

## **A Global Integration: Internationalizing a Public Speaking Course**

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### **Abstract**

Institutions of higher education around the world have responded to the challenge of globalization by internationalizing their curricula. Incorporating elements of cross-cultural examination to a freshman Fundamentals of Public Speaking class proved to be an important first step toward globalization for this speech professor. In the class, students were placed in groups of 5 or 6, and each group selected a theme regarding study abroad and places abroad. Each group member examined an aspect of the group's selected theme in a 2-3-minute speech. The act of integrating a global component into the Fundamentals of Public Speaking course broadened the students' knowledge concerning a country and its cultures as well as encouraged them to participate in the university's study abroad program. Through this process, important course goals can be reached while infusing an internationalization component. Both professors and students benefit without an excessive amount of extra work on the part of students or professors.

Keywords: public speaking, internationalizing curriculum, global education

Public Speaking is a Georgia Board of Regents' requirement, which is why every student at Albany State University must pass the course before they graduate. The mandate is perhaps because, "Extant literature clearly indicates the need for communication training in an undergraduate curriculum" (Hunt, Ekachai, Garard, & Rust, 2001, p. 1). Scores of college students thus enroll in a Public Speaking course each academic semester, some because it is required and others because they want to. Skills learned in the class, such as how to convey information to listeners, organize ideas, persuade others, and hold listeners' attention, are among the skills most sought after by employers (Karr, 2012). Research indicates that employers rank communication skills as their number one priority when selecting prospective employees (Karr, 2012; Zekeri, 2009).

Surveys of personnel directors and directors of college career service departments, both in the United States and internationally, have confirmed that they consider communication skills the top factor in the success of those students who find employment after graduation (Curtis, Winsor, & Stephens, 1997). We live in an increasingly global society and communication is considered an international concern, yet many communication courses lack a significant global component.

This article describes how international and cultural contributions can be integrated into undergraduate Public Speaking education. In addition to equipping students with communication skills that are valued in the workplace, the course also informs them about other cultures—which will better prepare them for an interdependent world.

### **Literature Review**

For the past twenty years, institutions of higher education throughout the United States and abroad have made significant strides in internationalizing curricula (Yang, 2002; Bartell, 2003; Teichler, 2004; Stensaker, Frolich and Maassen, 2008). Each year, at Thompson Rivers University in British Columbia, Canada, for example, dozens of faculty members participate in a week-long Internationalizing the Curriculum workshop that enables faculty to introduce global learning objectives in their classes (Bourassa & Garson, 2015). Betty Leask is Professor and the Pro Vice-Chancellor (Teaching and Learning) at La Trobe University, Melbourne, Australia. Her work internationalizing the curriculum has been a critical advancement in the field. Leask (2013) suggests that an internationalized curriculum involves “challenging dominant paradigms, exploring emerging paradigms in [academic] disciplines, and imagining new possibilities” (p. 111). The courses that instructors use to tackle global issues run the gamut from political theory courses to business courses, but despite the success of internationalizing classes across the curriculum, there are only a few publications regarding internationalized public speaking courses. One of the few documented Public Speaking courses (Boromisza-Habashia, Hughes and Malkowskib, 2016), addressed the issue by asking students to highlight the cultural gap between Anglo-American and non-Anglo interpretations of public speaking. It is understandable that incorporating a global element into public speaking courses might, initially, appear to be problematic and

challenging; however, when students are asked to incorporate an international component into their speeches, it can easily be achieved.

### **Prior to Internationalization**

In each of the Fundamentals of Public Speaking courses that I have taught to date at Albany State University, enrolled students were asked to deliver three speeches: an experience (descriptive) speech, an informative speech, and a group informative speech. Students chose their own topics for these speeches. For the last speech presented, the group informative speech, students were divided into groups of 5, and each group was tasked with selecting a group theme. Each student in the group then delivered a 2 to 3-minute speech on one aspect of the theme. For instance, if a group chose as a theme protest songs during the Vietnam War, student-1 may have chosen to deliver a speech on “Why People Objected to the Vietnam War”; student-2 may have opted to deliver a speech on the “The Vietnam Draft Policy”; student-3 might have delivered a speech on “How the War was Protested on College and University Campuses”; student-4 might have examined the protest song “What’s Going On?” by Marvin Gaye; and student-5 might have delivered a speech on the protest song “War” by Edwin Starr.

