DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 395 349 CS 509 262

AUTHOR Campbell, D. Gail
TITLE Toward Refining the Assessment of the Basic Public Speaking Course: An Experimental Study.
PUB DATE Nov 95
NOTE 11p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Speech Communication Association (81st, San Antonio, TX, November 18-21, 1995).
PUB TYPE Viewpoints (Opinion/Position Papers, Essays, etc.) (120) -- Speeches/Conference Papers (150) -- Reports - Research/Technical (143)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Communication Research; Comparative Analysis; *Evaluation Methods; Higher Education; *Introductory Courses; *Public Speaking; *Student Development; *Student Evaluation; Undergraduate Students
IDENTIFIERS Personal Report of Communication Apprehension

ABSTRACT

A study on basic speech assessment replicated an earlier one except that in place of the CCAI and the Competent Speaker form, the Self-Perceived Public Speaking Competency Scale (SPPSC) was used. Also, 2 randomly selected control groups of students were added to the research design: one consisting of 62 students who had not taken speech and were not taking it, and the other consisting of 71 students who had already taken speech but were not presently enrolled in a speech class. The experimental group consisted of 56 students. All three groups were administered the PRCA-24, the RSE, and the SPPSC at the beginning and end of the semester. Scores were examined in terms of the following hypotheses: (1) that all three instruments, pretest and posttest, would not register significant differences for the control groups; and (2) that all three instruments would indicate better posttest and pretest scores for the experimental group. Results showed both hypotheses to be wrong. All 3 groups scored lower on the PRCA posttest than the pretest; all three groups improved slightly on the other two tests. In other words, most students improved in their speech skills over time whether enrolled in basic speech or not. The results appear disappointing. One explanation would look to the long-proven confusion produced by time itself. Another would note that public speaking skills were not reinforced in classes other than speech, even though speech or presentations were required. (Contains 7 tables of scores and 15 references.) (TB)

TOWARD REFINING THE ASSESSMENT OF THE BASIC PUBLIC SPEAKING COURSE: AN EXPERIMENTAL STUDY

D. GAIL CAMPBELL, PH.D.

DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNICATION
UNIVERSITY OF COLORADO AT DENVER
CAMPUS BOX 176
POST OFFICE BOX 173364
DENVER, CO 80217-3364
OFFICE (303) 556-2591; FAX (303) 556-6018

DGCAMPBELL@CASTLE.CUDENVER.EDU

A PAPER PRESENTED AT THE
SPEECH COMMUNICATION ASSOCIATION CONVENTION, SAN ANTONIO,
NOVEMBER, 1995

TOWARD REFINING THE ASSESSMENT OF THE BASIC PUBLIC SPEAKING COURSE:. AN EXPERIMENTAL STUDY

All across the country, issues of evaluation and accountability are spurring efforts by researchers to define and hone models, methodologies, and instruments for assessing skills learned by students in academia including communication skills and competencies (Cronin, 1992; Speech Communication Association, 1993; Speech Communication Summer Assessment Converence, 1994). Among the proponents of this movement is Phil Backlund (1990) who cites two objectives of assessing college outcomes: (1) to improve the quality of educational programs according to goals that have been set and (2) to determine if students achieve these goals. To meet these objectives, Backlund says that schools must formulate a statement of anticipated outcomes, participate in college assessment programs, and use standardized measures of assessment.

To address these concerns, communication faculty at a midsize midwestern university have been working on developing an assessment program for oral communication skills at the undergraduate level for the past several years. The program those faculty have developed has, in part, utilized a pretest-posttest design for the assessment of the cognitive, affective, and behavioral dimensions of basic public speaking competency (e.g., Morley, Morreale, & Hulbert-Johnson, 1991; Morreale, 1990; Morreale, Hackman, Shockley-Zalabak, & Gomez, 1991; Morreale, Moore, Taylor, Surges-Tatum, & Hulbert-Johnson, 1993). That design has employed four instruments: Rubin's (1982) Communication Competency Assessment Instrument (CCAI), McCroskey's (1970) Personal Report of Communication Apprehension (PRCA-24), Rosenberg's (1965) Self-Esteem Scale (RSE), and (Morreale, Morley, & Naylor, 1991) the Competent Speaker Speech Evaluation Form.

