ACSC '98
Teaching communication skills in the disciplines

The Proceedings of the Australian Communication Skills Conference

Editors: Joanna Tapper & Paul Gruba

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Foreword

We would like to welcome all delegates to the Australian Communication Skills Conference at the University of Melbourne. As both organisers and editors of this conference, it has been a pleasure to get to know a number of you as friends, to renew our respect for your academic work, and to find new colleagues in this nebulous area of teaching communication skills at tertiary level.

The Australian Communication Conference, chaired by Anita Jawary, at Monash University in 1996 was the first time when communication skills teachers at university level had a chance to meet and listen to each other. That conference served as a model for this meeting, although we added the word 'skills' to the name of this 1998 conference, in order to avoid confusion with the field of communication and media studies.

The theme of our conference this year is Teaching Communication Skills in the Disciplines. From the start, our intent in setting this parameter was to distinguish our discussion from several other closely related fields. First of all, we limited our scope by drawing boundaries between our tertiary contexts for teaching communication skills and the contexts of teaching at school level, and the teaching of the national competencies communication skills requirements.

We also wanted to distinguish ourselves from the very broad field of tertiary literacy in Australia. Co-incidentally, the First National Conference on Tertiary Literacy: Research and Practice, was also held in 1996 in Melbourne—organised by Zosia Golebiowski, and held at Victoria University of Technology. Some of the contributors to that conference are also here at this Australian Communication Skills Conference, so the overlap exists, but we have tried to focus on teaching which takes place within the disciplines, rather than on separate academic or learning skills support.

Another area of overlap is with English as a Second Language. There are a number of papers in this volume which touch upon communication skills issues related to non-English-speaking background (NESB) students. Depending on the institutional context, NESB students may be mainstreamed, or may be encouraged—or even required—to take separate communication skills instruction. This split is reflected in some of the papers in this volume.

Certainly, we can see that the teaching of communication skills in Australian and New Zealand universities has taken a different course from what happens in the USA. The focus on writing classes in US universities, and the concept of a university-wide oral communication program are very different from the requirements of undergraduate education in our contexts. Yet much can be gained from US theory and practice, particularly in the field of Writing Across the Curriculum, and Writing In the Disciplines.

Throughout the local papers, we detect an underlying theme: communication skills instruction must gain more respect. As Pantelides writes in her paper:

> Communication skills is termed a 'service area' by all the administrative workings of the university. The term embodies the subordinate role of the area within the university system, and disempowerment of the staff who 'serve' through it, most of whom are sessional lecturers employed on a needs only basis each semester. However hard communication skills staff work to replace the 'service' stigma, the semiotics and the politics remain (p. 140).

We hope that our discussions at this Conference will give ample support to our efforts to gain wider recognition of the roles which our teaching and research play in our institutions.

Joanna Tapper and Paul Gruba
Melbourne, 1998

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Keynote addresses

CAC Online: Enhancing Communication Across the Curriculum with information technology

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Information technology adds exciting new dimensions to the language-rich active learning that Writing Across the Curriculum (WAC) and communication across the curriculum (CAC) have always encouraged. Although pedagogical objectives should determine which tools we incorporate into our instruction, electronic mail and the World Wide Web are motivating many educators to re-examine and to modify their approaches to teaching.

Electronic collaborations are developing across classes, colleges, and countries as well as across disciplines. And increasingly, higher education is responding to these trends by establishing or supporting programs that encourage innovative applications of information technology in teaching, what we call Electronic Communication Across the Curriculum (ECAC). This presentation will illustrate some of the ways information technology encourages and supports communication activities as learning strategies, emphasizing the use of the World Wide Web for student research, interaction, and publication.

Introduction

> The role of faculty in the electronic classroom is most likely to evolve toward that of enabling students to discover knowledge for themselves...[and] may accelerate a process already underway...to restore faculty to the role of mentor.
>
> William M. Plater, Dean of Faculties at Indiana University/Purdue University at Indianapolis (IUPUI), (1995, p. 10).
>
> The use of computer conferencing and electronic mail introduces writing across the curriculum and teaches essential computer concepts as an integral part of every course.
>
> Armando A. Arias Jr., Associate Vice President of AcademicPlanning, Instruction, and Assessment, California State University at Monterey Bay, and Beryl Bellman, Department of Communication Studies, California State University at Los Angeles (BESTNET), (1995, p. 181).

These two quotations highlight a significant opportunity in higher education and all levels of education, an opportunity enabled by and perhaps even driven by information technology (IT).

1. IT can foster a mentoring-discovery model of learning.

2. IT can foster writing across the curriculum: writing for learning course content and concepts, writing within the context of a discipline, and 'learning to write'.

Both of these possibilities are of increasing interest to higher education in Australia as well as in North America. In her presentation at the Conference on College Composition and Communication, Joanna Tapper (Gruba & Tapper, 1998) identified several issues of concern to Australian University staff in general and to her own University of Melbourne colleagues

in particular as they built a Communication Across the Curriculum program. The issues she outlined are not unfamiliar to teachers at colleges and universities in the United States despite significant differences in the role of writing instruction and professional development in our educational systems.

Of special interest was Tapper's reference to large infusions of funding to support information technology projects in higher education, for example, the University's Multimedia Education Unit and Information Technology Services and similar programs. "At present," she said, "teachers who are interested in transforming their teaching and fostering their students' learning are encouraged to channel that interest into using online technology."

This examination of teaching and learning in the context of IT is exactly what led many teachers in North America to initiate and embrace projects that seemed on the surface to focus on computers but had the potential for broad influence on our approaches to teaching and learning.

This examination of teaching and learning in the context of IT could guide us and our students to attend not only to computer literacy but also to a range of literacies including media literacy, writing literacy, reading literacy, and visual literacy. After all, "the literacy spaces we inhabit now are located both in physical space and in cyberspace and more than ever across classrooms, campuses, countries, and continents" (Reiss & Young, 1998).

This examination of teaching and learning in the context of IT by educators at the upper levels of administration and by content teachers in every discipline is of particular interest in North American colleges and universities to advocates of Writing Across the Curriculum (WAC) as well as to Communication Across the Curriculum (CAC), which includes oral and visual communication as well as writing. Many of us are initiating WAC and CAC projects within the context of IT, or, if we had WAC and CAC projects in place, we are revitalizing them in relation to IT.

Art Young, Dickie Selfe, and I even invented a name for this connection of WAC and CAC with IT, which we call ECAC for Electronic Communication Across the Curriculum. We have defined ECAC thus (Reiss, Selfe & Young, 1998):

> A term to highlight the evolving intersections between the communication across the curriculum movement and new information technologies. ECAC recognizes that e-mail, synchronous and asynchronous conferencing, multimedia, and the World Wide Web offer new modes of communication to construct and enhance learning within and across disciplines.

With the new opportunities for communication and collaborative learning offered by electronic mail, computer conferencing, and the World Wide Web come new ways to encourage teachers to reconsider their pedagogies: why they teach, what they teach, and how they teach. These communication tools enable connections that were difficult or impossible with the technologies of pen and paper. For teachers of writing as well as for teachers in all disciplines in a culture being transformed by information technology, these communication tools encourage examination of our perceptions of language and learning. Barbara Walvoord invited us to explore new media in a WAC context when she wrote that with information technology, "lines blur between writing and other forms of communication and between classrooms and other learning spaces" (1996, p. 72).

This blurring of boundaries challenges our definition of writing and of communication. In his forthcoming article "Theory in WAC: Where Have We Been? Where Are We Going?" Christopher Thaiss (1998) invites us to rethink the term writing as it has been used in North American WAC programs, which did not usually adopt the broader language across the

curriculum concept of its predecessors from the United Kingdom (Britton, et al.). How do and how will new media integrate with our definition of "writing"? According to Thaiss:

> [E]-mail poses a conceptual difficulty for WAC planners, a difficulty that will disappear in an integrated language-across-the-curriculum (LAC) environment, one which, I predict, technology is forcing us to conceptualize and eventually accept.
>
> If e-mail muddies the definition of writing, consider the swamp created by multi-media composing. The broader definition will now mean that the act of writing means choosing among a huge array of images and forms, only some of which are "words."

In a related reflection on the definition of "writing" in "Writing Across the Curriculum," Russell (1998), historian of WAC programs, says that "[w]riting facilitates all kinds of social actions using all sorts of textual forms, in combination with non-textual forms (machinery, apparatus, architecture, gesture, drawing, etc.)," adding that "[w]riting is not a single generalizable skill, then, learned once and for all at an early age, but a complex range of accomplishments, variously tied to myriad human practices, which may develop over a lifetime as the desire or need to do new things with new genres of writing arises."

This presentation will illustrate a number of models that expand our understanding of writing in relation to information technology as practiced in language-across-the-curriculum or literacy-across-the-curriculum or Electronic Communication Across the Curriculum initiatives at North American colleges and universities, mostly in the U.S. These models appear in the following categories:

1. Internal computer networks and the Internet: using specialized groupware or Internet applications to communicate synchronously or asynchronously, either individually or collaboratively

2. WAC and CAC programs: incorporating IT into existing programs

3. IT programs: incorporating WAC or CAC into technology projects

4. Learning communities: within and across disciplines, using the principles of WAC-CAC and the tools of IT

5. Centers for teaching and learning: offering workshops and resources for examining and updating instructional strategies, including WAC, CAC, and IT

The common element in these models is the integration of information technology with "writing" or "communication" in the broader sense that ECAC suggests along with a re-examination of our approaches to teaching and learning.

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Lest we think the revolution is a revolution: Images of technology and the nature of change

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When English studies teachers get together to talk about technology, we generally end up talking about change. It is common sense, after all to link computers with change when microprocessors, according to Moore's law, double in speed every eighteen months, when biomemory, superscalar architecture, and picoprocessors become feature stories for National Public Radio; and when media generations flash by in less time than it takes to uncrate a faculty workstation and get rid of the styrofoam packing.

And, at some level, English Departments have come to terms with technological change—we have adjusted diminishing supplies and equipment budgets to accommodate an ongoing program of purchases and upgrades, accepted computer studies as a new area of scholarly focus, integrated technology into various curricula, and modified many programs to include technology training and use (c.f. Selber, 1994; McDaniel, 1990; Schwartz, Selfe, & Sosnoski, 1994; Wahlstrom & Selfe, 1994).

Like most of Americans, however, even though educators have made these adaptations, we remain decidedly undecided about technology and change. At one level, we believe in the pairing; we believe in the computer's power, and we believe strongly in the beneficial ways in technology promises to improve our lives (Bump, 1990; Delany & Landow, 1991; Snyder, 1996). At other levels, we fear the effects of technology, and the potent changes that it introduces into familiar systems (Apple, 1986; Kramarae, 1988; Hawisher & Selfe, 1993; Selfe & Selfe, 1994).

These contradictory impulses are the focus of this paper, especially as they affect the work of English studies specialists and educators. In addition, these attitudes shade subtly into one another at multiple levels of a larger collective social experience, and they are worth exploring for that reason as well.

Change, technology, and the status quo: Some background

Because our culture subscribes to several powerful narratives that link technological progress closely with social progress, it is easy for us—for Americans, in particular—to believe that *technological* change leads to productive *social* change.

Indeed, the narratives linking technological change to social change are part of the reason that English studies teachers—like many other educators—have come to embrace computer technology so enthusiastically over the past decade.

Quite simply put, like most Americans, we hope computers can help us make the world a better place in which to live. In the profession of English studies, for example, we hope computers can help make us, and the students with whom we work, more productive in the classroom and other instructional settings (Hafer, 1996; Coogan, 1995; Clark, 1995; Turnow, 1997; Sirc, 1995) more effective as communicators (Blair, 1996; Minock & Shor, 1995; Sproull & Kiesler, 1991), and more responsibly involved as literate citizens in world affairs (Schuler, 1994; Selfe, 1996; Geren, 1996).

We are not alone in these stories that we tell ourselves—indeed, they are echoed for us constantly and in a variety of versions. Vice President Albert Gore (1994) has noted that the Global Information Infrastructure (GII) would increase opportunities for intercultural, communication among the peoples of the world. Howard Rheingold, in *The Virtual Community* (1993), describes how computer networks can support more citizens in their efforts to communicate with government agencies, corporations, political groups, and information resources. Negroponte, in *Being Digital* (1995), sketches a picture of electronic landscapes that provide individuals new ways of making personal contributions to public deliberations and decision making. Spender, while more careful in her perspective in *Nattering on the Net* (1995), speculates on what it will take to establish new kinds of electronic forums that will support women and other groups now often left out of—or kept out of—public discussions in other venues.

This optimism about technology often masks in a peculiar way, however, a contrasting set of extremely potent fears. Moreover, and perhaps more importantly, an exclusive focus on the positive changes associated with technology, often serves to distract educators from recognizing how existing social forces actually work to resist change in connection with technology, how they support the status quo when technology threatens to disrupt the world in any meaningful way, how our culture, and the social formations that make up this culture, react with a special kind of conservatism to technology, even as we laud the changes it promises to bring. The more things change, the French would say, the more they remain the same.

This paper will attempt to illustrate the ways in which change is modulated and complicated by forces of stasis by focusing attention on a series of images that come from commercial advertisements about technology. These advertisements reflect a portion of our collective American cultural imagination about technology. Like most images, they tell rich and powerful stories about the social contexts in which they are produced. Like snapshots—of weddings and graduations, of Christmas and family reunions, they reveal us, as Americans, to ourselves. They are laden with cultural information, shot through with the values, ideological positions, and social understandings that comprise our shared experience. Indeed, it is because we recognize the common cultural symbols in these snapshots so clearly, because we commonly construct meaning with and through them, because they are so loaded with social significance to us, that such images are powerful communication devices.

These are also the reasons that the ads included in this paper can reveal to us the complications of our feelings toward technology and illustrate how these feelings are played out in the shared landscapes of our lived experience.

Narrative #1: The "Global Village" and the "Electronic Colony"

One of the most popular narratives Americans tell ourselves about computers is that technology will help us create a global village in which the peoples of the world are all connected—communicating with one another and cooperating for the commonweal. According to this popular social narrative, the computer network that spans the globe will serve to erase meaningless geopolitical borders, eliminate racial and ethnic differences, re-establish a historical familial relationship which binds together the peoples of the world regardless of race, ethnicity, or location. As Negroponte (1995) re-tells the story to us

> ...a new generation is emerging from the digital landscape free from many of the old prejudices... Digital technology can be a natural force, drawing people into greater world harmony" (p. 230) within a landscape where "we are bound to find new hope and dignity" (p. 231).

This story, as you can imagine, is appealing at a romantic level to many Americans. It is also, incidentally, quite terrifying. Becoming just another member of the tribe, just another citizen of the global village, suggests the possibility that Americans could be asked to relinquish their current privileged status in the world where, as Negroponte (1995, p. 230) also reminds us, 20 percent of the population currently consumes 80 of the resources. Being just one among many village members also suggests the possibility of losing the economic benefits that have accrued to us as citizens in one of the most highly technological nations of the world and the possibility of functioning within a new global context in which classism and racism is unacceptable because so many members of the connected human family are poor and of color.

In fact, we find ourselves, as a culture, ill equipped to cope with the changes that the "global village" story necessitates, unable, even, to *imagine*, collectively, ways of relating to the world outside our previous historical and cultural experiences. As a result, in the advertisements included here, we re-vise the script of the narrative to fit within the historically determined contexts that are familiar and comfortable. In doing so, we also limit our cultural vision of the technological changes that are acceptable and possible for us as a culture.

The first series of images presented in this paper reveals how our cultural imagination deals with the radical changes that the Global Village Narrative implies, by re-constituting technological change within the boundaries of these more historically and socially familiar contexts. In the global village narrative, for example, while we maintain the vision of linking peoples around the world, we imagine ourselves, not as simple members of this electronically constituted village, but rather as discoverers of the village, explorers of its remote corners, and even colonizers of its exotic peoples.

In the revised narrative, the global village retains its geographical reach, but it becomes a world in which different cultures, different peoples, exist to be discovered, explored, marvelled at—in a sense, known and claimed by—those who can design and use technology. Inhabitants of this electronic global village, in turn, become foreigners, exotics, savages, objects to study and, sometimes, to control.

This revision is a familiar imaginative context for us—we have, after all, a history of experiencing the world as missionaries, as colonists, as tourists, as representatives of multinational companies. The revised story leaves no doubt about our own role—Americans are the smart ones who use technological expertise to connect the world's peoples, to supply them with technology and train them to use it. Nor does the revised story leave us in doubt about the roles of other peoples in the world—they are the recipients of technology and its benefits, those who *use* the technology that *we* control. This story is so familiar because it has happened before and in ways that Americans like to remember. We have a long and admirable history of exporting technological expertise to less fortunate neighbors—through the Lend-Lease, the Peace Corps, and the Space Program among other routes.

This re-telling or re-vising of the Global Village story—we can now call it the Electronic Colonial narrative—happens very naturally within the discursive venues available to our culture—on television, in our classrooms, in books, and articles, and in corporate settings—often without anyone noticing because the elements of revised Electronic Colonial narrative are so much more familiar and acceptable to us than were those of the original Global Village story.

The following pair of images reveals these themes (Figures 1 and 2). Especially fascinating in terms of this revised narrative is the use in these two ads, by Virgin Sound and Records, of the "one tribe" motto. In the first image (Figure 1) we get a glimpse of both stories we have described. The text here narrates the Global Village story, "For the world to have a future, we must work together as one tribe" because "encroaching civilization," "disease," and "epidemics" are threatening some of the world's people with "near extinction." Virgin, the

ad tells us, has donated a portion of their profits from their CD Atlas, entitled *One World*, to assist the Yanomami tribe in the Amazon Basin as they establish health care programs in their villages.

The second, re-vised story—the Electronic Colonial narrative—is revealed most clearly in the visual image represented in the ad, the picture of the Yanomami man. In accordance with the themes of the revised narrative, the Yanomami is shown in ritual dress with feathers and face paint, presented as a wondering savage, vulnerable to the crueler effects of civilization, and obviously unaware, in a critical or informed sense, of the power of the technology being used to his benefit. He is connected to Americans as "a member of the tribe," but he also remains a world away from us—the people who are creating the CD technology and donating the money to health care projects.

The second ad (Figure 2), again for Virgin Sound and Records, announces two products and provides us another version of the revised Electronic Colonial story. In this story, Americans use technology to become world travellers, to learn about—and acquire knowledge of—other cultures, while remaining comfortably situated within their own living rooms and, thus, comfortably separated from the other inhabitants of the global village.

On the left side of the page, the *One Tribe* CD is described, in which "MTV star Pip Dann takes you on a journey exploring the people and cultures of our world, from the origin of the Maori islanders to the rituals of a Tibetan monk." As the ad says, "One Tribe takes you further than you can imagine—right from your own Home." On the right side of the page, the *One World Atlas* offers "A stunningly rich trek around the earth," and a "wealth of maps and information all set to a culturally rich music track." The non-Americans featured in this ad are identified as exotic, albeit inviting, co-habitants of the global village. At the top left, are representations of two youngsters, spliced together to present a bizarre tribal image; on the left margin scattered among postcards from exotic destinations and lists of foreign vocabulary words, two picturesque French men sport the requisite berets and a veiled Middle Eastern woman with mysterious eyes is portrayed.

To complement the textual representation of the electronic colony narrative, the picture in the bottom left of this ad reveals the source of this world gaze—a white, blond woman sits in a well appointed living room that is chock full of artifacts from around the world; several big-screen viewing areas in front of her feature images of exotic peoples and far-off locations, a large computer with a world map on the screen, and a globe complete the representation. And Virgin provides an interesting case study in this respect. As a company, it has roots in Great Britain, but, given its marketing and advertising targets, it has acquired a decidedly American flavor, thus, joining the two countries under the potency of a single colonial gesture.

And, these are the tasteful and more subtle advertisements that associated with the Electronic Colony narrative. The other end of the spectrum is represented in these next two images (Figures 3 and 4). Figure 3, entitled "Unexpected" shows an Indian woman, bone picks through her nose, feathers attached to her ear, beads around her neck, nursing a baby on one breast and a monkey on the other. The ad, for a color scanner, begins with a dollar sign. The person in the image, the message suggests, is another inhabitant of the global village, but one important to Americans only as the unexpected exotic, an image that we can use to sell a piece of technology.

The next ad (Figure 4), for Polyglot International software, provides yet another version of the electronic colony story. In this image, a male, of undefined indigenous origins, with gold teeth, a broad smile, and a Carmen Miranda kind of bonnet made up of roses and topped by either a radio antenna or a birthday candle. The ad's designers have superimposed a set of aviator's goggles over the man's eyes, and, across these goggles, are printed a series of 1s and 0s, denoting binary code.

In this ad, the text provides the background story for the image, "You need a team of software...experts who can help you culturally adapt every aspect of your software for global markets. What you need for what they want." The members of the global village, the ad implies, are indeed different from Americans, and strange, but we can, given the know-how that characterizes the American free enterprise system, identify what these people are seeking in terms of desirable software and provide it to them in a language that they can understand, even with a simplistic notion of our technology products.

These four advertisements—like the travelogue images we look at in *National Geographic*, like the tourist brochures we pore over in the travel agency, like the slides we view after a friends' trip abroad—are representations of exotic places and exotic peoples now available to Americans as new global markets, multiplied, as Fredric Jameson (1991) and Jean Baudrillard (1983) would say, to the point of dizzying accessibility and specificity. And, it is the wondering native, the silly Indian, the veiled woman that is the object of our collective technological, cultural, and capitalist gaze. Americans, in these four ads, you'll notice, go almost un-represented in terms of images. Instead, Americans are the canny and sophisticated minds behind the text, behind the image, behind the technology. We are the designers, the providers, the village benefactors. We are cybertourists and cybercapitalists who both understand and represent the world as a private standing reserve.

This next pair of advertisements (Figures 5 and 6) from IBM entitled "Solutions for a small planet" also tells the electronic colony story, illustrating how generous Americans can be in providing other needier countries with useful technology, and providing the story a potent cumulative power. The small map portrayed in each ad helps to orient viewers to the particular area of the world that IBM and American influence have reached.

In the first ad (Figure 5), for example, with the tone of an old master, IBM provides the 3-D rendering technology needed to rebuild the Frauenkirche, a church destroyed during the allied firebombing of Dresden in 1945. The ad notes that this technology, along with the experience of talented stonemasons, allows the reconstruction to proceed, linking the power of a "21st century tool" with the imagination of "18th century craftsmanship."

In the next IBM ad, this set in South Africa, IBM helps the smiling driver of a South African Breweries truck "slake the thirst of...far flung customers...so precisely that no one's ever short a drop."

If the previous series reduces the world to a series of tourist destinations, this pair of ads—representative of a much more extensive series of technological "solutions for a small planet"—reduces the worlds' problems to a set of embarrassingly quick fixes. American technology and technological know-how, these images imply, can provide reparations for the cultural damage caused by the firebombing of Dresden, recreate the painstaking artistic achievement of a destroyed eighteenth-century cathedral, and serve as a corrective for decades of apartheid. These implications, of course, are not only absurd; they are humiliatingly small-minded. Nothing can provide redress for the millions of human lives, the art, the history, the beauty lost in Dresden; nothing can totally ameliorate the pain and the lingering inequities of South African apartheid. As much as Americans might like to think it; technology is not the solution for all of the world's problems—and, indeed, it might well be a contributing cause to many of them.

Technology, in these ads, is an American tool. And what we use this tool for reveals all too clearly our values as homo faber—the tool maker. In these images, I'm afraid, we see reflected not those fundamental and much needed changes we talked about pursuing earlier; not improvements in the world situation, nor the elimination of hunger or pain or suffering or war; not, in other words, an improved life for our fellow inhabitants in the global village or an improved understanding of their cultures and concerns, but, rather, the all too familiar stories of how to multiply our own personal markets, how to increase our own cultural

profits at the expense of others, how to take more effective advantage of ignorance and difference whenever we identify them, and how to reduce the cultures of other people to inexcusable simplifications.

Narrative #2: "Land of Equal Opportunity" and "Land of Difference"

A second favorite cultural story that we tell in connection with computers and change focuses on equity, opportunity, and access—all characteristics ascribed to the electronic landscape we have constructed on the Internet and to computer use, in general.

This landscape, Americans like to believe, is open to everybody—male and female, regardless of color, class or connection. It is, in fact, at some level, a romantic re-creation of the American story and the American landscape themselves—a narrative of opportunity in an exciting land claimed from the wilderness, founded on the values of hard work and fair play. It is a land available to *all* citizens, who place a value on innovation, individualism, and competition, especially when tempered by a neighborly concern for less fortunate others that is the hallmark of our democracy. If you recognize this story, it is because it has been told so many times. It is the same story that Alexis De Toqueville (1735) told us in *Democracy in America* and one that we've been telling ourselves ever since—in *Horatio Alger* and *Huck Finn*, in Nancy Drew and in *Ozzie and Harriet*.

This next series of advertisements, play on this narrative, emphasizing, in particular, our fascination with—and strong faith in—these traditional American values; in this case, specifically as they have the enduring power to inform and temper technological innovations. The first two are ads (Figures #8 and 9) for Bob, Microsoft's friendly operating system. These images are all ripe with references to the fifties, a time when America was entering the very beginning of its accelerated push toward technological growth and innovation. Although Sputnik, launched by the Russians on the 4th of October in 1957, weighed heavily on our collective minds, the fifties were chock full of optimism. We were still fresh from our successes in World War II, invigorated by the promise of the space program, tantalized by the bright future that the new world order seemed to hold for those who were innovative and farsighted, ready to help the world realize the promise of democracy and technology through the collective effort of the Peace Corp.

This cultural memory is a potent one for Americans, and these ads resonate with the values that we remember as characterizing that golden time—recalling the fundamental American value on friendliness, especially when one sits in a position of privilege in the back of a large and expensive pink convertible (Figure 7); and on the down-home, no-nonsense comfort, associated with a good dog, a good pipe, a warm fire, a comfortable pair of shoes (Figure 8), and the other very American comforts accruing from a good salary and hard work in a culture where effort is rewarded with capital gain, regardless of race, color, creed, or class.

Indeed, we tell ourselves this clearly American tale—which I'll refer to as the Land of Equal Opportunity narrative—often and in many different versions. The next two images (Figures 9 and 10) also play on it, for instance. The first, for Cisco Systems, uses a picture that could have come right out of a Dick and Jane reader (Figures 9). It shows another very American scene, also harkening back to the magic time of the fifties. This time, the focus is on landscape inhabited by smiling people who point to airplanes as evidence of the technological progress because these machines characterize what American know-how can accomplish in the land of equal opportunity when circumstances are right. The text notes, "With wide-eyed optimism, you thought technology was going to let you set information free. You were going to put power into the hands of the people." The ad goes on to explain that technology uninfluenced by traditional American values can run amuck, especially in a postmodern world characterized by "conflicting standards," "rival companies," "incompatibilities," and inefficient work habits.

The second image (Figure #10) tells a bit more of the Land of Equal Opportunity narrative. It speaks for a piece of software by c/net called *The Ultimate Internet Tour*, showing what looks like a frame from an old home movie. From a wide angle shot of a fifties suburban tract home development, we get a magnified perspective on a typical American family—three smiling kids, two smiling, upwardly mobile parents posing in front of a spanking new, functionally designed, split-level home, with all the optimism characteristic of the Eisenhower era. The message, which urges readers to "keep up with the Joneses, the Gates and your kids," suggests that citizens of the twenty-first century can achieve the same kind of happy security and personal well being that was enjoyed by citizens of the fifties—by purchasing a software package rather than a new home.

Unfortunately, if Americans have no collective imaginary context for, or historical experience of, a real global village, nor do they have any real experience with an undifferentiated land of opportunity. Our cultural experience, indeed, tells us something very different—that America is the land of opportunity only for some people. The history of slavery in this country, the history of deaf education, women's suffrage, immigration, and labor unions remind us of this fact; as do our current experiences with poverty, the differential school graduation rate for blacks and whites and Hispanics, the fact that we have never had a woman President, and the presence of border guards and the razor-wire fences over the Rio Grande. All these things remind us that opportunity is a commodity generally limited to privileged groups within this country.

Thus, the re-vised story in the case of these last six ads—which we can call the Land of Difference narrative—is present *not* in what they show, but what they *fail to show*. These ads are what my grandmother would call "mighty white." There is a remarkable absence in all the images of people of color, and poor people, and people who are out of work, and single-parent families, and non-heterosexuals, and foreigners. If citizens of all kinds are to have access to technology and the opportunities it provides, we do not see such a narrative imagined in the Land of Difference narrative; if technology is to improve the lives of all Americans regardless of race and class, our collective ability to envision such a world is not evident in these images.

Narrative #3: "The Un-Gendered Utopia" and "The Same Old Gendered Stuff"

A third potent narrative that Americans have told themselves about technology and change focuses on gender—specifically, this story claims that computers and that computer-supported environments will help us create a utopic world in which gender is not a predictor of success or a constraint for interaction with the world. This narrative, the Un-gendered Utopia story, encourages educators to see and understand computers as educational allies that can support efforts to create new kinds of educational and economic opportunities for students—regardless of gender. The potency of this narrative persists despite evidence to the contrary. It is clear, for instance, that fewer girls use computers in public secondary schools than do boys, especially in the upper grades, fewer women enter the advanced fields of computer science than to males, that the computer industry continues to be a space inhabited by and controlled primarily by males. Computer games are still designed for boys; computer commercials are still aimed mainly at males; computing environments are still constructed by and for males (cf. Spender, 1995; Kramarae, 1988; Jessup, 1991). Computers, in other words, are complexly socially determined artifacts that interact with existing social formations and tendencies—including sexism, classism, and racism to contribute to the shaping of, a gendered society.

This situation, complexly overdetermined as it is within cultural contexts, is nowhere more visible than in gendered images of technology use—especially, but not limited to, commercial images. In these richly textured images, the elaborately woven fabric of social formations that supports the male focused computer industry is coded ideologically at numerous visual and discursive levels for consumers and users. This fabric is so tightly

woven, that for many computer users and consumers, for many students in our schools, it represents what John Bordieu (1977) would term "doxa"—ideological systems of belief so consistent with popular beliefs, and therefore so invisibly potent, that they preclude the consideration of other positions altogether. At the same time, all such fabrics have gaps, lacunae, that provide the space for resistance; and this one is no exception. Indeed, it is exactly because this ideological system is so densely and consistently coded that these images provide such rich sites of analysis and strategic information. In Andrea Dworkin's (1974) words, an analysis of these images can provide us the chance to *unthink* current discourses about technology and to transform the dialogues we hold with ourselves about gender and computers in new and productive, heterodoxic ways.

Like the Land of Equal Opportunity narrative, the Un-Gendered Utopia story can appeal at a romantic level to many Americans, while, at the same time, it terrifies us on a practical level. Creating an electronic ungendered utopia means that we might have to learn how to understand people outside of the limited gender roles that we have constructed for them, that we may have to abandon the ways in which we have traditionally differentiated between men's work and women's work in the market place, that we may have to provide men and women with equitable remuneration for comparable jobs, that we may have to learn to function within new global contexts that acknowledge women as Heads of State as well as Heads of households.

In fact, we find ourselves, as a culture, ill equipped to cope with the changes that this Ungendered Utopia narrative necessitates. We cannot, indeed, even imagine, collectively, ways of relating to gender outside the context of our familiar historical and cultural set of experiences. As a result, re-vise the script of the narrative to fit more snugly within the historically determined contexts that are familiar and comfortable to us. In doing so, however, we also limit our cultural vision of gender within technological landscapes—constraining roles and expectations and possibilities to those we have already constructed as a culture, limiting the potential for change by subscribing to a conventional framework for our imagination.

In this revision, for example, while we maintain the vision of an electronic landscape that is open to all innovative and hardworking people, regardless of their gender, we also limit the actual participation of women and men within this landscape to the more traditionally determined gender roles we have already constructed within our culture. In the revised narrative—the Same Old Gendered Stuff narrative—the new electronic landscape retains a value on innovation, hard work, and the individual contributions of people of both genders, but only as they are practiced appropriately—within the traditionally gendered contexts we have historically and culturally ratified for women and men in our culture.

In such a landscape, women use technology within a clearly constrained set of appropriate settings: to enrich the lives of their family and to meet their responsibilities at home—as wife, as mother, as seductress, as lover; within a business setting, women use computers to support the work of their bosses—as secretaries, executive assistants, and loyal employees. There are, of course, exceptions to this story, as we shall see, but this narrative, as Anthony Giddens (1984, p. 22) would say, is "deeply sedimented" in habit, historically determined practices, in tradition, in our imaginations, and, thus, it exerts a strong influence on even these alternative stories. Men, in contrast, use computers at home to expand their personal horizons beyond current limits—for excitement, for challenge, to enhance their own private lives as explorers, pioneers, and builders. Within the business world, men use computers to support their historically constructed roles as bosses, leaders, decision makers.

This re-telling or re-vising of the Un-Gendered Utopia story happens very naturally. A good portion of our collective imagination is constructed by history and sedimented in past experience and habit. Indeed, many of the images appearing in the next series have a

distinctive "retro" look that harkens back to the fifties—for many of the same reasons as those ads telling the Land of Equal Opportunity narrative discussed earlier in this paper.

In that optimistic time, women were no longer encouraged to maintain a presence in the workplace. At the close of WWII, they were displaced from the workplace by men returning home from the European and Pacific theaters (May, 1988). Women, faced with this eventuality, became the savvy managers of the private sphere—especially when they were assisted by technological innovations. These women, were urged to serve their families frozen foods and TV dinners, and to acquaint themselves with the scientific principles of eating so that they could be effective nutritional advisors to the family; they were expected as well to heed the advice of Dr. Spock, take advantage of the Salk vaccine for polio, and keep abreast of advances in antibiotics and modern theories of behaviorism to become effective health advisors; and they were expected to use the newly developed and improved technologies of electric vacuum cleaners, dishwashers, washing machines, televisions, cleaning products, and station wagons to be increasingly effective housekeepers.

The fact that this previous era of technological optimism provides the context for Americans' collective imagination about the current cultural project of technological expansion is both interesting and important. The results are evident in numerous advertisements about computers and women that use a retro look to link women's roles in the 50s to those in the 90s. The first (Figure 11), for Acer, gives several illustrative views—both of the office, the technologically enhanced world that men inhabit, and the home, the technologically advanced world that children and women inhabit—each gender assuming their appropriate role in connection with technology. Men use technology to accomplish things, women benefit from technology to enhance the ease of their lives or to benefit their families.

And to understand how these traditionally gendered roles of the fifties are projected even more directly on the technological context of the nineties, readers can focus on the image on the far right of Figure 11 and compare it to the image of the same living room in Figure 12. The images are ostensibly set in two different eras: one in the television-era of the fifties and the other in the computer-era of the nineties. Despite this fact, however, despite the fact that families in the nineties must maintain a dual presence in the work force, despite the fact that the rising incidence of divorce at the end of this century makes single-parent families the norm rather than the exception, despite the fact that the optimism of the fifties and sixties as articulated by John Kennedy has given way to the paranoia of the nineties as expressed by Pat Buchanan—the images of gender, the narratives they tell in connection with technology remain relatively stable, disturbing intact except for the imposition of a computer keyboard—held and operated by the father—and a computer menu—admired and enjoyed by the women and children.

And so the re-vised narrative—the Same Old Gendered Stuff narrative—remains current. Its resonance is also demonstrated in Figure 13, an advertisement for Reveal, and in Figure 14 where we meet a thoroughly modern woman, Celeste Craig of Pontiac Illinois. Celeste, we learn, is finally achieving her dream of "going to college by staying home." The invention of a sophisticated distance education computer network has allowed Celeste to undertake a course of study from her home in Pontiac Illinois while, at the same time, continuing to fulfill her role as a single mother supporting a family, parenting her children, and maintaining a household.

The gender roles of the Fifties also translate into workplace roles for women in the Nineties. In Figure 15, for example, Irma, like a good, upscale, personal business assistant in the nineties, speaks "fluent Internet" much like her fifties counterpart would have spoken French. In Figure 16, Fran, a fifties secretary with "just another pretty face" has been transmogrified, into a "multi-talented" nineties cyborg/robot assistant that "makes your web site look good." In Figure 17, an un-named graphic artist knows the technological tools of her trade in the nineties, but is portrayed in the sepia tones and romantic focus of a

Maybelline girl from the 1950s. And finally in Figure 18, which suggests only a slightly revised version of the Same Old Gendered Stuff narrative, a nineties woman-as-boss, also portrayed in sepia tones against a fifties-style restaurant banquette, remains as decidedly cool, relaxed, and elegant as her fifties counterpart luxuriating in front of the air conditioner (Figure 11), despite the fact that she has also required the title of "hotshot," "collector," "workhorse," and "nomad."

But the roles of parent, housewife, and secretary/boss are not the only ones open to women in the new cyberlandscape represented by the Same Old Gendered Stuff narrative. Figure 19, for example, shows an ad for Nokia monitors, and in doing so, portrays a woman in the traditional role of "beauty." In the advertisement, a sophisticated woman draped with jewels, decked out in a chic black dress, washed in sepia tones and softened by a grainy texture gazes into a computer monitor. Although the text accompanying this image ostensibly outlines the capabilities and design of the monitor, the language itself leaves no doubt of picture's focus or intent. As it notes, the "European passion for beauty" is quickly "winning the hearts and eyes of Americans too" by seductive means. The woman pictured in this advertisement, it should be noted, gazes longingly into a monitor, but lacks a keyboard with which she could act on the computer.

Finally, the nineties retro series offers Americans the role of seductress—also a traditionally defined role for women, and one that has retained enormous strength even in cyberspace where change is expected to affect so many areas of our lives. Figure 20 from *Mondo 2000* and Figure 21, representing a narcissistic seductress for Samsung, illustrate the potency of these traditionally constrained roles.

In these ads, we see reflected the roles that our culture can imagine women playing in relation to technology. And they are familiar roles—the seductress, the beauty, the mother—all relationships ratified by our historical experience, easily accessible to our collective imagination, and informed by traditional social values. These roles exist, and are reproduced, within a set of over determined social formations that makes radical change hard to imagine and even harder to enact—even, or especially, when technology is involved.

The revision of the Un-Gendered Utopia narrative into the Same Old Gendered Stuff narrative deals no less traditionally with men's roles, it should be noted. In connection with workplace technologies, men are allowed essentially the same tie-and-oxford-cloth look in the nineties (Figure 22) as they were in the fifties (Figure 23), although slight variations of this role—the impatient-and-rebellious young entrepreneur on the go sans tie (Figure 24) or the successful architect-net-cruiser (Figure 25) sporting a turtle neck—are also permitted. Out of the workplace (Figures 26–28), men are shown to adopt the equally traditional and retrograde roles of bikers, nerds, and sex maniacs.

These ads, of course, are only one expression of our collective experience—and I would not want to claim that they tell a totalizing story. They do indicate, however, that it will be exceedingly difficult for Americans to collectively imagine an electronic landscape in which individuals enjoy new kinds of opportunities to relate to each other and new kinds of opportunities to make positive changes in their lives. It takes energy and careful thinking to create a landscape in which women can participate in roles other than those of seductress, beauty, or mother; and in which men don't have to be bikers or abusers or rabid techno geeks or violent sex maniacs. It is far easier and more comfortable simply to re-construct for ourselves those traditional narratives that tell the same old gender stories over and over again, and that re-create the status quo ever more clearly in their re-telling.

Confronting revised narratives

The images in this paper illustrate to English studies professionals the richly textured narrative fabrics within which computer technology and other communication technologies

are situated in the American cultural scene. Our work as teachers, the curricula we fashion, the corporate and public environments our students enter as professionals, the schools that make up the educational systems—these social formations are also shaped by the same sets of culturally determined values, the same complexities, the same ambiguities, the same contexts for our collective imaginations.

Such a realization can serve to remind teachers that technology does not necessarily bring with it social progress, and that educators had better make sure that students recognize this fact if we want them to be able to make contributions of which they can be proud. Within the English studies programs that we design and administer, and participate in, we place everyone in jeopardy if we limit our understanding of technology and change to one dimension, if we teach students only one part of this complicated picture.

A good English studies curriculum will educate students robustly and intellectually rather than narrowly or vocationally. It will recognize the importance of educating students to be critically informed technology scholars rather than simply expert technology users. Graduates of English studies programs will face an increasingly complex set of issues in the workplace and in the public sphere, and our failure to provide the intellectual tools necessary to understand and cope with these issues at multiple levels signals our own inability to lead productively as professionals and as citizens.

Finally the images can serve to remind educators that even though productive changes are hard to make—with or without technology—our responsibility to work for change, especially as educators, remains undiminished in its urgency and importance. Like Paolo Friere, we need to be optimistic enough to believe that in teaching ourselves and others to recognize the inequities that challenge humanity in our world—the ethnocentrism, racism, classism, sexism—we have begun the difficult work of addressing these problems.

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Electronic communication across the curriculum: Success breeds responsibility

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I've been told that in this region of the world, just as in the United States, most teachers are being encouraged to use the Web for managing teaching materials, developing online courses, and getting grants for developing multimedia materials. If we are successful at encouraging the use of networked communication technologies across the curriculum, important stakeholders in technology-rich virtual and physical environments (teachers, administrators, technicians, and students) will need to collaborate with each other on a substantial set of issue areas that may not have been part of their initial considerations. In order to maintain and support the types of innovative practices mentioned by both Art Young and Donna Reiss, and those suggested in Snyder's (1998) book *Page to screen*, a broader, institution-wide approach to technology support needs to be developed.

I am encouraged to take this approach by some comments in Ilana Snyder's (1998) introductory essay to *Page to Screen*. She says:

> In Australia, at least, technology has never assumed a significant presence—neither in schools nor in post-school educational institutions...

and

> Of course, it may well be that a restrained approach to the electronic technologies' so-called revolutionary potential may prove to be an entirely appropriate response to their use in educational settings (p. xxii).

Synder goes on, I think appropriately, to recommend an activist approach:

> prudence yes, but "we should also be looking at the many and complex effects of the technologies and how we may use them to our advantage in literacy settings" (p. xxiii).

This talk, then, will outline some of the "many and complex effects of [new] technologies" and offer some suggestions for strategic planning that address some of the human and institutional issues that arise when we succeed in our efforts to teach appropriately with new communication technologies. (In a book-length publication, that I hope will be published in 1999, I outline a more comprehensive set of workshops and planning strategies. Today I'll focus on the plight of teachers who are plunging or being propelled into the process of teaching with networked technologies.)

This type of technology planning involves a number ofstakeholders—students, student workers, teachers, staff, andadministrators—who need to participate in a process that will help sustain appropriate technological innovation.

One of the reasons that I am optimistic about Synder's suggestion is that for important stakeholders working in and developing these environments, technology-rich instruction produces moments of excitement and satisfaction. That excitement was evident in my dissertation research (1997) where 191 students, teachers, administrators, and technicians at 55 colleges and universities primarily in the United States commented on issues relating to technology-rich facilities. Their excitement seemed to stem from the instructional potential of interactive publishing and learning environments, from access to real and varied electronic

audiences for students and teachers, from new instructional activities made possible by synchronous and asynchronous conferencing technologies, from increasingly easy access to massive library holdings and databases, and from the potential of almost immediate feedback from diverse and distant readers.

All this instructional potential has led many early adopters of these technologies to conclusions similar to Mary's, one of the teachers in that survey:

> [E]ven though I feel that it [teaching with technology] is more intensive work for me, the payoff is better, for as students realize the benefits of editing on the computer, writing anxiety lessens, the writing is easier and better. Working with students during the composing process also allows mini-conferences and the work that we do together while writing is occurring—visual, verbal, aural—seems to stay with the student better than do merely written comments on papers. The work is harder, because it is more intense. It is more satisfying because the results are so much improved.

These benefits must part of the reason why Mary also labeled herself an enthusiastic user of instructional technologies (5 on a scale of 1-5). Green and Gilbert (1995) in their work with the American Association of Higher Education, label such teachers "early adopters" (p. 11), educators willing to endure the difficulties of pioneering the use of computer-based instruction. They have a high tolerance for moments of frustration and are exhilarated by the prospects of new class structures, new learning environments, and new course content resulting from infusions of instructional technologies.

As you can imagine, not all comments were as positive as Mary's. Behind much of the upbeat commentary, a particularly damaging, accusative dynamic seemed to be lurking in the background.

Mutual blaming: A self-defeating dynamic

See if it sounds familiar:

When good teachers do not get the professional development they need to integrate technology into their classes, they tend to move much more slowly than others who see innovative practices elsewhere-preferring to ensure good education rather than cutting edge technology. And when teachers choose to lag behind in their integration of technology, students often say that they feel as if they know more about technology than their instructors who they considered ill prepared to do this type of teaching. Or if teachers take up technology-rich instruction enthusiastically (early adopters), students complain that they are confused and overwhelmed by the technology-rich instruction they are receiving. Both administrators and technical staff often, in such situations see teachers as incompetent technology users, unwilling to learn new systems well. Or they see early adopters as unreasonably demanding without understanding the constraints that technologists and administrators worked within.

When describing their own challenges, teachers point to their lack of professional incentives; lack of time, minimal technical support, a lack of systematic, personally relevant training; increasing workloads; static pay schedules, and a lack of access to convenient equipment and time for project work and training.

I became convinced at this point that what we needed was a broad-based approach to technology planning. Theoretically, the way to avoid this dynamic is simple: provide teachers with good support. Teachers who are asked to integrate technology into their classes deserve the help they need

- as they learn new technologies,

- as they plan to integrate these technology into their classes, and
- as they implement these technological innovations in technology-rich facilities or online environments.

In particular, they deserve the technical and curricular support of someone like me, who is responsible for organizing a group that can work to create an institutional infrastructure that supports their efforts to teach with technology (TWT).

While this may sound simple in these theoretical terms, the details of how that support is provided is of course quite complex and politicized. But the bottom line is that teachers should expect a local culture of support if administrators want to encourage them to continue teaching with technology into the future. This conference has taken a step in this direction by supporting workshops for teachers. But of course workshops are only the beginning. The group gathered here today has the potential to form a coalition that can help build cultures that support TWT across institutions.

My fundamental suggestion, if you want to skip the rest of the details below, is to collaborate with others in your institution and, just as importantly, those from other institutions and begin lobbying for conditions that will help make a commitment to teaching with technology practical, sustainable, and even exciting!

Working to create a culture of support

Although we should remind ourselves that local conditions and constraints require wide variations in these support systems, components of a supportive educational culture worth working toward might include the following.

If administrators want to create a productive and sustainable environment for teaching with technology, teachers should expect a continuous effort to provide the following:

Day-to-day efforts:

- Faculty machines and upgrades connected to the net
- Clerical support staff on-line
- Faculty support persons
- Student support persons to direct facilities that facilitate TWT
- System administrator responsive to student and faculty support
- School business that's run over the net (with paper support for those who won't otherwise participate)
- College & department chairs who participate on administrative e-mail lists
- Travel and professional development money for academics and staff willing to upgrade technological skills

For the teachers and administrators who form support systems for those using technology in the classroom (virtual or otherwise), the following three basic formats for supporting teachers' needs and interests seem to have worked well over the last decade for us.

Faculty Technology Experiences

I. Weekly meetings: informal, self-determining, alternating between hands-on work and discussions of theory and classroom practice, with weekly meeting notes disseminated throughout the college or department

II. Quarterly multiple-day workshops:

A. Survey of faculty ⇒ topics for workshop ⇒ hands-on demonstration ⇒ plenty of supported, project work time

III. Paid or supported attendance at an annual intensive two-or one-week workshop:

A. teaching goals and strategies developed up front

B. reading list and book reviews

C. lots of planning and curricular assignments

D. daily discussion sessions

E. daily supported hands-on work with technology

F. course-work development and mini-teaches

G. social events

H. 24-hour access to parallel technology

I. lots of optional mini-workshops from local, visiting, and participant experts.

Institutional involvement

At some point, individual teachers, student interest groups, technical support people, and program directors will find it important to becoming involved with institutional and extra-institutional committees and organizations. These committees and organizations serve both as a source of funding and as points of intervention in the technology-rich initiatives that inevitably change our teaching and working conditions. Here are a few institutional spaces where a Humanities department in an engineering university has manage to leverage change in the way technology is supported, distributed, and used.

- representation on technology committees
  (At MTU, for instance, that means seven university & three departmental committees)

- attending to institutional initiatives
  (Committees on lab fees, security/privacy, faculty computing, WWW policy making...)

- applying for local grant efforts
  (multimedia grants, WWW research, distance education, ...)

- setting up student teaching assistant program
  (www.hu.mtu.edu/kitalong/ita)

The following are some organizations that might be useful models or starting points for more comprehensive approaches to technology use:

Extra-Institutional involvement:

AAHE's Teaching, Learning, & Technology Roundtable approach

(www.tltgroup.org)

Alliance for Computers and Writing

(english.ttu.edu/acw)

Epiphany Institute

(mason.gmu.edu/~epiphany)

Upcoming Epiphany institute information:

(www.richmond.edu/~writing/junebug)

Technology-rich Environments:

Last, but certainly not least, we must all work together to develop and maintain technology-rich teaching/learning environments that provide for

- adequate, safe student access to appropriate technologies
- teachers who want to develop innovative teaching practices
- all of us to work together to create a critical approaches to literacy education

I don't have time to go into details here, but I am particularly interested in how these technology-rich environments (virtual and physical) come into being and how they are supported over time. Please grab me if you would like to talk about an expanded role in literacy education for these environments.

I'm not alone, of course, in these observations. Peyton and Bruce (1993) claim that

> Educational institutions may embrace a new technology because of purported pedagogical benefits and the desire to prepare students for a technological society, but not be ready to provide the complex network of resources necessary to assure that the technology succeeds." (p. 76)

We have to learn to work within an institution or between institutions help decide how technology support can and should be organized. Over time as a group, teachers, administrators, technicians, and students can become informed technology activists and leverage the institutional practices needed to sustain technology-rich instruction.

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Conceptualising CAC programs: Writing to Learn

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> Art was unable to get a copy of his keynote address to us before publication date. However, he suggested that we substitute a previously published paper, which is compatible with his keynote address. Although the paper is not the same thing, it does provide participants with information about Art's approach to Communication Across the Curriculum. The paper first appeared with the title "The wonder of Writing Across the Curriculum", in 1994, volume 1, number 1 of *Language and Learning Across the Disciplines,* pp. 58-71. The paper is reproduced here, with kind permission of the editors of *Language and Learning Across the Disciplines.*

The wonder of Writing Across the Curriculum

The main reason I got involved with writing across the curriculum fifteen years ago was administrative and related to campus politics. The main reason I have stayed actively involved in writing across the curriculum for fifteen years is personal and related to my teaching. Quite simply, I am a better teacher because of writing across the curriculum. So while motivations and intentions are messy things to characterize, for me the combination of administrative and teaching responsibilities and personal and public desires have led to most of my professorial life being engaged in writing across the curriculum—in my own classroom and on my college campuses—first at Michigan Tech, and now for six years at Clemson University.

Fifteen years ago, as a new department head, I was called into the office of my even newer Provost and given a charge: do something about the lack of communication skills exhibited by Michigan Tech engineering students and recent graduates. I returned to my department symbolically located, I thought, on the other end of campus, and met with colleagues to decide what to do.

Now doing something about the communication skills of engineering students was not at that time the battle cry of my fledgling departmental administration. We had established our own internal priorities around more traditional goals of creating a new undergraduate degree and thereby attracting more majors and of starting a graduate program. It was as if Bill Clinton, on being ushered into power on the promise to build an economically strong America, had been told that his first priority would be to build an even stronger Germany and Japan. To aid aggressive competitors in campus politics for market share and funding priorities. And not only to help them to achieve a better product, a more marketable engineering graduate, but to help them in an area that they themselves didn't deem very important to their mission or worthy of their time—an area that they saw as a secondary one—communications skills. Kind of like the Japanese or Germans wanting U.S. advice on fashions—what to wear to a corporate dinner. Or so we thought. In some sense, very early on, we saw the Provost's charge as an opportunity, but to recognize how big an opportunity it really was took time, experience, and a new way of thinking about university priorities, about colleagues across disciplines, and about what being a teacher was really all about. So after about a year of study and discussion, a writing-across-the-curriculum project was launched at Michigan Tech.

Now, I hope you don't mind if I use the abbreviation "WAC" for writing-across-the-curriculum. It has become a staple in my vocabulary, like GM, IBM, or GE. In fact, as long as I am drawing analogies to market competition, I might share an experience I had earlier this year. Conducting the second day of a faculty workshop at St. Thomas University in New Brunswick, Canada, I arrived to find an overhead transparency projected onto the screen—"WAC MAN: THE RETURN." It was a newspaper ad from a local electronics store in Fredericton—appropriately, perhaps, named "Wacky's." I will spare you the rest of the extended analogy I wrote about obtaining a WAC mobile so that the briefcased crusader could battle sentence fragments and comma splices in a never ending battle against language corruption.

What I have found in fifteen years as a WAC Man, is that being involved with WAC has kept the focus of my professional life on teaching. I realize that my teaching suffers if I allow myself to become isolated, to drop out of the WAC community of teachers at my school, that I lose the reality check on my own teaching and forgo opportunities for further growth as a teacher. That is why WAC, for me, is both a personal and institutional matter. For WAC to work, it needs both the commitment of individual teachers and a supportive interdisciplinary community and institutional commitment to nurture it. Thus, my remarks today will have this twin focus, the individual and the communal, the personal and the public, the teacher and the institutions that support teaching.

It has not been enough for me to get some good ideas about teaching at a conference or faculty workshop and then drop the conversation—go into my classroom and shut the door behind me. I need to find ways to sustain the conversation—with my own students as junior colleagues in the enterprise of teaching and learning—and with each of you. I need them and I need you to keep the teaching conversation going with me, and together we must find ways to keep the faculty workshop going—with long breaks and with good food, of course—but a continuing workshop nonetheless.

Writing across the curriculum, when it works well and thrives, conceives of students, teachers, our various disciplines, and our administrative programs as one interrelated system (Herrington and Moran ix). This is something I could not or did not imagine sixteen years ago—when I viewed faculty in different disciplines as competitors for market share—ones who talked a disciplinary language I could not understand and did not want to understand.

Writing across the curriculum has its beginnings, for me, in the important work of James Britton, Nancy Martin, and their colleagues at the University of London's Schools Council Project. Theirs was a major effort to integrate and then study "language across the curriculum" in English schools in the 1960s and 70s. Their work demonstrated in theory and in practice that language was integral to learning as well as to communication in all disciplines. Most WAC projects in the U.S. in the late 70s, such as the one at Michigan Tech, were motivated by a desire to enhance student abilities in these two areas. First, they were concerned with students' ability to communicate, what was often called student literacy—functional literacy, critical literacy, academic literacy. Teachers, administrators, and funding agencies wanted students to read and to write better than they did. Second, they were concerned with students' abilities as learners—they wanted students to become more active and engaged learners, critical thinkers, and problem-solvers—and they believed that providing students with increased opportunities to use writing as a tool for learning would help meet these goals. In some sense, we might say that first-generation WAC programs founded on these premises focused on the cognitive development of individual students. They encouraged writing in all disciplines to enable students to become astute learners, critical thinkers, and effective communicators.

In the 1980s, teachers explored the social dimensions of written communication, an exploration that gradually shifted WAC theory and practice away from a cognitive emphasis

to a more socially based perspective on writing. This shift paralleled WAC's move from the individual classroom into the wider social arena of campus-wide and state-wide programs. Thus, to the first two premises for WAC programs, a third and fourth were added. Third, writing is a social activity; it takes place in a social context. If we want students to be effective communicators, to be successful engineers and historians, then we cannot separate form from content, writing from knowledge, action from context. Student writers need to join a community of learners engaged in generating knowledge and solving problems, to join, even as novices, disciplinary conversations and public-policy discussions. WAC programs, therefore, began to stress the role of collaboration in learning, the role of audience in communication, and the role of social context in learning to write and writing to learn. Each new context makes different demands on a writer and requires different understandings about what is valued as expressions of knowledge in particular communities. Teachers began to change the social environments of their individual classrooms to nurture and challenge student writers, and they began to lobby for the instutionalization of WAC within their school or college.

A fourth premise, then, is that writing is social action; writers are advocates who write to further personal and social goals. If we want students to be effective communicators, we cannot continually ask them to practice at writing separate from any social or disciplinary community of shared knowledge and interests. Writers write to change their perceptions of the world and to change others' perceptions of the world. Thus WAC programs have added advocacy writing to their repertoire; students writing to audiences beyond the classroom, writing to audiences who want to hear what they know and what they think about what they know, writing on electronic networks to understand, monitor, and solve global as well as local problems, writing "where language can lead to action in the world" (Dunlap 213).

As we move through the decade of the 1990s toward the twenty-first century, WAC proponents understand more and more what is to be done. We do not replace the cognitive dimension of writing with the social dimension, but rather we continue to build on the knowledge and experience of others in both areas. Today, mature WAC programs attempt to use all four underlying premises as a way of empowering students as active learners and effective communicators: writing to learn, writing to communicate, writing as a social process, writing as social action. Certainly there are tensions and conflicts between teachers and scholars who prefer cognitively or socially-based instructional strategies, but the stance of most WAC programs is to welcome competing viewpoints on such matters, to see WAC as an inclusive and evolving movement, one which seeks to encourage conversations about significant educational issues by teachers and other interested parties, and then to listen for opportunities that may lead to communal action and educational renewal based on consensus (preceding four paragraphs adapted from the 'Introduction' to Farrell, Gere, and Young's forthcoming *Programs and Practices*).

But as we all know, when we try to start and sustain WAC programs, things do not always run smoothly in practice. About four years ago, Toby Fulweiler and I were editing a book on this subject: *Programs That Work: Models and Methods for Writing Across the Curriculum*. We were just about finished, and it became time to write the introduction—an overview of the book and a response to the most frequently asked questions about implementing and running a WAC program. But something was bothering me. I knew from my personal experience as well as the experiences of the cross disciplinary faculty represented in the fourteen chapters before me, that something was wrong. We knew that WAC programs create a better academic environment for both students and faculty to excel as teachers and learners, and yet we also knew that most WAC programs remain difficult to initiate, difficult to fund, difficult to sustain, difficult to institutionalise , difficult to integrate into the central role of the school or university. WAC "is still an adjunct program on most campuses, still on tenuous budgetary footing, still without administrative positioning within the academy, still, as it were, operating on the fringe of academic respectability" (287). Even though our book contained descriptions of fourteen exemplary and apparently healthy programs, I thought

we needed to confront this darker reality. So Toby and I did what we often do when we don't quite understand what the other is talking about, he went his way to write the first draft of the 'Introduction', and I went my way to write the first draft of what was to become the 'Afterword' to the book—with the ominous title 'The Enemies of Writing Across the Curriculum'.

I elaborated on along list of attitudes and practices that subvert WAC and its effort to improve education, what I call enemies of WAC and institutionalizing WAC—a list familiar to most of you I'm sure:

- Academic institutions are organised by disciplinary departments, and thus interdisciplinary programs, such as WAC, fall through the cracks of the academy, along with many of our students.

- WAC is identified as a remedial program, as a quick fix, as something temporary, so that once students again write better, as in the good old days, the program will be phased out.

- Unstable leadership: Writing faculty, often the most knowledgable leaders of WAC on campus, are often adjuncts, part-timers, graduate teaching assistants, non-tenure track—subject to being rolled over and turned out in a few years.