### **Methodology**

During the Fall 2016 semester, I incorporated a global component to the Fundamentals of Public Speaking course, which was the only speech class that participated in the globalization pilot. I decided to ask all 16 enrolled students to choose an international topic for their final speech assignment. Each student, as before, was assigned to a group which consisted of 5 or 6 students. Each student in each group was required to design and deliver a 2-3-minute speech. At their own initiative, the members of each group set up a Group Meet App to which students submitted their contact information and group updates. As each group was required to choose an international theme for the group, each student in the group was therefore asked to decide on a speech topic that embraced the selected global theme. Students were given three class periods of one week to conduct lap-top research, and three periods of one week to practice their speeches. During this time, I could observe the students’ planning and editing process, which revealed not only the information the students preferred to include in their

speeches but also allowed me to see what they chose not to include, and to listen to them discuss those decisions about inclusions and exclusions. Students were also required to participate in a Research Check, which required students to reveal to me their outlines and accumulated research. While reviewing the outline, I queried each student about their speech. Accordingly, I could ascertain what was learned by the students. During their final in-class Practice Session, I asked each student to deliver a portion of their speech.

To ensure some consistency to the international component, each group was asked to choose a topic regarding either study abroad or a place or culture abroad. Students were required to deliver an extemporaneous speech, which, in Public Speaking terminology, means that preparation is required and note cards are used for recall purposes; it is not an impromptu speech<sup>1</sup>. This assignment required students to deliver a prepared speech using no more than five 3x5 notecards. Students were then graded on their own individual speeches. In preparation for each student's speech, the speaker chose a speech topic to support the theme, researched the topic, designed the speech, created a PowerPoint slide, and practiced the speech. As a group, the students decided upon the order of the speeches for the group presentation.

This global group project ended our speech class with three grouped sets of speeches. Group One chose the theme "Study Abroad at Albany State University." In this group, Student 1 delivered a speech on Dr. Nora Osakwe, the Director of Global Programs at Albany State University. Student 2 delivered a speech that explored the financial aspect of study abroad and examined the scholarships and grants available for ASU students. The social, cultural, and economic benefits of the ASU Study Abroad Program were examined by Student 3. Student 4's speech concerned the study abroad curriculum in China and Ghana, which were study abroad sites for the ASU Study Abroad Program. Student 5 shared the experiences of ASU students who had previously studied abroad in China and Peru.

Group Two's theme was entitled "Cultures around the World." While Student 1 delivered a speech on the history and culture of Trinidad and Tobago, Student 2 delivered a speech on the food, fashion, and music found in South Korea. Student 3 delivered a speech on the Diwali and Holi Festivals in India, and Student 4 delivered a speech on the New Year and

May Day Celebrations in France. Student 5 delivered a speech on food and fashion in Great Britain, and Student 6 delivered a speech on food and lifestyle in Australia.

For Group Three's presentation, students chose the theme "Exotic Locales Abroad." The group decided that each member would explore sightseeing and tourist attractions in a different exotic location: Dubai (Student 1), the Swiss Alps (Student 2), Bora Bora (Student 3), Monaco (Student 4), and Madrid (Student 5).

During each group's presentation, the group members were seated in a horizontal row in front of the audience. For each group presentation, the group's leader began the presentation by approaching the podium and delivering an introduction that consisted of an attention-getter, which was a statistic, rhetorical question, quotation, or anecdote concerning the theme. The group leader followed the attention-getter with a preview that consisted of a brief introduction of the speakers that included each speaker's name and their speech topics. Afterwards, each speaker, including the group leader, delivered a speech and presented one or two PowerPoint slides to accompany their speech. Once the speeches were completed, the group's leader delivered a conclusion: a review, the name of the speakers, their topics, and a closing statement.

### **Findings and Discussion**

It was evident from each student's speech and PowerPoint slides that they acquired knowledge regarding international topics. The speaking-points brought to each speech in each group's presentation can be found in Appendix A. The ASU Study Abroad speeches examined the success of the Study Abroad Program at ASU and the procedures to follow for students interested in participating in the program. A student in Group One who delivered his speech about financial assistance opportunities for students interested in the ASU Study Abroad Program was peppered with questions regarding the Gilman Scholarship after his speech. The fact that the student speaker could expound on the subject beyond the rudimentary information shared in his speech demonstrated that he had accrued an extensive knowledge of the subject in preparing for his speech.

