to estimate how many times each of the 10 methods they used in an average week. They placed a number in a box to estimate frequency.

Results

Demographics. Of the 59 respondents who completed the survey, 36% (n = 21) were male, 64% (n = 38) female. Thirty-one respondents had used text messaging within the last month and 28 had not. All but two were full-time employees (40 hours per week) and all but one were of Latino decent. This particular manufacturing plant seemed to have low turnover of employees. Nearly half (43%) of the respondents had worked five years or more with the company, 27 percent of those had worked over 10 years. Moreover, most were not educated. Over 60 percent of the respondents had not completed the equivalent of a high school education and only 8 percent had a university degree or higher. Overall, ages ranged from under 20 to over 50 years.

Four workers (7%) were under age 20, six (10%) were between 20-24 years, 26 (42%) were 25-35 years, 13 (21%) were between 36-49, and 10 (16%) were over 50 years.

Descriptive statistics were computed on Questions 9-11 concerning typical use and reasons for text messaging. Of the 31 respondents who had used text messaging within the last month, 18 (58%) text messaged more than twice a day, but 9 (29%) text messaged only once a week or less. Twenty-five respondents (81%) indicated their primary reason for using text messaging was to connect with family and friends, an interesting finding for management that employees are using technology primarily for non-work related purposes if they are texting while at work. Similarly, 18 respondents (58%) indicated their second most important reason for using text messaging was to connect with family and friends.

Reliability tests (Cronbach's α) were computed on each subscale in the questionnaire and all subscales revealed high reliability coefficients. Questions 12-21, which measured the range of tasks when text messaging, resulted in $\alpha = .963$. Questions 23-49 addressed the perceived usefulness and perceived value of text messaging for an individual's work and resulted in $\alpha = .91$.

Cross-tabulation Results. When the independent variable, age, was cross-tabulated with the dependent variable, "I have used text messaging sometime in the last month," results showed low significance for Pearson Chi-Square at $p < .1$. Gender revealed no significant differences nor did level of education. However, time with the company was significant at $p < .001$ when compared with text messaging use in the last month. This is, newer employees (4 years or less with the company) predominately used text messaging, and the longer employees had been with the company, the less likely they used text-messaging.

Reliability Coefficients Task Items. Our data sample of 31 was too small to conduct factor analyses on the range of tasks items for text messaging. However, we have good reason to assume that the factor structure in our data would be the same for Van den Hooff, Groot, & de Jonge's (2005). Thus, we calculated a reliability coefficient for the five lean task items and the five rich task items in our data and Table 1 reports the means, Standard Deviations, and reliability coefficients.

TABLE 1 Range of Tasks Items:
Means, SDs, and Reliability Coefficients for Each Subscale

Item	M	SD	Cronbach's Alpha
Range of tasks (rich)			α = .932
Exchanging information	.281	1.567	
Time-sensitive information	.259	1.440	
Asking questions	.236	1.313	
Exchanging opinions	.226	1.257	
Staying in touch	.271	1.508	
Range of tasks (lean)			α = .915
Decision making	.188	1.046	
Confidential information	.172	0.958	
Resolving conflict	.226	1.257	
Getting to know someone	.143	0.798	
Negotiations	.223	1.241	

The following table shows the 26 unidimensional scales (Questions 23-49) which addressed the perceived usefulness and perceived value of text messaging for an individual's work. Means, Standard Deviations, and reliability tests (Cronbach's α) for each subscale are indicated in the columns on the right.

TABLE 2: Perceived usefulness and value of Text Messaging
Means, SDs, and Reliability Coefficients for Each Subscale

Item	M	SD	Cronbach's α
Perceived usefulness			.950
Through text messaging, I can reach important contacts.	1.68	1.907	
Thanks to text messaging, I can communicate efficiently.	1.90	2.065	
Thanks to text messaging, I can do more in less time.	1.78	1.948	
If text messaging is unavailable, my work is seriously hampered.	1.14	1.432	
Thanks to text messaging, I can react adequately in my work.	1.24	1.512	
User: expertise and skill			.482
I know how my text messaging application works.	2.00	2.084	
I use most of the functionalities of my text messaging application.	1.56	1.803	
I use text messaging outside of work as well.	1.95	2.185	
I am a skilled computer user.	1.72	1.565	
I can solve regular problems in the text messaging application myself.	2.47	1.120	
Task: geographical distance			.400
My work involves cooperation with people in other locations.	1.64	0.483	
My work regularly involves communicating over distance.	1.03	0.183	
Task: time pressure			-.331
Time is an important factor in my work.	2.02	1.514	
I don't always have sufficient time to do my work.	3.32	1.090	
Task: equivocality			.308
There is no clear task description for my work.	2.81	0.438	
My work strongly differs from day to day.	1.47	2.504	
Social environment: coworker evaluations			.884
My coworkers' opinions of text messaging are important to me.	2.10	2.670	
Social environment: coworker use			
I use text messaging for the same tasks as my coworkers.	2.03	2.101	
Social environment: critical mass	1.88	2.071	
The majority of my colleagues use text messaging.			.887
The majority of my superiors use text messaging.	1.29	1.672	
Text messaging is an important medium in our organization.	1.14	1.502	
Medium: speed	1.31	1.567	
Thanks to text messaging, I can communicate fast.			.921
With text messaging, I get immediate response.	1.17	1.440	
Text messaging enables me to speed up the communication	1.49	1.794	
process.	0.95	1.181	
Medium: geographic reach			
Text messaging enables me to easily contact people in other			.898
locations.	0.75	0.993	
Text messaging obviates the feeling of distance.			
Thanks to text messaging, a communication partner's location	0.93	1.271	
becomes irrelevant.	0.78	1.052	

Discussion and Conclusions

When organizational employees adopt and use various communication technologies in the workplace, the process of choosing such media has emerged as a complex one. Numerous variables impact the decisions of employees and managers when they adopt and use new technologies. Van den Hooff, Groot, & de Jonge's (2005) study effectively summarized these variables into a model that is useful for business communication researchers. Thus, when we adapted their assessment instrument for email usage to text messaging usage in a different type of company, our results reflected similar findings in most subscales of the instrument.

Specifically, we investigated the extent to which a representative multinational manufacturing organization has adopted and used text messaging. In our case study, text messaging usage appeared nearly as ubiquitous as e-mail usage among those who use the technologies. Email usage has not declined among employees or certainly not been "replaced" by text messaging. In fact, during an interview with the owner about the results, he commented favorably that email was the most used form of communication according to the survey results, surpassing even face-to-face communication. As a result he believed his employees were becoming more efficient with their time by using email.

Overall, text messaging appeared to be in common use among those employees who owned cell phones, but it was used primarily for informal communication with friends and family. To a lesser extent text messaging was used to communicate with a supervisor or with work related individuals internally and externally. No official policies currently exist in the company to govern employee use of new technologies. Our study created an awareness of the issues and motivated the owner to begin addressing them. We concluded that these findings of adoption and use of text messaging represent the circumstances existing in other similar companies.

The finding that text messaging is being used to interact with family and friends most likely reflects the same pattern occurring in almost any workplace. Yet we wondered how management felt about the non-work use of technology on company time, although we did not specifically address this research question in this study. In informal interviews with several other owners of manufacturing companies similar to the one in our study, we heard a range of responses about the personal usage (family and friends) of technology in the workplace. On one end of the continuum of opinion, an owner expressed strong concern against such usage and indicated he would take direct measures to restrict that type of communication. Another owner at the opposite end of the continuum expressed no concern and said that he wanted his employees to have freedom with those decisions. He felt his workers and managers would be more loyal to the company without a policy against technology in place. If employees wished to "phone home" or text home during work time, he was happy with it. Happy employees were productive employees. Yet a third owner had adopted a balance between these two opinions by enacting policies restricting only some technologies. Interestingly, one manager sent us an email to say that her large multinational company had already put into place some policies restricting internet usage (Facebook, E-Bay, Twitter, and others) and limiting personal phone calls and texting during work time. In whatever stand owners and policy makers in companies may take, they must critically assess this issue, review the changing role of communication technology in their unique circumstances, and make important decisions regarding its usage.

Other findings deserved further consideration. As we mentioned before, cross tabulations revealed no significant relationship between age and messaging, but did reveal an effect for tenure with the company. Newer employees with four years or less significantly used text messaging more than older employees. Thus, we reasoned that new employees may not have been necessarily younger, but may have been transfers from another organization or ones who came from a culture for using technologies. Or it may be possible newer employees are seeking social support from outside the company while older employees have established social networks within the company. This finding needs further investigation, particularly in regard to social support variables.

No significant relationship was revealed between gender and messaging. However, a growing body of literature has investigated “remote mothering,” a communication process involving women who use cell phones to manage their responsibilities for home and children (Rakow & Navarro, 1993). Rakow (2007) suggested “these devices are fascinating and our lives are different with them, but we must be careful not to pass along industry’s buzz but rather stop to examine it” (p. 406). In our study, our analysis revealed no significant relationship between gender and Q8, “What is the main reason you use text messaging?” Further analysis showed that no differences existed between the primary reason male and females use text messaging. Both extensively used messaging to communicate with friends and family. Apparently, remote mothering was not a dynamic in this company.

In summary, we would re-phrase Vascellaro’s (2009) quote cited at the beginning of this manuscript: “Email has had a good run as king of communications...” and it seems to still be holding its own within manufacturing organizations. We agree with her that the shift to new technologies in organizations “promises to profoundly rewrite the way we communicate – in ways we can only begin to imagine.” We must take on the challenge as business communication researchers and remain on the cutting edge with our research.

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YouTube Revolutionizes Corporate Communication

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ABSTRACT

YouTube has become a cultural phenomenon in just a few short years. Not only an entertainment media, YouTube is also becoming a popular business tool. Business uses include widespread, low-cost promotion of products and services, and recruiting, as well as distribution of corporate presentations, product updates, and company profiles. Crisis communication has also been revolutionized by the interpersonal, engaging nature of YouTube. Classroom applications of YouTube allow students to exhibit creativity, critical thinking, and applied learning, either individually or in teams.

Introduction

In a period of just a few years, YouTube has become a household word and is listed as one of the top ten web sites of the 2000s by the International Academy of Digital Arts and Science, home of the Webby awards ("Top Ten Web Sites," 2010). Videos can be easily created and uploaded, and viewers can access their favorites on their TiVo, PC, iPhone, or other mobile device. According to YouTube CEO Chad Hurley, "We never anticipated when we started this site we would have such a profound effect on popular culture… we're really just enabling so many more people to express their views, not only their talents, but to get a message out there" (Gannes, 2008). Dubbed the "marketing innovation of the decade," YouTube has become the channel for viral video and has led to the success of online video marketing (Wasserman, 2009).

YouTube was founded in 2005 by Chad Hurley, Steve Chan, and Jawed Karim, all former employees of PayPal. Like many technology startups, YouTube began in a garage and with minimal funding. The company's tremendous growth in its first few months enabled it to attract significant investments and to expand to its current staff size of 70 employees. In late 2006, YouTube was sold to Google, though YouTube continues to operate independently (Glaser, 2006). The YouTube website averages more than 100 million unique visits per month in the U.S. alone, with the average viewer watching 62 videos ("YouTube Traffic," 2009).

While young people made up most of the audience early after YouTube's launch, viewership is now rather equitably distributed across age brackets (Dougherty, 2008). A broadly expanding international audience includes wide popularity of YouTube in various countries, such as the UK and Ireland. Local-language YouTube websites are operational in France, Italy, the Netherlands, Spain, Poland, Brazil and Japan."Video is universal and allows people around the world to communicate and exchange ideas," says Hurley (Kiss, 2007).

According to Mike Shields (2009), a reviewer for *BrandWeek*, "the landmark moment for YouTube was its influence over consumers' expectations. Thousands of no-bodies sharing clips…has been vital in ushering in the notion of consumer as mini-media mogul." Film and television companies are competing to secure distribution on this growing platform.

A social media application, YouTube is a content community used to share video content between users. Other content communities include BookCrossing that shares book, Flickr that shares photos, and Slideshare that shares PowerPoint presentations. In order to share videos, YouTube users are required to provide only basic profile information, such as the date they joined the community and the number of videos shared (Kaplan & Michael, 2010). Because of the huge popularity of YouTube, a high risk exists for the illegal posting of copyright-protected materials, such as television programs or commercials. While procedures are in place that ban or remove such illegal content, responding to copyright violations is an ongoing challenge for YouTube and other social media applications (Kaplan & Michael, 2010).

Corporate Uses of YouTube

YouTube's motto "Broadcast Yourself" emphasizes the company's place in the digital media revolution where everyone participates (Hurley, 2007). No longer just for personal entertainment, businesses are also cashing in on YouTube's popularity. As an advertising tool, videos promoting a product or service can be produced with very little cost and viewed by a wide audience. Many business organizations are also posting short video segments of their leaders' speeches, product updates, and corporate officer profiles. Firms such as Cisco and Google rely on YouTube to share recruiting videos, keynote speeches, and press announcements with their employees and investors (Kaplan & Michael, 2010).

Job applicants have discovered the video résumé and have posted thousands of entries to YouTube under the "résumé" category. To date, few employers are looking to video résumés, or "vésumés," for potential employees, in part because of fears of discrimination claims resulting from the visual disclosure of gender, race, and age. However, once the YouTube generation infiltrates the workplace, video résumés are expected to be as popular as iPods (Cullen, 2007).

Companies are also using YouTube to enhance their recruiting efforts. Global consulting and accountancy giant Deloitte invited employees to produce their own short films to address the question "What's Your Deloitte?" Teams of up to seven people created films about their lives and experiences at work, and the videos were posted on a special YouTube-like area on the company intranet for rating by colleagues. From there, a panel of judges chose the finalists, and Deloitte's employees picked the winners. The top videos, which are now featured on YouTube, have been integrated into the organization's recruitment efforts (Smith, 2007). Hallmark placed a video on YouTube inviting applications for its intern program. The video contained a series of images, with no talking heads at all, and an end-line of "be a part of Hallmark." Differing from the traditional wordy approach, Hallmark's goal is to excite the viewer with a range of design used and entice them to visit the careers link on the company website to discover more about working at Hallmark ("5 Ways to Market," 2008).

YouTube gives CEOs and other corporate spokespersons a platform to speak directly to customers in an interpersonal way, even when responding to challenging situations. Both JetBlue and Domino's recently used YouTube for damage control following negative publicity situations. Companies such as these are finding that a transparent and personable connection can positively impact public perceptions (Rucker, 2009).

YouTube can be used in distributing various types of sales messages and training information to a geographically dispersed audience. While the easily accessed site can be an excellent avenue for sharing business presentations, some adaptation from traditional methods is necessary for best effect (Gallo, 2008):

- Keep it short. According to Chad Hurley, the average viewing time for a YouTube clip is 2.5 minutes. Longer presentations should be divided into several short segments posted as separate videos.
- Make it loud and clear. Improve audio quality by using an external microphone rather than relying on one built into the camera.
- Avoid bulleted PowerPoint slides. Bullet points will appear blurry on YouTube and be next to impossible to read. Edit content and change it to full screen slides before uploading.

While YouTube video résumés are the latest trend in developing creative job qualifications, applicants should solicit assistance from someone with film experience, if possible, to ensure a quality product. The following suggestions will aid in creating a visually enhanced résumé that is brief, showcases key qualifications, and reflects the applicant’s personality (Sipper, 2007):

- Keep the video simple with one stationary shot using a good camera and tripod. Avoid gimmicky effects and excessive panning that distract from the message.
- Use proper lighting, making sure that the employer can see the speaker’s face. Avoid light behind the speaker that casts shadows.
- Invest in a good quality microphone and speak clearly and at an appropriate pace for easy listening.
- Choose clothing appropriate for the job sought; film test footage with different clothing and select the ideal choice. Avoid clothing that gaps and bunches when seated, as well as bright colors and close patterns that tend to vibrate when filmed.
- Edit the video to eliminate dead air and other imperfections that detract from a professional image.

Because most video viewers do not have the time or inclination to struggle through a long, poorly prepared video, presentation postings on YouTube and other social media sites should be designed and edited to be “online compatible.”

Preparing Students for Corporate Uses of YouTube

In addition to its various business applications, YouTube can be used in educational environments to enrich the content of various courses. Several examples of possible types of assignments are outlined as follows:

1. *Critical Thinking*: View a YouTube video of an interview with Chad Hurley conducted by U.S. Representative Ed Markey following Hurley's presentation to Congress: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Fx1r8u_cmfs
   - What is Chad Hurley referring to when he discusses openness of the Internet?
   - How is YouTube "changing the landscape of the world"?
   - How does Chad Hurley see YouTube improving communication and understanding of people around the world?
2. *Collaborative Learning*: In groups, view and critique a business presentation posted to YouTube: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=37JdmdCr76s
   - How well does the posted presentation reflect the suggested principles for YouTube presentations?
   - What suggestions do you have for improving the viewed video presentation?
3. *Applied Learning*: Produce a two- to three-minute video on the topic assigned by the instructor.
   - Prepare an outline of your planned content, and have it approved by your instructor prior to recording.
   - Record your video, using appropriate equipment and software.
   - Present your video to the class, using their input to refine your production.
   - Post your video to YouTube.

   Suggested video presentation topics include the following:
   - Prepare an "elevator speech" that explains qualifications the student has to offer a prospective employer. Have students view www.elevatorspeech.com to learn more about elevator speeches and to view good and poor examples. Variations of this flexible "What's My Story" assignment include having students pitch the value of a new product or service to potential customers or investors or give testimonials about a specific internship or work experience, career or college choice, student or community group involvement, or favorite cause. The YouTube videos posted as a part of the "Be a Part of Hallmark" internship invitation and the ""What's Your Deloitte?" will guide students in identifying and developing their own ideas.
   - Produce a short video presentation that summarizes a completed team research report. Ask students to identify and produce a short video presentation as a logical extension of the report. Because of the unstructured nature of the assignment, presentations will vary but will provide rich opportunity for critical thinking and creativity. Presentations may include persuasive pitches to managers or employers to adopt new policy or procedures, instructional videos explaining preferred workplace practices, or role plays illustrating unethical business actions. Invite a panel of judges to view the videos and choose the top three videos based on the value of the message, creativity, and production quality. The winners may be posted to YouTube under "Education." For added energy, organize the "screening" of student submissions as a film festival with adjudicators providing immediate feedback and "film makers" responding to

questions from the audience. A playbill, appropriate signage, and popcorn and beverages will add to the realism and excitement of the event. Students with theatre or film experience can assist with the arrangements.

Summary

YouTube is no longer a mere entertainment venue. Business organizations are finding increasing numbers of ways to use YouTube for corporate communication purposes. The universal accessibility, ease of production, and widespread appeal make YouTube attractive to businesses for marketing, recruiting, strengthening public relations, and practicing damage control. Classroom applications of YouTube allow students opportunities to exhibit creativity, critical thinking, and applied learning, either individually or in teams.

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OMG! I SAID THAT?: The Ever-Lurking Dangers of Texting, Twittering, and Facebooking

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Introduction

"The lack of punctuation while Texting is creating poor communication between the sexes!"

This was a statement a student recently made in a senior level Executive Communication class taught in the College of Business in a university in the southwest region of the United States. This research and presentation was spurred by this student's comment and ensuing class discussion. Knowing full well the more evident dangers of texting, such as train, bus, and car accidents and the resulting loss of life, the authors of this study were challenged to think about what other perils were being created through the use or misuse of prominent electronic channels of communication and how we can best instruct our students to avoid the perils and pitfalls of such.

In this microwave society of instant everything…caution often is thrown to the wind when communicating with friends, family members, business associates and others. The lack of discipline created by this ever -pressing need to communicate NOW is one of the causes for uncomfortable, sometimes deadly, situations that might not have occurred otherwise.

Though there are other electronic communication channels, such as email, which may be improved by implementing some of the suggestions provided in this study; the major focus of this presentation is limited in scope to texting, Twittering and Facebooking.

Review of Literature

Some of the pitfalls and perils specifically related to texting, Twittering, and posting on Facebook where discovered while reviewing current literature related to these areas. Not surprisingly, most of the information available was found on the internet. The quick internet search provided real concerns such as: English language under attack; laziness in communication; new words/definitions created with internet lingo; sexual exploitation and sexting; surprise visitors on Facebook; admission counselors/future employers inspections; abusive marketers; intimate life details and compromising photographs; connecting with undesirables; client confidences breached; in court libel case; securities fraud committed; electronic records of verbal faux pas; IM mishaps; cyberbullying, internet harassment and intimidation; generation style differences creating miscommunication; sleep deprivation; tweeting addiction; time wasters; health dangers; reputation damage; self-esteem damage; internet efficacy/truthfulness; messages sent to wrong person; texting relationships; fired by text; car, train, bus accidents related to distracted driving; cheating in school; huge bills; study distractions; dating dilemmas; arrest and prison time; harsh financial penalties; devastating real world consequences; lost and damaged relationships; and lost careers.

According to Michaels (2007), although the Internet provides a forum to visit chat rooms, communicate through instant messaging, and post and view internet personals, it also has a dark side when it is used to harass, annoy, threaten, and intimidate other online users. Even President Obama warns teens about revealing too much personal information on Facebook (Obama warns teens of perils of Facebook, 2009).

Another aspect to the dark side of texting and Twitter is evident through the activity of posting or checking posts continuously. This behavior is distracting and impacts personal productivity. Technology can be used to help learn, create and express individuality, but it can also help waste time, cause sleep deprivation which can potentially damage health and well being not to mention future success (Garcia, 2009, June 24).

The list presented in current literature related to the challenges and concerns presented through these forms of electronic communication seem endless. In contrast, the remedies or rules for preventing these challenges are not near as plentiful or universally recognized. In addition, recent statistics about the dangers presented through use of electronic media compelled the authors to continue this investigation leading to the development of instructional activity helping students avoid situations that may be life changing, embarrassing or awkward. Some of these statistics are being collected by FocusDriven a new victim support group developed with the support of the Federal Department of Transportation and The National Safety Council. Here is some of the compelling data:

> "One recent simulator study compared drivers using cell phones and drivers impaired by alcohol. Cell phone users had slower reaction times than drivers with .08 BAC and slower reaction to vehicles braking in front of them and drivers who use cell phones are four times more likely to be involved in a crash" (Why cell-free driving, n.d., para. 6).
>
> Another study supported this as far back as 2003: "…driving performance was more impaired when they were conversing on a cell phone than when they were legally intoxicated" (Strayer, D. L, Drews, F. A, & Crouc, D. J., 2003, March 9).
>
> "A growing body of research suggests that using a mobile telephone while driving increases a driver's risk of being involved in a crash. Studies that have analyzed the cell phone records of crash-involved drivers have reported that using a cell phone while driving is associated with roughly a quadrupling of crash risk" (AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety, 2008).

For many cell phone users, especially teens, text messaging and checking Facebook is a real addiction that impairs their performance in social relationships, work, or school (Brooks, 2009). Sleep deprivation is one of the major consequences of needing to read and respond to text messages. Another manifestation of texting's appeal to young users is sexting where teens send objectionable pictures of themselves to others. In the extreme, this practice has lead to the death of an 18-year old girl in Cincinnati who killed herself to escape the shame and embarrassment after former boyfriend forwarded texting compromising pictures of her to hundreds of other girls (Lalor, G., 2009). Not only can reputations be damaged, but texting can also be hazardous to health. Carlin (2009) of CBS in New York reports that a 15-year-old girl fell in an open manhole into raw sewage while texting and suffered deep cuts and bruises.