- Resistance from English departments has many forms as well: reluctance to share responsibility for teaching writing with untrained faculty in other disciplines; reluctance to water down the main mission of the department, the literature program; reluctance to tenure and promote faculty in composition.

- The pressure at many colleges is for even larger classes, more students, but also more research. With large classes come standardized tests and the belief that such tests are objective and preferable to subjective writing assignments. This reinforces the myth that writing in educational settings should be used primarily to test students' knowledge rather than as opportunities to learn subject matter. In the nation's schools, the situation is even worse. Not only are the students labeled with a standardised test scores, but so are teachers, school districts, and states. Teaching to such tests subverts innovative teaching —and WAC thrives on innovation, just as mediocrity thrives on standardisation.

- At the college level, the traditional reward system devalues undergraduate teaching and primarily rewards research, publications, grants. It also assumes that the student's job is to memorize what the teacher disseminates. If such a model is accurate, it makes perfect sense to videotape the professor's lectures, show them to ten or fifteen classes of students at the same time—or watch them in the library if you miss class—and have graduate students administer the scan-tron tests—to measure how much the students remember from the video lectures. It certainly does free up faculty research time—especially if the videotapes only need revising once or twice a decade (or a career?).

- The fear of student resistance is another key enemy: everyone knows students hate to write, so why turn them off and risk getting lower student evaluations at the end of the term? Teaching students to write about physics or horticulture is some one else's responsibility anyway. Our system of education has trained students to be like Skinnerian pigeons—to prefer things simple. Tell us what to say, when to say it, how to say it, and then give us our reward. But as every WAC teacher knows, students are not pigeons, and when given the opportunity, most prefer not to be treated as pigeons. Faculty are often pleasantly surprised when student evaluations actually go up.

- And the final enemy I noted, faculty resistance: some faculty are apathetic, others insecure, others downright hostile to any program that offers to assist them with their teaching. They see such efforts as a subtle indictment of their current teaching and feel threatened by any attempt at collaboration centered on teaching. They believe that teaching is a matter between teacher and students, and any organized attempt to change their teaching strategies is an attack on academic freedom. At colleges, faculty have an even greater reason to resist—it is against their own self-interest. Time spent on teaching is time robbed from research (287–294).

This is a depressing litany, isn't it? And this from a guy who is generally upbeat, optimistic, idealistic, forward-looking. The WAC Man. Fifteen years as a WAC advocate. I don't know what got into me—some midlife episode I assume. My 'enemies' essay has now been out for a couple of years, and it has been interesting to see some of the critical reactions from teachers in other places. Mostly the reaction has been favourable, favourable in the sense that they concede that I commonsensically summarized a depressing situation. Some scholars have been more perceptive and have constructed arguments about how I missed the boat on such things as faculty resistance. Faculty resistance is actually a good thing, they claim, because out of such resistance comes the creative tension that engenders change. The post-modernist paradox: the need to be part of a community (Howard 49). For some reason, these arguments did not immediately lift my spirits from their midlife depths.

And then I read an article by William E. Coles. Jr., of the University of Pittsburgh, with the engaging title 'Writing Across the Curriculum: Why Bother?' After summarizing my list of enemies and the struggles that WAC programs face, he writes and I quote, "that the real wonder is not that the program has enemies. The wonder is that it has gathered so many friends" (23). And reading Cole's essay, my spirits began to soar. And thus the title of my talk today on the wonder of writing across the curriculum. Cole goes on to conclude his essay in this way:

> Why bother to work at writing across the curriculum? Finally, I suppose, because a student, as it turns out, is not the only focus of the process. For teachers, no less than for students, writing across the curriculum—given its insistence that one ask real rather than loaded questions, the way it takes for granted the importance of dialogue and revisions as part of the writing process, and its emphasis on teachers rather than the supremacy of the Teacher—can be an expression of faith that can keep faith itself alive, faith in this case that real growth, real development, real change, are possible, even in an educational institution. This does, of course, demand a commitment of time and energy, but an unreasonable one only if I forget that, very simply, I'm a better teacher, a better student, a better person, when I act as though I had that kind of faith. (25).

And thus the conversations we have at workshops, at colloquia like this one, and in print (like the one I had with William Coles), continue to work their magic for me. So with no apologies whatsoever, I'll tell you about one writing and learning process I have been using in an upper-level Victorian literature class I teach, and thereby share with you the joy I experience in teaching, a joy continually renewed not only by my interaction with students but with faculty colleagues who bother about writing across the curriculum.

I use writing to help students learn Victorian literature (the subject matter I teach), learn to read difficult texts, learn to talk and write about them, learn to pose questions that need asking, learn to make meaning in such a way that it is indeed meaningful to them and to others. Although our subject matter changes depending on our discipline, whether accounting or zoology, these are common goals among WAC teachers, ones we can adapt to the unique circumstances of our own teaching. By way of introduction, let me say that I learned about this strategy I'm going to share with you from an engineering course, and that it has been adapted and used by teachers at Clemson in various disciplines, including

Melanie Cooper in chemistry and Robert Jameson in mathematics. Unless I am mistaken, all three of these teachers used it before I did. We learned about it from each other in our faculty workshops—which over 400 Clemson faculty have now participated in—and through articles we wrote for our local WAC newsletter. Although my Victorian literature class enrolls about 35 students per section, it should be noted that Melanie Cooper's first-year chemistry course enrolls about 200 students per section.

The focus on this assignment is on a series of notes or letters students write to each other in pairs. They first write to a partner about the problems they've encountered in interpreting a difficult text—they construct and contextualise questions about it—and then write a return letter to their partner suggesting possible answers and perhaps raising other issues to be discussed. In writing, they often surprise themselves with what they learn, and they are often gratified to help some one else understand—to make a difference through written communication.

Let me give you the context for this assignment: this was the last of six writing assignments students were required to do in the course, in addition to a midterm and a final exam. Two of the other assignments were formal critical essays on the literature, and three were more informal creative writing assignments, like writing a poem in the dramatic dialogue form of Robert Browning. Students kept their writing in a portfolio, which was read and assessed by them and by me about midterm and at the course conclusion. For this final assignment, students had one week to read the novel *Heart of Darkness* by Joseph Conrad, to read the critical introduction to the novel by Cedric Watts, and to read one scholarly essay by Chinwa Achebe who argued that the novel is racist. Part 1 of this assignment, the first letter, was written before the novel was discussed in class: it could be handwritten and be about 200 words long; and Part II, the response letter, was written following the week's class discussion and needed to be typed and be about 500 words long. Students knew as well there would be a final exam question on *Heart of Darkness*.

I present one letter of inquiry and one letter of response from the exchange between to and Alyson—as a way of centering our attention on students' texts.

> Alyson,
>
> On page 149, Marlow makes a general statement about women after having a conversation with his aunt, saying, 'It's queer how out of touch with the truth women are. They live in a world of their own, and there had never been anything like it, and never can be. It is too beautiful altogether, and if they were to set it up, it would go to pieces before the first sunset.' After reading the novel, I could see how Marlow would think that Kurtz's Intended fit into this stereotype. She really did seem to be totally out of touch with reality, and she didn't seem to have a clue about the man she loved. The question I want to ask is whether the African woman described near the end of the novel on page 226 fits into this stereotype. Actually, I would like to know where and how she fits into the novel at all, beyond the insinuations of being Kurtz's mistress. I think this woman must be symbolic of something, although I am not exactly sure of what. Is she a living, breathing human embodiment of the 'heart of darkness,' the wilderness of the African Congo, as seems to be indicated on page 226?
>
> Emily

> Emily,
>
> In class, we discussed the possibility that Heart of Darkness is a masculine novel. This idea seems supported by the narrator's reliance on patriarchal assumptions and

Marlowe's unsympathetic view of women and, perhaps, by the subject matter which focuses on plotting, murder, intrigue, and male adventure. Based on these assumptions, the savage woman's role can be explained as a symbolic representation of the things to which this man feels alternatively attracted and repulsed—woman and Africa.

Before the trip, Marlow has, as you mentioned, stated his demeaning and subordinating attitude towards women (that they're out of touch with the truth). But that description fits his Aunt and the Intended specifically, while this savage woman seems a striking deviation from this stereotype. When considering the savage woman in the context of Marlow's stereotype, I came up with several possibilities.

Some possibilities for the purpose of this woman were suggested briefly by Achebe. He believes that she serves as a direct contrast or opposite to the Intended. If so, I wonder why Conrad would deliberately draw this contrast with his own view of woman who is embodied in the Intended? When you consider the dichotomies presented (Thames/Congo, Africa/England, civilized/savage, good/evil), this contrast of the powerful, wild savage with the civilized, naive Intended is a fitting echo of the division made by Marlow. But does Marlow's image of women represent what he wants them to be? I think it does, because he wilfully hides the truth from the Intended by lying about Kurtz's last words.

Yet I think it's important that, to Marlow, truth is available to men only. It's a masculine concern. So if the woman represents Africa, which he suggests is the case by comments such as "...the whole sorrowful land... seemed to look at her, pensive, as though it had been looking at the image of its own tenebrous and passionate soul" (76), then she has a strong connection with the truth. As I see it, the primitive and the savage is the vehicle for truth in Heart of Darkness; therefore, this woman conveys, or threatens to convey, truth ...

However, another purpose this woman serves is to help explain Kurtz. The implication that she was his mistress makes Marlow and the reader consider her as a real woman, one who is capable of having a relationship with a white man. It's interesting to consider whether Conrad created her to represent how savage Kurtz had become or to show us that our kinship with Africa is real. I think an important question is whether she represents a positive alternative to the deluded, meek Intended or whether she represents the darkness which lured Kurtz into madness. That question asks, I think, a major decision to be made about the novel.

Alyson

As I read the exchange of student letters, the first thing that struck me was the quality of the talk about the literature that is exhibited in the letters: the questions and issues that were thoughtfully raised, the insight and agility with the process of literary interpretation, the quality of the writing and thinking, the impressive array of intellectual skills that was brought to bear in assisting another to understand the novel: analysis, synthesis, inference and speculation, integration of primary and secondary sources.

Why was I surprised by such an engagement and sophistication by my students?—because these letters contrasted markedly with the two formal critical essays they had written previously for me and to me in the course—ones which were not coherent or insightful—ones that were not a joy to read. Many of you know the kinds of critical essays I mean. I began to question what might have caused the difference: the shift in audience from the teacher as primary to fellow student as primary with the teacher as secondary? The shift in context, from a topic or question the teacher concocted to a question raised by a fellow student? The shift from the form and language of my profession—the specialized language

of literary analysis in the critical essay—a language many students must do their best to invent—since it is not the language of their profession or of their experience—to the form of language of notes and letters —at once personal and familiar to the students?

Some other questions I muse about when I study and interpret the student writing:

- Why did the students claim to enjoy and learn more from the letters they wrote and received rather than the formal critical essays they wrote?

- Why did many students write inept and "just playing the game" critical essays and insightful and sincere letters about *Heart of Darkness?* And was I just playing the game when I earlier in the course assigned a critical essay on the role of love and marriage in Oscar Wilde's play, *The Importance of Being Earnest?*

- Why did the students complain about the restrictions on their creativity and interpretive ability when I assigned the broad topic of love in Wilde's play for their critical essay, and not complain at all about writing a letter to a fellow student on a much narrower topic (such as the "role of the African woman" in *Heart of Darkness,* who appears for only a couple of pages)?

- How come the students so easily integrated primary and secondary sources into the flow of their letters, while quotes from such sources in their critical essays resembled patchwork quilts?

- And why, at the end of class, on the student evaluation form—did numerous students comment that the letters were the most difficult writing assignment of the term, and the most time consuming, and yet the one they found the most valuable and learned the most from?

I assigned these essays last semester—only three months ago—so I'm still musing—I don't have the answers to these and other questions. But I do have some initial observations that I'm willing to share with you—in the hopes that you will give me your ideas about these issues as we chat in the discussion period following this talk.

First, I think the social nature of the assignment was important. The students had interpreted my critical essay as the familiar school assignment—show the teacher that you read the novel and can write some things about it—show your teacher you can think. You are not really helping the teacher understand the novel any better—because the teacher has read and taught the novel several times, read many professional books and essays about it, and you have spent a week reading the novel—while taking four or five other classes at the same time. The advantages of the letters is that they are written for a specific individual, a peer, who is asking real questions, asking for help, and for whom you can play the role of colleague and of teacher. The letters demonstrate students communicating to a real audience rather than practicing at communicating for a pretend audience: professional scholars who read and write essays about *Heart of Darkness*. In addition, the letters are contextualised within the classroom community. As you can see from Alyson's response letter—and this was true of most letters—the classroom lectures, discussions, and readings are integrated into the letter writing—students synthesize and make sense of what they heard and read in class. The formal critical essays were written in the vacuum—as if to mention that you got some of your ideas from classmates and class discussions was a form of cheating. The letter assignment, I believe, was vital to the knowledge students were making, while the critical essay was perceived as an "add-on assignment"—an "out-of-class" project—and became, in practice, an isolated and isolating task.

Second, I think the problem-posing nature of the assignment was important. The students learned as much in Part I of the assignment as they did in writing the longer and more

formal (it had to be typed) Part II. Fundamental to every discipline is figuring out how to ask important and germane questions that continue the advancement f knowledge within that field. You've got to know a lot to ask good questions (and I found out my students know a lot), and good questions beget good responses. The person writing back to you knows that superficial generalities or a string of quotes from secondary sources will not do—will not answer your questions and address your confusion, will not help you understand a little more about *Heart of Darkness,* will not help at all. It asks the writer to take seriously the responsibility of a writer. It places responsibility on the writer in Part II—an obligation to teach, and an obligation to be sincere and honest. Reading this student writing made me question if I was being honest when I earlier asked the students to write an essay on love and marriage *in The Importance of Being Earnest*—when I already knew most of the answers. I also note that Alyson, in responding sincerely to Emily, questions herself—and that these questions and the remarkable conclusion to her essay become an invitation to continue the conversation—and not an attempt to provide definitive answers and thus end it.

In reading my students' writing—both the critical essays and the letter exchange—I not only learn about the students, about Oscar Wilde and Joseph Conrad, but also, and maybe most importantly, about myself as a teacher, who and what I value in teaching. I now realise I prefer my mirrored reflection, my own self-image, as it is represented in the student letters—rather than the image of me I see represented in their critical essays. It makes me eager to read the writing my students this semester, in an entirely different course, are generating. And it makes me eager to listen to each of you talk about your teaching—in the hallways and in the workshop sessions over the next two days of this colloquia. For doing these things, quite simply, makes me a better teacher.

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Papers

Working toward an efficient and effective oral communication program at The College of William and Mary

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According to student outcomes assessment and alumni surveys at The College of William and Mary in Virginia, the curriculum has not provided sufficient opportunities for the development of oral communication skills in recent years. Budget constraints and departmental configurations have made it necessary to address this situation with a series of small creative program changes, rather than broad curricular reform. In 1994, the College was awarded a two-year state-level grant for the installation of four new program components: a faculty development series, a directive student assessment procedure, a new hybrid communication course, and a learning resource studio. The overall objective of these efforts was to increase opportunities for all students to develop communication skills throughout their undergraduate careers. This paper describes the process of establishing an Oral Communication Program with limited financial and personnel resources, and reflects on the successes, failures, and current status of each program component. The intent is to provide encouragement and useful insight for those considering similar programmatic development.

Introduction

In 1989, the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS) mandated in its Criteria for Accreditation that the general education core of colleges and universities under its supervision must include "components designed to ensure competence in reading, writing, oral communication, and fundamental mathematical skills" (Fleuriet, 1993, pp. 17–18). This was the first time that a focus on oral communication had been included as part of the accreditation requirements adopted by SACS. In 1990, student outcomes assessment and alumni surveys at The College of William and Mary in Virginia (a state-assisted "public ivy" liberal arts college with approximately 4,500 undergraduate students in Williamsburg, VA) indicated that the existing curriculum did not provide sufficient opportunities for development and improvement of student oral communication skills. Budget and personnel constraints (only two Communication Studies academics) prevented the solution of this problem with an infusion of new resources. Therefore, the College's response was to undertake a one-year pilot study of student communication competency and the effectiveness of existing communication courses (Burk, 1994). Recommendations and concerns raised as a result of the project were discussed at a two-week faculty development seminar attended by two external consultants in May of 1993 (Burk, 1993). These efforts produced a strategic plan, which was developed into a grant proposal and subsequently supported with two years of start-up funds by the State Council for Higher Education in Virginia.

The broad objective of the two-year project was to create a programmatic structure which would continue to increase the opportunities for all students at The College of William and Mary to develop oral communication skills throughout their undergraduate careers. The primary constraint on this effort was the fact that the project was to be coordinated by a single faculty member provided with a temporary partial release from normal teaching

responsibilities. The intention in writing this paper is to produce a short case study for others considering programmatic development under similar constraints.

Project overview

The grant supporting this project consisted of US$114,919 in external funds with an additional commitment from the college resulting in a total two-year budget of US$ 191,506. Based on these funds, the original project proposal included four primary components:

> *Faculty Development*—A program of seminars and short workshops to encourage and train faculty to incorporate oral communication activities and instruction into their courses.
>
> *Directive Assessment*—A procedure to identify entering students most in need of improving their oral communication skills, and a structure to provide this information to advisors and give these students enrollment priority in relevant courses.
>
> *SPCH 102*: Fundamentals of Oral Communication—A new introductory Communication Studies course designed to broadly develop knowledge and skills of first-year students in a variety of classroom-oriented contexts.
>
> *Oral Communication Studio*—A teaching "lab" facility featuring audio-video technology, computers equipped with interactive instructional and self-assessment resources, and a small staff of trained student Oral Communication Consultants (O.C.C.'s).

The remodeling and equipping of the studio space required an initial outlay of about US$20,000. Beyond this, most of the remaining budget went to support salaries and the hiring of adjunct employees to provide release time. After the first year, the budget was cut significantly due to state budget cuts, and the original goals were reduced, particularly in the area of directive assessment. A timeline of these project activities has been created.

Project details

Faculty development—During the two-year period defined by the grant proposal, the College offered and encouraged participation in 16 different faculty development experiences, varying in format from two-week intensive seminars (for which participants were given small stipends). to two-hour lunch-time workshops. The content and structures of these programs were determined by faculty surveys and departmental requests. Specific topics included individual and group presentations, using small groups in the classroom, enhancing discussions, and developing skills such as listening and critical thinking. In addition, an adjunct consultant was hired for two semesters to deal with faculty development issues unique to the School of Business (this element of the project was cut during the second year due to budget reductions). Attendance included 114 faculty members (approximately one-third of all Arts and Sciences faculty). and 64 graduate students. Since the completion of the project in 1996, continuing requests for programs and testimonies from faculty seem to indicate that these efforts were among the more successful components of the project.

Assessment and advising using the PRCA—After research and consultation with national experts, the directive assessment portion of the project was designed around the application of a written self-assessment tool called the PRCA, or *Personal Report of Communication Apprehension* (McCroskey, 1978, 1982, 1990). Although the PRCA does not provide an actual behavioral measure of communication skill (Richmond & McCroskey, 1995), it does meet the specific limitations inherent in the assessment of a large body of incoming students through a "Freshman Questionnaire Packet" bulk mailing (24 multiple-choice questions on a single page which can be scanned by computer). In addition, it is the most widely-used and highly-

validated instrument available for self-identification of communication apprehension (DeWine & Pearson, 1985; McCroskey, Beatty, Kearney, & Plax, 1985; McCroskey, Booth-Butterfield, & Payne, 1989; Rubin, Rubin, & Jordan, 1997; Vinson & Roberts, 1993). During the two-year project period, the PRCA, which ranks students as exhibiting "high," "moderate," or "low" levels of apprehension, was completed and returned by 3082 incoming freshmen. Approximately 10% of all responding students reported high levels of communication apprehension. To direct the enrollment of these students into SPCH 102, the data were reported in student profiles given to Faculty Advisors, along with additional information about the new course. Unfortunately, enrollment levels of high apprehension students in SPCH 102 were disappointingly low (approximately 12%). and a re-application of the test with a sub-population of students after one year of enrollment was inconclusive.

SPCH 102—In designing and acquiring approval for this new broadly-targeted course dealing with oral communication skill development, the College adhered to a definition of communication competency utilized by the National Communication Association (1990). This definition includes the three components or "domains" of communication: "cognition" (knowledge), "behavior" (skills), and "affect" (motivation). The description of SPCH 102 in the current course catalogue at The College of William and Mary is as follows:

> An examination of oral communication within a variety of contexts, including interpersonal, family, small group, public, and intercultural communication. The course will focus on techniques to achieve communication competency, and on the development of other skills such as listening, participating in discussions, and critical thinking.

A unique aspect of the course is its two-credit lecture-lab format, which involves one lecture meeting in which multiple sections meet together and one separate interactive "lab" meeting each week. This structure has allowed an approximate 25% increase in student access to communication courses with no change in faculty support (contact hours). During the two-year project period, 17 sections of SPCH 102 were offered with a total enrollment of 244 students. Currently, four sections of the course (approximately 64 students). are still being offered each semester.

Oral Communication Studios—Although the process took longer than expected, the project resulted in the development of two O.C. Studios, which are now in full operation. The original plan called for one facility, but upon consideration of space limitations, the decision was made to spread the resources into two locations. One of the Studios is associated with an existing Writing Resources Center, and the two operations work effectively together, sometimes involving the same student consultants. The other Studio is located within the building which houses the Department of Theatre and Speech. Both Studios are staffed by trained student tutors ("Oral Communication Consultants"). who provide guidance and feedback to the users of the facilities. The training of the O.C.C.'s includes critiquing individual and group presentations, guiding small group dynamics and decision-making projects, and dealing with apprehensive students.

Together, the two Studios feature three interactive instructional stations, each of which is composed of a computer linked to a laser-disk player and a video monitor. The systems operate via specially designed software and associated full-motion graphics on laser disk (developed at Radford University in Radford, VA), which lead the student through one of four instructional modules dealing with listening, critical thinking, speech introductions and conclusions, or speaking outlines. Furthermore, each computer is loaded with three self-assessment tools advocated by the National Communication Association: the Personal Report of Communication Apprehension, the Willingness to Communicate Scale, and the Communication Behaviors Inventory. Other resources available in the Studios include instructional books and video tapes, and video recording and playback equipment for practicing communication activities such as presentations or small group discussions.

During the second year of the project (the Studios were not fully finished during the first year as planned), the three interactive instructional computer stations recorded over 700 student sessions (approximately one hour each) and the O.C.C.'s conducted approximately 300 consultations. A large proportion of this activity was due to assignments associated with SPCH 102. However, since the end of the project in 1996, faculty from across the curriculum have continued to send their students to the Studios for consultations, and the instructional stations have continued to be used by students preparing for oral presentations in a variety of courses and contexts.

Project evaluation and continuation

Michael Cronin, then the Director of the Oral Communication Program at Radford University, served as the external consultant for this project. His mid-term and final reports based on two site visits were positive, but contained some suggestions about reducing diagnostic assessment and dissemination activities given the limited resources available. He also suggested an expansion of efforts in the areas of the Oral Communication Studios and O.C.C.'s, and the provision of additional support to continue communication-related faculty development.

In addition to this formal evaluation, each component of the project was assessed through the gathering of feedback from both faculty and students in the form of surveys and questionnaires. Many of the most positive reactions to the project came from faculty (academic staff) evaluations of instructional development seminars and workshops. As part of these programs, all participants completed pre- and post-experience questionnaires. The responses were not only valuable in the process of fine-tuning subsequent efforts to accurately address specific concerns, but led to a recognition of the need for continuation in offering these types of opportunities to the faculty. Average numerical evaluations of the content, facilitation, and outcomes of the programs fell in a range from 4.7 to 5.0 on a scale from 1 to 5, with 5 representing the highest possible rating. Furthermore, in a series of six-month follow-up surveys completed by participants, longitudinal outcomes of the experience included increases in the use of small group work, improvements in class discussions, development of innovative projects and exercises, increased awareness of delivery strategies, and improved student performance.

One interesting and potentially valuable insight that came about as a result of the faculty development work was that the most well-received programs offered were those that involved elements of novelty in the educational context. That is to say that the best opportunities for influencing course delivery were associated with new courses, new faculty members, or new students (first-year students). In essence, it appeared that when one or more of these elements was present, there would be less resistance to pedagogical experimentation on the part of the faculty members, and/or more receptivity on the part of the students. For example, one of the most effective programs offered was targeted at faculty members teaching in a new program of Freshman Seminars for the first time. The connection between the Oral Communication Program and the Freshman Seminars was an obvious one, because this new series of courses for first-year students was intended to provide them with a "reading, writing and speaking intensive" experience to prepare them for later academic work (Bosworth, 1997). The unique enthusiasm for faculty development observed in this context and the positive results seen in student evaluations (Burk, 1997). illustrated the importance of designing faculty development around these types of opportunities.

It is important to note with respect to the success of the faculty development programs that the individual wholly responsible for their design and delivery, Tamara L. Burk, is broadly trained in the discipline of Communication Studies and the theory and practice of pedagogy in higher education. Furthermore, Burk has taught at The College of William and Mary since 1991, and is consequently more familiar with the people and politics contained therein than an outside consultant would be. Although these factors may not be crucial to the success of

instructional development efforts, they clearly represent a unique combination of positive elements which undoubtedly contributed to the positive outcomes.

In contrast to the positive results produced through faculty development, the directive assessment component of the project was much less beneficial. Not only was the goal of separating "want" from "need" not demonstrated, but repeated applications of the PRCA failed to show any influence of the project on student self-perceptions of communication apprehension. Although it would be easy to suggest that another tool might have detected the desired effects, the PRCA was chosen because it was the best measure available that could be applied through a mass mailing. At one point during the project, the use of a more extensive and accurate measure of communication competency was considered, but the project consultant, Michael Cronin insisted that this task was beyond the scope of the current resources available. Despite these problems however, the collection and distribution of the PRCA data to Freshman Advisors did contribute toward the overall goals of the project, because it raised the consciousness of faculty across the curriculum about the importance of oral communication training. For this reason alone, the PRCA is still included as part of the Freshman Questionnaire packet at The College of William and Mary.

SPCH 102 was another semi-problematic component of the project. The philosophy behind the course was to target novice students in order to maximize the benefits of the communication training for later courses. Unfortunately, there were difficulties coordinating this plan with the Registrar's Office, and, as a result many sections of the course were attended by more senior students, presumably interested in acquiring some "easy" credits. Under these conditions, delivery of the course became more difficult. However, student evaluations were still very positive. On the College's standard course evaluation form, there are two questions which deal with course content:

Did the semester's work achieve the major course objectives?

Was class time well used?

With respect to SPCH 102, over 230 students from 17 different sections of the course taught by two separate instructors produced ratings (1_5, with 5 representing the highest possible rating) of 4.45 and 4.47 for these questions respectively. In addition, responses on a specialized course evaluation form indicated that over 97% of the students enrolled felt that taking SPCH 102 had improved their level of oral communication competency. Since the end of the original project period, sections of SPCH 102 have regularly been offered, and have regularly filled, with the course being open to first- and second-year students only.

The final component of the project, the Oral Communication Studios, was initially a challenge to establish, but these resources have since been supported and staffed inexpensively, and their use has been steadily increasing. Furthermore, student evaluations of the Studios have been very positive. After each session with an O.C. Consultant, a student is given an evaluation form and encouraged to offer constructive criticism. Through this mechanism, approximately 13% of the Studio users during the project period suggested improvements, some of which were useful. The average numerical rating (1–5, with 5 representing the highest possible rating). of their experience with a consultant was 4.27. One major unforeseen problem that was faced was the provision of a sound-isolated area in the Studio associated with the Writing Resources Center. When students began to use the facility, it became clear that privacy was a crucial issue when practicing presentations and other communication exercises. This situation was remedied through an US$1100.00 in-house Technology Grant and some creative construction.

The biggest challenge in the development of the Studios was probably the establishment of a successful system by which to select and train the student O.C. Consultants. During the initial project phase, this process was very dependent on the Writing Program as a model

and on SPCH 102 as a conduit for interested students. Currently however, most of the O.C.C.'s are recruited from among exceptional students enrolled in the introductory Communication Studies courses and trained to some extent by their predecessors. As a result, the Oral Communication Studios have become more self-sufficient, although the writing-speaking relationship remains an important part of the Oral Communication Program.

One external form of assessment that has been relevant to the project is a telephone survey which is regularly conducted by the Office of Assessment at the College. In 1993 (pre-O.C. Project), a survey which was targeted at sophomores dealt specifically with questions about students' oral communication experiences across the curriculum. When the same survey was conducted again in 1996 (post-O.C. Project) the results indicated increases in the number of courses involving oral presentations, small group discussions, group research projects, and opportunities for class discussions. In addition, 1996 sophomores indicated higher ratings of their self-reported oral communication skills than those in 1993. These results are the clearest demonstration of the positive impact created across the curriculum by the Oral Communication Program activities.

Conclusion

By most accounts, the establishment of the Oral Communication Program at The College of William and Mary has been a success. In retrospect however, the conditions which led to its development have been unique enough that it may not be entirely appropriate as a model for other institutions attempting to make similar curricular changes under financial constraints. Instead, the program components presented here are meant to serve more as insights than guidelines. In fact, if there is a broader lesson to be learned from this experience, it is probably that this type of programmatic development must be viewed as a longitudinal process, and it must be marked by consistent administrative support in an environment where a pre-existing recognition of the need for change is widely felt. In contrast, a drastic curricular change within a resistant community is much less likely to produce the desired effects. In this sense, it is imperative that any effort toward these types of goals must involve a raising of consciousness about the importance of oral communication among all of the members of the academic community; including administrators, faculty, staff, and students. At William and Mary, this project has involved promotional efforts which have undoubtedly been important in this respect. Flyers advertising SPCH 102 and other Oral Communication Program resources have been widely distributed to departments, student organizations, Faculty Advisors, Orientation Aides, etc. News articles and announcements dealing with the Oral Communication Program have regularly appeared in two campus newspapers. Workshops and seminars, including faculty development, student-facilitated programs, and showcases of O.C. Studio facilities, have been an important form of local dissemination. In addition, all of the efforts described in this paper have been guided by feedback produced through questionnaires, surveys, and interviews. In fact, these types of requests for input may be very important in the maintenance of enthusiasm for the program because they help to create a collective "ownership" of the Oral Communication Program objectives.

Recently, a continuation proposal for the Oral Communication Program was submitted to the College administration by the Project Coordinator, Tamara L. Burk, which was endorsed by the Theatre and Speech Department. The proposal included a request for financial support to maintain four sections per semester of SPCH 102 and to continue the student staffing of the two O.C. Studios. The response was the approval of an annual budget of approximately US$ 15,000 a year, most of which will be used to hire adjunct teaching support (approximately US$ 12,000) and pay the wages of the student consultants (approximately US$ 2,500). Additionally, some of the basic maintenance and operations costs for the program are currently absorbed by the Theatre and Speech Department and the Writing Resources Center. However, it is expected that as the Oral Communication Program

becomes more established, its status will be continually reviewed. With a program this small, of course, there is always the danger that in the future it could be seen as an acceptable loss in the face of financial constraints or new academic objectives. In this sense, perhaps the biggest challenge will be maintaining and fostering the current level of oral communication awareness that the Oral Communication Program has produced in the William and Mary community.

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"The only native speaker in the room"

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Since communication is always about something, many academic skills teachers find that communication for academic purposes is best taught within the disciplines that students are learning. At the same time, however, it is useful for students to be aware of the commonalities underlying these apparently dissimilar modes of communication, so that they can study effectively within more than one discipline, and, more broadly, appreciate what coherence there is in a university degree and the nature of the skills they take out of it. Skills teachers, with their knowledge of the general considerations that inform academic discourses—considerations of purpose, audience, and voice—and subject teachers, with their knowledge of the forms these give rise to in particular disciplines, can collaborate to devise activities to make these explicit to students as a regular part of their course.

It is helpful to think of such collaborations in light of Courtney Cazden's reminder that a teacher is always "the only native speaker in the room". Students entering a discipline benefit from immersion in the discourse as modelled by a native speaker; but they also need some "meta-talk" about what is being modelled.

This paper looks at a range of collaborations of this kind in the School of History at La Trobe University. Discussions of discourse have been incorporated into lectures, readings, and tutorials, and have accompanied both the preparation and the return of assignments. They have focussed on the modes of communication typical of spoken and written texts in the discipline and picked out what is shared with a wider range of disciplines in the B.A.

Introduction

My work as an academic skills adviser involves helping students to communicate more successfully across a range of subjects in Humanities and Social Sciences, and the context for this paper is the dilemma we face in choosing whether or not to integrate our teaching into the disciplines. This has been discussed in a number of institutions and conferences in recent years, and many of the issues will be familiar (see, for example, the 49 papers collected in Chanock, 1995b). They range from practical issues about student numbers, teaching resources, and institutional structures, to pedagogical ones about which way students will learn most effectively. The choices turn, essentially, on how we can teach transferable skills. If we stay outside the disciplines, can students use what they learn to enhance their writing for their disciplines? If we move inside the disciplines, can students use what they learn to write about anything else? I have been trying to address this problem, in my Faculty, by inviting students and lecturers to examine the communications of their disciplines at a level where useful comparisons can be made with others. In collaboration with subject lecturers, wherever possible, I have been devising materials and activities to focus on questions such as:

What is characteristic of writing in this discipline?

What is it doing that other disciplines also do, but in different ways?

What questions are likely to help us see those different ways?

This process is still at an early stage, and I'd like to tell you about what we are doing, and get the benefit of your ideas about it. Many of us, I know, have had experience with both generic and discipline-specific kinds of teaching, and will appreciate that the fence-straddling urge arises from the unresolved problems associated with jumping either way. I'll begin, therefore, with a look at what those problems are.

Generic vs. discipline-specific skills teaching

Where there has been movement it has generally been in one direction, from more generic to more discipline-specific teaching. The movement may be triggered by a comparison of what writing teachers value with what subject teachers value, and concern at the discrepancies revealed (Rose, 1983; Hamp-Lyons, 1991b; Horowitz, 1991; Leki & Carson, 1997; for a brief survey, see Raimes, 1991, pp. 411–17). It may be the result of exposure to the perspective of students who cannot see much in common among the subjects they study, and like a student who was monitored as he moved from Composition to Poetry and Cell Biology, "perceiv[e themselves] to be in one strange land after another... In each new class Dave believed that the writing he was doing was totally unlike anything he had ever done before" (McCarthy, 1987, p. 245; see also Anderson et al., 1990, p. 28). This is understandable, moreover, when we look at some of the writing that students do produce for their disciplines, like the Cinema Studies essay containing my favourite sentence of this year:

> I viewed the film several times on video and found nothing about Fiorentino to equate with the ankle bracelet disavowal of lack of penis associated with Stanwick in *Double Indemnity*.

I wondered where to begin on this one, but the only part the tutor was concerned about, as it turned out, was the only part I understood: the first eleven words. They were a narrative of the writer's analytical process, where the tutor wanted to read the analysis alone; and she had referred the student to me in the hope that he could learn to write something less like a diary and more like an essay. So we did that.

There was little of use to this student, or to many others that we see, in the usual bundle of skills on offer in a study skills course: time management, listening, reading and notetaking, analysing essay topics, finding and writing from sources, referencing, essay structure and coherence, grammar and punctuation. Yet, this is not to say that his writing was adequate for his purposes. It is this kind of experience that leads some skills teachers to try to find out more about what goes on in the disciplines their students write for (Herrington, 1985; Purves & Purves, 1986; Ballard & Clanchy, 1988; Freed & Broadhead, 1987, p.163; Jones & Comprone, 1983). "To be able to make confident qualitative judgements about writing in a discipline," say Faigley and Hanson, teachers

> need to know how that discipline creates and transmits knowledge... They will have to explore why those disciplines study certain subjects, why certain methods of inquiry are sanctioned, how the conventions of a discipline shape a text in that discipline, how individual writers represent themselves in a text, how a text is read and disseminated, and how one text influences subsequent texts (1985, p. 149).

As this suggests, it is a complex undertaking. It is not enough to look at the subject matter, for it is not facts that make a discipline, but what is done with them (Applebee, 1996). We have to read its texts; and, as Swales points out, we need also to know "the roles that texts play in their particular environments" (1990, p. 7). Is a book being used as a source of truth, or as something to be "challenged or modified", or some mixture of the two? Students' ability to position themselves appropriately in relation to the texts they write about has much to do with how "good" their writing is judged to be (Bartholemae, 1985).

Then there is the problem of understanding the assignments that students are asked to do. As Geertz puts it, there is a "cultural frame" around the "technical tasks" of each discipline (1983: 155), without which the tasks themselves are unintelligible. A student's initiation into a discipline involves assimilating a "model of knowing...embedded in the research methodology... and ...encoded in the language that community members use" (Berkenkotter et al., 1988, p. 12). The tasks in each subject make up an apprenticeship in the discipline, for students are expected not just to read what scholars have written and to write about it, but to become practitioners themselves, to "become familiar with...central concerns and disciplinary issues" (Berkenkotter et al., 1988, p. 30). "One of the primary goals of college instruction", as Schwegler and Shamoon put it, is "to get students to think in the same critical, analytical, inquiring mode as instructors do—like a literary critic, a sociologist, an art historian, or a chemist" (1982, p. 821; cf. Odell, 1980, pp. 48–9). This is echoed by the comments of a Biology teacher interviewed by McCarthy, who said that his students "are bright, and they can memorise piles of facts, but they're not yet good at writing. They know what Science is but they don't know what scientists do" (1987, p. 257).

Yet, it is not a simple matter to find out what practitioners do. They often have not articulated it themselves (Freed & Broadhead, 1987, p. 162–4; see also Fish, 1980, p. 268; McCarthy, 1987, p. 234; MacDonald, 1987, p. 315; Chanock 1985a). Surveying his colleagues at UCLA, Rose concluded that "various academic audiences write and read with an elaborate and—unfortunately for our students—often subtle, even tacit set of philosophical and methodological assumptions that determine what they will consider acceptable or unacceptable reasoning, presenting of evidence, and inferring" (1983, p. 111). To bring these assumptions into the open requires what Swales calls an ethnography of academic writing in contexts (1990, p. 7; see also Faigley & Hansen, 1985, p. 141; Odell, 1980; Anderson *et al.*, 1990). As well as reading published texts and students' essays, we need to talk to tutors in the disciplines. Among the writing teachers who have done so, Dick and Esch (1985) employ a useful set of questions, such as

> "What do you want the student to learn ... particular procedures, particular concepts, or both? ... Is the student writing as an apprentice ... or ... for fellow experts? ...What role do you play as you evaluate the student's paper? How do [your] expectations about format and style relate to your purpose in giving the assignment?" (p. 181).

Dick and Esch aim thereby to "obtain detailed knowledge of unfamiliar customs that will help us ... avoid incomplete and misleading advice, and introduce students to purposes, audiences, and conventions appropriate to a variety of academic and professional roles." At the same time, their "colleagues in other disciplines obtain a significant body of explicit data about writing and gain confidence in their ability to train their own students to write." (p. 181).

Despite the enthusiasm of writers like these, however, not everybody feels the effort is worth it (Spack, 1988, pp. 38–40); and this must be especially so in situations of sparse staffing, where one skills teacher is responsible for students in a bewildering array of disciplines. Faced with the degree of specialisation revealed in a collection of anthropology essays, a skills teacher concluded that there was no point in trying to teach students to write research papers: "I can't conceive myself giving useful direction to those students. I can't conceive myself showing them how to do the research they did, how to avoid pitfalls, assure representativeness of data, draw permissible inferences, and reach defensible conclusions" (Larson, 1982, pp. 815–16; see also Tate, 1993).

It is difficult to quarrel with the proposition that you shouldn't teach what you don't know. However, I think this is likely to be a problem chiefly for the sort of course that runs alongside a subject in the disciplines, with the writing teacher assigning and trying to mark essays on discipline-specific topics. It is in these circumstances that Spack finds writing teachers embarrassed, students annoyed, and discipline specialists made anxious by the

skills teachers' lack of expertise in the subject (1988, pp. 37–8). The kind of collaboration I am interested in does not involve writing teachers marking work in the disciplines, but rather working with the teachers in the disciplines to identify what they require and to make it more explicit, and at the same time to suggest to students what may and may not be transferable from one discipline to another.

How can we tell what the disciplines have in common?

My view from astride the fence is that there are useful generalities to be brought back from the strange lands, but that we have to make the trip. And we may as well, considering the amount of time we already put in puzzling over the flotsam and jetsam that drift up on our shores from the disciplines our students study. When we talk with students individually about the work they are doing for their subjects, we are immersed in the discourses of their disciplines. Helping students to analyse their questions involves questioning them on the themes and purposes of the subject, and looking at the subject guide together. Teaching them to read more effectively requires that we look for characteristic structures in the texts they have to read for a subject, so they can skim, make predictions, etc. Helping them with listening skills is better done if we have some idea of what they are listening to, and this has led me to sit in lectures in a range of subjects in my Faculty, listening for characteristic purposes, structures, types of evidence, discourse markers, and styles of delivery. Evaluating the organisation of a draft involves trying to follow the argument, which requires an evaluation of the evidence. This, in turn, calls upon our experience of what tutors in that discipline have used as examples in their lectures, and accepted as evidence in other essays we have seen. These kinds of "local knowledge" (Geertz, 1983), sometimes disparaged as "practitioner lore" (North, 1987), quickly accumulate and are far from trivial or ephemeral, as suggested by those who long for lore to be replaced by theory. We cannot have a meta-discourse without first having something for it to be *meta* about.

But what does all this teach us? The encouraging thing about studies by people who have immersed themselves in the particularities of disciplinary discourse is that they are not sucked into a vortex of exotic methods and conventions, never to return. Instead, they re-emerge with ideas for comparing one discipline with another, on the basis of what they do, rather than what they say. What they say—their information—is infinitely varied, and difficult to generalise; but what they do—their approach—can be described in very much simpler terms. Whether studying essay prompts (Horowitz; Rose, 1983, pp. 111–12), text types (Shwegler & Shamoon, 1982), or features of a genre (Swales, 1990), researchers have seen commonalities across disciplines in terms of the tasks required, or the rhetorical purposes achieved, in writing on a great variety of topics.

Thus, depending on the level of specificity at which we want to discuss characteristics of academic discourse, we can zoom in on the assignments in a History subject, or step back to consider History as one of a cluster of similar disciplines, or broaden the perspective still further to see what these have in common with a whole range of writing within the university. It will be helpful if we are able to identify some questions that can help us with comparisons at all these levels. I think that some can be distilled from a combination of teaching experience and the perspectives of various studies in the literature.

There are studies of the literacy practices of single disciplines, too numerous to look at here, but good places to start are *Textual Dynamics of the Professions* (Bazerman & Paradis, 1991) or *The Rhetoric of the Human Sciences* (Nelson, Megill, & McCloskey, 1987).

At the middle level of generality, there are interesting studies by MacDonald (1987) and Bazerman (1981) MacDonald places disciplines on a continuum according to the degree to which the problems they address are "publicly and readily discernible ... limited in number ...communal ...[and] generalisable" (as in Psychology) or not (as in English) (p. 319). She compares the kinds of questions scientists and social scientists ask with the kinds of

questions that teachers of literature ask. She finds that the project of the former is reductive, while the project of literary exposition is expansive. Social scientists, like scientists, are seeking generalisations which can make sense of a welter of data, and thus replace it. Critics, in contrast, honour the complexities of their data and seek to elaborate these rather than to reconcile them. This is also true, I think, of disciplines like cinema studies, art history, and media studies.

Such differences in purpose, moreover, are matched by differences in presentation. Bazerman (1981) has shown that in a science article, the justification for writing was taken care of by existing agreement on what needed to be discovered in that field, so that little space was devoted to it. Similarly, because the problems were shared, the background was well known to readers, and the only other work referenced was that which the authors needed to refute. Even the implications of the work were dealt with in a sentence, as they would be obvious to readers. In other words, the article did not need to put readers in the picture, much less persuade them that there was such a picture. Nor did it need to establish the authority of the authors, for authority in science is looked for in soundness of method and congruence with nature. (No wonder scientific articles are short) The literature article Bazerman looked at contrasted sharply in that the writer's authority appeared to depend upon establishing his superior sensibility as a reader. (Elsewhere Fahnestock and Secor, 1991, situate this operation more securely in the disciplinary culture by showing how critics call upon shared values and tropes; "sensibility", though ostensibly individual, is also culturally constrained.)

Both these studies are concerned with how disciplines pose problems; their purposes and the methods by which they carry these out; a conventional voice that addresses a particular kind of imagined audience; and the types of evidence appropriate to each situation. This kind of study has much in common, I think, with the contrastive rhetoric studies undertaken by researchers interested in ESL and EAP. These seek to discover differences between the discourses, including academic discourses, of different cultures, and a major part of such an investigation is the analysis of texts with questions such as "What are the main sections of the piece? What is in each section? What textual devices are used to advance the argument? What is the tone?" (Leki, 1991, p. 135). The assumption here is that English speakers understand the rhetoric of their academic discourse, as we see in Leki's aim that "A writing pedagogy that embraces the textual orientation of contrastive rhetoric would work to actively foster the construction in students of rhetorical schemata which hopefully correspond to those of English-speaking readers" (1991, p. 135). No doubt students trained in a foreign academic tradition are at a double disadvantage in this respect, but I think it is useful to regard native students, too, as strangers to the academic culture of the university, if not to the same extent. And, like so much else in ESL, the insights of contrastive rhetoric can be useful to all students in understanding the discourses of their disciplines and of the university in general.

At the most general level there are studies that can help us to focus students' attention on common rhetorical features. There is Swales' study of article introductions, in which he discerns a common pattern of rhetorical moves designed to "Create a Research Space (CARS)" (1984, revised in Swales, 1990, p. 143). He describes this pattern for scientific writing, but it is also prevalent in the writing of humanities and social science subjects. It is the typical introduction that poses a problem and refers to the existing literature on it to establish that something more needs doing: ie., whatever this writer is about to do. Thus, if we teach students to find the purpose of an assigned reading encoded in its "CARS" moves, we give them a strategy that transfers readily from one discipline to another. Similar, but more comprehensive, is the description of "the features of the academic research paper" offered by Shwegler and Shamoon, who believe that the "conventions for the most part transcend disciplinary boundaries" (1982, p. 821). They find that

> academic research...begins with a review of current knowledge and then moves

> through a variation of one of four basic patterns... Review of research...Application or implementation of a theory...Refute, refine, or replicate prior research...[or] Testing a hypothesis (1982, pp. 822-3).

At these intermediate and more general levels, it is possible to see that the things a student must do in each discipline are roughly the same. They must pose a problem; follow an approved method in its solution; produce evidence; establish authority; and conform to conventions of form. Where disciplines differ is in what is considered a problem; what method is followed; what is considered evidence; what is thought to confer authority; and what forms are employed.

Skills teachers can highlight these features

In some disciplines, all of this is fairly explicit. In disciplines that students do not study in secondary schools, lecturers tend to realise that such things as problems, sources, evidence, and forms must be explained to students. This is particularly the case where the vocabulary of the discipline is esoteric. In other disciplines, however, these things are much less obvious, and are not made explicit, and this is where students have difficulty and feel that they are writing at random. If they are unsuccessful, they do not know why; and, more tellingly, if they are successful, they do not know why either. The lament, "I don't know what they're looking for" is often read as a complaint about having to think independently, but I think this is a further mystification of something that is already quite mysterious enough. Students do not become successful by thinking in a way which is different from anyone else; they become successful when they have worked out what is done in a field sufficiently to be able to situate their thinking as different in a way which is relevant. At one level, "I don't know what they're looking for" can mean "I don't know what they want me to say"; but it can also mean what it says, that the purpose of inquiry in this field is obscure to the student.

And this is the starting point for useful collaboration with subject teachers. We can draw upon our experience of students' misunderstandings to persuade lecturers that their purposes need to be spelt out for students, and likewise the ways in which method, evidence, authority, and form are related to that purpose. This is like the difference between teaching a language solely by immersion, and bringing in some metalanguage as well. An idea that I find very helpful is Cazden's use of this analogy when she reminds teachers that they are "the only native speaker in the room" (Cazden, 1988, p. 44; see also McCarthy, 1987, p. 261). A native speaker knows how to use the language, but may not know how to isolate and draw attention to the patterns that learners need to see as patterns. Similarly, a history tutor may be very fluent in history, but not know how to analyse that fluency for learners (Chanock, 1995a). This is where the skills teacher can come in.

Skills teachers can bring those questions about purpose, method, evidence, authority, and form, to observations of the various texts and performances in a subject; check what they discover with the subject teachers; and work with them to devise activities that will share those discoveries with the students. This is quite different from telling the lecturers how their teaching might be improved, and this, I am sure, is why it has met with enthusiasm rather than resistance. Rather than advocating change as such, I try to learn what already goes on and work out ways of making it clearer to the students. This is what I have been doing in the School of History at La Trobe University. What I can do varies with the amount of time a lecturer feels able to set aside for skills work; but even in the most common situation where lecturers can spare only an hour of lecture time in the semester, I am able to model the process I hope they will go through in discussing students' work. Most often I am asked to come in when the first essay is handed back, to focus on it as a piece of writing. The most motivating time for this might be before the essay is written, but there are reservations, understandably, about seeming to tell people what to write. Instead, I talk about what can be learned from what they did write, and how to use these insights from then on.

I prepare for this by reading about fifteen essays in a range from fails to As, and noting what was successful and unsuccessful in the writing, in a number of categories. How did successful introductions make it clear that the essays addressed the assignment's purpose? How did they attempt to contextualise the question, to propose a thesis, and to signpost the approach the essay would take? And, as the essays went on, how did they use evidence? How did they make links and transitions; decisions about how much information and explanation to include; and reference to sources? I also collect examples of the most common expression problems, usually to do with sentence boundaries, apostrophes, commas, and agreement. Tact is essential in presenting this material, so where there were problems in handling any of these things, I generalise and describe them (eg.,"many of you got comments like 'who was this?', 'when?', 'what was this organisation?', where you hadn't explained something because you figured the tutor already knew it"). Where I find an example of skillful handling, on the other hand, I put it on an overhead so the students can see some real writing at this level that is satisfactory. And wherever possible, I pull good bits from essays that had problems in other areas; I never name the writer, but students have told me that they are encouraged by seeing what was good about their essay, when the mark overall had been discouraging. It also helps them to know that the comments they got were dished out quite liberally to others in the class, and that the problems are common ones and have solutions that are not beyond their reach.

My aim, in taking this approach, is to solve the problem of relevance for students' immediate concerns by starting from the discipline they are struggling to write in. At the same time, however, I need to make the insights relevant for their communications outside the discipline by identifying the generic in the specific. Thus, when I have explained what was successful in terms of the purpose of the assignment, I ask what part that assignment was intended to play in the overall apprenticeship in method.

This interests the lecturers because they have often designed this apprenticeship without articulating why each task is there; it just seems to them the obvious way to go about historical work. In fact, it often turns out that the sequence of assignments mirrors the process of research in a discipline. At an early stage, students are asked to handle primary sources in order to experience the difficulties of distilling knowledge from them and to confront questions about relevance and reliability. They consider how this primary material bears out, or casts doubt upon, current theory. In another assignment, they are expected to focus on the discourse of interpretation in the discipline. They write about some secondary source, paying attention to the nature, structure, and persuasiveness of its argument as well as to its factual content. Next, they compare competing views in some debate within the discipline, and evaluate these.

Interestingly, these are all exercises in reading, and they usually lead up to an exercise of a kind more familiar to the students, in which they simply answer a question—something they already did at school. First-year courses, then, retrain students in reading for a new kind of project. The assumption (which is probably due for an overhaul, in view of changes in secondary education) seems to be that they have been trained, before this, in reading exposition, and must now be trained in reading arguments. The first few assignments comprise an orientation for the student who has, as it were, walked into an unfamiliar room in which knots of people stand talking with their backs to her. "Where am I?", she wonders. "Who are these people? What are they talking about? Why? And how do I get into the conversation?" At least, that is what lecturers hope she is wondering; and lectures provide answers to the first four questions, while the sequence of assignments in the first semester answers the last one.

When I talk about the purpose of the assignment the students are currently getting back, I put it in the context of this common cluster of purposes, relating it to the other assignments they will meet in the subject. I then suggest that students look for the same sorts of purposes in assignments given by other subjects they are studying. Wherever possible, I relate these,

in turn, to the broader purposes of writing in the world of work. There, too, people have to select and interpret information, making decisions about relevance, reliability, and significance. They have to develop strategies for reading and evaluating other peoples' reports and arguments. And they have to know when synthesis is possible and when contradictions matter.

For both students and lecturers, this approach enables them to look beyond a preoccupation with content ("Mathilda got a B and I mentioned all the same facts but I only got a C!") to see that most of the marks above 50 are earned not for what information people drag back from the reading, but for what they do with it. This has to do with the approach of the discipline, and important elements of that approach can be seen to be held in common by a cluster of disciplines as well.

There is no point in pretending, however, that this approach does not have its problems. One is the amount that has to be packed into an hour, and the other is the degree to which it depends on the skills teacher rather than the subject teacher. The reading of essays in preparation is very intensive, both in terms of what one has to find there and in terms of the short time available between the subject teacher's marking and returning them. It has to be done afresh each year, because the teaching material comes from that year's essays. And if this amount of extra work is going to be done, the subject teachers naturally prefer it to be done by me. I have found that the gains, in terms of students feeling that they know what to do the next time, justify the effort; but in one subject I have managed to take the same ideas further and involve the subject teachers to such a degree that I could gradually leave the skills teaching to them.

A closer integration

This collaboration began three years ago when I was sitting in on lectures in a first-year History subject, "Britain and Australia in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries". I go to lectures in several subjects at the beginning of each year, to share the students' experience of being introduced to each discipline, and to collect the handouts. I expect to hear something about the approach and something about the subject matter, and in this lecture I noticed something more. The lecturer's talk about approach and subject matter was taking a form I found very familiar. He started by describing the conventional way of teaching about Britain and Australia in his period, but he proposed to do it differently. I recognised the moves from Swales' analysis of "Creating a Research Space", and sure enough, a thesis followed. The lecturer thought that the concept of "cultural baggage" was the key to understanding the subject matter, and after explaining this idea, he produced a series of examples to persuade us of its usefulness as an explanatory tool. With each example, he read aloud from documents of the period, commented upon what we should make of these distant voices, and related them to one another. And as he moved from one part of the lecture to the next, he reminded us of where this demonstration had begun, and where it was going. The lecture, it seemed to me, had the same purpose, structure, and rhetorical features that students would meet in a book or article, and would be expected to reproduce in their essays. It was not background information, received wisdom, a talking textbook, or random thoughts about a topic—that is, it was none of the things that lectures are often dismissed as being—but rather, a model of history text structure delivered orally (Chanock, 1996).

Was this a swallow, I wondered, or a summer? I attended the next lecture to find out, and it, too, took the form of an oral article or essay. I thought this was worth pointing out to the students in the subject, and asked the lecturer if I might do so—only to learn that he was as surprised as I was to discover that the template of academic argument appeared to shape every element of the course, from its overall design to its lectures, readings, and writings. He was not producing this common form of discourse deliberately, for he had not been aware of it; but once I had seen it, he could see it too. And once he had seen it, he wanted to share it with the students. That year, he made time for me to show this to his students in the lecture

room. The second year, we made a video (Chanock & Tyrrell, 1996) interleaving his lecture with my commentary on its structure as an argument. After showing it, we asked students to highlight the same structure in their tutorial reading. The year after that, we overhauled the subject to make its purpose, method, evidence, sources of authority, and forms of argumentation explicit in the first few weeks, at the same time suggesting ways for students to uncover similar features in whatever other disciplines they might be studying.

We identified the general purpose which that subject shared with most other introductory history subjects, a purpose that often goes unnoticed by students whose main focus is on the subject matter: this subject, like the others, is an apprenticeship in historical explanation, just as politics subjects are an apprenticeship in the explanatory framework of political science, and similarly for sociology, cinema studies, and the rest. An examination of the tutorial questions and assignments in this subject revealed the particular explanation this subject was trying out: that the culture of colonial Australia was formed by eighteenth century English paternalism, but transformed by competing ideas about rights which arrived in the same cultural baggage. This explanation was not presented by straightforward assertion and proof, however. It was to be arrived at by a process of testing a model of paternalism against primary sources from the 18th Century, noting correspondences and discrepancies; consulting an alternative explanatory framework; testing it against more sources; and so on. This spiraling structure was important, for the process of arriving at an explanation was just as much a part of what the subject aimed to teach as was the explanation itself.

We thought the students should be alerted to this, so we decided to make the question underlying this subject into the final essay question and give it to them at the start: "Paternalism was a powerful idea in the British society from which Australia's settlers came. How and to what extent did it influence the development of colonial society in New South Wales?" Knowing the goal, the students could then be asked to see the subject design as a method of getting there. Accordingly, in the first lecture they were given a handout discussing this approach, posing the final question, and asking them to go through their subject guide (as I had done) and highlight all the questions in it, so that they could see each week contributing to the overall project.

This was the first of five handouts to accompany the first five tutorial readings of the semester, backed up by small tasks to practise relevant skills. Each handout focussed on the feature of historical method or discourse that the students were being exposed to in that week: theoretical models, primary sources, scholarly context, or debate. First, students read a secondary source that explained the nature and influence of paternalism; their job at this point was to understand an intellectual model, and as we pointed out to them, this is a common task across a number of disciplines. The skilling task was to colour-highlight the thesis and topic sentences by which the model was built up. Next, they read primary documents which appeared to illustrate the workings of paternalism, so that they could practise using a model to interpret the reality it purported to explain; again, a common activity. The analysis they were asked to write that week required them to select material from a primary source and present it as evidence of paternalism. They moved from there to looking at primary sources that cast doubt upon the model, involving them in testing a model against reality. Here, the subject was moving into a phase of confronting discrepancies in evidence and interpretations, so the handout focussed on the role of referencing in keeping academic conversations open. For their task, the students listed the readings they had done thus far in accordance with the referencing conventions in their subject guide. They then returned to secondary readings, this time reading an explanation that disagreed with the first one, and thus drew them into a debate in the discipline. The handout drew attention to the lengthy rejection of other scholars' views with which the writer prefaced his own thesis, and discussed the use of this common text structure to position an interpretation within the wider conversation of the field.

In this way, a focus on the specifics of the subject led, each week, to a consideration of what it shared with others. While the information they were reading was different from what they would find in any other subject, the operations they were doing with it were very common. The same is true of the writing they had to do. Following discussion of this sequence of readings, an essay assignment asked them to evaluate the theories they had encountered in the light of the primary materials, and to present their evaluation in the form of an argument, which, by this time, had been modeled repeatedly in lectures and readings. The sequence of readings, and the assigned writing, were not new. What was added to the subject, as a result of my collaborating with the lecturer, was some meta-commentary on the kind of learning that each part was designed to accomplish, and the suggestion that similar activities, designed for similar learning, were to be found in other disciplines at this level too.