To engage students into evaluating their fellow classmates, I incorporated technology into the assignment. After the speeches and a

discussion of each group's presentation, I asked each student to send a text to the student who he or she felt had delivered the most well-informed speech and explain why. I also asked them to send a text to the student whose speech sparked their interest. I ended class fifteen minutes early so that the students had time to send their text message, and since I asked the students who received a text message to show me the text messages, I had time to view them. Quite a few sent texts to the student speakers in Group Two who examined the theme "Cultures Abroad." One of the students in the group delivered a speech on the history of Paris Fashion Week and received several text messages. These texts explained that the students enjoyed the information regarding the evolution of Paris Fashion Week due to its frequent discussions on television and in other forms of media. There were also numerous texts explaining their fondness of the speech on Australia, which was another speech from Group Two. In the texts, students stated that they had viewed a few movies about Australia, and one had read a book that took place there. Familiarity with the subject seemed to prompt their interest in the subject. While delivering the speech about Australia, the student shared common Australian greetings and sayings and asked the audience to repeat them. While the students were leaving class, they were echoing the greetings to one another.

Group Three examined "Exotic Locales Abroad," and their colorful PowerPoint images seemed appealing to students because, during the discussion session, the students mentioned that they would like to visit the locations. A student enjoyed the speech that explored Dubai because of the luxurious accommodations at the Burj Al Arab Hotel. Another student sent a text stating that the snorkeling that was mentioned in the speech that explored Bora Bora sounded inviting.

### **Student Reflections**

The students' oral comments after group presentations revealed that students who delivered the speeches learned information regarding their own speeches as well as the speeches of their classmates. They also shared that they enjoyed learning about various cultures and places abroad. The clear majority of the class indicated that they were particularly interested in the information concerning study abroad at ASU. When students were asked why that particular group of speeches interested them, they responded that

they had been previously unaware of the many study abroad options and the financial assistance that was available to them. Moreover, the application process was simpler than they had expected, which made the process seem realistically achievable. I was pleased that two students initiated the application process for study abroad almost immediately. Students were also compelled by this assignment to use sources that they had not previously examined, such as blogs, interviews, and websites.

### **Faculty Reflections**

Incorporating a global component in the Fundamentals of Public Speaking initially seemed like it would be a challenge because students resented the fact that they were limited to choosing an informative speech topic with an international focus. They were also frustrated because they thought they would have difficulty doing so. Once I gave the students examples of global topics, however, they seemed to be more amenable to selecting a global topic. As soon as topics were selected, the students definitively committed to their speeches. While most students had to adhere to the general course rules regarding suitable sources, the students who explored the Global Studies Program at ASU had difficulty finding sources, and as a result they were aggravated at first and wanted to change their topic. Convinced that the speeches could inform students about the many advantages of the global problem and encourage them to study abroad, I worked hard to persuade them to stick with the subject. I gave them suggestions for possible sources to use such as blogs, the Global Studies Office brochures, the websites for these campus programs, and interviews with Dr. Osakwe. This effort appeased them, and they were ultimately satisfied with the result. I now realize that less traditional assignments require guidance in finding resources.

Upon reflection, I realized that it had been relatively easy to add an international component to my Public Speaking course. To do so, I simply asked that students limit their final speech topic to a global one. The only challenge was troubleshooting the students' initial concerns about and ambivalence regarding using a global topic. The fact that students were not limited to global topics early in the semester may have added to their angst. Before the students were required to incorporate a global component in their speeches, they had the freedom to choose from any subject.

To overcome their reservations, I did something that worked quite effectively: I complimented them. Some students, after I provided them with suggestions as to where to locate sources, remained discouraged. In response, I told them that I was proud of their willingness to patiently tackle the assignment (even though they were clearly reluctant), and that I was confident that they could and would succeed. It was amazing how well that strategy worked. Once the students progressed (even a little), I again complimented them and encouraged their efforts. The most surprising aspect of this project was that it taught me, as well as my students, an important lesson in patience.