The above statistics refer to matters of life and death as they relate to our students and the use of electronic media. And while it may not be our purpose as instructors to prevent accidental death, it certainly is our purpose to help our students communicate more effectively and to use channels of communication efficiently and appropriately. To that end, a survey was developed that gathered important information related to many facets of electronic media and social networking.

Survey and Results

After reviewing the information related to this subject a survey was developed with the specific purpose of determining how major themes discovered in the review related to traditional college students. This section presents primary data from the results of a survey describing specific student experiences through misuse or miscommunication through the use of electronic communication. A social networking survey was created and distributed to students at Stephen F. Austin State University, a traditional college campus in East Texas with approximately 2/3rds of its student population from major metropolitan areas and 1/3rd from rural areas. This section provides a look at the survey questions and an overview of the results.

The usable returned surveys were from 305 total students: 103 of these were male, 202 female. College classification of the students submitting usable results included 55 seniors, 10 juniors, 3 sophomores, and 236 freshmen. To overview: approximately 2/3rds of the respondents were female, over 3/4ths of the respondents were college freshman and close to 1/5th of the respondents were college seniors.

After discovering the demographics of the respondents the survey sought to determine how much time the respondents dedicated to social networking. Table 1 indicates how much time (from under 30 minutes to over two hours) that students are spending engaged in social networking.

Table 1: Time Spent Social Networking

	Text	Twitter	Facebook/Myspace	Other
Under 30 min	31	178	52	17
30 min - 1 hour	57	8	61	9
1 - 2 hours	50	3	94	13
Over 2 hours	159	3	91	22

A quick review of the responses (Table 1) indicate that a large percentage respondents spend over one hour or more a day either texting, or on Facebook/Myspace, or both, and over half of the respondents spending two hours or more a day texting and nearly a third of the respondents spending more than two hours a day on Facebook or Myspace. Clearly texting and using Facebook and Myspace have become a significant form of communication for our college students.

The survey was divided into five major sections with the attempt to determine how social networking was having an impact on Education, Communication, Employment, Social Relationships, Personal Productivity and Financial Cost, and Legal Implications (Table 2). Specific yes/no questions were asked in each of these areas with opportunity for the respondent to explain their response if he or she so chose. Following are the questions and results. Only selected written responses are provided here as some of the questions had nearly all 305 respondents providing input.

Table 2: Social Networking Impact

	Yes	%	No	%
Education				
Study distractions	231	76%	73	24%
Cheating in school	29	10%	276	90%
Communication				
Language & punctuation confusion	81	27%	223	73%
Laziness in communication	103	34%	200	66%
New words/definitions created with internet lingo	124	42%	172	58%
Abusive marketers	6	2%	270	98%
Misdirected text messages	113	38%	187	62%
Generation style differences creating miscommunication	66	22%	229	78%
Employment				
Admission counselors/future employers that read postings	39	13%	258	87%
Fired from a job by text or electronic postings	14	5%	288	95%
Lost job or reprimanded for spending too much time on social network sites	17	6%	282	94%
Social Relationships				
Dating dilemmas	79	27%	217	73%
Lost or damaged relationships	64	21%	236	79%
Surprise visitors on Facebook/Myspace	82	28%	216	72%
Intimate life details and compromising photographs revealed online	39	13%	259	87%
Relationships affected by texting/postings	95	32%	203	68%
Connecting with undesirables	39	13%	262	87%
Breaches of confidentiality	31	10%	270	90%
Reputation damage from postings	39	13%	261	87%
Self-esteem damage from postings	31	10%	268	90%
Personal Productivity and Financial Cost				
Sleep deprivation from too much online time	86	29%	212	71%
Tweeting addiction	4	1%	294	99%
Time wasters from online activity	139	47%	158	53%
Huge technology usage bills	16	5%	279	95%
Legal Implications				
Sexual exploitation and "Sexting"	22	7%	275	93%
Cyberbullying	23	8%	274	92%
Internet harassment and/or intimidation	25	8%	273	92%
Technology distractions leading to accidents or other mishaps	39	13%	258	87%

A total of 1,577 comments were provided by the respondents related to the questions asked. Following are samplings of the specific comments with the attempt to capture the general nature of all the comments that were presented.

Education Comments = 273

1. Study distractions? Comments = 232
    - I am always thinking about Facebook.
    - When studying I get on Facebook intending to stay 10 minutes and it easily turns into 30 minutes to an hour.
    - If I get a text message, I definitely stop studying to see who and what is says…
    - I have to look at Facebook and Myspace before studying, "routine."
    - …you can not focus on studying due to constant incoming text.
    - The phone is always on. …it will always cause a break in the thought process.
    - I spend 12 plus hours on Twitter and Facebook alone, including time in class.
    - It's difficult to get off Facebook while doing homework.
    - When people dread doing assignment, they usually procrastinate by Facebook.
    - When I'm on my computer, I always get on Facebook!
    - Couldn't finish English paper-Facebook.
    - I stay on internet constantly and it makes me not want to do homework or study.
    - People get on and forget assignments till it's too late…
    - Farmville must be completed before studying.
    - Social networking sites are a lot more interesting than studying.
    - It's so hard to study when you can't get off Facebook.
    - Always answer a text or get on Facebook and accidentally stay on forever.
    - Sometimes when studying I get on Facebook and spend hours messing around.
    - Facebook is a great way to waste your time. It is a big distraction hard to ignore.
    - It's entertaining, studying isn't.

2. Cheating in School? Comments = 41
    - I haven't seen this happen.
    - I am way too scared to cheat. Never done it. Terrified.
    - Preceding classes always give information to next class.
    - I have not cheated this semester, but I've had plenty of people cheat or try to cheat off me.
    - I've seen someone text answers to a quiz.
    - Using text messages for definitions on a vocabulary quiz.
    - In art appreciation because the class is stupid and pointless.
    - People use texting in present day to cheat on test and major exams.
    - People text answers or use pictures phones to take photos of the notes and they use the photo to cheat off of.
    - I've seen other people do it.
    - Too lazy to do it myself.

Communication **Comments = 460**

1. Language and punctuation confusion? Comments = 81
    - I have to think about spelling certain words again because I used text and the word populates itself.
    - Not personally, but my friends use improper language and punctuation.
    - I have noticed how people use text and Facebook slang in everyday language.
    - We should keep punctuation and grammar skills so no one is confused on meaning.
    - Oh my goodness. This is a big problem. You cannot show emotion when you text except for punctuation and if you accidentally use the wrong punctuation it can be disastrous and confusing.
    - Text is the worst. There is no tone in literature so interpretation is left in the air.
    - Spell check is ruining grammar for young people.
    - People don't speak correctly anymore because of "text lingo".
    - Sometimes text messages that are meant funny can come across rude…
    - I may be joking in a text to my girlfriend and she takes me seriously and gets mad.
    - Some people are more lax online.
    - We all write and text in slang now days.
    - Texts don't always follow English rules.
    - Text doesn't have facial expressions.
    - People using text speech in everyday speech.
    - Sometimes I say jk instead of just kidding.
    - I text a lot so therefore I have terrible writing skills.
    - With little or not punctuation, it is hard to distinguish true meaning in a text message.
    - I refuse to use most abbreviations and I always us punctuation; I guess my age (45) really shows in a text message.

2. Laziness in communication? Comments = 95
    - This is especially in the male species. They almost always use it to avoid conversation. It gets on my nerves.
    - I have to work hard not to put "lol" and "u" on papers for school.
    - Sometimes people are too lazy to call or talk in person so they text…
    - People don't even want to talk on the phone, just text.
    - I use synonyms and sometimes they do not know what I mean.
    - That's why I prefer email compared to actual talking.
    - Sometimes I don't feel like talking, so I will text them, Even family.
    - Too easy too text.

3. New words/definitions created with internet lingo? Comments = 106
    - Duh, all the time.
    - Some are funny.
    - I've noticed younger kids with new lingo. Things I don't even remotely know what it means.
    - New words are created all the time…
    - Lol, omg, roflmao, brb, lmao, lmfao, wyd, ttyl,
    - Confusing
    - OMG, I say omg and people I talk too use lingo while talking.

4. Abusive marketers? Comments = 23
    - Not really abusive, just really annoying.
    - Advertisers on Facebook.
    - Bad viruses.
    - Advertisers constantly on Facebook and Myspace.
    - Too many ways for them to contact people.
    - Lots of ads on the site and they get access to email you will get junk emails.

5. Misdirected text messages? Comments = 97
    - You cannot know the tone or exact meaning. It sometimes causes problems.
    - …not being able to tell if someone is serious or joking, I've had problems with this.
    - Can't understand sarcasm.
    - Sent wrong texts to wrong people.
    - Sent a text to the person you were talking about.
    - … in some cases disastrous.
    - People read text in the mood they are in.
    - …me and my boyfriend got in a fight because of it.
    - Texting sometimes hurtful to someone.

6. Generation style differences creating miscommunication? Comments = 58
    - Older people don't always understand what I'm talking about.
    - I try talking to my parents and will sometimes use text communication. They can't stand it.
    - My dad does not know my way of communicating.
    - Mom sometimes doesn't know what I mean in text messages.
    - Harder for older to communicate with younger.
    - My mom sends text messages that I can't understand.
    - We don't verbally communicate as well.

Employment **Comments = 59**

1. Admission counselors/future employers that read postings? Comments = 34
   - Personal info on a site meant for a friend shouldn't influence an employer's thoughts completely.
   - Facebook has become a huge part of employment.
   - Employers have started checking up on prospective employees on Facebook.
   - A lot of people I know delete Facebook when they graduate.
   - My boss looked at Facebook/Myspace before hiring me.
   - Check your Facebook photos to see what kind of person you are.
   - Grammar again.
   - …so I took all the inappropriate stuff off mine.
   - Teachers, employers are checking Facebook (mostly pictures) to see who they are dealing with.
   - They can view your true life and form an opinion of you.

2. Fired from a job by text or electronic postings? Comments = 12
   - My sister was fired through a text.

3. Lost job or reprimanded for spending too much time on social network sites? Comments = 13
   - We're blocked at work…they know what problems it would create.
   - I've heard of people getting reprimanded at work for both texting and Facebook.
   - Some employers have gone as far as to block the websites and not allow personal phones during work hours.
   - I didn't lose my job, but my internet was disconnected because I spent too much time on Facebook/Myspace.
   - Reprimanded for being on Facebook.
   - It's only fair that if you waste time at work, by being social, that you get fired.
   - Caught at work texting.

Social Relationships **Comments = 435**

1. Dating dilemmas? Comments = 74
   - Trouble with girlfriend over Facebook pictures.
   - Trouble with boyfriend over Facebook pictures.
   - Sent the wrong text to my girlfriend.
   - Everyone knows your personal business if you choose to display.
   - Yes, you send a text and she takes it the wrong way.
   - Girls get jealous.
   - Boys are just so confusing, the end.
   - DRAMA!
   - Boyfriend gets mad if I talk to other guys on Facebook.
   - No phone calls, only text.
   - People get caught cheating.

2. Lost or damaged relationships? Comments = 54
   - People are sneaky and do things no one is supposed to find out about.
   - I think it has rekindled relationships.
   - Sent wrong message to girlfriend.
   - Break ups.
   - Friends can see everything.
   - I miscommunicate or misread tests all the time…this has caused many fights.
   - Online games.
   - Texting replaces real life.
   - People who date and have each other on Facebook can face a problem when they
   - break up.

3. Surprise visitors on Facebook/Myspace? Comments = 77
   - Weird people.
   - Cyber stalking is getting ridiculous.
   - Sometimes random people try to add me.
   - Ugh! My grandparents; and a girl I thought was out of my life permanently.
   - People I don't know try to add me; that's why I set my profile to private.
   - Mother and Aunt.
   - Estranged father found me.
   - Parents and family.
   - Not a big friend of friending my parents or their friends.
   - Too many.
   - Creepers.
   - People I haven't heard from forever, never thought they would find me.
   - Relative sees something.

4. Intimate life details and compromising photographs revealed online?
   Comments = 36
   - People accidentally start telling their business and showing pics for attention.
   - There are so many controversial photos that get uploaded on Facebook.
   - Friends add pictures and tag you. Sometimes they don't consider the picture may be embarrassing.
   - My mother is my friend on Facebook and sometimes there are some things I would rather her not know.
   - Alcohol pictures are easily misinterpreted.
   - Not by me, but I've seen some of others.
   - It happened to a friend.
   - People post things they shouldn't online.
   - People put their whole life stories online.
   - Pornographic pictures are grossly displayed on mis-users.

5. Relationships affected by texting/postings? Comments = 79
   - No trust, people are sneaky.

- When someone sent a text to the wrong person.
- Crazy girl going through text.
- Rude posts.
- Caught an ex boyfriend cheating on Facebook.
- Jealousy from ex-girlfriend.
- Yes, Facebook is the devil! People put their info on Facebook and drama is created.
- A girl cousin post something on your wall and your girlfriend assumes your cheating.
- Girlfriend gets mad.
- Sometimes an ex would look through my phone.
- Saying something in a text can be forwarded to someone and ruin everything.
- Someone taking pics of your text and sending to your bf.
- Arguments through text and it makes it more difficult.
- …arguments frequently because he would put things about me on Facebook.
- Hence the phrase: "nothing is official until it's Facebook official!"
- Other girls putting pictures of me on Facebook.
- My roommate is constantly posting rude things about me on her Facebook status.
- Catch who is cheating easier.
- Relationship status lied on Facebook/Myspace.

6. Connecting with undesirables? Comments = 30
   - Some people I don't like try to connect and contact me through Facebook.
   - A friend (ex-friend) from a long time ago contacted me and I didn't want her to talk to me ever again.
   - Ugly girls track you down.
   - Sometimes on Facebook, people you don't know continuously message you.
   - Facebook chat allows people to message me every time I sign on and it gets annoying very fast. I finally disabled it.
   - A guy will always send me messages, but I don't want to be mean.
   - People you hate can find you on Facebook.
   - There are a lot of people online it is hard to avoid the undesirable.

7. Breaches of confidentiality? Comments = 24
   - Facebook remembers everything!
   - People looking through your photos.
   - People looking through phones.
   - People tell other people.
   - Facebook is showing everything.
   - People tell all online.

8. Reputation damage from postings? Comments = 34
   - Haters will scandalize your name and people believe all they hear…ignorance.
   - Postings on Facebook can ruin a person's reputation.
   - Sometimes friends will log into your account and put a status that is embarrassing.
   - Drunken nights.

- Sleazy pictures.
- Picture of embarrassing things lose jobs.
- Some people post false info.
- Happens all the time.
- People can write bad things about you that are not true, but everyone still sees them.
- It’s easy to post something bad about someone, true or not, and it can ruin their reputation.
- False comments quickly and easily are outbursted.
- Someone reading personal information can be damaging.
- People make fun of you.

9. Self-esteem damage by postings? Comments = 27
   - People are cruel and cowards behind the computer.
   - People are mean.
   - Negative postings can bring people down.
   - People can post mean stuff about people.
   - Words really do hurt people, but you learn to forgive and forget.
   - The things people write can lower your self esteem.
   - People rag on others.
   - People can be very critical.
   - People speak their minds…

Personal Productivity and Financial Cost Comments = 221

1. Sleep deprivation from too much online time? Comments = 81
   - I've seen people not sleep all night due to computer.
   - Staying up too late, not even realizing it.
   - I was on Myspace one time for 5 hours and didn't realize it.
   - Addicting.
   - I stay up late sometimes looking at Facebook.
   - I am always online during late hours.
   - When AIM first came out I would stay up all night chatting.
   - There is so much to do and it just sucks up all your time.
   - Sometimes it's hard to get off.
   - Would rather be online than go to bed.
   - Sometimes I stay online too long and don't get enough sleep.

2. Tweeting addiction? Comments = 8
   - It's fun to tweet.
   - Mean to people.
   - Some people give too much of their lives online.

3. Time wasters from online activity? Comments = 118
   - This is huge because of the games on there are so fun.
   - I spend as much time filling out surveys from Myspace just to waste time.
   - Facebook and shopping.
   - I search for timewasters instead of getting what I need done.
   - Yes. Facebook distracts me from studying a lot!
   - Procrastination.
   - Checking Facebook for no reason.
   - Excuses not to do homework.
   - Playing games and Facebook stalking.
   - Farmville!
   - Take quizzes and play games instead of studying.

4. Huge technology usage bills Comments = 14
   - For my parents not for me-they pay my bills.
   - Yes, one time my phone bill was extremely high from texting
   - Overtexting and going over minutes.
   - Text messages.

Legal Implications Comments = 90

1. Sexual exploitation and "Sexting"? Comments = 19
   - I do this with my boyfriend when we haven't seen each other in a while.
   - Sexting is easy.
   - Porn.

2. Cyberbullying? Comments = 17
   - Someone attempted to bully me. I blocked them.
   - I have seen friends leave nasty comments on a girls profile because they didn't like her.
   - People have done it to me.
   - I have been victimized but this is not difficult to avoid.
   - Happens on Facebook.

3. Internet harassment and/or intimidation? Comments = 19
   - Stalkers and weirdoes.
   - Facebook.
   - I have been victimized…

4. Technology distractions leading to accidents or other mishaps. Comments = 35
   - Yes, I wrecked my car while texting.
   - Physical altercations stemming from cyber stalking.
   - My friend wrecked her car while texting.
   - Driving while texting is more dangerous than drunk driving.
   - People so focused on internet they don't focus on real life.
   - Wrecks, wrecks, wrecks…

Overall Comments Comments = 39

- Social networking is bad for people in college. Very distracting.
- Facebook has taken over my life. It is super addicting. More so than texting, I can control that.
- I don't have Facebook, Myspace, or Twitter. I don't believe in that dumb stuff.
- People should have enough self control not to let these things control them.
- People spend a lot of time online, but it also take their mind off of stressful events.
- I hate texting; I'd rather have a conversation.
- This is a great idea.
- Why do we have to take this survey?

Summary of Comments and Future Study

It is obvious social networking affects nearly every area of our life: education, communication, employment; social relationships, personal productivity and financial cost, and legal implications. The comments provided from the results of the study are thought provoking and challenge future study to encourage efficient and effective use of electronic communication. Technology continues to create new challenges as we interact with others. Some interesting future studies that the authors of this study plan to pursue include: Texting versus Talking: what are gender and age differences related to the use of texting; and Rules to follow related to Facebook, Texting and Twittering: what are specific guidelines that will help our students and others avoid the ever lurking dangers of electronic communication.

Sample Lesson Plan

Lesson title:

Preventing Painful Perils and Pitfalls while Texting, Twittering and Facebooking

Cognitive Objective:

Make students aware of the communication challenges of social networking.

Behavioral Objective:

Change the behavior of students related to the use of cell phones and computers while communicating.

Pre-class assignment:

Ask students to interview 3-5 of their friends related to serious or comical events that they have experience while Facebooking, texting or Twittering.

In-class:

- Divide class into groups of 4-5 students each.
- Ask each to designate a spokesperson for their group.
- Ask each group to discuss what they discovered in the pre-class interview and present these in a round-robin fashion to the rest of the class.

Lecture:

Follow with a short lecture from the literature review and survey results in this study.

Post-lecture activity:

Ask each group to develop a Top Ten Rules to Follow related to texting, Facebooking and Twittering. Have each group present one of their rules at a time until a class list is built related to Rules to Follow.

Post-class assignment:

Challenge students to use these Rules to Follow during the next few days and report back at the next class the results.

Conclusion

It is mind-boggling how electronic communication is interfacing with nearly every area of our life. From simple miscommunication to serious accidents, it is important that we understand what the benefits and dangers are and how we can best use these forms of communication. The distraction, confusion, challenges and concerns presented with the advancing technological forms of communication makes one wonder if the disadvantages offset the advantages incurred while using electronic communication.

Whether they do or not, this form of communication is with us; and it is critical that standards, etiquette, and rules continue to be established that will prevent or eliminate the challenges presented. As business communication professionals it is our place to help establish guidelines to provide protection and guidance for our students and clients.

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Going Green: Paperless Technology and Feedback in The Classroom

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to measure the following: student satisfaction with the paperless classroom; student satisfaction with paperless feedback; and costs savings as a result of the paperless classroom. Traditionally, software courses are paper-intensive because of the large amount of assignments being submitted for grading by students. In an effort to "go green," this study is proposing the electronic submission of software assignments and electronic feedback by instructors using Blackboard's virtual hard drive and USB flash drives. The response from students on their satisfaction with electronic submission and feedback of assignments was overwhelmingly positive. The study also resulted in a 48% cost savings on paper and toner.

Introduction

With our economy in a slump and our budgets stretched thin, institutions are trying to devise methods for cost containment. Implementing the paperless classroom not only prepares students for today's technology-driven workplace but also helps our department's budget by reducing paper and toner costs. Obtaining data on the paperless technologies, feedback and cost savings will assist our department and ultimately our university in validating the "going green" concept
.

Using web-based technologies for the dissemination of course materials and for the storage of course work provides many benefits to both instructors and students. Lutes and Harriger (2003) conducted a study on the paperless classroom using a web-based tool called Essignments. This tool, much like any web-based software, provides the users with many benefits like 24-hour accessibility from anywhere there is an Internet connection, electronic archival of all files, elimination of stacks of paper, and reduction of lost assignments.

Purpose

The purpose of this study is to measure the following: student satisfaction with the paperless classroom; student satisfaction with paperless feedback; and costs savings as a result of the paperless classroom. Traditionally, software courses are paper-intensive because of the large amount of assignments being submitted for grading by students. In an effort to "go green," this study is proposing the electronic submission of software assignments and electronic feedback by instructors. Specifically, the research questions being investigated are as follows:

Research Question 1: What level of satisfaction did the students report with the paperless classroom?
Research Question 2: What level of satisfaction did the students report with the paperless feedback used in this study?
Research Question 3: Did the implementation of the paperless classroom result in a cost savings for the department?

The two paperless technologies that will be used for assignment submissions are the Virtual Hard Drive available on Blackboard and USB flash drive s). The paperless feedback that will be used by instructors will be in the form of written comments on papers using Microsoft's tracking and comments features.

Background

In 2009, RCC Consulting posted an article about the cost of paper used in the year 2001 for an organization of 100 employees. RCC Consulting used copying, faxing and storage costs as factors to be measured in order to compute the cost of paper. An interesting aspect of their study was that they indicated that the cost of paper ran about .003 cents per sheet which is minor but the majority of the cost had nothing to do with the actual sheet of paper but with what was done with the sheet once it was purchased. They indicated that 45% of the paper is used for photocopying, 35% is used for printing, and 5% is used for faxing with 5% being mailed and 10% being wasted or discarded. Of the paper that is used, 30% is placed into filing cabinets which will eventually be purged. When you consider the cost of equipment and supplies for printers, faxes and storage materials along with the square feet of office space, the cost increases exponentially (RCC Consulting, 2001). According to *INC Magazine*, it costs $20 to file a document, $120 to search for a misfiled document, and $250 to recreate a lost document (K2 Enterprises, 2009; McCorry KJ, 2009). Most of the data that is found in paperless offices is geared toward ensuring a return on investment, in other words, keeping data that is of value or required.. Real Estate Offices, Title Companies, Accounting Firms, and Law Firms are just some of the industries that have experimented with converting to the paperless office. The cost of the conversion and the success of such a project have been topics for many articles.