If a close examination of what went on in this particular subject turned up discipline-specific examples of more generic operations, does this mean that we could just as well teach the skills these operations require from outside the disciplines? I have no firm answer to this, but I am inclined to think that integration is better, for two reasons. One is the benefit that Dick and Esch have drawn attention to already, and that has been noted by ESL teachers who have worked in concert with lecturers in the disciplines (eg. Flowerdew & Miller, 1995, p. 370). Precisely because the lecturers' knowledge of the purposes and procedures of their disciplines is tacit, they often do not know how to articulate it for their students. The lecturer I worked with in this history subject had not known that he organised each lecture as an argument, nor recognised all the ways in which the lectures connected with each other and with the readings. As a result of the analysis I brought to the subject, he now attends to what the lectures do as well as what they say, and signposts this copiously as he goes along. The collaboration has raised his awareness of the discourse of his subject and what students need to know about it, and this means that I am not the only one focussing attention on these matters. The more lecturers I can work with in this way, the more help I get in showing students the characteristic purposes and forms of communication in Humanities.

The other benefit of integrating skills teaching into the disciplines is that more students get it, and they see more value in it. This might not be a consideration for people who are able to offer communication subjects for credit, but where communication is not considered a subject in its own right, we must draw attention to it where we can. If all this is integrated into the regular course of a subject, then it is not seen as remedial but as a normal and necessary part of developing skills in the discipline.

Suggested Strategies

Is it possible, finally, to boil this story of collaboration down to some specific strategies for use with any subject? I would like to suggest the following steps as a rough guide, and would be very interested to hear of any other experiments along similar lines:

1. Observation

    - Read the "subject guide", noting Aims, Questions, Purposes of tasks, Sequence of tasks, Components of method. Attend introductory lectures

    - Look at readings, noting Types and Sequence Structures.

2. Reflection

Form some hypotheses about the apprenticeship this subject offers:

- What are students learning how to do?

- How is this modeled?
- How does each activity contribute to it?

1. Checking

2. Discuss these hypotheses with the subject coordinator, and revise your understanding as needed.

3. Collaboration

   - With the subject teachers, consider ways of making your discoveries more explicit to the students. These may include:

     * Discussion &/or signposting in lectures
     * Handouts with commentary on the week's work
     * Explicit modeling, through performance or handouts
     * Student activities focussing on specific components of method (including aspects of reading & writing).

4. Implementation

   - Trial what you have developed together

5. Evaluation:

   - In terms of students' understanding and handling of tasks compared with earlier cohorts.

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Giving international students a voice: Enabling participation in the culturally diverse classroom

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Throughout Australian universities, especially in professional schools such as accounting, engineering, and health sciences, enrolments of international students from the Asian region are high, adding to the diversity of an already multicultural student body. Teaching such culturally diverse groups presents many challenges. This paper addresses one of these challenges: enabling class participation for all students.

In response to the challenge, an holistic, culturally informed, structured approach to participation has been developed in the 'Communication Management' unit being run in Curtin University School of Accounting. This approach is informed by four areas of crosscultural diversity: collectivism/individualism, high power distance/low power distance, high context/low context, and high uncertainty avoidance/low uncertainty avoidance.

The paper discusses the classroom strategies and activities as well as important insights that have contributed to success in enabling participation in the culturally diverse classroom.

Introduction

Throughout Australian universities, especially in professional schools such as accounting, engineering, and health sciences, enrolments of international students from the Asian region are high, adding to the diversity of an already multicultural student body. Teaching such culturally diverse groups presents many challenges. This paper addresses just one of these challenges: enabling class participation for all students.

The fact that class participation can contribute significantly to deep and reflective learning is emphasised to international students in professional schools' orientation programs. However, knowing the importance of participation and observing local Australian students participating with confidence does not necessarily help international students to participate more effectively themselves. What is needed is an holistic, culturally appropriate, structured approach which gives students specific strategies and techniques and the opportunity to practice these strategies and techniques within a supportive learning environment.

Such an approach could be adopted in teaching any subject in the curriculum, but it can perhaps most effectively be developed in communication (preferably communication-in-context) classes, in which the 'how', rather than the 'what' of communication can be emphasised and reflected upon. Once learnt, these skills can be reinforced through practice in subsequent units—staff teaching in these units are generally willing to create opportunities for students to negotiate the 'what' of their discipline area through the 'how' of participation as long as there are no major disruptions to the delivery of technical content.

Class participation in Communication Management

At Curtin's School of Accounting, an holistic, structured approach to participation has been developed in the 'Communication Management' unit. Communication Management is an

optional unit for second-year accounting majors. It focuses on the interpersonal communication skills that accountants need for success in their profession: listening, interviewing, negotiating, managing conflict, working in teams, working in an international business environment, and so on. These skills are contextualised within a strong theoretical framework—the emphasis is on empowerment through understanding rather than on direct skills training.

Students come to this class having been exposed to the academic communication skills of essay- and report-writing and oral presentation, which are integrated with technical content units in first and second year, but students' level of proficiency in these areas varies from excellent to substandard. The cultural mix varies from class to class, with the international student component ranging from 20% (in the evening class) to 85%.

Given this range, it is crucial that the approach to participation should deliver—and be seen to deliver—benefits to *all* students. It is particularly important to avoid the impression that participation skills is a 'remedial' area for overseas students: on the one hand, international students must not feel stigmatised because they are not experienced in the kind of participation that is required in an Australian university course; on the other hand, students who have been socialised within an Australian educational context must be shown that the participation strategies and techniques they are learning are relevant and highly valued by the profession they will enter as graduates (ICAA 1994). Indeed, for both groups of students, the emphasis should be on participation not so much as an academic skill but more as a *professional* skill.

Nevertheless, the challenge is still to enable international students (in this case, from South-east Asia) to participate effectively in a cultural context different from that in which they have been socialised. To meet the challenge, we first have to recognise that individuality, assertiveness, verbal directness, and the other attributes of the successful classroom participator are not universally valued but, on the contrary, may be experienced in other cultures as selfish, discourteous, and disruptive. From such a position of cultural relativism, we can appreciate that teaching international students 'Western' participation skills is not a 'remedial' communication exercise but, rather, an exercise in crosscultural negotiation. In other words, we are seeking not to replace one set of behaviours with another but, rather, to add another element to the students' repertoire of communication skills.

Culturally informed strategies

Four areas of negotiation most widely discussed in 'east-west' cross-cultural literature are collectivism/individualism, high power distance/low power distance, high context/low context, and high uncertainty avoidance/low uncertainty avoidance.[1] Too often, these categories are used narrowly and reductively, but they do offer useful insights into resistances students might experience in acquiring particular communication skills. These insights inform the teaching strategies involved in enabling participation.

To generalise very broadly, most international students from South-east Asia perform best in group situations, where cooperation, consensus-building, and harmony are important; local students, by contrast, perform well in individual and personally autonomous situations. *Both* sets of behaviour have their place in the global business environment that students will be entering when they graduate. It is therefore more productive to move beyond the perception that the relationship between collectivism and individualism is one of binary opposition, and to recognise the collective and the individual as complementary. For instance, the graduate accountant may have the highly valued individualist attributes of self-reliance and the ability to work without supervision, but s/he will still have to work in a team with people from different backgrounds, with different personalities, and so on, and be jointly responsible for the success of the team. A valuable skill, therefore, is the ability to enact and

express one's individuality in ways that advance the cohesion as well as the interests of the group.

To give students practice in this skill, the basic organisational unit in Communication Management classes is the five-person, culturally diverse, semi-autonomous group. Individuals are assigned to groups in combinations which maximise cultural heterogeneity. Once assigned to a group, the individual cannot change groups, but must keep to the original group throughout the entire semester. If s/he wants to leave the group, the student must apply to the entire class for a 'divorce', after discussing the matter with her/his assigned group and the lecturer, who takes a mediation role.

As it develops, each five-person group acquires a sense of identity—a group identity built on mutual interests and shared experiences. During the first four weeks of semester, all classroom exercises and activities are directed towards ensuring that within the group each person participates and gains confidence in expressing themselves in front of their four colleagues. Students are given 'group skills study sheets' which describe different task and maintenance roles that need to be taken up for the group to function effectively, and each student is given a different role—initiator, harmoniser, summariser, etc.— to take up in each group discussion.

Especially in the early stages, it is preferable to devise activities and discussion topics which are simultaneously relevant to the professional discipline *and* entertaining; introducing an element of play not only emphasises the importance of creativity and flexibility in effective communication but also reduces students' fear of 'losing face', of giving the 'wrong' answer. A typical exercise is 'Tragedy at One-Bridge River', which requires students to read a short account of some scandalous and tragic events (a young woman is shot by a madman as she tries to get home to her husband before he discovers she has spent the night with her lover) and to rank the level of responsibility of the six characters involved. Each student goes through the exercise individually, and then the group compare answers and come to a consensus decision, which they present to the rest of the class. The exercise presents students with a number of dilemmas: for instance, the madman pulls the trigger and so in one respect is most directly responsible, but on the other hand his madness means that he is not responsible; similarly, the young woman may be responsible for her own tragedy, but does her responsibility lie in taking the risk that she might be shot or in her adultery, which puts her in the tragic situation. As well as creating lively discussion, this exercise introduces students to relativism of values and ways of thinking, without directly addressing the issue of culture—in fact, the divide tends to occur on gender lines, resulting in good-natured 'battles of the sexes'.

Initially, most interaction occurs through exercises like this *within* the groups, gradually moving to interaction *between* the groups, through whichever student is taking up the spokesperson role in particular discussions or activities. The spokesperson expresses the consensus opinion of the group, and consequently feels less vulnerable than if s/he were giving her/his own opinion. As the semester progresses, the individual student is gradually required to speak in her/his own voice as well as in the voice of the group.

'Textbook facilitation' is one exercise that mediates the shift from the collective to the individual voice. Students are required to read and answer discussion questions on one chapter of the set textbook each week. To model what is required, the lecturer sets questions on the first three chapters. From chapter four to chapter eight, each group is responsible for compiling questions on a given chapter. The group responsible for a particular chapter distributes a set of five questions to the rest of the class, who meet in their groups between classes to prepare answers. The next week, the responsible group takes over the class and facilitates the discussion of the questions, usually choosing a particular individual to give specific answers. If necessary, the individual chosen to answer may get help from their group.

The textbook facilitation activity has a few rules which are set down clearly: there is a strict time limit, students must use their own words and not those of the textbook in answering the questions, and, as well as being given orally, the answers must be written down and submitted to the lecturer at the end of the five weeks of facilitation.

Especially in the early weeks of the semester, it is crucial to make explicit what is expected from students, through ground rules and, where possible, modelling and examples. As Gudykunst and Kim (1992, pp. 10–11) remind us,

> No matter what our reason to communicate is, we always experience some degree of uncertainty (a cognitive response, or a response involving thoughts). and anxiety (an affective, or an emotional response). High levels of uncertainty and anxiety inhibit effective communication ... The degree to which we are familiar with the situation and know how to behave, the expectations we have for our own and others' behaviour, and the degree to which we perceive ourselves to be similar to the other person, for example, influence our level of uncertainty and anxiety. Our ability to reduce our uncertainty and anxiety, in turn, influences the degree to which we can communicate effectively.

This comment is relevant for all class members, but it is particularly so for those students who come from what Hofstede (1980) calls 'high uncertainty avoidance' cultures—that is, cultures whose members have low tolerance for ambiguity and who experience anxiety working in a situation where there are no formal rules or clear instructions and outcomes are uncertain or contingent.

Negotiating ground rules

Students from high uncertainty avoidance cultures work most productively when they are clear about what is expected of them. In week one of the semester, therefore, the lecturer gives out a 'tutorial skills study sheet' covering the following topics: 'Why do we have tutorials?', 'What can I get out of tutorials?', 'How can I make tutorials more effective?', and 'How can I develop my tutorial discussion skills?'. Accompanying this study sheet is a set of self-scoring 'participation checklists', which students complete each week and keep in a journal to monitor the development of their participation skills. Both the study sheet and the lecturer emphasise that the success of tutorials is the responsibility not of the lecturer but of the students—*all* the students.

The greater the stake that students perceive themselves as having in the tutorial, the more dynamic it is. For this reason, the first activity each group engages in at the beginning of the semester is about setting and negotiating ground rules for the effective operation of their tutorials. Each group is given a large sheet of blank newsprint and a different coloured board marker for each student. Their task is to make a loose 'mindmap' of what they expect from the lecturer during the unit. Students enrolled in Communication Management have had some experience of 'mindmapping' in an earlier unit and are able to throw down their ideas on the paper reasonably spontaneously. (Writing down what they expect from the lecturer has proven to inspire more useful and dynamic comments than writing down what they expect from the unit.) At the end of ten minutes, each group sticks their paper to the whiteboard or classroom walls, and from all the various comments, the whole class and the lecturer agree upon ground rules for the class's operation throughout the semester—the lecturer also has a set of ground rules s/he reveals during the class discussion. The comments are anonymous—ideally, the lecturer should leave the room while students are writing and putting up their sheets—but often students voluntarily acknowledge their contributions in the subsequent class discussion.

This activity has several functions: it makes students aware of themselves as negotiators and active contributors to the class's effectiveness; it gives the lecturer the opportunity to address

students' inappropriate or unrealistic expectations; it clarifies the terms of the relationship between students and lecturer.

In outlining what they do and do not want from the lecturer, students tend to draw on past experience. Typical comments are 'explaining difficult concepts patiently', 'marking and returning assignments promptly', 'giving students respect', 'being available for consultation', and 'not being boring'. Most of these student expectations can be matched by lecturer expectations of students, such as 'making sure you've done the preparatory reading, so you can follow explanations of difficult concepts', 'handing in all assignments on time and not asking for extensions', 'showing courtesy to the lecturer and other students', and so on. As a consensus emerges, the lecturer can write up a list of mutually accepted expectations. If approved by all the groups, this list becomes an informal student-lecturer contract, which can be reviewed from time to time throughout the semester.

On the student expectation sheets there are always some frivolous comments, which actually have a useful ice-breaking function and can help establish the classroom as a friendly environment. A perennial favourite item on international students' wish-list is 'the lecturer will be a lenient marker', to which an appropriate answer is 'dream on!' But sometimes similar comments are made seriously, revealing students' basic misapprehensions about tertiary education. Common comments are 'the lecturer will give us solutions' and 'the lecturer will pass us'. These comments provide the cue for the lecturer to explain, in the first case, that her/his role is not to give specific solutions but, rather, to suggest strategies for solving problems and, in the second case, that lecturers assess students' work as objectively and impersonally as possible, and are not open to coercion or special pleading or, indeed, responsibility for students' assignment and exam results. Having established her/self as sympathetic to the particular needs of international students, it is also important for the lecturer to make the point quite unambiguously that s/he will be rigorous and scrupulously resistant to any kind of manipulation in assessing students' performance in the unit.

The student-lecturer relationship

These last issues highlight the uncertainty which many international students experience in the power relation between themselves and the lecturer. This is partly a question of negotiating between the high power distance culture in which international students have been socialised and the comparatively low power distance culture that operates in Australian institutions. Hofstede and Bond (1984) define power distance as "the extent to which the less powerful members of institutions and organizations accept that power is distributed unequally" (p. 419). There is, of course, a significant power differential between lecturer and student in the Australian system, but its basis is that of expert and legitimate power rather than referent or coercive power, which is more usual in high power distance cultures. Put into practical terms, it is possible in Australian universities for lecturers to have friendly relations with students without compromising the professional power relationship; in such a system, students may question what the lecturer presents to them without feeling they are attacking her/him personally. In high power distance cultures, by contrast, such questioning is seen as disrespectful and disruptive; obedience is considered a more appropriate response. This is a major source of international students' reluctance to share their views with the class: the fear that the lecturer will condemn them for expressing views which do not conform to her/his own.

International students—many of whom are living away from home for the first time—do value friendliness and personal concern from their lecturers, but they feel more comfortable when a certain level of power distance is still recognised and maintained. An aspect of this can be seen in the way in which lecturers and students name each other. The normal practice at Curtin and most other tertiary institutions in Australia is for lecturers and students to call each other by their given names: Mary, Ahmed, Jeanne, and so on. This is an implicit acknowledgement that we are all together in the same enterprise of teaching and learning.

However, although they are given permission to name lecturers in this way, many international students feel uncomfortable with what feels to them a discourtesy. In Communication Management the issue is addressed at the end of a first-week ice-breaking exercise—'what's in a name'.

In this exercise, students mutually interview a colleague on the subject of her/his name and then introduce their partner to the class. Students discuss how their name should be pronounced, what their name means, who named them, why that name, do they like their name, and which version of their name would they like to be used in class, and so on. Two outcomes of the exercise are, firstly, that students remember their colleagues' names because they have narratives attached to them (being able to address one another by name tends to open channels of communication). and, secondly, that students can assert their individuality without having to disclose more than they feel comfortable with. A further bonus is that students with, in particular, formal Chinese names who also use an English name can either give or withhold permission for the class to use the English name, or they may perhaps choose to be addressed by their family name. (Especially in a communication class, this can lead on to a discussion about naming, using language, and the ways in which language constructs reality.)

Before the 'what's in a name' exercise begins, the lecturer models what s/he expects from students by discussing her/his own name. In doing this, s/he can disclose, for instance, her/his family roles, any difficulties people have remembering or pronouncing her/his name, and so on, always remembering that the objective is to establish her/himself as an approachable but not over-familiar mentor. S/he can then explain the convention of students addressing staff by their given names, and ask the class for their response to this. If no-one addresses the issue, the lecturer can acknowledge that some students feel uncomfortable using lecturers' given names and suggest that these students might preface her/his given name with 'Ms', 'Mr', or 'Dr' as it applies—for instance, 'Ms Mary', 'Mr Ahmed', 'Dr Jeanne'. The transition from using these names to using 'Mary', 'Ahmed', and 'Jeanne' is much easier and more graceful than making the transition from 'Ms Smith', 'Mr Said', and 'Dr Dawson'. Most international students do manage to make the transition towards the end of the semester as they adjust to the low power distance learning environment.

As this last exercise demonstrates, enabling class participation for all students is not simply a case of explaining what is required or setting up opportunities for participation; rather it requires attention to the small details which together constitute an environment in which students—both local and international—can most effectively empower themselves as learners.

Reflective journals

It does seem possible to enhance students' participation skills—or perhaps just their self-confidence—through activities which are not directly related to class participation. Such an activity is reflective journal keeping. Each week, students are required to write at least one A4 page, reflecting on what they have learned each week, how it relates to what they already know, to what they are learning in other units, to their future profession, and to their life in general. Reflections may be typed or handwritten (drawings may be included), and although complete sentences and paragraphs are preferred, there are no penalties for errors in spelling, grammar, or expression. The lecturer collects the reflection journals in weeks three, nine, and at the end of the semester, assessing them on the level of the students' engagement with the unit (students are given samples of reflections from previous classes to model what is required). and making informal comments. Assessment is 'fail' for students who do not hand in the reflections or who do not go beyond itemising topics covered in class, 'pass' for those who make an effort to think critically and make connections, and 'high pass' for those who demonstrate strong engagement with issues and some sophistication of thought.

At first, most students struggle to write more than half a page—as accounting students, many of them see themselves as good at number crunching but not at word crunching, and certainly not at creative thinking. By the end of the semester, however, many students are freely writing two to three pages each week and, although their writing errors have not been formally corrected, their standard of writing improves markedly with practice and as they gain confidence and enthusiasm. As students become more articulate in writing, they also become more self-confident and, consequently, more willing to participate in class.

Understanding factors of intercultural difference such as collectivism/individualism, high power distance/low power distance, high context/low context, and high uncertainty avoidance/low uncertainty avoidance certainly gives the lecturer useful insights, but such understanding on its own is not enough; s/he also needs the interpersonal communication skills of empathy, observation, and critical listening. Above all, s/he must be 'mindful' (Langer 1989, p. 39) of her/his own communication practices—the words s/he uses, the gestures s/he makes, the meanings s/he attributes. Such mindfulness necessarily enhances her/his effectiveness as a teacher, whether the students are international or local.

In outlining some of the ways in which international students may be enabled to participate more effectively in the culturally diverse classroom, I am not offering some kind of formula for success. Rather, I am suggesting that in meeting the challenges of teaching in an increasingly internationalised environment we must be flexible in our thinking and both opportunistic and eclectic in our appropriation of insights. From this flexibility, opportunism, and eclecticism we can develop holistic, culturally appropriate, structured approaches which offer benefits to all students.

Notes

[1] These crosscultural dimensions have been chosen in preference to more sophisticated models because most staff teaching in the commerce area are familiar with Hofstede, and can therefore more readily accept this approach to teaching culturally diverse classes than possible alternatives.

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Can we talk?: The role of oral communication in student learning

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As educators, it is our responsibility to facilitate an environment conducive to learning. There are numerous teaching strategies to fulfill this responsibility, one of which is social interaction through the use of oral communication learning strategies. Communicating with others through social interaction plays a dynamic part in the way knowledge is acquired and organized. Consistent with the notion that "the center of the instructional act should center on orality" (Sprague, 1996), this paper addresses issues associated with student learning through oral communication, with a specific emphasis on class discussion. The paper includes three major sections: First, the role of oral communication in the learning process is explained through social perspective theories which posit that meanings emerge from shared interaction of individuals in human society. Secondly, classroom implications of utilizing group discussion as a learning strategy are addressed. Finally, directions for future research are offered.

Introduction

As educators, it is our responsibility to facilitate an environment conducive to learning. There are numerous teaching strategies used to fulfill this responsibility. One approach is to promote social interaction through the use of oral communication. Communicating with others through social interaction plays a dynamic part in the way knowledge is acquired and organized (Alvermann, O'Brien, & Dillon, 1990, p. 298). Jo Sprague (1996) posits that "the center of the instructional act should center on orality." With this in mind, one would expect instructional processes in the classroom to include oral communication strategies in learning course content. However, this is not always the case.

Historically, the lecture method of instruction has been the dominant activity in many college and secondary classrooms, with teachers talking about seventy percent of the time (Alvermann, Young, Weaver, Hinchman, Moore, Phelps, Thrash & Zalewski, 1996; Davis, 1992; Goodlad, 1984; Karmos & Karmos, 1987; O'Keefe, 1986). This may be due to teacher perceptions of their roles as "dispensing knowledge" and "delivering the curriculum" (Schmuck & Schmuck, 1997, p. 259). Paul (1990) criticizes these "out-moded, didactic, lecture and drill-based models of instruction" (p. 40), because students fail to learn how to gather, synthesize, or assess information through collaboration with each other. Researchers suggest that teachers change their methods of presentation from a didactic mode to a more discursive or argumentative mode of teaching. Students need to become active learners rather than passive recipients of information and take responsibility for their own learning (Education Commission of the States, 1995; Kruse, 1988; Maryland State Department of Education, 1990; McPeck, 1990).

In response to these concerns, communication-across-the-curriculum programs (CXCPs) have been developed at numerous universities. The rational for these programs is twofold: 1) Communication skills are best developed if emphasized in a variety of courses (Cronin, 1990; Cronin & Glenn, 1990a, 1990b, 1991; Cronin & Grice, 1993; Hay, 1988; Roberts, 1983, 1984; Steinfatt, 1986); and 2) oral communication teaching strategies represent a fundamental mode of learning (Cronin & Grice, 1993; Modaff & Hopper, 1984; Steinfatt, 1986). CXCPs encourage educators to expand the application of meaningful oral communication teaching strategies so students take a more active role in mastering course content, thus enhancing classroom learning across the curriculum (Backlund, 1991; Cronin & Glenn, 1990a, 1990b;

Cronin & Glenn, 1991; Cronin & Grice, 1993; Garside, 1996; Morreale, Shockley-Zalabak & Whitney, 1993). To date, these programs have focused primarily on oral communication skills development through individual student presentations. Interactive videos outline how to prepare and present a speech, faculty training sessions focus on evaluating individual presentations, and CXC "labs" provide assistance for students preparing individual presentations. The potential impact of effective discussion strategies on learning is less emphasized, often taking a "back seat" to presentational speaking instruction. In short, faculty and student training in class discussion strategies become the exception rather than the rule.

In response to these concerns, this paper explores the theoretical and practical applications of class discussion on course content learning. The first section of the paper examines the theoretical framework of oral communication as a means of learning. Social perspective theories provide the framework from which this examination occurs. The next segment offers suggestions regarding the utilization of oral communication strategies for learning course content. Classroom discussion is used an as illustration of one such strategy. Finally, the paper concludes with directions for research on learning through oral communication.

Theoretical framework

Oral communication[1] plays an integral role in the learning process. The extant literature examines this role from both communication and education perspectives. From a communication perspective, people using language construct meaning. The mind develops out of and is a part of a social process that is already present. Meanings in the mind emerge out of social interaction (Meltzer, et. al., 1959). From an educational perspective, learning is described as the making of meaning (McCarthy, 1996). Since oral communication functions as a means by which students construct and reconstruct their views of the world, new learning is likely to occur. In combining the two perspectives, it is clear that language is a way to facilitate learning. Learning is the making of meaning, and meaning is constructed through language. Thus, verbal language through social interaction facilitates learning.

Social perspective theories

"Social perspective" theories of knowledge acquisition (Reynolds, Sinatra, & Jetton, 1996) such as social constructivism, symbolic interaction and social constructionism provide a framework from which to examine verbal interaction as an effective learning strategy. Theories within this social perspective focus on knowledge construction through social interaction and assert that meaning is gained and formed through interaction with others (Alvermann, et. al, 1996; Blumer, 1969; Gergen, 1984). Within the social perspective paradigm, individual knowledge claims are ultimately traced to social process. Thus, social perspective theories see "meanings as social products, as creations that are formed in and through the defining activities of people as they interact" (Blumer, 1969, p. 5).

Communication-across-the-curriculum programs (CXCPs) are grounded in the social perspective theoretical notion that knowledge acquisition results through social interaction. In the context of CXCPs, oral communication activities enhance student learning of course content. As a result, "teachers who move classes beyond a recitation-mode into discussion promote learning because they encourage students to use dialogue as a tool to enhance thinking and understanding" (Maryland State Department of Education, 1990, p. 25).

Classroom implications

If indeed, we use language to make meaning for ourselves—if understandings are shaped as we speak—then it is apparent that the students are the ones who should be talking in the classrooms, not the teachers. "Oral language, used in specific ways for specific purposes" influences learning and thinking produced in classrooms (O'Keefe, 1986, p. 2). As such,

faculty are encouraged to implement assignments and strategies that require student oral verbal involvement in conjunction with the instructional goals for a course (Palmerton, 1993). There are numerous variations of basic oral communication learning strategies utilized within the framework of CXCPs. These strategies emphasize verbalization of information individually or in groups where students do the talking. Palmerton explains that in order to be successful, "oral verbal activity should clearly help the students learn the course materials. Objectives should be clear to both the instructor and the student."

There are numerous oral communication strategies to facilitate learning that can be utilized in any classroom. Cronin and Grice (1995) advocate the use of individual presentations, group presentations, listening activities, classroom debates, and interactive video. Morreale (1996) adds team building and interviewing to the list, while others encourage students to teach each other (Halpern, 1987; Lindsey, 1988; Steinfatt, 1986). Case studies facilitate learning by providing an opportunity for student interaction and analysis where students build on insights of other class members (Garside, 1995; Millis, 1994; Ruggerio, 1988; Wilkerson & Boehrer, 1992). Palmerton (1989, 1993) recommends interpersonal communication strategies, class discussion, learning group discussion, and task group discussion. All of these strategies have import within CXCPs to the extent that they emphasize student verbalization and complement course objectives. At this point, however, I would like to more fully address issues associated with discussion strategies for a couple of reasons. First, even though they are reviewed in the literature, they are rarely the focus of faculty training workshops. When faculty are not trained to effectively utilize discussion, they are less likely to use it in their classrooms. This results in students rarely receiving instruction in effective group discussion strategies. Second, if educators use classroom discussion strategies, they are often used ineffectively. Classroom discussion can easily become problematic because of limited training and instruction for faculty and students.

Strategies for effective discussion

Discussion is a recognized part of classroom life, providing a window of understanding through oral discourse (Alvermann, et. al., 1990; Padak, 1986). It is characterized by verbal interchanges among students and teachers who converse in a cooperative and constructive manner in order to listen and learn from one another (Jetton, 1995). Often, teachers equate learning with active and thoughtful participation in class discussion. Effective discussions are those in which students are active participants and thoughtful sharers of information where give-and-take dialogues encourage participants to enrich and refine their understanding of course material and related ideas (Alvermann, et. al., 1990, p. 306). Book (1996) argues that students need to participate in group discussion so they can develop analytical and problem solving capabilities. Students elaborate, rehearse, and personalize information during the process of verbalizing their thoughts and ideas. This interaction gives students the opportunity to internalize information and has the potential to raise students to a higher intellectual level of development through collaboration (Vygotsky, 1978).

Unfortunately, discussions typically resemble lectures, where the instructor dominates classroom talk by asking questions and students direct their comments and responses to the instructor. This "teacher-controlled genre" (Jetton & Alexander, 1995) of discussion contributes to student passivity criticized by Goodlad (1984). The "quest for covering content" often supersedes any meaningful, in-depth attempts at discussion. "Viewed within this context, it is understandable why teachers often find open-forum discussions difficult to enact." In addition to demands for content coverage, effective use of time and classroom order pose difficulties. Often, teachers fear letting students get out of control, an option not easily relinquished (Alvermann et. al., 1990, pp. 319–320).

There are also concerns regarding small group discussion from a student perspective. Although small-group discussion promotes students' class involvement by increasing the frequency of individual talk and decreasing risks when expressing personal or tentative

thoughts, sometimes discussion gets off topic. Students are aware that they easily deviate from the topic of discussion, which they consider detrimental to discussion effectiveness and overall learning. Further, students fear being placed in unproductive groups where one student or a few students within the group assume responsibility for all the work. Finally, students seek compatible group members, especially on a secondary level. They want to know and like the members of their group (Alvermann, et. al., 1996, pp. 255-263).

In spite of these apparent difficulties, discussion strategies can be designed to achieve maximum effectiveness for student learning. Particular conditions and norms of interaction are required[2] Resnick (1991) explains that effective group discussion depends on the conditions under which the group works and the nature of the task. With this in mind, a primary goal in designing class discussion is to "help students acquire and integrate cognitive and metacognitive strategies for using, managing, and discovering knowledge" (Collins, Brown, & Newman, 1989, p. 480). Examining practical considerations for class discussion can enhance its effectiveness as a learning strategy. As such, it seems prudent to explore preparation, guidance and evaluation strategies to provide more meaningful approaches to class discussion.

Preparation for discussion is critical. Before any discussion can be effective, there needs to be a sense of community in the classroom. Students are more likely to share ideas and opinions when they feel comfortable. Students need to participate in group discussion training experiences. Consistent with schema theory (Abelson, 1981), classroom training in group situations assists students in developing "scripts" or "schema" for effective group discussion. These scripts provide the mechanism whereby students can examine the "way in which social reality is constructed and how constructions of reality translate into social behavior through action rules" (p. 727). In short, scripts provide appropriate models for effective group discussion. The notion behind this perspective is that discussion—as a vehicle for incoming knowledge—needs to be experienced, and discussed in order to be effective. Otherwise, the probability of learning is adversely affected (Alba & Hasher, 1983, p. 205). Another preparation strategy involves student preparation. Pre-discussion assignments such as reading and/or writing prior to discussion develop prior knowledge from which the student can draw in order to participate more fully and effectively in discussion. Students can also prepare with study questions provided by the instructor, written questions from the readings, summaries, and outside information (Davis, 1993). Finally, the instructor should set up the context of the discussion. The overall purpose of the discussion with objectives, expectations, and ground rules, should be clear to the instructor and the students.

Guidance strategies during the discussion can also increase its effectiveness. Numerous educational researchers (Collins, et. al., 1989; Jetton & Alexander, 1996; Rogoff, 1990) suggest that students be "apprenticed" in the nature and forms of discourse that arise in the classroom. Apprenticeship posits that students learn social interaction skills through observation, coaching, and successive approximation. The teacher functions as a consultant to small groups asking questions such as: What are you doing? Why are you doing it? How will success in what you are doing help you find a solution to the problem? These questions encourage students to reflect on their activities and engage in metacognitive skills by articulating the reasoning behind their choices. It also develops self-monitoring skills (Collins, et. al., 1989, p. 473-474). Apprenticeship strategies require students to be active and use their knowledge.

During the discussion process, instructors should let students do the talking. Minimal interference from the instructor encourages students to be active participants. Engaging and relevant topics that activate the prior knowledge of students serve to facilitate effective discussion. Further, students perceive "discussion-worthy tasks to be interesting and demanding, yet clearly defined, drawing on their abilities to reason and to evaluate ideas" (Alverman, et. al., 1996, p. 259). If possible, students should be involved in selecting and

defining topics of discussion. Discussion should provide open exchange of student ideas and opinions. Questions should be devised in an effort to stimulate thoughtful discussion. Encourage students to talk to and question each other as well as the instructor (p. 319). In addition, keep the discussion focused. Watch for digressions and topic changes. Putting the discussion or problem-solving procedure on a hand-out or on the board can keep students focused and goal-oriented. Training experiences prior to discussion can also help alleviate the tendency to deviate from the topic.

Evaluation strategies can improve future classroom discussion opportunities. Ask students to write briefly on how their thinking changed as a result of the discussion. Make your own informal evaluation of the discussion. Occasionally, save time at the end of the period to assess the day's discussion. If equipment is available, videotape the discussion and analyze the process as a class. Students can also consider how the discussion could have been improved. Establish specific improvements as goals for the next class discussion. Assist students in adjusting behaviors to help meet these new goals.

Integrating preparation, guidance and evaluative strategies increases the effectiveness of the discussion process, which in turn, enhances learning. Alvermann, et. al. (1996) explain, "discussion allows students to become engaged with ideas, to construct meaning, to take responsibility for their own learning, and to negotiate complex cognitive and social relationships. When discussion is a regular part of classroom life, students learn how to work with others, how to fit in, how to stay focused on a topic, and the importance of listening and contributing to a group effort" (p. 264). As such, educators need to make every effort to ensure quality discussions.

Directions for future research

Alvermann (1996) calls for future research that explores how student perceptions of their experiences as discussants vary across the disciplines. There is evidence to suggest that discussion plays out differently in mathematics, engineering, and science classes. This is likely the case in other disciplines as well. CXCPs need to be responsive to discipline-specific communication behaviors so discussion and other oral communication strategies will have more utility, meaning, and effectiveness for those disciplines. Communication scholars need to undertake systematic research to identify conventions of oral communication within academic discourse communities. This is essential in being able to truly look at communication from an across-the-curriculum perspective. In short, CXCPs need to recognize the unique features of discipline-specific communicative behaviors.

On a larger scale, the theory behind CXCPs holds that "learning occurs best through the cognitive processes associated with message formation" (Steinfatt, 1986, p. 460). While this notion seems reasonable based on theoretical assumptions associated with learning, there is little empirical research reported as to whether oral communication strategies within these programs enhance student learning or skill improvement. Current research relies mostly on anecdotal evidence and self-report data from students. This data reveals that students perceive that communication skills and understanding of course content are improved through oral communication activities (Alvermann, 1996; Cronin & Grice, 1993; Palmerton, 1989; Roberts, 1983). However, this self report data has been criticized as providing inaccurate measures of communication skills and student learning (Cronin & Grice, 1993; Garside, 1996; McCroskey, 1986; Rubin & Graham, 1988). Cronin (in Palmerton, et. al., 1996) re-emphasizes this notion saying that we need to get serious about research and assessment. "If oral communication increases competency, we need to do controlled studies to prove the claim. If oral communication increases learning, we need to do controlled studies to prove the claim." Independent measures of actual learning or skill improvement must be included in oral communication across the curriculum assessment strategies" (Cronin & Grice, 1993, p. 7). Future research should provide careful assessment of all major activities within a program to measure the immediate and long-term effects of these programs on course

content learning and oral communication skill development. Palmerton (1997) emphasizes the "importance of multiple measures, and using forms of assessment that are not quantifiable but that allow for contextual understandings." Regardless of whether the research is quantitative or qualitative, it is evident that assessment measures need to be developed and integrated to evaluate the effectiveness of CXCPs and the oral communication strategies they espouse.

Conclusion

Instructors can develop methods for effective discussion where students are actively engaged in thoughtful, meaningful dialogues regarding course content. Through observing and reflecting on classroom discussion, instructors can enhance their knowledge of productive instruction utilizing oral communication learning strategies. This knowledge can lead to classroom environments where "students are organized into interpretive communities, engaging in the process of meaning-making" (Jetton & Alexander, 1996, p. 37). When we provide opportunities for interaction within the social context of the classroom, student learning and critical thinking should be enhanced. As educators then, we would be wise to heed the words of Dewey (1935, p. 81): "Ideas form the substance of life through employing language. We must determine how we will use them, not if we are going to use them".

Endnotes

[1] Oral communication refers to oral verbal communication (talking about ideas and concepts) as opposed to oral nonverbal communication (sighs, laughs, etc.); written verbal communication (writing with language, such as term papers and letters); and written nonverbal communication (such as traffic signs, $#%@$!, etc.)

[2] The following are excellent resources for issues associated with effective group discussion in the classroom and other contexts. B.G. Davis, *Tools for teaching* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey Bass, 1993), G.J. Galanes & J.K. Brilhart, *Communicating in groups: Application and skills* (Madison, WI: Brown & Benchmark, 1997), R.M. Schwart, *The skilled facilitator: Practical wisdom for developing effective groups* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey Bass, 1994), and G.L. Wilson, *Groups in context: Leadership and participation in small groups* (4th ed. New York: McGraw Hill, 1996). The information in this section of the paper is a synthesis of material from these sources.

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Cultural literacy and intercultural communication competence: Australia/Asia and the Middle

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Intercultural communication competence is a neglected area in Australian education. Despite lip service to the critical importance of communication skills in a multicultural society constantly engaging in interaction with contrast cultures, the development of intercultural communication skills is largely ignored.

This paper draws upon, and extends, ideas presented in the author's *Communicating with Asia* (Allen & Unwin, 1996). It privileges an approach to understanding contrast cultures and enhancing intercultural communication competence based on national, ethnic and religious identities (an anthropology of identity) over earlier approaches based on do's and don'ts lists (an anthropology of manners). The argument is explained and illustrated with reference to issues concerning Australia/Asia and Australia/Middle East communication.

Consideration is given to the implications of adopting an identities approach to cultural literacy for efforts to improve intercultural communication via further and higher education courses, short courses and cultural briefings, and personal do-it-yourself (DIY) lifelong learning projects.

Introduction

The essential argument of this paper is that intercultural communication is a neglected area in Australian education and training (see also Irwin, 1994; 1998); that cultural literacy is central to enhancing intercultural communication competence; that a "cultural identities" approach based on understanding national, ethnic, religious and communal identities is the most appropriate frame of reference for conceptualising, understanding and developing cultural literacy; that cultural literacy involves knowledge and understanding of one's own culture as well as relevant contrast ("other") culture(s), and of cultural change; and that effort to improve intercultural communication competence by developing broad cultural literacy warrants much greater attention in Australian higher and further education curricula, in short courses and cultural briefings, and in personal do-it-yourself lifelong learning projects (see also Irwin, 1992; 1993; 1996; 1997a; 1997b). The argument is illustrated by reference to aspects of Australia/Asia and Australia/Middle East cultural literacy and intercultural communication.

Intercultural communication is the symbolic, interpretive, transactional, contextual process in which people from different cultures create shared meanings (Lustig & Koester, 1993, p. 51). Competence in intercultural communication demands motivation, knowledge, understanding, empathy and sensitivity supported by performance skills.

Cross-cultural literacy

Because it more fully captures the idea of interaction in the intercultural communication activity to which it contributes, it is preferable to talk in terms of Australia/Asia literacy or Australia/Middle East literacy (or, in a more focused way, of Australia/China literacy or

Australia/Turkey literacy) than in terms of the often used (in Australia). Asia literacy or some similar reference to Middle Eastern literacy. Cultural literacy is inherently cross-cultural, best understood in terms of contrasts. It is not something to be developed by "us" for dealing with "them". It is this cross-cultural imperative of cultural literacy that ensures it is instrumental to, and essential for, intercultural communication.

Conceptualised thus, cross-cultural literacy does not privilege an individual, organisational or national/ethnic viewpoint. Consequently, it is not focused on power, manipulation or winning in argument or negotiation. Rather, cultural literacy, conceptualised as cross-cultural and interactive, is about contributing to equity, fairness and authenticity in cross-cultural interaction and intercultural communication. Cross-cultural literacy contributes not only to the knowledge and understanding components of intercultural communication competence but also to its performance component.

The anthropology of identity

National, ethnic, religious and communal identity has been central to much recent work in the humanities and social sciences. Sociology, anthropology, psychology and cultural studies share interests in conceptualising identities and explaining how they change. Analysis of identity informs study of cultural diversity. Focus upon comparative identity, or what is termed here the anthropology of identity, provides rich opportunities for enhancing the knowledge, understanding and competency which form the basis of cultural literacy, including Australia/Asia and Australia/Middle East cultural literacy.

Basic to the identities approach is appreciation of a community's character and distinctiveness, with this being explored and made manifest through understanding of its histories, its (changing) values and their influence on behaviour and practice, its present (expressed, for example, through its political and economic organisation, national and group tensions and popular culture), and its future(s), as aspired to and as they emerge and evolve. Analysis of this "big picture" distinctiveness results in knowledge and understanding in which individual episodes of cross-cultural interaction and intercultural communication take place. This contextualisation of interactions leads them to be more understandable, more communicatively competent. The argument is that intercultural communication is more authentic and effective when participants understand the broad cultural contexts, their own and constrasting ones(s). They will be more comfortable, confident and competent knowing where they and other interactants are culturally located, where they are "coming from". They will be working within a communication frame of reference far superior to that advocated previously as an anthropology of manners (Hall 1955, 1966) which translated to do's and don'ts lists of behaviours when dealing with "other" cultures. This approach was superficial because it was ethnocentric (western centred), devoid of context, ahistorical and did not adequately deal with cultural change. It was threatening because it demanded behaviour changes without explanation or understanding. It was misleading in promising quick-fix solutions to complex issues in intercultural communication when the reality was that no quick solutions were possible.

As Huntington argued in an article in *Foreign Affairs* (1993) and his (for other reasons) controversial book *The clash of civilizations* (1996), increasingly people define themselves on the basis of ancestry, language, religion and customs and in the 1990s the critical criteria are not ideological or economic but cultural. This, along with how people are defined by others, for example how Indonesians perceive Australians or how Australia perceives China, is what cultural identity is all about. When identities are defined, comparisons and contrasts are inevitable and it is this that gives rise to what may be termed an anthropology of identity. It is argued here that the study of comparative identities, the anthropology of identity, forms a powerful framework for understanding cultures and cultural contrasts and, thus, for developing the knowledge, understanding and sensitivity pre-requisite for cross-cultural interaction and intercultural communication competence.

"Knowing" changing, enduring identities

How do identities come to be "known"? Identities are complex and mysterious and thus elusive, so that "knowing" a cultural identity can be extraordinarily difficult. It has often been claimed, for example, that the complexity and mystery of Japanese identity is such that it is and will remain largely incomprehensible and largely unknowable to those from contrast cultures despite the close scrutiny it has received following Japan's territorial ambitions of the 1930s and 1940s and its subsequent economic success (Littlewood, 1996). The same has been said of Middle Eastern Islamic cultures which have long been viewed in Europe as mysterious and threatening (Ahmed, 1996). Indeed, the same has been said about Australian identity, especially by Australians. All this mystery and confusion should not, and does not, deter analysis and discussion. Pursuit of curiosity about national and ethnic identities promises rich rewards of understanding and all that can flow from it, including a basis for improved intercultural communication. That the rewards for pursuing understanding of identities come at the expense of time and effort is obvious: it is an issue which will be returned to.

Identities are dynamic so their study must take account of change. In postmodern times, rapid change contributes to identity. Thus, the anthropology of identity must capture the idea that national, ethnic, religious and communal identities are problematic and unstable, that they are continually being reviewed and altered. While the dynamism of identities poses issues for their analysis it does not prevent identities being known to an extent useful in developing cultural literacy. Despite rapid but marginal cultural change and innovation (for Japan, for example, see Hills, 1996; McGregor, 1996) paradoxically central values and cultural characteristics are remarkably enduring. There is some sense to the old saying: "the more we change, the more we stay the same".

Knowing a cultural identity involves establishing a deep familiarity with it and understanding its distinctiveness, its Chineseness, its Australianness, or its Morocconness. This involves understanding cultural history (the Chinese experience, the Australian experience, the Moroccan experience) religion (including, for example, why Turkish mosques welcome non-Muslim visitors while Morocco's exclude them), values, popular culture (music, literature, print and broadcast media, sport), the sociology of work, and the role of women and the family. Helpful to this are analyses of values, value difference and value change, studies of comparative religion, cultural caricatures and accounts of how cultures are seen by outsiders.

Analyses must be critical and nowhere is this more important than about values, value change, and the influence of values in shaping identity. Analysis of Lebanese values, for example, often becomes analysis of Islamic values and must take care to recognise the differences in the practice of Islam. Analysis of Chinese values often becomes analysis of Confucian values. Much attention is paid to diligence and hard work, emphasis on education, self-reliance and self-improvement and the familial nature of entrepreneurship and family success—often as if these values are unique to Chinese (see Tan, 1997). Less is said about "new" values such as the relentless pursuit of money, obsession amongst the young on material goods and wealth, and a growing intolerance of delayed gratification. In the broader analysis of "Asian values" much of what is said is put in positive, optimistic terms and ignores the downside—corruption, nepotism, sexual slavery and child labour, human rights violations, political repression and neglect of the environment.

During rapid change, personal perception, judgement (and thus bias) are active in identities debates. For example, one commentator has perceived the key features of Australian identity as "the nation-state, the tradition of freedom and individualism, the stress on equality and on abhorrence of a too vigorous official nationalism and a livery adversarialism" (Milner, 1996, p. 15). Yet when ABC Radio National (1997, p. 4) interviewed three media correspondents reporting Australia to the Asia-Pacific quite different views were expressed.

Lotte Chow of the Far Eastern Economic Review claimed her readers across Asia see Australia as a tourist, education and gambling destination and as a producer of "milk and wheat". Wakako Yuki of the Japanese-English newspaper *Yomiuri Shimbun* agreed that the Japanese saw Australia as a tourist destination, "a wonderland of nature", and an important trading partner and supplier of natural resources. Ratik Hardjono (see also Hardjono, 1992), however, interprets Australia to her readers of *Kompas*, Indonesia's second largest newspaper, as a very new and modern country and writes about "social changes, social interactions, how Australians are coping with this identity". Perceptions of identity must be flexible to take account of change and the uncertainties and ambiguities of postmodern life.

Cultural literacy and enhanced intercultural communication competence: Ways forward

The first step toward achieving cultural literacy and enhanced intercultural communication is to overtake numerous mind blocks that have grown up around the task. This is equally important for educationalists and training officers whose responsibility is course design and for individuals who accept responsibility for their ongoing education. It has to be accepted as much more than cultural awareness, that there are no easy short cuts and that investment of time and effort are essential. Space must be found in a crowded curriculum. Time must be found in busy personal and professional lives. Apprehension about the magnitude of the task must be overcome and Australia's traditional preference for Britannia-centered curricula (FitzGerald, 1992), along with unreasonable influence in universities of cultural defenders and preservers of Euro-Australian culture (Chan, 1995), must be tackled seriously.

What are post-secondary education institutions and government bodies doing to promote and assist activity to develop cultural literacy, and with what success? Government funding initiatives have provided some motivation, especially in relation to Asian, Australian and Aboriginal studies. Only a single formal attempt has been made to gather data about the extent to which these funding initiatives prompted universities to action. *The curriculum development for internationalisation: Australian case studies* and *Stocktake* (IDP, 1995) collected information on internationalisation from 38 universities and this revealed over a thousand curriculum initiatives in the 1990s. Although this sounds an impressive total it must be seen in relation to the tens upon tens of thousands of courses offered in Australia. Most initiatives were confined to international subjects, internationally comparative approaches and interdisciplinary programs. Most initiatives identified involved Asia. Very few concerned the Middle East with a notable exception being from Macquarie University via its Middle East Centre and involving students in two Middle East politics courses using the Internet with universities in Egypt to simulate diplomatic negotiations. No evidence is available from the stocktake of deliberate and planned attempts to tackle issues of cross-cultural literacy or intercultural communication competence. One of the stocktake's conclusions was that Australia lagged behind countries in Europe and Asia in curriculum internationalisation work. Another was that "many universities do not have an overview of the number, pattern or nature of (their own) internationalised curricula" (IDP, 1995, p. 72) and that a national register or clearing house of curriculum internalisation activities should be established. It is also clear from the stocktake that almost all of the work done has been confined to developing knowledge and understandings but makes little contribution to the performance of effective intercultural communication.

One promising innovation has been the introduction, in 1997, of a Certificate in Intercultural Studies by the Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology (RMIT) and IDP Education Australia in partnership with the University of British Columbia (RMIT, 1997). The course is offered, via experiential workshops and assignments completed on the Internet, to locations in Australia or New Zealand. Participants are encouraged to use prior intercultural experience (six months is a prerequisite) and present interests in the work they do to develop "culture-general communication" and "culture-specific communication and relationship skills" in association with development of broader cultural literacy.

Short courses and cultural briefings offer another pathway toward cultural literacy and intercultural communication competence. They are commonly concerned with such issues as cultural expectation, culture shock and culture stress, valuing value differences, non-verbal communication, contrasting organisational cultures and so on. Many rely on little more than do's and don't "tip lists" concerned with customs and business etiquette. A major problem with short courses and cultural briefings is that they are short and brief, and thus superficial. Typically, they range from a half day to two days, cover a particular Asian or (less commonly) a Middle Eastern country or clusters of countries, are offered by external providers because few Australian organisations have the internal expertise, and use experiential activities such as role play, or employ "cultural informants", people with first hand knowledge of the focus culture(s). Rarely is reading required. While short courses and cultural briefings may engender a "feelgood" quality among participants, they offer limited prospect of significantly enhancing cultural literacy or communication skills because they cannot hope to improve knowledge of national, ethnic, religious and communal identities in the time available.

Given the present severe limitations of post-secondary and short course offerings in tackling cultural literacy issues much of the onus for development falls on individuals who have something of a do-it-yourself approach forced on them. Looked at more positively, individuals who identify the need to develop cultural literacy and intercultural communication skills have the challenge of incorporating this into their lifelong learning activities. In the spirit of lifelong learning, individuals can take up the opportunity to learn to learn and take responsibility for their own Australia/Asia and or Australia/Middle East literacy and intercultural communication competence. As argued here, this involves focus on national, ethnic, religious and communal identities, associated value systems, cultural histories and futures and cultural change as well as customs and practices and cultural explanations of them. It involves building knowledge and understandings from appropriately selected books, other resources, travel and work/life experiences and then (or simultaneously) using this new knowledge with confidence to broaden the range of, and enhance, everyday cross-cultural encounters and everyday intercultural communication skills.

Immediately the question arises: what is the best source material for this personal learning exercise? Australian book suppliers specialising in the humanities, business and management carry large ranges of books dealing with Australia and Asia but a more limited range dealing with the Middle East. There can be no "best list" or prescription in this reading exercise but it is important to identify some starting points. The works listed below are indicative and illustrative only but serve to provide an idea of the range and categories of available material:

- Undergraduate texts provide a useful framework for understanding intercultural communication. Examples of well regarded texts include Lustig and Koester's (1993). *Intercultural competence: Interpersonal communication across cultures* and Brislin's (1993) more advanced *Understanding culture's influence on behavior.*

- Coverage of national and/or religious cultures provides helpful background understanding. Examples include Hendry's (1990) *Understanding Japanese society,* Said's (1997) Covering Islam and Esposito's (1995) *The Islamic threat: Myth or reality.*

- Futurist analyses (regional and national) provide insight into cultural change. Recent examples are Naisbitt's (1995) *Megatrends Asia,* White and Logan's (1997) *Remaking the Middle East* and Spagnolo's (1996) *Problems of the modern Middle East in historical perspective.*

- Accounts of popular culture also provide insights into cultural change. Examples include McGregor's (1996). *Japan swings*, Scarce's (1996) *Domestic culture in the Middle East* and Brook's (1995) *Nine parts of desire: The hidden world of Islamic women*.

- A particularly interesting and helpful category of book is that which describes images of the culture from another. Hardjono's (1992) *White tribe of Asia: An Indonesian view of Australia*, Said's (1978) seminal work *Orientalism: Western conceptions of the Orient* and Strahan's (1996) *Australia's China: Changing perceptions from the 1930s to the 1990s* are illustrative of this category.

- Focussed "culture shock" books are generally highly readable. Illustrative examples are Cooper and Cooper's (1986) *Culture shock: Thailand* (one of an extensive series) and David's (1996) *Arabs and Israel for beginners*.

- "How to do" business guides are also helpful in building a background towards improved intercultural communication competence especially where they offer explanations of their advice. Examples are De Mente's (1991) *Korean etiquette and ethics in business* and James' (1995) *Asia-Pacific communications*.

- Novels and light travel narratives, such as Prindle's (1992) *Kinjo* the corporate bouncer and other stories from Japanese business and Katzenstein's (1990) *Funny business: An outsider's year in Japan* also can provide valuable insights into conrast cultures.

Caveats apply to this do-it-yourself by reading approach as they do to building knowledge from films or from travel. A close watch must be kept for biases, distortions, predispositions and pure fiction and for authors who stress the problems of contrast cultures at the expense of their strengths or who do not analyse cultures below their exotic surfaces. A special watch is warranted for work that magnifies and glorifies the historic role of the west in relation to Asia or the Middle East or which assumes that Westernisation is the only pathway to modernisation.

Concluding remarks

Knowledge of national, ethnic, religious and communal identities is necessary for developing robust frameworks for Australia/Asia and Australia/Middle East cultural literacy, including competent performance in cross-cultural interactions and intercultural communication. The comparative identities approach advocated offers the best opportunity for this work but is currently hindered by serious deficiencies in the international curriculum, a growing dependence on inadequate short courses and a conspicuous lack of attention to applying knowledge and understandings in practical, performance oriented ways. Opportunities must be provided for the practice of cultural diplomacy and interaction in multicultural settings. While do-it-yourself approaches can achieve success, the longer term solution to Australia/Asia and Australia/Middle East cultural literacy and enhanced intercultural communication lies in converting the rhetoric into practice and internationalising Australian curricula at all levels. Serious attempts to do this will involve mainstreaming the study of languages and societies, joint curriculum development with Asian and Middle Eastern Institutions, expanded study abroad and student mobility programs, resource reallocation and a greater acceptance of practical, skills oriented courses. All this has been delayed for too long.

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Human and technological communication: An interactive world

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This paper describes a teaching project, (the Monash project), that taught human and technological communication skills in an integrated fashion. It espouses the view that neither human nor technological communication skill should stand alone in Western academia and that students learn both these skills best in a constructivist environment. It also posits the need to reassess traditional contexts of human communication in the light of computer technologies and for communication textbooks to sensibly consider the effects of computer technologies on human social interaction.

The project

The project was conducted in the Department of Computer Science, Monash University, in both 1996 and 1997 in the 13-week elective of Professional Communications. The subject's aim was to teach basic human and technological communication skills.

By the end of the project students were expected to be able to:

1996

- use e-mail and to analyse e-mail communications
  - a) in terms of suitability for a co-operative project
  - b) in terms of intercultural communication
- identify ethical issues arising from internet communications
- identify and overcome intercultural barriers
- record, analyse and assess communication within a small group
- conduct a formal audience analysis
- design a user test
- write user documentation for a particular audience
- plan and conduct a group sales presentation
- deliver a public presentation
- identify linguistic barriers to communication

1997

As above, plus:

- use html to create Web documents

- analyse Web documents for audience suitability
- understand and be able to use FTP to place documents on the Web
- assess the technologies used in terms of their effect on human communications.
- select appropriate technologies according to communicative needs.

Students were mainly first year Computer Science students, most of whom were in the 17–19 year age group, fresh out of school, though about 2% were adults returning to study. Not all were familiar with computers and about 1% in each year were from degree programmes other than computer science. At least 30% of all students were from a variety of non-English speaking backgrounds with a marked number of Asian students, predominantly from Hong Kong and China.

In 1996 there were 50 students enrolled in the subject and concomitantly participating in the project. In 1997 there were 120. Students attended two 1hr lectures and a two-hour practical/tutorial session per week. Lectures were conducted on an interactive basis. In the first year lectures were conducted in a hall where students sat at desks that could be moved. In the second year, because of increased enrolment, lectures were conducted in a traditional lecture theatre. The greater success of the project in 1996, from a teacher's perspective, was partly due to a physical teaching environment that lent itself more readily to constructivist learning.

The majority of students had avoided the humanities at school. A cursory oral survey in both years revealed a general distaste for writing.

What did students actually do?

In 1996 students constructed a timing device using bits and pieces of familiar office materials. They wrote instructions for the construction of their device, designed a user test for fellow students, designed an audience analysis of two groups of students in America, used e-mail to forward their instructions to those students and reflected on the group process throughout the project. The American students, in turn, implemented their instructions and provided feedback to the Monash students as to their understanding of their instructions (Jawary, Birchak, & Strack Vargo, 1997).

In 1997 the Monash students communicated with students in New Zealand.

The 1996 group used e-mail alone for their communications with students overseas. The 1997 group used e-mail and Web-based communication. The latter were also taught html and principles of Web design.

In both years students worked in groups. They were required to take detailed minutes of all their meetings and to reflect in writing on their roles within their groups according to the Bales and Lashbrook quantitative and qualitative methods of analysing group communication (Barker & Barker, 1993). Students made oral and written observations about their own personal communicative styles, cultural values, expectations and approaches to group management. At the final stage of the project, students had to try to sell their timers to academics and peers in group presentations.

In 1996, because of non-synchronous academic calendars of Australia and America, the bulk of the theory and relevant computer skills had to be taught within the first five weeks of semester. In 1997 there was no such pressure.

The theoretical basis of the subject was delivered through assigned weekly reading, mainly from Barker & Barker (1993) and De Vito (1991) as well as through lectures on the following topics:

Communication modeling	Minute-taking	Presentation skills
Intrapersonal, interpersonal, small group, large group and intercultural communication	Technology and human interaction	The internet
Computer ethics	Use of e-mail	User documentation
The internet & the Web (1997)	Web design (1997)	html (1997)

Table 1. Theoretical basis of Professional Communication, 1996 and 1997

Assessment

Student work was assessed in the form of a large assignment consisting of group and individual work, both written and oral.

Oral presentations were assessed by teachers from the Department of Computer Science. They were given marking guidelines but also added their own criteria.

Written reflections on the group process were assessed by postgraduate students from the English department. These assessors had no background in either computing or communication studies.

Two group meetings were formally observed, monitored and assessed by tutors whose expertise was in computer science. They had no background in communication studies.

I assessed the students' Web pages.

Marking was always discussed by the assessors. Because they brought different perspectives of their own disciplines to the marking process, they articulated learning outcomes that often surprised me and that greatly enhanced the assessment and teaching process during the project.

Jonassen (1991) suggests several criteria for assessing constructivist learning, one of which is goal free evaluation. Pre-defined goals in a constructivist learning environment, says Jonassen, lead to bias in assessment. To counterbalance this, he suggests having an assessor who has no background in the area being assessed. Experience of the Monash project assessment process proves Jonassen right. Marking was greatly enhanced by the perspectives of the different assessors.

In a purist sense, of course, Jonassen is right. Constructivism should have no goals. If we take this view to its extreme, the purest constructivist environment is life itself; yet one cannot be sure if it is totally purposeless in its construction. (Indeed, the juxtaposition of the words 'construction' and 'goal-free' seems to be dichotomous.)