The students' frustration may have been avoided if I had required them to use global topics for every assigned speech. If the students had to overcome the hurdles of finding and researching global topics for the first assigned speech, I am confident that I would face objections from the students. However, repeating the procedure for the second and third speech would have proven to be less aggravating. Moreover, requiring students to use a global topic for each speech would increase the students' experience of facing research obstacles and overcoming them.

### **Evaluation**

There is a plethora of meanings for the term assessment. While some researchers use 'assessment' interchangeably with 'evaluation' (Hudzik and Stohl 2009), others consider 'assessments' and 'measurements' synonymous (Brandenburg and de Wit, 2010). Ewell (2002, p. 9) defines assessment as "The processes used to determine an individual's mastery of complex abilities, generally observed through performance." In higher education, professors utilize assessment to ascertain the students' ability to learn and understand. It is not uncommon for professors to assess a specific course, a learning opportunity, or a program of study. The evaluation of this adapted course was a necessary element of this study and shows whether gains were made, and the experiment should be repeated. Information gleaned from Appendix A and Appendix B reveals that internationalizing the course increased the students' knowledge regarding other cultures and encouraged them to take part in a learning opportunity, the Study Abroad Program at ASU.



The Fundamentals of Public Speaking course was evaluated using a three-fold assessment process which included, a) an interview during the Research Check Assignment, b) questions asked during the Final Practice Assignment and, c) a distributed survey. During the Research Check Assignment, students were asked to submit a typed outline of their global speech, including at least four sources and two quotations from experts on the speech's topic. While reviewing the outline, I asked each student questions about their speech to ascertain the extent of the students' knowledge of the topic. For example, a student listed common greetings in Australia, so I asked her how to pronounce the greetings and how she could ensure that she was pronouncing them correctly. She explained that she had gone to the online dictionary.cambridge.org website and put in the greetings. After her session, I asked her to pull up the website and pronunciation on the classroom computer to check the pronunciation. In general, the typical questions that I asked the students during the Research Check included the following: a) Why did you choose this topic? b) What was the most interesting aspect of your research? c) What was the most surprising aspect of your research?

During the Final Practice Assignment, I spent three minutes with each student and asked about an aspect of the speech that I found interesting but had not previously asked about. It surprised me that almost all the students were so well informed; I was forced in several instances to interrupt students because they sought to extend their explanations beyond the time limit of our meeting. When I apologized and explained that, due to time constraints, I could not let them continue, they seemed genuinely disappointed. This assignment was the last practice session of the speech that occurred in class. Each group member practiced the speech in its entirety. Once I approached a group, I asked each group member to show me their outline. The student did not know which portion of the speech that I would ask her/him to deliver until I looked at the outline and asked the student to share a portion. It was my favorite assignment because it allowed me to evaluate the scope of the students' knowledge and revel in their desire to flaunt what they had learned about their selected global subject. For the three students who were not well informed at this stage in the process, this assignment really highlighted their lack of knowledge. Not only did they not want to go beyond the time limit, they had difficulty elaborating on the topic

for three minutes. Typical questions included: a) What aspect of the culture you researched reminded you of American culture? b) Was there any custom of the culture that you objected to or that you found offensive? c) What aspect of the culture was most unlike American culture?

Once the students completed the speeches, I evaluated them using the evaluation rubric in Table 1, below.

Table 1.  
*Rubric for Evaluation of Speeches*

<b>Evaluation Criteria</b>	<b>Maximum Points</b>
Global Content	25
Obvious Research (Quotations and Statistics)	10
Organization of Content	10
Eye Contact and Use of Notecards	15
Time Limit	05
Volume	05
Rate	05
Fluency	05
PowerPoint Slides	10
Appropriate Attire	05
Physical Presence	05

The criteria for and distribution of grades for the Global Speech is shown in Table 2, below. They are generally like the other Public Speaking classes that I have taught. This was surprising to me. Due to the interesting subject matter, I had predicted that students in the global class would far exceed the measured performance of students in my other Public Speaking classes. This proved true in the case of the Global Speech assignment, but not for the other speeches. However, I believe that if each assigned speech had included a global component, this may have increased the students’ interest, motivated them to work hard on the assignment, and hence resulted in improving their grades.

