Association for Business Communication

Southwestern United States

2014 Refereed Proceedings
March 11-15, 2014
Dallas, Texas

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Editor's Note

Welcome to the 41st meeting of the Association for Business Communication-Southwestern United States. Many thanks are given to the planners, program chairs, reviewers, presenters, and other contributors responsible for making this a great conference. Special thanks go to Traci Austin, President-Elect and Program Chair of ABC-SWUS, who has assembled a great program that will appeal to business communicators.

The program this year includes 25 presentations by 41 authors from United States institutions in California, Delaware, Georgia, Indiana, Kentucky, Louisiana, Massachusetts, Missouri, Ohio, Oklahoma, Pennsylvania, Texas, and Wisconsin, as well as from Puerto Rico. Four papers are included in this proceeding. A special thank you goes to the proceedings reviewers Traci L. Austin, Marsha L. Bayless, Debbie D. DuFrene, Susan E. Jennings, Margaret S. Kilcoyne, Kathryn S. O'Neill, Marcel Robles, Nancy Schullery, Lucia S. Sigmar, Randall L. Waller, and Bradley S. Wesner.

Each year completed papers that are submitted for the program are considered for the Irwin/McGraw Hill Distinguished Paper Award. This year's distinguished paper was awarded to **Kathryn S. O'Neill** from Sam Houston State University and **Gary L. May** from Clayton State University. They will present their paper on Thursday, March 13 at 8:30 a.m.

Congratulations are also in order for **Margaret S. Kilcoyne**, from Northwestern State University, who is being awarded the 2014 Federation of Business Disciplines Outstanding Educator Award. In these proceedings, you will also find information on previous program chairpersons, Distinguished Paper Award recipients, and recipients of the Outstanding Research and Outstanding Teacher awards.

Please make plans to join us next year in Houston at the Hyatt Regency for the 2015 Conference on March 11-14, 2015. The call dates for next year's papers are September 15th for presentation proposals and January 15th for the accepted presentations.

We hope this conference becomes a memory of professional enhancement and great times with colleagues as we share our collective knowledge and research.

Laura Lott Valenti
Editor

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Future National and Regional Meetings
2014 – 2015
For more information visit:
http://businesscommunication.org/conferences

The 13th Asia-Pacific Conference of the Association for Business Communication
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Shanghai, China

Association for Business Communication Midwestern Conference
April 3-4, 2014
Minneapolis, Minnesota

Association for Business Communication 79th Annual Convention
October 22-25, 2014
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

Association for Business Communication-Southwestern United States
March 11-14, 2015
Houston, Texas

ABC-SWUS Program Chairpersons 1973 - Present

2013-2014	Traci L. Austin		1990-1991	Marian Crawford
2012-2013	Randall L. Waller		1989-1990	Marlin C. Young
2011-2012	Lucia Sigmar		1988-1989	Sallye Benoit
2010-2011	Margaret Kilcoyne		1987-1988	Tom Means
			1986-1987	Lamar N. Reinsch, Jr.
2009-2010	Faridah Awang		1985-1986	Sara Hart
2008-2009	Marcel Robles			
2007-2008	Ann Wilson		1984-1985	Betty S. Johnson
2006-2007	Carolyn Ashe		1983-1984	Larry R. Smeltzer
2005-2006	Harold A. Hurry		1982-1983	Daniel Cochran
			1981-1982	Nancy Darsey
2004-2005	Lana W. Carnes		1980-1981	John M. Penrose
2003-2004	Marsha L. Bayless			
2002-2003	Betty A. Kleen		1979-1980	R. Lynn Johnson
2001-2002	William Sharbrough		1978-1979	Raymond V. Lesikar
2000-2001	Carol Lehman		1977-1978	Jack D. Eure
			1976-1977	Phil Lewis
1999-2000	William P. Galle, Jr.		1975-1976	Dale Level
1998-1999	Anita Bednar			
1997-1998	Timothy W. Clipson		1974-1975	Bette Anne Stead
1996-1997	Debbie D. Dufrene		1973-1974	Sam J. Bruno
1995-1996	William J. Wardrope			
1994-1995	Roger N. Conaway			
1993-1994	Donna W. Luse			
1992-1993	F. Stanford Wayne			
1991-1992	Beverly H. Nelson			

First Call for Papers

Association for Business Communication
Southwestern United States
Dallas, Texas
March 11-15, 2014

You are invited to submit a proposal or paper for presentation at the 2014 ABC-SWUS Conference in Dallas. Research papers or position papers related to the following areas are encouraged:

Communication Technology	Technology and Education
Innovative Instructional Methods	Business Education Issues
International Business Communication	Paradigm Shifts in Communication
Training and Development/Consulting	Interpersonal Communication
Nonverbal Communication	Executive/Managerial Communication
Legal and Ethical Communication Issues	Organizational Communication

- Papers or proposals should include a statement of the problem or purpose, methodology section (if applicable), findings (as available), a summary, implications for education and/or business, and a bibliography.

- If you are submitting a proposal only, it should contain 750 to 1,500 words and must be submitted on the ABC website: http://www.businesscommunication.org. Click on the link for the 2014 ABC-SWUS conference.

- If you are submitting a completed paper, please submit your proposal online as indicated above. Then email the completed paper to Traci Austin – tla016@shsu.edu. All submissions must be in Microsoft Word.

- Personal and institutional identification should be removed from the body of the paper. Identify yourself and your institution only on the cover page. Submissions will be anonymously reviewed.

- A cover page is required with the title of the paper and identifying information for each author: name, institutional affiliation, address, phone and fax numbers, and e-mail address.

- For your research to be considered for the Richard D. Irwin/McGraw-Hill Distinguished Paper Award, you must submit a completed paper rather than a proposal.

- Submitted papers should not have been previously presented or published or be under consideration or accepted for presentation elsewhere.

- All authors and co-authors are expected to join ABC-SWUS and pre-register for the FBD meeting.

Deadline: Papers and proposals must be received by September 15, 2014.

The deadline for submitting accepted papers to the Proceedings will be January 15, 2014. Authors must submit to the proceedings editor a copy of the finished paper they wish to be considered for inclusion in the proceedings; this also applies to completed papers that were sent for original acceptance to the conference.

For more information, contact Program Chair
Email Address: to Traci Austin - tla016@shsu.edu

Prentice-Hall and Thomson Learning Outstanding Educator Awards

for

The Association for Business Communication
Southwestern United States

To be eligible for the award, recipients must have received the ABC-SWUS Outstanding Educator Award, must not be a previous recipient of either the Prentice-Hall or Thomson learning awards, must be a member of the Association for Business Communication, and must teach in the business communication discipline. This top tier ABC-SWUS award began in 2001 to honor outstanding educators in ABC-SWUS who were already recognized by our association. The award was sponsored by Prentice-Hall in 2001 and 2002, and by Thomson Learning in 2003, 2004, 2005, 2006, and 2007. The award winner must also have been recently active in the association as evidenced by attendance at recent ABC-SWUS conferences. The award winners are listed below:

2014   Margaret S. Kilcoyne, Northwestern State University

2013   S. Ann Wilson, Stephen F. Austin State University

2012   Marcel M. Robles, Eastern Kentucky University

2011   Harold A. Hurry, Sam Houston State University

2010   Geraldine E. Hynes, Sam Houston State University

2009   Roger N. Conaway, Tecnológico de Monterrey, campus San Luis Potosí

2008   Bobbye J. Davis, Southeastern Louisiana University

2007   Betty A. Kleen, Nicholls State University

2006   William Wardrope, University of Central Oklahoma

2005   Betty S. Johnson, Stephen F. Austin State University

2004   Marsha L. Bayless, Stephen F. Austin State University

2003   Lillian H. Chaney, University of Memphis

2002   Debbie DuFrene, Stephen F. Austin State University

2001   Anita Bednar, University of Central Oklahoma

The Association for Business Communication
Southwestern United States
Outstanding Researcher and Teacher Awards

These awards were developed and first awarded in 1992 to recognize the accomplishments of the region's members. Nominated candidates are evaluated by a panel of previous award winners. No awards were given in 1998, 2001, 2003, 2007 or 2013. The association began alternating the awards every other year in 2000 between researcher and teacher. In 2011 the Outstanding Teacher Award was renamed the Marlin C. Young Outstanding Teacher Award in honor and memory of his contributions to the ABC-SWUS organization. The recipients below each received a plaque and award of $100 (the award was changed to $200 in 2008):

