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ABSTRACT

This paper takes a ethnomethodological look at a typical Experiential Self-Empowerment Approach (ESA)-using speech class to see how the ESA uses 12 assumptions as background expectancies (Heritage, 1984) to accomplish personal growth in college public speaking classes. The following assumptions are addressed: (1) students deserve "something more" out of this experience than just public speaking; (2) public speaking is a vehicle for personal growth; (3) instructors need awareness and flexibility; (4) students are already innately competent speakers; (5) students need to learn to communicate thoughts; (6) present, positive thoughts are the key to success; (7) unifying the basic, adult, and higher selves pays rich dividends; (8) experiential learning lasts a lifetime; (9) personal growth flourishes in a supportive climate; (10) breaking through a comfort-zone fosters confidence; (11) lifelong learning is the goal; and (12) students benefit from knowing what to expect. Sudents' everyday practices within the setting of nine University of Alaska at Anchorage college classes are examined to see why the ESA experience can produce such dramatic, powerful, and desirable results. After instruction with the ESA in an additional 11 classes in colleges in Oklahoma, student evaluations showed that students enjoyed the method, the techniques, and the benefits of ESA. The paper also offers implications for teaching the basic course in college public speaking classes. Contains 37 references. (Author/CR)

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# Public Speaking Instruction With the Experiential, Self-empowerment Approach (ESA): An Ethnomethodological Look

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Abstract

An ethnomethodological look at a typical ESA (Experiential, Self-empowerment Approach)-using speech class is taken to see how the ESA uses twelve assumptions as background expectancies (Heritage, 1984) to accomplish personal growth in college public speaking classes. This work also looks at student's everyday practices within the setting of nine college classes (at the University of Alaska, Anchorage) to see why this experience can produce such dramatic, powerful, and desirable results. Results are added for an additional 11 classes taught with the ESA (in many colleges in Oklahoma). Implications for teaching college public speaking classes (the basic course) are given.

## Public Speaking Instruction With the Experiential, Self-empowerment Approach (ESA): An Ethnomethodological Look

A child watching a magic show often will ask in fascination, "How'd you do that," knowing that the magician may not oblige with an explanation, but with the invitation to "Watch again, more closely." This creates and extends the illusion of magic and draws the child inward for a closer look.

In the same way, ethnomethodologists turn their fascination towards the unlikely "non-magic" of people's everyday practices and the "embodied" and communicative accomplishments they enact together. This close watching to see how some "it" [namely, some specified folk method] is done (or accomplished) is essentially what Garfinkel's ethnomethodology is all about (Garfinkel, 1967; Heritage, 1984; Wieder, 1977).

This paper's challenge is to take a close ethnomethodological look at a typical ESA (Experiential, Self-empowerment Approach)-using communication class to see how it uses twelve basic assumptions as background expectancies (Heritage, 1984) to accomplish personal growth in a college public speaking setting. It also looks at the participant's "non-magic" everyday practices to see why this experience can produce such desirable results.

## Definitions

An ESA-using communication class is an experiential public speaking class that uses self-empowerment techniques which honor twelve pedagogical assumptions to facilitate personal growth. So far, I've taught nine classes at the University of Alaska, Anchorage and 11 in Oklahoma. A pilot study on the first seven Alaska classes shows one measure of their success (Bedore, 1992).

Experiential classes are "hands-on" classes where the focus is on John Dewey's advice to "learn by doing" (as cited in Borowy & Mc Guire, 1983). These classes are typically full of activities.

I define self-empowerment as: *an attitude of personal power that is achieved and maintained through a recognition of one's own worth, talent, courage, dignity, grace, and integrity.*

Self-empowerment techniques are personal growth activities that are used over time to create a sense of self-worth, personal accountability, and power in an individual. The goal is to recognize, accept, and act on individual hidden reserves of talent, ability and courage. These techniques are learned experientially, and are best presented in combinations or in groups of activities.