Table 2  
*Grades for the Global Speech*

Quantity	Grade	Scores
5	A	98, 95, 93, 92, 92

6	B	88, 88, 87, 83, 82, 80
3	C	78, 75, 74
2	D	63, 60

A Survey Sheet, distributed the last day of class (Appendix B), was used to evaluate the global assignment. All the students completed the survey, and it was useful in helping me to gain an understanding of the students' assessment of the course.

### **Conclusion**

When students graduate from Albany State University, they will be facing a world more interconnected than ever. A Public Speaking course is easily and naturally suited to integrating a global component. Students can easily be asked to give their speeches a global focus. Because of doing so, in my course during the Spring 2016 semester students learned new directions and were motivated to work hard to explore options for the design and delivery of speeches. An additional bonus is that, because students are mostly from the local area that the assignment gives them encouragement and flexibility to see the world outside their borders; it allows them to focus on any culture or place abroad. For me, the pilot course was a worthy learning experience which expanded my pedagogical toolset. Thus, they are encouraged to learn and better understand the people and places that exist both in the U.S. and beyond U.S. borders.

### **Limitations and Future Research Directions**

Although only the last four weeks of the Fundamentals of Public Speaking class were devoted to the internationalization of the course in the pilot I conducted, it is now apparent that more time and assignments should have been devoted to its global focus. I recommend that future global Public Speaking classes devote the entire semester to internationally themed speeches and assignments. In addition to requiring all speeches to have a global focus, it would be beneficial to meet over Skype with an undergraduate, English-speaking Public Speaking class from another country so that both groups of students would be allowed to discuss similar and contrasting speech practices and challenges with their global counterparts. Documentaries and on-line advertisement films distributed by tourist bureaus, will helpfully provide visual images and the milieu of various worldwide locations.

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## Appendix A

### **Group One:** *Each student discussed study abroad at ASU*

<b><u>Student-1</u></b> <b>Director at ASU</b>	<b><u>Student-2</u></b> <b>Financial Assistance</b>	<b><u>Student-3</u></b> <b>Benefits</b>	<b><u>Student-4</u></b> <b>Ghana &amp; China</b>	<b><u>Student-5</u></b> <b>Peru</b>
Dr. Osakwe has been the Director of Global Programs since 2010.	Gilman scholarship opportunities.  Fulbright scholarship opportunities.	Learn about various cultures-- including language, the food and religion.	In Ghana, students can take English 2111 or African Diaspora 4990.	In Peru, students view tourist sites.
Published 38 book chapters and edited 8 books.  Professor of English at ASU.	Federal Pell Grants.  Educational Opportunity Grant.	Meet new friends and network  Experience noted in resume— makes the student more marketable in a competitive job market.	Visit Ghana slave trade sites, explore the active music scene and receive 6 credit hours.  In China, students take Photojournalism class or an International Journalism class.	Intern at local hospitals and lab facilities.  Tour historical landmarks.
Received a fellowship from the Rockefeller Foundation and a Fulbright Fellowship.		Graduate schools attracted to applicants who have studied abroad.	Both classes, in China, allow the students to explore Beijing and Shanghai.	
Study Abroad Program has flourished.				
France, England, China, Peru, Tobago, and Trinidad.			In China, students attend classes at Xiamen University.	
Posted blogs and ASU Study Abroad Facebook.				

**Appendix A - continued****Group Two:** *Each student discussed Cultures Around the Word*

<b>Student-1 Trinidad &amp; Tobago</b>	<b>Student-2 South Korea</b>	<b>Student-3 Diwali and Holi Festivals</b>	<b>Student-4 Paris Fashion Week</b>	<b>Student-5 Great Britain</b>	<b>Student-6 Australia</b>
How each was founded and gaining its independence.	Food (Bibimbap, Bulgogi, Hanjeongsik, etc.).	The Diwali otherwise known as the "festival of lights" is an ancient Hindu festival.	Paris Fashion Week is held biannually.	Influences on Britain culture (Greek influences).	Common Greetings- Ga day or G'day Toodle-oo Cheers Ta.
Culture of the country including celebrations, popular food and fashions.	Fashion- Hanbok vibrant traditional dresses.	During the Diwali Festival, Hindus dress up in new clothes or their best attire.	Paris Fashion Week was first held in 1973.	Fashion in Britain (Modeled after the royal family).	History of Australia.  Establishment of British colonies.
	Music- Trot and K-Pop.	The Diwali Festival requires participants to light up lamps and candles.	The event was initially held as a fund raiser to restore the Palace of Versailles, and it was held there.	Food in Britain (Beef, Lamb, and Pork).  Laws in Britain (Like American Laws).	Establishment of additional colonies.  Convicts and colonial society.  Free colonies in South Australia.
		Rangwali Holi is carnival of colors.	The event's evolution.	Celebrations in Britain (New Years, Burns Day, and Chinese New Year).	