2012 Susan Evans Jennings, Outstanding Researcher Award

2011 S. Ann Wilson, Marlin C. Young Outstanding Teacher Award

2010 Margaret Kilcoyne, Outstanding Researcher Award

2009 Harold Hurry, Outstanding Teacher Award

2008 Roger N. Conaway, Outstanding Researcher Award

2008 Geraldine E. Hynes, Outstanding Teacher Award

2006 Janna P. Vice, Outstanding Researcher Award

2005 Bobbye Davis, Outstanding Teacher Award

2003 Marcel Robles, Outstanding Teacher Award

2004 William Wardrope, Outstanding Researcher Award

2002 Lillian H. Chaney, Outstanding Researcher Award

2002 Jeré Littlejohn, Outstanding Teacher Award

2000 William Sharbrough, Outstanding Researcher Award

1999 Robert Olney, Outstanding Teacher Award

1999 William Wardrope, Outstanding Teacher Award

1998 Betty Kleen, Outstanding Researcher Award

1997 Al Williams, Outstanding Teacher Award

1996 Betty S. Johnson, Outstanding Researcher Award

1995 Marsha L. Bayless, Outstanding Researcher Award

1995 Anita Bednar, Outstanding Teacher Award

1994 Nelda Spinks, Outstanding Teacher Award

1993 Timothy W. Clipson, Outstanding Teacher Award

1993 F. Stanford Wayne, Outstanding Researcher Award

1992 Debbie D. DuFrene, Outstanding Researcher Award

1992 Beverly H. Nelson, Outstanding Teacher Award

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Irwin/McGraw-Hill Distinguished Paper Award Recipients

2014   Kathryn S. O'Neill and Gary L. May
Using Business Cases to Foster Critical Thinking

2012   En Mao, Laura Lott Valenti, and Marilyn Macik-Frey
Status Update – "We've Got a Problem" – Leadership Crisis Communication in the Age of Social Media

2011   Betty A. Kleen and Shari Lawrence
Student Cheating: Current Faculty Perceptions

2010   Jose Guadalupe Torres and Roger N. Conaway
Adoption and Use of New Communication Technologies in an International Organization: An Exploratory Study of Text Messaging

2009   Susan Evans Jennings, S. Ann Wilson, and Judith L. Biss
Is Email Out and Text Messaging In? Communication Trends in Secondary and Post-Secondary Students

2008   Debbie D. DuFrene, Carol M. Lehman, and Judith L. Biss
Receptivity and Response of Students to an Electronic Textbook

2007   William J. Wardrope and Roger N. Conaway
Readability and Cultural Distinctiveness of Executives' Letters Found in the Annual Reports of Latin American Companies

2006   Janna P. Vice and Lana W. Carnes
Professional Opportunities for Business Communication Students That Go Beyond the Course Grade

2005   Lillian H. Chaney, Catherine G. Green, and Janet T. Cherry
Trainers' Perceptions of Distracting or Annoying Behaviors of Corporate Trainers

2004   Patricia Borstorff and Brandy Logan
Argumentativeness and Verbal Aggressiveness: Organizational Life, Gender, and Ethnicity.

2003   Ruth A. Miller and Donna W. Luce
The Most Important Written, Oral, and Interpersonal Communication Skills Needed by Information Systems Staff During the Systems Development Process

2002   Roger N. Conaway and William Wardrope
Communication in Latin America: An Analysis of Guatemalan Business Letters

2001   Annette N. Shelby and N. Lamar Reinsch Jr.
        Strategies of Nonprofessional Advocates: A Study of Letters to a Senator
2000   Donna R. Everett and Richard A. Drapeau
        A Comparison of Student Achievement in the Business Communication Course When Taught in Two Distance Learning Environments

1999   Susan Plutsky and Barbara Wilson
        Study to Validate Prerequisites in Business Communication for Student Success

1998   Jose R. Goris, Bobby C. Vaught, and John D. Pettit Jr.
        Inquiry into the Relationship Between the Job Characteristics Model and Communication: An Empirical Study Using Moderated Progression Analysis

1996   Beverly Little, J. R. McLaurin, Robert Taylor, and Dave Snyder
        Are Men Really from Mars and Women from Venus? Perhaps We're All from Earth After All

1995   Bolanie A. Olaniran, Grant T. Savage, and Ritch L. Sorenson
        Teaching Computer-mediated Communication in the Classroom: Using Experimental and Experiential Methods to Maximize Learning

1994   James R. McLaurin and Robert R. Taylor
        Communication and its Predictability of Managerial Performance: A Discriminant Analysis

1993   Mona J. Casady and F. Stanford Wayne
        Employment Ads of Major United States Newspapers

1992   Betty S. Johnson and Nancy J. Wilmeth
        The Legal Implications of Correspondence Authorship

1991   Rod Blackwell, Jane H. Stanford, and John D. Pettit Jr.
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EXPLOLRATION OF THE FLIPPED CLASSROOM FOR BUSINESS COMMUNICATION INSTRUCTION

Ashley A. Hall and Debbie D. DuFrene

Stephen F. Austin State University

Abstract

Growth in the popularity of the flipped classroom concept is expanding. In flipped classrooms, lectures are replaced by out-of-class delivery of streaming video, reading materials, online chats, etc. During face-to-face class time, lectures as the central theme are exchanged for more in-person interaction, such as small group problem solving and discussion. Classroom flipping has its advocates and its critics. Because of the theoretical and applied aspects of business communication instruction, courses in the discipline seem ideally suited to flipped instruction. This research reports on perceptions from instructors who have employed the flipped classroom model, summarizes the insights gained, identifies best practices, and makes recommendations for future research and application.

Introduction

Educators have flipped classes for decades, well before the methodology was assigned a catchy name. Humanities professors have long expected students to read a novel on their own and report to class ready to discuss it. Law professors have historically used the Socratic method, which compels students to study material before class or risk humiliation as a result of the professor's pointed questions (Berrett, 2012). Lage, Platt, and Treglia (2000) described the practice as the inverted classroom, and observed that traditional lecture format was incompatible with some learning styles. Crouch and Mazur (2001) referred to a particular type of flipped instruction as peer instruction because of the face-to-face interactive portion. While reliable numbers that chart the growth in popularity of flipping are lacking, the concept is clearly becoming a movement. The Flipped Learning Network (2012) reported that membership on its social media site increased from 2,500 instructors in 2001 to 9,000 in 2012.

In flipped classrooms, lectures are replaced by out-of-class delivery of streaming video, reading materials, online chats, and other resources. During face-to-face class time, the central theme is in-person interaction, such as small group problem solving and discussion. Thus, students do the lower level cognitive work related to knowledge and comprehension outside of class. Class time is then focused on higher forms of cognitive work, including application, analysis, synthesis, and evaluation (Brame, 2008). Because of the theoretical and applied aspects of business communication instruction, it would seem that courses in the discipline would be ideally suited to flipped instruction; in fact, some instructors in the discipline report that they have been applying the concept for some time for at least portions of their courses.

Purpose

The purpose of this research was to gain perceptions from instructors who have employed the flipped classroom model as to

the success of the technique, challenges presented by the delivery mode, and advice for other instructors considering the flipped classroom for their courses. Insights are summarized, with recommendations made for further investigation and business communication instruction.

Literature Review

Academic research that includes actual quantitative studies on the effectiveness of the flipped classroom is quite limited. Lage, Platt, and Treglia (2000) studied the flipped (or inverted) classroom and found that as compared to traditional classrooms, flipped classrooms were able to appeal more effectively to a wide array of learning styles and that students generally preferred the inverted classroom. Alvarez (2012) reported on a successful flipped classroom experiment with students in a number of high school courses that resulted in a significant reduction in failing course grades. In a study of 453 middle school and high school students who participated in flipped instruction, 67 percent had increased test scores, 80 percent had improved attitudes about school, and 99 percent of teachers said they would flip their classrooms again the following year (The Flipped Learning Network, 2012).