Recently, a sister institution in a neighboring city, also a midsize university, has joined in a collaborative effort to extend and refine the original research design for assessing the impact of the public speaking course on undergraduates. (See Campbell, D.G., & Morreale, S.P., 1995). Specifically, the second university extended the pre-posttest design to include a pre-posttest control group. The intention of this second study was to speak to challenges to the first study related to history, maturation, subject selection, etc.

This paper presents the second study which replicates the first except for the following conditions: (1) In place of the CCAI and the Competent Speaker form, Ellis' (1995) Self-Perceived Public Speaking Competency Scale (SPPSC) was used. The scale has been reported to be a valid self-report measure of subjects' perceptions of their communication behaviors; and (2) Two randomly selected control groups of students were added to the research design: one group consisted of 62 students who had not been and were not presently enrolled in a public speaking class; the other group was composed of 71 students who had already taken, but were not presently enrolled in a public speaking class. The experimental group was composed of 56 students enrolled in the basic public speaking course. All three groups were administered the PRCA-24, the

RSE, and the SPPSC at the beginning of the semester in January and again at the end of the semester in May.

Scores on the three instruments for all three groups were examined in terms of the following hypotheses:

(1) On all three instruments, pretest-posttest differences for both the non-speech and the previous speech control groups were not expected to differ significantly.

(2) On all three instruments, posttest scores for both control groups were not expected to be significantly better than their pretest scores. However, posttest scores for the experimental group were expected to be significantly better than the pretest scores.

Results

The hypothesis of the experimental group pre-post interaction on the PRCA was not supported, $F(2, 186) = 1.57$, $p. = .000$. However, there was a significant pre-post main effect, $F(1, 186) = 16.14$, $p. = .000$. Overall, subjects in all three groups scored significantly lower (i.e., less apprehensive) on the PRCA at the end of the semester (56.48) than at the beginning (59.45). See Table 1.)

Analysis of the four PRCA subscales yielded some significant differences. A repeated measures ANOVA on the Group Discussion communication apprehension subscale yielded a highly significant pre-post main effect, $F(1,186) = 9.06$, $p. = .003$, as well as a marginal experimental Group Discussion pre-post interaction, $F(2, 186) = 2.99$, $p. = .053$ (see Table 2 for means). Specifically, Group Discussion subscale scores decreased (i.e., indicated less apprehension) overall (15.26 to 14.45). In addition, although only marginally significant, it appears that prior speech students remained the same throughout the semester while current speech students and those who had never taken the course improved somewhat on this dimension.

Analysis of the Public Speaking subscores of the PRCA yielded results similar to the overall PRCA. There was a pre-post main effect, insofar as all three groups improved (were less apprehensive) between the beginning and the end of the semester (18.89 to 17.72), $F(1,186) = 15.40$, $p. = .000$ (see Table 3).

A similar pre-post main effect, $F(1,186) = 8.22$, $p. = .005$, resulted from the Meetings subscale pf the PRCA. As the means displayed in Table 4 show, the sample improved as a whole over the course of the semester, evidenced by lower scores at the end.

Analyses yielded no comparable pre-post differences on the Interpersonal Conversations subscale of the PRCA (Table 5).

Analysis of RSE scores yielded results similar to the PRCA. There was a pre-post main effect, insofar as all three groups improved between the beginning and the end of the semester (40.10 to 41.93), $F = 14.18$, $p. = .000$ (see Table 6).

However, the hypothesis that current speech students would demonstrate more improvement than any of the other groups, or that students who had never taken speech would score lower overall were not supported, all F's <1, not significant.