Although the project had clearly defined goals, they were the basis, or 'home page', as it were, of what I call the 'hypertext of learning'.

In a constructivist context, learning continues to spiral well past the given project. The more closely the learning environment is context driven, the stronger the learning in terms of its hypertextual branches and relevance to the life experience of the student. No teacher can predict or identify all of those hypertextual outcomes. The hypertext of learning is the

product of the marriage between the constructed learning experience (including its theoretic grounding) and the student's growing individuation and ongoing experience.

The fundamentalist division between transfer and constructivist theory, albeit at times useful for descriptive purposes, is artificial. Even the instructional method of teaching is, in some sense, constructivist. Mapping learning options as a political continuum, with transference the extreme right and constructivism the left, is simplistic and limiting. Seeing transference as a subset of constructivism is even less helpful. Mapping the learning process as a flow chart whereby constructivism leads to theoretic understanding or vice versa has its uses. But optimum learning environments are hypertextual and multilayered, incorporating any of these approaches concomitantly.

According to Perkins and Salomon, as discussed in Driscoll (1994),

> Transfer of specific skill and knowledge appears to take place under two conditions: (1) with much practice, in a large variety of situations, leading to a high level of mastery and near-automaticity, or (2) with deliberate, effortful abstraction of a principle (Perkins & Salomon, 1989; Salomon & Perkins, 1989). Regarding instruction for general cognitive skills, their conclusion is very similar to that recommended by situated learning theorists; cultivate general strategic knowledge together with context-specific knowledge.

This project did just that. It used techniques of straight lecturing, interactive situational learning within the umbrella of a constructivist environment. Goals were both identified at the specific level and broadly sketched. Assessment criteria were at one level easily specified, and at the hypertextual level had to be discussed and negotiated, both among assessors and, by implication, with students. They continue to grow.

Perspectives

Student perspectives

Among the benefits of participation in the project, students noted:

- the practical value of bonding and getting to know people they were working with on a social level before immediately trying to work with them on a professional level.

For example, 'Paul' writes of his group's reticence to speak up at the first meeting but points out at the end of the project, "I believe that forming solid friendships was the key to our group performing well."

Based on this learning outcome, a worthwhile way to extend learning in the future would be to ask how one might achieve group trust and bonding through internet communication.

- the lesson that a common language does not guarantee mutual understanding.

Students reported misunderstandings with words like sticky tape, pencil sharpener lid, rubber, and noted the need to convert metrics to inches for an American setting. They also encountered misunderstandings with use of the term 'negro'. Further barriers resulted from lack of synchronicity of software and assumptions made about lifestyle practices and attitudes of students overseas.

- the importance of thorough audience analysis before commencing writing.

'Travis' writes that his group would have done better had they established ahead of time to what extent their American counterparts were able to decode their e-mail attachments.

'Ryan' points to intercultural misunderstandings linked to technology failures as well as to rash cultural assumptions. His words as written:

> For inter-cultural communication ...it would be wiser to know the culture well ...with e-mail there is no verbal and very little graphical usage available, meaning that in the event of a communication failure, there would be misunderstandings and different interpretation.

Ryan recommends using the telephone for initial contact with overseas groups and then e-mail once they have a better idea of the user's needs. He also notes the importance of checking that electronic messages have been received.

- The machine is not the message.

Students found that the communication medium of the 21st century cannot mask communicative incompetence and can, in itself, create misunderstanding and communication breakdown. According to Kling (1996) this lesson is fundamental for anyone who communicates via computer.

The teacher's perspective

The use of computers in education is still being explored. According to Strassman (1997), "...we are at the end of the Gutenbergian era and the beginning of the 'electronic display' era". The appearance of 'electronic display' in place of traditional text gives students who feel they are no good at writing, a fresh start.

The Web offers them a psychological shield. Ironically, in the case of the Monash computer science students, their erroneous belief that technology would take care of their communication, was a boon. Because they were being taught html and Web design and not essay writing, they felt more confident in their ability to succeed and were constantly aware of the relevance of their work. Writing became both global and interactive. Students were not writing for their teacher; they were creating a design for real students to work with, to respond to, and their projects were given the same Web-space as any other writer's.

The notion of community is an aspect of this project worth developing. For a short time, students had formed a co-operative community with people on the other side of the world. In turn, they discovered the power of their own community.

One student writes to his e-pals in America: "We are all born outside Australia. We come from England, Philippines, Bahrain, etc.," (though one wonders what the "etc" means). The internet encouraged a focus on commonality rather than differences. With examination of communicative abilities through the distance of the internet, students were able to analyse their own communicative behaviours at home less self-consciously. Riel (1995) correctly reflects, "Global community...promotes a view of education as a process of cultural definition rather than cultural transmission."

The extent to which physical environment determines learning process and possibly outcome is an interesting one. In 1997 there were 120 students and they were taught in a traditional lecture theatre setting as opposed to a more fluid environment. It meant that they had to either leave the room to work in groups or to straddle chairs. The physical barriers made group bonding and teaching flexibility more difficult. Although students still said they found the project worthwhile, I would not conduct such a project to a large group in that kind of setting again. It would be preferable to limit numbers and to use a more open space.

The connection between communication studies and technology

Strassman (1997) compares the amount of time spent on different forms of communication and estimates that into the '90's, "...about half of the information workforce will be equipped with an electronic medium through which at least half of their communication will take place." The personal computer has extended the range, diversity and nature of personal, social and organisational communication in the industrialised world. For Duin and Hansen (1996) social context and modern technologies are interrelated. Technologies affect social interactions and they will in turn affect technology, and so forth.

In order to prepare students for workplace, academic and social communications in the western world, modern technologies should be taught in conjunction with related principles of social communication and vice versa. Computer technologies challenge the traditional contextual classifications assumed in human communications textbooks. These contexts need to be closely re-examined. The social impact of computers will increase as more and more have-nots of the globe gain access to computerised communications and gain competence in their use. Current communication textbooks[1] are letting us down by not adequately addressing the impact of computer technologies on human communication and communication teachers in industrialised nations do students poor service by skimming over the impact of computer technologies on communication, social interaction and identity.

What makes this different?

E-mail projects are particularly popular in schools and projects exposing students to computers and the Web are often used to extend writing and research capabilities as well as students' vision of themselves as part of a global community of scholars. That of Bar-Natan and Hertz-Lazawrowitz (1996) is one of many.

Riel (1995) describes the learning circles of e-mail cooperative projects. It differs from this project in its greater focus on collaborative learning where each reciprocal group focuses on the same learning outcomes. Riel's learning circles are contextually bound and pay less attention to an examination of the technology itself. In the Monash project, each reciprocal group had its own agenda for participating in the project. The shared goal was co-operation. Groups were not contextually linked. They used one another's input for their own distinct purposes.

In Kling's view (1996), "diverse professionals and citizens need a view of computerization that examines the social choices whether and how to computerize an activity, and the relationships between computerized activity and other parts of our social worlds."

The Monash project challenged students' assumptions about computer technology and encouraged them to understand their responsibilities as communicators in a technological era. The project helped integrate their understanding of technology with their experience of people and human communication and helped demonstrate to both students and teacher how closely the two are linked in Western life.

Conclusion

Participation in the project enhanced students' self esteem and made them aware of different ways of working with people, both virtually and close at hand. They gained practical understanding of hurdles in intercultural communication and a more sober and realistic view of the constraints of the technologies they were using. Most importantly, they learnt the machine is not the message.

The skills students learnt and the hypertextual learning spiral they embarked on are best taught in a constructivist environment that integrates instructional learning with experience.

The project's relevance to students, their high motivation, the learning outcomes identified both by students and assessors, together with the increased use of computer technology for business, academic and social communication in the western world, demonstrate the need to integrate technology into human communication courses and vice versa. If we accept this then we must recognise that our human communication textbooks, and the traditional contextual divisions of the discipline are sadly lagging behind communication realities of the information age.

Endnote

1. Because internet communication is a growing field of study, there may now well be some human communication texts that are taking computer communication further into account. These are the texts I examined at the time of writing: Barker & Barker, 1993; Barker & Gaut, 1996; Beisler, Scheeres & Pinner, 1993; Berko, Wolvin & Wolvin, 1995; De Vito, 1997; Elder, 1994; Mohan, McGregor & Strano, 1992; O'Hair, Friedrich, Wiemann & Wiemann, 1995; Seiler, 1996; Verderber, 1993.

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Students' perceptions of teacher communication style in the use of pedagogies: A case study of expatriates teaching English in China

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In exporting Western pedagogies to China, expatriate teachers encounter difficulties in technological transference. Traditional views of appropriate teaching have remained strong and the pedagogical conflicts create a "wall" between teachers and students. At least some expatriate teachers go to China in high spirits, but return home disappointed, resentful, and hostile. Chinese host institutions, though happy with predictable outcomes, feel dissatisfied with the negative outcomes of expatriate teachers' teaching. Good intentions do not necessarily guarantee desired results. This case study was designed to identify the possible sources of intercultural miscommunication by examining Chinese students' perceptions of expatriate teachers' communication styles in teaching English at tertiary institutions in China. Forty Chinese students majoring in English were interviewed. The study reveals that the teaching methods adopted by expatriate teachers are often regarded as inappropriate for Chinese learners. In these circumstances, expatriate teachers' teaching is perceived to be rigid, dogmatic, unsystematic, purposeless and irresponsible, aiming at low-level teaching objectives. The students' dissatisfaction arises from the mismatch of their expectations and teachers' improper communications styles in cross-cultural interactions. The paper suggests that it is crucial for expatriate teachers to be flexible, adaptive, and empathetic in their teaching and to adopt a variety of teaching methods to meet the diverse needs of students in China. It is pointed out that pedagogical reconciliation and cultural awareness are crucial for expatriates in intercultural communications. Students also need training to be able to adapt themselves to teachers' pedagogical innovations so as to narrow the gap of miscommunication.

Introduction

Since the Open Door policy of the Post-Mao period, thousands of teachers from English-speaking countries have been employed as "Foreign Experts" or "Foreign Teachers" (referred to as "expatriate teachers" hereafter) to teach in Chinese tertiary institutions. Their participation has become an important part of English teaching in China.

However, in exporting Western pedagogies from contexts in which they are believed to be successful to the Chinese educational contexts, many expatriate teachers encounter difficulties in their transference (Sampson, 1984; Morrison, 1989; Orton, 1990; McIlwraith, 1996) since Chinese teachers and students tend to appreciate their own ways of teaching and learning, which are perceived to be more effective than Western methods in their cultural contexts (Stevenson & Stigler, 1992; Zhang, 1995; Cortazzi & Jin, 1996; Biggs, 1996), or Chinese teachers would use Western methods to offset the shortcomings in their own methods (Wu, 1983a, 1983b; Cortazzi & Jin, 1996; Rao, 1996). The pedagogical conflicts create a "wall" between teachers and students (Murray, 1982; Orton, 1990; Morrison, 1989; McKnight, 1994). As a result, the good intentions embraced by both parties are thwarted and a communication breakdown occurs. Some expatriate teachers go to China in high spirits, but come back home disappointed, frustrated, and hostile (Maley, 1986a; Wu, 1983a; Porter, 1990; Zhang, 1995; McIlwraith, 1996). The Chinese host institutions also seem to be unhappy with the technological transference and expatriate teachers' practice (Wu, 1983a; Blatchford,

1983; Sampson, 1984; Porter, 1987, 1990; Zhang, 1995; Wan, 1997). The value of expatriate involvement in teaching English as a foreign language (EFL) in China has been called into question (Maley, 1986a, Porter, 1990; Wan, 1997). English teaching pedagogies developed in and monopolized by the West have become problematic (Maley, 1984a; Yu, 1984; Burnaby & Sun, 1989; Holliday, 1994; Rao, 1996; Wan, 1997; Wen & Johnson, 1997). Teacher intentions mediated through teaching methodologies and learner perceptions and interpretations do not often match (Kumaravadivelu, 1991).

Disparities in pedagogical expectations

Pedagogy, a means to mediate teaching and learning, is culturally and contexually determined (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977). Pedagogical communication across cultures requires teachers to understand the local culture so as to identify and tailor the teaching to the needs of students (Holliday, 1994; Widdowson, 1994). However, existing socio-cultural differences make communication difficult, though not impossible (Brislin,1993). According to Hall (1976), the Chinese culture is a high-context culture in which communication messages are not in the explicit code. Such a communication pattern can be problematic for people from low-context cultures where the mass of information is explicitly transmitted (Ting-Toomey, 1989; Yum, 1988; Cheng, 1991). For expatriate teachers, the task of meeting students' expectations "has quickly become more demanding, complex and consequential" (Cummings, 1987, p. 214) than what they were familiar with before. In Yu's (1984) view, many pedagogical conflicts arise from expatriate teachers' inability to discern socio-cultural differences in teaching and learning conceptions, and from a consequent lack of communication skills in teacher-student classroom interactions.

When teaching in China, expatriate teachers, through pedagogical communication, interact with students who have long been exposed to conventional Chinese teaching styles. Although it is difficult to categorize such styles, one particular feature is apparent: transmission of knowledge (Sun & Wu, 1986; Li & Gu, 1995; Lin, 1995). In spite of a gradual decrease in the use of the grammar-translation teaching approach, the concept of transmission is pervasive in the ELT contexts in China (Dzau, 1990; Ho & Crookall, 1995; Yao, 1993; Rao, 1996).

According to Swain (1998), transmission teaching sees knowledge as absolute or near-absolute certainties that can be implicitly and explicitly transmitted from the teacher to the learner. The main role of the learner is to accumulate, absorb, and assimilate the large amount of input coherently and systematically delivered by the teacher, who is held responsible for the progress of the learner (Paine, 1990; Brick, 1991; Hong, 1993). The role boundary is clearly defined and the role distinction is relatively stable (Wright, 1987). Within the boundary, both the teacher and the learner try to maintain the classroom culture in an eco-systemic balance: the teacher assuming a dominant role as an arbiter of knowledge, the learner a passive one as a receptacle of knowledge (Tabulawa, 1998). The transmission style of teaching favors a teacher-centered pedagogy. The pedagogical innovations attempting to accommodate or change the Chinese students' deep-seated conceptions seem to be facing a severe challenge (Scovel, 1983; Maley, 1986a; Gardner, 1989). In pedagogical challenges, nothing can be more daunting than the restructuring of the teacher-student role relationship (Kumaravadivelu, 1991).

Most expatriate teachers claimed to have used the communicative approach in their teaching in China (Maley, 1984a, 1984b; Orton, 1990, for example). The approach puts emphasis on the teacher's facilitative rather than authoritative role, on students' active involvement rather than on passive reception, on fluency rather than on accuracy, on spontaneity rather than on systematic transmission (Maley, 1986b). Underlying the rationale of the communicative language teaching, Hird (1996) found, is the intent to involve students in interactions "in an active manner through collaboration with peers in a teacher-free situation" (p. 173), focusing on developing students' oral conversational uses of English in small group discussions. Hird

argued, however, that such pedagogical assumptions derived from a monolingual setting under-estimate the complex dynamics of EFL contexts. Attempts to impose such a teaching approach on Chinese students, Hird submits, "may be counterproductive" (p. 163) and "the informal conversational English language did not eventuate" (p. 173) in the Chinese classrooms. Expatriate teachers in China have begun to question whether current Western approaches are appropriate for Chinese learners (Cortazzi & Jin, 1996). Chinese students, accustomed to transmission teaching, are unlikely to appreciate the methods adopted by expatriate teachers who are preoccupied with group work, peer tutoring, games, debates, and role plays, all facing head-on clashes with students' fundamental learning conceptions and role expectations (Yu, 1984; Hird, 1996; Oatey, 1984, 1990; McLaughlin, 1995; Rao, 1996; Ho & Crookall, 1995; Wan, 1997; Wen & Johnson, 1997). Oatey (1984) found that the approach adopted by expatriate teachers was not appropriate for the Chinese learners. Rao (1996) argued that the "outcome of teaching English exclusively using the communicative approach did not provide the expected results" and that the "students judged the methods ridiculous and inappropriate" (p. 459).

The study

The study aims at identifying the possible sources of misunderstandings in intercultural communication and communication breakdown caused by such misunderstandings by examining the gap between expatriate teachers' pedagogical intentions Chinese students' perceptions of language learning tasks.

Location

This survey was conducted in four English language departments in four universities in a south-western city in the People's Republic of China from March to May, 1997.

Instruments

In this survey, questionnaires, interviews, group discussions were all used as data-collecting instruments, but for the purpose of this paper, only the interview data (conducted in Mandarin for Chinese students) from four universities. All interviews, lasting from 30 to 60 minutes each, were audio-taped, transcribed, and checked by both Chinese and English native speakers.

Subjects

Forty Chinese students, all English majors at tertiary levels, were interviewed. They were randomly selected from the four universities. All had been taught by expatriate teachers for between two and four years.

Eight expatriate teachers participated in the survey, all claiming that they had received their relevant qualifications in ESL/EFL, English literature, education, applied linguistics, and had taught in China for at least eight months, some over six years.

For the purposes of clarity and brevity in this paper, each expatriate teacher will be identified as Expatriate Teacher 1 (ET1), Expatriate Teacher 2 (ET2), and each Chinese student will be identified as Chinese Student 1 (CS1), Chinese Student 2 (CS2), and so on. The number refers to the interview order of each research subject.

Results

Teaching approaches adopted by expatriate teachers

It has been the intention of many expatriate teachers to try to create an interactive atmosphere to enable students to become involved in the classroom activities. Most of them confirmed that they had been using the communicative approach to provide Chinese students with opportunities to use the language in a group setting. ET7 categorized his teaching approach as the communicative approach only which emphasised learner responsibility. ET3 and ET8 believed that they used the interactive approach which engaged students in participation, group work, and discussions. The approach, in their view, was situation-based rather than text-based, and therefore, it emphasised spontaneity in classroom activities rather than lock-step teaching. As a result, ET7 held, well-structured and systematic teaching was neither important nor necessary because structures could "inhibit the communication" and spontaneity. The intention of interactive teaching, according to ET1, ET3, ET4, and ET7, was to develop students' fluency through verbal participation and to overcome Chinese students' habits of rote memorization. Classroom spontaneity saw prescribed textbooks as a barrier to effective interaction (ET2, ET4, ET5, ET6).

It was almost unanimously agreed that expatriate teachers had played a unique, incomparable and irreplaceable role in teaching English in China. What impressed the Chinese students most was the lively classroom atmosphere in which joy and teaching was incorporated (CS1, CS5). It was almost a consensus that the presence of expatriate teachers could help create an authentic language learning environment that was difficult for Chinese teachers to do (CS9, CS10). Expatriate teachers were believed to have provided an opportunity for the students to interact with native speakers and, therefore, most students found that their listening competence was largely improved (CS8, CS15, CS16). The involvement of expatriate teachers in China, most students were sure, had helped students to develop their linguistic and cultural awareness in a context where English is spoken only in the classroom (CS9, CS12, CS13). Foreign involvement has provided a large range of educational perspectives and alternative frameworks for Chinese students majoring in the language (CS13, CS14).

Success of communication depends largely on the students' perceptions of their teachers' communicative purposes in the use of teaching methodologies. Despite the positive contribution, Chinese students reported that a large bulk of teaching methodologies used by expatriate teachers did not suit their perceived needs, as identified in the teachers' inappropriate use of methodologies, particularly in the area of oral discussion, and students' perceptions of this in the learning process, ie., low expectations, rigid teaching styles, and unsystematic teaching.

Despite their long stay in China, expatriate teachers generally did not know very well the Chinese students' existing level of language proficiency. Under-estimating the students' actual level of proficiency, they tended to use unbelievably simple teaching materials and low-level teaching methods which failed to fulfill students' expectations.

CS31 complained that expatriate teachers, not knowing the needs of the students, used the same methods to teach students at all levels, and what they taught was too simple to be useful to students. CS40 felt utterly disappointed with expatriate teachers' teaching which contained no meaningful input. She reported that the expatriate teacher who taught reading assigned homework that was suitable for junior secondary pupils only, not to the fourth-year university English majors. She asked her son in Year 7 to complete the assigned homework, instead. Her view was supported by CS30 who asserted that it was simply unbearable to sit in the expatriate teachers' classes with such low-level objectives.

CS12 claimed that she had not learned anything from expatriate teachers' writing classes because almost all expatriate teachers, without taking into account the students' existing English proficiency and their expectations, always began their writing classes from simple writing models, such as sentence writing, paragraph writing, or topic sentences regardless of the levels of the students.

The teachers' motives came to be suspected when teachers failed to adopt appropriate methodologies. Some began to form a notion that expatriate teachers were deliberately cheating the students (CS11, CS30). Some felt it a torture to attend their classes (CS1, CS3, CS15, CS35, CS36, CS37). A large number of informants admitted that they all had from time to time found excuses to absent themselves from classes that were pointless to them. According to CS37, only one third of the students came to the class. Some acknowledged that they could not escape because of the strict university regulations (CS11).

The agony was reflected in some expatriate teachers' obsession with the group-, debate- and discussion-type or interactive teaching styles that Chinese students did not find relevant because these styles, in their perceptions, did not provide any input meaningful to their learning. CS3 found the expatriate teacher's teaching intolerable because the teacher compelled students to participate in group activities. The results of group work, however, CS1 claimed, were rarely satisfactory as the teacher lacked an ability to effectively manage the classroom activities in large-sized classes. She felt puzzled why some other expatriate teachers, whether they taught English literature or newspaper reading, tended to involve students in the discussions and role plays by forcing students to repeat item by item from the textbook, and discouraging any deviations. Such dogmatic teaching, she complained, could be detrimental to learning.

Expatriate teachers' low expectations were reported as particularly apparent in oral classes. The teaching methods that emphasize spontaneity gave students an impression that even the teacher did not know what he/she was doing (CS12). She asserted that such purposeless teaching could not help the students to reach a high level of proficiency because expatriate teachers had nothing new to offer, nor did they have anything to offer except some simple English like "how are you?", "what's your name?", "where are you from?", or at best, they would give some topics for students to have "free talks", to freely express their views. She concluded that students could not learn anything from such teaching. CS7, in her third year at the university, found such teaching aiming at simple thing incompatible with students' learning objectives:

> He used games for children as teaching resources. At first we found it interesting because we did not have to prepare for the lessons. But as time passed, everybody complained. We were treated like children. We could not learning anything from playing games and singing songs.

Expatriates' communication styles, emphasizing liveliness in the classroom atmosphere and very simple things in interactions, both CS8 and CS11 believed, were inappropriate to adult learners and English majors who would teach the language or use the language as a working tool in the future.

The second recurrent theme surrounding the features of expatriate teachers' teaching is related to a perception of their rigid teaching styles. Expatriate teachers were frequently reported to stick to their beliefs about teaching without any flexibility. These beliefs, possibly in conflict with students' beliefs about teaching and learning, or even with current teaching and learning theories so far in existence, orchestrate the teachers' teaching activities. The larger the gaps between the beliefs, the greater the student-teacher communication failure.

Most expatriate teachers were preoccupied with the interactive teaching approach which they believed would enhance Chinese students' learning. The Chinese students and

expatriate teachers, however, were not at the same level of understanding. To the Chinese students, such an approach was suitable for children only, not for adults (CS8, CS11, CS24, CS40). The more the expatriate teachers emphasized cooperative learning, peer tutoring, group activities, the less the Chinese students felt they had benefited from the class (CS8, CS9, CS30, CS32). The clash resides in the teachers' preoccupation with the approach and the students' reluctance to accept the rationale of the teaching activities (CS13). It was the belief of CS5 that such a teaching approach could not produce the desired results. The approach, in the view of CS7 and CS11, emphasized the form at the price of learning content. To the Chinese students, expatriate teachers' narrow range of teaching techniques was a barrier to their effective teaching and as a result the students found their classroom activities inflexible and tedious.

Misunderstandings arose as teachers and students communicated at different levels. Expatriate teachers might believe that teaching resources like photos or pictures could help promote discussions and ultimately facilitate student learning. With this rationale, in the oral class, they stuck to using photos, pictures, and paper-cuts (rarely textbooks) as the major teaching mode. Students, nevertheless, refused to accept such communication style as "teaching" (CS15, CS16).

Most students felt that expatriate teachers were humorous in their teaching. When humor dominated the class, however, the results could be devastating. CS24 complained that he had learned nothing in the oral class in which the teacher made jokes and students laughed. Such style of communication left students with an impression that teachers were not serious about their teaching (CS8, CS16, CS14, CS40) and that some of the classroom behaviors were not appropriate in the Chinese cultural contexts (CS14, CS15). Teaching with joyfulness was positively regarded, but when it was pushed to the extreme, it was regarded as meaningless (CS13, CS23).

The teacher-student tension surfaced when teaching was not what was expected, especially when the teacher and student clung to certain beliefs and assumptions about learning and teaching. CS7 found that some expatriate teachers were very stubborn in their certain beliefs. She reported that in the writing class, the teacher limited students' composition to five sentences only: the topic sentence, supporting details, and the conclusion, and students who wrote more than five sentences or less than five were penalized for not meeting the requirements. She found this unbearable because five sentences, however concise they were, were not enough to express her ideas.

One of the surprise findings is that some expatriate teachers insisted on mechanical reading of the text from the beginning to the end, quite contrary to what they espoused as the modern communicative method. The teachers' intention might be to help students improve their listening, but miscommunication was inevitable. CS2 and CS15, CS16 felt exasperated with such a teaching technique. CS17 explained that students refused to attend expatriate teachers' classes because they were not interested in their inflexible teaching methods: reading the textbook from the beginning to the end of the class, without any interpretations, without taking students' interests into considerations and without any consideration of the effectiveness of such teaching. CS19 reported that the expatriate teacher who was teaching oral English routinely asked the students to read very long texts after him, never changing the teaching modes. She said, such a rigid style of teaching had sent many students fleeing from the class.

Seeing that their rigid communication styles were challenged, some expatriate teachers resorted to imposing very strict rules to discipline the students. The imposition of the teachers' will on students sparked bitter resentment among students (CS8, CS10).

The third recurrent theme is perception of expatriate teachers' teaching as unsystematic and incoherent. Teachers' intentional emphasis on spontaneous interactions and de-emphasis on

structural and lock-step teaching clash with Chinese students learning beliefs. CS4 made a distinction between Chinese and expatriate teaching methods: Chinese teaching methods emphasized coherence and meaningful input, while expatriate methods emphasized spontaneity which to the Chinese students was randomly scheduled without any careful planning. Such a distinction may be reasonable from students' perceptions. The teacher might have carefully planned the instruction, but students might have failed to see the logic of each classroom activity. There exists miscommunication between teacher intentions and learner interpretations. In the response to the questionnaire (not provided here), 48.3% of students believed expatriate teachers' teaching was unsystematic.

CS23 preferred Chinese teachers to English native speakers. He explained:

> In general, compared to Chinese teachers, expatriate teachers were not serious and not systematic in their teaching. We have been taught by two young teachers, one American, one British. ... In class, they did whatever came to their minds, without any instructional planning, without any textbooks.

In CS30's view, expatriate teachers had disorganized methods. He felt what he had learned with expatriate teachers in the past few years was but odds and ends because the classroom activities and the lessons were not logically and coherently related. CS7 said that he could not tolerate expatriate teachers who even did not know how and what to teach. CS9 felt exhausted in the class and yet did not know what the teachers were doing. It seemed to CS9 that students had difficulties gleaning the hard-won bits of knowledge transmitted by teachers in their disorganized and incoherent instructions. Moreover, such hard-won knowledge, if any, was too "shallow" to be useful in real interactions (CS10, CS11, CS24).

The perceivably unsystematic and incoherent teaching was often associated with a view of teachers' abdication of responsibility. CS12 described some teachers' communication styles this way: "They come, give you a topic without careful thought, then ask you to talk, and, at best, ask you to stand up to make comments. Such a kind of teaching is totally useless." CS10 felt desperate, asserting "it is not easy for us to come to the university, but these expatriate teachers have ruined us."

Discussion

The study suggests that cultural factors play a critical role in students' perceptions of expatriate teachers' communication styles that seem inconsistent with students' role expectations and "mental framing" (Hofstede, 1991). The Chinese high-context culture makes it difficult for expatriate teachers to identify students' learning needs and expectations. Although there were signs of students' resistance to their pedagogies, such as messages communicated through absenteeism, instead of investigating the causes of the communication problems, some expatriate teachers took counter-productive measures by tightening class controls which made matters worse. Methods, such as group work, discussions, games, peer tutoring, were not considered as "teaching" in its strict sense by Chinese students, who insisted on teacher's lectures and transmission of knowledge through textbooks (Paine, 1990; Brick, 1992). As a result, teachers rarely did what students had expected. There is a mismatch between the expatriate teachers' pedagogical "agenda" (in Nunan's term, 1995, p. 135) and that of the students. The large rifts between the experiences and expectations were associated with students' psychological distress and also resistance to accommodate conceptual changes (Rogers & Ward, 1993).

Learning cannot be enhanced when instruction is designed for low-level proficiency, not matching students' existing level of competence. According to Krashen (1994), it is the comprehensible input (meaningful in the perceptions of the learner, not the teacher). that results in students' language acquisition and literacy development. He maintained that "High levels of proficiency cannot take place without comprehensible input" (Krashen, 1994,

p. 48). He emphasised that more advanced acquirers will get less *i + 1* from "ordinary" conversation. For more advanced students, Krashen (1991) declared, non-interactive contact is associated with greater gains than interactive contact. Therefore, it remains to the teacher to employ the principle of "rough-tuning" by keeping input approximately at the level of the learner's current competence, and, Marton (1988, p. 12) contended, it would be meaningless to engage students in activities from which they could not gain anything new. The claim by Chinese students that they could not learn much from expatriate teachers could be reasonable given that the instruction did not contain any *i + 1* comprehensible input.

Most expatriate teachers claimed to have used the communicative approach in their teaching, and yet their actual practice deviated far from the espoused theories. One of the most important assumptions in the communicative approach requires teachers to identify and tailor their teaching, in a flexible and constructive way, to students' needs (Canale & Swan, 1980). The principle, however, was seriously violated. Obsession with certain teaching techniques was characteristic of some foreign teachers' communication patterns. Rigidity was so routinized by teachers, who, with arrogant "we've-got-it-right" attitudes (Harvey, 1985), rarely bothered to care about cultural incompatibilities. Much of the outcome turned out to be undesirable for both students and teachers (Orton, 1990), and "disconcerting for everyone" (Sunderland, 1990, p. 231).

Students' perceptions are generally believed to be aligned with what is happening in the classroom (Levy, et al., 1997). The study suggests that expatriate teachers' cross-cultural communication skills and flexibility are more important than those of students (Nayar, 1989). Directly grafting the West "skin" onto the Chinese "tree" can cause serious problems (Orton, 1990; Gardner,1989). One single "best" approach, without taking into account of the learners' existing beliefs, values, aims, levels of proficiency, can be completely problematic (Strevens, 1980; Prabhu, 1992; Garrott, 1995). Changing teachers' behavior to suit students' cultural contexts may result in positive outcomes, but miscommunication often occurs when teachers rarely see themselves as students do (Levy, et al, 1997). To narrow the communication gap, both teachers and students have to adapt to each other. Simply compelling students to comply can render disservice rather than service to learning. McLaughlin (1995) emphasised that it is "professionally irresponsible" (p. 112) to assume that only students have to adapt while academics insist on maintaining their positions. Pedagogical reconciliation and cultural awareness are crucial for expatriates in intercultural communications. Students also need training to be able to adapt themselves to teachers' pedagogical innovations so as to see what the teacher is trying to achieve.

Conclusion

Expatriate teachers, equipped with Western teaching theories, have played an important role in English teaching in China by providing an opportunity for students to interact with native speakers in an "authentic" language learning environment. However, many expatriate teachers had difficulties in transferring Western technology to China due to misunderstandings in intercultural communications. In the perceptions of Chinese students, expatriate teachers' teaching, unsystematic and rigid in nature, generally aimed at so low a level of proficiency that students felt disappointed and frustrated. The study argues for pedagogical flexibility, ie., using diverse teaching approaches to meet the diverse needs of students at different levels. Teaching that emphasizes the dogmas of certain teaching approaches without taking students' learning needs into account could lead to communication breakdown.

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Teaching communication in an engineering context—an experiment

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In 1996, first year engineering courses at Victoria University of Technology were restructured and the traditional two hour weekly stand alone class of Language and Communication was embedded and contextualised into two new subjects: Engineering in Society and Experimental and Communication Studies. Language and Communication lecturers from the Humanities Department now taught alongside engineering lecturers and reinforced the skills of reading, writing, listening and speaking in an engineering context. All materials used to teach language and communication skills were drawn from either engineering experiments or from engineering issues and problems discussed in related classes.

From a teaching and learning perspective, the new subjects were extremely successful. However, organisationally the co-ordination was exceedingly difficult and support for the two new subjects in the Engineering Faculty was not unanimous. By mid 1997 it was decided to restructure these first year subjects into three separate entities. This paper outlines the experiment, describes the positive outcomes and indicates how they are to be implemented in 1998 and beyond.

Introduction

The most effective ways of teaching and enhancing language and communication skills in engineering education have long been discussed and debated. Utilising effective methodology has proved quite a challenge for educators, and especially for those who are aware of the changing backgrounds and needs of the undergraduate students enrolling in many tertiary institutions. Traditionally taught, lecture based technical courses have been criticised as not offering subjects with a breadth of skills which extend the undergraduate's experience of engineering within social, economic, environmental, political, and local and global contexts. Further, both changing workplace practices and a technologically advancing society are calling for engineering graduates who are not only technical experts, able to solve engineering problems but are articulate, competent communicators, versed in the social and cultural as well as the technical side of engineering (IE Aust, 1996). Cognisant of this, and aware also of the need to motivate and encourage many undergraduate and especially first year students, the Engineering Faculty at Victoria University of Technology (VUT) decided to review all engineering courses in 1995, and introduce new subjects in 1996.

VUT offers a range of undergraduate degree programs in engineering in the disciplines of Civil, Building, Environmental, Mechanical and Electrical Engineering. Annually an average of 450 students enrol across the first year courses. Traditionally students come from ethnically diverse backgrounds and many speak a language other than English at home. Sixty-two point five percent of students commencing in Engineering courses in 1994 were classified as coming from a language background other than English (Pearce & Borland, 1997). Most have not been exceptional in conventional academic terms and do not enjoy writing or presenting orally. Historically, the Engineering Faculty was aware of the specific language needs of students enrolling and introduced a written and oral communication core, for award, in the early 1970s (at the VUT predecessor, Footscray Institute of Technology).

Over the years the Language and Communication (L&C) subjects were redefined and refined as pedagogical needs dictated. By the early 1990s a fairly successful model had evolved and lecturers in L&C were generally confident that they were offering students worthwhile and relevant subjects. The skills of summarising, synthesising, writing instructions and manuals, researching, referencing, report writing and oral presentation techniques were taught and practised in two hour workshop size groups of twenty to twenty-five students. Further, all engineering departments supported the teaching of parallel classes for non-native speakers of English (NNSE) who needed more specific English language support than native speakers. Award bearing courses for NNSE were added to the first year engineering curriculum in 1991. This was a bold step which recognised the learning needs of a specific group of enrolled students.

In teaching written and oral skills, many L&C lecturers had developed professional links with their engineering colleagues, but this was not consistent. Where there was a strong collegial relationship, material to be used in L&C classes was co-operatively designed—reading lists, articles of relevance for synthesis and summary, and report topics were developed. Engineers offered report feedback, and attended oral presentations on engineering related material. Unfortunately, this was not a universal pattern and it was clearly evident that where material was highly contextualised and where engineering lecturers were involved, students were more inspired and saw more relevance in studying L&C. This supports Baren and Watson's (1991) claim "that it is not even desirable to teach written or oral communication separate from content areas" (p. 419) and Mullins, Quintrell and Hancock (1995) who state that "students learn most effectively when they are engaged in learning activities which are authentic, contextualised and meaningful" (p. 216).

As true contextualisation had been ad hoc and dependent on individual professional relationships rather than a collaborative curriculum, when the Engineering Faculty decided to review and revise all its subjects, including those offered by the Humanities Department, L&C lecturers were supportive of and committed to the changes. They were fully aware of the value and importance of the concept of 'writing across the curriculum' and of the need to involve all subject lecturers in the writing process. This not only helps students to improve written skills, but also helps them to learn and enhance their thinking through writing (Britton, 1975). Committed to the concept that writing is better taught and learnt in a context-dependent situation, rather than in isolation, detailed planning began.

A very complicated model was developed—one which bound communication skills to an engineering context, had relevance for students, and which looked exciting and challenging for both engineering and language lecturers to teach. Contact hours for L&C subjects would not be reduced; however, instead of being presented in a two hour block, the subject would be split in half and attached to two completely new subjects—Engineering in Society and Experimental and Communication Studies. These two new subjects were to be taught to all students in all engineering departments by teams of lecturers from all departments.

Another motivation in presenting these common first year subjects was to offer all students, regardless of their chosen area of specialty, a broad introduction to engineering education. The Institution of Engineers, Australia (IE Aust. 1996) recommends that engineers "receive a broader education, that they be drawn from a wider range of backgrounds" and that "engineering courses must have clearly stated goals and outcomes to equip graduates for lifelong learning" (pp. 8–9). Further, employers today demand that graduates have well developed written and oral skills as well as an ability to problem solve and think critically (Business/Higher Education Round Table 1992).

In planning the new subjects, the specific transition from secondary to tertiary education was considered. Lecturers placed great emphasis on providing clear, accessible information about the subjects, the academic expectations and the assessment criteria. Early feedback was incorporated in each syllabus (McInnes & James, 1995).

Engineering in society

The subject titled Engineering in Society was developed by an Engineering Faculty-wide working party as well as L&C lecturers, but most of the support and initiative for its inclusion in the curriculum came from the Department of Civil and Building Engineering.

After extensive planning and negotiation it was decided that all students would attend a one hour lecture, taken by an engineering lecturer, and a two hour tutorial shared between an engineering and a language lecturer. The lectures covered general topics like engineering achievements, engineering and political decision making, the environment, career opportunities and leadership in engineering. The tutorial topics followed from the lectures and issues raised were evaluated in the first hour (eg. alternative energy sources, population pressures and resources, the value of technology). In the second hour, L&C lecturers taught and reinforced written and oral skills in the context of the material offered in the engineering lectures and tutorials. Lecture note taking, summary, synthesis, research techniques, referencing of materials, report writing and debating of issues were covered through explanation, example and instruction. L&C lecturers also corrected report drafts and organised debate rehearsals. Final debate presentations and written reports were then assessed jointly by both L&C and engineering lecturers.

It was in the tutorials that the students could see the connection between the two fields of study and became aware of the close collaboration A five minute overlap time between the first and second hour was provided so that the engineering lecturer could hand over to the L&C lecturer. Further, as the first hour was designed to allow the students to consider engineering issues in a supportive small group of no more than twenty students, it was decided not to offer separate tutorials for NNSE students. It was hoped that the small group would support the needs of these students and that they would also be provided with strong native speaker role models. This approach was successful in some groups but appeared to be dependent on the actual dynamics within each group. L&C lecturers were prepared to spend additional time with NNSE students, when necessary, but no separate formal instruction was provided.

Another attempt to reinforce group dynamics and to allow the first year students to identify more closely with a few lecturers was to timetable the L&C lecturer to the same group of students in both the subjects of Engineering in Society and Experimental and Communication Studies. However, due to timetabling constraints this was the exception rather than the rule. Nevertheless, it was certainly the better model where it was applied.

Another aim of Engineering in Society was to provide an unofficial mentor scheme where the engineering lecturer who took the tutorial became the contact person and mentor for the student. McInnes and James (1995) stressed the desirability of this in first year. Workshops to activate mentoring and small group management were conducted early in 1996.

Experimental and communication studies

In the Experimental and Communication Studies subject all students completed twelve engineering experiments from the various fields of engineering. Each department had to provide two experiments per semester, suitable for all first year students to complete in two two-hour sessions on consecutive weeks. Experiments ranged from concrete testing, to circuit board construction to water dynamics and engine mechanics. They were all practical in nature and the students had to complete work sheets on each. These sessions were designed to be both enjoyable and informative and to give all students an idea of the scope of engineering related tasks. An example is the sequence of experiments in the "Turn Up the Heat—Energy in Processes" module. Students were able to learn about energy by conducting four experiments on heat conduction, pressure gauge calibration, thermal heat exchange and temperature measurement before completing the required engineering theory

tasks. L&C lecturers could then use these experiments as the basis for exercises including a list of instructions, a workshop manual, a laboratory report, a poster presentation or an oral demonstration. All L&C lecturers had to participate in and understand all the experiments in their non teaching time.

In 1996 a fortnightly L&C class of two hours was timetabled to support this laboratory work, however in 1997, due to timetabling logistics, a one hour weekly class was scheduled. This, unfortunately, provided insufficient time for actual written and oral workshop tasks to take place effectively.

Assessment

Assessment for both of these subjects was joint—with 35% being awarded for communication and 65% for the engineering content. It was also stipulated that to pass each subject the communication part had to be satisfactorily completed. This emphasised the importance that the Engineering Faculty placed on oral and written communication skills and also supported the professionalism of the L&C lecturers. Where students did not achieve satisfactory results in the L&C component, provision for a Summer School subject was incorporated.

Evaluation

The concept of total embedding and contextualisation of L&C into the two engineering subjects is of sound educational merit and is supported widely (IE Aust, 1996; Cowen, 1993; Mullins et al, 1995; Ferguson, 1997; Fiocco, 1997). An important focus for first year students was also provided by the mentoring aspect in Engineering in Society where the specific transition needs of first year students were carefully considered in all planning. Further, the majority of students responded favourably to the subjects. Surveys conducted in Experimental and Communication Studies and Engineering in Society in 1996 and 1997, clearly indicated this (Evans & Nichol, 1997).

Both subjects were designed to be of interest and relevance to the students, and where possible enthusiastic lecturers, committed to teaching first year, were assigned classes. It was encouraging to see the involvement and interest of the students in many experiments. For example in the experiment "Make It and Break It" they first learnt about the properties of concrete, the physics of force, and the role of reinforcement. Next they had to mix and pour concrete to make different types of reinforced beams. In the following two hour session the students had to test the strength of the different beams in a Universal Testing Machine by applying various loads and investigating the relationship between deflection and load. Written and oral responses, in both the lab and L&C classes, followed. Students also enjoyed doing the experiments with their L&C lecturers. It was very evident that where there was collaboration and collegiality, the new subjects worked well. However the changes introduced by these two new subjects were quite far reaching. With altered modes of delivery and more than 450 students enrolled, additional engineering lecturers had to be involved in the experiments and teach the tutorial groups in Engineering in Society. Some lecturers who were assigned groups did not have much interest in first year teaching, preferring older or postgraduate students and their own research activities. A few were unwilling to cooperate in the language skill development of their students, choosing to concentrate only on content. Others were uncomfortable with the small group discussion method of teaching and reverted to traditional lecture format. (As L&C lecturers had always taught with a small group workshop emphasis, this was no real departure from the norm for them.) There was also a pedagogical debate within the Engineering Faculty about the relevance of a broad first year—especially when some lecturers believed that the body of knowledge from their discipline was paramount, and that the students enrolled in their department should concentrate on their department specific subject matter. The "resistance

to change" factor was fairly strong and had the potential to destroy the new subjects through lack of commitment and support.

Timetabling was also very problematic—despite the planning and organising for at least four months before each new semester began. The logistics of placing 450 students in twelve rotating experiments, and providing correspondingly linked L&C assessment tasks across the board, were demanding. Students really needed individual timetables and the faculty did not have the infrastructure to provide these. Further, although the concept of the five minute handover time in the middle of the two hour Engineering and Society tutorial was excellent, for lecturers who were coming from or going to other classes, this became difficult.

From a teaching perspective L&C lecturers found that the two separate hours for each subject could not be used to optimum benefit. Often workshop tasks could not be completed and if students came late to class, teaching time was further reduced. Clear instructions and reinforcement had to be constantly provided to avoid confusion between the L&C component in each subject, especially in semester one. Also, despite great planning to avoid overlapping the times for submission in the two subjects, some students struggled with their own organisation, subject requirements and submission deadlines.

Finally, due to the lack of unanimous support in the Engineering Faculty, the departure of the Dean who had instituted the changes, and because of the logistical effort required to mount such subjects, it became clear, by mid 1997, that a restructure would ease the load of those attempting to carry the subjects for the faculty. In addition, as a strong commitment had been made to teach L&C in context it was believed that the established professional relationships between the co-operating engineering and L&C lecturers would continue when the subjects were restructured.

Consequently three new subjects were developed for 1998—Experimental Studies, Engineering in Society and Engineering Communication (Engineering Communication could be further divided into Engineering Communication for NNSE). The Engineering Communication subjects were to be taught as weekly two hour workshops, drawing content from both Engineering in Society and Experimental Studies. The engineering subjects were also planned to be more discipline specific and emanate from departments, rather than across the faculty.

1998 and beyond

VUT has undergone several structural changes since January 1, 1998, and more are predicted. The Faculties of Engineering and Science have amalgamated, as have their departments. The Faculty of Arts has also merged some departments and most members of the former Humanities Department have joined in forming a new department of Communication, Language and Cultural Studies.

As planned, all first year engineering students have been organised into two hour, weekly workshop groups for two semesters and study either Engineering Communication or Engineering Communication for NNSE, depending on need. (Assessment and tasks for NNSE are the same as for the mainstream students, however teaching methodology differs and groups are smaller.)

To simplify organisation and avoid student confusion it was to decided that the first semester content of Engineering Communication would parallel that of Engineering in Society (with the tasks of summary, synthesis, reports, oral presentations, and debates) whilst the second would draw from Experimental Studies. Instruction and manual writing, laboratory reports, oral demonstrations and a poster presentation are the proposed assessable tasks.

Conclusion

The experiment of teaching communication in an engineering context was certainly a worthwhile one for the L&C lecturers. We established collegial ties with many engineering lecturers and earned their professional respect. We were no longer "the service teachers", but part of a team. We began to feel more involved in the teaching and learning process than previously. We also improved our knowledge of first year engineering content, which is transferable to subsequent skills work. We are now better able to assist first year engineering students in their acquisition of language and communication skills in context.

Further, we all worked with great dedication and determination to ensure the success of the subjects. We planned and developed the subjects as a team, and this bound us together. We shared our frustrations with the problems that arose as we were committed to collegiality and teaching collaboratively within the engineering subjects. We were all disappointed, when the need for restructure became evident. Nevertheless, we were determined to salvage what we could and develop a new, viable subject. The infrastructure for effective in-context language and communication teaching is now in place. As well as making provision for NNSE students we have also won a small internal university teaching grant to develop on-line self paced materials for more able students, to allow flexible delivery for more able students. This will enable us to cater to even more individual needs in the future.

The process of this experiment, over the last three years, has had both highs and lows, but much has been learned and gained and we believe that the curriculum and experiences for all first year engineering students have certainly been enhanced.

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Teaching postgraduate students how to get started and keep going with their theses

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This paper will outline and discuss the contents of a one-hour workshop on 'How to get started and keep going with your thesis.' This is a self-contained workshop that is part of the skills development programme the Student Learning Centre of the University of Auckland provides for postgraduate students. Students attend the workshop voluntarily and, like most of the other workshops in the programme, it is repeated numerous times during the year. The strategies included in this particular workshop are aimed at focusing the students so that (1) the usual amount of time spent at the beginning on "trying to get started" is reduced, and (2) unnecessary but common pitfalls, which often result in delays and difficulties in writing the thesis, are avoided. These strategies revolve around clarification of the aim and logic of their thesis, planning and setting of objectives, establishment of accountability, and initiation of the writing process. The workshop is interactive and includes a series of exercises for the students to complete and discuss during the session they attend. Feedback received from students who have attended the workshop will be mentioned.

Introduction

The *Collins Cobuild Dictionary* defines a thesis as a "long piece of writing, based on your ideas and research, that you do as part of a university degree, especially a PhD ..." This is a simple and straightforward definition of a piece of work that many postgraduate students find laborious and taxing—both physically and psychologically. There are numerous accounts in the available literature of just how poorly postgraduate thesis students—in general—tend to fare. For example, Turney (1985) reported that only about half of the PhD students supported by the Science and Engineering Research Council of Great Britain during 1983 and 1984 completed within four years. Similar low completion rates were reported by Morton and Worthley (1995) for students who enrolled in postgraduate programmes in psychology. Hodgson and Simoni (1995) noted high drop out rates among doctoral students, particularly those in humanities and social sciences (50% and 41% respectively). Garcia, Malott and Brethower (1988) made an important observation that, of students who drop out before obtaining their masters or PhD degrees, at least 25% do so after completing their courses and before finishing their theses or dissertations.

Many difficulties arise in actually getting started on the thesis and/or in keeping going once a student has started. There are many reasons for these difficulties. Garcia et al. (1988), for example, focused on factors relating to supervision and provision of incentives. And Rennie and Brewer (1987), citing a paper by Jones (1975), suggested that one of the possible reasons why some students find it so difficult to actually write is that they do not clearly define their projects and impose grandiose expectations on themselves.

In this paper, I will describe—and explain where necessary—the different aspects of a one-hour workshop I teach to help students avoid or overcome the sorts of difficulties associated with getting started on and keeping going with a thesis. These strategies are largely based on many years of work experience in providing advice and learning assistance to students, including postgraduates, and my own experiences in writing theses at the Masters and doctorate levels.

The University of Auckland context

The University of Auckland had a total of 25,780 students enrolled in 1997. Seventeen point five percent (17.5%) of these were postgraduates. The University has a Student Learning Centre which is a stand-alone teaching centre reporting to the Deputy Vice Chancellor (Academic). In 1997, a total of 2,754 students registered with the Centre, 15% of whom were postgraduates. Staff of the Centre taught a total of 774 courses and workshops, which generated a total of 24,406 student contact hours (where 1 student taught for 1 hour = 1 student contact hour).

In 1997, the Student Learning Centre conducted 67 workshops for postgraduate students. These ranged from whole-day workshops held during weekends to one- or two-hour self-contained workshops. The majority of workshops offered were of the latter type primarily because they tend to better suit the often busy schedules that postgraduate students have. These workshops focus on specific topics, skills, or issues pertinent to the postgraduate experience (eg., completing an ethics approval application, presenting seminars, structuring literature reviews, formatting larger pieces of work on the computer, etc.). The short duration of these workshops does not mean that help provided to postgraduate students is limited. To the contrary, these students are provided with a wide choice of specific workshop topics, and can attend as many or as few as they wish (we of course encourage students to attend as many workshops as they feel would be helpful to them). In addition, postgraduate students can make appointments for individual consultation with Centre tutors.

The workshop I teach on "How to get started and keep going with your thesis" is a one-hour self-contained workshop. It was offered six times in 1997: three times in each of semesters 1 and 2. It was attended by a total of 45 students. Student attendance of each workshop ranged from 4 to 14.

Strategies for starting

Clarifying the aim or purpose of the thesis

After preliminary introductions and checking of the student register for the workshop, I first get the students to write the aim or purpose of their thesis in ONE sentence. This helps the students to focus (if they are starting) or to re-focus (if they have already been working on their thesis). Zuber-Skerritt and Knight (1986) emphasised the importance of "defining the research problem" (p. 94). They pointed out that, without a clear definition, a lot of the activities the student is likely to undertake—such as researching and taking notes—will lack focus.

Needless to say, many students find it quite difficult to write their aim or purpose in one sentence. I suggest that they could start their sentence with "To show...," "To investigate...," or something similar. After a few minutes, students have an opportunity to briefly discuss what they have written. This is an important aspect of the workshop: students initially do the exercises on their own, then they are given the opportunity to discuss what they have written or what they have come up with—either in pairs or in the big group.

Specifying how to achieve the thesis aim or purpose

Next, I get the students to write down exactly what they need to do—or still need to do—to achieve their thesis aim or purpose. I suggest they think about activities like conducting experiments, analysing certain materials and/or data, carrying out surveys, conducting interviews, and so on. The purpose of this exercise is for the students to write down everything that they think they have to do. The list of course is likely not to be exhaustive,

but making a list this way makes seemingly endless and overwhelming things concrete and finite. Also, having a list is likely to facilitate prioritising and more direct, immediate action.

Clarifying the logic behind the thesis

I then get the students to write a brief justification for their thesis or research on the basis of what has already been done in their subject area. I give an example based on my PhD thesis that investigated the usefulness of process mnemonics in teaching students with mathematics LD:

> Research has found fact mnemonics effective in teaching various forms of fact-based information (eg., vocabulary words) to students with learning disabilities.
>
> Research has also found process mnemonics (mnemonics for remembering rules and procedures). effective in teaching normal students.
>
> Therefore, it is conceivable that process mnemonics would also be effective in teaching students with learning disabilities.
>
> It is worthwhile undertaking such an investigation because process mnemonics instruction could conceivably address the very difficulties that students with learning difficulties experience (eg., maths computation).

I also remind the students that their research/thesis is supposed to add to or extend existing knowledge in their subject area.

The purpose of this exercise is to sort out the logic of, or the justification for, the students' theses. This is often an area that the students have some idea about but which they have not sorted out to be able to state briefly and clearly in a step-by-step manner. They need to ask: What has been done before? Why is it worthwhile undertaking this research? Sorting out the logic this way ought to directly facilitate the writing of their introduction, literature review, and/or rationale chapter(s). Paltridge (1997) instructs English-as-a-second-language (ESL) students to write a condensed literature review as part of a programme which helps these students prepare for thesis and dissertation writing. The exercise I describe here of getting the students to write a brief justification for their thesis is much shorter but basically aimed at the same purpose that Paltridge (1997) described: "to highlight the main issues raised in previous relevant research as well as lead to the reason for the particular study being proposed" (p. 65).

Sorting out a realistic time plan for the research and the completion of the thesis

I then ask the students to write a skeletal time plan of their research work and the various stages leading to the completion of their thesis. Essentially, this comprises deadlines by which they need to have completed important aspects of their thesis work (eg. experiments, writing the literature review). I point out that they should aim to complete the thesis (bound and ready for submission) at least a few weeks before their absolute deadline for submission. This way, should any unforseen delays occur (which usually do), they would still be able to submit on time.

The purpose of writing this rough time line plan is so that students would be better able to appreciate the limited time they have available—which ought to help motivate them to act and be more productive in their time usage.

Strategies for keeping going

People support

I advise students to establish regular meeting times with their supervisor(s). Other authors have stressed the importance of such meetings. Moses (1984), for example, described the benefits of such meetings to both students and supervisors. I suggest to students attending my workshop that once a month is the very least they need, and that once a fortnight is better. Closer to the completion of their thesis, more meetings may be required. I point out that establishing regular meeting times does not preclude seeing their supervisors outside of those times should they need to.

Apart from facilitating the likelihood of more effective guidance, the regular meeting times ought to help students pace themselves better where the many tasks they have to undertake are concerned. I stress to students the importance of adequately preparing for each meeting so that they would be able to get what they need from those meetings. I give them an exercise to write down some of the things they could usefully do during those meetings. Ideas that students usually write include reporting on progress, setting goals, discussing problems and difficulties, submitting drafts and other completed work, and getting feedback from their supervisors.

I strongly recommend to students that they set up accountability for themselves—that they establish a system whereby they have to regularly report to someone what they have accomplished and what their next goals would be. This clearly can be done with their supervisors as discussed above, but some students may feel more comfortable with and prefer setting up accountability with another postgraduate student (this of course does not mean they can do away with the regular meetings with their supervisors). In these cases, the students would need to become accountable to each other, to make the arrangement mutually beneficial.

On the subject of people support, I also stress the importance of approaching other people (other than their supervisors) for help, advice, and/or support when it is necessary and appropriate. If time permits, we quickly brainstorm who these people could be (eg., departmental office staff, computer support staff, other teaching staff who may have particular areas of expertise, other students, and people in various support services).

Task focus

I point out to students the importance of not getting bogged down on peripheral tasks such as learning to use a particular statistical package, reading background information, and so on. I advise them to appraise whether they really need to do each task and to what extent. The reason is that many postgraduate students are delayed in their thesis production as they are sidetracked by these peripheral activities.

I tell students that they need to have a clear, specific purpose whenever they read. This is to help keep their focus and to avoid reading a lot of material that they do not really need to read. I point out that in most cases they should not need to read whole books or articles, but just go to the chapters or sections where the information they require is contained: this, however, would only be possible if they know what their purpose is and what they are looking for. As an exercise, I get students to write down the purpose of their next thesis-related reading task, specifying what they need and what they are looking for.

I also stress to students the importance of creating a plan before they write, even if they are writing only short sections or segments of their thesis. I tell students that they first need to clarify the logic of their plans. Once that is done, they ought to follow the plan to write as simply and as clearly as they can without resorting to perfectionism. I advise them to

complete the draft for a whole section before re-drafting it, otherwise they could end up just re-writing the same thing over and over again. I point out that the most common reason why students get stuck in writing is that they do not have a clear plan to focus them on what they want to convey through their writing. The importance of planning and efficient writing of the first draft—"without excessive concern for detail, precise language or fine tuning of the argument"—was similarly emphasised by Zuber-Skerritt and Knight (1986, p. 98). They identified planning and writing of the first draft as one of two crucial phases in postgraduate students' research and thesis production process.

The findings from a survey of Masters thesis students undertaken by Manalo, Wong-Toi, Lavery, and Henning (1998) confirm the value of the strategies described above. Of the successful writing strategies reported by the survey respondents, one of the most frequently mentioned was "structuring and planning" before actually writing. On the other hand, "reading too much and without a specific purpose" was reported by many as a misguided approach that proved not helpful.

Time management

In the same survey undertaken by Manalo et al. (1998), 40.9% of the respondents pointed out that time management and planning strategies they used proved helpful during their thesis production. The many strategies reported included: setting of deadlines, use of time planners, careful planning of thesis tasks and objectives, taking time out when this is needed, prioritising, and starting early on all things that need to be done with the thesis.

In the workshop under discussion here, there are four things that I tell students are important where time management and their thesis are concerned: regularly reviewing their time plan, listing things to do, setting specific times to work on their thesis, and clarifying their daily objectives.

I tell students that it is important to regularly review their time plan so that they can implement adjustments or modifications effectively. They need to regularly look at their time plan and ask whether they are keeping up with their schedule for completion. This way they can make any necessary adjustments in a timely manner, rather then leaving the review till much later when it may be too late to take any effective action that could enable them to still complete on time.

I point out to students that in the process of their thesis production there would be so many things that they have to do. Thus it is crucial that they list those things they have to do so that, firstly they avoid getting overwhelmed, and secondly they appraise the situation much better and hence prioritise more effectively.

I suggest to students that every day they set specific times to work on their thesis. I suggest to them that they assume a rule that I myself assumed when I was working on my PhD thesis: to accomplish something—no matter how small—towards the completion of their thesis every day. No excuses. No exceptions. I point out that on certain days their accomplishment need not be a big one (eg. checking on a reference, revising a section they have written). The important thing is that they feel a sense of continuity and achievement towards their goal of completing the thesis—every day. This way, every day counts.

Finally, and following on from the previous point, I emphasise to students the importance of clarifying their daily objectives. I advise them to write a realistic to-do list first thing every day, and not just hope the day will go smoothly, nor for their objectives to automatically get sorted out by themselves. As a final exercise, I get them to first plan what they could do during what remains of the day to make the day a good one where their thesis is concerned, and secondly to jot down their specific objectives for the following day.