Ferreri and O'Connor (2013) reported on a flipped class experiment with university pharmacy students that also included a shift from large lecture hall classes to small group discussion sessions. Students in the smaller class format reported a greater preference for working in teams and achieved significantly higher grades than did students in the large lecture sections. Findlay-Thompson and Mombourquette (2013) conducted a comparison of traditional instruction with the flipped classroom concept in an undergraduate introduction to business course. While grade outcomes for the two groups were not significantly different, the majority of students in the flipped group did express interest in enrolling in another

flipped class, and some thought they had earned a better grade because of the flipped classroom.

The lack of extensive hard evidence for the effectiveness of the flipped modality does not mean that instructors should not flip their classrooms. Advances in pedagogy and learning have most always resulted from a willingness of some to try new things. Until more studies are done, the appropriate question might be, "Do the reported benefits of the flipped classroom reflect best practices and research-based principles of effective teaching and learning?" (Goodwin & Miller, 2013). If the answer is yes, then the flipped experience may be worth a try for educators looking for effective ways to reach today's learners.

Those who have tried the flipped classroom model point to various advantages. The flipped classroom is said to:

- Increase student engagement. Students may quiz as teams at the opening of each class period, using an electronic response system such as clickers or phone app polling (Satullo, 2013).
- Strengthen team-based skills. Asynchronous technology-driven team interaction is a natural fit with the flipped classroom, and team interdependency encourages class attendance and participation (Millard, 2012).
- Offer more personalized student guidance. By requiring quizzes that cover out-of-class assignments before the face-to-face class meeting, the instructor can identify common problem areas that need to be addressed and reinforced (Sams & Bergmann, 2013).
- Focus classroom discussion. Students report to class sessions already aware of the larger topic areas for discussion. They can then

provide more meaningful input and even have a say in what direction they would like in-class discussion to take (Herreid & Schiller, 2013).

- Provide faculty freedom and build collaboration. Standardized lectures can be developed and shared among faculty. In-class time can be better utilized addressing areas of confusion and applying lecture concepts, and more time is available for meaningful applications of course content (Ash, 2012).

The idea of the flipped classroom is not without its criticisms, many of which originate from those who have not tried the technique but see many reasons to avoid doing so. Flipping has been criticized for the following reasons:

- Exchanging boring face-to-face lectures for boring recorded lectures doesn't advance learning. It is merely a time-shifting tool grounded in the same ineffective teaching method (Ash, 2012).
- Instructors can bog down in the technology aspects and neglect instructional design. Instructors experienced in the technique are quick to point out that flipped learning is not about how to make lecture videos; rather, it is about how to best use in-class time with students (Bergmann & Sams, 2012).
- Instructors need support to successfully flip a class. Resources of time, training, and technology investment, which are often in short supply, are necessary for the strategy to work (Berrett, 2012).

Research Design

A request was posted via the BizCom listserv in fall 2013 for instructors who had experience with flipped class instruction to participate in a short interview survey. Over the next few weeks, instructors who volunteered were interviewed, either in person or via phone, about their experiences and reactions to the strategy. Their responses were summarized and analyzed for commonality and for unique aspects.

Findings

Five instructors volunteered to participate in an interview. Undergraduate courses that were reported as flipped included Business Writing and Speaking, Design Thinking and Communication, and an honors section of Introductory Business Communication. Reported graduate courses included Managerial Communication, Organizational Communication, and Negotiation and Conflict Management.

Reported Advantages

Interviewed faculty consistently reported a number of advantages they had discovered from the flipped class experience. They described the process as more creative and fun for both students and the instructor. Faculty can actually cover more information, and students can review instructional material as often as necessary. Flipped classes were also credited for promoting more active learning and generally resulting in better student outcomes. When collaboration occurs in course planning and delivery across multiple sections, students benefit from different strengths of faculty members. Consistency is also facilitated across course sections, and instructors are freed from having to go over the same information repeatedly.

Reported Disadvantages

Some disadvantages of the flipped class were also reported. Respondents generally agreed that flipped courses pose more work for faculty, especially in the initial implementation. The preparation of videos and other standardized content is time consuming if done well. For multiple sections of courses, individual faculty members lose some control over content

delivery when out-of-class instruction is standardized. The single most important disadvantage is that some students do not complete the out-of-class assignments and therefore are ill-prepared for the face-to-face learning component. One respondent reported that student outcomes in flipped classes are not better at the graduate level.

Best Practices

Survey respondents were generally positive about the flipped class concept, and all indicated that they intended to continue using it, at least in certain courses or for portions of courses. Various ideas emerged related to effective practices in the use of flipped instruction, which are summarized as follows:

- Be aware that flipped instruction generally works better with small classes than with larger ones, since its success relies on student participation.
- Start with just part of a class rather than changing a whole course at once.
- Plan and prepare well, as lecture coasting will not be an option.
- Use class time for activities and demonstrations and that are hard to follow in print or from video.
- Keep videos to 10 minutes or less.
- Consider ways to motivate students to complete their out-of-class work.
- Use student feedback to refine content and delivery.

Other best practices for flipped instruction will continue to emerge as educators share their ideas, resources, and experiences with one another (Herreid & Schiller, 2013). A central theme embedded in the concept is that active learning is superior to passive learning. Active learning promotes deeper learning that stays with the student longer and has a greater impact on decisions and behaviors.

Summary and Recommendations

The flipped classroom idea is not new. Educators over the years have struggled to get students to study and read on their own, either ahead of time or as homework. What flipped classrooms offer is not just a change in the classroom experience, but a shift of the entire teaching paradigm. Instructors no longer fulfill the role of "sage on a stage," but are much more aligned with the "guide on the side" concept. Students are held accountable for assuring a portion of their learning, and class time can be spent on collaborative learning with application for real-world problem solving.

While various advantages are cited by those who have employed the flipped classroom concept, some challenges exist. Further research is recommended to discover best practices associated with effective flipped instruction and to discover more about learner needs and behaviors in regard to the practice. Support is needed for faculty who wish to venture into flipped instruction, including released time from instruction to facilitate planning and initial preparation. As with various types of instructional innovation, faculty who develop effective models for instructional delivery and learning should be encouraged and rewarded.

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UNIQUELY QUALIFIED: BUILDING STUDENTS' PROFESSIONAL BRAND FOR JOB PLACEMENT AND CAREER MANAGEMENT

Gail Johnson, Rochell McWhorter, and Jennifer Hicks

The University of Texas at Tyler

Abstract

According to a recent report, over half of bachelor's degree holders under 25 are either underemployed or jobless (USA Today, 2012). To combat this pervasive problem, universities are seeking effective ways to prepare students for landing a professional position or improve their career management. This innovative teaching session highlights an AACSB-accredited university program where students built their professional brand by emphasizing what makes them uniquely qualified within multiple modalities: oral and written communication, online (LinkedIn, social media), and in person. By pairing with community business professionals for structured mock interviews, business students were afforded multiple networking opportunities and authentic real-time evaluative feedback on their professional brand.

Introduction and Discussion of Problem

The contemporary job market reflects trends of high unemployment for younger workers with bachelors and masters degrees coupled with mounting student debt which leave some consumers questioning the value of higher education (New York Times, 2012). As higher educators work to stay relevant in uncertain times, employers are looking for job candidates who can articulate the *value added* to their organization (Hartranft, 2013). Further, contemporary work environments include the uncertainties of downsizing, unemployment, and restructuring that necessitate the need for existing employees to have the skills to navigate their careers and articulate their continued value added to the organization, a "prerequisite for success" for career management (Lair, Sullivan & Cheney, 2005, p. 316).

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this paper is to highlight career-related activities within a set of courses in an Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB) accredited university program that integrate: 1) professional branding, 2) social networking, and 3) mock interviews with business professionals. Each of these areas will be highlighted next.

Professional Branding

The precursor to professional branding was a concept known as *personal branding* that was launched in the 1990s (Peters, 1999) and offered the process of transforming oneself into a brand. However, several scholars noted that although the personal branding movement produced a number of books, seminars and websites in its time, this approach promoted "a vision of

the working self that is superficial at best, devoid of opportunities for self-reflection and improvement" (Lair et al, 2005, p. 310) thus offering "no encouragement to the individual professional to reevaluate or apply values" (p. 336).