Background expectancies is Shutz's 1959 term for the expectancies that members of a group share and socially sanction. These included features such as their "factual nature," their

"undoubted correspondence," their ability to affect and be affected by the witness, their ability to be named, their reproducibility, their temporality, their symbolic "what-anyone-knows(ness)," their "exchangeability," their bibliographic indifference, their public and private dimension, and their ability to be controlled by the witness (Garfinkel, 1967 , pp 55-56). While it is not within the scope of this work to give a complete exegesis of these features, it can be demonstrated that the twelve assumptions the students use function as their background expectancies (Bedore, 1994).

Accelerated personal growth implies an awareness of and a focused attention on dignity, grace, integrity; self-esteem, self-empowerment, and self-sufficiency; and confidence, competence, and courage. The goal is to make improvements in these communicative areas. "Honesty statements" from students have consistently shown that improvements have been made.

## Major Assumptions

### Students Deserve Something More

The first assumption is: **Students deserve "something more" out of this experience than just public speaking.** "Something more" can happen, but that "something more" depends fundamentally on the way the experience is originally structured.

Look at how that assumption "played" itself out. When I

entered the first class, I thought this would be the "experience of a lifetime" for these students. I expected this class to be interesting, fun, and different, challenging, intriguing, and "freeing." I knew we were going to create something really rich. I also had the other eleven assumptions in my mind, so it wasn't difficult to communicate enthusiasm.

There was an immediate feeling of "winning" in the air. Much of it was based on our positive self-expectation, which Waitley (1979, p. 78) characterizes as "pure and simple optimism." That optimism seemed to be contagious.

Originally, this was just any ordinary public speaking classroom. However, it quickly became "the place where personal growth happens," or in other words, a perspicuous setting (Garfinkel & Wieder, 1992) where fun and growth could happen.

We brought the "setting" into being whenever we were together, even if we transported it outside for a class or two on a sunny day. We usually stayed indoors because we could "be ourselves" better without the unavoidable intrusion of curious looks from passers-by on campus.

Our classroom became its own little "culture" during the times we shared the space and the experience together. It was a safe space to learn and grow. It was special because we were acting

on the premise that we wanted to create "something more."

That first assumption - but really all of them together - created a self-fulfilling prophecy (Beck, 1988; Fensterheim & Baer, 1988; Gamble & Gamble, 1990; Zimbardo, 1989) for us. We believed we could do it, and we did.

Public Speaking is a Vehicle for Personal Growth

The second assumption was: **The public speaking experience can be a vehicle for personal growth.** It only took a little while for students to see the value of what we would be doing together. Personal growth in this class implied an awareness of and a focused attention on dignity, grace, integrity; self-esteem, self-worth, self-sufficiency; confidence, competence, and courage.

We worked with the belief that no one came in to the class "broken" or inadequate, or somehow needing to be "fixed." This class just offered students some new things in addition to what they already had. They were skeptical, but as they experienced greater facility with these qualities, students began to accept them as goals worth as much attention as their public speaking goals.

As David P. Gardner (as cited in John-Roger & McWilliams, 1992, p. 22) points out, "The fact is that we are being educated when we know it the least." This was certainly true here. It was after a student "lived through" an awkward situation that dignity,

grace, and integrity became more "visible." It was after a student "fought through or re-phrased" fear that courage, confidence, and finally competence "appeared." And, it was after "taking charge of the mind" that a student could "see" innate self-esteem, self-empowerment, and self-sufficiently in action.

Hindsight is a valuable tool, because action is finally slowed down enough to make it "more than an invisible blur." Although ethnomethodology has as its concern the recognition of affairs they are being done, in their midst, and for their duration (MacBeth, 1988, p. 74), we weren't ethnomethodologists. For us, hindsight worked well.