Lutes and Harriger discuss a web-based electronic submission system that allows instructors the ability to accept assignments and students to submit those assignments using the Web (Lutes and Harriger, 2003). Focusing on a hands-on developmental framework for both online academic course management and industry-class collaboration in a paperless environment, Wang's study found a very high level of motivation by students for using the paperless environment as well as for acquiring its benefits (Wang, 2009). In 2008, Allen Kupetz posed the question, "Is the Paperless Classroom Possible?" and listed the advantages of going paperless. Although he is cautious to note that "…paperless doesn't mean any less paper. It means simply that technology is giving us new options to reduce or eliminate much of the paper we use today and to enjoy the cost savings that result" (Kupetz, 2008).
This paper does not propose conversion to a completely paperless environment, but simply ventures to create a paperless assignment submission and feedback environment to analyze the students' satisfaction with the learning environment without physical exchange of paper. Students will simply

be asked to use either a USB flash drive or a virtual hard drive to submit their work. Instructors will have the majority of adjusting to do as grading all assignments and exams will be direct from the virtual hard drive or from USB flash drives. This grading will require instructors to read and respond to the submitted work electronically.

Methodology

Students taking software classes in the Applied Business Technology department were taught using a paperless classroom. Two sections of Business Computer Applications, two sections of Microsoft Word, one section of Microsoft PowerPoint and one section of Microsoft Access were used in this study. Students submitted assignments by two methods: USB flash drives and virtual hard drive. Instructors uploaded graded assignments to the virtual hard drive with comments by using Microsoft comments and tracking features. At the end of the semester, students provided their perceptions about the different methods for submitting work for grading and receiving instructor feedback after their assignments were graded.

In each course, a lesson on file management was taught at the beginning of the semester to encourage good file organization and management as well as to teach the mechanics of the virtual hard drive and the flash drive. Students had little questions about the flash drive as most had prior experience using one. All students experienced a learning curve with the virtual hard drive as this was a completely new technology for every student. One step associated with the virtual hard drive was the need for students to grant the instructor permission to view their work for the course only. In other words, the students could have folders and documents not accessible to the professor if they wished. The instructors had each student sign a permission slip before using their virtual hard drive to document this permission. At the end of the semester and at the request of the instructors, students revoked these permissions for the course folder(s).

Findings

Virtual Hard Drive Findings

To gain a better understanding of the students' satisfaction with the virtual hard drive, a questionnaire was administered. Students enrolled in the courses that used the virtual hard drive had never been exposed to this tool prior to the first day of classes. Students overwhelmingly reported satisfaction with all aspects of using the virtual hard drive for submitting assignments electronically and for receiving instructor feedback.

In terms of assignment submission, 90% strongly agreed or agreed that using the virtual hard drive helped them to better manage their work throughout the semester with 82% reporting that it helped them to be more cognizant of meeting assignment deadlines. The introductory lesson on file management proved to be valuable with 97% reporting that it helped them to better manage their assignments. For all students in this study, the virtual hard drive was a new technology. Even so, 90% of students who participated strongly agreed or agreed that they prefer it over using paper and would like to see more instructors using it, while only 55% reported that they would prefer using USB flash drives, a more familiar technology.

In terms of instructor feedback, 87% strongly agreed or agreed that the electronic feedback helped them to understand their strengths and weaknesses. In spite of this being a new technology, 86% of students who participated reported that they prefer receiving feedback in this manner over using paper and would like to see more instructors using it, while only 45% reported that they would prefer using USB flash drives, a more familiar technology.
The specific findings can be found in Table 1.

Table 1: Results of Virtual Hard Drive Questionnaire*

Question	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Uploading my homework to BlackBoard's Virtual Hard Drive helped me to better manage my assignments.	26	9	3	1	0
	67%	23%	8%	3%	0%
The electronic feedback that I received from my instructor helped me understand my weaknesses/strengths on my assignments.	25	9	5	0	0
	64%	23%	13%	0%	0%
Uploading my assignments to the virtual hard drive has made me more aware of meeting assignment deadlines because my instructor is not alerted to late submissions.	19	13	5	1	1
	49%	33%	13%	3%	3%
I would like for more instructors to accept my homework assignments using the virtual hard drive.	25	10	1	2	1
	64%	26%	3%	5%	3%
How do you prefer to submit your assignments?					
a. paper printout	6	7	7	6	9
	17%	20%	20%	17%	26%
b. BlackBoard 's Virtual Hard Drive	28	7	1	1	1
	74%	18%	3%	3%	3%
c. USB Flash Drive	9	10	6	2	7
	26%	29%	18%	6%	21%
Did the introductory lesson on creating assignment folders (file management) on the virtual hard drive help you to better manage your assignments?	24	8	0	0	1
	73%	24%	0%	0%	3%
How do you prefer to receive instructor feedback on your assignments?					
a. paper printout	7	10	5	4	8
	21%	29%	15%	12%	24%
b. BlackBoard's Virtual Hard Drive	26	7	4	0	1
	68%	18%	11%	0%	3%
c. USB Flash Drive	7	8	8	3	8
	21%	24%	24%	9%	24%
I found uploading assignments to Blackboard's Virtual Hard Drive easier than printing the assignments.	28	6	3	0	1
	74%	16%	8%	0%	3%

* Percentages are rounded to the nearest whole number.

USB Flash Drive Findings

To gain a better understanding of the students' satisfaction with using a USB flash drive, a questionnaire was administered. Students who enrolled in the courses that used the USB flash drive had prior experience with using them for document storage. Students were required to purchase an additional USB flash drive for course assignments only to be submitted to the instructor for grading.

Students overwhelmingly reported satisfaction with all aspects of using the USB flash drive for submitting assignments electronically and for receiving instructor feedback.

In terms of assignment submission, 89% strongly agree or agreed that using the USB flash drive helped them to better manage their work throughout the semester with 94% reporting that it helped them to be more cognizant of meeting assignment deadlines. The introductory lesson on file management proved to be valuable with 94% reporting that it helped them to better manage their assignments. For all students in this study, the USB flash drive was not a new technology. Even so, 84% of students who participated strongly agreed or agreed that they prefer it over using paper and would like to see more instructors using it. Thirty-nine percent reported a desire to use the virtual hard drive to submit assignments even though it was an unknown technology.

In terms of instructor feedback, 88% strongly agreed or agreed that the electronic feedback helped them to understand their strengths and weaknesses. Most students (84%) who participated reported that they prefer receiving feedback in this manner over using paper and would like to see more instructors using it. Interestingly, 48% of students reported that they would like to receive feedback using the virtual hard drive even though they had no prior experience.

The specific findings can be found in Table 2.

Table 2: Results of USB Flash Drive Questionnaire*

Question	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Saving my homework to the USB flash drive helped me to better manage my assignments	21	10	3	0	1
	60%	29%	9%	0%	3%
The electronic feedback that I received from my instructor helped me understand my weaknesses/strengths on my assignments.	17	13	4	0	0
	50%	38%	12%	0%	0%
Saving my assignments using the USB flash drive has made me more aware of meeting assignment deadlines because my instructor cannot grade my work without it.	18	14	1	1	0
	53%	41%	3%	3%	0%
I would like for more instructors to accept my homework assignments on a USB flash drive.	18	9	3	3	1
	53%	26%	9%	9%	3%
How do you prefer to submit your assignments?					
a. paper printout	7	3	12	3	6
	23%	10%	39%	10%	19%
b. BlackBoard ‘s Virtual Hard Drive	7	4	6	4	7
	25%	14%	21%	14%	25%
c. USB Flash Drive	19	7	2	2	1
	61%	23%	6%	6%	3%
Did the introductory lesson on creating assignment folders (file management) on the virtual hard drive help you to better manage your assignments?	22	9	1	0	1
	67%	27%	3%	0%	3%
How do you prefer to receive instructor feedback on your assignments?					
a. paper printout	10	4	10	2	4
	33%	13%	33%	7%	13%
b. BlackBoard’s Virtual Hard Drive	10	3	7	3	4
	37%	11%	26%	11%	15%
c. USB Flash Drive	18	5	2	2	5
	56%	16%	6%	6%	16%
I found uploading assignments to the USB flash drive easier than printing the assignments.	25	5	2	0	2
	74%	15%	6%	0%	6%

* Percentages are rounded to the nearest whole number.

<u>Cost Savings Findings</u>

As shown below, fall 2008 copy paper and toner costs for the department were compared to the fall 2009 costs. The costs are for the entire department and not just the classrooms; however, no changes in faculty, course offerings, or office procedures were implemented during this time frame. The only deliberate change was the implementation of the paperless classroom for all sections of the software courses offered in the fall 2009 semester.

August through December 2008

Copy Paper - Total Amount / Quantity

$170.05 / 5 boxes
$365.00 / 10 boxes
$340.10 / 10 boxes

TOTAL $875.15

Toner – Total Amount/Quantity

$757.06 / 5 cartridges

TOTAL $757.06
TOTAL FALL 2008 Supply Costs $1,632.21

August through December 2009

Copy Paper - Total Amount / Quantity

$314.50 / 10 boxes
$349.90 / 10 boxes

TOTAL $664.40

Toner – Total Amount/Quantity

$131.87 / 1 cartridge

TOTAL $131.87
TOTAL FALL 2009 Supply Costs $796.27
PERCENT SAVINGS 48%

Conclusions and Recommendations

Research Question 1: What level of satisfaction did the students report with the paperless classroom?

Research Question 2: What level of satisfaction did the students report with the paperless feedback used in this study?

Research Question 3: Did the implementation of the paperless classroom result in a cost savings for the department?

Overall, students responded positively to the paperless classroom. Introducing a new technology such as the virtual hard drive to entry-level students who were learning new software could have been disastrous. However, the opposite was the case. Students embraced it and have indicated an interest in using it in future semesters with future instructors. In fact, students who participated in the USB flash drive classroom also indicated an interest in using the virtual hard drive. Both technologies were successfully implemented and embraced by the students.

In response to research questions 1 and 2, students responded with a high level of satisfaction with both the paperless classroom and the paperless feedback. They were overwhelmingly satisfied with using the virtual hard drive and the USB flash drive for submitting assignments and for receiving instructor feedback on assignments. No desire to return to a paper system was reported.

Therefore, it is recommended that faculty who teach software consider using a virtual hard drive for submission and feedback in future courses. One consideration to using Blackboard's virtual hard drive is that students must grant permission to their instructor so that their course folders can be viewed. It is imperative that this permission be removed at the end of the semester to maintain the student's privacy.

In response to research question #3, the department realized a significant cost savings. With over a 48% cost savings, it is recommended that other courses be evaluated to determine if a paperless approach might work for some or all assignments.
Overall, students reported anecdotally that the use of the virtual hard drive gave them peace of mind. Using the USB flash drive or submitting hard copy assignments at times, resulted in their losing their homework, whether the dog ate it, or they just lost their USB, their homework was not available. The virtual drive eliminated that possibility and therefore they felt much more at ease once they had submitted their assignments.

Implications

Organizations are adopting the "going green" agenda promoted throughout the country in an effort to save our environment. One example is Citigroup Inc. They have implemented a program that offers to plant a tree for each credit card holder who signs up for paperless statements. Another example is Vanguard Group Inc. They now waive account fees for customers who agree to electronic delivery of statements, fund reports and prospectuses. In addition, Washington Mutual Inc. and Sovereign Bancorp Inc. have begun making donations to environmental groups when customers switch to doing some of their business online (Laise, 2007).
The hope is that this study will result in a reduction of costs for our department and will serve as a model for other programs throughout our university. Not only will this study promote the "going green" agenda, it will also make a significant difference in our classroom supply budget.

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Incorporating Virtual Job Interviews in the Online Business Communication Class

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ABSTRACT

One of the criticisms expressed about online courses is the lack of interactivity. In particular, the lack of synchronous interaction is noted. Though in many instances asynchronous interactions can be just as effective, or sometimes even more effective, there are some things that are much more successful in a synchronous venue. Job interviewing is one of the activities that can be better accomplished by synchronous interaction. Virtual worlds now provide a new venue for online synchronous education. The mock interview examined in this study was accomplished through phone and virtual world (SecondLife) interviews. Results of the interviewing project where students were given the opportunity to use a virtual environment are reported here.

Introduction

In 1913 Thomas Edison is credited with saying, "Books will soon be obsolete in schools ... Our school system will be completely changed in the next 10 years" when he was talking about the motion picture (Wesch, 2007). However, books are not obsolete; they are still valuable teaching tools, but only one tool. Though online education is still considered to be a relatively new phenomenon by most, technology implementation and computers in the classroom as classroom tools are not new concepts. Over the years many new tools (e.g. movie projector, filmstrip projector, computers, smart boards) have made an appearance in classrooms. These additions to the classroom were not meant to replace the role of the classroom teacher; they were merely seen as effective tools to be utilized in the instruction of students.

Technology provides many new tools to create a myriad of new educational opportunities for both students and instructors in today's classrooms. The virtual classroom is no longer a thing of the future; technology has created a venue for the classroom to exist in this non-traditional format. With the speed technology changes, it would be unrealistic for all educators to totally accept and embrace every new technological tool that comes along. However, this does not mean that educators should totally ignore new technologies either. It is important that educators evaluate new tools and venues for validity and applicability to instruction whether it is physical or virtual in nature.

Dickens (1994) described research showing that learning is closely tied to motivation. She states, "Students will learn what they want to learn and will have great difficulty in learning material in which they are not interested" (p. 21). Boche and BeMent (1990) purport that with the use of simulations, students are challenged to apply both knowledge and skills to business situations. Simulations provide opportunities for students to make decisions, solve problems, interact with coworkers, and face challenges that they cannot experience in the traditional classroom. They express that, "Simulation sparks interest for all students--male and female, low ability and high ability, from entry-level to management."

In Herbert's (1993) research on individualizing entrepreneurship instruction, he quoted the old adage that, "Experience is the best teacher." He said, "Students who operate their own businesses would attest to that tenet" (p. 32). Burgess (1987) said, "The active learning that takes place in a simulation can complement the more reflective type of learning which arises from a conventional teaching program" (p. 236).

Educators have been teaching online for a number of years now. However, one of the problems encountered is providing active learning. New technologies may provide that active learning component. One of the newer technology tools used in education is an online virtual world known as "Second Life," which was first opened to the public in 2003. Wang and Braman (2009) describe SecondLife (SL) as, "a three dimensional (3D) electronic environment where members can socialize, hold virtual meetings, or conduct economic transactions (p. 235)." At any time of the day visitors to SL will always find more than 40,000 world-wide members online, and over 1 million who have logged in during the last 60 days. Though some mistakenly call SL a game, it is not. There are no rules and no preset agenda as there are in games such as World of Warcraft. Students are able to create representations of themselves for the virtual world in the form of an animated character called an avatar. This avatar is able to move freely around the virtual world and do practically anything they could do in real life, and many things they could not do in real life, but in a virtual world. In a virtual world, students may have the opportunity to gain experience that would not otherwise be available to them. According to a large information technology research and advisory company, though it might not necessarily be SL (as there are other virtual worlds), they predict that 80% of active Internet users will have a "second life," as will Fortune 500 enterprises, by the end of 2011 (Gartner, Inc., 2007).

In 2008 Warr lists businesses such as Adidas, Dell, Calvin Klein, Warner Brothers, and Nature along with cultural organizations such as Virtual Rome, Louvre, and the Alliance of Second Life Librarians as examples of this second life virtual presence. She also mentions politicians such as Hillary Clinton, John Edwards, and Antonio di Petro as having a virtual presence in SL (Warr, 2008).

Many universities are now creating a presence in SL. Some of these schools are offering complete courses in Second Life. A list of some of these universities and organizations can be found at http://simteach.com/wiki/index.php?title=Institutions_and_Organizations_ in_SL. According to eSchoolNews, educators are gravitating toward Second Life because of the improvement in interaction and expression (Appel, 2006). ISTE (International Society for Technology in Education) hosts a virtual environment in Second Life. According to the ISTE website (http://www.iste.org), this is a "venue for educators to network and learn from each other about real-life education opportunities and best practices in Second Life."

The type of learning activity used in SL is very dependent on the course and the learning objectives for that course. Some researchers report taking advantage of the use of international guests, talking with professionals in their field, and taking tours of production plants without encountering the usual costs (Dreher, Reiners, Dreher, & Dreher, 2009). Wang and Braman (2009) reported effective virtual activities for learning computer-related subjects. Some of the activities they reported using in their field trials were field trips, class discussions, building and manipulating objects, and in-world presentations. Dreher, Reiners, Dreher, and Dreher (2009) found SL to be very beneficial in teaching information systems-related skills such as programming, requirements analysis, systems development, project management, and business process modeling. They felt that through the blending of real world and virtual world, students' intrinsic motivation was enhanced and industry-relevant skill was transferred. They described SL as "a safe, inexpensive and highly adaptive environment" where students could "develop industry relevant skills and gain industry experience."

Wagner and Ip (2009), who had students create and run their own businesses in SL, assert that unique opportunities are made available with the use of virtual worlds. They describe these unique opportunities as a way to "provide an action learning environment where students can enact real business ideas and generate considerable value, in an environment where failure has relatively few and inexpensive consequences (p. 249)." They added that students found success to be very rewarding.

Students in a fashion design class at Buffalo State College used SL for product development and visualization. The fashion industry is moving toward the use of 3D modeling, making this an especially valuable learning experience. The researcher reported that multiple aspects of fashion design, development, merchandising, advertising, and promotion can be experienced by students from the use of a virtual environment. A virtual style show was held at the end of the semester for students to showcase their work. She felt that the project provided a link from existing concepts to new concepts (Polvinen, 2007).

SL offers a unique opportunity for communication. An instructor teaching English in SL said that her students are able to learn about things in a way that would not be nearly as effective in-world and experience true interaction with different nationalities, religions, and sociopolitical groups (Lamb, 2006). Unlike many other countries, in the United States a large percentage of the country only speaks one language. In SL language barriers can be removed with the use of a language converter. The tool recognizes what others are saying in their native language, and this is translated into English. This facilitates an excellent opportunity for cross-cultural interaction and collaboration.

Purpose

The purpose of this study was to examine whether students would choose to use virtual world synchronous interview communication over telephone communication for a mock job interview in an online course.

Participants

This was a convenience sample of students enrolled in a business communication course in a mid-sized regional university in Texas. The online class in this study comprised 26 students. There were 8 males and 18 females enrolled in the course. More than half of the students were traditional-aged students in the 18-22 year age group. A complete list of the age of students is shown in Table 1.

Table 1
Age Groups of Participants

Age Group	Number of Participants
18-22	14
23-29	6
30-39	2
40-49	2
50-59	2

n=26

The course is a sophomore-level class and part of the core curriculum for the University. Though it is taught in the College of Business, the class makeup is very diverse. The largest number of students were majoring in Human Sciences Child Development. Table 2 shows the majors for the entire class.

Table 2
University Major of Participants

Major	Number of Participants
Accounting	3
Child Development	5
Finance	2
Forestry/Agriculture	3
General Business	2
Interdisciplinary Studies (Elementary Education)	3
Kinesiology	2
Math	1
Marketing	2
Nursing	3

n=26

Procedure

Students were required to participate in a job interview for the employment communication unit. Three jobs are posted on Blackboard, and the student was able to choose which of the jobs he or she would like to apply for. When submitting his or her resume and letter of application, he or she was to keep that job in mind so that he or she could include experiences that were relevant to the job. Students were given the choice of participating in the interview process by a telephone interview or by an "in-person" interview with their SL avatar. Because of additional requirements for participating in a virtual interview (e.g. equipment, attire), students were awarded a 10% bonus on their interview score if using that format. Students had online forms to sign up for the time and method of interview. Both the telephone interviews and the SL interviews were conducted by the same interviewer who had experience in hiring for a major company. The interviewer was provided with the letters of application and resumes several days prior to the start of the interviews. Prior exposure to SL was provided by a bonus assignment earlier in the semester. Students were given instructions on how to sign up for a SL account and how to navigate within it.

Limitations of the Study

The participants were in one online class resulting in a small sample size. Some of the students who might have chosen to participate in the SL interview indicated that they were prevented from doing so because of equipment requirements. In order to participate in the SL interview, students had to be able to access SL as well as have speakers and a microphone. SL also requires high-speed Internet to operate successfully. The only introduction to the use of SL was in the form of a PowerPoint slide show and printed instructions.

Results of the Study

Only one student in the sample group had previous experience with the SL environment. Of the 26 students in the class, 12 (46%) students participated in the initial bonus activity where they were introduced to SL and were required to travel to several locations within the environment, take screen captures showing they were there, and submit these electronically through Blackboard. Three of the males (38%) and nine of the females (50%) participated in the bonus activity. When students completed the bonus assignment earlier in the semester, they were given the opportunity to make comments on their first impression of SL and whether they thought it had educational potential. The following are comments received:

> Comment 1:
> Even though it didn't keep me from learning how to use Second Life, the learning curve is probably frustrating for a lot of people, but that's definitely part of what makes the Second Life community so fun and interesting – it's not full of young kids. The kids who do play are likely to try to act more mature, so they can be taken seriously in the community, especially in the adult areas. Second Life is an excellent tool for learning nearly anything imaginable. I would love to see the University develop more facilities in Second Life and utilize them for online education courses. A 3D design class could potentially be responsible for creating content for the University's island. From art, to business theories and computer programming, Second Life can be applied to many disciplines to educate the next generation of students who will have grown up with the Internet and can easily adjust to class in a virtual world. Attendance rates would probably reach an all time high, but any student whose character is "Away" for longer than 10 minutes should surely be counted absent.

> Comment 2:
> My experience with Second Life was confusing. I do not see this program being used to enhance the online class experience. There are too many options to get into. Also, there is some material that is not even related to our online class. I realize that this program is an innovation, but I do not see it being used dealing with classes. It was a new experience, however, getting to see people live, chatting, and doing things within Second Life.

Comment 3:
I think this could be a very powerful tool for learning because it makes meeting and talking with your professor and/or other classmates fun, and it gives you a chance to express yourself a little. I could see this program catching on, especially if professors encourage it to their students so that questions about the class or anything in general can be answered

Comment 4:
My first impression of Second Life was good, and I also thought to myself that once I got the hang of things it could be very fun to use. I think that it can be an interesting experience for students taking an online class because it would be something different, and they would get a virtual world feel to having the class. There could be classrooms set up for the online class instead of using Blackboard to get information. There could be places the students could meet and chat or have a set time, kind of like office hours, the teacher would be available to demonstrate examples on what they were studying. Depending on the class, the students would be able to start their own business in Second Life, like a simulation, and use resources learned in class to make it work and be profitable. They would also have the influence of people outside the university and have more resources to try different things and learn more things.

Comment 5:
I do not prefer this medium of learning or communication, and I don't like to play role-playing games. SecondLife is very similar to World of Warcraft, and I know many people play that, but I just don't care for it at all. For me, getting around in SecondLife is much more cumbersome than simply searching for information on a website index or using Google. Utilizing a medium in which I have to navigate a character to find what I need is a waste of my valuable time. Additionally, I had to wait on the graphics to be rendered in some cases, and I use a newer, not-so-inexpensive Dell. Having said that, I can see the usefulness in a tool like this, perhaps with elementary or junior high students who would otherwise be inattentive if the material was delivered by different means.