In contrast with personal branding, the notion of *professional branding* affords the opportunity for students to examine their skills and values in depth which is combined with self-reflection as a way for them to determine the added worth they can offer an organization (Epstein & Johnson, 2011). In this revised concept of one's brand, the student can more fully "know, understand and communicate exactly who they are and their value to an organization by emphasizing what makes [them] uniquely qualified and professionally memorable…to achieve professional goals" (p. 5). Professional branding also extends to the creation of professionally branded resumes, cover letters, and social networking that illustrate the unique skills and abilities that a candidate brings to the workplace such that professional branding becomes a "self-marketing tool" (*A New Brand You*, 2013, para. 1).

Social Networking

Through the emergence of Web 2.0 tools, students can electronically network with one another, instructors, and business professionals (McWhorter, 2010). However, students need direct instruction on the negative consequences of online postings that damage their professional brand. According to Foss (2013), portraying oneself in a negative or unfocused light on social networking sites is very detrimental for the job hunter. Instead, job seekers must understand their value to potential employers, then be mindful of how they present themselves on social networking sites, and attend networking events. According to Gerard (2012), technology "can improve the success of individual and institutional efforts [of networking]" (p. 866) and LinkedIn (LinkedIn.com) serves as an

online professional network.

LinkedIn is a popular social networking site aimed at professionals allowing its members "to contact past and current colleagues, look for a new job, uncover business opportunities and network with experts in a particular industry" (Scott, 2013, para. 1). In addition, it allows its users, over 100 million professionals, to create an online profile to connect with others, join professional groups, post or comment on a link, and post original work. LinkedIn is also a prime site for recruiters and HR professionals through specially designed products where they can search the entire LinkedIn data base for qualified candidates (business.LinkedIn.com). In addition to LinkedIn, students in this study were given direction on extending their professional brand through the professional focus of blogs, Pinterest, Facebook, and Twitter with professional examples given for each.

Mock Interviews

Students need multiple experiences in practicing their interviewing skills in a low stakes venue to prepare for actual (high stake) employer interviews. According to Marks and O'Connor (2006), interview skills were described as "being able to talk about yourself and highlight your appropriate skills in the context of a job's requirements in what is often a stressful environment" (p. 264). Further, effective job interviewing skills are critical for the student to obtain employment, and building these skills is time-intensive to provide multiple opportunities within the school context for students to practice. In this study, over 50 business professionals from the region participated in a *mock interview* (a simulation of a real interview) with business students.

Method and Findings

Reflection papers and other qualitative feedback from 120 junior and

senior level university students and written remarks from 50 business professionals from the region were collected. Data collected from both students and business professionals overwhelmingly substantiated the perceived benefits of the three activities in the set of courses; namely, 1) professional branding, 2) social networking, and 3) mock interviewing with business professionals.

Feedback from the student reflection papers provided qualitative evidence of the development of professional branding and interview skills. For instance, one senior business student remarked:

> The mock interview process was a test of my nerves and my ability to remember the most valuable things about my work and school history and seemed to be quite a challenge! I found that I did well on the one-on-one mock career fair interview with [instructor] but when I performed in the first panel interview [with my group] I felt out of my element and appeared nervous based off of the panel evaluations…I tended to want to take over the interview by giving people additional answers to interview questions. During the panel interviews that followed, I balanced my answers to specific questions…the interview process became manageable and my elevator speech and examples flowed easily…giving myself a competitive edge because the class assisted me considerably.

The culminating semester event was a final mock interview held in a formal setting. Students came to the event dressed for success and brought their professionally branded resume and cover letter (incorporating the URL to their LinkedIn profile). Their resume and cover letter contained their professional branding statement that highlighted their value to an employer and summarizing prior relevant experiences.

Summary and Implications

Today's complex job market underscores the need for faculty and business professionals to work together to educate and prepare students for the world of work. (Students need direct instruction and sufficient practice in how to develop their professional brand. Their instruction must also include appropriate online social media networking and one-on-one networking with business professionals in a mock, but authentic experiential learning environment). Higher education must continue to demonstrate the value of a college education as instructors integrate learning with professional technology and engage students in simulations of activities they will encounter throughout their professional career.

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STUDENT SELF-ASSESSMENT VS. ACTUAL PERFORMANCE OF THEIR COMMUNICATION SKILLS

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Abstract

As self-assessments become more predominant in the college classroom, research is establishing the importance of self-assessment on an effective writing and editing process. Self-efficacy is also a factor related to quality of writing; whereas students' perceived notions of their writing ability are related to their actual writing competence; when self-confidence increases, actual performance increases.

Students in a Professional Communication course, taught in the Business School, were asked to "grade" themselves in 13 communication skills. Students were then given a pre-course writing to evaluate their current level of knowledge and skill in business communication. The results of the study will be discussed during the presentation.

Statement of the Problem

This study reviewed the self-assessment of non-business students in various aspects of written communication skills as compared to their actual level of knowledge and skills at the beginning of the semester.

Methods and Procedures of the Study

Non-business students in a Professional Communication course, taught in the Business School, were asked to "grade" themselves in 13 different written communication skills:

- Writing (not penmanship)
- Spelling
- Grammar
- Punctuation
- Proofreading
- Reading
- Comprehension
- Word Processing Application (on a computer)
- Vocabulary
- Following Directions
- Letter Writing
- Report Writing
- Sentence Structure

Students graded themselves using the following scale:

A – Excellent in this area; I could teach the concept.
B – Good in this area; once in a while I am not sure if I am correct.
C – Fair in this area; I am about average but know I could do better.
D – Poor in this area; I definitely need to improve my skills.

Students were then given an objective pretest and a pre-course writing exercise to evaluate their current level of knowledge and skills in written business communication. The writing exercise was given in the computer lab and consisted of a scenario in which students were asked to write a relevant message using correct format. The students' documents were graded based upon the written communication skills that they had self-assessed. Results of the comparison between student self-assessment and their actual performance on the written communication skills will be discussed during the presentation.

Review of Literature

Self-assessment is a critical skill for professional development and lifelong learning (Langan et al., 2008). As self-assessments have become more predominant, research is further establishing the importance that self-assessment has on pedagogic value (Patri, 2002). Self-assessment is also an important component of an effective writing and editing process. In fact, research has shown that self-assessment of written communication can impact the quality of the writing (McCarthy, Meier, & Rinderer, 1985).

The emphasis in most business communication courses is written and oral communication, usually with the main focus on the principles of business writing and the correct use of grammar and punctuation in the form of memos, letters, and reports (Wardrope, 2002). While one or two English Composition classes may be pre-requisites to the business writing course, most students enter the course as mediocre, or even poor, writers of business documents. Most undergraduate business students take, at most, one course emphasizing oral and written communication skills. Educators need to determine how to teach students to write well in perhaps only one required core course for all business majors.

Pre-requisite knowledge and skills are still necessary to improve learning and academic performance (Schunk, 2003). Knowledge and skill in their major and oral communication skills were perceived as well developed in student self-assessment; in contrast, written communication, teamwork, and analytical reasoning were ranked the lowest in students' self-assessment (Arnold et al., 1999).

Self-Assessment in Writing

Self-assessment is a critical skill in and of itself (Orsmond, 2004); furthermore, self-assessment is critical in the writing process and impacts the quality of writing (McCarthy, Meier, & Rinderer, 1985).

Self-assessment in the higher education business communication classroom can be an effective method for helping students to learn. Students need to address the strengths and weaknesses of their finished product, as well as the entire writing process. Self-assessment is an active learning method that helps students to develop learner autonomy, independence, and self-reflection (Arnold et al., 1999; Langan et al., 2008; Orsmond, 2004; Patri, 2002). Students develop an awareness and appreciation of their competencies (Langan et al., 2008).

Additionally, positive self-assessment of both their capabilities and

progress toward skill accomplishment is critical for sustaining self-efficacy for students' learning and improved performance (Schunk, 2003). Introspective self-assessment on the part of the student can potentially increase competence because of the awareness of self. Inclusion of self-assessment tools empowers learners (Langan et al., 2008).

Self-Assessment Influences Self-Efficacy

Another factor related to writing quality and achievement is student self-efficacy (Linnenbrink & Pintrich, 2003; Pajares, 2003; Schunk, 2003; Walker, 2003). Research indicates that self-efficacy increases motivation and learning in written communication (Schunk, 2003). Students learn concepts, experience competence, and compare their progress toward learning (self-assess), which leads to increased self-efficacy (Walker, 2003).

