

University of Dayton
Communication Modules Assessment

Introduction

The Communication Module assessment program was successfully piloted during AY 2001 – 2002. During this time course goals and competencies were identified, measures for those goals were identified and created and multimedia content was created. In addition, an on-line assessment web page was created. This web page allows students in the courses to be part of the assessment process outside class time. The data provided by the students is captured in a Microsoft Access database, which was developed along with the web site for these courses. The data can be analyzed in Access or SPSS.

In August of 2002, a report was completed outlining the pilot study. In this report internal reliability coefficients were reported for the measures employed in the assessment. Those reliability coefficients will not be re-reported here. However one of the goals identified under the “Future Improvements on the Assessment” section of that report was the reduction of measurement. The number of items used in the pilot study was much too cumbersome for students to complete in a reasonable amount of time. Since then, the scales have been reduced to single item measures. In all cases the single item measures represent the previous scale item that best reflects the purpose of the measure. For example, public speaking competence was assessed by an item asking students how strongly they agreed with the statement “I am an effective public speaker.” Similarly items asking about effectiveness and anxiety in interviewing, and decision making in small groups were also employed. Given the high levels of correspondence between the single items and the original scales, very little is lost in this data reduction process.

Results

Unfortunately the results of the full scale implementation of the modules were not as successful as the pilot study. A discussion of this will follow the presentation of the results of the assessment for 2002 - 2003

CMM 110 – Small Group Decision Making

In the pretest, students were asked five questions about group decision making. Question one asked students to identify how strongly they agreed with the statement “I seldom enjoy group discussions.” The mean response for this item was 2.45 in the pretest and 2.53 in the posttest. While the means suggest they students enjoyed group discussion less by the end of the course – the difference is not significant. This means students felt about the same at the end of class as they felt at the beginning of class. Question two asked students to identify how strongly they agreed with the statement “I am usually calm and relaxed when I have to participate in a meeting.” The mean response to this item was 3.67 in the pretest and 3.92 in the posttest. This difference is significant and ($t = 3.51$, $df = 378.534$; $p < .001$ two-tailed) and indicates that students were more anxious at the end

of the class. Question three asked students to identify how strongly they agreed with the statement “I often decide other people are wrong before I hear everything they have to say.” The mean for this item was 4.02 in the pretest and 4.11 in the posttest – a difference that is not significant. Question four asked students to identify how strongly they agreed with the statement “I am seldom preoccupied with unrelated events during group discussions.” The mean response for this item was 3.12 in the pretest and 3.20 in the posttest and again this difference is not significant. This indicates that students felt no more effective at the end of class than they felt at the beginning of class.

CMM 111 – Informative Public Speaking

In the pretest, students were asked five questions about informative public speaking. Question one asked “I enjoy the opportunity to give a speech.” The mean for the pretest was 2.88 and the mean for the posttest was 3.09. This difference is significant ($t = -2.750$, $df = 862$, $p < .006$) and means students enjoy public speaking less after completing the course. Question two asked if students “felt calm and relaxed giving a speech.” The mean for the pretest was 2.72 and the mean for the posttest was 2.87 – a difference that is not significant. Question three asked if they were likely to “decide a speaker was wrong without listening to everything they have to say.” The mean for the pretest was 3.97 and the mean for the posttest was 3.96 – a difference that is not significant. Question four asked students if “they find themselves unable to remember any of the details from a speech they just heard?” The mean for the pretest was 2.48 and the mean of the posttest was 2.52 – a difference that is not significant. Question five asked if the student felt they were “an effective public speaker?” The mean for the pretest was 3.22 and the mean for the posttest was 3.44 – a difference that is significant ($t = -3.975$, $df = 716.652$; $p < .001$). This means students believe they are less effective at public speaking at the end of class.

CMM 112 – Persuasive Public Speaking

In the pretest, students were asked five questions about persuasive public speaking. Question one asked “I have no fear of giving a speech.” The mean for the pretest was 2.95 and the mean for the posttest was 3.96. This difference is significant ($t = -2.49$, $df = 58$, $p < .017$ two-tailed) and means students were more fearful after completing the course. Question two asked if students “forgot facts because they get nervous giving a speech.” The mean for the pretest was 2.32 and the mean for the posttest was 2.22 – a difference that is not significant. Question three asked if they were likely to “focus on delivery more than what the speaker says.” The mean for the pretest was 2.86 and the mean for the posttest was 3.11 – a difference that is not significant. Question four asked students if “paid attention to the evidence provided by the speaker?” The mean for the pretest was 2.23 and the mean of the posttest was 1.67 – a difference that is not significant. Question five asked if the student felt they were “an effective public speaker?” The mean for the pretest was 3.45 and the mean for the posttest was 3.89 – a difference that is significant ($t = -2.099$, $df = 58$; $p < .04$, two-tailed). This means students believe they are less effective at public speaking at the end of class. Please note the sample size for the persuasive public speaking course is much smaller than the other three modules. This is due to the fewer number of sections offered and lower levels of student completion of the assessment process.