Exercises that the students have to do during the session itself are an integral part of this workshop. These exercises are included in the handouts that the students are given. Even though at times parts of the course may feel a little rushed to fit in the one-hour schedule, it is important that students do the exercises there and then, rather than as an option they undertake later. There are two main reasons for this. First, the exercises are often crucial for implementing the strategies given and, if the students experience difficulties in successfully executing the exercises, discussion in the class would be particularly helpful. For example, quite a few students find it difficult to state in one sentence the purpose or aim of their thesis. They usually jot down several loose ideas, but through discussion with others in the group they often are able to extract and verbalise the point of their thesis and hence come up with the one sentence. The second reason is that students could take many hours to do these exercises, but that is not the point behind them: they are intended to be done quickly and not used as further excuses for delays. Therefore, I consider it best to do them during the workshop itself when the students would have to work on them briskly under given time constraints.

This workshop is applicable to students from all subject disciplines, as long as the students have to produce a written thesis. The focus of the workshop is on purposes and tasks common to all in the process of producing a thesis. The skills conveyed in the strategies for keeping going are generic and ought to be as useful to a student in medical science as to a student in history.

Feedback from students

As noted earlier, a total of 45 students attended the six times this workshop was offered in 1997. In mid-November, we mailed out a one page survey questionnaire to 42 of these students who we had mailing addresses for. The questionnaire was confidential and did not ask for the students' names. Apart from demographic details (gender, age, ethnic affiliation, and faculty), the questionnaire sought the students' opinions about the usefulness of the workshop and the effectiveness of the instructor. Information was also sought about what the students found particularly useful about the workshop, what they thought could be improved, other programmes offered at the Student Learning Centre that they have used, and what other workshop topics they thought would be useful to postgraduate students. In addition, the questionnaire asked if the student was enrolled for a thesis in 1997 and if so what the state of the thesis was at the time of their completing the questionnaire (mid to late November). Sixteen students completed and returned the questionnaire.

Demographic details

Eleven of the students were female, and five were male.

Seven of the students were in the 20 to 29 age bracket; another seven were in the 30 to 39 bracket; and two were in the 40 to 49 bracket.

Eight of the students were of Asian ethnic origin; seven were of European ethnic origin; and one did not specify.

Six students came from the Arts faculty; three each came from the Medicine and Science faculties; and one each came from the Architecture, Commerce, Education, and Theology faculties.

Satisfaction with the workshop

In response to the question, "How helpful did you find the workshop?", the students' average rating was 5.56 (standard deviation = 1.21) on a scale of 1 (not helpful) to 7 (very helpful).

In response to the question, "How effective did you find the instructor?", the students' average rating was 5.75 (standard deviation = 1.13) on a scale of 1 (not effective) to 7 (very effective).

Thesis status

Eight of the students were not enrolled in a thesis in 1997. These students would have attended the workshop in preparation for their forthcoming thesis year—presumably in 1998.

Of the eight who were enrolled in a thesis in 1997,

one had completed,

one was on track and close to completion,

one was on track and should complete by a deadline in 1998,

one had an extension and will probably complete within that time,

one obtained an extension due to the illness of his/her supervisor,

one could not find a suitable topic,

and two were behind schedule and would probably require an extension.

Aspects of the workshop that students found particularly useful

Six students commented on the usefulness of the opportunities they had to organise, verbalise, and/or write down their aims and ideas. Three noted the discussion with, and feedback received from, other students and the instructor. Two mentioned the usefulness of strategies for starting and/or keeping going with their thesis discussed in the workshop. One mentioned the handouts and teaching materials. Another commented on the new ideas they got from the workshop that they were not previously familiar with.

How the workshop could be improved

Three students suggested that the workshop be made longer. Two students asked for the workshop to be made more specific, for particular groups (presumably in different subject areas). Two students suggested a more systematic approach or the use of worksheets. There was one suggestion each of reducing the amount of time they had to talk with other students; more humour; for only students actually working on a thesis to be allowed in the workshop as others who have no idea what they are doing tend to waste time; and for the workshop to be run at one of the University's other campuses as well. Six students either wrote that it was fine the way it was or did not suggest anything.

Other programmes they have used at the Centre

Seven students wrote having attended other courses for postgraduate students run at the Centre. Four wrote down general courses (that both undergraduates and postgraduates can attend). Three listed both postgraduate and general courses. One student said that he/she had made use of other programmes but did not specify which those were. Only one student had not made use of any other programme that the Centre offered.

Other workshop topics that they thought would be useful

In response to the question, "What other workshop topics do you think would be useful to postgraduate students?", one student wrote that those offered were all good as they were, while three students did not comment here. Suggestions from the twelve other students include the following:

strategies for research (various);

computer skills;

more on writing; writing the literature review;

statistics; data analysis;

reading strategies;

the differences between undergraduate and postgraduate students at the University;

supervisor management;

obtaining ethics approval;

dealing with the emotional side of thesis writing;

time management;

and how to set up support groups.

Conclusion

As the title of the workshop suggests, all the strategies and exercises covered in this one-hour workshop are geared towards getting the student participants effectively started on productive work on their thesis that they can sustain. This aim is achieved by focusing and organising the students where their thesis thoughts, ideas, and tasks to complete are concerned. The strategies and exercises are also intended to give the students a sense of control over the big task of thesis writing by getting them to specify immediately actionable tasks and procedures that they can see would directly contribute towards their ultimate objective.

The response rate (38%) to the survey of the students who attended the workshop in 1997 was not as good as we had hoped. Nevertheless, the evaluations and comments from those who completed and returned the questionnaire were positive and clearly indicate that the students had found the workshop helpful. The thesis status of the majority of the students enrolled in their thesis in 1997 tend to confirm the usefulness of the workshop. There is also a lot we can learn from the returned questionnaires that would help in our efforts to constantly improve and further develop our instruction and support programmes for postgraduate students.

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Genre, audience and thesis/dissertation writing

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This paper discusses ways of using research carried out in the area of genre analysis and composition studies to help ESL students write audience-responsive theses and dissertations. It draws, in particular, on the notion of 'students as researchers' to encourage students to explore how they might present their research in a way which meets the institutional and audience expectations of their particular text. Activities include an analysis of the context of production and interpretation of the text, consideration of the purpose of the text, and activities such as students doing their own 'on-line genre analysis'. Students also consider who their potential readers might be and the assumptions and expectations they will bring to the evaluation of their thesis. The paper is illustrated by examples of work produced by a student from the People's Republic of China writing a Master's level thesis at an Australian university.

Introduction

This paper discusses ways of using research carried out in the area of genre analysis and composition studies to help ESL students write audience-responsive theses and dissertations. The paper, first of all, discusses the place of audience in ESL writing research and practice. It then suggests a number of tasks which encourage students to explore how they might present their research in a way which meets the institutional and audience expectations of their particular text. These focus, in particular, on student discovery of expectations and conventions within their own discipline-specific situations. The paper concludes with an example of a student from the People's Republic of China writing a Masters thesis at an Australian university.

Audience and ESL writing

The issue of audience has only recently been taken up in much ESL writing research. This is notwithstanding the fact that for ESL students, in particular, the ability to address a particular audience is essential to their success (Johns, 1993). This is somewhat in contrast with research carried out in the area of composition studies where the place of audience has been discussed for some time (see eg. Kroll, 1978; Flower & Hayes, 1980; Berkenkotter, 1981; Park, 1982; 1986; Ede & Lunsford, 1984; Nystrand, 1986; Brandt, 1990; Kirsch & Roen, 1990; Lunsford & Ede, 1996).

Drawing on the work of Ede and Lunsford (1984), and others in the area of composition studies, Johns (1990) discusses the expert, 'all-powerful reader' of ESL students' texts who can either accept or reject students' writing as coherent and consistent with the conventions of the target discourse community, or not. In her view, and in the view of Ede and Lunsford, knowledge of this audience's attitudes, beliefs, and expectations is not only possible but essential for students writing in a second language. This audience, further, exists outside the text. Writers need to analyse the needs and anticipate the biases of their anticipated audience, as well as adapt their discourse to meet the expectations of their intended readers (Ede & Lunsford, 1984).

General and particular expectations

Dudley-Evans (1995a) makes a distinction between 'general' and 'particular' expectations which is extremely helpful for ESL students writing a thesis or dissertation. By 'general expectations' he means general transferable patterns of textual organisation that might be transferred from one area of study to another, such as the overall organisation of a thesis or dissertation. By 'particular expectations' he means the ways in which these general patterns need to be adapted to meet the expectations and requirements of a particular field of study. Developing this kind of discipline-specific sensitivity should, in Dudley-Evans' view, form part of the teaching of academic writing. As Dudley-Evans argues, "an approach to the teaching of academic writing that implies that there are common patterns of organisation that always apply in all disciplines [can be] dangerously misleading" (Dudley-Evans, 1993, p. 147). Thus, even though we can say things about the general expectations in terms of how a thesis or dissertation might be written , we also need to be sure to consider the particular expectations of the academic audience our students are writing for.

Graduate student writing

Swales and Feak (1994), in their book *Academic Writing for Graduate Students*, argue also for the importance of audience in second language classrooms. They provide a helpful overview of important characteristics of academic writing, showing how academic texts are a product of many considerations, such as audience, purpose, organisation, style, flow, and presentation (see Figure 1 below).

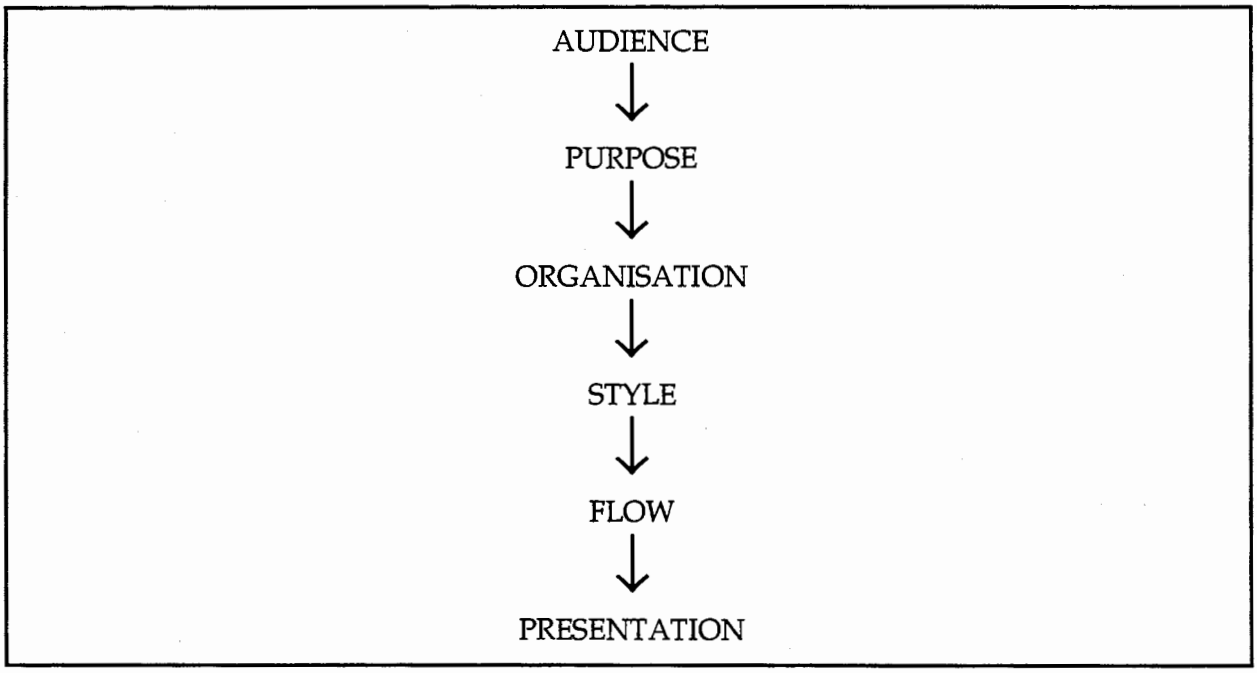

Figure 1. Considerations in academic writing (Swales & Feak 1994, p. 8).

As Swales and Feak point out, even before students begin to write, they need to consider their audience. They need to have an understanding of their audience's expectations and prior knowledge, as these will impact upon the content of their writing. If the audience knows more than the writer, as is often the case with graduate writing, the writer's purpose is usually to display familiarity and expertise in the particular area, beyond simply reporting on the research at hand (Swales & Feak, 1994).

Primary and secondary readerships

Brookes and Grundy (1990), in their book on writing for study purposes, discuss the notions of 'primary' and 'secondary' readership which is also helpful for ESL students writing a thesis or dissertation. In the case of theses and dissertations, they are written for a primary readership of one or more examiners, but also a secondary readership of the student's supervisor and anyone else the student decides to show their work to for comment and feedback, such as a study skills or an ESL tutor. It is the primary reader, however, that will be the final judge as to the quality of the piece of writing, rather than the secondary reader whose role is, rather, to guide the student through the research and writing process. As Kamler and Threadgold point out, in a paper titled 'Which thesis did you read?':

> Thinking about who the examiners are, will/must shape the thesis and a variety of questions related to its production, including what are the interdisciplines it will cross and what tendacious issues it might address and how (Kamler & Threadgold, 1997, p. 47).

They continue by noting that a dominant, or 'primary' reader, within the academy, " quite simply counts more than other readers" (Kamler & Threadgold, 1997, p. 53).

Academic essays

Kusel (1992, p. 459), in his discussion of the writing of academic essays, makes a number of points which are relevant to thesis and dissertation writing. As he argues, the essay, in normal practice "has to be written in a way to appeal both to an imaginary reader as a communication and to the tutor as an exhibit". In his view, this 'dual function' of essay writing is the cause of much difficulty in second language essay writing. Kusel suggests encouraging students to write 'for an imaginary audience', arguing that "writers of many genres do this all the time" (1992, p. 467). Part of this involves anticipating what the imaginary audience already knows about the subject of the text, what knowledge the writer needs to 'display', as well as how well the imaginary audience would understand and react to what they read.

Thesis and dissertation writing

Shaw (1991), in a discussion of thesis and dissertation writing, argues that it is difficult for academic writers to write for their particular audience and to produce 'reader-based prose', "caught as they are between knowledge-display and information transmission" (1991, p. 193). As he points out:

> [The students'] relation to their audience is strange, in that they presume that the real readers (supervisor, external examiner) already know much of what they have to say. This unacknowledged knowledge-display function of theses must affect the writing process (Shaw, 1991, p. 193).

Some of the confusion, he suggests, is due to advice from supervisors, many of whom seem to recommend writing for an expert in a parallel area or merely for someone with background in the particular area. It is not, however, obvious, he argues, that following this advice would produce the traditional thesis or dissertation that supervisors are looking for. That is, if students write a thesis or dissertation assuming their audience has a certain knowledge of their particular area they may not 'display' the knowledge and understanding that is required of them at this particular level.

This display of knowledge, typical of much academic writing in English, however, varies cross-culturally. Chinese examiners of theses and dissertations, for example, have different expectations of what a thesis should contain than, for example, English examiners (Shaw,

1991). Shaw found that the majority of the students he interviewed for his study were able to best match the English language tradition of thesis and dissertation writing by examining and using completed theses and dissertations as models for their own writing; that is, by doing their own 'on-line' genre analyses (Flowerdew, 1993) of the particular texts they were writing. This included the collection of subject specific lists of words, and an analysis of typical generic structures and conventions.

Ramani, Chacko, Singh and Glendinning (1988) and Tickoo (1994) remind us, however, of the need to incorporate ethnographic or 'insiders' views' into genre-based descriptions of theses and dissertations. Ramani and her colleagues found, in their teaching of the conventions of citation and referencing to PhD students, that they were forced to abandon developing a universal style guide for all PhDs as most research groups in their institution, they discovered, had their own conventions that they were reluctant to change. Instead, it became more worthwhile to encourage students to look at theses recently completed in their areas of specialisation to find out exactly how they were expected to refer to previous research.

The occluded nature of theses and dissertations

Swales (1996) also reminds us of the 'occluded' nature of theses and dissertations. That is, it is often very difficult for students to obtain and identify highly regarded instances of theses and dissertations without access to confidential information, such as the level of grade the thesis or dissertation was awarded (in the case of a Master's thesis), and what amount of revision was required by examiners before the final copy of the thesis was accepted by the university. Thus, even though a university department may have a collection of theses for students to look at, it is often difficult for students to know which of these are 'best examples' of the particular genre and why.

Students as researchers

Johns (1988, 1997) suggests training students to 'act as researchers' as a way of helping them write texts which meet the institutional and audience expectations of their particular field of study, as well as discovering the knowledge and skills that are necessary for membership of their particular academic community. In the context of thesis and dissertation writing, this might include consideration of the role of students, supervisors and examiners. It might also involve identifying key topics and concepts in their particular area, as well exploring the writing conventions of the particular field of study, and the kinds of knowledge claims which are permissible in the particular area (Johns, 1988). The particular focus, in this perspective, is on 'student discovery' of discipline-specific understandings, expectations and requirements. As Johns (1997) argues, though we cannot hope to predict all of our students' possible literacy experiences, we can help them to ask questions of the texts they are required to produce, and the contexts in which these texts occur.

Context analysis

One further suggestion Johns (1995) makes is to ask students to collect several examples of a text, then use them as catalysts to elicit sociocultural understandings about the context and community in which the text occurs, roles and purposes of readers and writers, as well as typical textual patterns; that is, as the basis for an analysis of the context of production and interpretation of the particular genre.

The analysis of the sample texts might consider aspects of the text and context in which they occur, such as the social and cultural context of the texts, including:

the purpose of the texts

the content of the texts

the writer of the texts

the intended audience of the texts

the relationship between the writers and readers of the texts

the setting of the texts (eg. in a university or other research setting).

the structure of the texts

the tone of the texts

the expectations of the target discourse community

any shared understandings between the writers and readers of the texts

any particular background knowledge that is assumed by the texts

the relationship the texts have with other similar such texts, as well as with other genres

(adapted from Grabe & Kaplan, 1996).

Audience analysis and expectations

Students can then proceed to consider, in more detail, who the 'primary reader' of their text is likely to be. This is a difficult task for students writing a thesis or dissertation in that, at the point of writing, they may not know who that reader might be, and in some cases, may never know. They, therefore, have to consider an 'imagined reader' for their text, what that readers' purpose in reading the text will be, and what this reader is likely to expect in relation to the text as a whole, as well as each the section of their text.

One way in which students can do this is by considering their text in relation to assessment guidelines given to examiners at the University where they are studying; that is, the criteria statement examiners are given for the award of each level of grade. Another helpful task is to ask students to consider their text in relation to advice given to thesis examiners, such as that presented by Brown and Atkins (1988) in their book *Effective Teaching in Higher Education* (see Figure 2 below). This is especially helpful for keeping students' attention on the primary reader of their text, their examiner, rather than the secondary reader they have contact with, and receive feedback from.

This, and a number of the other tasks suggested here, focus, in particular, on the content of the students' writing. As Berkenkotter and Huckin point out, genre knowledge "embraces both form and content, including a sense of what content is appropriate to a particular purpose in a particular situation at a particular point in time (Berkenkotter & Huckin 1995, p. 13). A student, thus, needs to know not only how to structure a thesis or dissertation, but also what it is important and appropriate to write about in such contexts. Students also need to understand "who they are expected to be", and how they are expected to textually position themselves (Cadman 1997, pp. 8–9). This is often difficult for ESL students who come from a writing context where the demonstration of knowledge is quite different to the situation they now find themselves in (Cadman 1997, Ballard & Clancy, 1991). As Connor (1996) observes, students are very often given very little guidance on content in second language teaching and learning materials. This is especially the case with theses and dissertations where universities often present vast amounts of information to students on binding, presentation, width of margins, and punctation, but very little real guidance on the actual content of the thesis (Kamler & Threadgold, 1997).

Reading a thesis or dissertation

Review of the literature

- To what extent is the review of the literature relevant to the study?
- Have I slipped into 'here is all I know about x'?
- Is there evidence of critical appraisal of other work, or is the review just descriptive?
- How well have I mastered the technical or theoretical literature?
- Have I made explicit links between the review of the literature and the design of my study?
- Is there a summary of the essential features of other work that relates to my study?

Design of the study

- What precautions did I take against likely sources of bias?
- What are the limitations of the study? Have I made it clear I am aware of them?
- Is the methodology for data collection appropriate to my research question?
- Are the techniques used for the analysis of my data appropriate?
- In the circumstances, has the best design been chosen?
- Have I given adequate justification for the design I used?

Presentation of results

- Does the design of the study appear to have worked?
- Have the hypotheses in fact been tested or research question/s been answered?
- Do the solutions obtained relate to the questions posed?
- Could the presentation of results be made clearer?
- Are patterns and trends accurately identified and summarised?

Discussion and conclusions

- Am I aware of the possible limits to confidence/reliability in the study?
- Have the main points to emerge form the results been picked up for discussion?
- Are links made to previous research?
- Is there evidence of theory building or reconceptualistion of problems?
- Have I made any speculations? Are they well grounded in the results?

Reflection

- Is the standard of presentation of the thesis adequate?
- Have I shown an understanding of the relevant field and how my thesis relates to it?
- Have I thought through the implications of my findings?
- Is there evidence of originality in my thesis?
- Does my study add to existing knowledge on the subject?

Figure 2. Suggestions for reading theses and dissertations (adapted from Brown & Atkins 1988, pp. 142-143).

Students doing their own on-line genre analysis

Another useful task is for students to do their own 'on-line genre analysis' (Flowerdew, 1993) to identify the typical 'generic structure' and linguistic characteristics of theses written in their particular area. Students can, for example, examine the way the thesis is divided up into identifiable stages, as well as consider the function each of these stages performs in achieving its overall goal (Veel & Coffin, 1996). Students can then use this analysis as a check list for examining their own thesis or dissertation to ask themselves if they have achieved these goals.

Student can also be asked to examine other theses for examples of 'metadiscourse' (Swales, 1990; Vande Kopple, 1985) and the 'discourse about discourse' (Hyland, in press) which is particular to thesis and dissertation writing; that is, ways in which thesis writers signal where they are going, where they have got to, and "what they have achieved so far" (Swales, 1990, p. 188). Some of the ways in which thesis writers typically do this is by presenting an 'overview of the thesis' in the first chapter of thesis, as well as by the use of 'introduction' and 'summary' sections at the beginning and end of each chapter to link the chapters together, as well as to 'help their reader through the text'. Students might also consider the rhetorical strategies thesis writers use to convince their readers of their claims (Mauranen, 1993), and the strategies they use to direct their reader towards an 'intended interpretation' (Hyland, in press).

Using the results of genre analysis

The results of previous genre studies are also useful for providing a framework for students to use, in combination with other aspects of genre knowledge (Berkenkotter & Huckin, 1995), as a 'scaffold' for writing their own texts. Hopkins and Dudley-Evans' (1988) analysis of the discussion section of MSc dissertations shown in Figure 3 below is useful for this sort of task, as is Swales and Feak's' (1994) list of 'points' (rather than 'facts') that are typically found in the Discussion section of research articles (see Figure 4 below).

The Discussion section: Some possible options	
1.	Background information
2.	Statement of result
3.	(Un) expected outcome—ie whether the result is expected or not
4.	Reference to previous research—comparison of results with previous research reported in the literature
5.	Explanation of result/s—ie suggesting reasons for an unexpected result, (if this is the case) or one different from those found in previous studies
6.	Example/s—providing examples to support the explanation given in 4.
7.	Claim—making a more general claim arising from the results of the study eg. drawing a conclusion, stating an hypothesis
8.	Support from previous research—quoting previous research to support the claim/s being made
9.	Recommendation—making suggestions for future research
10.	Justification for future research—arguing why the future research is recommended

Figure 3. Discussion sections of research articles and dissertations (Hopkins & Dudley-Evans, 1988; Dudley-Evans, 1995a).

Hopkins and Dudley-Evans found that the Discussion section of the theses they examined did not follow a fixed pattern, or "favoured order of moves" (Dudley-Evans, 1995b, p. 298). but were made up of a number of cycles of moves that combined two or more of the moves. The key move cycles they observed were a 'statement of results' followed by 'reference to previous research' or 'claim', followed by 'support from previous research' (Dudley-Evans, 1995a). They found it especially important that writers relate the results of their study to previous research in the field.

Move 1	Points to consolidate the research space—ie interpretive points rather than descriptive facts or results. For example: • a reminder of the original purpose of the study • statement of results followed by a follow-up such as: * statement of the importance (or otherwise) of the results, * examples from the data which illustrate the results, * comparison with other work/previous research, * review of the methodology, * reference to the theory underpinning the study, * conclusions that might be drawn, * the strengths of the study, * whether the results were expected or unexpected.
Move 2	Points to indicate the limitations of the study • What cannot be concluded from the research
Move 3	Points to identify useful areas of further research

Figure 4 List of 'points' for Discussion sections (Swales & Feak, 1994).

It is important to point out to students that Swales and Feak's 'list of points' does not represent a fixed order. Which point comes first and which comes next depends on the particular study. Swales and Feak also remind students that Discussion sections often move through the move sequence they present more than once. They also point out that Discussion sections vary from discipline to discipline and urge students to examine what actually happens in their own field. In Hewing's (1993) experience, the Discussion is frequently the most difficult and poorly written section of ESL students' theses and dissertations, and one that benefits most from particular attention (see an example below).

Comparing student texts

Another useful task is to ask students to compare and discuss sections of each other's theses and dissertations (Swales, 1981, 1984). This comparison can be based on some set of guidelines, such as the list of points shown in Figure 5 below for writing a literature review.

In this exercise, students use the list of points to read and critique each other's texts. They then discuss their observations with the student who wrote the text. Each student then re-works his or her text on the basis of the fellow student's observations. Students, thus, are encouraged 'to become critical friends of each other' (Hamp Lyons, 1998).

The list of points to consider in writing the Discussion section provided by Swales and Feak (see Figure 4 above) can also be helpfully used in this way.

Reviewing the literature

The literature review section of a thesis or dissertation should show an awareness of:

key studies which have already been carried out in the particular area

details of these studies such as the methodological approach employed, procedures used for the collection of the data, and approach to the analysis of the data

what conclusions were reached in the previous research

whether these conclusions are in agreement or conflict with each other

the strengths and weaknesses of previous research

which can be considered the better studies, and why

the main issues or controversies which surround the research question or problem

any significant gaps in the previous research

the relationship between the research being carried out and what has already been done in the particular area

(i) Read another student's literature review and makes notes on how well they have considered each of these points.

(ii) Discuss your observations with the student who wrote the text.

(iii) Re-work your literature review on the basis of the feedback you received from your fellow student.

Figure 5. Comparing student texts: Writing a literature review

Preparing for research

An important stage in the thesis writing process is the writing of a thesis proposal. The notion of audience can also be usefully brought up with students at this stage as well. Students often ask, even before they begin writing, who their examiner might be, as well as what is expected of them at the particular level they are studying. For example, a common question is what is the difference between a Master's and a doctoral level thesis. Madsen (1992, pp. 3–5) and Preece (1994, pp. 189–193) both discuss this point. Students can be asked to read these author's views on this and bring a summary of what they say back to class for discussion. Students can also be asked to examine university and departmental descriptions of the research component of the particular degree they are undertaking. They can then bring these descriptions to class for detailed discussion and comparison. If the students are studying in different (or even related) disciplines, this is a particularly useful exercise as it highlights how much discipline-specific expectations can vary. Students can look, in particular, for minimum and maximum word lengths, and the level of originality and 'contribution to knowledge' that is required of them. Each of these points are important for students to consider as they have a direct bearing on the scope and focus of the research the students will undertake and, in turn, report on. It is also helpful, at the proposal writing stage, for students to examine the assessment guidelines the university sends to its examiners, as well as the kind of advice to examiners shown in Figure 2 above.

An example

Qi (not her real name) is a student from the People's Republic of China who came to Australia as a government-funded student to undertake a Master's degree in the area of applied linguistics. Her first language was Mandarin and, at the time of arrival, had an overall IELTS score of 6.0, with a score of 5 in the writing component of the test. After a year of intensive English study in Australia, her IELTS score had increased to 7.5, with a score of 8 in the writing component of the test. Qi's first degree was in science. She also had an English teaching certificate from the University of Foreign Languages in Beijing. In China, she works as a lecturer in English at a university of science and technology.

Qi was enrolled in the thesis component of her degree for a year. She wrote her thesis on opening sequences in Chinese telephone calls. Her decision to make this her thesis topic was influenced by a course she did in her Master's degree on discourse analysis as well as by the ease of obtaining the data: friends and family members in China collected the data and sent it to her in Australia. She saw her supervisor every two or three weeks throughout the year she was enrolled in the thesis component of her degree. Field notes were taken during the supervision sessions, during which each of Qi's written drafts were closely examined. She was also interviewed after the thesis had been completed.

The supervision process commenced with a review of Qi's thesis proposal. The proposal outlined the overall purpose of the study, relevant background literature, the research question, a proposed research methodology, the theoretical approach that would be employed for the analysis of the data (conversation analysis), a discussion of limitations and problems that might be encountered in the study, and a statement of the significance of the research.

The readership of her thesis had already been brought up in a research proposal workshop Qi had attended prior to enrolling in the thesis. Early supervision sessions returned to this topic and, in particular, discussed who her potential readers might (in general terms) be, and what they would expect in terms of content, presentation, analysis and discussion. She had also, prior to commencing her thesis, read the 'advice to thesis examiners' shown in Figure 2 above. In her words, "these were extremely useful, before, during, and at the end of the thesis". This was especially the case, she said, for writing the review of the literature and discussion sections of her thesis.

Early on, Qi prepared a chapter outline for her thesis by doing her own 'on-line' genre analysis of other theses written in the department on similar topics. In the supervision sessions, this outline was discussed in relation to the purpose and expectations of each of the chapters she had proposed. As her research progressed, Qi revised and further refined this chapter outline. Her analysis of previous theses also helped her with the presentation and discussion of her data and the particular expectations and conventions that she would be expected to follow using her particular approach to the analysis of her data. Her on-line analysis also revealed metadiscourse strategies she was able to employ in her thesis such as outlining the structure of the thesis in her introductory chapter, and 'linking' sections at the beginning and end of each chapter. The following example of 'guiding the reader through her thesis', from Chapter 1, shows how well she was able to draw on the models she observed and integrate them into her own writing:

> From here, the thesis proceeds in three stages. First, the theory and methodology of conversation analysis are discussed and related studies on telephone openings are reviewed. This provides background to the study (Chapter 2). Second, the openings of 80 Chinese telephone conversations collected from three families living in Beijing, in the People's Republic of China, are analysed to provide a detailed description of the opening sequences of these telephone conversations (Chapters 3 and 4). Finally, the observations made of the Chinese context are discussed and compared with those

previously reviewed for other language communities in terms of their similarities and differences. Conclusions are then drawn on the basis of this analysis and discussion, and recommendations are made for further research (Chapter 5).

The following example of 'linking' from the end of Chapter 3 further illustrates this:

> This chapter has provided information about the Chinese families who participated in the study and the context in which the study was carried out. The method of data collection and the procedures of data transcription and analysis have also been described. The next chapter is a detailed description of the opening sequences of the 80 telephone conversations.

Later in the writing, Qi worked with the descriptions of Discussion sections shown in Figures 3 and 4 above to address the general expectations of a Master's level thesis. She found these analyses particularly useful, drawing on both of them equally. They were very helpful, she said, for planning the Discussion section of the thesis, as well as for reviewing what she was writing. This section took her the longest to write, and was, she found, the most difficult section of the thesis to write. The final piece of writing was, however, detailed and substantive, making constant links back to her analysis and well as to the results of the studies she had summarised in her literature review.

In summary, Qi found the kind of activities described in this article extremely helpful. This was especially so given that she had not written a text of this kind before. She discovered early on that the thesis required much more of her than had the coursework component of her degree. The focus on audience helped her considerably to adapt her writing to the particular level and task she was undertaking. As Ballard and Clanchy (1984) observe, Asian students often have difficultly, at this level, with the more analytical and critical kind of work expected of them. Qi was able, through the attention given to audience and expectations, to very capably do this.

Qi was awarded a very good grade for her thesis, with the examiners saying her work was clearly defined, well argued, and convincing in the observations and claims that it made—much of which, I believe, was the result of the attention she paid to genre and audience throughout the process of her research and the writing up of her thesis.

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"Do we really need to be here?": Meeting the needs of reluctant learners in communication skills classes

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At many tertiary institutions, such as Curtin University, first year undergraduate students are required to successfully complete a communication skills unit as a component of their study programme.

This paper is based on my observation and reflection as lecturer, course coordinator and researcher in the field of communication skills, in the School of Communication and Cultural Studies, at Curtin University. Many students, especially those from the science and technology areas of the university, enter their communication skills units with a great deal of resistance. This paper examines causes of the problem, how it manifests and to what effect in terms of student and staff morale. It goes on to discuss strategies that we have trialled to overcome antipathies.

The paper looks at the way forward to more productive outcomes as students become empowered in a student negotiated, and genre based, language across the curriculum environment.

Introduction

Firstly, I will briefly outline the context of the following discussion of communication skills in a university learning environment. This paper centres around undergraduate students, of all language backgrounds, who are required to enrol in an English communication skills unit, usually in their first year programme, at Curtin University of Technology. These units aim to help students develop their written and spoken literacy skills in a relevant academic and professional context. Students are also required to pass these units, within a specified time period, in order to proceed into subsequent year programmes, and ultimately to graduate.

In a sense I am discussing conscripted men and women, students who most probably would not have enrolled in a communication skills unit, if, depending on one's perceptions, it were not for the enlightenment of certain university academics and administrators. I should also add that although our units do encompass a significant number of students from humanities areas such as Architecture, Interior Design and Urban and Regional Planning, the majority of our students are enrolled in science and technology degree programmes. Our area, Communication Skills, which is located within The School of Communication and Cultural Studies thus 'services' (I will return to this term later) fifteen or so other university schools and departments, providing discrete units of communication skills tuition for approximately nine hundred students over the academic year.

This paper is based on my involvement as a lecturer and researcher in this communication skills context, over the past nine years, and a needs analysis project I carried out in 1996 which examined the English language support needs of a cohort of first year electrical engineering students at Curtin University, (Pantelides, 1996). The project involved written questionnaires and a series of taped and transcribed interviews with students and academic staff, from engineering and communication skills departments. The student and staff comments incorporated in this paper are, in the main, from this particular project. Students

in the sample were recent high school graduates from a wide range of ethnic and socio-economic backgrounds.

Manifestations of the problem

Of course not all students are reluctant learners, nor is this resistance necessarily persistent through a semester in this area, but there is a core of students, especially school leaver entrants in science and technology programmes, who demonstrate a dogged resistance to the notion of communication skills development in a formal academic context. This resistance is not only acknowledged by a wealth of shared and almost legendary experience from communication skills teachers internationally but also science and technology teaching staff.

The resistance may be manifest in students' reluctance to attend class or attend class on time and a strategy whereby some students will commit to a minimum effort in order to simply pass the unit. Students may decide to play a numbers game whereby they will participate in certain class activities and complete certain assignments, to the value of a 'safe' pass standard with a careful appraisal of the time and effort required to do this.

Other unproductive behaviours manifest when students do not take the time to tune in to the oral feedback on their assignments or read extensive written feedback but simply turn to the grade page and then bury the assignment in obscurity, or as sometimes has happened, leave it in the classroom for the cleaners to pick up and dispose of. These are frustrating behaviours for lecturers to witness but they are also saddening as they indicate that the students have very little self-respect for what they have produced and the effort, even if limited, which they have put into it.

Generally, this resistance might be termed as passive. More overt resistance such as disruptive behaviour in class is generally limited to groups with near on 100% male school leaver populations, where a high school inheritance of inappropriate peer group behaviours takes root in the class and can play havoc with less experienced teachers. Nevertheless, experienced teaching staff are often reduced to stringent class management techniques in order to ensure that students do indeed stay on task and complete the unit requirements. Under such circumstances the class can become a bare and joyless environment of teaching and assessing rather than students taking responsibility for their own learning in collaboration with their lecturer and peers. As one communication skills lecturer commented on his students' reactions to the communication skills component of their degrees:

> For them it's a chore ... so psychologically to me I find even the keenest ones find this a labour... It is seen as a chore, an interruption to the 'technical' curriculum that they've got in front of them.

The causes of the problem

There are some legitimate reasons why students may place communication skills at the bottom of their academic priorities list. Their 'mainstream' units in maths or technology constitute a much larger percentage of their credit point loading in a semester and credit points are seen by many to indicate the relative value of curricula at university. Additionally, many degree programmes, especially in the engineering area, have a high number of student contact hours each week and students struggle to keep up with the length and breadth of their academic commitments, in the widening context of their employment and personal commitments also.

As communication skills teachers we have found it constantly necessary to market and justify our units to our students. Of course we must be accountable to our stakeholders. However, we need to answer questions that, by all accounts, students ask us but not

colleagues in mainstream areas of the university: 'Do we really need to be here?' 'Why do we have to do this subject?'

This paper concentrates on student attitudes to communication skills study but it is important to note that they are also reflected in many staff attitudes. There is noticeably a conflict here between the public face of a university with its literacy policy and supporting documentation and the reality behind it. A communication skills lecturer comments about staff attitudes in other areas of the university, and his personal frustration:

> There are always enthusiasts...but I think it's a battle. It's a battle for acceptance because it's seen as an interruption, a distraction...Many others do also give a nodding acceptance and say 'good thing'. In fact in their hearts they would chop it as well...[cut out language-development in the curriculum] So you're banging your head on a brick wall. One feels that. One knows that.

Thus communication skills lecturers' active justification of their units are largely efforts in isolation. It is necessary to recognise the fact that academics are faced with a myriad of resource restraints which may cause them, consciously or unconsciously, to marginalise the need for students to develop their communication skills. However, if there is university commitment to a literacy policy it must be carried through in all aspects of the university's operation. Inconsistencies in staff's valuation of communication skills are noticed and only exacerbate a situation where the area is already devalued and resisted by students.

A significant cause from students' perspectives, at least in the science and technology area, seems to stem from their previous learning experiences at high school. In Western Australia all high school students seeking university entry are required to study either English or English Literature to Tertiary Entrance Examination (TEE) level, and achieve a pass grade in the subject. Many of our students who have performed well in the science subjects have found their achievement in language areas much more challenging. The table below illustrates the range and frequency of students' TEE English language score across a popular science degree programme (data is from first semester intake 1998).

Students' TEE English scores

Number of students attaining grades	Percentage of sample population
5 students attained a grade of 30–39%	6.94%
16 students attained a grade of 40–49%	22.22%
25 students attained a grade of 50–59%	34.72%
19 students attained a grade of 60–69%	26.39%
4 students attained a grade of 70–79%	5.55%
3 students attained a grade of 80–89%	4.17%

Table 1. Students' TEE English Scores

As can be seen from this data, from a sample of seventy-two school leavers, 29.16%, almost one third, of students did not achieve a pass grade of 50% in the TEE English examination. Another third, 34.72%, of students achieved a passing grade of between 50–59%. Although 26.38% students achieved grades between 60–69%, only 9.71% of the population achieved grades over 70%. The mode grade was 57% and the mean 57.325%. In contrast, the mean grade for these students in TEE Maths (as estimated by their first year coordinator) was 65.5%.

Many students make it very clear that they did not choose to study English language at high school. As one student stated:

> One thing I didn't like at school was the fact that they expected, you do, when it came to subject selection, list one and list two, at least one of the humanities, English....which I didn't want to do. I just wanted to concentrate on what I was hoping to get into at university, which obviously I did...

It's an area which students admit to finding difficult and frustrating. While these students may have been confident with the discourse demands of maths or chemistry at high school they floundered in contexts where sustained, analytical and reflective discourse was required in essay format. As one student commented about his experience of TEE English:

> I failed it. I failed the exam because...essays! It's what I'm really weak in.

Another student commented about his success in science subjects despite his perceived inaccuracies in the surface aspects of English language:

> ...Because when we did essays in science subjects...Chemistry we were told 'don't worry about the grammar. Don't worry about the spelling...' So we would just write and we used to make a lot of mistakes...'

Many students reiterated that they were marked for content in their science areas not their literacy skills. Some students seem to fear a perceived spontaneous creativity required in writing essays. Writing is also seen as a very isolated and isolating process:

> I have this major weakness in writing essays. My brain goes blank and I don't know what to write... You just sit there and you've got to think what to write. That's the hard bit.

Many would argue that these students' insecurities about the demands of non-technical writing, such as essays, stem not as much from their innate lack of creativity, lack of knowledge or even poor grammar and spelling but their lack of tools, or frameworks to tackle them confidently. They lack understanding of writing context (See Bock, 1988 in Taylor et al.; Reid, 1994). Many of these students are high achievers in maths and science and they have demonstrated conscientious commitment to these studies. The genre approach to language development (as outlined by Callaghan & Rothery, 1988; Macken et al., 1989; Derewianka, 1990; Cope & Kalantzis, 1993) is a means of empowering such students so that they can become confident and independent communicators across a range of contexts. The genre approach requires teachers to support students' examination of how language operates to make meaning. It clarifies the processes required to write different types of texts, such as their organisation of content and language features.

When students are enrolled in communication skills units (which perhaps unwittingly are frequently described in doom laden terms as 'English' units by administrative staff in other parts of the university), they often bring with them expectations of a difficult, uninteresting course which may also involve personal failure, a course which continues from high school 'English'.

There are also assumptions that language study (rather than development) was a subject that stopped at high school and thus would not be needed at university level. Students have little understanding of the different ways in which they will be required to acquire and use knowledge in a university culture. Therefore many students find the concept of intensive independent research, analysis and the need to reference material borrowed from published sources challenging (cf. Ballard & Clanchy, 1991; Davis, 1994; Phillips, 1994; Martens, 1994). At early first year level they may not have seen the relevance of these skills in their

mainstream studies and the skills may not have been promoted by staff in their home school areas. Students assume that they are still being assessed for content alone rather than content integral to its expression. The following statement was the impression of a student at the end of first year who seems to see language or language development as quite separate from the mainstream course concepts.

> There's not much English in it [the course] anyway, except in this communications unit. You probably don't do much English. It's just basically the course.

Additionally, some students believed that since literacy skills were so separate from their study of content they would not probably impact on their ability to find satisfactory employment:

> I think if you pass with honours they probably don't even know if you're good in English or not. But it depends...yeah...what mark you got in Engineering not in English.

This strikes one as ironic given the essential and desired criteria of employment descriptions in the field. It is also a concern given industry's feedback on the need for graduates' effective communication skills, such as the Australian Association of Graduate Employers (1993) and The Institution of Engineers, Australian National Competency Standards (1993).

Communication skills is termed a 'service area' by all the administrative workings of the university. The term embodies the subordinate role of the area within the university system, and disempowerment of the staff who 'serve' through it, most of whom are sessional lecturers employed on a needs only basis each semester. However hard communication skills staff work to replace the 'service' stigma, the semiotics and the politics remain.

However, what communication skills lecturers pragmatically identified as the crux to successfully overturning student resistance to their courses, was the active support of academics within students' home schools to the principles and practice of effective literacy skills. A communication skills lecturer explores this:

> ...The comments regularly come 'Oh look it's not important. It's the meat that matters. It's the material. Who cares how I'm putting it there? They'll know what I'm talking about.' So all that matters [in this technology department] when it's articulated to me is the actual concrete, factual stuff...So even though there has been an acknowledgement in a laughing sort of way about people [mainstream academic staff] who are interested in their [students'] expression...it's done very much in a laughing fashion...It's done with a smile...

Some strategies we have trialled

Integrated communication skills development

All our communication skills units are integrated to some degree with students' mainstream learning programmes. At a minimum level all major assignments are related to the needs and interests of particular cohorts of students. For example, report topics are negotiated between mainstream contact lecturer, communication skills lecturer and students. However, this integration is not sufficient. Many students are resistant to communication skills development because communication skills classes are isolated from their mainstream learning areas. Not only are the classes physically isolated in that they are taught in another building, often on the other side of campus, but they are taught by non-science or technology trained and predominantly female teachers. Among other differences these staff appear to have quite different expectations about literacy skills required by students from the lecturers in their mainstream courses.

This inconsistency is highly problematic. In 1995, following consultation involving Curtin University's Centre for Educational Advancement, the then Head of the School of Electrical Engineering, and myself, a new strategy was introduced in the School of Electrical Engineering to try to tackle the inconsistency issue and instigate some more effective Language Across the Curriculum strategies.

The first stage was to workshop some of the issues involved in the project with the teaching staff in the school. Perhaps ominously, only 50% of the staff who were invited to participate attended the workshop. Nevertheless, we discussed the rationale for the project and it was suggested a 15% communication skills component be introduced to all assignments across all areas of the school, in order to demonstrate the value the school placed on effective communication skills. Agreement was reached between the staff present about the criteria for this assessment.

A year later a lecturer in the school concerned had this to say about the language across the curriculum strategy:

> How strongly it is actually imposed by the members of staff I couldn't really comment.

It became clear from talking to other staff and students that the fifteen per cent across school communication skills assessment policy had petered out into relative insignificance. There was no observed difference in the inconsistent messages our students seemed to be receiving about the value of communication skills development. Admittedly, there were some inherent difficulties in the strategy which could have been worked on. However, there have since been changes in academic management around the university and time has gone by. We have continued to trial new paedagogical strategies in the communication skills area, trying to approach the problem from different perspectives.

Student-centred strategies

We are trying to encourage students to become participants in a learning programme rather than recipients of it. Thus our aim is to intrinsically motivate students to take responsibility for developing their English communication skills, as a life long goal.

We have found that the resistance that students demonstrate to language development courses, particularly male science and technology majors, is a symptom of their lack of confidence in their literacy skills. Our first goal is direct students' expectations away from any negative pre-tertiary language learning experiences by explaining the practical and context-driven nature of the courses. Communication Skills at university are centred around professional writing tasks which require the writer to address specific aims and audiences rather than tasks which require a more abstract, and at times personal, or value laden dialogue between students and assessor.

In classwork we try to focus on students' positives rather than deficits, working from what they demonstrate they do know and building on this. We attempt to de-mystify the notion of good writing by demonstrating that a writer can be successful if s/he follows a series of processes (cf genre approach). and is prepared to practise these skills over time.

As we administer a diagnostic course entry test at the beginning of semester we set time aside for students to engage in one to one discussion with the lecturer so they can negotiate some personal learning goals. As a corollary of this we have also introduced a 20% classwork assessment where students negotiate with their lecturer tasks which they believe they will find most useful to support their individual learning goals. Thus the unit is tailored, to an extent, to meet each student's needs.

We are using the curriculum cycle methodology in a genre-based approach (as propounded by Callaghan & Rothery 1988; Macken et al 1989; Derewianka, 1990). The process requires the lecturer to model a task leading to joint or small group production before individual production. Feedback from students, especially NESB students, indicates that they appreciate being able to try out a task in a 'safe' environment amongst peers, before facing the assignment alone. Almost all students indicate that they enjoy small group work as a learning strategy and we are exploring methods of incorporating elements of group assessment into the curriculum.

We have invested time and effort into developing professionally produced, user-friendly course materials, such as the unit guide books. We try to enliven the learning environment with graphics and humour.

And finally we encourage students to give us formative and summative feedback on our courses. This feedback is discussed within the communication skills area and taken back to students' degree areas for review.

The way forward

Our efforts to build a more effective learning environment and to create motivated and independent learners within communication skills courses will not however, work in isolation. Therefore we need to return to students' home schools to open collegial discussion on the central issues of undergraduates' communication skills at university, especially at first year level. For this discussion to be representative of the staff concerned, senior management, and especially heads of funding units, will need to set participation as a school priority.

It is essential that this discussion is conducted in an open, collaborative framework so that participants' concerns can be raised in a non-judgmental environment. There is a wide range of staff attitudes to undergraduate literacy, stretching from those who bemoan students' poor knowledge and application of the finer points of traditional English grammar, to those academics, some of whom are from non-English speaking backgrounds, who lack confidence in their own English language skills and fear being made accountable for their own or others' performance in this area.

Commitment is also required at senior management level to the notions that students develop language skills over time with continual practice and reinforcement and that language cannot be divorced from context. Thus students' communication skills cannot be 'fixed' over one semester in a low credit point discrete unit. Consensus must be reached within schools so agreed aims and objectives can be endorsed at all levels and appropriate strategies created to meet these goals.

Ideally language should be taught within its context in every course, across the whole curriculum by all teaching staff. Mainstream teaching staff need support to integrate and consolidate students' language development within discipline learning, but this is not an unachievable goal. Other universities in Australia, such as Queensland University of Technology have successfully implemented such programmes (see Cowen, 1993) without prohibitive expenditure of resources.

It is only when students' language development is valued as a key to learning itself rather than a discrete skill that significant resistance to the area will turn to support. Effective university induction programmes are needed which set out schools' expectations and students' pathways to achieving goals in language and learning. This presumes an overarching organisation which actively values undergraduate, especially first year learning and teaching, and is committed to meeting those students' needs in all aspects of their study programme.

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The development of team/group skills in an integrated business programme

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This paper examines and evaluates the development of group/team skills in an integrated business degree programme at the Auckland Institute of Technology. It discusses how this approach relates to current research on organisational learning and identifies areas which have been successful. In exploring the gap between outcomes and vision, it also suggests areas for further development and research.

As students develop an understanding of the relationships between traditional disciplines, they become increasingly autonomous and critical learners. A focus on interpersonal communication skills and capabilities can enable them to participate more effectively in group/team situations. The development of these interactive skills is based primarily on an understanding and application of congruent theory and practice. This is achieved through reflection on individual and group behaviours throughout the first three semesters of the programme.

Programme overview

It is widely recognised that effective work teams enhance productivity and employee satisfaction (Lock & Partners, 1996; Tubbs, 1998). Current research suggests that an organisation's ability and openness to learning is an essential aspect of effective business practice in a changing workplace (Senge, 1994). Senge defines team learning as "the process of aligning and developing the capacity of a team to create the results its members truly desire" (p. 236). One of the challenges of this approach is to move individuals from traditional analytical and mechanistic thinking patterns towards systems thinking. This involves fostering greater openness between team members and encouraging an ability to understand and analyse from a holistic perspective (Ramsey, 1997).

It is no surprise therefore that tertiary institutions have focused on students' development of group/team skills as they prepare for the workforce. Throughout the Bachelor of Business degree at the Auckland Institute of Technology there is a strong emphasis on these areas.

This degree is a four year programme with three introductory integrated semesters. During this time students gain an overview of the New Zealand business environment by exploring the inter-relationships between disciplines which have traditionally been presented separately. Communication Studies is a key part of this approach and is included in both discipline-specific sessions and in generic group tutorials which formalise the learning. These group tutorials are held at the beginning and end of each week to focus on the interdisciplinary linkages and on the development of a range of capabilities and skills. Study of outcomes of the integrated approach indicates that interdisciplinary general education can heighten student awareness of the complex situations that they will encounter in the workplace (Wright, 1992). There is also evidence that group/team skills learned in a training setting "generalise to organizational settings" (Hackman, 1990; in Bettenhausen, 1991, p. 346).

The degree document identifies capabilities as the application of knowledge, conceptual thinking, team work and communication, problem-solving and technical competence. In the area of team work and communication it aims to develop students'

> ability to work effectively with others, to formulate and express views appropriately, to evaluate the performance of oneself and colleagues in a realistic and constructive manner. This requires the application of specific techniques (eg. questioning, negotiation, accurate writing). and the development of qualities(eg. sensitivity to others, self-awareness). that enhance awareness and communication. (Auckland Institute of Technology, 1993, p. 3)

The vision is to develop dynamic, open, self-directed learners who recognise the value of cooperation to achieve shared goals. By the end of the first three semesters of the degree, students should understand and practise the principles of team learning. Senge (1994) identifies three critical dimensions in this area: thinking insightfully about complex issues, realising the need for appropriate action and understanding how the team inter-relates with other teams. This third dimension is a sophisticated concept most easily developed within the context of managerial or supervisory roles and is therefore not addressed during the introductory semesters.

Katzenbach and Smith (1993) add that the crucial elements which define a team—as opposed to a working group—are complementary skills, commitment to a common purpose, clear performance goals, and mutual accountability. To achieve this, the communication and generic group content of each semester needs to be carefully staircased so that students can move from power building to empowerment (Stewart & Manz, 1995).

The learning focuses

The first semester module therefore aims to introduce students to elementary theories of group work while focusing on contemporary New Zealand society. Assessment involves both individual and group tasks so that final grades are dependent on both self and others. Students are placed by teaching staff in a single group for the whole semester. The aim here is for students to begin to develop capabilities through taking responsibility for their learning on their own and in their groups (Pauling, 1997, p. 26). They begin to experience the potential for synergy (Gibbs, 1992), and that value of accepting different viewpoints.

Assessment for this module (as for the others) includes both individual and group work. Within group work, marks are allocated evenly between all members. One assessment is a self-evaluation journal which includes a reflection on individual learning within the group context. Worth 50% of the final Communication marks, it encourages students to develop reflection of their own and others' behaviours in group situations. Students identify blocking and positive behaviours and patterns of interaction. They are encouraged to examine and evaluate both negative and positive experiences in the light of the theory they have learned.

Some students are able to do this quite effectively. They are candid about their difficulties and reflect on their ability to apply appropriate theoretical principles. They support their observations with specific and insightful examples and analyse their weaknesses as well as their strengths. The marking criteria acknowledge the value of this openness.

By contrast, others may identify only their strengths without a critical focus. In addition to this they may fail to relate their observations to relevant underlying principles. They choose instead an approach of self-serving bias, identifying and blaming others' weaknesses. This tendency is sometimes repeated over the three semesters. Students may continue to deny the value/relevance of the theory that is taught and instead practise defensive routines that inhibit their learning. A third group is content to merely describe what happened in the group experience. They fail to reflect on or evaluate the processes in any depth. This

"satisficing" approach (Wilson & Rosenfield, 1990) may enable them to pass the course with only superficial learning For some of these students, this is the result of poor time management skills. An inability to multi-task and prioritise means that they do not allow sufficient time to reflect on and record the processes that they experience.

In response to these concerns, teaching staff have begun to allocate class time to personal reflection throughout the semester. For instance, after a listening exercise students are given time to write down a short evaluation of their own listening skills. This enables them to build a portfolio which traces their progress and provides material for their reflective evaluation. As they do not receive any feedback on the critical quality of their observations, the depth of their analysis is not monitored. The difficulty associated with increased monitoring has implications for both student privacy and staff workloads and is an area that needs to remain a focus for reflection.

During the second semester module the content focus is on information in business and the development of self-directed learning. Membership of two different groups is determined by teaching staff following students' identification of their strengths, weaknesses and preferred group roles. Students are introduced to some of the principles of organisational learning and how this links with an integrated approach (Senge, 1994). The academic theory from the first semester becomes a foundation for the development of a greater understanding of individual roles in a group/team (Belbin, 1991). By contrast with Module 1, only some of the teaching staff are dedicated Communication specialists. As a result, some group process issues which students bring from the previous semester may remain unresolved. There are two implications here. One is the positive reinforcement for both staff and students of the integrated approach: all lecturers are seen to be capable of assuming group supervision, regardless of their area of specialisation. The other is that the Communication specialists have a key role in helping other staff to become conversant with relevant communication theory.

Module 2 is the first time that teams within the context of organisational learning are mentioned. The tasks are more demanding than previously and involve both primary and secondary research. Students are made aware of the value of and the differences between affective and cognitive conflict (Amason, 1996). In this module, there is no single reflection on experiences and behaviours in their teams. However, there is an expectation that they will include this during three individual learning evaluation sessions with their group tutorial lecturer. These sessions represent 5% of the total module mark and, like the journal in Module 1, encourage and reward critical self-assessment. Although the main focus is on the ability to work independently, this self-assessment also includes the student's ability to work with others.

Again, there is a variety of student ability to use this process for learning. The one-to-one approach encourages positive introspection about individual self-management skills. However in most cases, group skills are eclipsed by the focus on critical self-analysis. This is despite the fact that the major assessment for the module is a written and oral group report. Consideration should be given on whether to place more emphasis on self-assessment of group skills development.

The differences between groups and teams is further highlighted in semester three. An increasing emphasis on critical thinking and responsibility for learning is designed to empower students. "Staying capable in a world of change requires confidence in one's ability to manage one's own learning" (Stephenson, 1997, p. 8). As in Module 2, students work in two different teams. However membership of the first is determined by the team adviser while the second is negotiated by the students themselves in consultation with teaching staff. For each team assignment, they develop evaluation criteria for individual participation, the first time as a formative exercise and then summatively. These criteria are determined through discussion by team members and must be specific and measurable. They are

typically concerned with participation, task sharing, cooperation and commitment and are used to evaluate behaviour of both self and others. Individual scores are used to adjust each person's grade (maximum +/- 15%) for the business plan which is written co-operatively. The perception of teaching staff is that the process works well but its management requires sensitivity, particularly where students lodge an appeal.

The main Module 3 assignment, developing and producing a comprehensive business plan, is more complex than before and demands advanced team skills. With the increased complexity of the task, conflict becomes even more of an issue. Group tutorial content therefore builds on and further explores team-related concepts which were introduced in earlier semesters. Students research theories and share the knowledge with others in a series of team presentations. They come to realise that the sharing of differing viewpoints is essential for effective team performance. They continue to be encouraged to identify the linkages between discipline areas and to see the larger picture through a series of practical applications of systems thinking (Senge, 1994).

Students are encouraged to use a sharing and flexible leadership model. Particular emphasis is also placed on developing a class and team culture of openness and self conscious awareness of the group process (Harris,1993; Senge,1994) as well as individual participation (Tubbs,1998).

The adjournment stage of the teams is dealt with for the first time in a half-hour debriefing session at the end of the semester. This is an opportunity to reflect on how the reality of their experiences matched the theory that they have discussed throughout the three semesters. Many students articulate this in a candid and positive manner. There is, however, a danger that some students may seek to avoid confrontation and not voice their concerns about their team experience. As a result "social loafers" may remain unchallenged about their behaviour because they have become part of an undiscussable dimension of the team (Senge, 1994). In addition other team members within this situation may fail to take ownership of this problem. The facilitator of the adjournment session should be aware of the underlying currents to help the team confront these issues constructively so that meaningful learning occurs.

Reflection and evaluation

In reflecting on the effectiveness of the programme, we need to ask how well the reality matches the vision we are trying to achieve—to empower people to "reason about their behaviour in new and more effective ways ... breaking down the defenses that block learning" (Argyris, 1991). The results are tangible. Although we have not yet quantified it, there is a definite progression between the beginning of the first semester and the end of the third. Most students do indeed become effective and skilled team members who can cooperate, set goals, meet deadlines and listen to others. They become increasingly sensitive to others' different paradigms, aware of (some of) their own prejudices and they appreciate the value of cognitive conflict.

However it must be recognised that not all students are so successful. Some individuals work effectively as group/team members from the beginning; others have difficulty recognising and accepting the concepts of shared participation and responsibility. As a consequence, social loafing (Latane, Williams & Harkins, 1979, in Bettenhausen, 1991). continues to be an issue. This is evident in their lack of insightful self- and group-reflection, and their resistance to consideration and application of underlying theory. While there are indications that this issue may be gender- (McConchie, 1996), culture- and/or maturity-related, this is an area for further research.

Some students are still exhibiting defensive routines at the final adjournment session. They "cover up" for each other rather than face the undiscussables of the dynamics within the

group (Senge, 1994). For these students, "... the leverage is in recognizing defensive routines as joint creations and to find [their] own role in creating and sustaining them" (Senge, 1994, p. 266).