Self-efficacy is defined as one's belief about his/her abilities to perform successfully in using learned skills (Bandura, 1997; Pajares, 2003). Students with high self-efficacy are more apt to work hard, persist, and ask for help in understanding so that they can perform a task successfully (Linnenbrink & Pintrich, 2003). The more that students believe they can do an activity, the more willing they are to try harder and endure the process towards success. Self-efficacy motivates and predicts student learning, influencing achievement (Schunk, 2003) and persistence (Walker, 2003).

Specifically, McCarthy, Meier, and Rinderer (1985) found that students' perceived notions of their writing ability were related to their actual writing competence. While no simple causality has been established between self-assessment and actual performance; when performance improves, self-confidence in abilities increases. Students who assess themselves highly may be a result of a high level of self-confidence (Langan et al., 2008); and when

self-confidence increases, actual performance improves (McCarthy, Meier, & Rinderer, 1985; Walker, 2003). Although, low self-assessment does not necessarily weaken self-efficacy and motivation as long as students perceive they can succeed (Bandura, 1997; Schunk, 2003). In fact, these students often try harder and persist longer, even reaching out to the instructor for help in finding a more effective strategy that will lead to success (Schunk, 2003).

Importance of Writing Assessment

Self-assessments can promote self-efficacy and increase motivation of students (Walker, 2003). McCarthy, Meier, and Rinderer (1985) found a strong relationship between writers' self-assessment of their own writing and the overall quality of their work. When students self-assess and increase their self-efficacy, they tend to use alternative learning strategies to increase their understanding (Linnenbrink & Pintrich, 2003; Schunk, 2003; Walker, 2003). Students with low self-efficacy focus on the grade as their goal, rather than on their learning (Linnenbrink & Pintrich, 2003). In addition to self-efficacy on student achievement, knowledge and skills are important influences on competent performance (Schunk, 2003). Students learn that success in problem solving about the real world of business is often based on hard information that can be accessed often in real time and online. As students see real-world documents, they can see the expected standards of written communication. They realize that the instructor expectations are realistic. Using self-assessment to indicate student learning rather than final performance encourages students with low self-efficacy to concentrate on their learning and their competence with the material (Walker, 2003).

While the importance of writing skills for business graduates has been established, the effectiveness of business communication courses often can be

questioned (Pittenger, Miller, & Allison, 2006). Wardrope (2002) found that, out of all the student learning outcomes in a business communication course, department chairs of business schools rated written communication skills the highest. Wardrope's study reaffirmed the importance of business communication skills in each business discipline and the emergence of written communication as most critical to student success. Therefore, the focus on writing skills should continue to be a priority in business communication courses, as well as basic grammar instruction.

Summary, Conclusions, and Recommendations

There is a relationship between self-efficacy and academic performance, and self-efficacy and previous performance are major indicators of writing achievement. When students persist and work hard for achievement, they increase their self-efficacy. Educators should use teaching approaches to encourage strategic thinking for all students, especially for students with low self-efficacy.

As a result of these writing assessments, students were more engaged and developed an awareness of their writing ability. They also developed a greater liking of the subject and ability to evaluate writing. Qualitative changes were also noticeable in student writing ability; perhaps suggesting a connection between awareness, perception, and ability.

Because students usually do not self-assess on their own, instructors should require them to monitor their progress throughout the semester by having students assess their skills and knowledge at the beginning, during, and end of learning a concept. As students perceive improvement in their learning progress, and in turn, their self-assessments; they will increase their self-efficacy and motivation for learning the content. The influence of instructor feedback can positively increase self-efficacy and motivation for continued learning. Feedback also prompts the instructor to adapt the teaching style and materials based upon assessment of student learning.

Student writing can improve significantly in a single course with continuous, effective instructor intervention, focusing on the basics of writing principles during the course.

Continued and Future Research

At this point, this assessment process is proving valuable to the students and to the instructor as well. Students realized that they need to work on their writing, but they are good in some of their communication skills. Therefore, student self-efficacy was increased in areas of communication ability. Issues at midterm should be addressed specifically before moving on to new concepts of research, APA style, and report writing for the second half of the semester.

As this study continues in future semesters, learners will be asked to assist in the identification of the criteria that should be self-assessed to ensure effective written communication. Student involvement in establishing the assessment criteria will potentially increase their understanding and application of the assessment criteria.

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CODE SWITCHING IN THE BUSINESS COMMUNICATIONS CLASSROOM

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Abstract

This case study is one effort to use the sociolinguistic construct of code switching as a pedagogical tool in a business communication classroom in a Historically Black College and University (HBCU) in the Southeast U.S. The case illustrates how students can learn an abstract concept as applied to their dialects and use it to identify different rules between business and other types of communication events, including using their own dialects and generational 'sub-codes.' In addition, students can learn ways to navigate between appropriate and inappropriate language use across the multiple linguistic contexts in which they find themselves. The study examines how code switching can be used as a tool for building a respectful classroom environment where students are not afraid to make mistakes while learning professional communication skills.

Introduction

The study of language use in society – sociolinguistics – has identified several areas of study that include such foci as language dialects, language and the law, teacher-student language in secondary education, and language learning, among others. These studies define the unique features of the particular linguistic code, examine how meaning is created in specific contexts where that code is used, and analyze why challenges exist for individuals outside the context in deciphering or decoding the correct meaning. The field may examine also the attitudes about and effects resulting from the use of a particular linguistic code. This sociolinguistic approach to examining how language is used every day provides important information to guide instruction in communication in the business environment.

At the foundational level, business communication classes are designed to prepare students to participate professionally in the business environment through multiple oral, written and non-verbal communication channels. Students learn the basics of writing professional documents, giving professional presentations, and representing themselves in a way that increases their opportunities and supports their desire to be successful. The classes explore personal interactions in the business environment, how to communicate in teams, how to prepare letters and emails that adhere to accepted rules, how to dress professionally, how to conduct themselves in a business environment, the techniques for influencing and persuading others, and how to give effective presentations. At the center of many of these activities is the effective manipulation of the language, in this case Standard American English (SAE). Standard American English as it is used here refers to a variety in the United States that adheres to the generally accepted rules of grammatical and morphological construction; for the purposes of this paper,

phonological descriptions are not considered (though there is an idealized version of American English phonology against which regional and social dialects are compared as a way to identify their unique features).

Language and Peer Identity

Students have a mostly subconscious but sophisticated understanding of the role of various forms of communication in their lives. They understand non-verbal behavior as an element of social interaction in the business environment, for example the rules for how close we can stand to people, how to shake hands, or how to dress professionally. In the classroom, even when students may not be able at first to explicitly analyze their own non-verbal behaviors, once the concept is identified, students readily understand and become adept at discussing how they use these signals and what they mean. Among their peers, students manipulate easily their group-specific, non-verbal behaviors to achieve acceptance, as is evidenced, for example, by hand gestures, forms of dress, and body posture. Identification with peer groups is a strong motivator for decisions about how they dress and walk, what they eat, the music they listen to, their cars, and their recreational habits. In addition and very importantly, they use grammatical and morphological forms that connect them to their peer groups and set them off from others who are outside that group (Bucholtz and Hall, 2005); students manipulate group-specific speaking patterns to achieve social goals such as assertiveness, peer approval, defensive posturing, sarcasm, humor, and to prove they are 'cool' or have 'street cred.' (It is important to emphasize that linguistic forms are not the only variables that affect social standing; rather, speaking patterns are a contributing factor.)

Irving Goffman described this use of the language as "footing" or the positioning that individuals engage in during social interactions (1981, pp. 127-128). Most people can be very good at this; each generation, however, engages in footing behavior differently by using its own unique word and phrasing choices. What was 'hip' becomes 'cool' or 'phat;' what was 'man' becomes 'dude;' what was 'later' (as in 'see ya later') becomes 'deuces.' In the field of sociolinguistics, code refers to language or a variety of language (Myers-Scotton and Ury, 1977; Wolfram and Fasold, 1974, pp 4-15), and one could argue that these decisions make up a 'generational code' that enables clear communication among the participants and reinforces identity cohesion. The code changes depending on the specific settings, participants, and goals of the interaction, and there are both structural and social constraints at play.