Comment 6:
My first impression about SecondLife was that it was a little confusing. It actually took me several minutes to even get started with it all. However, there are so many things that SecondLife could be used for. All the applications that are available are amazing, from religion to games, to arts and live music. I think SecondLife could be used to enhance the online class experience in many ways. I could see how maybe groups of students in a class could get together and make their own "location", or even assign the students to interact and have group discussions through the SecondLife experience.

When choosing which communication channel (telephone or virtual world) to use for the mock interview, only six students (26%) chose the virtual world, and all of the virtual interviewees were female. Students who chose to do a virtual interview were required to dress their avatar in business attire for the interview. The interviewer reported he found no obvious differences in student responses whether the interviews were conducted on the phone or virtually. In the virtual interview, however, he was able to observe their greeting upon entering the room as well as their attire. In addition, he indicated he felt more connected with the interviewee in the virtual interview compared to the phone interview even though it was avatar to avatar, not truly face-to-face. The ages of those who chose the virtual interview are shown in Table 3.

Table 3

Age of Virtual Interview Participants

Age Group	Number of Participants
18-22	3
23-29	0
30-39	1
40-49	1
50-59	1

n=6

It is interesting to note that half of the students who chose the virtual interview were 30 years of age or older. In looking further at the students who chose to use the virtual mock interview, it was noted that five of the students completed the class with the grade of A, and one with the grade of B.

Summary and Conclusions

This study was interesting in that the researcher had expected students to already be generally familiar with the virtual world of SL, but they were not. The reactions to the environment were mixed. For those who did provide a comment on the assignment, four were positive and two were negative. Though students often ask for bonus assignments, less than half of the class took advantage of what the instructor felt was a very easy bonus assignment. Further, only half of that group went the next step to choose the virtual interview over the phone interview.

Since this was a fully online class, no in-class introduction to the SL environment was provided. It is possible that if students were "forced" to at least try the virtual world in a classroom situation before being given assignments, the number who chose to use the virtual environment might have been different. According to Dufrene, Lehman, Kellermanns, and Pearson (2009), the perceived usefulness of a technology tool will affect the ease at which students adopt its use. They go on to say that this perceived usefulness can be positively influenced by the instructor. The recommendation they make is to educate the students about the tool explaining the benefits of its utilization, which can influence the students' perception of usefulness and increase the probability of using the tool. Wang and Braman (2009) found in their study that it was "essential to design a training session before any specific in-world activities are introduced in a classroom (p. 44)."

Studies have indicated that virtual worlds provide unique opportunities. Some suggest that they create a more dedicated approach to study, contribute to a greater level of knowledge retention, and present the opportunity to redesign pedagogical approaches. (Dreher, Reiners, Dreher, & Dreher, 2009). Is this the direction education is moving? That is yet to be determined. However, it seems that with some pedagogical creativity that this could be a very powerful teaching and learning tool for those willing to do the work.

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Investigating Collaborative Writing Activities: A Case Study of Five Professional Communicators

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Gee (2000) acknowledges that, "Over the last several decades, in and across a wide variety of disciplines, there has been a massive 'social turn' away from a focus on individual behavior toward a focus on social and cultural interaction" (p. 180). This turn to the 'social' can be attributed to the notion that literacy is best understood as a social practice. Adopting such a view, when applied to writing research, recognizes that literate practices are domain specific and therefore historically, culturally, and socially situated. As Barton & Hamilton (2000) argue literacy practices "straddle the distinction between individuals and social worlds, and … are more usefully understood as existing in relations between people, within groups and communities, rather than as a set of properties residing in individuals" (p. 8).

This turn to the social is also evident in workplace literacy research, chiefly, in the work of Odell & Goswami (1985) who were motivated to collect workplace literacy research that emphasized a social perspective after the realization that there was little to no scholarship that did so. Specifically, Odell (1985) argued "we have tended to ignore the larger contexts in which writing is done" and that "we have paid too little attention to the organizational context in which they do their writing" (p. 249). In response to this call for more contextualized workplace literacy research, succeeding scholarship has utilized qualitative approaches to account for the multiple contexts in which workplace literate practices are embedded. Furthermore, because workplace contexts most often involve literate practices that necessitate collaboration within and among groups, qualitative research in workplace literacy must account for specific forms and instances of collaboration within workplace contexts. However, this research has been limited to investigating either writer and supervisor collaborative writing activities associated with the production of a single document (Bogert, 1989; Couture & Rymer, 1991; Swarts, 2004) or finite instances of group collaboration in the production of a single document (Doheny-Farina, 1986; Mirel et. al; 1995; Cross, 2001; Haas & Witte, 2001). Taken together, these studies point to important observations about the nature of negotiation among individuals in context and the various situational exigencies in which collaborative writing is produced.

While this existing body of scholarship has yielded interesting findings about the nature of collaborative workplace writing, it has not presented a longitudinal account of how professional communicators work together, over time and across spaces, to produce multiple documents. Consequently, my current research, a yearlong study of workplace writing practices, investigates the collaborative writing that five professional communicators working across three states engage in to produce monthly, internal newsletters. In addition to addressing this existing gap in workplace literacy research, my present study also investigates the spatial implications associated with the production of this monthly publication. Specifically, these five writers work

in three different offices located throughout three states. Therefore, they frequently utilize multiple mediums and modes of representation to communicate and collaboratively construct a monthly publication.

Site

For a year, I conducted fieldwork investigations at Midwest Utility's[i] corporate headquarters which is located in Northeastern Ohio. Midwest Utility is a large, multi-state utility corporation that generates, transmits, and distributes electricity. To meet these ends, the corporation is structured into several subsidiary companies which include power plants and seven operating companies that are located across three states. Due to its complex organizational structure, the corporation has a multi-faceted communications division. Specifically, Midwest Utility's communication division is divided into three departments: external communications, communication services, and internal communications. During my site visits, I researched the collaborative writing activities of the professional communicators who worked in the internal communications department. This department is subdivided into two groups: communication accounts and publications and video.

The internal communications department is responsible for responding to and meeting all of the corporation's internal communication needs in both a proactive and reactive manner. One communication strategy employed by this department to meet the needs of Midwest Utility's diverse workforce is to create and distribute five newsletters: *Company News*, *Unity*, *Nuclear News*, *Delivery Service*, and *Generating News*.

Company News is a bi-monthly publication that is distributed to all Midwest Utility employees. *Unity* is published once a month as an insert of *Company News* and highlights employees' and their families' involvement in the community and military. The content included in *Employee News* and *Unity* is necessarily broad because the audience for both publications is over 14,000 employees.

The *Nuclear News*, *Generating News* and *Delivery Service* newsletters are created by different groups of professional communicators within the internal communication department and each publication caters to a specific business unit within Midwest Utility. Because using nuclear power to generate electricity is a complex and potentially dangerous process, the *Nuclear News* publication specifically addresses the issues and concerns associated with the nuclear power plant fleet. To emphasize the importance of written communication within this sector, *Nuclear News* is published weekly to keep employees abreast of any maintenance, safety, or reliability issues concerning the plants.

Midwest Utility also owns and operates power plants that utilize fossil fuels to generate electricity. The *Generating News* newsletter is published once a month and contains information pertaining to the fossil power plants. The *Delivery Service* newsletter caters to employees who work at an operating company and employees who work in customer service.

Each newsletter is written by a different group of professional communicators. Some of these groups, like the group that writes *Nuclear News*, have worked together for over five years. On the other end of the spectrum, the writers of *Delivery Service* have only been collaborating for a year. Beverly, the manager of the communication accounts group, supervises this group and acts as the editor-in-chief for the publication. Lauren, Delilah, and Katie are all communication representatives in the communication accounts group and write for *Delivery News*. Amy, who is works in the publications and video group, only edits newsletter articles.

This newly formed group represents writers with varying levels of professional writing experience. Lauren was hired in October 2009 and holds an electrical engineering degree. At her previous job, she was initially hired as an engineer but two years before she began working at Midwest Utility she became a communication representative. Delilah also started working for Midwest Utility in October 2009 but has over 20 years experience as a professional communicator. Additionally, she holds a Master of Arts in Communication. Katie has worked for Midwest Utility for over 20 years but has only been a professional communicator for a year. She transferred to the communication accounts group because her former position was eliminated due to company restructuring.

Due to their diverse writing skills and professional writing experience, Beverly mandates that the *Delivery News* writers engage in overt acts of collaboration. To do so, this group utilize multiple mediums which include weekly telephone conference calls, asynchronous communication (i.e., company e-mail), synchronous communication (i.e., company instant messaging program), and use of the company shared drive to provide document accessibility. It is necessary that this group utilize various technological tools to mediate collaboration because they work from three different locations. Beverly, Lauren, and Amy all work in the Ohio corporate office, Delilah works in a New Jersey office, and Katie works in a Pennsylvania office.

During the review process, the writers and editors of *Delivery News* all enable the 'track changes' feature afforded through Microsoft Word. As such, the Microsoft Word automatically assigns each collaborator a different color once a reviewer inserts her initials into the header. Assigning a color to each reviewer enables the writers to visually differentiate the feedback provided by each writer. For example, if a writer makes any changes to the document the altered text changes from black text to the color text assigned to the reviewer.

This group utilizes the track changes feature for three reasons. The first reason is each document version is saved with a different file name is a precautionary move to prevent losing a file if it becomes corrupted. The second reason for doing so is to provide documentation of the provided feedback. The third reason this process is completed is in the event that a reviewer made insertions, deletions, or changes that the writer does not want to accept, she can easily reference a preference version and proceed with revisions as she sees fit.

To direct the article review process, the group has codified a system. Each writer includes a header at the top of the page (See Figure 1). The article is then uploaded to the company sharedrive so that all of the professional communicators have access to the document. For each newsletter, a folder is created and named by its publication month. Within this folder, there are four subfolders named drafts, edited, final, and layout.

Issue Month: 2009 - January
Status: Edit Review
Picture (Y/N): N
SME:
SME Approval:
Names Verified: Y
Versions: V1 KJ
V2
V3
Header Info for all Articles

Figure 1: Header information

Lauren, Delilah, and Katie upload their initial article drafts to the draft folder. The first and second edits are completed by Lauren, Delilah, and Katie. Each time a writer reviews a document, she inserts her initials after the appropriate document version and saves the document file to reflect the latest document version available. After this process is completed, Amy is notified by the article author that the article is ready for her review. After Amy reviews the text, she then adds her initials to the end of the filename and saves the article in the edited folder.

Once documents are moved to the edited folder, Beverly will then assess the article. After doing so, she reverts the filename back to its original name, she adds "EA" to the end of the filename to signify that edits were accepted, and inserts a number at the beginning of the filename to correspond with its placement in the newsletter. When all articles to be included in the publication are completed, Beverly will then inform Chris, a graphic designer in the internal communications department, creates the newsletter layout in Microsoft Publisher.

After Chris completes the layout, he then informs Beverly, April, Lauren, Delilah, and Katie. At this point, review of final layout occurs in different ways. For example, sometimes Lauren, Delilah, and Katie will print out and copyedit the document separately and then collaborative via the phone about necessary changes. While discussing revisions, one writer will create one document that addresses all concerns and discuss those issues with Chris. However, due to time constraints, sometimes the final copyedits are determined by just one writer. Regardless of how final revisions are made to the newsletter, Beverly always has final approval before the publication is distributed.

Data

During my site visits, I had the opportunity to listen to the *Delivery News* weekly telephone conference call in which Beverly, Lauren, Delilah, and Kim participated. Each week I also attended the internal communication department meetings. During both meetings, I wrote field notes to document what activities transpired. My corpus of data also includes six months of *Delivery News* publications as well as the accompanying article drafts for those newsletters. I frequently spoke with the writers of *Delivery News* on both a formal and informal basis to contextualize the meetings and documents that were provided. Additionally, during these interviews I asked the writers about their own writing processes and practices.

Methodology

I chose to utilize a grounded theory methodological approach for data analysis because it provides a way to systematically account for the multiple contexts in which literate practices are embedded. Grounded theory is an iterative and cumulative process of analyzing and interpreting data. It is iterative because in order for the data to be grounded it needs to be constantly compared and contrasted as well as fractured and repaired during different stages. Grounded theory is a necessarily cumulative to ensure that codes and a core category are derived inductively from the data sets.

As explained by Strauss (1987), "Grounded theory is based on a *concept-indicator* model, which directs the *conceptual coding* of a set of *empirical indicators*" (emphasis in original p.25). The empirical indicators identified through open coding were transcriptions of weekly conference calls, field notes from interviews and weekly department meetings, article drafts and final *Delivery News* publications. Each empirical indicator was treated as a distinct data set. In doing so, I was able to code each data set for its salient features as well as to identify outliers.

An interesting conceptual code that emerged from my analysis of the *Delivery News* article drafts was the use of comments to provide feedback to those reviewing the text. I then dimensionalized, or fractured, this conceptual code to identify its constituent features and ostensible functions. Dimensions that emerged during this process include the author of the comment, purpose of the comment, comment location, language used in the comment, and action taken as a result of the comment. Results of this analysis are reported in more detail in the following section.

Findings

The findings reported in this study are a result of analyzing article drafts and the 13 corresponding final publications of *Delivery News*. The corpus included 127 pages and the median newsletter page length is 8 pages. The average newsletter includes 16 articles that are about 250 words in length. In total, 204 articles were published in the 13 newsletters. I then coded all article drafts and found that 145 articles included 698 author and reviewer comments.

Comments were defined as instantiations of meta-writing included by the article author or reviewer. Comment placement appeared in five different locations on the page. One location was within the article header. For example, sometimes the article author would leave comments within the article header to inform the reviewers that additional information was being requested and would be included once it was made available. Such instances were typically a result of waiting for information from a subject matter expert (SME). The writers would frequently solicit information from SME's within the corporation to include specific content and to increase the ethos of the article.

The second location comments appeared was prior to the beginning of the article. For example, Kate included a comment before an article to direct the use of a specific logo to accompany the article in the newsletter. Specifically she wrote, "Be sure to incorporate this logo with all CustomerFirst Articles (JPEG file in images folder)." When doing so, she would off-set the comment in a textbox that included the logo.

Within this data set, Amy would also insert comments before the text like, "NOTE: Shouldn't we list the full names and titles for Kathy and Kimberly? Otherwise, this thank you won't mean a lot. What do you guys think? Also, what about his sentence about last names being 'forbidden' - you may want to run by Beverly." Another example of providing a comment prior to the text to inform the reviewers of the shape of future drafts is when Katie wrote "Note: This is the 'lead' article for the PA awards- I have various photos and verbiage from individual grant presentations that are being completed as the checks are distributed."

The third location of comments was those inserted into the body of the article. Within the dataset this occurred for two different reasons. The first reason was that the author was acknowledging that additional information would be included in the final article once the content was received and verified. For example, in one article Delilah inserted "employee A and B" to signify that employee names would be inserted in the article once she obtained and verified the employees' names. A second example in which feedback was inserted within the document occurred on the part of the editors, Amy and more often Beverly. When providing feedback, Beverly would frequently insert her comments within the article set off by "< >." I posit Beverly would do so in order to eliminate confusion about what parts of the text she was commenting on because Beverly's feedback was most often framed as rhetorical questions.

The fourth location of comments appeared after the article. In these instances, the comments were usually written by the article author. These comments were most frequently the author's note concerning the article and explicitly stated that these notes were included for the author's edification and not to be included in the final publication. For example, at the end of her article, Delilah included "<<<< Notes>>>>> … not to be included: these are my notes>." An example of a reviewer providing comments at the end of the draft is when Amy wrote "Good article! My concern is shouldn't we add a sentence that ties this into employee safe driving. Maybe back to your 'Practice What You Preach' headline: 'As our parents taught us and we're teaching our children, let's remember ourselves to buckle up while on the job.' Or something along those lines."

The fifth and the most frequent location of comments were within a comment balloon. To do so, the collaborator would highlight the text in which they wanted to critique and select the 'new comment' icon located under the 'review' tab. This action would result in the appearance of a color coded comment balloon that automatically inserted their initials. Authors and reviewers would use this space to provide textual feedback and, more interestingly, engage in a dialogue.

Because the comment balloons afforded the opportunity to analyze specific instances of negotiation that occur during collaboration, I coded these comment balloons for their salient features. The two most basic functions that these comments provided were to suggest revisions or to justify revisions that reviewers made to the document. When these two functions were interrogated, the specific functions of these comments were categorized into three distinct categories: audience, intertextuality, and construction.

The audience category included comments that either explicitly or implicitly referenced the *Delivery News* audience. For example, Delilah suggested that information be omitted from an article because it provided "too much info for the general public" of Midwest Utility. Additional comments demonstrated audience awareness when reviewers would ask the author to clarify content, give evidence to support a claim being made or consider the larger context in which the article was situated.

The intertextuality category provided a systematic way to account for the comments that referred to existing texts. These texts included previous *Delivery News* article drafts, articles, and newsletters. The article authors and reviewers would also mention other internally produced documents that shaped the construction of a text such e-mails. An example of such a comment was included by Amy and stated, "Our original e-mail for [sic] Dorothy James lists both Maggie S. and Tracy G." These comments also referenced external publications used in the construction of the newsletters. As a rule, the *Delivery News* publication followed *AP Stylebook* formatting.

Amy would most commonly refer to the *AP Stylebook* as a means for justifying the copyedits she made when reviewing a document. Such comments were usually as succinct as "Please refer to the *AP Stylebook.*"

The third category of construction refers to feedback that suggests stylistic revisions that did not change the content of the article in any significant ways. As such, these comments corresponded to surface level considerations such as diction, syntax, and punctuation. At a more global level, reviewers would also suggest rearranging text to improve the overall organization of the piece (Appendix A illustrates all the categories and their respective codes).

Social Context

Taken together, the content of the comment balloons provide evidence of how collaboration is a social practice within this group of professional collaborators. Because this group of writers does not work within the same physical location, they collaborate in a digital environment. In doing so, they literally meet on the page and engage in discussions about the text. This process has resulted in the creation of explicit and implicit strategies to facilitate collaboration. Examining the professional communicators' strategies shifts the focus from what occurs to how it occurs. This subtle shift in analysis not only provides an account of the communication strategies practiced within this domain but suggests practices that can better inform pedagogical practices.

Explicit strategies that guide collaboration include the agreed upon revision process of uploading a document to the company shared drive for review. As previously discussed, this system was created by the group and codified through the creation of a job aid. In doing so, they intentionally made their revision process explicit to ensure efficiency. This group felt that they needed to make this process explicit because they had never worked together and to overcome the spatial constraints of their different workplace locations. Other strategies include participating in weekly conference calls, weekly department meetings, and updating the master spreadsheet to include new story ideas.

Implicit strategies that the professional collaborators may or may not be cognizant of are the politeness strategies they use when providing feedback to one another. The use of politeness strategies suggests the way in which these communicators wish to uphold the positive social dynamic that exists within the group. Regarding comments that suggested syntactical editing or content changes, the reviewers would provide recommendations in the comment balloons rather than usurp the text by making changes to the document. In addition to providing feedback within the margins, the language employed to construct these suggestions are framed to emphasize the content and not the writer. Specifically, the collaborators would frequently hedge their suggestions or use the pronoun "I" or "we" to avoid using the author's first name or the pronoun "you" when suggesting revisions. Avoiding assertive language in which the feedback could be construed as a directive rather than a recommendation suggested that the reviewers utilized politeness strategies as a means for saving face with one another. For instance, Amy commented "Should we say: '…and now it's the law'?" within an article written by Lauren.

Another finding that suggests how instantiations of collaboration are embedded within a social context is the ways in which negotiation occurs between the collaborators. For example in the second version of an article written by Delilah, Katie changed the word concerted to concentrated. In the document's fourth version, Delilah returned to the document to review the feedback provided and noticed the change in diction. In response, she wrote in a comment balloon "I am changing this back, bc concerted and concentrated don't mean the same thing – this was a deliberate effort." Amy contributed to this exchange in the fifth draft and wrote "How about eliminating: '..and concerted effort..' and just state: 'It took a lot of hard work by many people.'? The word effort is defined as 'hard work' so by eliminating it we won't be redundant." In sum, both Katie and Amy expressed their opinions to revise the diction. However, Delilah chose not to accept their suggestions and the final article was published with the language as it appeared in the first draft.

Another example of the writers negotiating on the page occurred in an article Lauren wrote that explained the need to wear flame retardant clothing for protection against fire exposure in which she included complicated mathematical formulas. As an engineer, Lauren felt that including the formulas lent credibility to her argument for the efficacy of wearing such clothing. However, Delilah and Amy both suggested that Lauren omit the formulas. Specifically, Amy wrote "What's the purpose for having this calculation? Is this needed? It's confusing. Will employees—especially new ones—know what this means? I'd suggest eliminating it and picking up with '…will provide adequate…'". Based upon their feedback, Lauren eliminated the formulas from the article. However, in the seventh version of the article, and in the final publication, the formulas were included per Beverly's editorial decision.

In other instances, the negotiation process is much more streamlined. For example, in a comment balloon Amy highlighted the working title and wrote "Is this the headline? Maybe try: 'James Jones—Placing CustomersFirst'" to which Katie responded in the same comment balloon 'Changed per suggestion- thanks!". Amy's comment demonstrates how politeness is used to negotiate and is representative of the language used by reviewers to suggest revisions.

Conclusion

The present study has examined features of workplace collaboration that have previously been unexplored. Specifically, the ability to analyze a series of documents that contain comments provided by professional communicators demonstrates the implicit and explicit strategies they employ over time to facilitate collaboration. At an additional level of complexity, this research addresses the ways by which these writers overcome spatial constraints by communicating in a digital space.

Implications of this study include new pedagogical approaches to teaching business and professional writing. Brady (1993) argues that to successfully prepare students to work in a corporate setting a business writing class should utilize a contextualized approach. Such an approach might entail adopting **fictitious** company persona and mission so that each assignment addresses the company's needs. Brady argues that providing an organizational context in which written assignments respond to promotes a course curriculum in which "we can teach students the strategies and skills that will help them… adapt to new cultures" (p.470). In the same vein, I posit that making students aware of both the implicit and explicit strategies that are utilized in a corporate setting will enable students to make informed decisions in their future workplace settings. Having students collaborate across time in a digital space will not only simulate how workplace writing collaboration transpires but will provide students with the opportunity to discern the affordances and constraints of such a practice.

Results of this research suggest specific strategies that can introduced into a business and professional writing course. However, these strategies are domain specific and therefore not indicative of how collaboration occurs within other workplace settings. Therefore, further workplace writing research is needed to account for *in situ* collaboration activities as they occur within a variety of settings to contribute to a more robust understanding of writing studies. Additionally, such future research would lend itself to more informed pedagogical practices to better prepare students of the exigencies and practices associated with collaboration.