To get to that second assumption, after I made a brief introduction of myself and the assumptions, I introduced the P.I.G. Page. This was foreign to everyone. It was a paper with the **P**urpose, **I**ntended results, and **G**uidelines on it (P.I.G.), followed by several goals. It served as a goal-setting, energy-getting activity that was spontaneous and fun.

We read the class goal together, then randomly selected individual goals and shared them. We began: *"The purpose of the class is to demonstrate my true potential to communicate effectively with myself and others, and to do so with dignity, grace, and integrity!"* Students then "popcorned up." and said, "To have fun!"

"To learn be a better speaker," "To enjoy the day," "To present a powerful speech," "To be in my integrity," "To go 100% in everything I do today," . . . on and on till everyone had finished. When we were done, we all laughed. In just a few moments, we proved to ourselves that we could work together, change the "energy level" and create something new. We had begun the bonding that would lifted us gently into our new "culture." And, we had already laughed together.

Instructors Need "Awareness" and Flexibility

This third assumption is simply : **Instructors doing this work need awareness and a willingness to be flexible.** In other words, the instructor has to be at some level an "aware" person. What this implies is a basic level of self awareness that stems from taking the time to do the "hard" work on oneself. Gebser (1949, as translated by Barstad & Mickunas, 1984, p. 532) echoes much the same sentiment: "the genuine work which we must achieve, is that which is the most difficult and painful: the work on ourselves."

Instructors need to understand the process of self-awareness so they can understand what the students will be going through in this personal growth/ communicative experience.

Much of my "self-work" came through the International Insight Seminar series, which was a division of the University of

Santa Monica (Semigran, 1988). Some of the twelve assumptions are adaptations from those experiences.

The instructor has to be willing to use the most current psychological, sociological, and communicative data and still be flexible enough to allow things to happen that may by scary, unpredictable, emotional, funny, or spontaneous. Henry S. Haskins (as cited in John-Roger & McWilliams, 1991 a, p. 53) once said, "Good behavior is the last refuge of mediocrity." An instructor needs to be flexible so personal growth can happen.

Let's look at this in action. Many students were strangers before the first class. One was a male "attention-getter," one was a female Native Alaskan from a northern tribe, one was a very studious male piano player, and the fourth was a female student from the Caribbean. Obviously, what one would "need" for personal growth, another would shun. What was scary for one was "a piece of cake" to another.

These students interacted with each other all semester long. Sometimes they laughed so hard they cried, and sometimes they cried for other reasons. Sometimes they were very boisterous, and other times, quietly reflective. Yet forcing all into the same mold would never be appropriate. We allowed each other to "be" whatever it was we were, and agreed to "let that be o.k." That

flexibility helped tremendously.

Students are Already Innately Competent Speakers

The fourth assumption is: **Students are already innately competent speakers.** Most students won't believe this at first. In fact, most will argue for their past and future incompetence - at least in the beginning. They'll argue that they can't give good speeches. But the instructor can stop this negativity.

Why? as John-Roger and McWilliams (1988) point out, "they're addicted to being 'right,'" because "one of the easiest ways to be right is to predict failure." (P. 41). In other words, this early argument is a learned coping attitude that students bring with them from their respective cultures. Your job is to purloin that attitude and replace it with a more helpful one.

Let's look how this is done. Students already know how to think, how to talk, how to express their emotions, how to get much of what they want, and how to "speak" nonverbally. All that's left is to "de-mystify" public speaking so students clearly see that they are already "doing" public speaking all the time. There's no "magic" to it. Your task is to show them how to use their innate talent in a new setting - a "formal" one. You show them how to think "on stage" by taking the charge off of the word "stage." The next assumption does just that.

Students need to learn to communicate thoughts.

The fifth assumption is: **If you can teach students how to communicate thoughts, you will teach them how to communicate for life.** If we never spoke but used mental telepathy, no one would ever be worried about communicating publicly. We would directly transmit thoughts, there would be no "delivery," and the thoughts would transfer quickly and easily without the "problem" of speaking. Students can be very anxious about "how to speak!" It's the "how to speak" that creates that overriding feeling of fear many students have.