Language and Dialect

Dialect can be legitimately identified as a variety of a language that is associated with a geographical region or a social group (Godley, Sweetland and Wheeler, 2006; Shuy, 1967). Dialects are often described by their grammatical, morphological, and phonological differences from the idealized standard form - the form used in formal writing that is taught in schools as the 'correct' form (Wolfram and Fasold, 1974). Just as speakers use different non-verbal techniques to communicate nuances of meaning, dialects, as defined from a more structural perspective, can be altered as well. In other words the dialect as code can be switched to a form that achieves some purpose other than the literal meaning. In his work on speech acts *How to Do Things with Words,* Austin *(1962)* referred to this kind of meaning as illocutionary. For example, a speaker may wish to amuse, warn, complain, persuade, promise, or even indicate higher status or intelligence and may do so indirectly.

In the classroom, the author switches from formal Standard English to dialect features common to Appalachian English, the dialect of her upbringing. This

switch is used to signal humor or irony and often to stress a point. When it is used, it draws attention to the point being made, primarily because it is dramatically different from the norm of professorial speech. Students typically smile; on some level they understand what is happening but they don't understand why it works to get their attention other than all of a sudden the professor does not sound "right" and perhaps sounds 'funny.' Just as the students might find it difficult to explain why they get the point she is trying to make, native speakers of any language typically have trouble describing how or why they use the language they do or why specific communication events have a particular meaning.

Interestingly, not only do speakers have difficulty describing accurately the speech they use most of the time; they also cannot describe the changes they make in their 'typical' speech to achieve their goals. In sociolinguistics research on regional or socially defined dialects, field interviewers know that the observer's paradox must be accounted for. Interviewees may unconsciously try to change subtle aspects of their language in the presence of an unfamiliar listener, especially if that listener is perceived as being well educated. They may even say that they know they sound 'country' or that they don't speak 'good English,' but they may have difficulty explaining what that means specifically. Very often, the changes they make do not adhere to Standard English forms but are an effort to sound more educated or more like the interviewer. The speakers may not know consciously that they make changes of a specific kind, but their manipulation affects the ability of the interviewer to get realistic, day-to-day speech, which is often the object of the field research. To address this paradox, interviewers ask emotionally laden questions that result in distraction away from the interviewing event and focus the speaker on feelings. For example, descriptions of times of fear, joy or other strong emotion can be very effective at

motivating more "natural" speech. This plays out often in the author's own home when she speaks on the telephone with her Appalachian family. The author, a trained sociolinguist, was unaware until told that she reverts to a much more obvious use of her native dialect when she is on the phone with her family and engaged in talk of home. In other words, to her spouse she sounded more Appalachian (though in many respects he would be unable to define exactly what made her sound that way). The point here is that speakers intuitively know there are different codes but without explicit attention to those codes it is unlikely that they will be able to accurately explain what the differences are.

To engage in multiple varieties of a language is to use different codes and, therefore, engage in code switching. Code switching, then, is the "practice of selecting or altering linguistic elements so as to contextualize interaction" (Nilep, 2006, p. 1). Code switching allows speakers to maintain their identity while achieving a desired position in contexts that are controlled by others. A dialectal shift such as the one focused on in this paper is a tool that allows alternative communication forms (Greene and Walker 2004, p. 435), and those alternative forms are useful in and appropriate to different contexts. This notion makes sense to students in the same way that they understand that different dress patterns are more or less appropriate in context.

The personal identity function of dialects is powerful, and it plays out in the classroom. Some professors are highly critical toward a student's speech and writing when it is – in their view – wrong. There is even a bias that students who have facility with the standard language are better students, perhaps even smarter (Godley, Sweetland and Wheeler, 2006). There is, perhaps, a failure to understand that a standard form arises from political considerations as an accident of history and not from intellect. If one way of defining a

language is that it has an army and a navy, in other words language as defined by country, then dialects which differ from the standard are less powerful by definition. The standard language is not inherently better – or more correct – but it is rather the variety used by the most powerful and affluent of that society, and, therefore, more positively perceived.

Donna Christian of the Center for Applied Linguistics states "If an educator underestimates a student's ability because of dialect differences, the student will do less well in school, perhaps as a direct result of negative expectations" (1997, p. 1). Instructor attitudes clearly have an effect on the classroom learning environment; for example, if an instructor's negative attitudes about the dialect result in a negative attitude about the student, then that student can feel demeaned and, perhaps, become unmotivated to do the difficult work of learning and applying new linguistic forms.

Statement of the Problem: The Dialect Dilemma

The problem is that, even if an educator does not harbor a bias toward dialect speakers, unless students who use a non-standard dialect have the ability to use the standard forms, they will do less well in the college classroom where the standard language is expected in oral and written communication. Business communication entails a focus on specific application of the standard language to the documents, processes, and strategies of communication that take place in the business environment. The place for direct instruction in Standard English and capable use of it should happen prior to the college level business communication classroom; however, this author's experience indicates this is not always the case. Students may receive direct instruction in the grammatical and morphological features of the standard prior to attendance at college, but some do not translate that instruction into an ability to apply the standard features. Many students

are beginning college without the ability to use the standard forms as required in the college classroom. Thus, the dilemma: Students will have, more likely than not, enhanced opportunities if they speak and write using the language of the standard, but, if they haven't achieved this skill by the time they enter college, then how can educators achieve the business communication classroom goals without taking a lot of valuable time to teach the structure directly.

Method to Address the Problem

To begin to address this dilemma, it is important to remember the fundamentals:

1. Language is identity, therefore, if students are speaking a different variety it is because of their group reference, not because of intellect, inability to think, or lack of commitment. The primary reference group for the American business students in this case is African American and many use African American English (AAE) dialect features. It is important, however, to enable an identity with an additional group, the group that wishes to be successful in business as expressed in statements about why they are in college: 'I want a good job or a great job.' 'I want to work for a big company.' 'I want to start my own business.' 'I want to be one of the leaders in some business somewhere.' 'I want to make a lot of money.' The business communication classroom is an excellent environment, then, to inspire personal identification with success as a business person.

2. If language is identity, then denigrating the students' non-standard use is an attack against that identity. This author has taught 22 classes averaging 25 students

per class since 2009. Many of the students speak African American English and in every class they (and others as well) report that teachers have told them that their spoken or written language was wrong, bad, poor, incorrect, lazy, dumb, and/or careless. More often than not, the language that is being so described is the language spoken by their parents, family members, and friends, and these negative comments may apply, in the minds of students, to those individuals as well. At some level, denigrating the language with which they grew up can be perceived as denigrating the important people in their lives as well. So, a new approach is necessary to allow students to identify positively with those reference groups while, at the same time, learning a new way to handle speaking and writing requirements in business. Students can be made aware of dialect diversity and that their speech isn't just a random compilation of careless words and sounds. They can learn that their code is systematic and rule governed with important social significance. At the same time, they must learn that some contexts necessitate a different variety from their own.

3. The reality of the business communication classroom requires a new approach to learning and applying language forms. Learning to use the standard past-tense form of an irregular verb can be positioned as no different than learning to use an appropriate hand shake, offer a business card, answer a business phone, or handle questions in an interview.   It may be a different kind of skill, but it is a learned skill nonetheless, and the skill is important to managing others' perceptions and to being a professional in a professional environment. Students can use their intuitive and learned knowledge about non-linguistic modes of communication to understand how their behavior, in whatever form it takes, connects to others' perceptions of them. This understanding is important in life, and it is very important to the business environment where others' perceptions are tied to promotions, opportunities, and even their ability to get the job in the first place.

4. Individuals' awareness of differences in non-verbal, verbal, and meta-linguistic acts is multi-tiered from an initial "ah-ha" moment to the ability to self-monitor in the moment of the act and make adjustments that serve themselves in the best way in specific environments. Just as an individual can use self-awareness and self-control to listen to others rather than indulge the compulsion to speak, the individual can develop awareness of language features and adjust as necessary for the context. This ability in college-age adults does not happen without intention however.
An example from mock interviews will illustrate the difficulty of self-awareness development. All students in the author's classes are required to participate in a mock interview to learn to answer typical interview questions to demonstrate their knowledge, skills, and abilities and to do so with confidence and professionalism. Out of approximately 500 who have taken Communicating in the Business Environment from the author, approximately 20% (at least five in each of 11 classes) used the non-standard form of 'ask' during the interview. The non-standard, African American English form is pronounced as 'aks.' When

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presented with the word 'ask' on a slip of paper and queried about their use of the word, very few African American students realized they used the non-standard pronunciation. Though it is possible they were reluctant to report truthfully that they knew they used a form that was considered incorrect by many people, their non-verbal signals indicated otherwise.