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Appendix A: Collaborative comments categories and codes			
Category	*Code*	*Definition*	*Example*
Audience	Reader	Comments that explicitly referenced audience considerations	Delilah: "I would remove all this too-too much info for the general public of MU"
	Clarification	Comments in which a reviewer asks for clarification because text is confusing and/or assumes the reader knows something that they might not know. These comments either explicitly ask for clarification, ask a series of questions, or a combination of both.	Amy: "This is a little confusing. Were the members of RDO onsite? Were the downed wires removed before the occupant was pulled from the vehicle? May want to add more information for clarify"
	Context	Comments that ask the author to consider the larger context in which the article is situated.	Amy: "Isn't this the group that's on strike? I don't think we'll want to mention him. Need to double check with Beverly"
	Evidence	Comments that ask the author to provide evidence to support a claim being made.	Amy: "What does this mean? Was this based on a survey- how do we know this?"
Intertextuality	Genre	Comments that explicitly reference how an article should be formatted to conform to the *Delivery News* genre. Additionally, genre comments could also refer to the layout constraints associated with the newsletter	Amy: "we use these bullets or circles for newsletters"
			Amy: "Do you really need to include all of this? It will make the article really long. Seems he's covered most of it in quote and earlier in the article. Or you could use as a sidebar"
	References	Comments that refer to texts, not produced by Midwest Utility, that are used as references and stylistic guides	Amy: "Refer to the *AP Stylebook* for punctuation and quotation usage"
	Archival	Comments that refer to past article drafts, articles, and newsletters.	Lauren: "Can we change Serving up Safety- already used in issue not long ago"
Construction	Organization	Comments that suggest rearranging the text to improve the overall organization of the piece	Amy: "How about closing the article with this paragraph"
	Diction	Comments that refer to specific language employed in the construction of an article	Delilah: "I am changing this back, bc concerted and concentrated don't mean the same thing – this was a deliberate effort"
	Syntax	Comments that suggest how to revise sentence structure	Katie: "There were three 'Dave's' in this one sentence"
	Punctuation	Comments that refer to correct punctuation usage	Amy: "Need to fix quotation mark here"

When I Speak Chinese: Artful Usage of Speech Code in Multicultural Organizational Communication

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ABSTRACT

Abstract: Natural language usage within multinational corporations has attracted much research attention over decades because of its close relationship with successful overseas business expansion. When today's American corporation expending overseas, expatriated managers are facing increasingly bigger challenges of language barrier or less-than-perfect communication with their local employees. In American corporations operating in China, English and Chinese usually enjoy unequal attention: English is required to be used in daily office environment but American managers are not required to learn or use Chinese. How do American expatriated managers and Chinese local employees observe, interpret and react to such speech norm within their office? Would the answer to this question lead to future innovative strategies for more smooth office communication in such multi-lingual, multi-cultural organizational communication setting?

To explore the answers, this paper attempts to document and summarize from data gathered through a 12 week ethnographic field research trip in China conducted in 2009. The paper will then use speech code theory (Philipsen, 1997) *to interpret and analyze the data set. Based on repeated themes, patterns and narratives, the paper will describe existing different interpretation and premises of language usage and language switch within such multi-lingual, multi-cultural office space and explore new strategies of artfully using speech code in multinational corporations' daily office communication practices.*

Introduction

Do you speak English? When looking for a position in American companies operating in China, local Chinese are usually faced with this question. According to a recent survey covering 200,000 working professionals in China (2007), English proficiency has become one the most prominent consideration of whether they are selected for the job, future promotion or increase in salary. Moreover, people who speak English fluently may be three times more likely to get promoted, if compared with someone who doesn't speaking much English. A separate research (2004) indicates that English proficiency, in both American and Chinese organizations, is directly linked to salary increase; the gap between someone who speaks English fluently and someone who speaks "fair" English may translate into 25% difference in annual income. Furthermore, people who graduated from overseas higher education institutions with foreign diploma are usually considered as having "supreme English proficiency, good team work ethics and solid professional knowledge" (2006).

Somewhat contradicting against the over-heated passion towards learning English among college students and job seekers, other social groups seem to hold different attitudes or sentiments towards learning English and are reluctant to recognize it as a necessary, nation-wide effort (Yang, 2009; He, 2009). A survey conducted by Phoenix.com, a leading Chinese news portal website, with on-line responses from 13, 362 respondents in 2009, indicates that over 79% of the respondents answered “no” towards the question, “do you think learning English as a national effort is necessary” (Yang, 2009). Such self-contradicting, bitter-sweet memories of learning English, shared over generations among Chinese people, may have reflected a unique national sentiment, psychology, and premise. On one hand, speaking English does bring about a more promising career prospect and a better life. On the other hand, English proficiency has been receiving such disproportionate attention, that many Chinese people may feel that it is competing with Chinese peoples’ cultural loyalty towards Chinese culture and Chinese language.

Contrary to their local Chinese employees, the expatriate American managers may hold entirely different perceptions towards using English in daily office settings, which entails a different psychology that contrasts against the above mentioned Chinese version. To American expatriate managers, using English in a daily office setting is an extension of decades’ long tradition of “having the other side to pick up the language” (Galbraith, 1975).

Since the early age of international business expansion in the 1970’s, firms began to respond to the need of a single corporate language to better facilitate the transfer of information and knowledge between headquarters and subsidiaries, and among subsidiaries across different national boundaries (Inman, 1978). Tendency of using English as corporate language continues to grow over the past few decades (Marschan-Piekkari, Welch, & Welch, 1999). English has evolved as the most commonly used corporate language, reflecting its more general position as a type of global language in international business.

This might help explain the reluctance of American expatriated managers to learn a second language for their overseas assignment. However, although their native language, English, has been widely used as global business language, failure rate of American expatriate managers has been extremely high (Tung, 1987; 1988). Contradicting examples are available among Finnish corporations expanding globally. Taking into consideration the fact that Finnish is a language spoken by a very small portion of global population, Finnish corporations minimize negative influence from the language factor by moving first into nearby Nordic countries and using Swedish (which is taught in Finnish schools) as part of a dual language policy (Welch, Lawrence, & Marschan-Piekkari, 2001). It seems that the failure rate among American expatriated managers may be stemmed from less willingness to pursue second language fluency but rely on the other end of business, who are usually trading partners or local employees, to pick up English and use it as corporate language.

Hence, different from their Chinese employees, American expatriated managers may not see speaking English in daily office setting as bearing too much strong tie to national identity as American citizen or symbolizing presence of American culture in business branch offices on foreign land. Speaking English is natural and the way things should be. Underneath such belief and interpretation, a different set of psychology and premises may be present.

The different attitude or perception towards use of English in daily office setting among American and Chinese employees, therefore, point to some very interesting discussions. Does use of English impact Chinese employees’ attitude towards the American organization they work for, since it may be more or less tied to their national identity and impact their cultural heritage?

How do they interpret and react to their American expatriated managers' attempt to learn Chinese, and how do they react to their manager's Chinese in work place? In other words, how do both sides react to such occasional language switching? What kind of tension, balance or harmony may be created because of such strategic language switching? Such discussion directly points to some of the focal concerns shared by scholars of employee communication and organizational culture as global business becomes an everyday reality today.

Literature Review

A brief review of previous discussion would help better understanding of the intricacy of language usage within multinational corporations. Today's business world has marched into the global stage and most multinational entities have gone through evolutionary stages of expending to overseas markets (Adler, 1997). In early classical management literature, however, there were basic assumptions about the nature of people and that managerial principles are universally applicable (Griffin, 1990; Maddox, 1993). Over the past few decades, however, most of the difficulties cited in academic discussion are more or less related to language usage and local employee communication, which requires exceptional cultural sensitivity (Aslton, 1989; Brannen, 2004; Kolde, 1974; Reed, 1999). On the other hand, a strong competitive advantage is now closely related to a truly global corporate identity and dedicated multicultural employee force. In a global entity, headquarters and regional offices are usually termed as a mini United Nations with a pool of best minds drawn from different countries (Kanter, 1995). However, up to date, only a "handful of corporations" have achieved this balance to become "global in the fullest sense" (Morley, 1998, p. 24).

Such widely acknowledged importance explains dedicated research over language usage in multinational corporations over several decades (Phatak, 1974; Adler, 1997; Grunig, Grunig, & Dozier, 2002; Vaara, Tienari, Piekkari, & Säntti, 2005), mostly because of its close relationships to the expansion of global business and consequent growing frequency of intercultural communication involving usage of second language between expatriated managers and local professionals (Du-Babcock, 1999; 1996).

However, despite of the commonly recognized importance of communication competence across cultures, the reluctance to learn foreign language among American expatriated managers seems to be consistently visible and might have its institutional root. In American corporations, foreign language competence seems to be of less importance to American manager sent overseas, even when cultural training and orientation for expatriated American mangers has been recognized for some time by both academic research and industrial practitioners (Inman, 1978). Research has found that among American corporations report doing business abroad, language ability, as a criterion for selection of personnel for overseas assignments, has been scarcely considered as necessary (Inman, 1978). Wilkins and Arnett (1976) reported that management staff will be considered sent abroad after they "have received excellent technical training and demonstrated success in domestic operations". Over half of the respondents in Morgenroth, Parks, and Morgenroth's study (1975) have indicated that they would require no use of modern foreign languages over the next four years, even though nearly 85 percent of the firms surveyed engage in business abroad. Furthermore, foreign language competency has virtually no effect on salary changes (Alexander, 1974). The lack of corporate commitment and individual willingness to pick up foreign language competence remains mostly the same in the decades to come. Based on Fixman's (1990) study, most US firms included in the research still believe that language is separate from its cultural context, and that the ability to speak foreign languages is a mechanical skill that could be readily acquired on an *ad hoc* basis.

In addition to institutional factors, the reluctance to learn target country's native language may also result from psychological or cultural premises shared among American expatriated managers. The insistence on letting the other party bridge the language gap has been summed up by Galbraith (1975) as "congenital inadequacy in languages". But such lack of linguistic facility becomes a critical blind spot for American managers to achieve effective international business communication (Kolde, 1974). According to Phatak's (1974) research, the majority of companies under study felt that the international aspects of their companies' business were not hindered by language problem. Many of them, however, did comment that nuances and underline meanings are missed even though all parties think they understand each other rather clearly. Phatak (1974) summarized from the academic discussion and pointed to three levels of corporate awareness of linguistic and cultural sensitivity in international business: ethnocentrism (linguistic and cultural chauvinism), polycentrism and geocentrism ("cosmopolitan corporate structure").

As this line of scholarship advances, discussions usually view natural language usage as a stable and predetermined construct within organizational context; when it does receive research attention, the discussion is focused on how to overcome the language barrier that facilitates market entry (Gibson & Hodgetts, 1991), local operations (Charles & Marschan-Piekkari, 2002), emotional conflicts within multicultural teams (Von Glinow, Shapiro, & Brett, 2004), or knowledge sharing and transfer (Szulanski, 1996; Gupta & Govindarajan, 2000). Such trend seems to be strongly influenced by earlier research in social identity theory and relative linguistic studies arguing that language and accent influence the formation of in- and out-groups (Lambert, 1967). Following that argument, Triandis (1972) stated that individuals categorize themselves based on language into certain groups that share same rules, values and collective norms. Tajfel (1982), on the other hand, directly equated linguistic distinctiveness with positive group distinctiveness.

Different from the above mentioned institutional, social and psychological factor, which consider natural language usage as stable construct within organization, a third approach views language usage as strategic tool that can be used to integrate global operation in a more effective way in multinational corporations. Empirical research (Lou & Shenkar, 2006) has conducted to explore options in managing language usage in headquarters and local business units, stressing on the importance of considerate awareness and competence over local cultural characteristics. Through case study, Welch and Marschan-Piekkari (2001) have examined the way in which language influences the pattern of foreign market expansion and analyzed how a firm may try to cope with language diversity by adopting a common corporate language. In the same research, Welch and Marschan-Piekkari (2001) also identified different patterns of market entry into other foreign countries based on the firm's language heritage: firms from English-speaking countries follows a path distinctively different from those countries in which such minor languages as Japanese, Finnish, and Norwegian are spoken. This line of argument resonates well with one of the premises of speech code theory (Philipsen, 1997), which sets forth a proposition that when an outsider artfully uses speech code of one particular speech community, the artful usage may be accepted by community member and creates harmony between the outsider and the speech community. In this sense, would an American expatriated manager act as an outsider who strategically or artfully switch between two languages and create harmony within the global workplace? This third approach is fresh and exciting because it provide researchers and professionals practical ways to explore options promoting and nurturing such cross-cultural communication competence, especially among American expatriated managers and local employees. To facilitate the discussion, this paper attempts to explore, describe and define such artful usage of language during multicultural organizational communication and how it may be interpreted or accepted by local speech community members, in this case Chinese employees.

The research questions of this paper, therefore, tend to be:

1) How are English and Chinese used in daily office settings in American corporations operating in China? What kind of status they each enjoy? What are the norms, premises and beliefs entailed within such corporate speech norm?
2) How do local Chinese employees and American managers interpret such corporate speech norm? What kind of premises or psychology stands behind such interpretations?
3) Finally, how do American expatriated managers exercise strategic language switch or artfully use corporate speech code, if any? How do local Chinese employees react or interpret such artful usage of corporate speech code?

Method

This paper is based on in-depth, 12 week ethnographic field investigation in China in 2009 across three major cities: Beijing, Chongqing and Kunming. The researcher conducted intensive semi-structured interviews and focus group interviews to explore major premises and perceptions among American expatriated managers and Chinese employees working in multinational companies regarding language usage, and how such interpretation may potentially reflect the interaction between their cultural identity as being Chinese and their corporate identity as staff members working in the company.

Beijing is one of the more advanced, cosmopolitan cities where most multinationals choose to build their regional headquarters. Chongqing and Kunming, on the other hand, are in-land cities but serve as regional economic and transportation hubs. The research project chose to generate data from those three cities, aiming to achieve a diverse database more representative to both parties across different geographical locations within the country.

Over the 12-week period, the researcher conducted 16 intensive interviews with informants at three different locations. The data are digitally-recorded audio files. Repeated themes, narratives and interpretations are transcribed and analyzed. The researcher also conducted focus group interviews and participant observations in two “English corner” gatherings, where Chinese English learners gather together to talk about their experience speaking English at work. Discussion based on the analysis and suggestion for future research is included.

Findings and Discussion

"My managers learn to speak Chinese because they want to get around and be accepted"

Among Chinese employees, most informants are tolerating their foreign managers' Chinese language proficiency and welcome any attempts to learn Chinese. Most of them can't remember if their managers have ever used Chinese in a professional setting, but they are usually happy with the fact that their foreign managers are willing to learn Chinese, which they believe are basic ways to get accepted in a new cultural environment. Simple Chinese used in daily conversation and interactions, including asking for directions, asking for prices and other examples are popularly cited ones when informants were asked to describe their managers' Chinese proficiency level.

The unequal status of English and Chinese within the work place has been consistently described as norm in office through all conversations. It is widely acknowledged and recognized that Chinese people are passionate and willing to spend large amount of time and money to learn English well. It is also true that multinational corporations are paying huge tuition bills for their employee training, which in most cases focuses on English proficiency training. Chinese local employees are expected and required to speak English on a level sophisticated enough to communicate in a professional setting; foreign managers are welcomed to speak Chinese, but not required to do so. Instead of sophisticated Chinese sentences and idioms, they only need to be able to speak daily simple Chinese.

Speech code theory (Philipsen, 1997) chooses to identify specific ways of speaking in particular speech communities. Such norms and its relevant interpretations may point to hidden premises relating to such ways of speaking. Hence, the unequal status of English and Chinese in multinational corporations' office space is a visible norm within this particular speech community. In this sense, different interpretations relating to this norm, if any, may help to unveil hidden premises relating to language usage in multicultural organizational communication practices.

It is interesting to notice that Chinese employees and American expatriated managers interpret such norm differently and subscribe to different premises when trying to understand why the other side tries to learn either English or Chinese as their second language. When local Chinese employees interpret this norm, a strong tie between language usage and national/cultural identity is consistently visible. They recognize such unbalanced attention on two languages and accept the fact that English enjoys higher priority in daily office communication. They also welcome their American managers' efforts to learn Chinese well but do not expect to communicate with their American managers in Chinese on a sophisticated level. To them, foreign language competence is more related to one's national and cultural identity; they believe that their managers' goal of learning Chinese is primarily attempting to function well in a new cultural environment and eventually be accepted by the new cultural environment.

How, then, do American managers' interpret their own attempt to learn Chinese or describe their situation facing language barriers in the office?

"I am certain an outsider"

Most American expatriated managers express frustration and social-distancing because of the less than perfect communication process. One informant, an American manger sent to Beijing for an eight-month assignment, expressed how he felt being isolated upon arrival:

> "I had unique experience. Before I came, I was told that I will work with people mainly in my office and people will benefit from my expertise. But after I came here, I realized I need to work with people outside of my office (clients and vender side), who don't usually speak English. Language barrier proved to be rather difficult for me, and that restricted a big part of my job, which is working with people. People are reluctant to give me tasks, in most occasions; they are "intimated" by me. I am CERTAINLY an outsider."
>
> *words capitalized by the author

The feeling of being isolated within the office, at the first sight, might resonate with the above mentioned Chinese employees' interpretation over their managers' attempts of learning English well: to better function in the new cultural environment. However, one can also discover that from American managers' point of view, the frustration has more come from the professional side of not able to achieve or accomplish work assignment efficiently. Most American managers complain about the quality of communication between American managers and local Chinese employees because they "need to spend additional time assigning and explaining a task" or "do additional communication to get the job done". The same informants commented that the language barrier has created for him:

"…feeling as incapable to do my job, as I said before, and also feeling lost and confused. I try to be friendly and volunteer my information with other Chinese co-workers, like where in china did you come from, you know, things you expect to know if you are working in an American office with American co-workers, you would know where they come from in the US."

Once again, corporate identity of American expatriated managers, rather than their national or cultural identity, has been their primary identity when they interpret their situation communicating with their Chinese employees. They are more concerned with if they can function professionally and efficiently in daily office environment, while less concerned with how they may be accepted in the new cultural environment. When they venture to create new topics with local Chinese employees, they usually do so by copying their way of interacting with their American colleagues back in the US. The goal of such interaction is more smooth professional communication within the office, rather than trying to mingle more smoothly with their Chinese colleagues after work.

The norm of unbalanced status between English and Chinese is invisible to most American expatriated mangers who received interview. Most of them are impressed that their local Chinese employees are using a second language in daily office communication; however, most of them also expressed concern and dissatisfaction of their employees' English level. Once again, their corporate identity and professional expectations enjoys higher priority when they interpret and understand such norms within daily multicultural office settings.

As speech code theory (Philipsen, 1997) proposes, different interpretations towards speech norm may be stemmed from different premises relating to language usage within daily office space. Do American managers subscribe to a premise that the use of English in daily office space, even on foreign land, is natural and "the best way"? One thing is certain at this stage: when American managers encounter language barriers, their primary concern is how it may affect their professional performance, rather than the extent to which they may be accepted or function well in the new cultural environment. Different from their Chinese employees, their professional and corporate identity outweigh their cultural identity when interpreting this speech norm in office.

"When I speak English they seem to be…ummm shocked"

There are also other interesting comments coming from a young American expatriated manager when he described one day when he tried to respond to two Chinese employees' office leisure chat:

> "One day, and this happens actually every day, when two Chinese employees speaking Chinese with each other (in front of me), I understood what they said and I stopped them and explained what they said to them. They were like, OK, and continued with their Chinese conversation. I mean they usually forget that I understand them and when I stop them and explain to them what they said, they seem to be…umm shocked, and OK and then went on with their conversation in Chinese."

In multinational corporations' local branch offices, local employees more or less face the situation of using a second-language in their daily office communication (Charles & Marschan-Piekkari, 2002). Throughout this investigation, the commonly shared sentiments among Chinese employees towards such everyday reality are visible: speaking English in daily office setting is their only option. When conversation takes place only among Chinese employees, using Chinese seems to be a nice balancing practice to ease the tension. What if their American managers interrupt such Chinese conversation and participate in also using Chinese? What kind of effect or reaction can be created with such maneuver or switch of ways of speaking?

Speech code theory (1997) also suggests that when an outsider try to artfully use the speech code usually used only within particular speech communities, such attempt may usually be accepted by local speech community member and create harmony. Hence, it is interesting to explore if in such occasions, which "happens every day", when American expatriated manager tries to use Chinese and takes part in such "Chinese-only" conversations, how would local Chinese employees react and accept such language switching. The artful usage of speech code from the other side may strategically re-balance the different interpretations and premises that Chinese employee and their American managers each subscribe to. In the given instance, this attempt turns out to be a surprise to Chinese employees; but how would such speech code switching create long-term effect within the office?

Future Directions

To answer the three research question, this exploratory study leads to new questions and enquiries. For example, It might be helpful to conduct participated observation in an office to understand how, when and why people switch between English and Chinese, especially how Chinese employee react and interpret their American managers' Chinese interruption. This paper argues that daily norm of office language usage between English and Chinese has in fact reflected unique psychology, in which Chinese people manage to balance between their loyalty to Chinese language, while on the other end continue with their pursuit for promising career development within foreign companies. From their American mangers' perspective, however, the unbalanced status between English and Chinese is less visible. There is less struggle between their corporate identity and cultural identity, either, despite of the fact that they are living in a foreign cultural environment.

To sum up, American expatriated managers and local Chinese employees interpret the daily multi-lingual reality differently: American managers put first priority to their professional identity while local Chinese employees focus more on their cultural identity. The language switch between English and Chinese, which performed occasionally by American mangers, can be interpreted as attempts to better associate with their Chinese subordinates; it is important, though, to conduct further field observation and interviews with Chinese employees to find out their reaction to such "artful usage of speech code", or strategic language switching. Does that create harmony in work space? Does that nurture welcoming atmosphere among corporate co-workers with different cultural and linguistic background? More questions are waiting to be answered. The research findings may inspire furture field observation and interviews with Chinese employees to find out their reaction to such "artful usage of speech code", or strategic language switching. Managers, employee communication professionals and local Chinese employees working in multinational corporations operating in China may all benefit from the research finding. Finally, they may all better understand corporate language policy and its consequent influences on corporate employees' identity in global work place.

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Business Communication Becomes Professional Business Development: A Sign of the Future?

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ABSTRACT

Changes to the business communication course title and description at Southeastern Louisiana University may portend similar changes at other AACSB-accredited institutions. Pressures related to accreditation have eliminated the word communication from the legacy business communication course description. The paper seeks feedback on how to navigate the changes.

Introduction

In Summer 2009 Southeastern Louisiana University's implemented a reorganization in which the undergraduate business communication course moved from the Department of Business Administration (now Business Administration & Finance) to the Department of Management. Simultaneously, with the 2009-2010 *General Catalogue*, the historic title of the course in "Business Communication" became "Professional Business Development." The prerequisite, previously the second semester of first-year college English writing (freshman composition), became a business school course in microcomputer applications. This paper discusses the course description and the role of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools and then goes into questions and analyses as well as findings to date and concludes with concern of implications for education and business.

Course Description

The previous course description was "A study of fundamental business communications, business letters, and reports" (Southeastern, 2008, p. 434). The description became (Southeastern, 2009, p. 483):

> Business competencies required for student success now and in the future as careers are developed. Competencies include critical thinking, effective business presentations, reflective thinking, case analysis, and the use of information technology.

Note the outline inherent in that description: "critical thinking," "effective business presentations," "reflective thinking," "case analysis," and "use of information technology." These phrases were drawn from the 2006 AACSB (Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business) learning standards as implemented by the University. Additionally the word *communication* vanished from both the course title and the course description. Informal discussion indicated that the changes were intended to protect the course against removal from the College of Business (delivered to the Department of Communication) or even elimination. Nonetheless, it was clear that the course was to continue to be, at least for the time being, "A study of fundamental business communications, business letters, and reports." The textbook for the prior course was Bovée, Thill, & Schatzman (2002), but textbooks must periodically rotate in and out of the course, and for the new course the faculty chose Guffey (2008); the difference was not regarded to be one of essence but merely the routine obligation to switch books.