*Rather than divorce students from their thoughts so that they can speak, we divorce them from the words so they can "think" in public. They learn to "think it" through. They learn the joy of being "lost in thought" on stage.*

Look what happens when a student has compelling thoughts to share. S/he "forgets" being on stage because the thoughts have stolen the spotlight. One of the things that characterizes a tremendously competent speaker is that the thoughts become "what you see." The person fades back in way that is difficult to explain, but the "person-ness" is not as important as the "thought-ness." The idea and the thoughts are what are really being communicated. The person becomes "un-conscious" and the

thoughts become "visible."

But what happens when the words don't get the thoughts across because of this self-talk: "I'm scared, I'm frightened, I'm going to make a mistake, I'm going to look like a fool, I don't know how to do this, I've never done this before, this is scary and frightening, and now I don't remember what I was talking about"? The next assumption grapples with this question.

Present, positive thoughts are the key to success.

The sixth assumption is: **The mind is like a very "literal" computer; your disciplined thoughts need to be present and positive.** This assumption is critical to the program's success and will be divided into five inter-related sub-sections. They form a Gestalt-contexture, where as Gurswitch (1962, p. 134) explains, "there is a thoroughgoing interdependence among all parts or constituents." Indeed, these parts "exist through each other; each retaining its qualified existence only if and as long as the others have theirs" (p. 135). In other words, all are "essential" in the same family of thought.

Programming the literal mind. What's important is to understand that the mind is very strong and very literal (Burns, 1989; Ellis, 1990; Hooper, 1980; John-Roger & McWilliams, 1988, 1991 a, b, 1992; Waitley, 1979). If we can understand the mind, we

can understand why, when a student says, "I can't do it," why that student is accurate. And why, when a student says, "I'm afraid," as Henry Ford (as cited in John-Roger & McWilliams, 1988) suggested, you have to say, "You're right."

Because the mind is so literal, it takes us very seriously. It will do everything in its power to create exactly what we "program" in. Look at what happens when a student says. "I'm scared." The mind says, "Oh, that's present tense, I'm scared," so it "does" scared. The student feels the stomach turning, the butterflies fluttering, the knees shaking, the mouth drying up, and hands getting cold and clammy. All kinds of "scared" things happen.

Why? Because the student's mind is busy "doing" "scared." That's what was put in, that's what was asked for. The mind is not independent. It can not do things that are not "punched in." The mind can wander, true, but when you put in a specific program, the mind will faithfully "do" that program every time.

Staying positive and present. You learn a certain "way to be in the world" from you past experiences, and those experiences create a "mindset." A lot of students in public speaking use a negative or future-tense mindset to work against their own progress. What's going on is this: a student wants to do well, but doesn't think s/he can do well, and because s/he has "programed"

a command not to do well, that's what happens.

What can students do to change that? Like rational restructuring (Robinson, 1989; Showers, 1988), they can tell themselves something different - something positive and in the present tense (Ayers, 1988; Hay, 1984: Helmstetter, 1987). Look at how this works. A student says," I can't speak in public," and the mind does "can't." S/he says, "I'll learn this someday," and the mind says, "Good, someday; I don't have to worry about that now." And it doesn't (Bedore, 1995).

*Teaching a student to be disciplined with self-talk is very important. When you succeed, the student creates a positive attitude in life that revolves around the idea of "positive-present." That's a powerful attitude to have, and there's no "magic" to it. Students go from being negative and out of control to being positive, present, and in control. That learning transfers forever.*

Understanding fear. What good does it do for a student to say that s/he is feeling afraid? What benefit does that have? We worked on rephrasing fear to mean "excitement." in our classes. Think of the mind like a thesaurus, checking out words. Put in the word "fear," and you get "anxiety," "tension," "worry," and "nervousness." Put in "excitement," and the mind changes gears. Now it's looking for "joyful," "happy," and "uplifted;" words that are

fundamentally different than the words it used to describe fear. Fear and excitement cause the same physiological symptoms (John-Roger & McWilliams, 1988). It's only as adults that we learn that it is not a good thing to be excited. Perhaps that's why we call those feelings "fear."