In another example, a southern white student from a rural community used the phrase 'I seen it.' When asked if she realized this, she said she did not; she knew the correct form was 'I saw it' but she was unaware that, during the interview, she had used the non-standard form. She was not an isolated case.

Students who use non-standard features of grammar may (1) know the standard form but are not aware that they don't use those forms; (2) not know that what they say or write is different from the expected, formal, and standard features; or (3) know that they are speaking differently but not know how or why.

5.   Awareness of linguistic diversity and allowing for 'code' pride can be an important construct in the business communication classroom. Discussions of code-switching can set the stage for 'code awareness' and, ultimately, the ability to use linguistic forms that are appropriate in context. The point after all is to increase the likelihood that students will use language as a tool for success.

The question then is how can this be accomplished?

Methodology for Using Code-Switching in the Classroom

No matter how much an instructor may desire students to be more self-aware and more adept with switching among dialect forms, unless there is an environment of trust between students and teacher, students will be reluctant to listen with an open mind. Methods must be used, therefore, that build students' linguistic awareness, demonstrate respect for their identity, and, at the same time, enhance trust in the classroom environment.   Educators must be intentional about building an environment of mutual respect and, therefore, classroom activities regarding identity constructs such as dialect have to be handled thoughtfully and strategically.

Building Trust

To begin a discussion about language as code and about code-switching, the author developed an exercise that would examine differences with regard to vocabulary and non-verbal behaviors. These categories were chosen because they are less threatening to talk about, yet they are very effective at illustrating how people express meaning differently. Students are not surprised that differences exist among speakers with regard to 'slang' and fully expect that there will be words and phrases they use that their instructor would not. In addition, students know explicitly how people use gestures in the U.S., but looking at other countries provides a broad and new way of thinking about it. The assignment that initiates this discussion provides the following instructions which are ordered to move from the big picture (the world) to the small (their group):

1. Provide ten non-verbal signals that mean something different in other countries than in the U.S. and say what they mean in both places.
2. Provide ten words or phrases that you use that you believe I will not

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understand. No vulgar language, please.

Points are given for completion of the assignment, not for content. Students are surprised and doubtful that they've understood the assignment correctly. They have no problem with the non-verbal task but find it hard to understand why a professor would give credit for identifying their 'street talk' in a business communications class.

During the discussion of this exercise, the same pattern occurs for every class. The non-verbal exercise that focuses on other countries goes quickly and students have a lot to say; they recognize easily the importance of this information in business, especially in a global business world, and they indicate considerable interest in the topic. It is non-threatening while being relevant and important for the class. Talking about other countries is not threatening because of the geographic and social distance involved, and it is easy to accept, for example, that the thumbs-up gesture means something very different in Thailand than it means in the United States. Doing this part of the activity first opens the dialog to discussions of difference without embarrassment.

The second part of the assignment about their own vocabulary starts differently; at first, students don't seem to understand that it's really acceptable to talk about words they use primarily among themselves, and they may hold back. Ninety-five percent of students at this HBCU are African American and the average age in this business communication classroom is 20.5 years. The instructor is Caucasian and middle-aged. Clearly there could be a lot of difference in linguistic codes, and clearly there is a power differential. After a bit of encouragement, however, they begin

to share their words and phrases. The importance of professor reaction is important here. The professor must assume the role of student and allow the students to teach her aspects of their code. Expressions of interest, humor, and surprise are appropriate and enable a relaxed atmosphere. The instructor's effort to use their words correctly is met with approval that she tries and with hilarity about how incongruent they sound coming from her. In every class, by the time all students have had a chance to provide a word or phrase, there is laughter and sometimes even disagreement among students about the nuances of meaning for a particular item.

Once the discussion is complete, students are asked why they were given this assignment. They think it is about generational differences, how race might cause differences, or about how other countries communicate. The discussion becomes an opportunity to talk about how people identify with the language of a group, whether it is country or family or peers or some other group that means something to them. Students discuss how people may also identify with multiple groups. The discussion leads naturally to notions of language as code, language as identity, diversity in language, and respect for that diversity. The key points are that:

1. Language – whatever we say at any given moment – is our code.
2. Different codes are legitimate and important in society.
3. Different codes can be used/should be used in different places.
4. It is not an issue of right or wrong; it's an issue of appropriate or inappropriate.
5. The better one's ability to manage various channels of communicating (dress, non-verbal, verbal, etc.), the higher

the probability that goals can be achieved.

6. People do not function outside of context. If students wish to be successful in business, they must be aware of the expectations of that context and act accordingly.
7. People can manage multiple codes and, to some degree, switch among them when important to communicate the messages they are trying to transmit.

This assignment has multiple goals: enhancing explicit awareness of language diversity and the term 'code' as applied to language; enhancing their awareness that all codes are equally valuable and can be used for many different reasons; enhancing their trust that the professor values their right to use their code; and illustrating that codes can be switched and that code-switching is a tool they can use to their advantage in their lives and, with specific reference to the class, in business.

Next Step: Focus on Dialect Features

Over two years, the author has used the exercise described above in 10 sections to ensure that the assignment achieves the goals consistently. In each case, students not only demonstrated a positive attitude about the assignment but were attentive and participative during the discussion. Students appeared to understand the points conceptually, but now there must be an effort to take this understanding and apply it to specific awareness and application of Standard American English features. The exercise above sets the stage for contrastive analysis focused on grammatical and morphological features between dialects. Contrastive analysis avoids an attitude of doing away with the students' dialect and, instead, shows SAE and AAE dialects side by side as equally valuable but contextual and important in different environments. (It is important to note here

that many features used in AAE are used in other dialects as well, so non-AAE speakers would not be excluded from the discussion.)

It would be fruitless to incorporate all features of SAE, however, because there are too many and the business communication classroom has limited time to focus on them. Rather, the author has chosen to focus generally on grammar and specifically on irregular verbs because (1) non-standard grammar carries greater stigmatization than other features and (2) irregular verbs are frequently used in their non-standard dialect forms in this classroom by students from several dialect backgrounds. Rickford states, "grammatical variation is much more common as a marker of social dialects and formal/informal style than it is of regional dialects, with non-standard or vernacular variants sometimes being strongly stigmatized for their associations with limited education or use by lower working class……." (2002, p. 5)

The approach will be to illustrate the contrast between SAE and AAE through use of a simple model that identifies the differences. Contrastive analysis and instruction regarding two equally valid dialects will allow the instructor to be learner focused rather than error-focused. The model will then be used to structure exercises using business relevant sentences so that the class stays consistent with the goals of the business communication curriculum.   The template below illustrates how this will be accomplished:

VERB	FORMAL (SAE CODE)	INFORMAL (AAE and OTHER CODES)	BUSINESS EXAMPLES
Do	I do the report daily. *I did it last week.*	I do the report daily. *I done it last week. I have did*	*Before our meeting last week, I did a report for my boss.*

	I have done it since last year.	*it since last year.*	*I have done the report 5 times, but I did this one with new marketing data.*
See	I see my client frequently. I saw him during August. I have seen my client for several weeks.	I see my client I seen my client during August. I have saw my client for several weeks.	Last year I saw my clients during August only. This year I have seen my clients every week.

Fig. 1: Example of irregular verb contrastive analysis template

The model, which will be expanded to show many of the most common irregular verbs, will be used by the students in writing assignments to enable 'switching' to the SAE forms. There is no expectation that students will use the forms perfectly; rather, the author believes that students will begin to use some of the irregular verbs in their standard form when appropriate to do so and in places where they used them rarely or inconsistently before. The author expects that, with student feedback, this model of the dialect features will be fine-tuned so that it uses classroom time efficiently while improving SAE usage. The model may be a document that students use as a reference whenever they are preparing written documents. It is unpredictable whether the standard forms used in writing will transfer to oral presentations, however, which are given mostly without notes.

Future Research

Future efforts by this author to understand students' speaking and writing skills and why some students struggle to identify and/or use the expected formal SAE grammar in their college level assignments should include:

1. The collection of more focused quantitative data to assess business communication students' use of grammar, particularly in writing, but also in oral presentations;
2. The assessment of students' use of grammar at the end of the semester after using the irregular verb contrastive analysis model described above.