Southern Association Of Colleges And Schools

An additional, and apparently causative, factor in the situation was an unanticipated narrow interpretation, by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS), of its requirement that the faculty member teaching a course must (shall) have "18 graduate semester hours in the teaching discipline" (2001); following the SACS ruling in 2006, just one on-site faculty member (whose Ph.D. is in communication) was considered qualified to teach the course. Immediately all other sections became taught by adjuncts on the internet. In 2008 the SACS eliminated explicit mention of the 18 graduate semester hours, but a concern may have existed that the course title and description needed to be recycled to permit others to teach the course.

Questions And Analyses

The situation leads to two questions:

1. How did the faculty member accommodate the new course description while minimizing changes in substance? The answer indicates how others can do accordingly if the answer to

Question 2 is affirmative.

2. Does the change in the course title and description at Southeastern portend a trend? Analysis of those two questions likewise involves two aspects of the methodology.

- Question 1 necessitates expression of sources which document the changes and show, from the faculty member's syllabus, how the changes were accommodated.
- Question 2 involves the 2010 ABC-SWUS Conference itself, in that the faculty member will seek input from others to ascertain their experiences and anticipations of such changes.

Findings

Table I articulates the way in which the previous course, by unit, was provisionally grafted into the new course.

Table I. Changes to Unit Topics

Prior syllabus	**New syllabus**
Communication theory	Critical thinking: Theory & vocabulary
Grammar	Reflective thinking: Grammar review
Correspondence	Information technology: Correspondence
Report writing	Information technology: Written reports
Oral communication	Oral communication: Effective presentations

An additional finding is evident from the Louisiana Board of Regents (2008) articulation matrix, which indicates that Louisiana State University no longer has a business communication course in articulation with such a course at other public institutions in the state. Does this development mean that business communication is subject to disappearing as a requirement in AACSB-accredited curricula? (The prior LSU course, English 2002, which was moved from LSU's College of Business Administration to the English Department in the 1980s, is still, however, taught, and appears in the matrix, at Louisiana State University at Eunice, a junior college. The matrix shows the Southeastern course as GBBT 234**;** this is the course which was re-prefixed and renumbered as MGMT 240 at Southeastern.)

A further complication, which arose after the change in course title and course description, was a profound downturn in the economic outlook, marked by a series of budget cuts and looming cuts possibly involving strategic alteration to Louisiana's public higher education (Ellzey, 2010).

Conclusion: Implications For Education And Business

The changes at Southeastern are in the context of ominous cutbacks in the state budget, including public higher education. Simultaneously the need for communication skills among business graduates is widely acknowledged. But the profession of business communication educators must change with the times. Participation of others in discussion at the 2010 ABC-SWUS Conference is welcome.

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Professionalism Through Performance

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ABSTRACT

University students complete their course studies and eagerly anticipate graduation looking forward to joining the ranks of the "real" business world. However, it seems that many of the students who graduate do not have the professional communication and etiquette skills nor the professional look needed to competitively seek employment in today's struggling economy. We contend that a single professional development theory course alone may not be sufficient to educate the students, especially those business students completing a Bachelors degree program. Graduate students are being sent into the highly competitive job market of the "real" world without having adequate knowledge of and/or experience in the many facets of career preparation and professionalism. Being staunch supporters of "learning by doing," we believe in the adage "Experience is the best teacher."

Professionalism Through Performance

The purpose of this study was to determine the current level of professionalism taught at one specific university and if there is a need to increase or enhance professionalism education and/or experience at the University.

Presently, the professionalism education at the University consists of one 200-level (sophomore) course (professional business development) and random business etiquette seminars. One course, career planning, also covers résumé and cover letter preparation; however, it is an elective course for College of Business students. The prerequisite for the course is a "microcomputer applications for business" course. We contend that these venues are insufficient to provide students with the necessary knowledge, skill, and experience needed in professionalism to increase student success in job interviewing and social behavior upon graduation. We further assert that theory education alone does not provide what experience (learning by doing) can in the classroom.

Methodology

Participants

Students enrolled in two sections of professional business development (approximately 60) were involved in a course-long project to determine the need for increased professional development of students in the business school and in what way(s). The ranking of these students included sophomores, juniors, and seniors. Those surveyed for the project included business students (both undergraduate and graduate students), faculty, and staff.

Instrument

Two survey forms, one for students and one for faculty and staff, were completed resulting in 21 questions of qualitative and quantitative nature (Appendices A and B). The survey was conducted online for five days and targeted College of Business students (including MBA students) and faculty and staff. Teams then analyzed the survey results and incorporated their findings in a formal report along with other research material in support of their findings.

Procedure

Students from two professional business development courses were given a project topic with three possible approaches.

Option A: The first option was to create a professional development center (PDC) for the College of Business students. This option incorporated the development of a professional dress resource component whereby donations of new or like-new clothing, shoes, and accessories would be collected. Students from the current disciplines (Accounting, Business Administration and Finance, Management, and Marketing and Supply Chain Management) could operate the PDC receiving some sort of compensation in the form of experience or training for inclusion on their résumés. Those students deemed financially challenged could receive those clothing items needed for job interviewing free or at a much discounted price. In return, those students receiving assistance from the PDC could pay for the items "in kind" by donating a set number of hours of their time to work as a volunteer in the PDC.

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Option B: The second option was to create a professional development center (PDC) without the professional dress resource unit for the College of Business students. This option focused on the use of seminars to educate students on professionalism, social behavior, communication, and etiquette using University and community resources. It was also suggested that the students could explore a professional dress resource component that incorporated discount pricing for prospective graduates on professional attire from retailers in the local community.

Option C: The third option was course refinement/development. This option required the review of the current course for restructuring as well as the development of a new course or courses to incorporate the areas of professionalism, social behavior, etiquette, and communication. Students were also to determine the level of the course(s) and any prerequisites that may be needed as well as course content and recommended textbook and teaching materials.

Each class was divided into teams of four and five students for the project and a team leader selected for each team. By the mid-semester drop date, some teams contained as few as three members. Teams were restructured immediately following the drop date to accommodate those students who dropped the course as well as those teams experiencing inner conflict.

Student teams were required to develop survey questions based on the topic of professionalism. The activity coordinated with textbook and supplemental material for a practical application of the theory. Two final survey forms, one for students and one for faculty and staff, were completed resulting in 21 questions of qualitative and quantitative nature (Appendices A and B). The survey was conducted online for five days and targeted College of Business students (including MBA students) and faculty and staff. Teams then analyzed the survey results and incorporated their findings in a formal report along with other research material. Each of the three project options had at least one team work on it.

Students next developed a letter of invitation for special guests (administration, faculty, and staff) as well as a guest list tailored for the presentations. The letter of invitation corresponded with the textbook material for a realistic application of the theory.

Formal presentations were given by each team in support of their research findings and recommendations. Students were also required to evaluate their performance as well as that of their team members twice during the project. Additionally, weekly progress reports were submitted verbally by each team leader to ensure the teams were progressing satisfactorily in the project.

After completion of the project, the students from the two professional business development courses were surveyed to determine their thoughts on the course and the project experience (Appendix C).

Findings

Approximately 60 professional business development students were hand surveyed in class at the beginning of the course on various topics of career preparation and professionalism knowledge. Based on initial class discussion and hand surveys of the course members, indications were that there is a deficiency in the total preparedness the students feel they have now and will have upon completion of their course studies for their place in the job market. In particular, when asked if they were aware of their personality types and characteristics, most of the students were unable to answer those questions. Those observations triggered questions about how, when, and where the students are to learn this and other vital information pertinent to business professionalism when there are no “checks and balances” in place to ensure students are truly prepared for advancement into their professional careers.

Use of Career Services is not required, while attendance of etiquette seminars is only recommended. To the best of our knowledge, the professional business development course is the only required course in the College of Business curricula which exposes students to professionalism.

The University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire College of Business (AACSB accredited) has recognized the need for professional and career preparation of its prospective graduates.

Currently, students are required to attend four targeted workshops to meet graduation requirements. These courses are required for completion during the freshman, sophomore, and junior years. There are, however, no requirements for senior level or exiting students (College of Business).

The University of Central Arkansas has a Student Corporate Program offered through its Career Services Center where students are taught career planning and job search skills and receive assistance with internships/jobs and networking. There is, however, a limit of 50 students for participation in the program (University of Central Arkansas).

Based on preliminary findings, we feel there is an urgent need to develop/refine student success skills in areas including communication, organizational process/flow, negotiation, and technical writing, as well as professionalism, etiquette, and social behavior at the University.

Based on the 281 surveys completed by students and 29 by faculty/staff, some of the most important findings of the survey are presented herein.

Table 1

Question	Students		Faculty/Staff	
Have you had any courses that covered personal grooming?	No 55.9%	Yes 44.1%	No 52%	Yes 48%
Have you had any courses that covered business etiquette?	No 32%	Yes 68%	No 38%	Yes 62%
Have you had any courses that covered body language?	No 32%	Yes 68%	No 41%	Yes 59%
Have you had any courses that covered résumé and cover letter preparation?	No 32%	Yes 68%	No 21%	Yes 80%
Have you had any courses that covered social skills/ behavior?	No 30%	Yes 70%	No 48%	Yes 52%
Do you perceive a student differently when the student is dressed in business attire rather than casual attire on campus?	No 25%	Yes 75%	No 31%	Yes 69%
Should there be a “dress code” for business students when attending classes?	No 78%	Yes 22%	No 66%	Yes 34%
Would you support a “professional dress center” which would aid in providing clothing assistance (new or like new clothing and accessories) to financially challenged graduating students?	No 16%	Yes 84%	No 10%	Yes 90%

The majority of students and faculty/staff, 56% and 52% respectively, have had no education or training in personal grooming. Students had no education or training in job interviewing (35.9%), body language (32.4%), social skills/behavior (29.5%), business etiquette (32.0%) nor résumé and cover letter preparation. Faculty/staff were deficient in these areas as well.

Encouragingly, both students (84%) and faculty/staff (90%) would support a professional dress center which would aid in providing professional dress attire for prospective graduates.

Table 2

Question	Students		Faculty/Staff	
I feel (students are) knowledgeable and prepared in the areas of professionalism.	Agree 82%	Disagree 18%	Agree 28%	Disagree 72%
I feel business students need additional education/ training in professionalism.	Agree 81%	Disagree 19%	Agree 72%	Disagree 28%
I feel "service learning" (learning by doing) is needed to enhance course theory in the classroom (i.e. projects, activities).	Agree 87%	Disagree 13%	Agree 90%	Disagree 10%

Interestingly, in Table 2, 100% of the faculty/staff felt students are not knowledgeable and prepared in verbal and written communication, intercultural communication, and professionalism; however, only 55% of the faculty/staff members felt that students need additional education/ training in professionalism.

The students enrolled in two professional business development courses were surveyed at the end of the semester to determine their thoughts and feelings about the course and "learning by doing." Some of the more significant findings are included in Table 3.

Table 3

Question	Students		Faculty/Staff	
I feel (students are) knowledgeable and prepared in the areas of professionalism.	Agree 82%	Disagree 18%	Agree 28%	Disagree 72%
I feel business students need additional education/ training in professionalism.	Agree 81%	Disagree 19%	Agree 72%	Disagree 28%
I feel "service learning" (learning by doing) is needed to enhance course theory in the classroom (i.e. projects, activities).	Agree 87%	Disagree 13%	Agree 90%	Disagree 10%

Discussion

We feel that incorporating "practice through performance" in courses will increase not only a student's experience but also the student's self-confidence and self-worth. We also contend that theory alone is insufficient to convey the concepts of professionalism, social behavior, etiquette, and dress to students.

In our opinion, there are various learning curves in that not everyone learns in the same way. While some can grasp concepts through theory alone, others need to experience the theory in application before the concepts are truly understood.

Survey results as well as our personal experiences indicate there is a need to increase professionalism in the College of Business. Furthermore, the authors recommend the establishment of standards for professionalism education and student involvement for business students in post-secondary studies not only at the university studied, but for all students in post-secondary education.

The public relations genre could benefit from the findings of this report as well since the disciplines intertwine at various points in both theory and application.

Conclusion

While efforts have been made to improve student preparation for the job market, there appears to be a need to establish, refine, and/or enhance student knowledge and experience in academic studies in the areas of professionalism, communication, social behavior, etiquette, and dress. Many prospective graduates are not exposed to in depth education or experience in these areas. Often students garner this information as members of the workforce. We feel attention must be given to professionalism and experience and their incorporation into the classroom and/or educational setting so that prospective graduate students can be better prepared for entrance into the workforce and quite possibly increased success in the job market.

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APPENDIX A

Professionalism Survey—Students

			n	%
1.	What is your classification?			
	Freshman		29	
	Sophomore		57	
	Junior		74	
	Senior		87	
	Grad Student		34	
2.	What is your current G.P.A?			
	Under 2.0		18	
	2.0-2.4		54	
	2.5-2.9		65	
	3.0-3.4		75	
	3.5-4.0		69	
3.	Have you had any courses or training that covered how to prepare a résumé and cover letter?			
	No		89	31.7
	Yes	High School	63	22.4
	Yes	College	122	43.4
	Yes	Work	6	2.1
	Yes	Community	1	0.4
4.	Have you had any courses or training that covered business etiquette?			
	No		90	32.0
	Yes	High School	15	5.7
	Yes	College	163	58.0
	Yes	Work	11	3.9
	Yes	Community	2	0.7
5.	Have you had any courses or training that covered social skills/behavior?			
	No		83	29.5
	Yes	High School	41	14.6
	Yes	College	135	48.0
	Yes	Work	13	4.6
	Yes	Community	9	3.2
6.	Have you had any courses or training that covered personal grooming?			
	No		157	55.9
	Yes	High School	50	17.8
	Yes	College	50	17.8
	Yes	Work	13	4.6
	Yes	Community	11	3.9

7.	Have you had any courses or training that covered verbal and written communication?			
	No		20	7.1
	Yes	High School	46	16.4
	Yes	College	207	73.7
	Yes	Work	4	1.4
	Yes	Community	4	1.4
8.	Have you had any courses or training that covered body language?			
	No		91	32.4
	Yes	High School	29	10.3
	Yes	College	140	49.8
	Yes	Work	13	4.6
	Yes	Community	8	2.8
9.	Have you had any courses or training that covered job interviewing?			
	No		101	35.9
	Yes	High School	40	14.2
	Yes	College	122	43.4
	Yes	Work	13	4.6
	Yes	Community	5	1.8
10.	Do you know what "professionalism" means?			
	Yes		263	93.6
	No		18	6.4
11.	Do you feel that your current understanding and level of professionalism will adequately prepare you for transition from college to the work force upon graduation?			
	Yes		234	83.3
	No		47	16.7
12.	Do you perceive a student differently when the student is dressed in business attire rather than casual attire on campus?			
	Yes		212	75.4
	No		69	24.6
13.	Will you be able financially to invest in the proper clothing needed for job interviewing?			
	Yes		236	84.0
	No		45	16.0
14.	Would you support a "professional dress center" which would aid in providing clothing assistance (new or like new clothing and accessories) to financially challenged graduating students?			
	Yes		235	83.6
	No		46	16.4

15.	Should there be a "dress code" for business students when attending classes?			
	Yes		61	21.7
	No		220	78.3
16.	I feel knowledgeable and prepared in the areas of professionalism.			
	Strongly Disagree		30	10.7
	Somewhat Disagree		20	7.1
	Agree		68	24.2
	Somewhat Agree		81	28.8
	Strongly Agree		82	29.2
17.	I feel knowledgeable and prepared in the areas of verbal and written communication and intercultural communication.			
	Strongly Disagree		35	12.5
	Somewhat Disagree		26	9.3
	Agree		81	28.8
	Somewhat Agree		74	26.3
	Strongly Agree		65	23.1
18.	I am confident of my current skills/abilities in job interviewing.			
	Strongly Disagree		30	10.7
	Somewhat Disagree		28	10.0
	Agree		73	26.0
	Somewhat Agree		86	30.6
	Strongly Agree		64	22.8
19.	I feel business students need additional education/training in professionalism.			
	Strongly Disagree		22	7.8
	Somewhat Disagree		32	11.4
	Agree		81	28.8
	Somewhat Agree		63	22.4
	Strongly Agree		83	29.5
20.	If area businesses offered discounts on dress clothing (i.e. suits, shoes), I would be more inclined to purchase from those retailers.			
	Strongly Disagree		16	5.7
	Somewhat Disagree		15	5.3
	Agree		55	19.6
	Somewhat Agree		45	16.0
	Strongly Agree		150	53.4

21.	I feel "service learning" (learning by doing) is needed to enhance course theory in the classroom (i.e. projects, activities).			
	Strongly Disagree		22	7.8
	Somewhat Disagree		14	5.0
	Agree		72	25.6
	Somewhat Agree		49	17.4
	Strongly Agree		124	44.1

Survey data collected from 281 responses to student survey.

Professionalism Survey—Faculty/Staff

			n	%
1.	What is your association with the University?			
	Faculty		22	75.9
	Staff		7	24.1
2.	What is your gender?			
	Female		14	48.3
	Male		15	51.7
3.	Have you had any courses or training that covered how to prepare a résumé and cover letter?			
	No		6	20.7
	Yes	High School	4	13.8
	Yes	College	14	48.3
	Yes	Work	5	17.2
	Yes	Community	0	0
4.	Have you had any courses or training that covered business etiquette?			
	No		11	37.9
	Yes	High School	0	0
	Yes	College	10	34.5
	Yes	Work	7	24.1
	Yes	Community	1	3.4
5.	Have you had any courses or training that covered social skills/behavior?			
	No		14	48.3
	Yes	High School	0	.
	Yes	College	12	41.4
	Yes	Work	2	6.9
	Yes	Community	1	3.4

6.	Have you had any courses or training that covered personal grooming?			
	No		15	51.7
	Yes	High School	3	10.3
	Yes	College	6	20.7
	Yes	Work	4	13.8
	Yes	Community	1	3.4

7.	Have you had any courses or training that covered verbal and written communication?			
	No		1	3.4
	Yes	High School	1	3.4
	Yes	College	26	89.7
	Yes	Work	1	3.4
	Yes	Community	0	0
8.	Have you had any courses or training that covered body language?			
	No		12	41.4
	Yes	High School	0	0
	Yes	College	13	44.8
	Yes	Work	3	10.3
	Yes	Community	1	3.4
9.	Have you had any courses or training that covered job interviewing?			
	No		7	24.1
	Yes	High School	1	3.4
	Yes	College	17	58.6
	Yes	Work	4	13.8
	Yes	Community	0	0
10.	Do you know what “professionalism” means?			
	Yes		29	100.0
	No		0	0
11.	Do you feel that your current understanding and level of professionalism adequately prepared you for transition from school to the work force upon graduation?			
	Yes		27	93.1
	No		2	6.9
12.	Do you perceive a student differently when the student is dressed in business attire rather than casual attire on campus?			
	Yes		20	69.0
	No		9	31.0
13.	Were you able financially to invest in the proper clothing needed for job interviewing?			
	Yes		29	100.0
	No		0	0
14.	Would you support a “professional dress center” which would aid in providing clothing assistance (new or like new clothing and accessories) to financially challenged graduating students?			
	Yes		26	89.7
	No		3	10.3

15.	Should there be a "dress code" for business students when attending classes?			
	Yes		10	34.5
	No		19	65.5
16.	I feel students are knowledgeable and prepared in the areas of professionalism.			
	Strongly Disagree		8	27.6
	Somewhat Disagree		13	44.8
	Agree		7	24.1
	Somewhat Agree		0	0
	Strongly Agree		1	3.4
17.	I feel knowledgeable and prepared in the areas of verbal and written communication and intercultural communication.			
	Strongly Disagree		11	37.9
	Somewhat Disagree		8	27.6
	Agree		10	34.5
	Somewhat Agree		0	0
	Strongly Agree		0	0
18.	I feel business students are confident of their current job interviewing skills/abilities.			
	Strongly Disagree		6	20.7
	Somewhat Disagree		11	37.9
	Agree		9	31.0
	Somewhat Agree		3	10.3
	Strongly Agree		0	0
19.	I feel business students need additional education/training in professionalism.			
	Strongly Disagree		3	10.3
	Somewhat Disagree		5	17.2
	Agree		5	17.2
	Somewhat Agree		7	24.1
	Strongly Agree		9	31.0
20.	If area businesses offered discounts on dress clothing (i.e. suits, shoes), I would be more inclined to purchase from those retailers.			
	Strongly Disagree		3	10.3
	Somewhat Disagree		8	27.6
	Agree		5	17.2
	Somewhat Agree		8	27.6
	Strongly Agree		5	17.2

21.	I feel “service learning” (learning by doing) is needed to enhance course theory in the classroom (i.e. projects, activities).			
	Strongly Disagree		1	3.4
	Somewhat Disagree		2	6.9
	Agree		5	17.2
	Somewhat Agree		12	41.4
	Strongly Agree		9	31.0

Survey data collected from 29 responses to faculty/staff survey.

Professionalism Survey—Professional Business Development Students

			n	%
1.	What is your classification?			
	Freshman		0	
	Sophomore		9	
	Junior		14	
	Senior		3	
	Grad Student		0	
2.	What is your gender?			
	Female		13	
	Male		13	
3.	Prior to taking MGMT 240 (professional business development) this semester (Fall 2009), have you had any courses or training that covered:			
	a. how to prepare a resume and cover letter?			
		No	11	42.3
		Yes, High School	8	30.8
		Yes, College	7	26.9
		Yes, Work	0	0.0
		Yes, Community	0	0.0
	b. business etiquette?			
		No	14	53.8
		Yes, High School	3	11.5
		Yes, College	7	26.9
		Yes, Work	0	0.0
		Yes, Community	2	7.7
	c. social skills/behavior?			
		No	10	38.5
		Yes, High School	4	15.4
		Yes, College	7	26.9
		Yes, Work	0	0.0
		Yes, Community	5	19.2

	d. personal grooming?			
		No	9	34.6
		Yes, High School	7	26.9
		Yes, College	6	23.1
		Yes, Work	0	0.0
		Yes, Community	4	15.4
	e. verbal and written communication?			
		No	2	7.7
		Yes, High School	7	26.9
		Yes, College	16	61.5
		Yes, Work	0	0.0
		Yes, Community	1	3.8
	f. body language?			
		No	10	38.5
		Yes, High School	2	7.7
		Yes, College	12	46.2
		Yes, Work	0	0.0
		Yes, Community	2	7.7
	g. job interviewing?			
		No	16	61.5
		Yes, High School	6	23.1
		Yes, College	3	11.5
		Yes, Work	0	0.0
		Yes, Community	1	3.8
4.	Do you feel that your current understanding and level of professionalism will adequately prepare you for transition from college to the work force upon graduation?			
	Yes		17	65.4
	No		9	34.6
5.	Did the “learning by doing” aspect of the project enhance the MGMT 240 (professional business development) course?			
	Yes		25	96.2
	No		1	3.8
6.	Did completing the course project on professionalism increase your understanding of course theory from the textbook?			
	Yes		20	76.9
	No		6	23.1

7.	Would you support a "professional dress center" which would aid in providing clothing assistance (new or like new clothing and accessories) to financially challenged graduating students?			
	Yes		24	92.3
	No		2	7.7
8.	I feel more knowledgeable and prepared in the areas of professionalism, social behavior, and etiquette than at the beginning of the course.			
	Strongly Disagree		1	3.8
	Somewhat Disagree		1	3.8
	Agree		3	11.5
	Somewhat Agree		9	34.6
	Strongly Agree		12	46.2
9.	I feel more knowledgeable and prepared in the areas of verbal and written communication and intercultural communication than at the beginning of the course.			
	Strongly Disagree		1	3.8
	Somewhat Disagree		0	0.0
	Agree		8	30.8
	Somewhat Agree		7	26.9
	Strongly Agree		10	38.5
10.	I am more confident of my current skills/abilities in job interviewing than I was at the beginning of the course.			
	Strongly Disagree		1	3.8
	Somewhat Disagree		2	7.7
	Agree		6	23.1
	Somewhat Agree		7	26.9
	Strongly Agree		10	38.5
11.	I feel business students need additional education/training in professionalism in addition to what is currently taught in MGMT 240 (professional business development).			
	Strongly Disagree		1	3.8
	Somewhat Disagree		0	0.0
	Agree		2	7.7
	Somewhat Agree		7	26.9
	Strongly Agree		16	61.5
20.	The seminars on etiquette, when combined with MGMT 240 course material, are sufficient to educate, train, and prepare students in professionalism.			
	Strongly Disagree		1	3.8
	Somewhat Disagree		1	3.8
	Agree		5	19.2

	Somewhat Agree		9	34.6
	Strongly Agree		10	38.5
21.	I feel “service learning” (learning by doing) is needed to enhance course theory in the classroom (i.e. projects, activities).			
	Strongly Disagree		1	3.8
	Somewhat Disagree		1	3.8
	Agree		0	0.0
	Somewhat Agree		3	11.5
	Strongly Agree		21	80.8

Survey data collected from 26 responses to student course survey.