Look how we worked with that. We called fear a "four-letter-word," using Insight Seminar's "Fantasized Expectations Appearing Real" (Semigran, 1988, p. 26). We'd ask, "What's the fantasy, what's the reality?" Usually, the students could see that they over-imagined bad consequences and under-imagined good ones. We'd then laugh at ourselves and commit to taking better charge of our thoughts. Once that became habit, we were home free.

Understanding affirmations. These are positive, present-tense statements. Just statements. Much information says that when you make them over and over again, your mind will certainly understand that you're serious and it will try to deal with the new "program," and will change patterns to fit that new pattern (Hay, 1984). So, instead of saying, "I'm going to," focus on the present tense, and an affirmation can get you into a better place.

Some students said them a many times a day for thirty days. Others liked to say them in the car, right before they got up, or right before they went to bed. It doesn't matter when they're said,

just so it is often enough so that the mind understands that you have taken charge. As Bloch (1990-1991) points out, transformation begins "only once you acknowledge that your thoughts create everything that occurs in your life" (p. 72). Over time, students learned be disciplined about their thoughts.

Look at some of the ones used: "I am a great speaker," "I'm always ready for my speeches," "I'm learning to relax with each speech," "It's like me to do a terrific job on my speeches," I welcome the unexpected while speaking," and "I enjoy speaking." In class, the students learned to believe in themselves. Over time, they saw those affirmations beginning to work.

Understanding visualizations. When it comes to memory, the mind can not tell the difference between something vividly imagined and something that actually happened. Olympic athletes use this knowledge of "visualization" with great success.

Given what Shutz (1967, p. 20) says, namely, that "I have to visualize the state of affairs to be brought about by my future action before I can draft the single steps of such future acting," one can readily see the importance of this technique.

Visualizations (Gawain, 1978; Hay, 1984; John-Roger & McWilliams, 1988) can also be called "imaginings" (John-Roger & McWilliams, 1988), "daydreamings" (Hooper, 1980), or "positive

suggestions" (Burns, 1980). All say the same thing, and all are based on common sense. If, as Waitley (1979, p. 5) asserts, "What you 'see' in your mind's eye is what you get," it simply makes sense to "see" yourself succeeding in your "mind's eye."

Look at how we used that. We "saw" ourselves successfully giving terrific speeches and enjoying them, and mentally "rehearsed" succeeding. "Honesty statements" from the students indicated that over time, the visioning exercises helped.

Unifying the Three "Selves" pays rich dividends.

The seventh assumption is: **If students unify the basic, adult, and higher "selves," they will be better able to communicate effectively.** The conceptualization for these three "selves" come from Insight International Seminars, but many scholars through the ages have also held similar views. If you can understand having three separate "selves" in one person, you can understand what might be limiting a student from perfect expression of thought.

This section is also critical to the program's success, and will be divided into three sub-sections. Like the sixth assumption they also form a Gestalt-contexture (Gurswitch,1962), where all are "essential" and in the same family of thought.

Understanding the basic self. Simply put, the basic self is

the child self. It is impulsive, spontaneous, joyful, carefree, animated, and generally "un-conscious." It is the habit-keeper, the "do-er", and the positive thinker. It responds to affirmations, is quite literal, and only hears the "yes's." Some call the basic self the "perspirational" self.

Basic self work is reminiscent of Carl Jung's work with the the "Divine child," or Rochelle Learner's work with the "inner child," or Charles Whitfield"s the "Child within," or Emmet Fox's the "Wonder child," or Alice Miller and Donald Winnicot's the "true self " (Whitfield, 1989). All of these are talking about freeing one's creative, energetic, spontaneous nature. Experiences focusing on the basic self allow students to "get out of their own way" long enough to do the important work of communicating thoughts.