Broadly, more attention needs to be paid by educators to the needs of students entering college who have not learned to use the Standard American English features that are expected by faculty because these students are at a disadvantage if they cannot. In the business communications classroom (and most others as well) students must be able to use the grammatical structures that faculty expect in higher education speaking and writing. New methods need to be used that enable students to develop the ability to use the standard dialect forms while, at the same time, feeling comfortable with their own. This case study illustrates a step in a potentially helpful direction to address this issue, but it is only a beginning. Much more needs to be done if educators are to help students prepare for post-college success.

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March 13, 2014
(Thursday)

8:00 a.m. – 8:30 a.m.	San Antonio Ballroom B

ABC – SWUS Breakfast

All ABC-SWUS presenters and members are invited to enjoy a complimentary continental breakfast.

8:30 a.m. – 10:00 a.m.	San Antonio Ballroom B

SESSION A   **Welcome by ABC – SWUS President Randall L. Waller**

Innovations in Business Communications Pedagogy

Session Chair: **Lucia Sigmar**, Sam Houston State University

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Winner of the 2014 McGraw-Hill Distinguished Paper Award

Using Business Cases to Foster Critical Thinking
Kathryn S. O'Neill, Sam Houston State University
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A Course-Based Experiential Strategy for Reducing Anxiety, Increasing Confidence, and Building Lasting Oral Presentation Skills
Robert N. Yale, University of Dallas

Using the Business Communication Course to Evaluate Written and Oral Communication in Formative Assessment
Beverly A. Block, Missouri Southern State University
Michelle L. Dawson, Missouri Southern State University

10:00 a.m. – 10:30 a.m.	Lone Star Ballroom

FBD Coffee Break

Please make plans to visit the exhibits for information on the latest books and newest educational technologies. Let our exhibitors know how much we appreciate their presence and continued support!

Great Door Prize Drawings take place at **10:15 a.m.** in the Exhibit Area. *Must be present to win.*

**March 13, 2014
(Thursday)**

10:30 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.   San Antonio Ballroom B

SESSION A   Preparing Students for the Workplace

Session Chair: **Debbie D. DuFrene**, Stephen F. Austin State University

*Perception of Employers on the Competencies that Students and Graduates of the College of
Business Administration Demonstrate in Business Environments*
Aida Andino Pratts, University of Puerto Rico, Rio Piedras Campus
Zoraida Fajardo Heyliger, University of Puerto Rico, Rio Piedras Campus
Leticia M. Fernandez, University of Puerto Rico, Rio Piedras Campus

Adapting Employment Materials to Validate Alternative Educational Experience
Kenneth R. Price, University of Wisconsin-River Falls

What Does It Take to Get Hired in a Small Town? A Comparison of Soft Skills
Carol Wright, Stephen F. Austin State University

1:30 p.m. – 3:00 p.m.   San Antonio Ballroom B

SESSION A   Exploring the Language of Business Communication

Session Chair: **Kathryn S. O'Neill**, Sam Houston State University

Can Sentence Work Based on Transformational Grammar Help Students Write Better? Results of a Pilot Study
Kathy Rentz, University of Cincinnati

Codeswitching in the Business Communication Classroom: A Case Study
Rebecca Setliff, Savannah State University

The Logical Ordering of Language for Pre-Law Majors
Phillip Mink, University of Delaware

The State of Business Communication Courses in the United States
Farrokh Moshiri, University of California at Riverside
Peter W. Cardon, University of Southern California

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March 13, 2014
(Thursday)

3:00 p.m. – 3:30 p.m.	Lone Star Ballroom

FBD Coffee Break

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3:30 p.m. – 5:00 p.m.	San Antonio Ballroom B

SESSION A   **ABC – SWUS Business Meeting**

Presiding: **Randall L. Waller**, ABC – SWUS President
                        Baylor University

All ABC presenters and members are invited to attend the meeting.

5:30 p.m. – 7:00 p.m.	Lone Star Ballroom

FBD Meet and Greet Social

Everyone is invited to attend this FBD conference-wide social event. Visit with long-time friends and make new ones as you enjoy light appetizers and live music. A Cash Bar is available and a limited number of drink tickets will also be distributed. Stop by to relax and wind down from the day's conference activities before heading out to other association and cultural events or dinner.

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**March 14, 2014
(Friday)**

7:30 a.m. – 8:30 a.m.	Lone Star Ballroom A1

ABC – SWUS and ABIS Joint Breakfast

All ABC – SWUS and ABIS presenters and members are invited to enjoy a delicious breakfast

8:30 a.m. – 10:00 a.m. – **Joint Meeting with ABIS**	Lone Star Ballroom A1

SESSION A   **Communication Connections: ABC AND ABIS JOINT SESSION**

Session Chair: **Kelly Grant,** Tulane University

Tools of Engagement: Improving Student Engagement through Exercises in Empathy
Cynthia Eve Ash, Oklahoma State University - Tulsa

Exploration of the Flipped Classroom for Business Communication Instruction
Ashley A. Hall, Stephen F. Austin State University
Debbie D. DuFrene, Stephen F. Austin State University

College Freshmen: Expectations of Technology in the University Setting
Betty Kleen, Nicholls State University
Lori Soule, Nicholls State University
Sherry Rodrigue, Nicholls State University

Online Integrity: Student Authentication in an Online Course
Susan E. Jennings, Stephen F. Austin State University
Gail Weatherly, Stephen F. Austin State University
S. Ann Wilson, Stephen F. Austin State University

10:00 a.m. – 10:30 a.m.	Lone Star Ballroom

FBD Coffee Break

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March 14, 2014
(Friday)

10:30 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.   San Antonio Ballroom B

SESSION A   **Communication Without Borders**

Session Chair: **Susan Jennings**, Stephen F. Austin State University

Business Communication in China: Still the Same as Before?
Yong-Kang Wei, University of Texas at Brownsville

An Analysis of Asian Business Student Learning Styles
William McPherson, Indiana University of Pennsylvania

The Future of International Business Consulting
Sydel Sokuvitz, Babson College

10:30 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.   State Room 4

SESSION B   **Innovations in Business Communication Pedagogy, II**

Session Chair: **Kathy L. Hill**, Sam Houston State University

A Business Communication Exercise in Participation and Analytical Thinking
Elizabeth W. Bidwell, Oklahoma State University
Kristina Schaap, Oklahoma State University

Uniquely Qualified: Building Students' Professional Brand for Job Placement and Career Management
Gail Johnson, The University of Texas at Tyler
Rochell McWhorter, The University of Texas at Tyler

Bridging the Profit Gap: A Business Communication Perspective Toward Working in Interdisciplinary and Transdisciplinary Teams
Bradley S. Wesner, Sam Houston State University

Legal Writing in Business Communication
Beth Sindaco, University of Scranton

12:00 p.m. – 1:30 p.m.   The Kitchen Table

ABC – SWUS Executive Board Lunch – By Invitation

March 14, 2014
(Friday)

1:30 p.m. – 3:00 p.m.	San Antonio Ballroom B

SESSION A   **The Future of Business Communication**

Session Chair: **Bradley S. Wesner**, Sam Houston State University

Panel Discussion: Launching a New Business Major: Business Communication and Corporate Education
Marsha L. Bayless, Stephen F. Austin State University
S. Ann Wilson, Stephen F. Austin State University
M. Gail Weatherly, Stephen F. Austin State University
Susan E. Jennings, Stephen F. Austin State University

Companies Facing the Challenge of Communicating the Goals of the Strategic Plan
Laura R. Barthel, Eastern Kentucky University

3:00 p.m. – 3:30 p.m.	Lone Star Ballroom

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3:30 p.m. – 5:00 p.m.	San Antonio Ballroom B

SESSION A   **Communication Skills Assessment and Development**

Session Chair: **Laura Valenti,** Nicholls State University

Student Self-Assessment vs. Actual Performance of Communication Skills
Marcel Robles, Eastern Kentucky University

Everyone's Got an Opinion
John N. Davis, Hardin-Simmons University
Terry Minami, Hardin-Simmons University
Tim B. Chandler, Hardin-Simmons University

How to Execute Real-World Service Learning Projects In Business Communication Courses Without Them Taking Over the Entire Course
Lorelei Ortiz, St. Edward's University