Employers' Expectations of College Graduates: Perceptions of Business Communication Skills and Course Delivery

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to solicit information from working professionals as to what tools they were currently using for business communications, how communication skills were considered as part of the hiring process, and how teaching courses online might change their perception of course quality. This research, based at a moderately sized, southern, rural, public university found that organizations were depending increasingly on modern technologies for their communication. Advice is provided for improving communication courses and how these improvements would likely lead to improvement in the overall perceptions of education quality.

Introduction

Businesses are seeking employees who can communicate effectively. *Learning for the 21st Century* (2009) notes that employers need employees who can "understand, manage, and create effective oral, written, and multimedia communication in a variety of forms and contexts" (Partnership for 21st Century Skills, n.d., p. 11). Company recruiting personnel are looking for college graduates who can communicate well (DiMeglio, 2009; Olson, 2006). Good communication abilities are usually one of the top ten skills need by college graduates and requested by employers (Koncz, 2009; Page, 2005). Hill (2007) examined twelve of the essential soft skills applicants need to master to become a viable employment candidate. Of the twelve, communication skills ranked second.

According to CollegeGrad.com (2009), companies ranked communication skills as being among the eight most important attributes in the evaluation of job applicants. The identified attributes included: where the graduates earned their degree; their major/degree; their grade point average; computer skills, communication skills/interviewing; personal appearance, leadership, and their internship or work-related experiences. Further supporting the importance of communication skills, Great Britain employers reported having trouble finding employees with the right job skills set; especially, communication skills (Billing, 2003; Canny, 2004; "Graduate Vacancies Unfilled Due to Lack of Quality Recruits", 2009).

The purpose of this study is to determine the types of communication processes (written documents and oral presentations) used by employees in the performance of their jobs and employers' opinions of educational delivery systems used to earn a degree. It is hoped that the information derived in this study will allow instructors to better structure the content of business communication classes. The methodology is in keeping with recommendations from the Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB International) as to the processes which should be used in curriculum development—seeking advice from internal and external stakeholders such as the business community before making changes in curriculum.

Population and Sample

The target population was managers and recruiters in businesses and public organizations within the service area of a moderately sized, rural, public university in the southern United States. The names of the subjects were drawn from a list of recruiters who visited the campus and from organizations registered with local Chambers of Commerce within the university's service area.

The sample population included only those employers with current e-mail addresses. A total of 610 addresses were secured. The employers' participation was voluntary with complete confidentiality assurance.

Demographics of Respondents

Of the 59 respondents, 26 (43%) were men, 32 (53%) were women, and 2 left the question blank. Twenty-six respondents indicated that they worked in the service sector, 11 indicated they worked in the finance, banking, and real estate sector, and 8 indicated they worked in the public administration sector.

Approximately one-third of the respondents listed the city population of where their office is located as 5,000-25,000, one-third indicated 25,001-50,000, and one-third indicated greater than 50,000. The years of work experience of the respondent ranged from 1 year to 50 years with a mean of 17 years. Respondents stated that the number of employees working for them ranged from zero to 116 people with a mean of almost 12 employees.

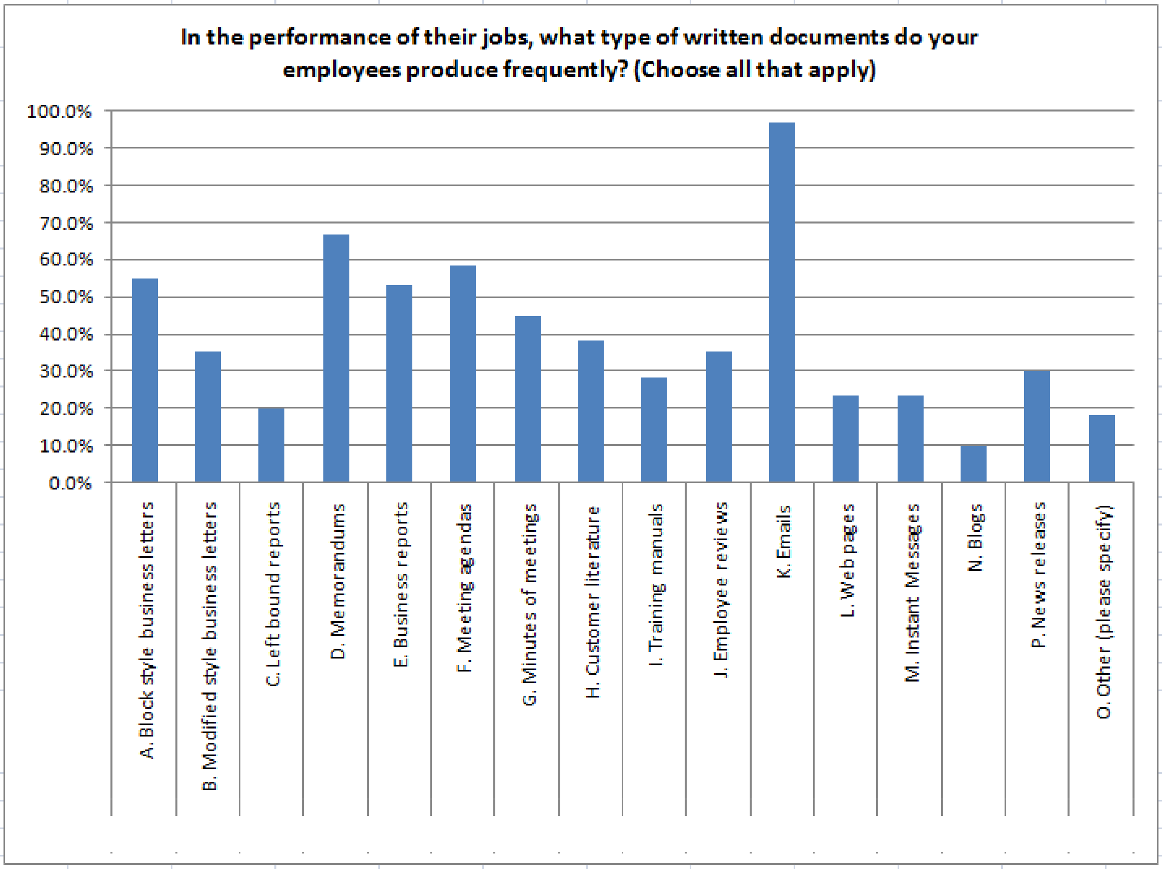
Methodology

The data was collected by an internet based survey. Each participant received an email message describing the project and the link to the internet based survey. Of the 610 usable e-mail addresses, 132 were returned as undeliverable. A follow-up/'thank you' email was sent out to all participants. After this second e-mail request, sixty surveys were completed; however, one survey was returned blank. The final response rate was greater than 12 percent.

Results of Survey

The survey was divided into four areas—types of written communication documents used in the performance of the job, oral communication documents used in the performance of the job, employers' opinions on educational delivery systems, and demographic data. Data was analyzed using SPSS for frequency analysis and statistical testing where appropriate.

Written Communication Documents Used in the Performance of their Jobs. Employers were asked which types of written documents were used by their employees in the performance of their jobs. A listing of all the documents can be found in Figure 1.
Figure 1-Types of Written Documents Produced Frequently by Employees



Of those written documents, the three types deemed most important to the success of their businesses were e-mails, business reports, and block-style business letters. Additionally, employers felt that their current employee needed the most improvements in producing the following documents: e-mails (37%), business reports (23%), memorandums (21%), and block-style business letters (21%). Lastly, employers felt that recent college graduates needed the most important producing the following documents: e-mails (36%), business reports (22%), block-style business letters (22%), and memorandums (22%). Forty-nine percent of the employers ranked new technology--web pages, e-mails, and blogs--to be an area of greater importance than traditional business letters/reports (28%), and managerial communication (23%).

Importance of Additional Evidence of Communication Skills for New Hires. Among the respondents the applicant's resume was critical to their evaluation of applicants' written abilities. Overwhelming the respondents (58%) indicated that the quality of the applicants' resumes in the assessment of their written abilities was very important (M=4.25). This indicates that employers use the applicant's' resume as the only criterion for evaluating written skills. Fifty-eight percent of the respondents indicated they used the applicants' resumes as the only criteria in evaluating written skills and that they did not require any additional writing evidence during the interview process.

Oral Communication Used in the Performance of their Jobs. On part 2 of the survey, the first two questions were used to determine if employees were required to develop and execute oral presentations aligned with presentation group size. Sixty-one percent of the respondents indicated that they did require employees to develop and execute oral presentations. Of those 54% did it in large groups (>10 people).

Microsoft Office applications (PowerPoint, Word, and Excel) are ubiquitous—cited 50 of the respondents who indicated that they used software for presentations. Of these only 5 respondents indicated that they were using web-based software for presentation for meetings.

Employers' Opinion on the Educational Delivery Systems. On part 3 of the survey, respondents who indicated a delivery preference preferred face-to-face (56%) over online (15%) delivery by almost a four to one margin. Approximately 90% of the respondents indicated that proctoring of online students was either important (22%) or very important (63%).

Communications Skills Quality Compared to Overall Educational Quality. Respondents' satisfaction the Overall Educational Quality of recent university graduates was highly correlated with satisfaction with these graduates' oral and written communication quality. A high inter-item correlation matrix (Table 1), and a Cronbach's alpha of .898 suggest that these three items all load on a single factor.

Table 1 - Educational and Communication Quality

InterItem Correlation Matrix			
	EdQual	OralQual	WrittenQual
EdQual	1.000	0.726	0.698
OralQual	0.726	1.000	0.811
WrittenQual	0.698	0.811	1.000

Additionally, the respondents' mean level of overall satisfaction of educational quality in the students they interviewed differed significantly from perceptions of these students with the quality of oral and written skills (Tables 2, 3)

Table 2 - Quality Means

Item	Mean	N
Overall Ed Quality	3.45	58
Oral Quality	3.16	58
Written Quality	2.88	58

Table 3 - Significance of Difference of Means

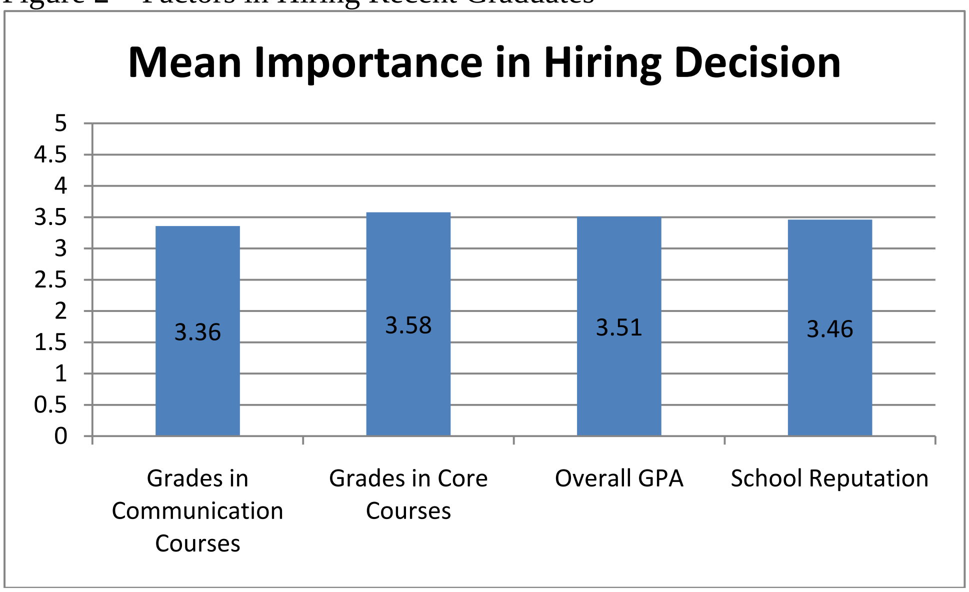
	Paired Samples Test		
Difference	t	df	Sig (2-tail)
OverallEdQuality - OralQual	3.076	57	0.003
OverallEdQuality - WrittenQual	5.763	57	0.000
OralQla-WrittenQual	3.414	57	0.001

It is not surprising to find perceptions of overall educational quality highly coupled with perceptions of graduates oral and written abilities. The uni-dimensionality might suggest that written and oral communication skills are inseparable in the minds of the respondents from their perception of overall educational quality. This would reinforce the idea that communication skills are essential and integral to the successful education of University students.

As Tables 2 and 3 show, significant differences existed in the respondents' average perceptions of overall, oral, and written interviewee quality. These differences suggested that perceptions of overall quality could be improved by improving oral and written communication abilities of the students.

Respondents were asked on a five point scale to rate the importance of factors in hiring recent college graduates. The mean score for the importance of communication skills was 3.36. (Figure 2). The differences in the means of these 4 hiring factors were not significant. (greatest P value .18)

Figure 2 – Factors in Hiring Recent Graduates



Of course it is not appropriate to argue that an effect is not present based on the absence of statistical significance. However, this survey clearly shows that Grades in Communication Courses were about as important in these respondents' hiring decisions as Grades in Core Classes, Overall GPA, and School Reputation.

Discussion and Guidance to the Business Communication Curriculum

Much of our current undergraduate business communication course focuses on written reports. This research validates this focus—written communication continues to be the core of modern businesses. This research also validates the generally accepted idea that businesses have embraced new technologies in their communication. The study participants ranked email as the most important written communication type. Even in a largely rural region, the largest portions of businesses indicated that newer communication technologies were the most important means of communication for their businesses.

This study also reaffirmed the importance of communication skills for student success in the hiring process. Grades in communication classes were about of the same importance in the hiring process as grades in core courses, GPA, and school reputation. Moreover, this survey suggests that managers' perceptions of graduates' communication quality is linked to overall perceptions of education quality. However, the only evidence that more than half of these managers used to judge written communication skills was graduates' resumes.

This study provides guidance both for improving the content of communication classes and for increasing perceptions of quality at the university level. At the course level the participants' responses suggest that an increasing portion of the undergraduate business communication course should be devoted to newer technologies. In addition, it seems that it would be difficult for business communication educators to overemphasize the importance of resume preparation to their students.

This study also provides insight to university administrators seeking to improve the perceptions of their graduates. For universities with a substantial online component, these managers made it clear that they thought it was important that online courses be proctored. Finally, the respondents' close association of communication quality with overall educational quality makes it clear that communication classes could play an important part in improving perceptions of the overall quality of educational quality of graduates. Moreover, the significantly lower means of communication quality compared to the mean for overall educational represents an obvious opportunity to increase perceptions by increasing the communication skills of graduates.

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A Review of Theories of Conflict

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ABSTRACT

This paper is aimed to review the theories of conflict. It begins with the most common definitions to review the causes of conflict and to categorize a typology. From these starting points, this paper reviews the methodology of the most important theatricals approaches of conflict. Conflict theory attempts to explain societal and individual violence. Social anthropology links macro-level theories of conflict and behavioral theories at individual level of conflict for a meaningful discussion of violence and conflict. There is a lack of cohesion or consensus among conflict theories. Classical and behavioral theories of conflict converge on analytical levels in a more holistic approach.

Introduction

Conflict is the embodiment of the concept of change represented in the Chinese characters for danger and opportunity. Conflict is defined as the clashing of interests on national values and issues (territory, independence, self-determination, autonomy, ideology, power, resources) of some duration and magnitude between at least two parties (states, groups of states, organizations, or organized groups) that are determined to pursue their interests and win their case. At least one party is the organized state (Heidelberg Institute on International Conflict Research at the Department of Political Science, University of Heidelberg). According to Coser (1956: 8), "Conflict means the struggle over values and claims to scarce status, power and resources in which the aims of the opponents are to neutralize, injure or eliminate their rivals". Conflict is defined as 'a battle between incompatible interests over government and/or territory where armed force is being used, and where at least one of the parties involved represents the national government.' (Wallerstein and Sollenberg, 1999: 605).

What these definitions have in common is the indication of inevitability of conflict in human affairs, perceived incompatibility between interdependent parties. Though conflict, competition, and cooperation are inherently interdependent, conflict engenders more intense interaction that competition and occurs when competing group's goals, objectives, needs or values clash and aggression, although not necessarily violence is a result (Schelling, 1960). The conflict exists as a result of the imperfect character of contractual arrangements to solve conflicting incentives

Conflict is a dynamic phenomenon with costs, implications and consequences difficult to determine. The analysis of conflict dynamics may lead to escalation of violence or to non-violent disruption of inter-group cooperation and coordination. Analysis of how societies, defined social units and target groups deal with crisis and conflict in their own context is a heuristic tool to understand their capacity for adaptive social change.

Typology of Conflicts

Vast literature has theorized, quantified and analyzed the causes of all types of conflict and its impact on economic and social development. All types of conflict entail private and social costs, affect millions of people and result in lost opportunities in terms of economic and social development. According to the conflict intensity, conflict can be non-violent and violent. Social conflict may take forms from non-violent competition to violent destruction. Latent conflict and crisis are non-violent conflicts while severe crisis and war are violent conflicts. In a latent conflict, positional differences and clashing interests may be articulated as demands or claims. A conflict can remain latent for long periods of time and can intensify for a certain time before it falls back to latent state again. Violent conflicts such as large-scale conflicts and civil wars represent a high magnitude of social and private costs. Social amplification of risk results of a sudden escalation in the level of conflict out of proportions (Kasperson et al., 1988). Conflict about power is less tricky than conflict about the rules of conflict. Socially embedded conflict may foster adaptive institutional change. Conflicts may be vertical between regional groups and the state structures and horizontal between communities in various regions. Tait (2001) proposed some categories of international risk-related conflicts, including those involving a wide range of types of chemical contamination, and their possible resolution.

Methodology Of Theory Of Conflict

There has been a substantial amount of inter-disciplinary research and analysis of conflict in the last decades. Conflict as a dependent variable already exists and may mislead conclusions about causes. (Collier and Mahoney 1996; King, Keohane, and Verba, 1994). The quantitative approach to conflict is based variables considered important and tests its effects in the dependent variable. Findings in specific conflicts were often generalized as theories. Conflict theory although ideologically neutral supports more radical political stance to the left than the functional theory when combined with egalitarianism. The methodological approach to the conflict theory is individualistic, built on the assumption that human nature is self interested rather than altruist. Dialectics in conflict theory is concerned with social change and movement by its own nature concerned with conflicts and all forms of stability in social systems. General theories should be built based on narratives marked by variation (Varshney 1997).

There is not one accepted theory and model of conflict. Economic models of conflict show the conditions under purely homo economicus prevails and cooperative behavior obtained in other situations (Garfinkle and Scarpadas 2000). For an analysis of predatory states under similar arguments, see Levi (1988). Conflict can be framed according to Marxist narratives, neomarxist, and dependency theory and modernization theory. In Marxist narratives and ethnic grievance, a group gaining ascendancy in a particular space and time, determines the cause of complaint and the discourse of grievance based on capabilities to organize violence although the objective factors of individual and group grievance may be different.

a. Perspectivism and Conflict Theory

Key questions in analyzing conflict theories for understanding perspective.

b. Functionalist perspective

Functionalist approaches in sociology and anthropology tend to underrate social conflict and to define society in term's social dimensions rather than system integration.

Theories Of Conflict

Conflict theory defines the nature, scope, observations and variety of conflict. There are several dichotomies dividing the search for a dominant paradigm in political science. There is a lack of consensus among both contemporary and historic views of human conflict. On the nature of conflict theory, some authors consider it is warfare. For others like Dougherty and Pfaltzgraff (1981:187) "Social scientists are divided on the question whether social conflict should be regarded as something rational, constructive, and socially functional or something irrational, pathological, and socially dysfunctional." The conventional approach to conflict considers that it destroys institutional framework Institutionalization of conflict define frames to reduce incidence of violence. Institutions drive conflict and may transform violent conflicts into procedures of conflict resolution or of organized competition. Institutions can frame conflicts, provide conflict regulation and defuse conflict potentials. Institutions are accepted, trained and sometimes enforced patterns of interaction that have distributional effects while linked to conflict, determining the relative position of actors and their access to resources for organizing violence.

Specialized formal and informal institutions in advanced societies process conflicts. Institutionalized conflict readjusts the balance of power within and between groups and maintains the order that keeps communities together. Non-violent inter-group relations are conducive to complex institutional arrangements of governance and the rule of law conditioned by three interdependent capacities of society never fully available, to process conflict in a non-violent and predictable way, to secure the basic needs, of relevant parts of the population, and the ability to adapt existing institutions, norms and habits to new realities. Adaptive social processes are driven by institutionalized conflict (Koehler and Zürcher, 2003, 2004). As a result, conflict becomes less violent. Embedded conflicts strengthen the institutional structure. In this sense embedded conflict is institutionalized conflict. The way society deals with conflict through different forms of governance, arrangements and informal rules defines the society.