Look at how this works with children. You take children who are telling a story and ask them a question about their clothes, and they'll look at you as if you were crazy. Why? Because they have already gone "un-conscious." They're so busy with the thought, that they don't have time to "do" consciousness.

And it's the very same way when you teach a student to get in touch with the basic self. That joyful, spontaneous self "forgets" about being adult and gets lost in the "doing" of thoughts. Because this is so, basic self activities form the

experiential core of work in the ESA-using public speaking classroom. Students literally have to get in touch with their spontaneous selves again.

Understanding the adult self. The adult self is nearly the opposite of the basic self. It is controlled, calculated, serious, worried, measured, and self-conscious. It is the record-keeper, the manager, and the negative thinker. It responds to criticism, is quite responsible, and only hears the "no's". Some call the adult self the "organizational" self.

Look at how this works in the classroom. Students typically come to class with their highly-armored adult selves. These "selves" are serious, afraid, and conscious of their "adultness," their appearances, how they "look" to others, and how they are "seen" in the world. They bring a negative mindset with them. That doesn't happen as much with children (Carnegie, 1962).

Our task together is to look at that serious, negative, adult self and see how it stands in the way of spontaneity and creativity. Once students learn to do that over time, they are able to "lighten up" enjoy the themselves on stage. By learning to make speaking "play" again, students learn to become "un-conscious" and to ignore the "self-conscious-ing." Instead, they attend to the thoughts, the excitement, the power, and the joy of getting

attention and sharing thoughts.

This was done very easily. It wasn't "magic," and it didn't take years of psychology, because it was just plain common sense. Nothing more. As Girton (1986, p. 70) explains, commonsense (sic) refers to a "world as seen, heard, felt, and known in common." Once students relied on that common sense, public speaking progress was rapid.

Understanding the higher self. The higher self is neither spontaneous and positive nor controlled and negative. It is neutral. It is more like a "spiritual other," an aware "master-teacher" self, a self that is "above" human experience. It is neutral, observant, spiritual, knowing, aware, and generally "ultra-conscious." It is the spirit-keeper, the watcher, and the non-judgmental thinker. It responds to the spiritual, is quite detached, and only "hears" the emotions. Some call the higher self the "inspirational" self.

Look at how this information was used. In class, we used the idea of a knowing, inspirational, higher self to have a neutral self to draw thoughts and ideas from. This neutral self was aware, but not necessarily positive or negative. It was "present," but not necessarily spontaneous or controlled. Because of this, it became an ideal "self" to trust for inspiration.

This trust in an "inner knowing' helped students who were "stuck" in their limited adult-oriented selves. This, when combined with the orderliness of the adult self and the joy of the spontaneous basic self, this led to a balanced "presentation of self" (Goffman, 1959) that translated into easy self-expression and real self-empowerment. Again, student comments in their "honesty statements" bore this out.

Experiential learning lasts a lifetime.

The eighth assumption is: **Experiential learning lasts a lifetime.** As Borowy and McGuire (1988, p. 146) point out, "The positive effects of experience-based learning have been in the forefront of educational theory since the time of John Dewey (1938)." These positive effects are still evident now. Experiential learning is the only learning that can stand the test of time. That is why over 85% of the class time in an ESA-using communication classroom is devoted to experiential learning.

In a praxiological hermeneutic of the martial arts done by Girton (1986), it was found that Kung Fu must be watched, assimilated, and then learned through experience. David Sudnow (1978) found much the same thing about learning to improvise on the jazz piano. Of his experiences with improvisational piano-playing, he writes:

> Everyday the bulk of my practicing was spent roaming all over the keyboard, rather than lingering in a delimited territory, mastering certain ways of dealing with a sparsely textured, small melodic course of movement (p. 44).