As a result of our own reflections in writing this paper, we suggest consideration be given to staircasing the group experience differently. Rather than placing students in only one group in Module 1, membership of several groups would provide a greater variety of reflective material. It would also have an added advantage of minimising the effects of attrition throughout the semester, which is common in the first months of many programmes. At Module 3 level, membership of a single team throughout the semester could provide opportunities for increased depth and awareness of interaction.

A further area of concern is the paradigm that some students have of the value of personal growth and development of capabilities and skills. They bring with them perceptions which have developed as a result of interactions at home, at school and socially, perceptions which impact upon their openness to "double loop learning" (Argyris, 1974, in Dick & Dalmau, 1990). In this context group tutorials may be considered less valuable than the traditional academic subjects, partly because capabilities and skills are not overtly assessed.

For teaching staff there may be an issue in relation to the balance between individual and group focus, especially with regard to delivery. Senge (1994) discusses the need to become aware of our own and others' mental models in order to enhance and deepen the level of communication. In working towards this, we need to be aware of the inadvisability of focusing solely on group performance. There is a danger of becoming part of an unquestioning acceptance of one mental model. Current research (Buisson, 1997) suggests that there is a "need to balance team work with individualism (sic) skills as well as creativity/ lateral thinking abilities". We believe that, while both individual and group achievement are recognised in all three modules, further research should be undertaken in this area.

A further issue is the level of consistency for teaching staff between their espoused and actual values. Senge (1994) suggests that this involves all aspects of our own self awareness and sensitivity in our interactions with others. To achieve the vision, classroom culture must be consistent with our aims. We need to model openness to learning and alternative paradigms. The trap is to see the students as different from us, because they are not. There must be an underlying consciousness of the need for congruence between learning content and teaching methodologies, ie. the need to "walk the talk" (Argyris, 1993).

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Fac. Eco. UNSW.

How did they solve ESL

Generic literacies (how to)
Disc Sp. literacies
Com. Skills
↓
(res., policy, ethic self exp)
| Reasoning, crit thinkg, arguments.

4700 st 25% Intl.
60% ESL
50 countries of origin
80 countries of birth
55 different languages

Diagnostic : 1996
33% U/G = need sup
40% P/G "

Did you test only ESL? : Basically discipline - specific
How solve issues of equity

Developing effective communication skills: Initiatives in commerce and economics

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The importance of developing *'effective communication skills'* for achieving success in academic and professional contexts is being increasingly recognised by tertiary institutions and their respective faculties. Recent business and workplace reports, both internationally and in Australia, have consistently identified *'effective communication'* as a key requirement for graduates entering the workforce.

The Faculty of Commerce and Economics at the University of New South Wales, has developed a range of initiatives to address the communication needs and enhance the communication competence of its large and diverse student population. This paper presents an overview of the Faculty's communication skills policy and direction, a discussion of key initiatives that have been and are in the process of being implemented, and brief comments on outcomes and future directions. Central to the discussion are strategies used for assessing students' language and communication needs, generic and discipline specific support courses, Faculty specific Communication Skills Resource Books, stand-alone subjects in Communication Studies (undergraduate and postgraduate), and the establishment of an Educational Development Unit to coordinate and extend these initiatives.

Introduction

In surveys seeking to identify skills which are 'predictive of success' in graduates, business leaders and employers, both internationally and in Australia, have consistently ranked 'communication' as the most important skill. In the Business/Higher Education Roundtable Report (1995), for example, human resource managers ranked 'communication' as the most important attribute in selecting new graduates, with 93.8% of respondents suggesting that it should be given *'very high to high'* emphasis. In the same study, graduates already in the workforce identified 'communication skills' as the key attribute required for future success.

Accompanying such findings, there has been, and continues to be, much criticism from employers and industry regarding the lack of preparation of graduates in the area of communication. In a study involving college trained students entering the business sector in the US, Porter and McKibben (1988, p. 99) reported extensive findings of "poor communication and interpersonal skills" and poor "oral and, especially written communication". Similar findings were made in a study in the UK by Lamb (1994) who reported that 45% of professionally trained employees entering business and commerce were lacking in oral skills, and 57% were lacking in written skills.

Such criticisms are not limited to graduates entering Business and Commerce. There have been calls, for example, in engineering, for more emphasis to be placed on the development of communication, leadership, teamwork and interpersonal skills (ACOST, 1991). In a recent UNSW survey of managers in commerce and engineering, regarding their perceptions of the communication skills required of graduates in the workplace, Jeremy Tompkins, Training and Development Manager in one of Australia's leading engineering companies, made the following comments:

> I understand that there is an increasing demand on the student's time to absorb more

> and more complex technical knowledge just to reach the starting blocks as a graduate engineer. However, there has to be a balance between their level of technical knowledge and the ability to communicate with others, so that they can realise the potential of that knowledge. It is no good being a master in your technical discipline if your communication skills are barely adequate. The one cannot compensate for the other. Graduate engineers' long term success and job satisfaction may well depend as much on their ability to communicate appropriately in different situations, as it will do on their technical excellence.

The same may be said of graduates entering all professions. Whilst the focus of this paper is the implementation of strategies to enhance the communication skills of students in Commerce and Economics, it is acknowledged that *effective communication* is a 'life-long learning' skill (Candy, 1994) that ought to be developed by all graduates, regardless of their field of study or future employment.

Background

The Faculty of Commerce and Economics at the University of New South Wales has a total of nine Schools and major disciplinary strands, each with its own discipline specific discourse with which students must become familiar. It has an approximate enrolment of 4,700 students, about 25% of whom are international students (mainly from Asian and South East Asian backgrounds), and over 60% have English as a second language. Fifty five different 'languages spoken at home' have been identified amongst these students. Given this diverse student population, any effort to enhance communication must, indeed, employ a range of strategies to address the diversity in language, learning and communication abilities.

To set the agenda for developing and implementing such a broadly based approach, the Faculty's Education Quality Committee turned to its Education Quality Plan (1996), which outlined strategies to ensure that graduates received the "highest quality of educational experience appropriate to the awards they take through the Faculty of Commerce and Economics" (p. 1). Of relevance to this paper, is point 1.2 of the Education Quality Plan (1996) which recommends the institution of "policies related to the development of English Language Proficiency, Communication Skills, Numeracy, Information Literacy, Ethics and Responsibility" (p.1).

Supporting the Education Quality Plan was the the Faculty's 'Proposed Graduate Outcomes and Skill Profiles' document (1996–1997). which detailed the skills expected of the students graduating from the Faculty. With regard to the Language and Communication skills required of students, the document clearly identified the following areas (pp. 1–5):

- generic literacies (English Language);
- discipline specific literacies;
- generic communication skills (interpersonal, written, spoken);
- specific communication skills (research, policy and ethical discourses, self expression);
- reasoning (analytic thinking, logical reasoning, argumentation).

Figure 1 below provides an overview of the Language and Communication initiatives supported by the Faculty's Education Quality Committee to date. Whilst the two dimensions of 'Language' and 'Communication' cannot effectively be separated, this has been done in

Figure 1 for the convenience of discussion and for the purpose of highlighting the different orientations to the initiatives.

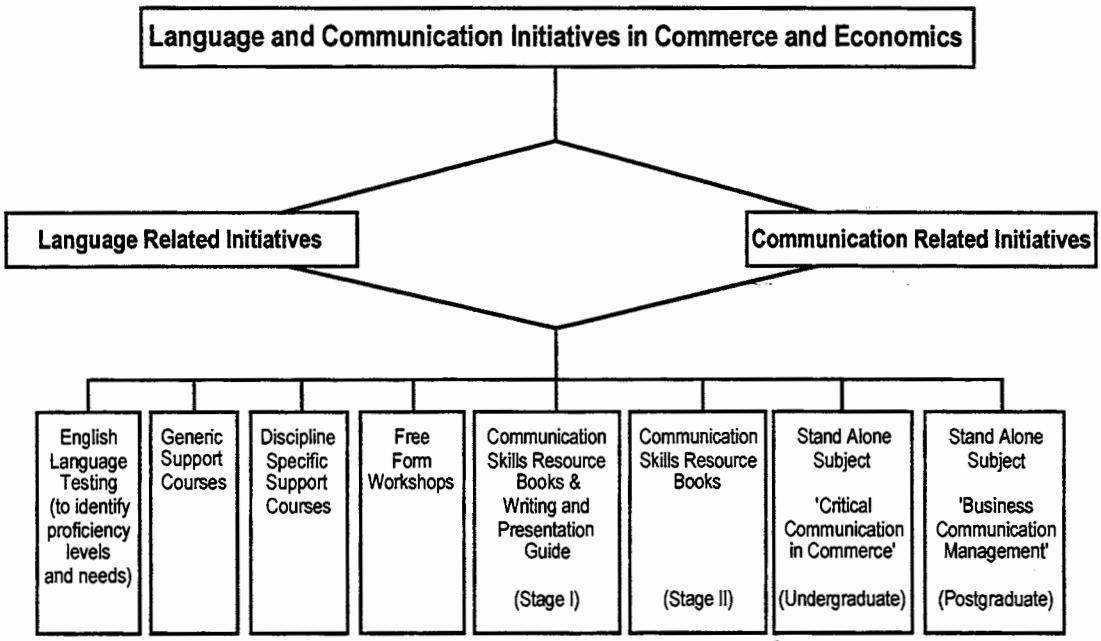

Figure 1. Language and communication initiatives in Commerce and Economics

Faculty initiatives

Language diagnostic task and generic support courses

Much of the impetus for determining appropriate support and development initiatives in language communication flowed from the outcomes of a language diagnostic task administered to approximately 1,000 undergraduate and 380 postgraduate students who enrolled students in the Faculty, in session 1 of 1996. Administration of the task (in 'written communication'). was in response to staff concerns about the "poor" English language and communication skills of students, and the impact of this on learning and teaching. The main purpose of this initiative was to gain an understanding of students' levels of written communication, to identify students experiencing difficulties in academic writing, and, on the basis of findings, to provide appropriate language and communication support courses.

The diagnostic task consisted of a reading extract (from *Business Review Weekly*), a set of multiple choice questions, and a writing task in response to the reading. The writing component was marked by trained language assessors (IELTS, CULT and Cambridge language test markers). to ensure an authentic assessment of students' levels of writing in the Faculty. Analysis of the findings indicated that approximately 33% of undergraduates and 40% of postgraduates required some level of English language support.

Consequently, a series of 'Language and Communication in Commerce' courses were devised and offered by staff at the Learning Centre. The short courses and workshops focussed on all four macro-skills (reading, writing, listening and speaking) and incorporated the use of both generic and Commerce or Business related materials. They varied in length and intensity to suit students' needs, and included:

(i) One-off workshops (2 hours).

(ii) Short intensive courses (2 hours per week x 6 weeks).

(iii) Long intensive courses (4 hours per week x 12 weeks: undergraduate).

(iv) Long Intensive courses (2 hours per week x 10 weeks: postgraduate).

A total of four workshops, four short courses, and eight long courses were offered by The Learning Centre at UNSW. Initial response to the support courses was encouraging, with approximately 200 of the 450 students identified accepting offers of support and development. However, numbers gradually dropped, with only 20 to 25 students attending by the end of the courses.

As can be expected, when work loads and study related pressures increased, support classes were the first to be dropped. Interviews with students who dropped out indicated that, despite concern about their written and oral communication skills, they "had no time " and "had too much work". Some saw "no direct benefit" in attending support classes, indicating a certain difficulty in associating the skills gained in 'out of load' support courses with 'in load' subject learning. The interviews also revealed that a large percentage of students (87%) would attend if given some form of credit, and an even larger percentage (91%) would attend if it were part of their degree. Thus, whilst the courses themselves were viewed as beneficial (by the Faculty, staff and students who continued to attend), in general, students failed to take advantage of this strategy.

It should also be pointed out that in a follow up study linking English language scores obtained in the diagnostic task with students' end-of semester results, no significant differences were found in the performance scores of students with low language scores and 'local' English speaking students (the TER cut-off for the Faculty was 91.5). In fact, 'international' students who had indicated high language scores in the diagnostic task, out-performed 'local' English speaking students. The Faculty came to the realisation that, whilst many students were in need of language and communication support, their capabilities and academic achievements indicated the need for alternate approaches to providing this support. It consequently shifted to the provision of support *within* the Faculty, and where possible, *within* specific subject areas where students could benefit most.

Discipline specific courses

In contrast to the response to the more generic language and communication support initiatives initially offered by the Faculty of Commerce and Economics, the focus on 'discipline specific support' initiatives is proving to be extremely popular amongst both students and teaching staff. Evidence in recent literature (English et al, 1995; Ingleton, 1996) points to the growing impact of this strategy on student learning, language and communication skills development. Broadly, 'discipline specific' language and communication support courses are directly linked to 'in load' subjects , address areas of need identified by academic teaching staff, are short and focussed, and are devised and taught by language staff in consultation with academic staff. Several such support strategies have been implemented to date, whilst others are being negotiated for implementation in later sessions, including for example:

- a report writing course for students in 'Computer Information Systems 1';
- a speaking skills course for students in 'Fundamentals of Marketing';
- an oral and written communication course for students in 'Critical Communication in Commerce';
- a communication course for students in 'Telecommunication Business Management';
- a reading, writing and discussion course for students in 'Legal Foundations of Business'.

The latter is of particular interest in that a skilled language teacher with a legal background was employed to devise and teach the support course, in consultation with an academic staff member. The support course was developed for a group of postgraduate international students who had little understanding of Australian Business Law, and great difficulty in managing legal discourse. The direct benefit to students in 'negotiating', 'understanding' and 'using' the specialised language of business law was clearly evident in evaluations of the support initiative.

Free form workshops

A variation of the 'discipline specific' support mode that has become extremely popular amongst students is the 'free form' workshop, an initiative in which academic staff are encouraged to devise and provide support courses in areas of concern in subject specific contexts. These workshops are less structured, more student-centred, provide opportunities for students to seek subject related assistance, and engage in the discourse of their discipline in a non-threatening environment, hence the term 'free form'. Attendance rates at these workshops are extremely high (an average of 80 students per week in the 'Microeconomics I' support workshop). Workshops have been established in relation to several other subjects including Accounting and Financial Management 1A and 1B (undergraduate) and Revenue Law (postgraduate). An attractive feature of this initiative is the involvement of academic staff, who are encouraged to participate with incentives in the form of reductions in teaching loads, and the provision of support and resources.

Communication skills resource books

It is expected that communication skills development will occur in the context of all subjects taught in the Faculty. However, to ensure that the Faculty's expectations of its graduating students in the area of 'effective communication skills' are met, it has set itself goals to be achieved in two stages:

- Stage I: Communication skills expected of students on completion of their first year of studies;
- Stage II: Communication skills expected of students prior to graduation.

These two stages "define the communication competencies to be possessed by graduates of the Faculty—as a point of reference for staff, students, and subsequent employers" (W. Birkett, in Communication Skills Resource Book, 1996a, p.ii).

Stage I

A *Communication Skills Resource Book* has been devised for distribution to all first year undergraduate and postgraduate students entering the Faculty (commenced in 1997). The aim of this initiative is to firmly place 'Communication Skills" on the agenda of teaching and learning in the Faculty. It is a key strategy in making students aware of the importance of the range of skills that fall under the umbrella of 'communication' and the significance of these skills for current and future use. Modules, together with 'checkpoint' activities for independent learning, include topics on Modern views about Communication, Perception and Communication, Listening and Communication, Language and Communication, Critical Thinking, Argumentation and Reasoning, Language and Persuasion, Written and Spoken Communication.

Implementation of this initiative has ranged from broad recognition of the book as a point of reference for students and staff in the Faculty, to inclusion of the book in the Recommended Reading Lists of almost all subjects (both undergraduate and postgraduate), to its use as an independent learning workbook (with students working through modules of interest in their

own time and at their own pace), and finally, to the direct incorporation of specific modules into subject specific contexts (eg. in subjects such as Accounting and Financial Management 1; Microeconomics 1; Critical Communication in Commerce).

In a pilot study, prior to Faculty-wide implementation of the *Communication Skills Resource Book*, modules were trialed with students from a range of backgrounds including undergraduates, postgraduates, local (English and non-English speaking) and international students, to seek feedback on appropriacy of the content, level, topics and language. Student responses provided valuable in-put for making the book more user-friendly, and in identifying difficulties that may be encountered, particularly by students with English as a second language. Feedback was extremely positive, with students describing the book as "very helpful", "well structured" and "very effective in increasing knowledge about communication issues". Perhaps the most encouraging comment was that of a local (English speaking). student who, although initially sceptical, on completion of the book's activities wrote: "I was really surprised, I could not believe how good it was."

The undergraduate international students, however, encountered difficulty with some of the language and topics (eg. Communication, Argumentation and Reasoning; Psychological Fallacies of Argument). Others expressed concern that the value of the book may be lost because students may not complete the activities or even attempt them. Suggestions to counter such attitudes included making completion of the book "compulsory", or seeking greater "staff commitment" to using the resource book in discipline specific areas. In response to these and other suggestions to ensure wide use of the resource book, the Faculty is currently considering strategies for ensuring student completion of the independent learning components (eg. the awarding of completion certificates), and staff use of relevant modules in their subject areas (eg. staff training sessions and support mechanisms).

A brief survey of student use of the resource book conducted at the end of session 2, 1997, indicated mixed responses. For example, 60% of students in Accounting and Financial Management 1 and Microeconomics 1 indicated that they used the resource book because they "had to", whilst 40% indicated that they used the book because they "wanted to". Student comments on the usefulness of the book ranged from "What has this got to do with Accounting anyway?", to "It's one of the most useful books I've had at university". Eighty per cent of students enrolled in the subject 'Critical Communication in Commerce' found the book 'very useful', particularly modules focusing on 'Argumentation', 'Reasoning' and 'Critical Thinking'.

In session 1 of 1998, approximately 1,800 copies of the Communication Skills Resource Book were distributed to students enrolling in the Faculty. It is expected that with each distribution, the *Resource Book* will become more firmly entrenched as a basic communication skills learning resource for students and a teaching resource for staff.

Yet another Stage I resource book currently being prepared for distribution to students is the Faculty's 'Writing and Presentation Guide'. Such a guide is intended to provide students with an indication of the genres and written communication styles commonly expected in the Faculty and in business related professions, and information and advice on making oral presentations in academic and professional contexts. There will also be an accompanying teachers' version of the Writing and Presentation Guide, with input from representatives from each of the Schools in the Faculty (sub-committee of the Education Quality Committee). Implementation date is set for session 1, 1999.

Stage II

A second series of Communication Resource Books is currently being prepared for students in their second and third years of study, and focuses on the realms of discourse expected of graduates in the areas of:

- research;
- policy formation;
- ethics and social responsibility; and
- self expression.

Whilst these discourses are frequently addressed within subject and discipline specific contexts, the approach is considered to be somewhat fragmented. The Stage II Communication Resource Books will act as a central point of reference for students and staff in the use and enhancement of these discourses. They will aim at ensuring that exiting graduates are competent and confident in communicating in the area of research, in engaging in the discourse of policy formulation, in considering and commenting on ethical issues, in actively participating in decision making, in espousing personal and professional goals and aspirations, and in determining future directions in the workplace. The resource books are currently being devised by consultants with expertise in each of the areas identified above, together with in-put from academic staff. The projected date for implementation in session 1, 1999.

Stand alone subjects

Communication initiatives have also been devised at a more formal level, to further diversify the communication opportunities available for students in the Faculty. This has been accomplished with the introduction of credit bearing electives in both the undergraduate and postgraduate programs.

Undergraduate subject

The undergraduate subject, 'Critical Communication in Commerce', was introduced in session 2 of 1997. The subject aims at developing and extending students' capacity for thinking critically and communicating effectively in academic, business and everyday contexts. It includes modules on:

- Principles and models of communication
- Language and communication
- Non-verbal communication
- Critical thinking and analysis
- Argument and reasoning
- Persuasive language
- Interpersonal communication
- Intercultural communication
- Communicating in small groups and teams
- Communication for the workplace
- Preparing and making oral presentations

The subject was piloted with a class of ten students, and initially included tutorial options in 'Language and Communication' (for students experiencing English language difficulties), and 'Logic and Reasoning' (for students to develop advanced critical thinking and analytical skills). The model was devised to enhance students' communication skills, as well as address Faculty concerns about students' language needs. However, most students' expressed a preference for both topics, leading to the abandonment of the 'streamed' approach and the adoption of a 'combined approach' which included aspects from both options. A discipline specific support course in 'Language and Communication' was subsequently established, to address the needs of students who required additional assistance in written and oral communication.

The success of this initiative can be seen in the rapid rise in enrolments (from 10 students in session 2, 1997 to 98 students in session 1, 1998), the nomination of the subject as an elective recommended for students undertaking majors in Marketing and International Business, and the following sample of student comments:

> "A basic requirement for all first year students—to learn the essentials of communication in commerce and prepare for the workplace. This subject should be compulsory." *(first year student).*
>
> "A great opportunity to learn valuable communication, presentation, language and critical thinking skills—essential for business students." *(second year student).*
>
> "Not only enjoyable, but highly relevant. I only wish I had the opportunity to study this subject right at the beginning of my course!" *(third year student).*
>
> "It's about time universities realise that students fail to gain important communication skills from most of their subjects! 'Critical Communication in Commerce' should be a core subject in first year because it would have assisted me a lot in second and third year! It is a subject that I've really enjoyed while at the same time gaining invaluable skills." *(third year student).*

The success of the 'Language and Communication' support strategy linked to the subject is clearly evidenced in the comments of students who participated in workshops:

> "I'd like to say that the (support) class is very helpful. After the class I wondered why haven't I come to this class earlier. I would not have failed my writing task if I did come. I really hope that the class will be running continually." *(first year international student).*
>
> "I think it's really good that I tried my speaking task today. Now I can imagine myself doing this in the class. It's the first time and I was really nervous..." *(first year NESB student).*

This undergraduate elective has all the signs of becoming a valuable and valued subject in the Faculty of Commerce and Economics.

Postgraduate subject

Included in the overall communication policy of the Faculty has been the intention to introduce a communication subject for postgraduate students, parallel to the undergraduate initiative. Consistent with this intention, a Faculty Postgraduate Teaching Colloquium recommended "the introduction of a Communication and Critical Thinking subject as a core component of the M. Com." (Recommendations Arising From the Second Postgraduate Teaching Colloquium, 1997, p. 1). An elective subject, tentatively entitled "Business

Communication Management", and similar in structure to the undergraduate subject, is currently being planned for implementation in session 2 of 1998.

Educational development unit

The development and implementation of the communication initiatives described in the context of this paper is but one dimension of the overall language, learning and communication policy of the Faculty of Commerce and Economics. On-going maintenance and expansion of the initiatives to address the diverse needs of students is another.

To coordinate these communication (and other educational development) initiatives, the Faculty has recently established an Educational Development Unit. The Unit seeks to:

- provide a structured framework for the delivery of the range of initiatives devised;
- ensure continuity in the provision of support initiatives for students;
- ensure continuity in the provision of support services for staff;
- be pro-active in identifying further areas of need;
- conduct research to measure the impact of the initiatives implemented; and
- conduct on-going research to further investigate student diversity in learning, language and communication.

Conclusion

The intention of the Faculty of Commerce and Economics at UNSW is to provide a range of initiatives and opportunities for students to enhance their language and communication competence. The initiatives aim at ensuring that students acquire the skills expected of graduates as outlined in the Faculty's 'Proposed Graduate Outcomes and Skill Profiles' document (1996-1997). Whilst there has been evaluations of some initiatives (such as the generic support courses, the Communication Skills Resource Book, the undergraduate elective subject), the impact of other initiatives (such as the discipline specific support courses and free form workshops). are yet to be measured. The latter is part of a major 'Learning, Language and Diversity Research Project' in progress in the Faculty. Findings of this study will influence further initiatives and future directions.

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Reflexive learning about communication and research: Exploring the benefits of participant-observation as an educative strategy

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This paper describes the innovative use of the reflexive research strategy of participation-observation as an educative tool. The educational module that was developed was designed to assist undergraduates who are studying to become health professionals, in the systematic development of experientially based insights into important aspects of their role as communicators. This paper describes the research origins of the educational initiative, details the main features of its conversion and implementation in the context of health professional needs, and explores some of its generic possibilities as an educative tool for any professional training program.

Introduction

In this paper I will describe my temporary metamorphosis from being a researcher to becoming a teacher of communication; and, more importantly, I'm going to describe some of the products of that experience. To do this, I've divided this paper into five sections:

Section 1: The starting point of my original research into the communication of health information—the rationale, plan and funding for it.

Section 2: Why this research became transformed into a double-headed learning exercise about communications content and research process.

Section 3: What it became as a student's integrated experience of educative research, or SIE-ER:

(i) in the case of an educational module for students in the health professions, with some details about the design and implementation as a collaborative venture; and

(ii) in the generic form of a framework for converting [or extending] a research protocol into a structured learning experience about content and process.

Section 4: Where to next? Is there a future for the SIE-ER and what are the best ways of communicating and exploring its potential?

Section 5: What I learnt on the road from researcher to teacher of communications.

Section 1: The original research into the communication of health information

Context: The current status of health and commodification of health information

Health is an enduring social priority whose value for Australians remains extremely high in the nineties (Sargent, 1994; Bulletin, 1997). Increasingly, however, developments in public health and preventive medicine have focused on the personal responsibility of informed members of the community for their own health management. It is, therefore, not surprising that there has been a rise and rise in the treatment of health information as a social commodity.

The putative *providers* or sources of this information are both disparate in types and proliferating in number, but it is possible to classify them into three broad clusters:

- people (including both health professionals and lay members such as family);
- media (including all the conventional forms of mass media as well as forms ranging from computer-accessed data bases to billboards); and
- organisations (ranging from educational institutions to disease-based health foundations and self-help groups).

How, then, do the *consumers* (both lay and professional), who are the targets of the resultant surfeit of health information, manage to create order out of the potential chaos of conflicting messages that are now provided about health? This is a process which the ethnomethodologists of the past would have described, rightly, as being in the taken-for-granted, unconscious sector of our daily routine (Abercrombie, Hill & Turner, 1994).

Research directions to date

The research that has been carried out in this area for the past several decades has focussed on the identification of the sources of health information which are the most effective channels through which to keep the public up-to-date on developments in health management. Such studies have, of course, been reflective of the social perspective of the times in which they were carried out. Seminal work conducted by Feldman (1966) in the 1960s, for example, demonstrated the reliance of that era on traditional medical sources. In the present self-help era, selecting the most effective and efficient sources from the wide range that is now available is of particular importance to members of the health promotion industry. It is, therefore a recurring issue in their public forums, as documented by Leathar, Hastings and O'Reilly (1985) and, more recently, in a number of the papers given at the National Health Promotion Conference in 1995.

In 1995, also, Radimer and Harvey (1995) published the results of a survey which was conducted to find the most used and 'more useful' sources of nutrition information. This aimed to 'help dietitians and nutritionists decide where to focus attention, energy and money in order to improve people's nutrition knowledge' (Radimer & Harvey 1995, p.98).

Their study was typical of many of those which have been carried out in the past decade (and reviewed in Radimer & Harvey, 1995; Ring, 1996), in that they could be described as broad brush approaches that do not make distinctions between some key differences in the ways that people access and deal with the health information potentially available to them. Specifically, these studies do not differentiate between:

- Peoples' active information-seeking behaviour as compared with what can be termed a more passive information-receiving behaviour (and how much overlap there is between them); ie, what they find because they are looking for it *and* where (or from whom) do they tend to seek it, compared with what they find because it comes into their purview in some opportunistic way *and* which are the most likely ways that this occurs—and the extent of overlap between them.
- What people do with the health information they have garnered from their various sources: is it acted on, filed away, or discarded? This raises the issue of the value people explicitly assign to items of health information, in the context of both the sources of the information and the degree of overlap between what is considered to be important information, and what is actually kept, retrieved and acted on.

Surprisingly little research has been carried out into questions such as these. Such issues are, however, of particular interest, both academically and for practical reasons, in the context of groups with differing health status linked with different lifestyles. An important case in point is that of the major differences in health status between men and women, which have, in turn, been aetiologically linked—in part at least—with gender differences in behaviour. The consequences, in female morbidity and male mortality, have been pithily summed up by Harper (1994, pp. 2-3): 'women get sicker, men die quicker'. As has been outlined in Ring (1996), both of these outcomes have become a matter of public health and—increasingly—public concern.

This was the basis for a doctoral study that compared the volume and types of health-related information directed separately to men and to women in a sample of mass media (popular magazines) which have been reported as being an important source of health information. Substantial differences—sustaining gender stereotypes over a period of major social changes in both gender equity and health thinking (between 1952 and 1988)—were found in the health content in these two sets of targeted media (Ring, 1995).

At the same time, there was considerable evidence for gender-linked differences in patterns of usage of the health services and the forms of media which are major providers of health information. In general, these tend to be in the direction of greater access by women than men, when comparing sources that range from the family doctor to point-of-sale information at supermarkets and health food stores (Ring, 1996).

The research questions and objectives

For these reasons, the doctoral research stimulated the design for a comparative study into the management of health information by women and by men. This study, which was awarded a development grant by the Faculty of Health Sciences in the University of Sydney, posed the following research questions, and associated objectives:

The questions

How do consumers manage health information, and do females and males show different approaches to the ways that they access, sort, select and make sense of what they need for their own use?

The objectives

1) To develop, trial and compare two approaches, each applicable for men and for women, to the examination of their health management behaviours at the levels of acquisition and use, where:

   - one approach involves a survey, and a quantitative analysis of the data collected; and

   - one approach involves a more qualitative perspective combining individual maintenance of a diary followed by a focus group interview.

2) To optimise the relevance of this project by working within an interdisciplinary framework in its development, through collaboration with communication and health professional experts who have conducted research and/or educational programs in this area.

3) To work with health professional students as subjects, in order to explore the value and the capabilities of the instruments that are developed, in two ways:

- as first order tools to collect and compare information from males and from females on their information-gathering behaviours, and

- as second-order, educational tools that can help such students to gain insights into the wider issues of the heterogeneous nature of these behaviours, and the implications of this with regard to: (i) the effective targeting of health-related information being developed for specific audiences; and (ii) assisting lay consumers of health information, to improve their skills in the acquisition, appraisal and use of health information appropriate to their needs

Section 2: Why the research became transformed into a double-headed learning exercise about communications content and research process: the shift from opportunistic to structured student learning

At that stage of planning, therefore, the potential benefits to the participant students were projected to be the opportunistic learning that is an expected by-product of research projects involving university students (Dalziel, 1996). However, during the initial discussions with Faculty staff in 1997 to set up the project, it underwent a significant change. This was the direct result of input from Dr Rosemary Cant, the Head of the Department of Behavioural Sciences (through which the project was administered).

Her areas of teaching interest include the ways in which health information is disseminated, and the value to the students in the health professions of developing an understanding of the types of health messages that are most commonly circulated through the mass media and other everyday providers. She therefore raised the possibility of converting the research protocol into an educational module. In this way, the health information issues that were being targeted by the study could be trialed as an integrated component of the students' educational program, through their class work. The educational benefits would then be available to students in selected courses in a systematic way, instead of being restricted to the more typical ad hoc variety accessed only by a self-selected sub-set of student research volunteers.

Her suggestion was a very exciting one, and—with the collaboration of herself and several other Faculty lecturers—the project was restructured as an innovative, two-pronged educational exercise, with the working label of a 'students' integrated experience of educative research' (or SIE-ER). In effect, the educational and the research objectives were reversed in terms of their hierarchical importance and—in so doing—have opened up a new perspective on the way in which academic research involving students can be conducted.

The framework that was developed for the educational program and is outlined later in this paper, has been successfully followed over the first semester of this year, and the program is currently being evaluated. It should be stressed at this point that the trialing of this educational initiative has been conducted with the participant students being explicitly and formally included as members of the project team, with no hidden agendas.

Section 3: The evolution of a students' integrated experience of educative research, or SIE-ER

An educational module for students in the health professions

Rationale

On the basis of the accepted definition of *communication* as 'the transfer of information', and of *information* as 'knowledge' (Macquarie Dictionary, 1997), it is probably not an overstatement to suggest that the development of communication skills at the undergraduate level for students in the health professions should include a sound understanding of the following two aspects of their future role:

- their contribution to the knowledge base of their clients (through effective communications), and

- their contribution to the knowledge base of their profession (through some level of involvement in research).

These future responsibilities are tied to the fact that they will be functioning in a society that is in the permanent throes of an overload of information. In general, as well as in the particular case of health which was discussed earlier in this paper:

- There is more to know.

- There are more people who know—both professional experts (with the increasing numbers of tertiary-educated individuals, as cited in Meek and Wood,1998), and what is becoming increasingly characterised as the *informed* (lay) consumer.

- There are more conduits for dissemination—not only expert people and organisations, but types of media, both existing ones broadening their scope and new types of information technology and telecommunications.

This situation raises certain questions:

1. There is, first of all, the compound research question that has already been posed: of how the individual consumers (lay and professional) of all of this information can manage all of the messages with which they are bombarded, and of how they can make sense of them for their own use.

2. This is linked to the question of how the health professional can help consumers to select out those messages that optimise well-being.

3. How can such professionals ensure that the messages that they themselves provide are based on soundly researched evidence?

These are questions that need to be addressed as part of the educational program for students in the health professions. And these questions provided the direction for the metamorphosis of the health information research project, into the innovative experiential learning exercise that is described in this paper.

Framework of aims and objectives

Aims

1) To use the participant-observer research strategy as a means of providing student health professionals, who are prospective expert providers of health information, with experiential learning:

   - to assist them in becoming more effective communicators, by gaining insights into the complex—and often taken-for-granted—area of consumers' management of the health information they are exposed to as part of their everyday life

   - through the use of a number of data collection methods that they will complete as consumers in order to examine the outcomes and the process as researchers

2) To appraise the data collection instruments that have been used, and the results, from the point of view of the superseded primary objective of this project, ie a pilot study of consumer management of health information

Learning objectives

1) To cover the area of project content:

   - health information categories—of subject matter, providers, consumers;
   - issues pertaining to appraisal, selection, value, use and retention of specific items of health information by (i) consumers; and (ii) themselves as health professionals-in-training.

2) To cover the area of research process the participant/observer perspective, and the data collection methods of survey, diary and focus group interviews

Implementation

The details of the educational intervention include the following approaches to administering the intervention:

1. included in the Department of Behavioural Science's Sociology component of the participant Schools' program for the semester

2. included in specific courses provided directly by participant Schools

A key feature of the intervention is that it can be tailored to fit into the conceptual framework of the course into which it has been integrated (ie it is relevant, and not treated simply as an add-on). Subjects into which the intervention was incorporated included introductory sociology, research methods, health promotion, use of the Internet, and exercise testing and prescription. The participant students came from the Schools of Community Health, Exercise and Sports Science, and Occupational Therapy.

In outline, the educational module had two to three educational components, depending on the time available:

1. An introduction to the experiential exercise and the underlying rationale (for health information content, and research process) followed by the (anonymous) completion of survey in-class, plus training for the (anonymous) completion of a diary format over a specified period and then returned to the project co-ordinator. (The survey and diary were then analysed for use in the next 1–2 sessions.)

2. Feedback of the results in an interactive session that also explored qualitative aspects of issues that emerged, in a quasi-focus group interview format. This component would focus, principally, on the class's own data and on the students' Discussion Points (on the form completed in the interim and brought to this session, with cover sheet handed in and yellow copy kept).

3. Comparative information on results from different groups, considering variables such as gender, age and career interests

Two optional but useful design features were tested in the implementation phase:

   - A desirable objective of this exercise is to be able to combine anonymity of data gathering with comparability of individual responses to different forms of data gathering approaches (retrospective survey; prospective diary; focus group

issues). The optimal way of doing this was to give each participant the full set of instruments at the outset, with each set having the same participant number.

- In order that the participants have maximum benefit from this exercise, they should be able—at later points—to compare their personal responses with the aggregated responses. The most efficient way of doing this was to produce the instruments on carbonated sheets, so that the top sheet could be handed in, and the copy retained for comparative purposes. (It has even been suggested by one of the Schools that if this exercise was mainstreamed as an evaluative strategy [as per the second dot point, below], it would be possible for students to compare their responses at the beginning and end of their training).

Generic features, as a framework for converting [or extending] a research protocol into a structured learning experience about content and process

A Students' Integrated Experience of Educative Research (SIE-ER) can be described in generic terms as the transformation of a research protocol into a value-added vehicle for education about both the content area being researched; and the process of research, including the specific methods used and the overall program of research, from early development to dissemination of results.

The essential feature of the SIE-ER is that it provides students with experiential learning by an adaptation of the research strategy of participant-observation.

Through its reconstruction as an educative tool, students are assisted to use the reflexive process of participant-observation in a structured way, to develop insights by taking on the subject's role in a quasi-research exercise, and then reflecting on this role in order to develop a first-hand understanding of:

1. The subject's perspective on the content area and as a target of research.

2. The project team member's perspective on the practicalities of conducting a research program, the specific attributes of particular data collection methods and their sequelae, and the implications of the findings, with regard to the content area being addressed

Key issues relating to the interaction of the student subject role are:

1. The use of a SIE-ER is appropriate when the subject's role is one that is personally meaningful to the student: ie, it is a matter of the students shifting into—rather than simulating—the targeted role.

2. The benefits of a SIE-ER are increased if the insights that the students develop with regard to the targeted role are directly relevant to their future profession.

Section 4: Where to next? SIE-ER products, dissemination and possibilities for the future

Project output: products and dissemination

The products of the trial intervention will include both a final report and a resource kit (available in hard copy and on disc from the Department of Behavioural Sciences) for other educators interested in exploring the potential of a SIE-ER for the students in their disciplines.

The D-I-Y Educational Resource Kit will include hard and disc copy forms of:

- The structure of the educational module
- The educational sessions – generic content on health information management
- The data collection instruments and students' information sheet
- The code books and analysis protocols
- Supplementary reading list for this SIE-ER's content area

The dissemination program that is underway includes:

- Intra-faculty research seminars at the University of Sydney
- Conference presentations (at the national level, at fora for health professional education, and for communication skills education).
- A collaborative article for international Journal of Allied Health Education
- Distribution of the Final Report

Potential for the future

The flexibility of the SIE-ER format (as demonstrated in this trial) means that in general, a SIE-ER can be adapted for a variety of courses, developed with new and old research protocols, and incorporated into a course as a total package, or in part.

In particular, this SIE-ER and its D-I-Y Kit:

- Address an important issue, of information blow-out and associated management, for health professionals and other professions for which client-centred information exchange is an important component.
- Provide an illuminating way of presenting the issues.
- Can be used selectively, with the various components of the D-I-Y resource kit able to be used independently or as an integral part of a more complex whole.

This program has a number of potential benefits that are currently (June/July 1998) being appraised in this trial phase, and will be reported on at the presentation of this paper:

- As an educational exercise that operationalises some of the theoretical constructs presented in course work from a variety of disciplines and perspectives (eg sociology, public health, professional development, health promotion and education, research methods), and therefore may well be able to be adapted for another disciplines.
- As an evaluation tool, when comparing junior and senior students from the same School, on the basis of approaches to health information consumption and appraisal (in the current trial, this is being done cross-sectionally, but if mainstreamed, it could be done longitudinally, with successive cohorts – this benefit is one that was identified and is being supported by the School of Exercise and Sport Science).
- As a data bank that students may wish to access for a range of applied project work.

- As an educative use of the participant-observer strategy that can be developed around other aspects of communication and social behaviours.

- As a pilot study trialing selected data gathering approaches with a number of different groups of health information consumers.

Section 5: Reflections on the shift from communication researcher to teacher

It was not by accident that I became a researcher rather than an educator. I am by nature an analyser, planner and designer, with a fair degree of ability in interviews and in guiding research staff. But getting up in front of large groups of people is not my thing, and while I've taught and tutored in the past, these episodes have been infrequent and nerve racking. For this project, however, I was the logical person to conduct the educational modules, because it was on work that I was steeped in.

And this time was difference. Why? I think it was because I was communicating about something that I felt deeply committed to as an issue, and enthusiastic as well as confident about in terms of my own knowledge base. Some of the educational sessions went extremely well, and while others fell flat. I found (to my surprise) that that was not too intolerably demoralising. Instead, they challenged me to a diagnostic process and corrective measures—largely in the direction of being more interactive and stimulating, rather than relying on the inherent interest of the content that I was presenting to get a lecture hall full of students involved. I would say that one of the many lessons I've learnt from this experience is that the bottom line is that you need to hone your communication skills to communicate effectively with students about communication.

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Developing analytical writing skills in applied science

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The Communication in Science unit was initiated by the Faculty of Applied Science to teach communication skills to second year undergraduates from a wide range of science and technical disciplines. The analytical report proved a major difficulty for many students. From the teacher's perspective, two of the most significant problems were communicating the nature of analytical writing and correcting vagueness. The reasons for these difficulties are explored and it is concluded that lack of content knowledge and familiarity with the discipline genres and scientific community are major impediments to precise analytical writing in the sciences. Consequently communication courses in the scientific disciplines should preferably be taught by scientifically literate staff who can model scientific thinking and writing, and should involve extensive exposure to texts from the students' science discipline. The latter may be facilitated by computer assisted learning and computer supported collaborative work.

Introduction

If science students are to learn academic writing other than by the trial and error method noted by Currie (1994), how can it best be taught? Many authors recognise the problems students have in understanding academics' requirements for writing in a particular discipline (Ballard & Clanchy, 1988; Meyer, 1988). Teaching communication in the disciplines seems a logical solution. However Garner (1997), although acknowledging the motivational advantages, expresses reservations about the practicalities of combining expertise in writing and discipline content. This paper, based on four years experience of teaching the Communication in Science unit in the Faculty of Applied Science at the University of Canberra, analyses some of the problems associated with teaching analytical expository report writing in science.

Background and history of Communication in Science

Communication in Science was developed as a one semester compulsory service unit for all Applied Science undergraduates after employers complained that graduates did not have the necessary written or oral expression (Wolf Mayer, 1998, personal communication). Consequently, the unit taught a variety of written and oral presentations, including television and job interviews. Only second year students were allowed to enrol, as first years were considered to have too little content knowledge. However, even second year students' prior experience with academic writing was likely to have been limited to simple laboratory reports. During the period 1987-1990 when I taught it, students came from many disparate disciplines including Community Health Nursing, Medical Laboratory Science, Nutrition, Parks and Recreation, Water Science, Geology, Geography, Material Conservation Science, Museum Studies, Building Science, Computing, and Health Education.

The 2000-3000 word analytical report (worth 40% of the marks) was required to be original, analytical, involve numerical data and visuals, incorporate specific sections (eg. preface and acknowledgments), and meet a high standard of formatting and presentation. It was not perhaps entirely clear to either staff or students whether the report should mimic a research article, a scientific literature review, a technical report or an undergraduate laboratory report, but to cater for the wide range of student backgrounds and interests, any of these

forms were accepted. Nonetheless, the standard unconsciously used by the staff in marking was probably the research paper or technical report, without the requirement for originality. Students were supposed to present their drafts for feedback, making the report effectively a redeemable assessment for the minority who did so. A reasonably high mark in the report should have been achievable for the majority of students, yet many students had difficulty in reaching a satisfactory standard. As explored below, this may have been partly due to the difficulty of communicating what is meant by analytical writing in such a wide range of genres. However, in retrospect it also seems likely that second year students had neither the necessary experience or desire to write within the broad genre of scientific exposition.

What constitutes good scientific writing?

The criteria of good scientific writing given by Lindsay (1984) are, in descending order of importance, that it should be analytical, precise, clear and concise. Horning (1993 cited in Kaldor, Herrimean & Rochecouste, 1997) in listing criteria for tertiary students' expository writing in English includes readability, cohesion and redundancy, and making the connection of reader expectation to writer intention. To do this obviously requires that students know the examiner's expectations; but communicating those expectations can take most of a semester.

Analytical writing

To deal first with the problem of communicating what is meant by analytical writing: according to Bloom's taxonomy of educational objectives, "analytical" writing should require at least an ability to break down material into component parts so that its organisational structure may be understood. It includes identification of parts, identification of the relationship between the parts and recognition of the organisational principles involved (Bloom, 1956, cited in Gronlund, 1968).

Arguments must necessarily be analytical because they elucidate the logical steps from assertions to the writer's conclusions. In scientific writing the validation of the claims requires presentation of evidence which must itself be validated. In primary sources, the Methods section validates the data in the Results, or for conclusions from other researchers, the citations provide the warrants for the truth of the claims. The following good (although not perfect) example of a scientific argument comes from the introduction of a high distinction student report about the effects of fire frequency on the ecological succession in Australian coastal heaths. In this case the writer works from his first broad generalisation through the explanatory evidence/claims to a final conclusion about the effect of fire frequency on the succession.

Example 1

> The elasticity of any species' tolerance to changes in the fire regime is finite, particularly as the frequency of fire occurrence increases. Fire frequency can significantly affect the fecundity of heath species in two ways. Firstly, by occurring at intervals such that sexual maturity is not fully reached, the occurrence of woody perennials that rely on propagation by seed may be much reduced (Gill, 1977, Gill and Groves, 1981). Secondly, if no fire occurs for very long periods, senescence may preclude seed viability, thus reducing the availability of seed to propagate the species. This comes about in many heath species, seeds will not either dehisce or germinate until fired (Bradstock and Myerscough 1981; Gill and Groves, 1981). If floristic composition does change, then so will the nature of the succession and its climax.

Thus a well-stated argument breaks the issue into its component parts, and clarifies the relationships between the claims and the conclusion. Conversely, the analytical steps of

establishing the relationships between the parts and the organisational principles involved are basic to the structure of an argument.

Analytical expository writing, however, goes further than pure analysis. By implication the topic must be controversial (Kaufer, Geisler & Neuwirth, 1989). There will necessarily be more than one viewpoint dealt with in the text. Analytical writing will therefore also call on more than one source and hence also involve Bloom's next level of cognitive function, synthesis. The ability of students to meld several sources into a fluent whole tests both their cognitive ability to find convincing links and their writing skills in sequencing and providing transitions. In other words, the language which gives evidence of synthesis also provides coherence in the text.

Indeed Smith (1992) also argues, from a psycholinguistic perspective, that analytical thinking, speaking and writing are closely related to coherence and audience adaptation, thus again indicating that the writer must be familiar with the audience's knowledge and expectations. The role of shared 'background knowledge' between author and reader in producing coherence is emphasised by Giltrow (1994), implying that evaluating the structure of scientific discourse requires at least some content knowledge on the part of the examiner.

In summary, to write analytically students must decompose an issue into its essential elements, draw together viewpoints and evidence from several sources, reach a coherent conclusion and convince their audience of the validity of that conclusion, all tasks requiring both substantial content knowledge and complex rhetorical judgements based on knowledge of their audiences' expectations. Viewed from this perspective, it is hardly surprising that many students in the unit found scientific analytical writing a difficult task.

Some of the difficulties in writing analytically can be illustrated by another example. This computing student gave an excellent oral presentation, demonstrating a high level of communication skills, yet the introduction and first paragraph of his draft report fall far short of the analytical requirement:

Example 2

> In Australia there are 800,000 km of roads and Australia has spent over three billion dollars in the past decade on roads. We can see that the cost involved does place a certain amount of importance on selecting the road project, which is the most beneficial and cost effective to the community. Cost-benefit analysis is well-suited for this role and can give the decision-maker a clearer picture of the project and its worth.
>
> As the name suggests cost-benefit analysis involves looking at a project's cost and measuring them against the benefits of the project. If the benefits exceed the costs then we can see that the project is worthwhile. When we measure the costs and benefits we come to a finite figure, which can then be used to compare other projects. In road evaluation we will be looking at the main costs and benefits. In particular concentrating on the value of travel time savings which is usually the major benefit of a road project. As we will find out, cost-benefit analysis is a useful tool but in no way a clear-cut, always right method which gives the correct project to proceed with.

This report could have been analytical as the topic is potentially controversial; however, the writer has failed to identify the issues involved. The second paragraph fails to elucidate all of the assumptions underlying the assertions—had this been done the author might have recognised their problematic nature. In other words, the analytical step of breaking into component parts is incomplete. The main examples of this omission are the assumptions underlying the third sentence, to whit, that all costs and benefits can be reduced to the same (unspecified, but presumably monetary) value, and that the cost-benefit basis of different projects will be similar enough that the final calculations will be comparable. By not

recognising these assumptions the argument becomes incomplete and the writing remains largely descriptive.

Precision and vagueness

As discussed in detail below, this report also suffers from vagueness, a common problem in student writing, and a difficult one to address because, again, overcoming it involves knowledge of content, familiarity with the genre and judgement of the audience's knowledge. A vague text leaves the reader uncertain as to the intended meaning and thus is a special case of the writer supplying too little information.

In philosophy, vagueness is recognised as arising from the existence of borderline cases for a definition, so that it is difficult to decide whether a particular event or object belongs or does not belong to the defined set (Sorenson, 1997). It relates partly to the problem of specifying boundaries for a category. There are times when this is a useful feature:

> Generality is obviously useful. If uncertain whether someone is 35, I can hedge by describing him as `thirty-something'. There is an inverse relationship between the contentfulness of a proposition and its probability: the more specific a claim, the less likely it is to be true. By gauging generality, we can make sensible trade-offs between truth and detail. `Vague' has a sense which is synonymous with generality. This precipitates many equivocal explanations of vagueness. For instance, many commentators say that vagueness exists because broad categories ease the task of classification. If I can describe your sweater as red, then I do not need to figure out whether it is scarlet. This freedom to use wide intervals obviously helps us to learn, teach, communicate, and remember (Sorenson, 1997).

In scientific writing, however, in contrast to every day language and political speeches, a competent author aims to constrain, as closely as possible, the meaning understood by the reader. Vagueness is therefore a major fault in scientific writing, as Bertrand Russell reasons:

> Precision diminishes the likelihood of truth, but often increases the pragmatic value of a belief if it is true... Science is perpetually trying to substitute more precise beliefs for vague ones; this makes it harder for a scientific proposition to be true than for the vague beliefs of uneducated persons to be true, but it makes scientific truth better worth having if it can be obtained (Russell, 1923).

Russell goes on to argue that all words are inherently vague, but that there are degrees of vagueness, potentially allowing an author some control in their writing.

Generalisations define a broad set so a statement such as "In developing countries, many children die of measles and diarrhoeal dehydration" is more likely to be true than "In Algeria, measles and diarrhoeal dehydration resulted in the deaths of 40,000 infants in 1989." However, it is possible to establish evidence for the latter, more specific, statement, whereas it is almost impossible to do so for the former generalisation. This is because of the nature of inductive claims where a single contra instance is sufficient to falsify a claim, making broad claims much more difficult to substantiate. For example, a single developing country with a low child death rate due to measles and diarrhoeal dehydration would falsify the first claim (always supposing the writer and audience could agree on the meaning of the relative term "many" – another example of a boundary problem). Narrow scientific claims, where the context is highly specified, are easier to disprove or establish as sound than broad claims covering many circumstances. So only narrow hypotheses are easily testable. This is another reason why scientists encourage students to write specifically rather than generally. One cause of vagueness is therefore low information content – generality rather than specificity – which makes it hard to grasp the author's meaning, and lowers the usefulness of the statement. Despite this, students may write high level generalisations because they are easier

to express, as they grapple simultaneously with understanding the content and the task of getting their thoughts onto paper.

Vagueness also is partly a function of context, the meaning of a word or sentence may be clear in one context but vague in another. The level of generalisation which is acceptable or meaningful changes for different stages of an essay or report. A generality early in a text "gives a reader an intelligible entrance" (Martinich, 1996). Broad generalisations are thus more acceptable early in the introduction and late in the conclusion, where they can give useful context or implications, whereas the middle sections of a text, which contain the main arguments, are more likely to be specific (Swales, 1990). The following sequence of concluding sentences in the introduction of the HD report (used in Example 1) shows the increasing level of specificity as the student refines his hypothesis:

Example 3

Some type of fire management is therefore appropriate for the conservation and preservation of these very diverse and unique ecosystems, and the surrounding areas.

(concluding sentence of first paragraph of introduction).

Floristic composition is therefore a function of the variability in the fire frequency and the fire regime as a whole.

(concluding sentence of second paragraph of introduction).

Fox and Fox showed how increased fire frequency caused a reduction in species richness in a shrubby woodland understorey, and Specht et al (1958) showed a similar decline in species' richness in heath communities over 20 years.

(concluding sentence of third paragraph of introduction).

In contrast with Example 3's successful control of the level of generalisation, Example 2 remains too general to address the real issues of cost-benefit analysis of road projects. There is no development to more specific information, eg, he uses phrases such as "the past decade" instead of specifying the years involved. Given changes in costs, inflation etc the real value of the expenditure becomes difficult to estimate. Further, some of the items of information omitted are steps in the argument. For example, who benefits from roads? How can benefits be assigned a monetary value for comparison with costs? Are costs and benefits borne by the same groups within the community? Vague writing affects the structure of the argument. Unfortunately it is often less strenuous for students to write vaguely than precisely, although it is more taxing for the reader to grasp the intended meaning. Indeed, one common cause of vagueness is that the student writers, exploring a new content area, are themselves unclear as to their intended meaning.

Another major cause of vagueness—words which are particularly empty of meaning—is exemplified in statements such as:

> Net productivity is the total amount of things that are produced in a certain environment. (Exam response)

Here "amount", and "things" are vague. "Certain" (as defined in the Shorter OED in its second sense, ie, "used to indicate things which the mind particularises, but which are not further identified") also contributes to vagueness. Science students need to be taught to avoid such words and to substitute quantitative for qualitative information wherever possible. Again, lack of content knowledge will limit their ability to do this.

Over or underqualification also contributes to vagueness. Underqualification results in lack of specificity, as described previously, but overqualification can also cause a loss of precision, as exemplified in the following statement:

> The position of this mine nestles closely to the headquarters of the South Alligator river, and therefore could pose some serious doubt as to the relative safety of the area.

"Could", "pose", "some", "doubt", and "relative" are all words which give rise to uncertainty in the mind of the reader, contributing to the loss of precision. In this case the problem faced by the author is to put forward a statement which is sufficiently qualified to be accepted as true by the audience (ie they cannot easily think of exceptions). Student writers will sometimes attempt this by overqualifying, rather than finding data to substantiate their assertion.

Teaching analytical writing in science

A fundamental difficulty in teaching any academic writing course is that the problems of writing analytically are confounded with the difficulties of thinking analytically. While I believed at the time that many of the students' problems in report writing came from "poor thinking", Smith (1992) argues throughout his book that the major thinking difficulties occur for students in formal education because of their unfamiliarity with the content area and the "unnaturalness" of the writing task.

This unnaturalness, given the close connection between competent argumentation and audience accommodation, probably arose from lack of familiarity with the discipline genres and the audience, even if here we mean the broader scientifically literate community rather than the narrow discipline communities of microbiology, computing, etc. This suggests that analytical writing courses for science students will be most powerfully taught by staff who are scientifically, as well as rhetorically, literate (though not necessarily scientists), who can communicate the expectations of the scientific communities and model scientific thinking and writing in lectures and tutorials.

Able students eventually unconsciously learn to imitate the style and structures of the discipline genres through feedback from examiners and by reading literature. Exposure to the writing of the appropriate scientific discipline might thus be the first step in teaching analytical writing. Initially, however, reading the discipline genres is itself difficult. Annotated texts, where the annotations cover both background content knowledge and commentary on the rhetorical purpose might overcome this problem, and assist weaker students. This could be modelled in tutorial groups, although tutorials are now too expensive to provide enough experience to allow students to write confidently. Further, in a unit such as Communication in Science, dealing with students from many different science disciplines, it would be difficult to find authentic texts which all students in a group would both comprehend and see as relevant.

In other disciplines (eg physics) there is substantial evidence that interactive engagement, facilitated by electronic media, can provide marked gains in conceptual understanding (Hake, 1997). Hypertext media allow students control over their pace and direction of learning (Oliver & Herrington, 1995), thus catering for a diverse student population. Further, genre templates in multimedia environments may encourage metacognition (Gordon, 1996). For these reasons, and to more easily tailor examples to particular disciplines, computer assisted learning (CAL) programs (of which I have designed eleven on technical and social topics) could be used to provide practice in comprehending and analysing written texts. Both good and bad examples of analytical writing can be handled in this way, using full examples of both research articles and undergraduate genres, with shorter examples to illustrate argumentation, vague versus precise writing, and other topics, so that students can begin to abstract the criteria for themselves. Help in understanding the content could be

provided through hypertext. Concurrently, work on the complex task of writing for a particular audience might begin in the tutorials.

In addressing vagueness it is necessary to counteract the vagueness rife in everyday language (where great precision is unnecessary in many situations). Vagueness is also deliberately cultivated by advertisers and politicians, and students' exposure to and familiarity with vague language makes it initially invisible to them. Hence, there is a need for intensive practice in the area, because, as mentioned above, vagueness is partly caused by lack of cognitive skills in categorisation.

Teaching plan for overcoming vagueness

Phase 1 Developing the concept of precision in scientific writing.

(a) Contrasting vague and precise texts to develop understanding of the causes of vagueness:

1. Level of generality versus specificity
2. Vague words
3. Qualification

(b) Elaborating on the need for precision in science and technology

Some explanation of the scientific method and the role of inductive reasoning, the predictive value of science, hypothesis testing might be necessary, as it cannot be assumed that second year students will fully understand this.

Phase 2 Rewriting vague sentences by substituting more specific words.

Phase 3 Reducing vagueness by including more steps in an argument.

This where the need for discipline specific examples comes in, so that arguments are comprehensible to students. For this reason, these exercises might be best initially approached through tutorials or computer based collaborative writing, so that a group from the same discipline can pool their content knowledge and communication skills.

CAL can provide only part of the solution, however. Where the students' own writing is concerned, individual feedback and mentoring are essential. Besides the essential need for one on one feedback, a number of possible advantages exist for the use of computers to provide cognitive tools (Jonassens, 1994). Multi-user-domains Object Oriented (MOOs) can provide such tools so that learners can try out different writing skills (under their own or an assumed identity), leaving examples for others to use or comment on, or "building" their own exercises. Students could be required to provide such an exercise on some aspect of scientific writing as part of assessment. Besides allowing asynchronous communication, MOOs can be used for real time multi-person interaction and so also function as a venue for computer managed collaborative work (CMCW) and a meeting place for mentors and peer-tutoring; a MOO can function as an electronic version of a tutorial. Because they allow assumed identities, a commonly experienced advantage is that some of the less vocal students find a voice (Keenan, 1996). It is therefore possible that students who are normally reluctant to come for help may access such help through a MOO.

Conclusion

Lack of content knowledge and familiarity with the discipline genres and discourse community are major impediments to precise analytical writing in the sciences. Consequently communication courses in the scientific disciplines need to be taught by staff

who are familiar with the genres and expectations of the scientific community. Such courses need to involve extensive exposure to texts from the students' science discipline.