The breakdown of the institutional framework may enable risk factors to translate into violent conflict. When a conflict spirals out of accepted levels of violence by a specific society and when disrupts inter-group cooperation, the conflict losses its social embedding. Social disembodying of conflict is the result of the breakdown of an institutional framework to regulate conflict processes. Disruptive conflicts create an environment of fear and prejudice, increases the risk of destructive action and violence since inter-group conflict is not processed and relationships of trust and reciprocity are infringed. Conflicting groups may clash, withdraw, retire or negotiate. Risk assessment and regulation implies the distinction between interest-based and value-based responses to risk issues involving chemical, which should influence conflict resolution. The interests and values distinction is important in communication and conflict resolution. Interest-based conflicts may be resolved through information provision (propaganda), compensation (bribery), negotiation (betrayal) or regulation, while value-based conflicts are difficult to resolve. No conflict is likely to be based entirely on interests or entirely on values. To deal with risk-related conflicts it is necessary to understand attitudes and values which express disruptive or supportive behavior; responses based on interests or on values, overriding of values by personal or group interests and changing individual or group responses (Tait, 2001). Conflicts between personal family values and material security values need to be resolved Viewpoints may changes in some countries as people place more emphasis on children and their needs and less emphasis on wealth. Although socialization, group comparisons, positive self and group identities and the perceived illegitimacy by minority communities are important variables and attributes to explain human aggressive behavior and conflict at unconscious level, there are other conscious variables to be considered in the analysis of human conflict. Theories of ethnic conflict are rational or instrumental and emotional or psychological (Gurr and Harff, 1994:78). There are two approaches to theory of conflict: the classical or macro theories and the behaviorist or micro theories of conflict.

a. Macro theories of conflict

Macro theory of conflict focuses on the interaction of groups at the conscious level. The classical approach focuses on the macro level of analysis and it is concerned with analyzing the conscious interactions of groups divided along different cleavages. Macro or classical theories assume that the roots of conflict stem from group competition and the pursuit of power and resources, which operate on conscious level as the motivational factors determined by relationships in an environment of many variables. The use and exercise of power is a central concept of macro theory of conflict already explained by early political theorists such as Thucidyades, Sun Tsu, Machiavello, etc.

b. Classical theories or rational conflict theory

Classical theories of ethnic conflict concentrate on the conscious interactions, the exercise of power and the use of force between groups. Horowitz (1985) explains that the core ethnic conflict has the objective to seek control of the state as a zero sum conflict in order to ensure that needs are met to the detriment of opposing groups. The framework where ethnic conflict occurs is the post colonial state system, control of the state, and exemption from control by others are among the main goals of ethnic conflict. However he recognizes the complexity of the issues in the political agenda of divided societies, such as the case of North Ireland, where the issues that became entangled permeating the fabric of society within a wider ethno-national conflict that challenges the existence of the state. And the perceived zero sum nature of the conflict is a hindrance to its resolution (Horowitz, 1994) However, he recognizes that the study of ethnicity and nationalism is where theoretical over claiming is in evidence’ and where competing positions have not ‘produced a great deal of cumulative knowledge.

Many scholars argue that poverty and low levels of economic development are causes of ethnic conflict. Horowitz does not share the argument that poverty has social consequences that have led to more conflicts and tensions between ethnic communities. He recognizes that economic antagonism explains conflict between politicians, policy planners and bureaucrats in developing societies. He describes the framework of ethnic conflict theory in the developing world arguing that the decline of ethnic riots in the West might be owing to the benefits communities receive from consistent economic development (Horowitz, 1985:561). Synthesizing instrumentalist and primordial's theories Horowitz (1998) summarize that identities are malleable and not hard givens. Horowitz (1994) suggests resolution of ethnic conflicts through a political engineering aimed to alter or replace institutions capable of supporting a system of power sharing from the bottom - up. Separating fighting parties of an ethnic conflict, create more dense homogenous countries, which tend to suffer more conflict.

c. Macro sociological level theory

This theory focuses on conflict as inevitable part of social life. Society is comprised of dominant and subordinate groups, which compete for resources. Societies are characterized by inequality. There is an emphasis on the role of competition in producing conflict, which is not necessarily a negative aspect of society since it produces social change. Marxism is essentially a sub-theory that focus on class social conflict determined by the economic system, between the bourgeoisie, owning or ruling class, and the proletariat, working class. Social disarticulation and functional dualism describe social and economic conflict between the export base and the peasant society. Class membership is determined by relationship to means of production; belief that the proletariat would organize and precipitate a revolution because of this inequality and thus capitalism would be transformed into socialism and eventually communism. Constant changes inherent in capitalist organization of labor, production, technological innovation, distribution, market mechanisms and consumption make conflict inevitable. Other author of this theory is Max Weber. Some criticisms of this theory overemphasize tensions and divisions between societies, consider relationships between groups more complex and existent situations where subordinate groups control the interactions are ignored.

d. Decision making and game theories of conflict

The concept balance of power employed by Metternich was destroyed by the outbreak of the First World War and replaced by the deterrence theory used in the Cold War resting on the assumption that a balance of terror would prevent conflict. This theory gave way to sophisticated theories such as decision making and game theories based on the rational actor theory to explain human behavior under the assumption that people make choices and decisions based on the rationality of informed choices and opportunities. Game theory relies on the assumption of a rational decision making process that is fundamental to the engagement of human conflict. In an attempt to break down the complexities in incidents and situations of inter group relationships, Schelling (1960) introduces irrationality, communication, negotiation and information into a model of strategic thought to support interdependence of conflict, competition and cooperation among actors. Chance, skill and strategy are types of games found on both cooperative and conflictive international relations *e. Conflicts modeled using "War of Attrition" theory*

The attrition war models conflict (Dixit and Nalebuff, 1991; Bulow and Klemperer, 1999) assumes that competing agents follow a strategy to win conflicts. Agents often represent the potentially conflicting interests of several principals.

f. Behavioral theories

Behavioral theories of ethnic conflict examine the individual subconscious. The national bond is subconscious and emotional rather than conscious and rational in its inspiration (Connor 1994: xiii)."Explanation of behavior in terms of pressure groups, elite ambitions, and rational choice theory hint not at all the passions that motivate Kurdish, Tamil, and Tigre guerrillas or Basque, Corsican, Irish, and Palestinian terrorists. Not at the passions leading to the massacre of Bengalis by Assamesc or Punjabis by Sikhs. In short, these explanations are a poor guide to ethno nationally inspired behavior." (Connor 1994:74). Connor (1994) sustains that there are other less salient elements of ethnic conflict. The ethnic conflict theories of Connor focus on groups having different concepts of identity that leads to the basic us-them syndrome and the struggle for identity and finding the identity that the environment requires. The opposition of national identities defines the ethnic conflict, involving the divergence of identity manifest in a syndrome of "us-them" underlining the depth of emotions associated to an ethno national behavior perceived as a zero sum confrontation. This dichotomy of us-them identities leads to the perception of a zero-sum conflict. The ethno national behavior is mass driven and not elite driven, so the elites do not dominated and drove the conflict. Connor notes: that "The essence of nationalism is not to be sought in the motives of elites who may manipulate nationalism for some ulterior end, but rather in the mass sentiment to which elites appeal." Identities are thought to be inherent, constructed, or instrumental as a product of political manipulation, or some combination.

g. Micro theories of conflict

Micro theories of conflict put complex situations into workable models that stand up to empirical objective analysis. Behavioral or micro theories are based on observations of the individual within their environment and focuses on the micro, individual and unconscious level in order to understand motivational factors under the assumptions that the root causes of war lie in human nature and human behavior. An element of human conflict is the material aspect. Animal behavior offers clues of the complexity of human conflict. There is a relationship between intra personal conflict and external social conflict and the individual and its existence in the environment, because psychological and biological characteristics of humans. Biological and genetic sciences challenge conflict theory. Behaviorists extrapolate specific variables regarding intra personal conflict and generalizations of interpersonal and international conflict. Humans engage in a broad range of conflict supplemented by a variety of motivators as the result of both predatory and intra specific conflict.

Under the frustration – aggression theory, conflict is traced in the frustration from the unfulfilled personal or group objectives. Thus, human conflict can be traced to an actor's failure to obtain what it needs. The discrediting of this theory is based on the explanation that aggression and conflict is traced to some catalytic frustration. The contentious debate over nature (genetics) and nurture (environment) is at the center in conflict theory research. The Seville Statement explains the implications of conduct and resolution of human conflict and concludes that it is primarily the environment and the roots of human nature are genetics. Though behaviorism assumes the stimulus-response hypothesis, it has created complex models of human behavior such as the social learning and social identity theories. Humans can control and change their social systems and relationships through processes of socialization, group comparisons, perceptions and formation of positive identities for finding solutions conflicts.

Social learning theory is based on the contention of the Seville Statement that aggression is not innate or instinctual but learned through the process of socialization and interaction with the environment. Ethno national conflict is the result of interaction in society that focuses and triggers stored aggression onto enemies. Social Identity Theory (SIT) based on psychological processes under all circumstances and conditions of inter group conflict and offers insight into the large scale conflicts as the result of social identities created to simplify external relations. The SIT bridges the gap between individual and group behavior and explains the majority-minority group relations. The concepts of in groups and out groups explains the human need for self esteem and self worth, order the environment by social comparison, and forms the perception of social and ethnic identities composition as extended kinship groups. These are important concepts when dealing with ethnic conflict, as it is the case of conflict and violence erupted between the “superior” protestants and the “inferior” Catholics in Northern Ireland, categorized themselves as distinct groups and they view each other as the out group or enemy.

h. Synthesis of macro and micro theories

1) Enemy System Theory (EST)

This theory explains intractable conflict and creates a model from the combination of theories of international relations, individual and group developmental psychology. It also combines elements of behavioral and classical theories using as units of analysis communal or ethno-national groups. Perceptions of individuals within groups and their relationships of cooperation, conflict or competition with other groups are determined by history in a comprehensive approach based on the fusion of micro and macro approaches to conflict theory. Competition can be either adaptive or maladaptive conflict. Both the Enemy System and Social Identity theories stress self-esteem and positive identity with regard to relations between in-groups, considered allies and out groups as the enemies.

The Enemy System Theory of conflict explains the creation and perpetuation of wider conflicts such as ethnic nationalism and terrorism conflicts. A “reciprocal hostile actions” (Julius, 1990) explains the zero sum nature of the conflict. Human needs are introduced to dichotomize and create enemies and allies. For instance, within Northern Ireland there are two distinctive and conflicting identity ethno-national groups, the Catholic-nationalist-Irish and the Protestant-unionist-Ulster-British which do not take responsibility for the actions of the conflict and do not feel compunction for victimization, thus perpetuating the conflict in repeated cycles of violence. Their solutions are the elimination of the other group or their destruction of their ability to attack and victimize.

2) Human needs theory (HNT)

Human Needs Theory (HNT) is a holistic approach of human behavior developed in the 1970s and 1980s and based on the hypothesis that humans have basic needs to be met in order to maintain stable societies. Human needs theory hypothesizes that there are irreducible human needs which must be met in order that societies can function without maladaptive conflict. In conflict situations, humans are compulsively struggling to get control of institutional environments at all social levels to ensure satisfaction of primordial and universal needs, wants and desires, such as security, identity, recognition, and development (Burton, 1991). Conflict is inevitable when there is a sense of control and prospects for the pursuit of human societal developmental needs. The frustration of not satisfying these needs leads to aggression and subsequently, conflict. Societies must meet the fundamental human needs, wants and desires to be stable with non ideological institutions and policies to avoid conflicts. The recognition that universal needs are not mutually exclusive and all must be met at no expense of other community’s needs moves the conflict from zero-sum to win-win. The enemy system theory in fusion with human needs theory explains comprehensively and objectively conflict.

3). Conflict resolution theory (CRT) of John Burton

Conflict resolution is an analytical and problem-solving process to facilitate institutional changes required to create a political and social system in which individual and group needs can be met. If Individual who strives for satisfaction of needs in their environments is prevented from this pursuit, conflict is inevitable. Whatever the definition of conflict, it is due to assertion of individualism. It is a frustration-based protest against lack of opportunities for development and against lack of recognition and identity. Whether the tension, conflict, or violence has origins in class, status, ethnicity, sex, religion, or nationalism, we are dealing with the same fundamental issues (Burton, 1991a: 20).

Burton's conflict resolution theory challenges the assumptions that power is based and exercised through elites who establish norms of behavior. Conflict resolution is a permanent solution to a problem and means terminating conflict by analytical methods that get to the root of the problem. But "Conflict avoidance is not conflict resolution." (Burton, 1991). He distinguishes conflict resolution from management, and settlement. Management is 'by alternative dispute resolution skills' and can confine or limit conflict.

Conflict management or regulation is based on negotiation and mediation that work when parties in conflict are willing and have something tangible but do not recognize the primordial needs Settlement is 'by authoritative and legal processes' and can be imposed by elites.

The ability to create an environment in which human needs required for human development and social stability can be met by all segments of societies is the basis of conflict resolution theory (CRT). Conflicts over needs, which can third parties or facilitators, play an important role for negotiation or compromise.

While there is some agreement in internal conflict there is little consensus on solutions. In an internal approach to conflict, there may be agreement about the causes of the conflict but there may not be consensus on solutions. Thus, it is necessary to take a holistic approach to the conflict to be more objective. Recognition of conflict between the participants enhances objectivity that will enable participants to understand legitimate needs that must be satisfied to resolve the conflict.

Diplomacy is a process that enables leaders to resolve inter group conflicts in a non-threatening, non-coercive and non-confrontational environment. Track one, diplomacy may fail to resolve protracted social conflicts. Resolution of conflict by track one implies official and formal relationships between governments and leaders. When conflicts cannot be resolved through track one, then track two or diplomacy can be used.

Burrton's conflict resolution theory recognizes the inevitable human needs and suggests track two diplomacy process to accommodate them analytically and non-coercively. Determination of parameters and nature of a conflict in an analysis to resolve the conflict requires processes and practical methods known as two track diplomacy. It is defined as an unofficial, informal interaction between members of adversary groups or nations that aim to develop strategies, influence public opinion, and organize human and material resources in ways that might help resolve their conflict (Montville, 1991:162).

A phenomenon developed is a protracted social conflict that defines intractable conflicts that are not readily amenable to resolution. It is based on identity related needs and not interests of communal and ethno national groups when they are denied physical and economic security, political participation, and recognition from other groups (Azar, 1991:93).

Protracted social conflict can managed through cooperative economic development as a venture to enhance problem solving oriented towards conflict resolution of subgroups more affected. Although it may not eliminate conflicts, it may alleviate material sufferings of contentious communities. Bargaining and manipulation of elite groups may not accomplish resolution of protracted social conflict unless during negotiations both, leaders and communities change their perceptions about each other, following track two diplomacy to find common ground, negotiable issues and to create a positive environment to move toward conflict resolution.

In a problem solving workshops facilitated by experts, influential leaders from the communities in conflict explore transformation of the perceived conflict from zero-sum to win-win. Once redefined the conflict the parties began to search for a common solution that satisfies all the participating group's needs.

Some Conclusions About Conflict Theories

Conflict theory attempts to explain societal and individual violence. Social anthropology links macro-level theories of conflict and behavioral theories at individual level of conflict for a meaningful discussion of violence and conflict. There is a lack of cohesion or consensus among conflict theories. Classical and behavioral theories of conflict converge on analytical levels in a more holistic approach.

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AoL—Let Us Tell You Our Story

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ABSTRACT

In 2003 the Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB) placed more emphasis on direct assessments of student learning. Because of this mandate accredited schools are expected to formulate specific learning goals and conduct appropriate direct assessments of learning for the purpose of improving the curricula in each course and their degree programs. (AACSB, 2009)

The authors describe the documentation methods and process involved in assessing student learning in the business communication course at one regional accredited university.

Assessment of student learning is a vital part of a school's continuous improvement efforts. This paper describes the development and implementation of learning goals for the business communication course, assessment procedures for Assurance of Learning for the program goal, and the process for improving the business communication course, based on the assessment results.

Introduction

When the Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB) placed more emphasis on direct assessments of student learning several years ago they included a significant focus on assurance of learning and continuous improvement. Because of this focus, accredited schools are expected to formulate specific learning goals and conduct appropriate direct assessments of learning for the purpose of improving the curricula. (AACSB, 2009)

Current AACSB Standards specifically, 16, 18, 19, and 21, deal with the requirements related to establishing learning goals in terms of required knowledge and skills for business programs. Schools must develop learning goals for their program, assess student learning, and use the assessment data to improve student learning if needed. The learning goals established by the school of business or the college must be driven by its mission statement. A clear linkage between the school's mission statement and its learning goals must be established. Schools of business must demonstrate that all faculty members were provided with an opportunity participate in the processes used to develop the mission statement and to develop the learning goals and to assess students' learning. (AACSB, 2009; AACSB, 2007)

Research indicates that employers are always seeking employees with good communication skills. According to CollegeGrad.com (2009), companies ranked communication skills as being among the eight most important attributes in the evaluation of job applicants. The identified attributes included: where the graduates earned their degree; their major/degree; their grade point average; computer skills, communication skills/interviewing; personal appearance, leadership, and their internship or work-related experiences. Good communication abilities are usually in the list of top ten skills needed by college graduates and requested by employers (Koncz, 2009).

Under the assurance of learning standards, seven categories of general knowledge skill areas are given. The first of these is communication abilities. (AACSB, 2009, p. 71) Therefore, we chose to use communication abilities as one of our program learning goals and it also fits under our student learning outcomes for business communication.

Assurance of learning is the latest buzzword in the arena of higher education. Every one facing accreditation or reaffirmation has heard the dreaded questions about assurance of learning. Are we sure that our students are learning? What are our students suppose to know? How do we know that learning has occurred? How do evaluate the learning? We have all heard the horror stories. Therefore, we wanted to share our story with others who are trying to deal with Assurance of Learning (AoL) issues.

Purpose

In this paper we wanted to share and to discuss the efforts made by the faculty of a small regionally accredited four-year university to assess one of its four learning goals, Goal 1- Effective Communicators. Continuous improvement and assessment and assurance of student learning are also related and considered.

Design

A committee with members from each college of business discipline met and reviewed its mission statement and then developed four major student-oriented learning goals. Then all business faculty members reviewed and approved the four major student-oriented learning goals for the program. The first three of these goals have three defining objectives and the final goal has two defining objectives.

The next step in the process included developing a matrix that listed all common business core courses. Each faculty member was asked to identify whether any of the four student-oriented learning goals were addressed in his or her courses. Since we did not want to measure a learning goal in every course and we did not want to measure all learning goals in our capstone course, we identified several courses where it would be appropriate to measure student learning for each learning goal. Business Reports and Communication (BUAD 2200) was chosen as the course to begin measuring student learning for learning goal one-- “Effective Communicators”.

For this paper we will focus only on the first two objectives of the effective communicators’ learning goal. The objectives were to produce professional quality business documents and to deliver professional quality oral presentations. The third objective was to demonstrate communication skills in team settings which is addressed in another course.

Since the business communication course was selected as the starting point for measuring assurance of learning for goal 1, the three faculty members involved in teaching this course were selected as the committee to report and discuss efforts made to reach this goal.

Assessment. Goal one’s objectives were assessed in BUAD 2200 (Business Reports and

Communication). Three faculty members teaching this course were requested to develop Assurance of Learning standards and quantify student outcomes for these objectives. Specifically, they were to determine if students' knowledge of business communication skills (both oral and written) had occurred and improved as a result of teaching activities.

In spring 2005, they reviewed the literature and examined standardized business communication examinations. A pre-test was developed that included a comprehensive overview of the business communication requirements and contained such topics as: laying communication foundations; using the writing process; corresponding at work; reporting workplace data; developing speaking and technology skills; and communicating for employment.

This same test was given as a post-test at the end of the semester and the professors piloted the pre-test/post-test exam in one summer school section. Some of the questions were eliminated and additional questions relating to basic grammar were added and a separate writing assignment was added. The official data collection process began in all sections of the fall 2005 business communication course. Student learning was defined to occur if there was a positive percent of change in the pre- and post- test scores. We defined success in the course as being a score of 70% or better. We also set a goal of at least 70% of the graded students meeting or exceeding this score each semester.

To assess the students' oral and written skills in the business communication course, grading rubrics had to be found and/or developed (Clapp, Dexter, & Weber, 2007; Guffey, 2010; Gueldenzoph, 2007). After looking at several rubrics from other instructors, rubrics for both oral and written skills were adopted and used. Next, we wanted to determine that the faculty members were assessing the oral presentations and written documents similarly. A two faculty-rater system was adopted to determine if the inter-rater reliability of both grading rubrics (oral and written rubrics) used for scoring yielded consistent ratings across raters. This method was implemented for two semesters and no significant differences were found.

Analysis and Actions. Given the importance of communication skills, faculty members decided to measure and document changes using the pre-test/post-test data for several sequential semesters. Each semester professors added their pre-test/post-test data to a common spreadsheet. Results were reviewed and recommendations for changes were made for the following semester "to close the loop". After an examination of test items, weaknesses in students' grammar skills were noticed.

Therefore, in fall 2006 and spring 2007, students were provided with the textbook author's website to practice basic grammar skills. Moreover, students were required to submit a certificate of completion (graded) for pre-selected exercises and were encouraged to complete all the exercises. Mandatory quizzes (graded) for each textbook chapter and selected basic grammar skills were required.

In summer 2007, faculty discovered basic grammar weaknesses still existed; therefore, additional study material and self-directed quizzes for student use were added. This additional material was not to be graded. This material was made available in the fall of 2007 and spring of 2008. Results from fall 2007 were reviewed and the professors decided to provide one section of the course with an electronic diagnostic grammar mechanics exam. It was used as a basis of current student knowledge and all students were required to complete the diagnostic exam (in this section). Feedback information was provided to allow remediation in grammar mechanics.

In conclusion, students were assessed in three distinct areas: written, oral and general knowledge. Using the same assessment standard of 70% as the minimum pass rate and at least 70% of the graded students passing with a 70% or better, we assessed students' general knowledge by giving a pre-test/post-test exams, at the beginning and end of the semester respectively. We assessed students' written skills using in-class assignments and report projects. Students' oral skills were assessed during two short presentations given during the semester. Table 1 gives an overview of the results of collected data on the pre-test/post-test exams from eight semesters.

Table 1-Goal 1-Effective Communicator from fall 2005-spring 2009

	Average Pre Score	Average Post Score	Number of Students	Number with Post Score >=70	Average Percentage Increase (Pre to Post)	Percent Post Scores >= 70
2005						
Fall	57.9	77.8	68	54	36%	79%
2006						
Spring	58.4	75.4	68	50	30%	74%
Fall	66.2	86.1	94	77	33%	82%
2007						
Spring	55.4	74.4	68	50	37%	74%
Fall	55.5	73.4	75	53	34%	71%
2008						
Spring	54.9	73.7	67	48	35%	72%
Fall	55.6	76.9	70	56	40%	80%
2009						
Spring	54.0	78	87	79	46%	91%
Grand Total	**57.5**	**77**	**597**	**467**	**36%**	**77%**

Recommendations and Conclusions

The results of the data collected on the students' general knowledge of business communication appear to suggest that our students are achieving the learning objectives established for goal 1-effective communicators. Overall, it appears that with each review and revision of the course the students are expanding their communication knowledge and skills.

It should be noted that the business communication course is only offered online during the spring semester. In the fall of 2005, the college implemented a no ‘D’ rule which means students earning a degree in business must earn at least a ‘C’ or better in ALL courses needed to complete their business degree. In the fall of 2007, the university raised admission standards. The college is investigating the possibility of making the business communication course a prerequisite to the core 3000/4000 level-business courses.

A preliminary review of students’ scores on their written and oral assignments during this time frame appears to reveal improvements in their writing and speaking abilities during the course. We have learned that our efforts are only the beginning or the knot of the thread. Our students must be required to demonstrate their communication knowledge and skills at the junior and senior level of their higher education careers.

More data needs to be collected and evaluated on the students’ written and oral skills using the selected rubrics to determine that there has indeed been an increase in their abilities. At the next levels, our colleagues should be using the same grading rubrics for written and oral assignments. Also, we are suggesting that the raters from the business communication course be used as raters in the selected 3000/4000 level-business courses so that data can be collected to assure that the students’ have improved.

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[i] A pseudonym has been used to ensure anonymity for the research site and research participants