If Sudnow had simply read the piano texts or watched others perform, he never would have learned how to play jazz piano, much less improvise. Further, he found that to really master improvisation, one needs to be completely immersed in the "doing" of the improvisation. He eventually had to learn to sing while playing so he could take his mind off the mental chore of thinking about finger placement. There was no "magic" to it. In a similar vein, he had this to say about advanced typists (1978):

> The advanced may make it through an unaccustomed passage by conceiving the fingers doing the spelling, not so as to 'remember' where the proper characters lie through an image of the terrain, but so as to make it through an unfamiliar sight in the text being copied " (p. 113).

In other words, to make it through, a student needs to focus on what is being communicated, not how it is being done. As before, it is the thoughts that count. To get to those, we focus on experiences.

When we stayed committed to activity after activity, over and

over, day-in-and-day-out for fifteen weeks, we took the emotional "charge" off speaking and put it on thinking. We took the charge off "difficult" and put it on "easy," We took the charge off "mistakes" and put on dignity, grace, and integrity. We took the charge off "fear," and put it on "excitement." And, we took the charge off "being an adult," and put it back on "being complete".

With disciplined planning, in a fifteen week, 30-student class, each student can be on stage about 80 times. Much of the time is spent on short impromptu speaking, basic self or spontaneous activities, and "mistake work."

As James Joyce noted (as cited in John-Roger & McWilliams, 1991, p. 158) "Mistakes are the portals of discovery." We "practice" mistakes so often that they became uninteresting. This is how, over time, we take the emotional charge off of them and other troubling concerns the students have on stage.

Commitment to experiential learning is the key.

Personal Growth flourishes in a supportive climate.

The ninth assumption is: **Students can learn to support each other so that growth can happen.** This doesn't take a lot of time. What is does take is creative energy, positive thinking, and a good "buddy" system that helps students see how support from others can be helpful. Remember the four students

mentioned earlier? The Islander and the piano player were buddies, and the attention-getter and the Native Alaskan were too. Think of the positive insights they gained as they struggled through the learning process together.

If you teach students to support and care about each other, dramatic changes in the way the climate, the atmosphere, and the "feeling" of that classroom will occur.

Look at how this works. At first, you're the catalyst. You show students how to cooperate, how to care, and how to be concerned. You do this for the first two or three weeks, and then do "maintenance," because after they "get it," and understand how important it is to work together on the process, they'll do the rest themselves.

One thing you could say is, "Well, those students were giving those wonderful speeches and making tremendous strides forward because there was support, but what happens when they get out there without the support? The interesting thing I saw is that when you teach students to have support and to get support, they learn the strategies for creating their own support systems outside of the classroom, and become lifelong support-givers and support-takers. It transfers out. They can and do re-create that supportive system in other environments.

Breaking through a "comfort zone" fosters confidence.

The tenth assumption is : **Helping students "breakthrough" their comfort zones is a powerful, confidence-building experience.** Also taken from Insight International Seminars, this experience focuses on taking a student out of the "comfort zone" or "place" where s/he feels the most comfortable (John-Roger & McWilliams, 1991 a,b). Carnegie hinted at much the same thing in 1962 with his advice to "crash through your shell of self-consciousness" (p. 160). It is the "crashing through" that matters.

Look at how this works. When the concept of breaking through was introduced, I saw students nervously glance sideways at each other. That's how I knew I was on the right track. I explained that each student had at least one area that was just "too comfortable" - at least one area that had become a self-limiting habit. I challenged them to think of the one (legal and moral) thing they could do to crash out of their own self-limiting shells, or comfort-zones. This had to be something significantly uncomfortable and personal, something they previously thought they could never do - something terribly frightening or freeing.