**Appendix A - continued****Group Three: *Each Student discussed Exotic Locals Abroad***

<b>Student-1</b> <b>Dubai</b>	<b>Student-2</b> <b>Swiss Alps</b>	<b>Student-3</b> <b>Bora Bora</b>	<b>Student-4</b> <b>Monaco</b>	<b>Student-5</b> <b>Madrid</b>
<p>One of most expensive cities in the world.</p> <p>The most expensive city in the Middle East.</p>	<p>Has a network of well-maintained trails.</p>	<p>Over the past decade, countless resorts have been built on motu—Tahitian islands.</p>	<p>The Musée Oceanographique—one of the oldest aquarium in the world.</p>	<p>Bronze sculptures of Don Quixote and Sancho Panza at the Plaza de España (Madrid).</p>
<p>A luxury hotel, the Burj Al Arab is commonly described as "the world's only 7-star hotel."</p> <p>Burj Khalifa is the tallest skyscraper in the world.</p>	<p>It is also a major destination for skiing and other various winter sports.</p>	<p>Water sports, such as Scuba diving and snorkeling, are popular activities in and around the lagoon of Bora Bora.</p>	<p>Saint Nicholas Cathedral is beautiful and the resting place of past princes and Princess Grace.</p> <p>Casino of Monte Carlo is one of the most popular casinos in Europe.</p>	<p>Fountain of Neptune.</p> <p>Monument to Alfonso XII.</p>



## Appendix B

### Survey for the Internationalized Fundamentals of Public Speaking Course

1. So far, what is the most important thing you have learned in this internationalized Fundamentals of Public Speaking course?
2. Suggest one or two specific, practical changes that could help improve your learning in this internationalized course.
3. In terms of helping you learn—what’s working in this internationalized Public Speaking course?
4. List three aspects of the global group speeches that most effectively enhanced your learning regarding global study or global cultures.
5. List three aspects of the global group speeches that are the least effective or need improvement.
6. Based on the speeches you witnessed, were there any that made you want to visit the speech subject?
7. Did the speeches regarding ASU Study Aboard encourage you to participate? If so, which ones?
8. If you were not encouraged to study abroad, what information could have been included to encourage you to participate?
6. Which speeches were your favorites? Why? (Shared in the Text Exercise)
7. Which speeches were your least favorite? Why?

#### About the Author

Dr. Florence Lyons is a Professor of Speech and Coordinator of Speech and Theatre at Albany State University. She received her Bachelor's degree in Speech and Theatre at Fisk University; her Master's degree in Theatre at Oklahoma City University, and her doctorate at Louisiana State University. The dissertation for her doctorate was entitled: *Beyond Boundaries: Political Dictates Found in Minstrelsy*. Dr. Lyons has taught at Bethune-Cookman University, Dillard University, Xavier University, and Virginia State

University. Among the activities she has found most rewarding have been being a scholar-in-residence at New York University; authoring articles published by the Georgia Communication Association Journal, in addition her article “Restructuring Blackface” was published in the African American Studies Journal. She has traveled to and presented at conferences, notably at the Centre for Modernist Studies in England.

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<sup>1</sup> Public speaking textbooks clearly state that extemporaneous speeches are speeches that require preparation and the use of notecards for recall. There are four types of speeches: manuscript (a speech that is read word for word; memorized (a speech that is recalled word for word; extemporaneous (the most preferred by speech professors and gives students the opportunity to prepare and use notecards for recall during speeches); and impromptu (a speech that is delivered at the spur-of-the-moment).