CMM 113 – Interviewing

In the pretest, students were asked five questions about interviewing. Question one asked “I have no fear of interviewing someone.” The mean for the pretest was 3.50 and the mean for the posttest was 3.97. This difference is significant ($t = -5.023$, $df = 536$, $p < .001$ two-tailed) and means students were more fearful after completing the course. Question two asked “I enjoy being interviewed.” The mean for the pretest was 3.31 and the mean for the posttest was 3.74. This difference is significant ($t = -4.938$, $df = 536$, $p < .001$) and means students enjoyed being interviewed less after completing the course. Question three asked “in interviewing situations, I often fake paying attention.” The mean for the pretest was 2.17 and the mean for the posttest was 2.09 – a difference that is not significant. Question four asked students how strongly they agreed with the statement “I am not very effective at interviewing others.” The mean for the pretest was 3.39 and the mean for the posttest was 3.80. The difference is significant ($t = 5.533$, $df = 536$, $p < .001$ two-tailed) and means students felt less capable as an interviewer after completing the course. Question five asked students how strongly they agreed with the statement “I am an effective interviewee.” The mean for the pretest was 3.50 and the mean for the posttest was 3.89. The difference is significant ($t = -5.520$, $df = 536$, $p < .001$ two-tailed) and means students felt less capable as an interviewee after completing the course.

Other data was gathered. Data examining information search and evaluation as well as course specific content was also gathered. Unfortunately this data was not gathered prior to the modules. Since direct comparisons between the modules and the traditional 16 week course cannot be made, that data will not be discussed here. However, concern about the general seeming lack of effectiveness prompted a secondary analysis of the course evaluation data as a way of triangulating – or increasing our confidence that student perceptions during the assessment and during the course evaluation process are consistent. It is clear from that analysis that the course evaluation data is consistent with the assessment data.

Course Evaluation Data

Course evaluation data from CMM 101 and the modules were gathered and analyzed. The time frame for this analysis extends from Fall of 1997 to Winter of 2003.

Term & Year	Course	Student Learning	Course Rating	Instructor Rating	Overall Rating	N of Ss
FA 97 – WI 01	101	2.90	2.78	3.03	3.07	5955
FA 01 WI 02	modules	2.35	2.36	3.075	2.76	5721
		Item 12 (old 9)	Item 24 (old 7)	Item 25 (old 8)	Total of All Items	

Comparisons of group means indicate all of the differences are statistically significant. Specifically, student reported learning more in the 101 course than they learn in the modules ($t = 8.8$, $df = 16$, $p < .001$ two tailed), rated the course lower ($t = 5.68$, $df = 16$, $p < .001$ two tailed) and using an index of all items gave the modules an overall lower evaluation than the 101 course ($t = 6.9$, $df = 16$, $p < .001$ two tailed). The instructor rating, however, remained about the same. Students evaluated the instructors about the same ($t = -0.844$, $df = 16$, $p > .41$ two tailed).

Summary

The module program no longer appears to be as effective as the more traditional 16 week course in terms of reducing speech anxiety. In addition the course has not shown to be effective at increasing student perceptions of affect toward the course, raising self-perceptions of communicative competence or increasing listening effectiveness. On excellent outcome of the modules is the use of technology in the course. Students report very favorably about being able to present their first/practice speeches on tape for feedback from the instructor.

Improvements on Assessment: Outcomes

1. **Multimedia Content Development.** The addition of streaming video on the assessment website. Rather than use transcripts of student speeches, audio/video files will stream the speeches for students to evaluate during the assessment. This has been completed. A small group panel presentation is available and so are examples of student informative and persuasive speeches. Instructors can bring the content to class on DVD's that have been created within the department. The media is not currently being streamed online, however. This is still a very real possibility, but instructors report preferring to use the speeches in class.
2. **Measurement Reduction.** The number of items for the scales employed on the website will be dramatically reduced. This will increase student participation and completion of the assignments with minimal loss of measurement precision. This has also been completed. The number of items has been more than cut in half – making the assessment process easier for students to complete.
3. **Instruction Changes.** Students will be required to turn in a video or an audio tape of their speech before they give the speech to the class. They will be allowed to do the speech as many times as they want to get it “right.” This will enhance the in class speeches by requiring significant practice in giving the speech and evaluating the quality of their own speech. This has also been incorporated into the course. Currently the technology was not available to do this in a systematic network manner like we had hoped. We tried many cameras this past summer and were not able to find one that worked at a reasonable cost. Currently students use whatever technology they can find and submit their projects to their instructors by hand. Not all instructors avail their students this opportunity, but most do.

4. Information Search and Evaluation. Emphasize the importance of information search and evaluation as well as message adaptation during COM 504 and part time instructor meetings. This has been done also. In addition, the measures are being reworked. It is hoped that this will evolve into a more “information as argumentation” model with less focus on information search and library skills.
5. Com 504 has been changed from no credit to 1 credit course for all teaching assistants. This too has also been completed. In fact, the course was changed into a 3 credit course that will allow more training for the teaching assistants.