Analysis of SPPSC scores yielded a significant pre-post main effect, $F(1,186) = 6.72$, $p. = .01$. Overall, students' scores increased significantly during the course of the semester, regardless of group (66.91 to 68.40). In addition, there was an experimental group pre-post interaction, $F(12,186) = 4.99$, $p. = .008$. Specifically, prior speech students' scores remained virtually the same. Currently enrolled students increased dramatically (63.84 to 68.12), and those who had never taken speech increased, but less so than the current speech students (67.89 to 69.42) (See Table 7.) The students who had never taken and were not enrolled in speech class during that semester scored higher on the posttest than the other two groups.

Discussion

Main effects:

The results may be summarized as follows: Because pre-posttest main effects were found for six of the seven measures used in the study (the PRCA, Group Discussion, Public Speaking, Meetings, RSE, and SPPSC), it is obvious that all three of the groups reported that they improved over time. So, whether students had taken, had not taken, or were enrolled in speech class, they all perceived that they became less apprehensive, more competent, and gained higher self-esteem by the end of the semester. Therefore, to declare that speech course instruction was most likely the reason that the experimental students' improved in communication skills in this study would be a misnomer.

Additionally, in all measures except for the SPPSC, currently enrolled students had the highest initial concern about their communication competence. This may be accounted for by the nature of the course objectives in the speech course (i.e., calling attention to such skills) versus non-emphasis of such course objectives in non-speech classes.

Interaction effects:

Pre-posttest interaction was marginally obtained on the Group Discussion subset of the PRCA, i.e.,. prior speech students' scores remained the same, while the current speech enrollees and the never exposed groups improved only a little. For the SPPSC, pre-posttest interaction showed that the prior speech students remain virtually unchanged, while those students who had never taken the speech class improved some and the current speech enrollees improved the most. The students who had never taken and were not enrolled in speech class during that semester scored higher on the both the pre- and posttest than the other two groups.

No effects:

The seventh assessment, the Interpersonal Conversations subscale of the PRCA, was the only measure where there were no discernable pre-post differences. Because it is a subscale of the PRCA which was found to have main effects overall and for the other three components, the findings are not noteworthy.

The results appear to be disappointing. The numbers show that the public speaking experimental group improved their scores on all three instruments at the end of the treatment, but so did the two control groups, i.e., those who already had taken a public speaking course and those who had not. The obvious contention for such results is the pretest, control group, posttest design. Scholars have long noted confounding conditions associated with the passage of time, environmental influences, measurement sensitization, fatigue, etc., effects which are present in the experimental and the control groups (e.g., Kerlinger, 1986; Osgood, Suci, Tannenbaum, 1957).

However, there may be another explanation. Skills in the art of public speaking that were reinforced in the experimental group might have been unnoticed in the other courses. Therefore, even though students in both control groups could have made presentations in some of the other classes they were taking, their grades might not have included their actual speechmaking performance level in front of the group.

This was certainly the case in at least one class. The author was invited visit to a senior level science class where the students presented persuasive speeches with visual aids about their semester projects/inventions to the author. It was noted that all but one of the approximately 20 seniors in the class had taken the public speaking class as a freshman or junior. Almost all of the presentations critiqued by this author in that class had at least some important public speaking drawbacks, even after a refresher module presented by the author to that group the month before their presentations. Had a potential marketer or investor in the business world been in attendance, the presentational skills of these college seniors might have influenced that business person's interest in the products presented. Similar performance levels have been noted in the author's senior level classes as well. Even former students of the author's speech class seem to have forgotten their speechmaking skills when presenting work in the author's senior level classes.

Maybe the problem is not that speechmaking skills weren't learned, but that they are not being reinforced in later coursework. A student who takes the speech course as a freshman or sophomore might forget such skills because they are not reinforced in successive classes. Another difficulty is that sometimes instructors do not realize what is missing in the presentation, sometimes possibly assuming that people can present information effectively through sheer experience rather than training.

