

University of Dayton
Communication Module Assessment

Introduction

During May of 2004, the annual assessment of the communication modules was completed. This report reflects data gathered during the 2003 – 2004 academic year for the four courses comprising the modules.

Results**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 2.48 in the pretest and 1.85 in the posttest. The means suggest they students enjoyed group discussion less by the end of the course than they had at the beginning of the course and the difference is statistically significant ($t = 10.196$, $df = 381$, $p < .001$).

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 3.90 in the pretest and 2.08 in the posttest. This difference is significant and ($t = 32.85$, $df = 381$; $p < .001$) and indicates that students were far less anxious at the end of the class than they were at the beginning of the course.

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 1.93 in the pretest and 1.14 in the posttest. This difference was significant ($t = 17.20$, $df = 381$; $p < .001$) and indicates that students were more likely to judge the comments of others at the end of the class than they were at the beginning of the class.

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 3.25 in the pretest and 3.91 in the posttest. This difference was significant ($t = -12.59$, $df = 381$; $p < .001$) and indicates less preoccupied with unrelated events at the end of the course than they were at the beginning of the course.

Question five asked students to identify how strongly they agreed with the statement “I am not very effective when I work in a decision making group.” The mean response for this item was 2.04 in the pretest and 1.67 in the posttest. This difference was significant ($t = 7.78$, $df = 381$; $p < .001$) and indicates students felt they were more effective working in decision making groups at the end of the course than they were at the beginning of the course.

In addition to the questions focusing on speaking anxiety within the group decision making context, self perceptions of communicative competence, and listening skills, student information search and evaluation skills were also evaluated. At the end of the five week period, 61% of the students could correctly identify where current periodicals can be found in the library and 55.5% knew where to find the bound journals. The vast majority of students – 92.8% knew the name of the University consortium UD belongs to and 95.8% understood the use of call numbers within the library. Finally 49% understood basic Boolean logic as a search tool.

Finally course specific information was also assessed. 73% of the students could identify a strategy to help small groups from falling prey to conformity, 85.9% could identify an effective strategy for remedying non-participatory group members and 63.1% could identify the type of group climate within a decision making group. In addition, 93.5% of the students could identify the type of conflict a group was experiencing, and 83.2% could identify the type of leadership within a group. In the only disappointing result for this assessment, only 37.2% of the students correctly identified the type of power being employed by a group member.

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 3.23 and the mean for the posttest was 1.91. This difference is significant ($t = 17.59$, $df = 252$, $p < .001$) and means students enjoy public speaking significantly more after completing the course.

Question two asked if students “felt calm and relaxed giving a speech.” The mean for the pretest was 3.02 and the mean for the posttest was 2.07. This difference is significant ($t = 12.51$, $df = 252$, $p < .001$) and means students felt calmer and more relaxed giving a speech after completing the course.

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 1.91 and the mean for the posttest was 1.09. This difference is significant ($t = 14.18$, $df = 252$, $p < .001$) and means students are less judgmental when listening after completing the course.

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 2.36 and the mean of the posttest was 3.95. This difference is significant ($t = -26.03$, $df = 252$, $p < .001$) and means students are better able to remember details when listening after completing the course.

Question five asked if the student felt they were “an effective public speaker?” The mean for the pretest was 3.48 and the mean for the posttest was 1.81. This difference is significant ($t = 23.54$, $df = 252$, $p < .001$). This means students believe they are much more effective at public speaking at the end of class.

In addition to the questions focusing on public speaking anxiety, self perceptions of communicative competence, and listening skills, student information search and evaluation skills were also evaluated. At the end of the five week period, 60.5% of the students could correctly identify where current periodicals can be found in the library and 59.7% knew where to find the bound journals. The vast majority of students – 95.7% knew the name of the University consortium UD belongs to and 96.8% understood the use of call numbers within the library. Finally 51% understood basic Boolean logic as a search tool.

Finally course specific information was also assessed. When asked, 77.9% of the students could identify the type of attention device used by a speaker and 83% could identify the correct audience relevance devices used by a speaker. Students were less successful at identifying the method of organization used by a speaker – only 40.3% correctly identified the type of organization used in a speech. Nearly every student correctly identified a preview of main points, 72.7% identified the transition used by a speaker and 73.9% were able to identify how a speaker adapted a message to their audience.

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 3.19 and the mean for the posttest was 3.45. This difference is significant ($t = 3.69$, $df = 77$, $p < .001$ two-tailed) and means students were less fearful about giving a speech after completing the course.