For quiet students, it was to shout out part of a speech. For boisterous ones, it was to be formal and serious, and for serious

ones, it was to do something funny. For some students, their "issue," was masculinity, femininity, or sexuality, and they "came out" in their speeches, often disclosing their sexual orientations. Others vented anger, guilt, resentment, grief, or sorrow.

By the end of the semester, most students had forced themselves to discover at least one breakthrough and to carry it out in the safety of the classroom. The support system was strong by then, and we helped each other through the process. Those who didn't were encouraged to breakthrough later on their own in a similar safe and supportive atmosphere. We stayed sensitive to student's personal timing on this activity.

The benefit was that students changed. They challenged their comfort zones and they won. They felt freer after they "lived through" their personal drama - any other speech activity seemed easy in comparison.

Lifelong learning is the goal.

Here is the eleventh assumption: **This experience sets the stage for a program of lifelong learning.** It is critical to get students to see that the fifteenth week is not the end of the growing and learning. Much of what is learned will take time to develop, mature, and "evolve" into something better. Like Sudnow (1978) learning to improvise on the jazz piano, the lessons unfold.

The first fifteen weeks lay the groundwork for a lifetime of successful and satisfying communication. Work with the ESA is by nature processual, and each student's process will be different. Students must understand that new "lessons" will pop up all throughout life. Now they have ways to make more sense of those experiences.

Look at how this worked. On the last day of class, the students were given "walking papers," or assignments to add to their P.I.G. pages. They were to use the P.I.G. page daily to stay focused on their own personal growth. They were also asked to set goals and inspire others every day, become "uncomfortable" once a week, stretch into new talents and speak out each month, be bold every year, and create fun for a lifetime. They were challenged to continue to grow. I'm convinced they will.

Students benefit from knowing what to expect.

The students need to understand that this class is radically different, so the last assumption is: **When you're doing this sort of work, you need to be honest with your students the very first day.** They need to know that they will learn a lot about themselves, experience personal growth, give some speeches, do many activities, use the "non-magic" of common sense, stretch out of their comfort zones, and have fun.

Look at how this happened. The first day, we did the P.I.G. page and many, many activities. Like most university teachers, I had more students than I could handle. Starting "on-task" immediately let those who didn't want to participate find another class without academic penalty.

Pragmatically, this was a good idea, but more importantly, it left those who wanted to be there, and I still had fairly full classes. The benefit was an expectation of 100% participation, which we achieved every day. After the first semester, those students told their friends, and I immediately had a waiting list - for public speaking. It then became even more important to get commitment early so that those who really wanted the class experience could get it.

## Discussion

This paper's challenge was to take an ethnomethodological look at a typical ESA-using communication class to see how it uses twelve basic assumptions as background expectancies (Heritage, 1984) to accomplish personal growth in a college public speaking setting. A related challenge was to look at the participant's "non-magic" everyday practices to understand why this type of experience could produce such desirable results.

Now, after exploring how the assumptions "played out" in

practice, we see that they, too form a Gestalt-contexture (Gurswitch, 1962). All of them are vital to the success of this type of work. Further, we can see how these assumptions, as background expectancies, create the foundational support for the communicative and personal growth that occurs. *The ESA is intended to be a fun, fast-moving encounter with personal growth through the use of experiential activities. More successful public speaking is one result of this approach* (Bedore, 1992).

Since this paper was originally written in 1994, I have taught an additional 11 classes in Oklahoma using this approach. In all classes, student evaluations clearly showed that students enjoyed the method, the techniques, and the benefits of the ESA. Many of them reported that they were *Finally Fearless!* (the title of my book describing 20 anxiety-lowering techniques I teach them to use). It is no coincidence that the courses I teach using the ESA are filled to capacity (Bedore, 1995). I teach friends of my former students.

This is just the beginning. Within ten years, we will see ESA-using public speaking classes taking the place of "traditional" public speaking in our colleges and universities.

We can give our students more, and they deserve it. I have seen this work and have felt the joy of its success. It is time to bring public speaking education up to date by using the ESA.

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