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An evaluation of the use of simulated patients in teaching communication skills to pre-clinical medical students

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Introduction

Simulated patients are lay people trained to portray a patient for teaching, assessment or research purposes. The use of trained simulated patients was first described in the United States over 30 years ago, and is now an established and increasingly used educational method in medical schools and post-gaduate training around the world (Novack, Volk, Drossman & Lipkin, 1993; Anderson, Stillman & Wang, 1994). As an adjunct to other teaching and assessment methods, they offer ethical, practical and educational advantages. These include:

> providing a safe environment for students to experiment with and practice communication, consulting and clinical skills (McManus, Vincent, Thom & Kidd, 1993);
>
> overcoming practical issues of providing sufficient patients, with a variety of appropriate clinical conditions, who are available at the scheduled times for education activities, and who consent to participate;
>
> providing the means whereby course coordinators can determine the content and complexity of the cases which will be used for teaching and assessment, to meet specific learning objectives (Baerheim & Malterud, 1995);
>
> providing standardised—although still responsive—presentations (Baerheim & Malterud, 1995; Kinnersley & Pill, 1993; Norman, Barrows, Glivia & Woodward, 1993) that is particularly important in assessment situations;
>
> enabling either direct observation or videotaping of the clinical interaction, without the ethical issues of involving real patients, as a method of gathering information about the actual performance of students which also allows students the opportunity to observe each other 'in action', and to compare the effect of different approaches to the same patient;
>
> providing feedback to the student from a patient's perspective (Baerheim & Malterud, 1995; Kinnersley & Pill, 1993);
>
> unlike real patients, whose very illnesses can interfere with their availability for educational purposes, simulated patients are dependable and can be re-used with the same or different cases; further, they tend to be highly enthusiastic about the work and their contribution to the education of doctors.

Simulated patients were introduced into the third year medicine Communication Skills course in 1995. Prior to this, students only had the opportunity to interview each other in role-play situations. Qualitative feedback on the introduction of this teaching method was sought from students, tutors and the simulated patients. This paper aims to describe our experiences in the use of simulated patients in teaching communication skills to pre-clinical medical students, and the evaluation outcomes of this process, including issues which

require further investigation as this teaching method is expanded in the new medical curriculum which will commence in 1999.

The third year medicine communication skills course

The current medical course is divided into three years pre-clinical training, primarily covering the basic sciences, and three years clinical, or largely hospital-based training. There are approximately 225 students in third year medicine, of which nearly 50% are female and 60% are from non-English speaking backgrounds. For the thirteen-week, second semester communication skills course the students are divided into 18 tutorial groups of 12–13, with a mix of gender and ethnic background. The course consists of a series of tutorials and seminars on communication skills and their application in clinical practice, including such areas as cross-cultural communication, breaking bad news, discussing sexual issues and death and dying. Much of the course still involves role-play interviews between students. Simulated Patients are used for formative and summative assessment purposes at the end of the course. In these sessions, the larger groups are divided into sub-groups of four or five students, who each individually videotape an interview with a simulated patient playing a standardised role for each sub-group. To emphasise that the focus in this session is on communication *skills* rather than medical *knowledge*, the students are required to take a social or contextual history from the patient. The sub-goup then reconvenes with the tutor and simulated patient, and each student is debriefed on their video-tape, with the tutor acting as facilitator and involving the simulated patient in providing feedback. Students are marked as pass or repeat by the tutor. A powerful aspect of this session is that the students observe each other interviewing the same patient, and can thus compare the effectiveness of different approaches in communication.

Recruitment

Simulated patients were primarily recruited through local amateur theatre groups, although numbers have been increased through contacts of the current pool of actors. Each applicant was interviewed by one of the course coordinators, which included a brief role-play similar to an interaction with a third year medical student taking a social history. They were quickly, but fairly subjectively, assessed as to their believability and ability to improvise. Those that 'passed' the interview stage were further 'tried out' in the training workshops. While our initial goal was simply to have enough skilled simulated patients to meet our needs (a pool of approximately 18), we are now interested in further defining the pool to represent a broader range of gender, age and ethnicity.

Most of the simulated patients have approximately five years experience in both amateur and professional acting. Many are undertaking further drama study, although none are recognisable 'faces', which could be disconcerting for students. A number of the actors have a background in teaching, and collectively they cited a number of reasons for becoming involved, including the opportunity to hone their own acting and improvisational skills, and to become involved in what one of them called "a very worthwhile cause":

> I thought it was a really good thing to do, to improve doctors communication skills...My reason [for becoming involved], I think, is helping in the education of students.

Training and instructions to simulated patients and tutors

Annual workshops are held to train new simulated patients and to up-grade and maintain the skills of previous participants. These workshops are also used to train the tutors, and ensure consistency in understanding of the aims, structure and expected standards for the debriefing sessions. Tutors are encouraged to be learner-centred in their debriefing, rather than directive.

Simulated patients are not given formal scripts, but an outline of the medical and psychosocial history of the patient, which has been prepared by the course tutors, based on real cases. Using this as the foundation of their character, they need to use improvisational skills to interact with and respond to the individual students. The actors are instructed that all aspects of the role not mentioned in the description are not considered relevant to the interaction, and if asked about such areas, they are to either respond in the negative (eg., for symptoms), or in such as way as to discourage further attention on the area (eg., for demographic or lifestyle information).

Evaluation

Studies from around the world have demonstrated that simulated patients are realistic, credible, valid and reliable as both a teaching and assessment 'tool' (Baerheim & Maltenud, 1995; Colliver, 1995; Gordon, Saunders, Hennrikus, Sanson-Fischer, 1992; Kinnersley & Pill, 1993; Kraan, Crijnen, De Vries, Imbos & Van der Vleuten, 1990; Norman et al., 1985; Woodward & Glivia-McConvey, 1995). Students and teachers are rapidly drawn into the verisimilitude of the consultation and suspend disbelief (Baerheim & Maltenud, 1995; Whitehouse, Morris & Marks, 1984). These findings are reinforced in the feedback from University of Melbourne 1995 third year students, tutors and the simulated patients themselves (through focus groups); and the 1996 third year students (through written feedback). [Representative, sample comments only included in the following summary.]

Realism

There were many comments from the students and tutors about the realism of the interview with simulated patients, particularly in comparison with the students role-playing with their peers as they had been doing throughout the tutorials, and which had been the only method for role plays prior to the introduction of simulated patients:

> It gave a sense of reality, I think having the simulated patients. (tutor 1995)
>
> It was very realistic. (student 1995)
>
> It really felt real. (simulated patient 1995)
>
> All of the simulated patients were very good. It didn't feel as though they were simulated they kept their roles very well. (student 1996)
>
> "... makes it a lot more realistic and a lot more scary!! (student 1996)

Only a very small number of students found it unrealistic, and felt that this affected their performance.

> Not bad, but the situation tends to be a tad unrealistic—the students themselves tend to end up "acting" as well, as the interview tends to be a little forced and unnatural. (student 1996)
>
> Difficult, because the situation was a bit artificial. But the patients were all very friendly and communicative, and probably had backgrounds similar to 'real' patients we might encounter. (student 1996)
>
> Helpful, but as a student I felt I was a simulated interviewer rather than an actual undergraduate applying interviewing skills. Perhaps more practice would be helpful. (student 1996)

Effect on students

The tutors reported that the students approached interviewing simulated patients differently, compared to interviewing their peers in role-play.

> They were a lot better this year, their communication skills were all better...[previously] they did not take it quite so seriously or because they were doing the tape with someone they knew and the problem was not as real or it seemed very false, whereas this year they seemed to flow much better, in the past they were a bit more stilted. (tutor 1995)

> I think it brightened up the whole course immeasurably. I thought it was great. I think we should have much more of it. Its just so much better than role playing with each other. You just can't compare it. (tutor 1995)

> It really did transform the student's understanding and expectations. (tutor 1995)

Students also found working with simulated patients a very different experience to role-play interviews with their peers, as had occurred in the preceding tutorials.

> Excellent! Should have more if possible. It is hard to have to pretend /role play. (student1 996)

> This was a good idea because I found it very hard to do role plays with my own classmates. It was harder to be serious with people you know and awkward at times. (student 1996)

There are clearly some advantages in students taking on the patients' roles in some of the sessions, however

> Good that students play the role of patients, we understand how patients feel better this way. (student 1996)

As a prelude to interviewing 'real' patients

Many of the tutors and students regard it as important that the students have the opportunity to develop their communication skills before being exposed to real patients.

> I think this is a very good idea because it allows us to actually try talking to people who we don 't know anything about. (student 1996)

> It was good to be placed in that situation with feedback available to you before reaching the clinical years. (student 1996)

> More opportunity for them to do it! Because the next people they practice on are real. (tutor 1995)

> ...I just thought the purpose of this was sort of as an introduction. It's not as if you expect to do 8 weeks or 10 weeks of this and you are a pro doctor, you know, you're a gun at taking a sexual history, you're a gun at communication. I thought it was just an introduction and it helped in the transition from now into the hospital because the hospital is primarily another practice session except that they are not simulated patients, they're real. (student 1995)

Some students felt that there were definite advantages in using actors rather than real patients when they were practicing their communication skills.

It was also good that you try a few things out...and if it doesn't work, it doesn't work. I mean next year you can't really ask the patients that...because like they will get offended or whatever. (student 1995)

As the first time that we do it [interview a patient], I was grateful that they were indeed simulated—God forbid that I make the mistakes I made with a *real* patient!! (student 1996).

Good. Wasn't as threatening as having real patients. (student 1996)

While for other students nothing can replace the real thing:

On the whole, very good. They were convincing and allowed valuable time to practise the material. Even better would be to use real patients. For example, incorporate one afternoon with a GP taking social histories from their patients. This would provide variety, real life experience and a chance to practise the skills we learnt. (student 1996)

Good practice for puffing everything into practice. However real patients would be preferable as broader range of subject topics would be covered and not just those that are in the script. (student 1996)

Feedback from the simulated patient

Students appreciated the opportunity to get feedback on the patients' feelings and reactions during the interview, from the simulated patients. The students regarded this feedback as credible and equivalent to feedback from real patients.

...it just gives you a lot more to think about. Its more constructive than just saying: 'Well don't do that.' (student 1995)

...it was good to get that back from the patient to hear the patient say: 'Yeah, I felt you were warm or I felt you were nervous', and that kind of thing, well, you don 't know that about yourself. (student 1995)

This is a great idea! It allowed me to experience what it is like to interview a patient and actually getting feedback on the positive and negative aspects of my communication skills. (student 1996).

Excellent. Provides a useful feedback on ourselves. (student 1996)

'...it is good to receive feedback from the tutor, the patient and friends. (student 1996)

It was good to be placed in that situation with feedback available to you before reaching the clinical years. (student 1996)

This was echoed by the tutors:

They certainly gave a richness and a depth to the feedback that wouldn't otherwise have been there. (tutor 1995)

I thought it worked very well, to get direct feedback from the simulated patients. The three I had were very good, they really didn't hold of: I mean sometimes I would have thought 'How can I be a bit softer?', but 'bang'—straight into it. Being actors also they were prepared to say things and that led to good discussion that I thought was really worthwhile. (tutor 1995)

I thought it was excellent...it really gave additional insight that we don 't normally

have. It felt that it really gave another completely different perspective to the interview. (tutor 1995)

In some cases, the feedback highlighted areas for improvement, for other students it served to increase their confidence:

I feel a lot more confident about interviewing patients—I didn't realise I was that competent...great to get the patient's feedback. (student 1996)

Providing feedback in role, or out of role

The simulated patients were specifically asked to reflect on the process of providing feedback to the students in role or as themselves. This had previously been identified as an issue by the principal author in previous work with simulated patients. It improves the credibility and realism of the feedback if it is provided in role, and some students find it very confusing if the simulated patient 'changes character'—a reflection of just how realistically they have been drawn into the role-play. However, occasionally the actors themselves are able to provide more articulate insights into the interaction than would the patient they have been playing It is also sometimes necessary for the simulated patient to be able to distance themselves from the emotional content of the interview to provide effective feedback, by stepping out or role. This is an issue that requires further exploration, particularly the nature of an actor inhabiting a role, and the extent to which they identify personally with the part. There appears to be considerable variation between simulated patients in this process and therefore their comfort or otherwise in separating themselves from the role in providing feedback.

Some of the tutors asked us to give feedback as ourselves and I would much rather do it as the character. (simulated patient 1995)

...at times I wanted to just explain from own words. (simulated patient 1995)

You were saying before about answering in character about those things or yourself, I don't think I ever answered as a character, most of it was me. (simulated patient 1995)

I would say, why did I feel uncomfortable, it wasn't the character who felt uncomfortable, it was you personally. (simulated patient 1995)

I actually did have trouble with boundaries in the debriefing because they asked me how did you feel about and I said 'my character felt like this'. (simulated patient 1995)

I tended to blur the boundaries of character and me a little bit, they may have different problems to me, but their problems I might be able to relate to in some ways so yes I tended to blur, that made it easier to, and it was me they were communicating with. (simulated patient 1995)

I was reacting as a real person, doing roles, so my reaction is OK with me. (simulated patient 1995)

Trying another approach

Having the simulated patients participate in the debriefing sessions, also provided the opportunity to resume the interview, and immediately apply approaches that had been developed through discussion of the feedback. It was obviously much more complex and potentially confusing if the simulated patients had already stepped out of role to provide feedback, and then was asked to resume the role again instantaneously However, resuming

the interview was very valuable as students are frequently able to identify what they would do differently in general terms, but often have difficulty applying the theory in practice.

> It was very good that when students brought up 'Well, I might have done this...' to be able to say 'Well, why don't you do it now', or 'Ask the patient now' or whatever. " (tutor 1995)

> I thought it was fantastic to have the simulated patients still sitting here and the students saying that 'I didn't do this very well' and then say 'Well, how could you have done it better' or 'Why don't you try that now' ... often that was very valuable, I thought. (tutor 1995)

> I found that was a really powerful experience for the student, I thought, to actually redo bits of it, they learnt a lot. I thought that was a really good way of learning. (simulated patient 1995)

Learning from each other

As well as reviewing their own communication skills on the video, the students also had the opportunity to watch their peers interview the same patient. This is one of the most valuable learning outcomes of the session.

> Each student got something different from the history of the patient they were with, depending on the details or questions they asked or the emotion that came through, but it was really interesting, I thought, for them to see how the one person, with the one story, who was constant how almost a totally different picture and feeling could come through, and thought that that was a valuable thing to be able to get them to see how some of the good communication skills can really draw out a lot more to get the feeling of what was going on than someone who has just got a checklist and the typical clerking that we learn in hospitals. (tutor 1995)

> They were learning in two ways—how they went and then also learning from everyone else, seeing that diffferent skills can bring out different emotions in different parts of the story. (tutor 1995)

> It was helpful, that was good...because you got to see how some people got out different, more personal information and their style of communicating was more successful in dealing with personal issues, and people who weren't able to elicit that information could see how important it was. (student 1995)

> I think you learn from watching other people. (student 1995)

> I was surprised to see how easy it was to respond to each different style of questioning, it was a lot easier than I imagined it was going to be in the training session, because the techniques are quite different and you respond quite differently to each person. It was rather interesting. (simulated patient 1995)

Useful and stimulating

Overall, the use of simulated patients was deemed a useful and enjoyable method of learning teaching and assessing communication skills. It was felt that the activity should be continued.

> Video taping experience very helpful and fun (after the event). Most practical way of helping us improve our communication skills. (student 1996)

> Fantastic to have such practice made available. (student 1996)
>
> A very stimulating part of course. (student 1996)

There were some calls for them to be used more extensively:

> If possible have one [a simulated patient] every week, I mean I know it would pay more. (student 1995)
>
> Another reason why it would be good to have them [simulated patients] throughout the tutes is that they would get a variety of different people, they could each have a different person because there is so much difference [between a]...student communicating with a young woman or an older woman, it is just really different whether somebody can communicate with a person that talks a lot or somebody that holds back, they are going to get all different sorts." (simulated patient 1995)

There were some concerns expressed however, that over-use of simulated patients could be counter-productive.

> I think you have to be very careful about over using simulated patients, I think a lot of the power and interest that they had in listening in what the person had to say was because there wasn't an overused, not perhaps an overused, but a common tool, and I thought it worked pretty well having the two sessions. They got into the swing of it with that first one in the tute sessions, it wasn't a strange thing when they actually did their assessment. It has to be very carefully balanced. (tutor 1995)

And finally:

> Very useful—more please. (student 1996)
>
> Excellent—I cannot think of any better way to learn. (student 1996)

Summary

Overall, the use of simulated patients was deemed to be an effective teaching method in the third year medicine communication skills course. They were generally felt to be realistic and provided a valuable opportunity for students to practice and receive feedback on their communication skills prior to their clinical years. Some students felt that the setting was artificial, and they themselves acted a role, while others felt that role-playing patients gave them an insight into the patient's perspective. Each of the possible formats for students to learn communication skills offers different perspectives and opportunities, and it may be most effective to design the course such that students move through interviewing each other in role-play, interview simulated patients with feedback, and interview real patients in hospital or community placements. Students also benefit from observing each other, particularly interviewing the same patient, and observing their own interactions on video. Much of the feedback suggested that simulated patients could be used more extensively and developed for more complex presentations than the current course permits. Further work needs to be done on developing a pool of simulated patients that more accurately reflects the demographics of the patient populations students will encounter. Also the process of taking on a role, and the issues of providing feedback in or out of role need to be further explored, in association with academics from the field of drama.

The University of Melbourne medical faculty is currently reviewing and revising its curriculum, and will introduce a new problem-based learning curriculum from the start of 1999. The teaching of communication skills will be given a strong and more integrated focus throughout the course, as part of a vertical theme of clinical skills. Our experiences in the use

of simulated patients will provide a valuable adjunct to the review of teaching methods in the new curriculum.

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Contextualising communication skills in universities

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Introduction

The background to this paper is that three years ago Erin Jancauskas, Professor of Engineering at Central Queensland University, and Tony Schirato obtained a National Teaching Development Grant to research the ways communication skills could be 'packaged' for engineering students. Undergraduate engineering students had to take a subject titled 'Professional and Technical Communication', which was supposed to introduce them to the kinds of communication skills and literacies they would require in their professional careers. However the subject was not well received by the students—they couldn't understand why it was relevant to what they were doing 'as engineers'.

There had been considerable comment from the engineering field (businesses, government, universities) about the need for engineering graduates to have good communication skills. Graduates were increasingly working in areas such as management, administration, public and industrial relations, and media management—all of which require an ability to communicate effectively.

We were faced with the task of 'selling' communication skills to engineering students. The problem, as we understood it, was based on what the French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu refers to as the dynamics of cultural fields (Bourdieu, 1991). While students studying in areas such as public relations and journalism understood the value of communication skills, and accepted that such skills could be described, analysed, taught and acquired, students in the field of engineering had a different attitude. Communication subjects were seen as 'soft options' which didn't provide any advantage or benefit.

We approached this problem through Bourdieu's work on habitus, cultural capital, and field. These notions were developed by Bourdieu as a way of making sense of, and contextualising, cultural practices. Field is understood as a combination of institutions, discourses, values, rules and regulations—as well as the practices that these features 'produce'. Cultural capital refers to institutional qualifications, knowledge, networks, achievements, experience and other 'things' that are valued within a particular field or fields. Practices within a field are understood, by Bourdieu, as improvised 'negotiations' of the capital, rules and regulations of fields. The process by which individuals 'take in' and accept the ideas, values and dispositions of a field or fields is referred to, by Bourdieu, as 'the habitus'.

Bourdieu's notions of field, cultural capital and habitus were useful because they enabled us to make sense of the 'disposition' of engineering students to devalue communication skills and subjects, and also because they suggested ways in which we could turn this situation around. We came to the conclusion that the field in which the engineering students worked was characterised by two main forms of capital: a strong sense of practicality and utility, and a valuing of down-to-earth explanations of practices, as opposed to ideas, abstraction, intellectualism and theorisation. Theorising about how people communicated, or indeed even analysing communication practices, wasn't of interest for these students: they weren't 'disposed' to value such activities. At the same time it was obvious that these dispositions were out of touch with developments in the wider professional and corporate contexts in which graduate engineers were employed. Articles were appearing in newspapers (written

by prominent people within the industry) complaining that engineering graduates couldn't cope with the tasks and responsibilities that they were expected to take on. These articles complained that engineering courses in Australia neglected other skills—in areas such as communication, management, law, public relations, finance, cross-cultural awareness and media management—which were valued by potential employers.

We were faced with the task of overcoming dispositions, habitus, and the capital of engineering students which were out of touch with the professional and corporate thinking of the rest of the field. We changed assignments and lecture content so that they were based on tasks and knowledges students would be expected to undertake and learn in their engineering subjects. And we used professionals from outside the university, as well as engineering lecturers, to give guest lectures on the (practical) value of communication skills for engineers.

The response to these changes was very positive. The use of professionals in the lectures certainly helped things: they had enough capital to win the students over (a communication lecturer could explain things, but practicing engineer had credibility with the students). And workshopping engineering assignments (in terms of how well they 'communicated' technology, for instance) also made a (positive) difference. We basically re-packaged communication skills as tools that helped engineers to perform professional tasks.

The project was so successful that the single communication subject, previously only an add-on to the engineering course, was replaced by communication modules that are to be integrated into all levels of the course, which is now project-, rather than subject-, based.

Communication in academic contexts

The success of this 'commoditising' and contextualising of communication skills through the use of Bourdieu's work was then used on a second project, one which was undertaken by Dr Andrew Wallace of Central Queensland University, Philippa Bright, Academic Co-ordinator at CQU's Sydney International Campus, and myself. We wanted to introduce two subjects (Communication Skills in Academic Contexts A and B) which would introduce students to, and provide them with, the skills students required at university. There had been a reasonable amount of work done, in a very general way, in this area. There were, for instances, plenty of books and subjects that dealt with how to write essays, study skills, how to give oral presentations—that sort of thing—but nothing which specifically contextualised and explained those tasks and skills in terms of academic contexts (field, cultural capital, habitus) and the notion of 'cultural literacy', which refers to the ways in which practitioners negotiate as a field of activity (Schirato & Yell, 1996). We set ourselves two tasks: to introduce those two new subjects, and to write a text book for them.

Even though our work on 'communication in academic contexts' was predicated, as was 'communication in engineering', on the inter-connections between habitus, field, cultural capital and cultural literacy, there were a number of differences between the two projects. For a start, 'Professional and Technical Communication' was compulsory for engineering students, whereas the academic contexts subjects were set up, at least at this point, as options for first year communication, computing and business students. The main aim of the work we were doing with the engineering students was to provide them with communication skills for specific professional applications, whereas in the second project our immediate aim was to help students succeed—as students: the focus was on specific, as opposed to generic, communication skills. There were a number of ramifications, consequent of this difference, that we needed to be aware of and address.

In some ways 'selling' communication skills to engineers was a relatively straightforward task: we had to provide them with examples, in their professional life, of the importance of effective communication practices—and everything flowed from there. A more general

contextualising of 'communication in universities', on the other hand, can't promise to give students the perfect 'quick fix' that they need to deal with problems or shortcomings in individual subjects or disciplines. Students might be attracted to the subjects, but they would probably prefer more direct advice and help with regard to the tasks and expectations confronting them in everyday academic work. And while we could talk to them about the importance of key 'general' skills or literacies such as critical thinking, argumentation, and research, their experience of other subjects or disciplines may still be that of absorbing and reproducing facts. And as a corollary, the relative ease with which we could simulate practical engineering exercises or tasks did not translate to 'academic communication', precisely because of the considerable differences (in terms of genres, discourses, cultural capital and conventions) across disciplines. At the same time the subjects have proved popular (in terms of early enrolments), not because students are particularly interested in developing critical thinking or analytical skills, or becoming more self-reflexive about their learning (they're not), but because students are anxious to pick up so called 'practical skills' (how to write better sentences, how to reference, how to give an oral presentation). In other words, they are attracted to the subject, in all probability, because they do see it as providing a more general quick fix (with regard to skills deficiencies).

The university context

It is reasonable to suggest that students lack requisite academic literacies upon entry to university. Of course many students do adjust to the culture and its demands, but for a large percentage 'academic culture' remains a mystery, perhaps not always at the level of tasks (as Bourdieu et al have noted), students soon learn to 'reproduce' discourses specific to a discipline), but certainly in terms of an understanding of the rationales which supposedly explicate those tasks. This is exacerbated by the difficulty young students have in organising their study effort in an environment where there is relatively little structure and unaccustomed freedom; some students also lack a sense of direction and motivation. This is a much larger problem now that universities cater for a much higher proportion of school-leavers, as well as considerable numbers of mature age and overseas students with their particular literacy problems. The consequences are high attrition rates and underperformance.

In part this is due to what Bourdieu (1994) describes as the principle of 'reciprocal mystification' between academics and students. University staff in a sense 'pretend' that students are picking up most of what they are trying to teach them, and students are complicit in this subterfuge—it is less threatening and more comfortable to sit back listening to a lecture they don't understand (since the system makes sure most of them survive) than to demand an education that really addresses their needs. One of the problems with 'academic skills' texts is that they ignore the real game being played. They tell students, for instance, that good writing means being clear and not using words they don't understand. Following this advice would in fact handicap students doing, say, some 'literary theory' subjects, where they would be expected to 'perform' theoretical language if they want to pass.

Universities have been slow to acknowledge this problem: when there has been a response, it has usually involved the provision of bridging courses and ancillary support devoted either to an identified deficit (eg. writing skills) or special group (eg. international students). The usefulness of such forms of assistance is limited, being under-resourced, under-utilised unless mandatory, and often required to accomplish more than the available time allows. New funding arrangements mean universities are more concerned about students failing or dropping out, and more of them are providing formal skills-based subjects with academic credit.

The textbook

In the last decade many books have been produced which provide advice for tertiary students. Most are either general 'study skills' or 'how to succeed at uni' books, with chapters devoted to things like time management, as well as using libraries, writing essays, and coping with exams. Other books concentrate more specifically on writing and communication skills. There are also more substantial textbooks on writing, but there are comparatively few on reading. These advice books tend to be very similar. In a sense they are unobjectionable—they provide good advice. But they are also largely ineffective for most students. Giving good advice isn't enough to provide deep understanding or change behaviour. It is probably impossible for any book to make much of a difference, which is why subjects are needed as well.

The textbook we are writing contextualises academic communication skills. By explaining the nature of the cultural field in which academic literacy is required it demystifies universities. It also discusses in some detail the vocational value of academic procedures. These aspects are designed to help improve student morale and motivation. Rather than just being encouraged to analyse the assignment topic, we step back and encourage students to analyse the institution and their place in it.

The book tries to meet two student needs. Universities assume that students have skills and competencies they in fact lack, and they do not realise how much difficulty students often have in reading textbooks, learning in lectures and tackling assignments. Students need various aspects of the academic environment explained, demystified and put into perspective. They need some straightforward 'this is what to do' advice. More importantly, though, they need to learn how to be effective independent learners who are able to understand the nature and long-term value of university study in some depth; articulate to themselves and others their own learning problems at various stages of their course; find their way to sources of help; learn from their experiences; utilise feedback; and reflect productively on aspects of process.

The subjects

The main purpose of the subjects is closely tied to that of the textbook; that is, to give students insight, knowledge and skills that would enable them to operate more effectively in their other undergraduate subjects. To some extent academic communication skills are generic and 'transferable' to employment situations. Raising students awareness of such transferability would give them a better appreciation of the value of the generic skills they were acquiring, and provide an incentive for them to continue to improve their standards in these skills by independent efforts during their years at university.

The subjects were not designed specifically for international or non-English speaking background students. However, some space was made available for addressing cultural differences between non-Western and Western (specifically Australian) educational environments in ways that would be useful for international students.

Focus on process

These subjects focussed quite deliberately on process rather than content. All academic subjects involve students learning selected content and procedures appropriate to a discipline. Some procedures (processes) are best acquired—or can only be acquired—in discipline-specific subjects. However many procedures—reading effectively, thinking clearly and critically, locating information, communicating orally—are common to all or most of a student's undergraduate work. There was much to be gained by introducing first year subjects which put content second, and allow students to attend more fully and carefully to process.

Arguably students' mastery of process is slower than it should be. This is often for institutional reasons: for example, by the time feedback on an assignment is received the student has lost interest in the problems associated with that task. Often it is because both academics and students are preoccupied with content. The former tend to cram more into a course than students can or will assimilate. The latter may mistakenly think they are meant to reproduce facts rather than understand and apply principles; they deliver oral presentations their audience can't follow by anxiously overloading them with content. Students fail to retain what they learned about structuring an essay last semester because they are baffled by the different content this semester; and so on.

Within any academic subject, part of what constitutes process belongs to that discipline—even that subject—and cannot be taught in a generalist unit. Another part of process has to do with the student's effectiveness or otherwise as a university learner generally. The new subjects addressed this element. It is impossible, of course, to significantly lift students' performance across all the generic skills, even in two dedicated subjects. What we are trying to do was to make students more aware of their own learning behaviours, and the strategies and resources available to them to improve their skills by independent action. The subjects encourage students to move toward the kind of autonomy in learning behaviour which is expected of university students.

In moving to university study from other learning environments students have entered a very different field in terms of the communication practices and cultural expectations. At the outset the proportion of our students who fully appreciate the difference is quite small, and this undoubtedly contributes to attrition and under-performance. We tend to assume our students can cross the gap entirely on their own. These subjects address the problem by making the transition to university-level education a topic for discussion, by teaching critical thinking and encouraging students to apply what they learn in their other units, and by examining Western academic practice as a cultural phenomenon.

It would be utopian to believe that all existing subjects could be transformed into ideal 'student-centred' models. There will continue to be differences in the way teaching and learning proceed in different areas. The new subjects encourage students to be alert to these differences (which sometimes derive from inherent differences between disciplines). They aim to empower students to move from one subject or discipline to another and intelligently assess what is required.

Content

While the weekly topics in the subject profile generally referred to some aspect of process, the study of process to some extent becomes the content; that is, the content can be regarded as certain principles of practical communication. The content also involves communication theory—and applying it to cultural contexts. It would be quite possible to deliver content-rich lectures on each week's topic and test students' acquisition of the principles in a three hour end of semester exam, though educationally such an approach would be a waste of time. The approach we use is explained below.

Two further points about content. First, students are required to do a fair amount of reading on their own, but there is some scope for students to choose what they read (within certain parameters): they will be able to concentrate on what they most need or are most interested in. Second, some of the content (eg. cultural differences) is studied by students in the course of researching projects or preparing for class exercises.

Achieving aims

Students are given a conceptual apparatus drawn from communication theory in order to gain insights into the sphere of Australian tertiary education in which they have to operate. Students learn specialised terms such as cultural literacy, genre and discourse.

Issues are contextualised. Students are usually told 'you must not plagiarise', but in this subject they are introduced to the values of academic culture and have a better understanding of why plagiarism is condemned. As well, they are encouraged to make connections between plagiarism and their own behaviour as tertiary learners. They are shown that the impetus to plagiarise may originate in a 'reproducing' orientation to learning inappropriate to Australian university study; or in unsatisfactory note-taking strategies; or in poor ability to paraphrase (for which they may want to seek help from study skills support unit).

Another example would be the place of 'independent' or 'original' thought in undergraduate subjects. Students may have a vague idea that this is valued at university, but have difficulty in understanding what it means in practice in a particular subject. Again, this issue is related to academic culture and discourse generally. It is dealt with in the work on argument and critical thinking, where students learn, for instance, that in academic contexts originality does not mean idiosyncrasy or the expression of personal whims. It is also dealt with on the level of what constraints and opportunities apply when students are facing specific tasks. Students learn to analyse set assessment tasks more carefully than is usually the case. This kind of insight is developed, within the subjects, by 'building in' these process to their assessment tasks: in other words, rather than assessing a final product (essay, oral presentation), their response to each assessment task is workshopped and documented, and assessed.

Students are guidance and incentives to practice becoming more and more self-reliant. In some cases they will be able to try something a second time in order to benefit from feedback and gain confidence. They are encouraged, and required, to reflect on what they are learning. The metacognitive aspect can be an important part of learning. It is not necessarily beneficial to do something right, and be rewarded with a good mark, if you don't know what you did right.

The sequence of topics across the two subjects has been designed to facilitate this emphasis on learning by doing and reflecting, rather than by being exposed to lists of "do's" and "don'ts". Some topics are revisited at stages when students will need to have them aired again, or when they will be receptive in a way that they would not have been earlier on.

Skills are addressed in terms of fundamentals rather than the specific requirements of specialised genres, which of course will still need to be taught in other subjects (eg. Marketing, Public Relations). However, students learn that each genre does have specific requirements, and they need to find out what these are as they move to new genres in later subjects.

Deficiencies in students' work (eg. poor structure in an essay) can be symptomatic of deeper problems. For instance the student may have no understanding that the essay was meant to be argument. The student's reading may also be defective: the student may not appreciate that something he or she read was structured as argument and was not merely a collection of facts.

It is not possible to deal with all aspects of writing—which include grammar, spelling, usage, style, tone, punctuation, editing and revision—in enough detail to meet all students' needs. Students are helped to identify problem areas and referred to self-help resources and other sources of assistance.

Special attention is given to certain generic skills traditionally neglected in universities—particularly those pertaining to oral communication and collaboration. Students often move from one semester to the next with very little improvement in these skills. Employer organisations regularly find fault with the standard of graduates in this area.

Students are presented with the challenge and incentive of planning and conducting a presentation to an invited audience as part of the final project in the second of the subjects. There is a degree of 'real-life' involvement to the extent that students are expected to contribute fairly detailed suggestions for improving the subject in future years.

Benefits

These new subjects will improve students' competence and confidence as they participate in academic communication—as readers, writers, speakers, collaborators—in their other subjects. For students who plan to major in Communication Studies, the subjects complement other offerings in this field. Theories and principles are related to the academic domain, rather than the domain of the mass media, and their personal relevance is made clear. Support service units providing help with communication and study skills will be able to concentrate on their core activities and on their clients who have specific deficits, rather than providing more general academic assistance.

Non-English speaking background (NESB) students will be able to put their language problems in perspective. In some cases a clearer sense of purpose and structure in communication tasks may compensate to some degree for flaws in usage. Students are encouraged to take responsibility for upgrading their standards.

Students reflect on, discuss, and ask questions about a range of issues and problems which they would normally have to ignore and suppress. Hopefully this will promote a de-mystified climate of creative problem-solving, rather than the dependence and fatalism which can too easily prevail.

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Teaching the fourth 'R': Argument—a foundational communication skill

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Among the list of graduate qualities produced as guidelines for subject development within the University of South Australia are those of logical and critical thinking and the ability to argue persuasively. Work carried out in this field, chiefly by Richard Andrews and Middlesex University, demonstrate that argument is fundamental to the construction of knowledge within a discipline, and to how the discipline itself is shaped. Yet, for too long we as teachers have assumed that immersion within the discipline content (the 'knowledge') itself is sufficient to induct students into the workings of their chosen fields. Attempts to remedy dysfunctions in this process have usually taken the form of communication skills subjects or the teaching of formal logic. A more effective pedagogy involves locating both 'argument' and 'discipline' within the broader concept of 'discourse', finding its full expression in the revived concept of rhetoric as both the classical 'art of persuasion' and the more general 'arts of discourse'. The University of South Australia's foundation subject Communication: Rhetoric and Reasoning operates within a wider understanding of discursive practices where texts act within specific contexts. By analysing and evaluating the arguments of others, using examples from academic, professional, commercial and popular sources, and in having to synthesise their own cases, students "contend with words", which "produces subjectivities, knowledge, and value" (Harkin & Schilb, 1991, p. 5). They thus acquire a repertoire of academic and professional literacies to argue their place within the discourse communities of academe, the professions, and the wider community.

In common with a growing number of other tertiary institutions, the University of South Australia promotes a set of 'graduate qualities' which are intended not only as desirable outcomes for its students, but also to inform the whole process of teaching and learning—locating it within lifelong, community and professional contexts as well as academic ones. In addition to being "able to communicate effectively" in those contexts, there are expectations that students "be able to operate effectively with and upon a body of knowledge"; pursue "excellence in their professional practice"; "be effective problem solvers, capable of applying logical, critical, and creative thinking to a range of problems"; "use logical and rational argument to persuade others, to negotiate with others" in order "to work both autonomously and collaboratively as professionals"; and "be committed to ethical action and social responsibility" (*The qualities of a University of South Australia graduate*, 1997, pp. 3–4).

The ability to argue effectively—to develop and present a persuasive case—is, as Richard Andrews (1997) shows, both a summary of the communicative skills which employers most "prize ...in the graduates they employ" (p. 9) as well as "a sign of expertise in a particular field" (p. 10). But he goes further by pointing to the research of Middlesex University's Leverhulme Trust-funded project into the teaching and learning of argument, which

> revealed that not only were the literacy aspects of argument important to success in a discipline, but that the discipline itself could be seen as being built around argumentative axes that were particular to that discipline. In other words, being a 'biochemist' or a 'geographer' was a matter of understanding the key *topoi* or 'places of

> argument' in the discipline as well as having command of the substance of the discipline. (Andrews, 1997, p. 10)

This view that the disciplines are essentially constructs of the very acts of argumentation for which they themselves provide a forum, renders to the teaching and learning of argument a foundational position in academic literacy. Our concerns to induct undergraduate students into the various disciplines within the humanities, the sciences—social, pure and applied—the expressive arts, and elsewhere, involve expectations that they be literate and numerate to begin with, but that they then acquire competence in the discipline-specific 'literacies' which they will use for the remainder of their academic and professional lives. Traditionally, we have promoted the latter process through students' intensive exposure to the content ('the knowledge') of the discipline: reading it, listening to it, and discussing it, while reproducing it in written, spoken, or more concrete form. Effective communication is, quite obviously from this list, at the core of the process, and many disciplines now are making their students hone their communication skills in addition simply to acquiring 'the knowledge', and hoping that the means to do so takes care of itself. But students in all areas of the academy would benefit from the opportunity to stand back from the usual content saturation and understand just how knowledge is produced and reproduced within the disciplines.

Even if the fundamental importance of argument is recognised, however, choosing an appropriately effective pedagogy to suit a broad clientele can be problematic. Two methodologies which, on their own, are insufficient for the present discussion can be quickly dealt with. The first is the notion that argument is a property of formal logic only. Obviously, logic and rationality are essential in establishing a sound case, but to reduce the teaching of argument to the rules of logic or an understanding of deductive and inductive reasoning allows little room for the intuitive, stylistic and other 'virtuosic' elements which a set of syllogisms cannot account for, but which form a vital part of the processes in which we wish our students to participate. Besides, as Bazerman (1992) notes, formal logic "does not cover most arguments, questions, and statements that people are actually interested in" (p. 115), particularly in the humanities and social sciences.

The second approach, which typically arises from a grudging recognition that 'something ought to be done so let's run a communication skills subject', involves concentrating on essay writing. But here again, the focus is far too narrow. If, as Andrews (1997) says, "disciplines are very different in the way they understand argument and build it into their own practices" (p. 10), then the teaching of argument must embrace methods which will best serve those differing practices. As an aside, even within those disciplines where it has long been the approved medium of expression and assessment, the academic essay may have reached its use-by date, with the Internet providing an endless supply of prose from a mass of virtually untraceable sources from which to cut and paste. The essay itself can be something of a Procrustean bed, with students often "having to shape what they know or don't know into a classic form that is not entirely appropriate to the learning that has occurred" (Andrews, 1997, p. 11). Andrews posits "alternative forms to the essay—forms that might give students better access to the nature and progression of their learning and which might allow argument about the topic to express itself more freely" (p. 11). Any approach to argumentation should at least take this notion of 'alternative forms' as a basis for its own methodology.

In order, therefore, for the teaching of argument to avoid "becoming nothing more than a pseudoscience on the one hand or a mere exercise-exchange on the other" (Anderson, 1987, p. 7, writing about 'the discipline of rhetoric and composition'), it must involve engagement with more than just formal logic and essay-writing skills. Mitchell (1996), in her report on the Middlesex University project, employs the image of a spectrum, where

> The range is between a notion of argument as having an internally coherent logical shape and a more dynamic social view in which argument is constituted in interaction

> and in which the validity of positions is less a quality of their internal logic than of the conditions of their reception. (p. 10)

As an exemplar of (near) the logic end of the spectrum Mitchell advocates the work of Toulmin et al (1996), where there is a "shift in argumentation theory from the rational to the reasonable" and "the validity of an argument is dependent on the *field* in which it is employed and from which it takes its backing" (p. 16, original emphasis). At the social end of the spectrum stands the work of Bakhtin, which emphasises the dialogic nature of all communication and is therefore perfectly positioned to deal with argument: "actual meaning is understood against the background of other concrete utterances on the same theme, a background made up of contradictory opinions, points of view and value judgements" (quoted in Mitchell, 1996, p. 17).

From here it is only a short step to recognise in both Toulmin's 'field' and Bakhtin's 'background' that site of consensus and contention we call the academic discipline. Indeed, we can draw these two ends of the argumentation spectrum, from the 'field dependency' view to the 'dialogic form' (Riddle, 1997, p. 3), even closer together by applying an overworked yet very valuable term, discourse, to the disciplines, and in particular the notion of discourse as argument. Then, by adopting "a rhetorical view of argument" (Miller, 1996, p. 18), a workable methodology for the teaching of argument may in turn be developed.

Academic disciplines are discourse communities like any other, where the content, or 'the knowledge', is constructed by language and is systematised into statements (texts) that describe and delimit what it is possible to say (Lewis & Slade, 1994, p. 39). Nevertheless, the very nature of discourse—which, in Bakhtin's terms, '(including written texts) is dialogic or double-voiced', "echoing other voices and anticipating rejoinders"' (Cockcroft & Cockcroft, 1992, p. 12) means that those limits are forever being reshaped: extended here, contracted there, redrawn to accommodate some new development elsewhere. To the notion that discourses are inherent in "ways of knowing which are the products of social, historical and institutional frameworks" (Lewis & Slade, 1994, p. 42) should be added that they are also nascent: always developing, growing and, to extend the analogy further, cross-fertilising. Buchbinder (1991) very aptly describes both the activity of the community and the process of induction:

> To enter a discourse, therefore, is to enter a dynamic of discussion, in which hypotheses are continually being made, or drawn from other discourses, and are then made part of an ongoing debate. (p. 5)

Entering discourse communities entails taking up "speaking positions" (Saunders, 1993, p. 26) carrying varying degrees of power. The commencing undergraduate student is assumed to begin from a position of very little discursive power at the discipline level, with the expectation that their immersion in the content of a discipline will result in more powerful speaking positions as they become adept in the language which constructs the discipline's knowledge, literally, as they learn to discourse. But there are (at least) three questionable assumptions underlying this view of tertiary education. The first is that simply taking a subject or sequence of subjects in a particular discipline automatically qualifies the student to operate within wider professional contexts associated with that subject area. This is clearly not the case, as anyone who has made the transition from university to professional environment can testify, and as witnessed by the growing demand for professional diploma and certificate courses at the postgraduate level and the increasingly recognised need for communication and professional 'link' subjects at the undergraduate level.

The second assumption, which has a strong affinity with the belief that language stands for a "transcendental signified" (Saunders, 1993, p. 60), is that by some process of osmosis, saturation in the content will eventually provide students with an epiphanic insight into how knowledge is constructed within the discipline. This is asking too much of both the content

and of the students, and more explicit methods about "the way texts construct their worlds" (Saunders, 1993, p. 31) need to be built into the curriculum.

The third assumption concerns the relative roles ('speaking positions') occupied by our students within their chosen disciplines. Students more than ever occupy roles—and often quite powerful ones—within many other discourses: family, commercial, professional and so forth. However much we might assume that, once enrolled in our courses, they are 'computing students', 'psychology students', 'media students', or whatever, the degree of their immersion in the discourse itself is necessarily limited by the fact that 'such-and-such student' is simply one role among others within the university itself, let alone within the context of their whole lives. The temptation for us as academics is to view this negatively either as a state of fragmented subjectivity which constrains development within any one particular discourse, or in a kind of Darwinian sense where each role competes in a struggle for discursive supremacy. Instead, we need to provide the space for students to harness all of their capabilities towards improving their speaking positions within all of their fields of discourse.

Such space can be provided by shifting some of our efforts from 'pure' content, or what might be termed "abstract language" (Saunders, 1993, p. 61), to how content is constructed within certain contexts towards "ways in which language-use and the social cohere" (p. 61). As Saunders eloquently puts it:

> the focus of attention becomes the ways in which discourses are mobilised to negotiate cognitive and social paths in the world and, therefore, the ways in which one is enabled (and disabled), by the discursive fields at hand. (p. 61)

A rhetorical view of argument provides that key because rhetoric focuses on how discourses actually operate: it "embraces the external factors—the conditions of utterance, who is speaking, to whom and why"; and "It takes argument firmly towards "persuasion" ...so that an utterance is not so much shaped by what stands behind it in terms of abstract logical structure, as by the way (or ways) it is received and responded to" (Mitchell, 1996, p. 18). Just as argument might be said to be an essential aspect of discourse, so "rhetoric might play as fundamental a part in argument as reason" (p. 19).

Rhetoric, as a discourse itself, has undergone a considerable revival. Pejorative connotations aside, its original "faculty of discovering the possible means of persuasion in reference to any subject whatever" (Aristotle, *The 'art' of rhetoric*, quoted in Cockcroft & Cockcroft, 1992, p. 3) is testimony to its "unique breadth of application, and ...adaptability to new subject areas as they evolve" (p. 3). According to Eagleton, a major proponent of the value of restoring rhetoric to the curriculum, this often "highly elaborate theory of specific signifying practices' of past eras was 'a mode of what we would now call discourse theory, devoted to analysing the material effects of particular uses of language in particular social conjunctures" (quoted in Black & Muecke, p. 219). Others have picked up on this to promote rhetoric as dealing with "*the arts of discourse* and with context": "the way discourses are framed at the 'text' level, the way they are shaped by their context and the differences between them" (Andrews, 1992, pp. 5 and 2, original emphasis).

In its applicability to 'any subject whatever', rhetoric is non-aligned territory in which the ways different discourses frame themselves in terms of language use may be examined, and where students may assess and improve their own discursive competencies. At the same time, in its potential as an "overarching dialogic theory to frame knowledge *about* language and language use" (Andrews, 1992, p. 7, original emphasis), rhetoric becomes a means of bridging the gaps between discourses, allowing for the discovery "that discourses are permeable; they are habitual and conventional ways of seeing and speaking, but they do not bind us absolutely" (Saunders, 1993, p. 31). If we substitute 'discipline' for 'discourse' the

result is something of a two-edged sword. On the one hand there are those within a university context who might feel profoundly threatened. As Saunders warns:

> a teaching practice that tries to identify the way texts construct their worlds, and the way readers construe them, in terms of different discourses, is one that promotes an environment in which it becomes increasingly difficult to rely on the 'commonsense' that seems so naturally to prop up the discourse in which one's own speaking position is located. (p. 31)

On the other hand is rhetoric's potential contribution to inter- and cross-disciplinary studies. The increasing number of students undertaking hybrid and double degrees surely warrants the 'umbrella' of rhetorical study, which has the capacity to "inform and enliven the teaching and learning of composition and reading" (Andrews, 1992, p. 7), but in a manner which extends beyond humanities-orientated 'narrative' forms of expression—where "the individual voice has been celebrated and privileged'—towards more dialogic, persuasive modes, with 'renewed attention paid to argument and argumentation, and to non-fictional forms of argument" (p. 8).

The University of South Australia's foundation subject, Communication: Rhetoric and Reasoning (CR&R), arose out of this ideology in 1994, and aims "To develop students' skills in thinking, writing and speaking using English in academic and professional situations, particularly in identifying, analysing and evaluating cases, points of view and argument" (*Student Guide*, 1997, p. 26). CR&R is one of four foundation subjects prescribed by the University as part of its various Bachelor of Arts and associated programs, covering writing and communication, media and culture, politics and society, and computers and information management. Each aims to provide students with skills necessary for application in both academic and wider professional contexts as well as an introduction to the theories and ideas informing the epistemological concerns in each area. (CR&R is also offered in a modified form, which has been adopted by one science-technology faculty as a foundation communication subject).

CR&R is not an 'essay writing' subject, nor is it one where general communication skills are ends in themselves. Instead, it locates those skills within a wider understanding of discourse and discourse communities, using as a base the revitalised concept of rhetoric as texts in action within specific contexts. Over the years, this base widened to include not only the 'new' rhetoric, but also an introduction to social-semiotics and communication and culture, as well as some related fields of analysis. Students deal with a set of source readings drawn from the work of established practitioners and theorists in each area, and with a collection of 'persuasion in practice' in the form of feature articles, newspaper and journal items, advertisements and visual texts.

In response to staff and student evaluations, CR&R is now taught wholly in the tutorial mode, which incorporates an independent learning procedure based on subgroups within each class termed 'cluster groups'. A proportion of tutorial time is devoted to cluster group sessions, in which the groups carry out various tasks. Students are encouraged to meet in their cluster groups at other times during the semester, and indeed eventually find this necessary for the completion of assignments such as the group presentation. Students are required to attend tutorials and cluster group meetings, to take an active part in learning tasks and discussions, and to complete three short papers, a journal of their cluster group meetings, a cluster group presentation to the rest of the class and a major report. By analysing and evaluating the arguments of others, using examples from academic, professional, commercial and popular sources, and in turn having to synthesise their own cases, students engage in what Harkin and Schilb (1991) call "contending with words", and out of contention comes argument, which "produces subjectivities, knowledge, and value" (p. 5).

Classical rhetoric was always about various kinds of argument, but as Andrews (1992) points out,

> The social and political context for these types of argument has changed, as have the functions of argument. We argue not only to persuade, but to clarify, to discover real issues under ostensible reasons for arguments, to prove, to win and to resolve, and we use a wide range of spoken and written means for achieving these ends. (p. 9)

Achieving these ends involves students' improving their own speaking positions within many discourses and becoming effective agents as well as subjects. More than ever, we owe it to them to be aware of just how fundamental argument is to discourse, and to practise and sharpen this skill.

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A major pedagogical challenge for traditionally trained students: Off with the security blanket and onto centre stage

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This paper describes a system of active student learning which was conceived after several years of running speechcraft courses. A prototype was trialed on a small scale at Curtin University with a group of 11 students in 1995. The evaluation of the success of speechcraft courses and the preliminary Curtin trial encouraged us to embark on a larger study with 65 students during a full semester at Massey University. The basis of the teaching method was to assist students to learn some principles of formal oral presentation using material relevant to their present semester course. These principles were learned by active participation during a series of practical sessions. The larger scale study involved students individually presenting their projects which were designed to collectively cover the complete syllabus. The major logistical problem of coping with the large student numbers was solved by division of study material and sub-grouping of students.

The preliminary evaluation indicated that the small scale study did impart significant presentation skills and increased student's confidence levels. In the larger study, although some students found this method of learning difficult, most responded to the challenge and appreciated learning valuable presentation skills at the same time as studying the syllabus in a novel manner. They also learned to accept and utilise principles of collaborative learning.

It has not been possible to measure student performance compared to traditional methods of learning. We would predict that presentation-trained students would achieve better than traditionally trained students in oral tests and any assessment involving formal presentation of learned material before an audience. We would not predict any differences in performance in traditional written tests.

Introduction

Many different methods of teaching tertiary level students have been tried over the years with varying levels of success. A major problem is that any given enrolment of students is variable in age, maturity, academic skills and general learning experience. Any single method of teaching such widely disparate groups of students is unlikely to be uniformly successful. The traditional pedagogical teaching methods are probably popular because they are generally non-threatening to students who attend lectures of their choice to gain the information necessary to pass examinations with the minimum of fuss. Because one lecturer can present material to a large body of students, it has been considered an economical method of teaching. However, traditional lectures in the Australasian veterinary schools based on passive learning strategies are probably the least effective form of learning and have been recently challenged (Collins, 1997) on the basis of inappropriate detail presented in a passive and archaic form which doesn't prepare the student to cope with a clinical based problem solving paradigm in final study years and beyond. Unfortunately, from most student's perspective, a 'good' lecture is generally based on the presentation of a logical sequence of linked information on a given subject which may encourage rote learning. A given student body is highly variable and there is an unfortunate tendency on the part of

teachers to generalise the attitudes of their students to learning. But some generalisations are permissible and the two categories of Bigg's (1989) model of deep and surface learning are particularly appropriate to the students who participated in the present studies. Some students are totally overwhelmed with the mass of information and learn at a superficial level in order to pass the examinations. This category of students requires the teacher to present only the information which can be readily learned and regurgitated in an appropriate form at the time of examination. On the other hand, the deep learning level students appear intrinsically interested in the subject being taught and will read widely, discuss concepts with their peers and tutors and attempt to link their newly achieved knowledge to related courses.

Studies such as those of Ramsden (1992) have listed proven strategies for effective learning which depend on good teaching practice, independence in learning, clearly stated goals, appropriate assessment and an appropriate workload. However, after attempting to achieve those objectives, which are largely at the 'teacher end' of the learning environment, we still believe that an ideal learning system would also encourage students to attend lectures and laboratories well prepared. During these sessions they should think creatively and actively participate in the learning process. There should be an opportunity for collaborative learning and reinforcement of previously acquired information.

We believe that traditional lectures encourage a self-centred learning attitude and students often actively avoid collaboration with other students. They become used to a passive system of information transfer from lecturer to student which may inhibit creative learning. Analysis of questionnaires given to veterinary science students at Massey university during the last few years have shown than few students prepare adequately for lectures or practical periods and they show a poor aptitude for using information presented during lectures to attempt to solve problems. It is possible that such passively acquired information may be stored in the student's brain in a form not suited to problem solving because recall of the relevant information is difficult or impossible. We believe that actively vocalising learned information, as in a semi-formal presentation and communication environment, encourages a deeper level of learning and ability to recall relevant information when needed. Preparation for a presentation is also a highly motivated and focussed form of learning—a principle well known and appreciated by any active teacher.

Furthermore, we believe that at tertiary institutions there is a need to improve the ability of students to communicate with each other as well as their teachers and in most professions graduates must be able to effectively communicate to the general public. In our experience these communication skills are rarely taught. Our views are supported by Marginson (1993) who reported, following an Australian Government funded study about the needs of employers, that universities did not traditionally value the attributes associated with communication but rather placed a higher value on academic achievements. Leslie (1992) is also of the opinion that there is ample evidence that future employers, when interviewing prospective employees, give a high ranking to oral communication skills.

It is somewhat late but relevant to mention that Curtin University wishes to survey employers in Western Australia to identify what they view as essential attributes for graduates to possess. The Graduate Attribute Survey was redesigned in 1997 and is being distributed to a large selection of employers of graduates. One out of six sections of the survey is devoted to the subject of communication and lists such skills as reading, writing, verbal and listening. The results of this survey are not available yet, but we would predict that a large number of employers would rate communication skills as very important. Whether or not graduates would perceive an equal weighting rather depends on their knowledge of commerce and industry and their educational experience. Marginson's (1993) report showed that the ability to communicate by their employees was listed first above the capacity to learn new skills and cooperation and teamwork

The speechcraft system as developed by Toastmasters International

Presentation of an effective speech demands researching and fully understanding the subject. The material is collated in a written manner and transferred into an oral mode both of which use different mechanisms of brain processing. The verbal recall of learned information requires different comprehension than merely a written recall. A presentation is more than "parroting" information verbally as it requires the conveyance of information using body language and other audio-visual aids. A typical speechcraft course requires a firm commitment from the student and may last for eight weeks and be divided into 6-8 modules each developing different presentation skills. Such skills vary from learning to organise data effectively into a speech to using effective means to present this information to an audience. Speechcraft also teaches effective listening and evaluation of presentations.

Speechcraft courses were not available to students at Curtin University and in the past these courses have been offered to the veterinary students at Massey University on a voluntary basis but few have enrolled.

This paper describes a method of utilising speechcraft techniques to both acquire and disseminate information relevant to courses previously taught by a traditional lecture/laboratory system. Our experience has been that preparation of information for oral delivery before a group of peers focuses learning. Few students have a natural ability for public speaking but a well designed coaching system, such as the one described in this paper, rapidly develops appropriate skills. This paper describes the methods we used to evaluate our hypothesis that learning by oral communication is a valid option to more traditional teaching and learning systems. The subjects for this study were two different groups of students, the first was a small group at Curtin University (Human Structure, HSD 331) and the second much larger group with more extensive tuition was at Massey University (Neuroscience, NS 94311)

Study one (HSD 331)

Method

The students were told that a visiting speaker (MFT) would conduct a single session course on developing presentation skills. At the appropriate time the course convener (GMF) introduced herself to the students and outlined the course objectives:

- To interview a colleague and present a short oral summary to the class
- To present a short speech on the subject of "myself"
- To prepare and present an oral evaluation of a speech given by a colleague
- To evaluate the effectiveness of the course in development of communication skills

The visiting speaker gave a short speech on the need for communication skills, both at university (to gain confidence and credit for presentations given as part of university courses). and beyond when good communication skills improve inter-personal relationships, assist in gaining jobs and may be necessary for effective career development.

The practical part of this course began with an opportunity to "break the ice" when each student was asked to introduce themselves to the rest of the group. The general recommended format was to state their name, where they live and why they chose to enrol in HSD 331.

Then students were divided into pairs and given a stated time (3 minutes) each to interview the other with a view to presenting an effective introduction to the rest of the group at the time of the formal presentation. Then the group were given a 15 minute period to prepare their speech on the subject, "Myself."

The speech order was allocated and written on the board. The introduction was timed for a maximum of 30 seconds. After the introduction, the speaker was encouraged to speak for a maximum of 5 minutes. During the speech, the introducer was asked to complete a written evaluation. Each student had a prepared evaluation sheet (illustrated in Figure 1) listing several points which aided an objective evaluation.

Evaluation

Evaluator:

Title of speech:

Was the speech adequately prepared? Yes No

What convinced me that the speech was adequately prepared?

Was there an introduction, body and conclusion? Yes No

Did the speaker talk clearly and audibly? Yes No

What about speed of delivery? Too fast? Too slow? OK?

Any significant distractions which might interfere with the speaker's future speaking success?

Yes No

Content of speech:

Was the speech content adequate? Yes No

If not, why not?

List a few strong points possessed by this speaker.

List a few suggestions to aid the speaker to improve in future?

Figure 1. Sample Evaluation Form

After three introductions and speeches there was break for the evaluations which were presented as a mini-speech, with an introduction, main body and conclusion. Evaluators were encouraged to give balanced evaluations with commendations wherever possible and recommendations as to areas the speaker should consider in future speech development. The convenor prepared a detailed written evaluation for each speaker which was handed out at the end of the session.

This procedure was continued until each student had given an introduction, a speech and a written and oral evaluation. In the three hour session each student spoke formally on four occasions.

Finally, students were asked to write a one word or single phrase subject on a piece of paper put into a box. The supervisor drew a subject at random and gave it to a student who was

expected to stand and give an impromptu talk for one minute on the subject. This was repeated for the whole class.

After the session was completed the students were asked to complete a five minute evaluation (See Figure 2) on how they reacted to the training session.

Expectations
Realised
Likes
Dislikes
Overall rating
Recommendations

Figure 2. Course Evaluation

Results

The course supervisors felt that the students valued the interactive afternoon. All students participated and completed their allocated assignments. All 11 students spoke on the four formal occasions without any signs of severe nervousness even though some explained later that they had tried public speaking but had been unable to continue and generally felt very inadequate when asked to speak in public and usually refused. One student admitted to having prior expectations that she would be unable to complete this session. The students appeared enthusiastic during the sessions. They generated good humour and they seemed genuinely interested in finding out more about their fellow students. We felt that there was a sense of "closeness" of the group which had not been so apparent during previous practical sessions. The final impromptu speaking session was well received and produced some original humour.