Question two asked if students “forgot facts because they get nervous giving a speech.” The mean for the pretest was 2.80 and the mean for the posttest was 1.94. This difference is significant ($t = 6.36$, $df = 77$, $p < .001$) and means students were less nervous and forgetful when giving a speech after completing the course.

Question three asked if they were likely to “focus on delivery more than what the speaker says.” The mean for the pretest was 3.15 and the mean for the posttest was 1.98. This difference is significant ($t = 8.09$, $df = 77$, $p < .001$) and means students were less likely to focus on style over substance when listening to a speech after completing the course.

Question four asked students if “paid attention to the evidence provided by the speaker?” The mean for the pretest was 2.31 and the mean of the posttest was 3.88. This difference is significant ($t = 10.59$, $df = 77$, $p < .001$) and means students paid more attention to the evidence provided by the speaker after completing the course.

Question five asked if the student felt they were “an effective public speaker?” The mean for the pretest was 3.60 and the mean for the posttest was 1.85. This difference is significant ($t = 12.31$, $df = 77$; $p < .001$) and means students believe they are more effective at public speaking at the end of class.

In addition to the questions focusing on public speaking anxiety, self perceptions of communicative competence, and listening skills, student information search and evaluation skills were also evaluated. At the end of the five week period, 65.4% of the students could correctly identify where current periodicals can be found in the library and 66.7% knew where to find the bound journals. The vast majority of students – 93.6% knew the name of the University consortium UD belongs to and 96.2% understood the use of call numbers within the library. Finally 55.1% understood basic Boolean logic as a search tool.

Finally course specific information was also assessed. When asked, 71.8% of the students could identify the type of attention device used by a speaker and 69.2% could identify the correct audience relevance devices used by a speaker. Students were less successful at identifying the method of organization used by a speaker – only 47.4% correctly identified the type of organization used in a speech. Nearly every student correctly identified a preview of main points, 71.8% identified the transition used by a speaker and 78.2% could identify how a speaker attempted to establish their credibility as a speaker.

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 3.63 and the mean for the posttest was 3.67. This difference is not significant ($t = -0.998$, $df = 264$, $p = .318$) and means students were not less fearful about interviewing after completing the course.

Question two asked “I enjoy being interviewed.” The mean for the pretest was 3.67 and the mean for the posttest was 1.89. This difference is significant ($t = 26.46$, $df = 264$, $p < .001$) and means students enjoyed being interviewed significantly more after completing the course.

Question three asked “in interviewing situations, I often fake paying attention.” The mean for the pretest was 2.10 and the mean for the posttest was 2.03. This difference is not significant ($t = 1.22$, $df = 264$, $p = .224$) and means students did not report paying more attention in interviews after completing the course.

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 2.23 and the mean for the posttest was 3.95. The difference is significant ($t = 33.55$, $df = 264$, $p < .001$) and means students felt more competent 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 3.84 and the mean for the posttest was 3.75. The difference is significant ($t = 36.96$, $df = 264$, $p < .001$) and means students felt more competent as an interviewee after completing the course.

In addition to the questions focusing on public speaking anxiety, self perceptions of communicative competence, and listening skills, student information search and evaluation skills were also evaluated. At the end of the five week period, 69.1% of the students could correctly identify where current periodicals can be found in the library and 72.5% knew where to find the bound journals. The vast majority of students – 99.2% knew the name of the University consortium UD belongs to and 97.7% understood the use of call numbers within the library. Finally 56.6% understood basic Boolean logic as a search tool.

Finally course specific information was also assessed. When asked, 73.2% of the students could identify the type of interview 40.4% could identify the correct interview sequence. Students were more successful at identifying question types used by an interviewer – 76.2% could correctly identify the questions by type. 67.2% could identify the interviewee responsibilities enacted by a speaker and 75.1% correctly identified appropriate use of hypothetical questions in an interview.

Summary

As can be seen in the assessment outcomes reported above, the module program has improved dramatically in the past year. One 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. We will begin an extensive pilot study of this use of technology in the Fall using USB 2.0 webcams and the University network with the help of David Wright. The small group panel presentation is being used widely in the classes 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.

Focus for the next year should be on the interviewing course. Student scores on the course specific content is lower than the other modules. Also students have a great deal of trouble with the final project for the course. A more manageable final project is sorely needed.