Therefore, recommendations for future study are twofold. The first is insuring that the basic speech course is included in the curriculum for all majors, whatever the field, and reinforcing those skills in later coursework to assure not only that the student learns, but that the student does not lose a precious competence in what it takes to succeed in life

after college. The second recommendation is to continue to look for appropriate measures of the outcome variables. Problems inherent in the pre-posttest design might yet be overcome through future development of better measures.

References

Backlund, P. (1990). SCA conference on assessment of communication competency. Denver, CO: University of Denver.

Campbell, D.G., & Morreale, S.P. (1995, March). Designing and refining assessment programs for the basic communication courses: A Descriptive study. Paper presented at the annual Colorado Regional Higher Education Assessment Conference, Denver, CO.

Cronin, M. (1992, November). Accreditation standards for oral communication competency. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the Speech Communication Association, Chicago, IL.

Ellis, K. (1995). Apprehension, self-perceived competency, and teacher immediacy in the laboratory-supported public speaking course: Trends and relationships. Communication Education, 44, 64-78.

Kerlinger, F.N. (1986). Foundations of behavioral research (3rd ed.). Fort Worth, TX: Holt Rinehart and Winston.

McCroskey, J.C., (1970). Measure of communication-bound anxiety. Speech Monographs, 37, 269-277.

Morley, D.D., Morreale, S.P., & Hulbert-Johnson, R. (1991, November). The competent speaker: Development, reliability, and validity of a communication competency-based speech evaluation form. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the Speech Communication Association, Atlanta, GA.

Morreale, S.P. (1990). "The competent speaker": Development of a communication-

competency based speech evaluation form and manual. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the Speech Communication Association, Chicago, IL

Morreale, S., Hackman, M., Shockley-Zalabak, P., & Gomez, A. (1991). An innovative approach to teaching oral communication: The Center for Excellence in Oral Communication. Education, 112, 276-285.

Morreale, S.P., Moore, M.R., Taylor, P.K., Surges-Tatum, D., & Hulbert-Johnson, R. (1993). The competent speaker. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the Speech Communication Association, Annandale, VA.

Osgood, C., Suci, G., & Tannenbaum, P. (1957). The measurement of meaning. Urbana, IL: University of Illinois.

Rosenberg, M. (1965). Society and the adolescent self-image. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University.

Rubin, R.B. (1982). Communication competency assessment instrument. Annandale, VA: Speech Communication Association.

Speech Communication Association. (1993). SCA criteria for the assessment of oral communication. Annandale, VA: Speech Communication Association.

Speech Communication Association Summer Conference. (1994). Published proceedings. Annandale, VA: Speech Communication Association.

Table 1: Pre-Post Overall PRCA Scores

	Prior	Current	Never	Mean
Pre	58.18	62.11	58.50	59.45
Post	56.87	57.55	55.05	56.48

Table 2: Pre-Post Group Discussion Scores

	Prior	Current	Never	Mean
Pre	14.48	16.32	15.21	15.26
Post	14.58	14.88	13.92	14.45

Table 3: Pre-Post Public Speaking Scores

	Prior	Current	Never	Mean
Pre	18.83	19.39	18.52	18.91
Post	18.07	17.73	17.47	17.76

Table 4: Pre-Post Meeting Scores

	Prior	Current	Never	Mean
Pre	15.94	16.96	15.68	16.16
Post	15.73	15.66	14.66	15.36

Table 5: Pre-Post Interpersonal Conversations Scores

	Prior	Current	Never	Mean
	Prior	Current	Never	Mean
Pre	8.93	9.43	9.10	9.13
Post	8.49	9.23	9.00	8.88

Table 6: Pre-Post RSE Scores

	Prior	Current	Never	Mean
Pre	40.04	40.21	40.07	40.10
Post	41.27	41.96	42.66	41.93

Table 7: Pre-Post SPPSC Scores

	Prior	Current	Never	Mean
Pre	68.48	63.84	67.89	66.91
Post	67.73	68.12	69.42	68.40