The analysis of the evaluation was illuminating and typical responses are summarised in Tables Table 1, Table 2 and Table 3 below.

Table 1 contains a summary of some of the comments elicited from the students concerning their expectations and whether or not these were realised.

Expectations	Realised
To be very nervous but to learn a lot.	I was and I did
To improve my public speaking skills	Made for a learning environment which was cohesive but fun
Expected more of a theoretical how-to sessions but was happily surprised at the outcomes	Info was pitched at the right level considering time restraints and the need for a participatory approach
To improve and restructure my public speaking	I felt that this short course went some way to help me
Practical information to overcome fear	Met my expectations
Sessions met my preconceived ideas of what to expect	Written and spoken info more than adequate
To learn some tools of public speaking to take away with me	The supervisors made some good points and we had a chance to put them into practice

Table 1. Summary of student expectations and realisations

Table 2 summarises some of the likes and dislikes elicited from the students.

Likes	Dislikes
Associating with the students, the teaching methodology used for the sessions	Getting up to speak for the first time but obviously that was necessary
Impromptu speaking	Having to talk about a topic you know nothing about
The atmosphere in the class was relaxed which dispelled some fear	Persuading us to stand up and talk except that I know it was good practice
The chance to ease into it by introducing someone else first	9 times out of 10 I know what I am doing wrong
Info was pitched at the right level	I felt nothing new was disclosed to me
The atmosphere was friendly, easy-going and humorous	Techniques to overcome or at least ignore fear weren't given
Positive and negative feedback	
The overall presentation was clear, audible and easy to listen to	

Table 2. Student likes and dislikes

Table 3 summarises a few comments on their thoughts about the overall value and the students recommendations to the teachers

Overall value	Recommendations
Excellent, wished we had it 12 months ago when we started speaking publically	Allow more time to iron out the bugs in our presentation styles
Found the sessions allowed complete participation by all	I feel a group evaluation of each speech would have been sufficient
Valuable to everyone regardless of public speaking experience	Limit the number of people evaluating the evaluators to reduce time
Very helpful. I nearly didn't come as I hate public speaking	Give more constructive criticisms
Getting up to speak 4 times allowed each of us to grow in confidence and to improve via feedback from classmates	Evaluate the speaker straight after their presentations instead of after another 3–4 speakers
I learnt heaps and the information will benefit my future presentation techniques	I would have liked more preparation time
I am now less nervous about giving my seminar	Make the sessions longer

Table 3. Summary of student comments and recommendations

Discussion

The comments speak for themselves. In a short session it is obviously impossible to iron out problems but at least students were aware of their own strengths and weaknesses and their colleague's problems and were given some instructions to help them in future. A few words of advice in coping with nerves were also given orally and in a written handout.

The success of this method of presentation learning relies on the students acceptance that this is a non-threatening experience with the audience receptive to the students feelings and needs. Because the subjects of the four speeches are essentially self-generated material given

before a relaxed and non-judgemental audience, some of the blocks to public speaking are removed. After the success of the ice-breaker, students moved into the next stage of introduction and/or delivery of their speech smoothly without time to have self-doubt and attacks of nerves. The nature of the evaluations, which are aimed at appropriate praise rather than criticism, also maintains an encouraging atmosphere for the sessions. Student evaluations are an important part of the Speechcraft learning process as it encourages informed listening and studies have shown a reasonable degree of consistency between supervisor and peer evaluations (Hughes & Large, 1993). The function of the course supervisors is to provide a friendly control over the sessions linking the various parts with good humour yet still maintaining control over the timing and arrangements for the sessions.

We were concerned that the limited time available would not allow significant learning of speechdraft techniques. All students commented that they appreciated the opportunity of even this limited amount of instruction and the rapid and consistent constructive feedback about their own performance and observing their colleagues all assisted in their learning.

Several students recommended we should allow more time for the preparation for the mini-speeches. We considered that for the chosen topics the amount of preparation time was adequate as we wished to factor an element of impromptu speaking into the course. We were aware that running such a course over a series of weeks would have led to progressive skill development and the ability but sadly the syllabus of HD 331 did not allow for that. It is worth commenting that the Toastmaster International speechcraft courses run over a mandatory eight weeks and cover most aspects of speech preparation and delivery. We believe that a well constructed speechcraft course should be offered as a part of every degree course in a university.

Extension of Study One

The success of the initial trial described above, led to a more ambitious mini-project to teach presentation skills using course-material previously presented in formal lecture as the basis for the prepared speech. This was to give the students opportunity to learn something about presentation and review course material at the same time. This involved a group of 15 generally well-motivated students whose ages ranged from 20–26. As in Study 1, few students had prior experience of public speaking yet were expected to give presentations before an audience as part of their assessment in other courses.

The design of this second study limited the objectives to preparation and delivery of a speech. We decided that the audience needed to concentrate on the subject material so we did not require written peer evaluations. Instead, the two supervisors prepared written evaluations for each student. However, the students were required to complete the course evaluation illustrated in Figure 1. The results of the analysis of the course evaluations were similar to those expressed in Study 1 above. These evaluations gave clues about the manner in which students approach these novel learning systems. The comments showed correlation between the student's confidence in the teacher and their performance. One constant concern of the supervisors is whether students feel that they can learn course material effectively from each other. It is possible that they can have their concepts of presentation techniques and skills modified by watching other students and see the best and least effective presentations. But would they feel somewhat cheated if the presentations did not reach an acceptable standard for themselves? After this session, the supervisors thought that all the students reached an acceptable standard of presentation. The material was well researched and presented. Some of the overhead transparencies were of very high standard and showed much care in preparation. One consistent finding was that students often demonstrated an ability to simplify concepts in an acceptable manner.

Study Two (NS 94311)

Introduction

The second study was more extensive than Study 1 and the model used was a mixture of Toastmaster International Speechcraft techniques and the techniques used in the Curtin studies described above. Veterinary students are required to produce various assignments in their fourth and fifth clinical years using formal essay, poster and oral presentation styles. They are required to research animal diseases, attend clinics, assist in the diagnosis and treatment of animals and report on the results from time to time. These assignments require collaborative learning, organisation of labour, preparation of poster and oral communication with the appropriate audio-visual aids and final delivery.

We designed this first semester course to develop collaborative and organisational skills in order to research selected topics in neurophysiology and demonstrate acquisition of skills by production of a collaborative written report and an oral communication in the form of a short paper. This study involved a class of 65 veterinary students enrolled in a full semester course in neuroscience and was divided into three parts.

Part one

This commenced in March, 1996 with five weekly three-hour periods each covering one subject area of neurophysiology with 15 students in each group. The subjects were the neurophysiology of the special senses (eye, ear, taste, smell) and the cerebral cortex.

The subdivision of the material was complex and Table 6 illustrates how this was done taking the eye as an example. Each subject was divided into five topics and three students were allocated to each topic.

In week two another group of 15 students studied the ear and so on until after five weeks the whole of the above syllabus had been covered.

Topics	Further subdivision	Student allocation
1. Basic overall anatomy	The eyeball	1
	The visual axis	1
	Associated muscles of the eyeball	1
2. Clinical Aspects	Visual defects	1
	Inherited problems	1
	Traumatic injuries	1

Table 4. Week 1 Subject—the Eye

Three more subjects, 3) Receptors; 4) Pathways to perception; and 5) Reflexes, were similarly subdivided and allocated amongst the remaining nine students.

Time allocation

Initially the supervisor introduced the session and explained the objectives (10 minutes).

Then the supervisor gave an exemplar presentation on the subject of principles of communication and speech preparation (10 minutes). Students were then organised into their subject subgroups and allowed 90 minutes to prepare their presentations using a variety of resource material such as course handouts, textbooks, material they collected from the library and a series of computer based modules using HyperCard which covered the eye

and the ear. Use of interactive multimedia techniques has been assessed in several studies by the present authors (Fyfe & Tarttelin, 1995) and others to assist in student learning of oral communication (Cronin, 1993) and during this preparation period the supervisor (MFT). and an experienced student demonstrator assisted with their collation and selection of suitable material. Each student had the objective of preparing a three-minute presentation on their assigned topic and they were encouraged to look through the supervisor's collection of slides, make overheads or draw diagrams or bulleted points on a mobile whiteboard to assist in their presentation.

The final session of the afternoon was devoted to the student presentations. The supervisor introduced each topic but each student was asked to introduce their subject at the start of their presentation. The supervisor prepared a detailed written evaluation for each student as illustrated in Table 1. Group evaluations were elicited after each of the five topics were covered. Each subgroup of three students allocated to a specific topic were required to collaborate in producing a brief written account of their topic.

In the second part of the semester students was chosen at random to prepare and deliver a more formal presentation before the entire class during an allocated lecture session. Preparation time varied from four to seven weeks for this presentation for which they were allocated marks.

During these formal presentations students were restricted to a speaking time of five minutes after their introductions and were encouraged to use slides, overhead transparencies and video clips if appropriate. A maximum of seven presentations per lecture period was the optimal number and those students who were not scheduled to present on the subject of special senses or the cerebral cortex prepared a subject taken from the later more advanced communication and presentation sessions described in parts two and three. Therefore, by the end of the semester all 65 students had given their five minute formal presentation and handed in their collaborative written assignments which were marked, collated, printed and a copy given to each student.

The marks for the formal presentation and written report replaced a semester examination and counted for a maximum of 11% towards the final paper mark.

Part Two

This study took place during the second semester and was devoted to the study of higher brain motor control and followed a similar format described in Part One above except students were given some prior warning of their allocated subjects. This second part was allocated a four hour period repeated twice in successive weeks, with half the class each time.

The supervisor (MFT) presented another subject on communication skills concentrating on body language and audio-visual preparation and delivery. Resource materials were as described in Part One above, supplemented by a HyperCard interactive computer aided learning (CAL) module on Motor Control. The format was changed slightly with students working in groups of three to four with one or two students chosen to orally present the collaborative efforts of each group. Students who had not presented formally during the first semester were directed to prepare and deliver their formal presentation during a later lecture period on the subject of motor control. The collaborative written assignments were collected, collated, printed and circulated as before. Each student who presented was also given a detailed written evaluation which they could compare to the evaluation given during the first semester.

Part Three

This involved half the class on two successive periods as in Part Two above and was devoted to the limbic system and the format was changed slightly to involve all the students as speakers and used a panel format. The supervisor (MFT). presented the final component of his communication and presentation speeches covering the subject, "coping with nerves" and the "final presentation." The panel format was to encourage the students to prepare their subjects and speak in a more informal setting with support from their collaborators. They appointed a panel leader who introduced the subject and the panellists. Then each student spoke to their subject for three minutes and the panel leader summarised their project. They used appropriate audio-visual aids and in addition to their written resource material used another HyperCard CAL module devoted to the limbic system. As in Part Two the groups collaborated in writing a report. The remaining students who hadn't formally presented to date were chosen from these final sessions and completed their formal presentations in a lecture period at the end of the semester.

Results and discussion

In most cases each student delivered a presentation on three or four occasions in addition to the formal presentation which was marked by the course supervisor. Marks were mainly awarded for presentation effectiveness using the evaluation sheet illustrated in Table 1. Because students had at least three written evaluations which were all graded, they could see any change in their performances.

Students were asked to complete a detailed written evaluation of the course, teacher and themselves. A brief general summary of student opinion of the course is given in Table 7. Analysis indicated that there was a divergence of student opinion as to the effectiveness of this method of teaching. Most students (70%) said they did acquire some communication skills and the learning sessions were interesting and rewarding. A few students were critical of learning from their peers and felt this form of teaching in some way did not match their own expectation of the unit. They certainly did not share the supervisor's enthusiasm for the generally high standard of presentation and adequacy of the material chosen and presented by the student.

Students who preferred the new course	Students who had reservations about the course
70%	30%
Liked developing communication skills	Wanted the didactic lecture system
Thought the new format was more interesting than the traditional lecture/labs	Felt insecure about learning from other students

Table 5. Summary of student opinions

A personal view (MFT), after having listened to every presentation and made detailed evaluations, was that the student selected and delivered subject cover was excellent and in some cases exceeded the course instructor's previous attempts in explaining a complex subject simply.

A recurrent problem with the course enrolment is that they are used to passive learning and rote learn for most of their traditional examinations which are based on short answer/essay type questions. They had been exposed to CAL learning techniques in concurrent courses and appreciated the rapid acquisition of information via computer as described elsewhere (Fyfe & Tarttelin, 1995; Tarttelin, 1995). They were used to receiving detailed lecture hand-outs which they supplemented with their own notes if they attended lectures and then they rote learned for the end of year examinations. The presentation method of teaching/learning demands that they work collaboratively on a small part of the syllabus and gain their

information from their peers during the presentations. They are forced to acquire information during a short period of intensive study during the practical sessions which is a novel experience. They are used to a more passive experience and would rather watch a physiological demonstration or a video than actually do some practical work (Tarttelin, 1995).

A few students commented that a communication course should be offered in addition to a more traditional lecture/practical teaching exercise.

They then caustically commented, "We are here to learn physiology not communication and presentation!" This view is contradicted by a study described by Mason and Hogg (1991) in which 1,000 students were polled and indicated that oral communication skills were beneficial to classroom learning and should be incorporated in the curriculum.

During the preliminary period of course organisation, it was pointed out to the class that in their fourth year course they would be required to deliver between 10–14 formal presentations of the subject of their allocated clinical cases in the presence of their peers and clinicians and without much further formal training in case presentation. Some students realised that their own communication apprehensiveness may have negative consequences for them in later courses and wished to learn techniques to alleviate some of these problems. This important conclusion was emphasised by Pelias (1991) in his analysis of a similar learning environment.

One recurrent comment was that they needed more time to prepare their oral communications even though they had requested details of their allocated assignments at least a week before the session. Clearly this was impossible at the start of the course but by about mid-semester this request was carried out. The supervisor was sceptical about the probability of students doing much preparation as earlier questionnaires had indicated that few students prepared for either lectures or practical periods. However, it appeared that some students did carry out some prior study and came prepared to their classes if only with the appropriate reference materials. Our conclusion was that the daunting task of speaking in public was a strong stimulus for some students to be better prepared for classes.

The written assignments proved to be a huge success as they were brief, generally well prepared, typed or produced on a WP and well illustrated with drawn or scanned images. After checking, collation, printing and circulation they provided a good study resource for the final exams.

Our studies have shown that some students respond enthusiastically to the teaching-learning strategies described in this paper as they were convinced of the need to develop these communication skills. They also improved their willingness to participate in collaborative learning with their peers rather than compete. They also become more effective in evaluation and so we presume became better listeners. The more difficult question is whether or not the use of oral communication and peer group teaching provides a better learning opportunity for the students than the more traditional lecture method of teaching. Paterson (1996) and Reppert (1993) have emphasised the need to teach communication skills in universities and incorporate these skills with more formal and traditional methods of supervised learning However, it is difficult to objectively compare the results of different types of teaching. We were unable to follow our students through to their fourth and fifth year to get feedback both from themselves and their teachers.

One big advantage of the learning strategies discussed in this paper is that students cannot remain unnoticed and passive during classes and are forced to participate in active learning. Maybe there is a need to compromise and incorporate this method of teaching into a more traditional course. However, it would be difficult to cope with large classes during a short course; speechcraft courses run over a four to eight week period and are normally limited to

eight to ten students. In our opinion, a single thirteen week semester would be about the minimum time to run such an elaborate course of instruction.

On the subject of course assessment, traditional assessment methods are probably not appropriate for this type of teaching. Assessment should be according to the manner in which the students are trained, for example, by oral presentation. However, skeptics of greater use of oral presentation in assesssment have raised the probability of anxiety and raised stress levels affecting student grades. This potential problem has been considered by Lind and Stewart (1994) but was not deemed to be a serious problem and not considered greater than the anxiety induced by any assessment method. We believe that consistent oral communication training will not only reduce communication anxiety but improve the ability of students to express their comprehension of the subjects they have studied. We are also well aware of the importance of a natural and fluid speaking technique in any interpersonal communication situation and especially during job interviews.

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Writing at a tertiary level: Making the critical connections

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One of the hallmarks of being able to write at a tertiary level is the ability to evaluate and write critically about information derived from a variety of sources. Yet a common complaint amongst lecturers is the tendency for many students to be mainly descriptive in their writing, with little evidence of critical thought. But what is critical thought? Can it be developed through the curriculum? How can it be developed in writing?

This paper proposes a model for examining different types of critical thought and their relationship to writing in various disciplines. The model provides a way of examining the types of writing tasks we set students. Using the model, the paper examines the relationship between critically evaluating information and then being able to reformulate and express one's own critical thoughts on paper. Based on experiences from the implementation of a generic skills programme across undergraduate degree courses offered by the Faculty of Business at Edith Cowan University, the author suggests various ways in which critical writing can be fostered across the disciplines.

Introduction

Despite the attention given to both writing and critical thinking from primary through secondary school, a frequent complaint at the tertiary level is that students tend to regurgitate the work of others and that their writing lacks critical analysis and depth of thought (eg, Ingleton & Thorne, 1995). This paper examines the relationship between critical thinking and writing at the tertiary level. It then proposes a model which broadly represents the types of critical thinking fostered at a tertiary level and discusses their relationship to writing with suggestions as to how critical writing can be developed across the curriculum.

Critical thinking and its relationship to writing

Traditionally, the study of critical thinking at university has been thought of as the study of logic, also referred to as argument analysis or the critical study of reasoning. This view of critical thinking has resulted in many proponents of critical writing focussing largely on the development of logic and argument in writing (eg, Cooper & Patton, 1997; Moore, 1993). Today, critical thinking is thought of more broadly. Critical thinking is acknowledged as involving a wider range of tasks, including problem solving and decision making, and these impact on writing in different ways.

With tertiary courses incorporating a range of thinking skills (Vardi, 1998), it is important to be able to identify the characteristics of diverse thinking tasks and how these characteristics impact on the final written product. One characteristic of all these tasks is that, to varying degrees, they involve both the evaluation of information and the generation of ideas (Marzano et al, 1987; Nickerson, 1990). A contemporary definition of critical thinking needs to reflect the complementary nature of these two sides of critical thinking as shown in Figure 1.

Sts should be able to clearly identify topic critical purposes audience ... = implications for academics.

need to link critical purposes to inputs, outputs, ... text types.

description, explan., argument, text interpretation — narration definition...

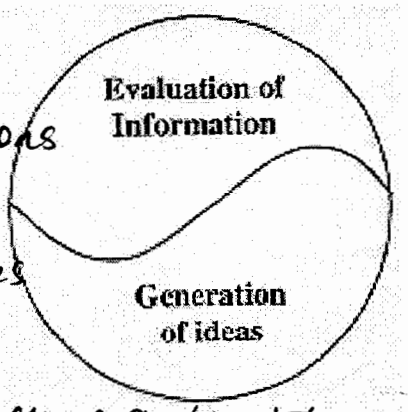

Figure 1. The complementary sides of critical thinking

These two sides of critical thinking may be interpreted broadly. The literature indicates that information to be evaluated may be derived from a wider range of sources than communicated argument. It can also include information derived from observation, experience and reflection (Scriven & Paul, 1996). Equally, the creative generation of ideas may result not only in the development of argument, but also in the development of systems, products, models, experiences, solutions to problems and so forth. In different pieces of critical writing, the source of the information being evaluated and the type of creative outcome being generated can affect the linguistic structure of the final written product.

One of the ways in which we can see the effect of various types of critical thinking on the final written product is through examining text types. Extended written discourse, as required at a tertiary level, combines smaller units of writing variously referred to as texts (Werlich, 1976), genres (Knapp & Watkins, 1994) or elemental genres (Martin, 1997). A text comprises a functional sequence of words or sentences based on a theme which has a clear beginning and end (Werlich, 1976, pp. 23–25) and which satisfies a social purpose (Cope & Kalantzis, 1993, p. 2).

In examining discourse, various linguists have identified major text types. Table 1. A comparison of text types lists and compares the main types identified by Werlich (1976), Knapp and Watkins (1994) and Martin (1985, 1997). Examination of Table 1. A comparison of text types reveals that while the terminology and groupings may differ between linguists, five major types of text can be identified. It is this notion of a text type that is useful for examining the various ways in which writing can express a wide range of critical thought.

Factors affecting choice of text type

- writers' perception of audience

Demands

Nature of info to be evaluated

Nature of ideas to be generated

Knapp & Watkins (1994) Genres	Werlich (1976) Major text types & sub-groupings	Martin (1997, 1985) Elemental genres
Description	Description • impressionistic • technical	Description (of a particular thing) Report (a description of a class of things)
Instruction	Instruction • directions • rules • regulations • statutes	Procedure
Explanation	Exposition (analysis and explanation) • definition • explication • summary • text interpretation	Explanation
Argument	Argumentation • comment • scientific argumentation	Exposition (argument & reasoning)
Narrative	Narration • narrative • report • news story	Recount

Table 1. A comparison of text types

To express critical thought, writers make several choices as to how much they will write in a given text type and how they will combine text types. These choices depend upon a number of factors:

- the writer's perception of the audience and its needs;
- the demands set by their thinking-writing task;
- the nature of the information to be evaluated;
- the nature of the ideas to be generated.

Given the range of factors that can impact on a final piece of critical writing, where best should critical writing be fostered? To answer that question, it is important to consider the relationship between critical thinking, the knowledge domain and writing. According to Paul (1992) critical thinking is integral to knowledge acquisition and understanding. The quality of critical thinking that students can display in their writing is directly related to the depth of knowledge they have acquired. According to researchers such as Ericsson and Hastie (1994) and Bransford and Stein (1990), as knowledge is better understood so the ability to solve problems, apply knowledge, develop one's own arguments and find problems within the domain improves. This relationship between critical thinking and knowledge of the domain shows why the development of critical thought and its expression through writing needs to be incorporated across the curriculum and across years of study.

How can critical writing be fostered within subject units? This paper proposes a model which allows lecturers to better understand the nature of critical task requirements and their subsequent demands on writing. This model can then be used to understand the various ways in which critical writing can be developed.

The critical thinking model

This model presents critical thinking in terms of inputs and outputs. Inputs and outputs are important as the type of input being evaluated and the type of output being created can affect the structure and style of the critical piece of writing. Figure 2 illustrates broad categorisation of the types of inputs and outputs typically found in a broad range of disciplines at a tertiary level.

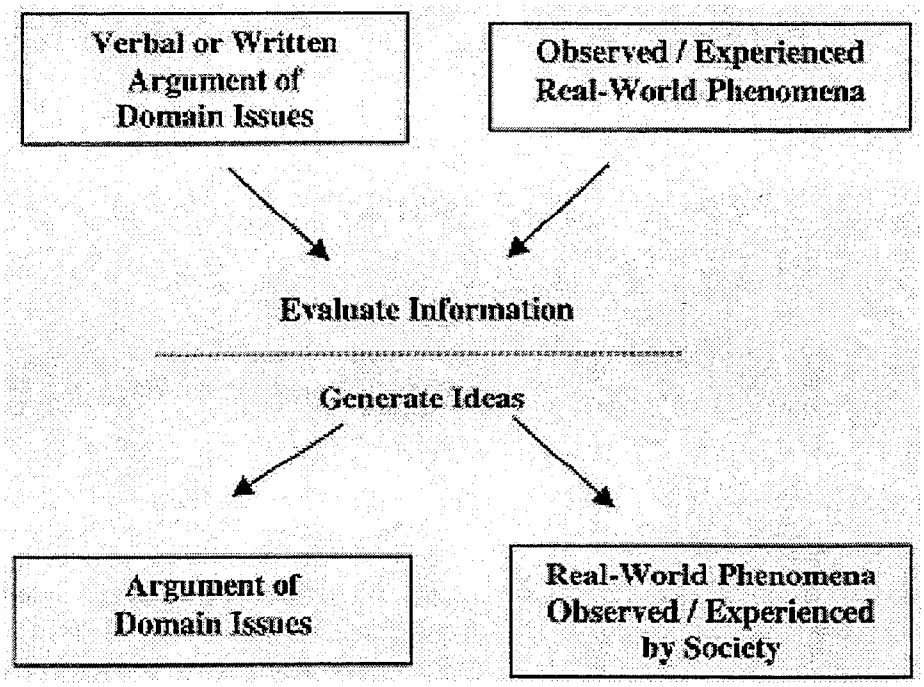

Figure 2. Inputs and outputs required for critical thinking

On the evaluation side, both the evaluation of argument and real-world problems are represented. Critically evaluating someone else's position about a domain specific issue requires some different critical thinking skills than critically evaluating a real-world problem such as the failure of a specific production system or a computer program. In evaluating argument, the student needs to be able to demonstrate that they understood another person's main points and ideas, followed their logic and reasoning, and were able to evaluate the arguments and evidence presented. Analysis of an observed or experienced phenomena requires perceptual abilities, including the abilities to determine which aspects are important or significant in the analysis and interpretation, as well as the ability to relate these to a given framework or model. These differences in critical thinking are reflected in final written evaluations.

Similarly, the generation of argument is different to generating ideas for real-world phenomena such as computer programs, building designs and manufacturing processes. The generation of real-world phenomena requires creative application that is different from the generation of argument. Again these differences impact upon the written product. Ideas generated for the real-world may well require more technical description, explanation and narration coupled with argument in order to adequately share and convince the audience of the new ideas. The generation of argument about domain issues, on the other hand, may require more text interpretation and comment in addition to the argument being presented.

Writing tasks at a tertiary level can combine these inputs and outputs in a variety of ways, again affecting the final written product. For instance, students could evaluate various writers' or speakers' positions on an issue and then argue their own case with reference to these positions. Or a student might evaluate a real-life situation such as the management structure of a company and its impact on the company's overall performance, and develop a better management structure. Alternatively, a student might evaluate a new design or a technological innovation, argue the effects of its use in the community and develop a policy for legislation governing its use or modify the innovation to address concerns. Examples of some combinations of inputs and outputs are shown in Figure 3.

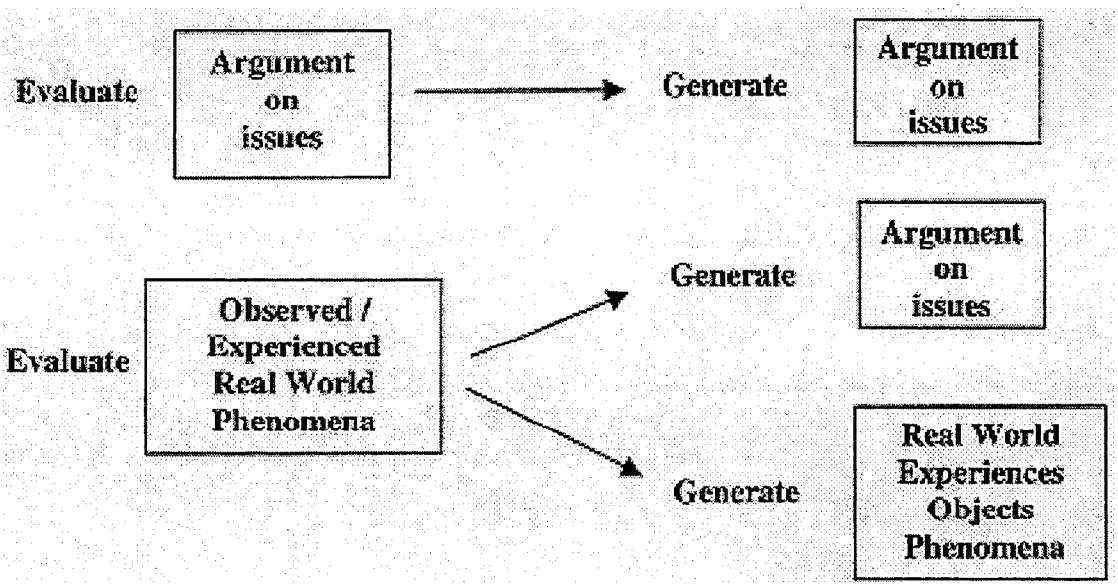

Figure 3. Examples of different ways to incorporate various inputs and outputs

These various combinations alongside the specific critical and creative demands of the assessment question are a major contributor to the choice of text types which writers make. This variation makes it difficult to teach the critical writing required for tertiary study in a formulaic way. Teaching students how to write for instance, an "argumentative essay" or a "business report" does not account for all the possible combinations of text types arising from the many possible critical tasks lecturers set. Lecturers can, however, provide support to students in their attempts at critical writing. To do this they need to examine the nature of the critical tasks they set and determine how this might impact linguistically on the final written product. This model provides lecturers with the means to examine the critical demands and the next section of the paper shows how the linguistic ramifications of tasks in terms of text types can be ascertained and supported throughout the writing process.

Supporting the critical writing process

Since the early 1970's, much has been written about the writing process (Carroll & Wilson, 1993, p. 30) with researchers identifying various stages through which writers go. Common to these are three broad stages:

1) idea gathering, evaluating and generating;

2) writing;

3) proof-reading and editing.

Lecturers and tutors can aid students in their development of critical writing skills at each of these stages by developing students' critical understanding of the topic, and by making the critical and linguistic demands clear.

Idea gathering, evaluating and generating

The first stage of idea gathering, evaluating and generating is the most important in terms of critical thinking. This is predominantly the stage where the quality of the critical thinking will be determined. At this stage, students can be helped in a number of ways.

(a) Clear assignment topics

Assignment topics need to be written so that students are clear about:

- the topic;
- the critical purposes of the writing;
- the audience for whom it is intended.

Focussing on the topic alerts students to the area that needs investigating and thinking about. Identifying the critical purposes helps students determine the nature of the information to be evaluated and generated which in turn dictates the types of text choices which will ultimately need to be made. Thinking about the audience will dictate the tone of the piece and determine how much information needs to be given—how much explanation, description and so forth that is needed for the audience's understanding.

An assessment question, such as the following, clearly indicates the topic, the critical purposes of the assignment and audience requirements:

> A major solar energy industry group has commissioned you to report on the state of solar energy production relative to current alternative power generating technologies. In your report, evaluate the current efficiency of silicon technology for the solar production of electricity. Discuss the long-term prospects for the solar energy industry in the light of alternative power generating technologies. Consider piezoelectrics and determine whether it is feasible to develop a more efficient process for solar electricity production.

The topic is silicon and piezoelectric technology for solar electricity production. The critical purposes of the task are many-fold:

- technically evaluate silicon technology;
- technically compare silicon technology with alternative power generating technologies;
- evaluate others' arguments and generate an argument on the long-term prospects for the solar energy industry in the light of the technical evaluations required as part of the assignment;
- problem solve using piezoelectrics.

The audience is a major solar energy industry group.

Such clarity in critical assignments helps focus the students. But this is only a beginning. Students can be further helped by an indepth analysis of the assignment's implied text requirements.

(b) Analysing assignment questions

In the previous example, the assignment question was partially analysed. Lecturers can help students, in particular first year students, even further by analysing with them the links between the critical purposes of the question to the inputs, the outputs, the audience and the text types these possibly suggest.

- Technically evaluating silicon technology and other alternative power generating technologies requires critical reading of technical articles and suggests text types such as description, explanation and argument.

- Comparisons of technologies requires analysis and results in text types such as argument.

- Evaluation of others' arguments requires text types such as text interpretation and the further generation of argument.

- The problem solving aspect of the assignment requires generation of an idea for real-world application and this requires text types such as description and explanation to share with the audience this creative aspect of the question, coupled with further argument. If recommendations are added to the report, then the text types of instruction and further argument may also be used.

This attention to the relationship between the requirements of the question and the final written product, helps students to focus on meaning. The use of a well written assignment question, in conjunction with a focus on meaning for the reading audience, provides students with ideas for the final structure of the written piece.

(c) Increasing depth of understanding

Understanding the question requirements and their impact on the written product is only one part of achieving improved quality in critical writing. The depth and breadth of critical and creative writing depends largely upon the depth of knowledge and understanding the student has developed about the topic, coupled with their ability to express their thoughts.

The role of tutorials and lectures in stimulating critical thought and understanding of background concepts is of paramount importance. Here, in-class writing can be used to help students organise their thoughts and access meaning. Students can reframe knowledge by writing in various text types. Text types such as definitions, explanations, and descriptions relevant to the domain start the critical process of accessing knowledge by encouraging students to show understanding of others' ideas, conclusions and arguments or understanding of a real-life situation. As students start to come to grips with the subject matter, so greater degrees of critical thinking can be demanded such as: analysis of underlying assumptions; determinations of bias in data; evaluation of argument; and comparisons of theoretical applications. The results of this thinking can also be expressed through the writing of texts such as argument, text interpretation and comment. Such variety in short pieces of writing can enhance knowledge acquisition as well as students' understanding of critical requirements in writing.

Understanding of the assignment question can be further aided through the use of discussion groups in the idea gathering, evaluating and generating phase. These could be incorporated either in or out of tutorial time. Collegiate learning, where students work through their understandings and gain insights from others, can be tutor initiated or fostered through 'study buddy' arrangements.

Writing

Once students have thought about the topic and the demands of the question, sought out and evaluated the relevant information, and generated their ideas, then each individual student is ready to start organising thoughts and commence writing. While much has been written about the process writers go through in this stage, Chandler (1994) cautions against imposing a given approach to the writing process. He points out that some people meticulously plan and then write to that plan, while others who are unable to use a plan, organise their thoughts through the act of writing. There is clearly more than one process within this stage for writing.

Students can, however, be aided without interfering with their preferred approaches to writing in a number of ways.

(a) Providing written models

Students rarely have an opportunity to see exemplary student writing. Providing them with models gives them the opportunity to learn from others. Students need many models which reflect the different types of writing arising from the critical and creative demands that can be imposed by different assignment questions.

Consider the different text types that could be elicited by a different assignment question:

> "The Thatcher government introduced the poll tax in the late 1980's under the 'benefit to user' definition of the equity principle. Critically evaluate equity issues in relation to this tax and the previously existing property taxes."

In this assignment question, not only is the topic different to the prior example, but the critical purposes and audience also differ, thus causing a different combination of text types to be used. This question suggests the need for the following text types:

- narration—to provide the historical background;
- definition—equity principle, 'benefit to user';
- description and explanation—to explain the different taxes;
- text interpretation and argument—in the critical evaluation of others' arguments;
- argument—to generate own view on the equity issues.

Clearly a written model generated for the first example of assignment question would be quite different in terms of text types from a written model generated for this example. Providing a basic text analysis of these written models further helps students understand how to structure their writing.

(b) Providing a text analysis of the model

Like most readers, students read for meaning, not to analyse the way in which the written piece was constructed. While students may appreciate a well-written model, they may not be sure what makes it critical or how its construction aids the audience's understanding. This is where an examination of the texts used in the model becomes important.

Figure 4 shows an example of the types of texts used at the start of a model essay based on the following assignment question.

> "Belkaoui and Jones (1996) state 'Accounting standards dominate the accountant's

work. These standards are being constantly changed, deleted, and/or added to, both in Australia and abroad.' Given their importance who should set accounting standards, the private sector or the public sector?"

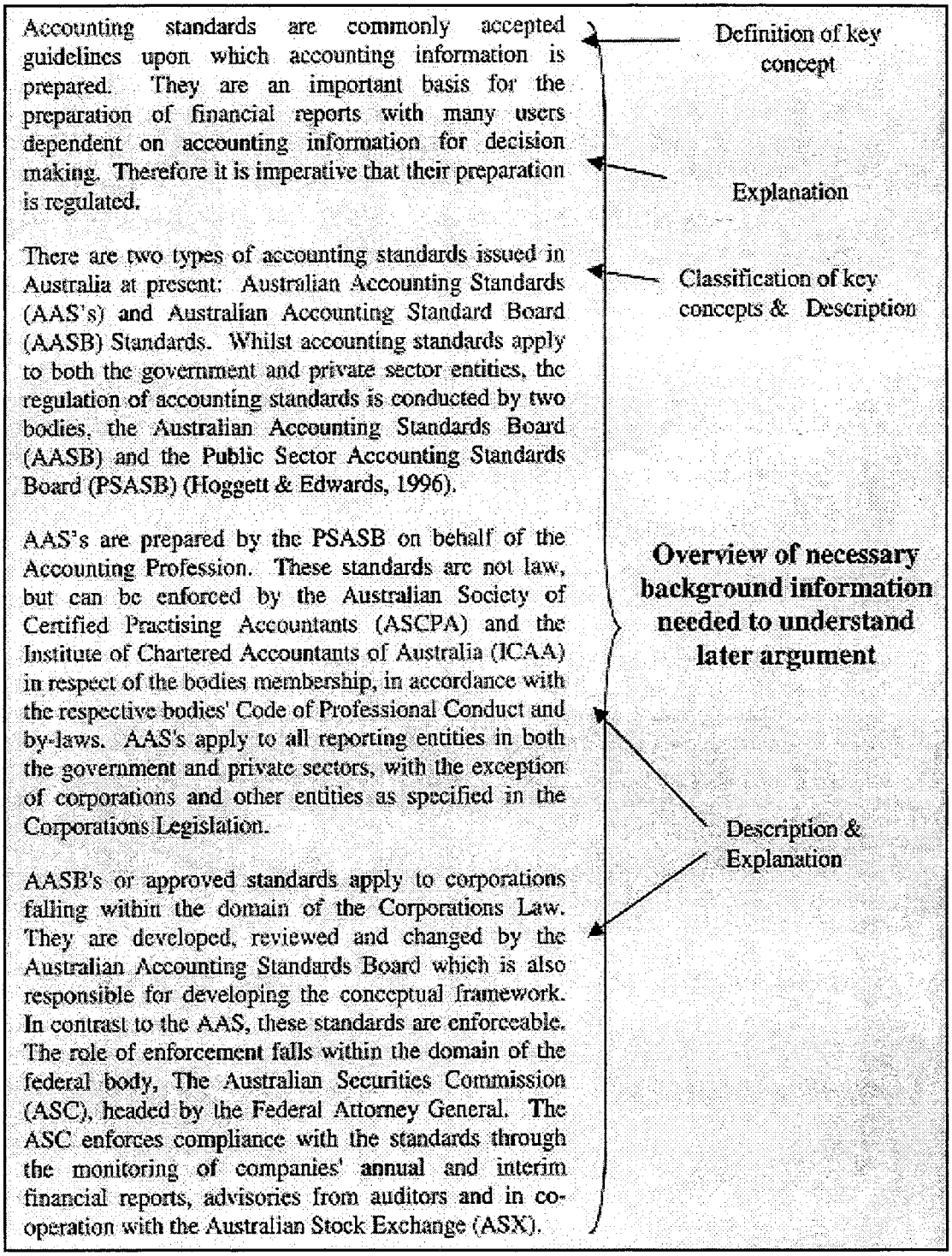

Figure 4. Showing an example of text types at the start of a model essay
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In this example, the analysis points out the various text types that the writer has used at the start of the essay and some of the reasons for their use. Many students, however, do not go beyond this necessary stage of writing, leaving it at this descriptive and explanatory stage. Figure 4 shows how a later part of the essay starts the more critical thought expressed through argument.

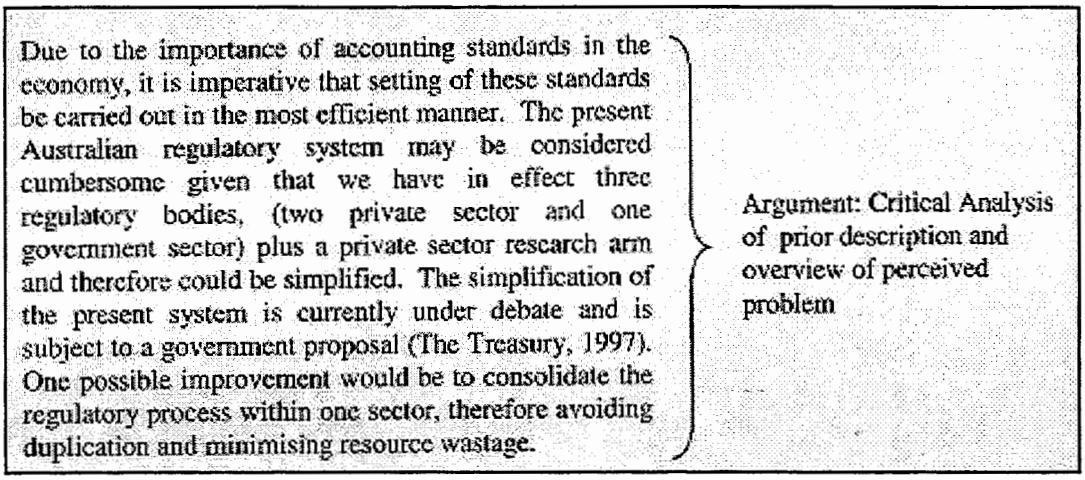

Figure 5. Later part of a model essay showing critical thought
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Figure 5 shows the start to the process of argument. In this example, the model essay went through a pattern of text types where 350 words were devoted to description and explanation and the remaining 1,200 words were devoted to arguments supporting the writers' position. A model essay such as this allows the lecturer or tutor to fully go through with the students, the reasons why the writer chose these text types and how these relate to the topic, the critical purposes and the audience as specified by the question.

Proof-reading and editing

In this final stage of the writing process, lecturers can best help students by ensuring that they are very clear about their expectations. Students need to be given the necessary information to ensure that as they re-read their written work they can check that they have met expectations in terms of

- critical purpose;
- readability;
- the required writing conventions (eg referencing, formatting).

Critical purpose

Students can be helped with expectations in this area by providing them with the criteria used in the marking process to determine the quality of critical thinking and writing displayed in the task. As anyone who has read a range of students essays knows, there are varying degrees of evaluative and creative thought that can be expressed in the writing. At the most basic level of thinking, students can demonstrate an understanding of others' ideas. As students engage more with material, so they need to be able to demonstrate greater critical thought such as the identification of underlying assumptions, the evaluation and synthesis of a range of ideas and viewpoints, and the generation of new models and approaches. The use of criteria for determining the degree of critical thought employed in conjunction with a model essay, should help students be clear about what is expected.

Readability

Encouraging students to think about focussing on their readers and ensuring reader comprehension helps greatly with improving readability. For instance, Rosenberg (1989) suggests that writers should anticipate criticisms or questions the reader might ask, pose these and answer them in the writing. Providing charts, diagrams and illustrations which

summarise or clarify the written material can also help the reader understand the more complex or detailed information.

Lecturers can support students in achieving clarity of writing by allowing them a measure of creativity in presentation and not sticking overly rigidly to definitions of what constitutes an "essay". Such rigidity can deny students access to strategies, such as diagrams or headings, which enhance reader comprehension.

Writing conventions

While students should be allowed some freedom in written expression, there are clearly some conventions to which they must adhere such as referencing and the conventional formatting requirements of writing in particular disciplines. These can be made explicit through the use of relevant booklets, handouts and guidelines.

Conclusion

Writing is a complex process, and the critical demands placed at the tertiary level make the process all the more challenging for writers. Ideas are more complex, the relationships between those ideas can be complex and this complexity is often difficult to express in the linear order demanded by written language. After twelve years of schooling, most students are aware of the need for an introduction, body and conclusion in a piece of writing. What they need help and practise in, at the tertiary level, is dealing with the new critical demands imposed on them through the discipline and understanding how these translate into the final written product. Traditional approaches to fostering critical thinking in writing emphasise logic and argument. This paper goes beyond the traditional approach by showing how critical thinking in its various interpretations impacts on the types of text required in a given thinking-writing task. It outlines some of the ways we can start thinking about these demands and offers practical suggestions for the ways in which teaching staff can help students at each stage of writing.

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Joining forces: A combined faculty and learning support venture to improve the communication skills of commerce students

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The University of Auckland's *Commerce Communication Skills Programme* is an ongoing venture which aims to improve the communication skills of students within the School of Business and Economics. The Faculty funds Student Learning Centre tutors to provide specific assistance to staff and students in all aspects of written and oral communication. This paper traces the three-year development of the *Programme*, which was conceived from a single orientation course for first-year students. It is now a comprehensive programme which offers individual consultations, orientation courses and one-off workshops for students, as well as assessment and teaching assistance to staff. In 1997 for example, report writing and oral presentation workshops were incorporated into one department's tutorial schedule to coincide with assessment requirements. The *Programme* also supported the publication of *The business of writing*, a prescribed text at undergraduate level, in an attempt to standardise information about written work. The book, originally published in New Zealand, has also been published in Australia. However, like many other similar programmes, the *Commerce Programme* is in a tenuous position within the University, and is constantly forced to justify its continuation.

Introduction

The primary aim of the University of Auckland's *Commerce Communication Skills Programme* is to assist staff and students within the School of Business and Economics with all aspects of written and oral communication. Specific tutors from the University's Student Learning Centre (SLC) co-ordinate the *Programme*, which is funded by the School. The SLC is an academic department which provides learning support to all students within the University, primarily through individual assistance and skills-based workshops. It focuses on teaching generic skills rather than specific course content. In 1997, over a tenth of the 25,780 students enrolled at the University (University of Auckland, 1997) made use of SLC programmes (Student Learning Centre, 1997).

In 1997, 5,704 students were enrolled in the School of Business and Economics (also known as the Faculty of Commerce) which is comprised of seven teaching and research departments: Accounting and Finance, Commercial Law, Economics, International Business, Management and Employment Relations (MER), Marketing, and Management Science and Information Systems. The Faculty provides funding equivalent to 0.6 of a full-time tutor position on an annual contract basis. This is a unique arrangement within the University of Auckland. In other cases, departments or faculties[1] fund staff *within* their department to provide their students with additional written communication skills support, while others[2] offer credit-bearing communication skills papers.

This paper highlights key developments of the *Programme*, and addresses issues regarding the current status of the *Programme* and its direction for the future.

Development of the Programme

The *Programme*, which began in 1995, was conceived from a single orientation course for first-year Commerce students. Discussions between the Faculty and SLC staff recognised the need for ongoing support for Commerce students, particularly in the area of written communication. There was widespread concern about the standard of written expression at all levels within the Faculty, especially with the increasing proportion of students from non-English language backgrounds (Maclean, 1995). A collaborative approach was adopted as the SLC had already established links with the Faculty, and it was a centralised department which had the appropriate skills and resources to meet the demands of students.

This arrangement, while unique in New Zealand, is closely associated with writing-across-the-curriculum (WAC) and writing-in-the-discipline (WID) programmes which, especially in the United States, have grown in popularity during the past 20 years (Anson, Schwiebert, & Williamson, 1993; Fulwiler & Young, 1990). The *Programme*, however, has not explicitly aligned itself to the writing-to-learn philosophies (largely drawn from the work of James Britton, Janet Emig and Christopher Thaiss) inherent in such programmes (Anson, 1993). Recurrent issues arising from WAC and WID programmes are equally relevant here. These include programme goals and objectives, theoretical and pedagogical underpinnings; institutional positioning, faculty and student perception; funding, evaluation, and long-term benefits.

Tutoring staff

The *Programme* has adopted a two-tutor approach whose combined work is equivalent to 0.6 of a full-time position. The tutors work together as a team, and complement each other with their skills and experience. So far, six different tutors have worked in the *Programme*.

Initially, tutors did not have a background in Commerce, enabling them to focus their work on communication skills rather than specific content. However, not having the personal experience of having studied in the Commerce Faculty meant that tutors lacked knowledge of the ins and outs of the departments. Following the departure of one tutor at the beginning of 1997, the *Programme* employed a Masters student who was also a Stage I MER tutor. Her background was both invaluable and problematic. Often students perceived her as being able to offer content-specific assistance in her role at the SLC, when this was not the case. When this tutor was unable to continue with the *Programme* in the second semester, an SLC tutor based at the University's Tamaki campus was enlisted. As he has played an integral role in the Academic Peer Tutoring (APT) Programme in Economics, Commercial Law and MER, similar confusions emerged when he became involved.[3]

Further, the staffing changes have resulted in a lack of continuity. When both of the tutors who set up the programme left after a year, their initial efforts to form a close working relationship between the SLC and the Faculty were "lost". The two new tutors who took on the programme had to familiarise themselves with key faculty members and the Faculty itself, and re-establish the connections made in the first year. Through subsequent staffing changes, new tutors have spent time "initiating" themselves into the programme, being less available—initially, at least—to work directly with staff and students.

These changes appear to be a result of part-time work on a non-tenured basis, rather than the work itself. Most staff involved in these types of programmes are temporary and transient, reflecting the marginalised status of such programmes, which are not usually considered to be truly academic (Young & Fulwiler, 1990). In the Commerce *Programme*, tutors have left to take up offers of full-time or longer-term work, or to pursue further studies. In 1998, for the first time, the same tutors have continued with the *Programme*.

Liaison with departmental staff

Promotion has been an essential aspect of the *Programme*, particularly in the first two years. This involved promoting, liaising and networking within the Faculty to advertise the *Programme* and identify areas of concern. In 1995, Stage I course co-ordinators were interviewed to ascertain how the SLC could assist in identifying and helping students develop their written communication skills (Student Learning Centre, 1995). Several issues emerged:

- There was uncertainty about assessing students' written work, which was creating friction within some departments. Some lecturers favoured marking for key words, while others demanded fuller evidence that students have a sound understanding of concepts and ideas.

- Grading of assignments tended to become more mechanical due to class size (eg., greater emphasis on multi-choice or short answers at the expense of written answers) (Maclean, 1995). Marking standards were being lowered due to students' difficulty with writing (eg., "... if marking 100 papers and the first 15 are really bad, you start marking easier.").

- Many students at first year level have insufficient English to understand course material. Language problems were also affecting teaching practice in tutorials as tutors spend more time explaining basic words and meanings rather than more complex ideas and concepts.

- Semesterisation would mean that there was even less time for the setting and marking of written assignments or essays in tests.

- Because of their already heavy course loads, students are not interested in attending special workshops or extra courses if they are not credit-bearing.

These discussions prompted joint efforts with the Department of Economics[4] to develop a system for identifying students with problems in written expression (Maclean, 1995). A 10-point checklist of writing elements[5] was devised to provide feedback on essays written in tests. Students' grades were not affected by this feedback. Of the 1,530 students who sat the test, 501 (over a third). scored 4 or less out of 10 in the assessment of their written expression. A further 150 students received a score of 5 out of 10, rated "just adequate" (University of Auckland, 1995). Of the 501 students who failed the written expression assessment, 213 (14%) had skills so inadequate (scoring between 0 and 2 out of 10) suggesting that they are not prepared for university study in English and most probably would not pass first-year Economics (University of Auckland, 1995).

Students identified as having problems were advised to seek assistance from the tutors in the *Programme*, but few took the opportunity to do so. This is probably because the checklist did not have direct bearing on the students' test mark, or because there was no personalised staff referral.

Early efforts in the *Programme* focused on assisting staff and students at the first-year level. In 1997, all Stage III course co-ordinators were invited to discuss the communication skills of students at third year level. Discussions reinforced concerns that many graduates of the University do not have adequately developed communication skills, despite meeting relatively high standards to enter the Faculty—some of these students may have "slipped through" with minimal communication skills. The needs of students and the problems that staff have in assessing students' ability were similar to those found at the first-year level.

One result of the Stage III course co-ordinators' meeting was the invitation to run a session (repeated 12 times) on report writing and oral presentation skills as part of a third-year Financial Accounting tutorial programme. These were very successful as students did not have to commit extra time to attend (they were in their usual tutorial times), the content was timely and directly relevant to upcoming coursework requirements, and there was full support from the course co-ordinator. These sessions have been continued in 1998.

Promotion of the *Programme* has taken much time and energy. It has also involved attending departmental staff meetings and Stage I lectures at the beginning of each academic year, and advertising in the general SLC workshop brochure and on noticeboards around campus. Student response to the *Programme* seems to increase when Commerce staff endorse it. Thus, staff within departments are encouraged to promote the Programme, advertise specific workshops in lectures, and refer students personally. The effort required to continually encourage staff to endorse the *Programme* however, takes time away from working directly with students.

Work with students

Individual assistance

Essentially, the *Programme* focuses on assisting students with their communication skills. Initially, students seemed reluctant to take advantage of the assistance offered. In the first year of the *Programme* tutors targeted those students who were identified as having problems with written expression according to the checklist feedback for the essay written in the Economics test. Workshops were poorly attended and few students sought individual assistance. Although many students need focused teaching on a regular basis, they probably would not seek help unless courses were credit bearing or students were directed by their tutors or lecturers to attend. Students are also more likely to seek assistance if they lose marks which are allocated for written expression.

Student usage of the *Programme* for individual assistance has increased each year. In 1996, 50 students sought individual assistance (Student Learning Centre, 1996), while this tripled to 174 in 1997 (Student Learning Centre, 1997). However, these figures seem relatively low given the Faculty's perception of the problem. The first three years of the *Programme* have seen similar trends in the types of students that have sought assistance, and in the type of assistance sought. The majority (over 70%) of those seen were from Asian, non-English language backgrounds, and sought help with written assignments. Two-thirds only made use of the *Programme* once, and in 1997 no student was seen more than five times.

Students tended to bring drafts of written work to be "proofread" shortly before the due date. Many of these students had a reasonably sound knowledge of grammatical principles, but found it difficult to put these into practice in their writing. Markers often pinpoint grammar as an area of concern, and consequently, when students draft essays and assignments, they focus on grammar. Students seem to lack confidence in their proofreading ability and tend to rely on friends (often unable to detect errors) and SLC tutors (Hansen & Wong-Toi, 1996). At second and third year level, some staff members have incorporated journal writing into their assessment requirements, and students come to the SLC for help in "proofreading" their journal entries because they are afraid that their mark will be affected by their grammatical problems.

Students also exhibit problems in their writing due to their limited English vocabulary (Hansen & Wong-Toi, 1996). This, along with their grammatical problems affects the flow and style of their writing. Their expression of complex ideas often becomes unclear and meaning is lost.

Time, lack of confidence and anxiety are other factors that influence students' ability to communicate their ideas (Hansen & Wong-Toi, 1996). Many students seen through the *Programme* require more time to complete written tasks and have difficulty producing writing under time constraints. Often, they lack confidence in meeting the requirements of writing at a tertiary level. They have difficulty identifying their specific writing needs, apart from knowing they require grammar checks. Students are also concerned about their ability to communicate orally. This makes them less likely to ask questions and hinders their ability to participate in tutorial and seminars.

Workshops

One-off one-hour workshops on topics such as grammar troubleshooting, report writing, reading and revision, and presentation skills have generally been poorly attended. Exam revision workshops and workshops for targeted groups have been more successful as they have been tailored to students' needs. These usually run during study and intersemester breaks, and include orientation programmes for first year students, review workshops for international students, and oral communication skills workshops for first year Malaysian students on government scholarships. It seems that workshops tailored for specific groups of students are the most popular, and general workshops held during the semester, the least. This may well be due to the University's decision to introduce a semester system. Following the introduction of semesterisation at the beginning of 1996, students perceived an increase both in their workload and stress levels (Morrison, 1996). In a survey of 2,300 undergraduates, students indicated that semesters did not give them enough time to do assignments well, and that the work was not evenly scheduled. A majority felt that semesters meant more superficial approaches to learning as they had did not have enough time to think about lectures and course materials.

Study groups

In 1996, study groups established during orientation courses were monitored. Tutors also attempted to form additional study groups for first year students. Although these were advertised in large Stage I lectures, student response was poor. It seemed that those who could set up groups themselves had already done so, and those who might have benefited from study groups may have lacked the confidence to respond. Tutors have decided to abandon any widescale efforts to establish study groups as it has been a time-consuming process with few tangible results. However, if a student asks about or might benefit from being in a study group, tutors advise on how they might form a study group themselves and offer resource material.

Comment

A problem with the joint approach is the misinterpretation of the nature of assistance provided. Because the *Programme* is supported by the Faculty, it appears that students expect the SLC tutors to have knowledge, not only about communication skills, but also the Faculty itself and the content covered in all its courses. In 1997, the dual role of the SLC / MER tutor, and later the APT tutor from Tamaki added to this confusion. Through the duration of the *Programme*, it has become clear that many students do require content-specific help, and perhaps because they are sometimes unable to get this from departments, they seek assistance from the *Programme* (Hansen & Wong-Toi, 1996).

Further, in an environment of large classes, teaching of writing has little place. Some faculty members view writing merely as an evaluative instrument, an opportunity to test students on whether they have read the textbook or paid attention to lectures (Young & Fulwiler, 1990). Similarly, many students may not be interested, or have the time, to reflect on writing as a process or a tool for learning and thinking. Instead, a written assignment is viewed as an obstacle which is necessary to complete to successfully pass a course (Young & Fulwiler,

1990). However, in teaching students about writing, the *Programme* attempts to reinforce the idea that by writing, revising and editing, students can improve the quality of their ideas, information, and expression (Dickerson, Fulwiler & Steffens, 1990). Students are encouraged to learn about their own writing processes and it is assumed that they will improve through practice. As this practice does not always have to be for their lecturer or marker, students are encouraged to write for themselves through freewriting and keeping journals.

Written resources

In 1996, the *Programme* supported the publication of *The business of writing: Written communication skills for commerce students* (Manalo, Wong-Toi & Hansen, 1997). This was a response to the need for standardised information about written requirements in the Faculty. The book provides a step-by-step approach to writing essays, reports and literature reviews in business disciplines. It also covers writing in exams and referencing. Since 1997 the book has been a prescribed text for all first year Commerce students, and a recommended text for some other undergraduate, as well as diploma and postgraduate courses. The book has been adapted for Australian students.

Key achievements

Achievements of the programme include:

- Enhancing the relations between the Commerce Faculty and the SLC.
- Establishing a framework for working jointly with a faculty to offer learning support to its students.
- Providing an avenue for Commerce students to seek assistance to develop their communication skills.
- Establishing a system for Economics staff to assess written communication skills in their first year students.
- Creating a written resource in which students within the Faculty have access to standardised information about written requirements.

Discussion

There is continuing debate about whether writing and learning support should be offered directly within departments, by an institution's English department, or by a centralised department such as the SLC (Fulwiler & Young, 1990; Kinneavy, 1983/1994). The *Commerce Programme* has adopted a combined approach, whereby the skills and resources of a centralised facility are used to meet the needs of students within a particular faculty. However, some departments see writing and learning support as their responsibility, and therefore incorporate aspects of writing and communication into their courses, but in some cases students are given conflicting advice from their department and the SLC. This could be reduced by improving the communication between departments and the SLC. A further problem with a decentralised approach is that assistance can become fragmented—students in some departments may have access to specific and direct help, but those in other departments might miss out completely. This seems to be determined by the convictions of key staff members within the department and broader social and educational factors (Young & Fulwiler, 1990).

At the University of Auckland, there is the additional question of whether the SLC and the staff development facility, Centre for Professional Development (CPD), should collaborate to enhance both staff and student development within faculties. Many WAC programmes work

directly with faculty, developing their ability and enthusiasm to incorporate writing-to-learn strategies in their courses (Anson, 1993; Bazerman & Russell, 1994; Fulwiler & Young, 1990). While this has been part of the *Programme*'s efforts, especially in the earlier stages, institutional problems have arisen. These come from the distinction between SLC (whose mission is to support students in their learning needs). and CPD (whose work is in the area of staff training and development). There is some confusion, particularly in the perception of faculty members, regarding these roles, especially as the two departments have worked together (eg., for postgraduate students who are often also staff members), and because some SLC staff have also worked for CPD.

Nevertheless, if the University continues to encourage students to enrol in its courses it must offer support to students. Students have the "right" to have access to communication skills support, and within the University's structure, that is the SLC's job. This does not mean that faculties and/or departments should not be responsible for developing communication skills in students, and that is where the writing-to-learn approach is important.

The theoretical assumptions and pedagogical framework of the *Commerce Programme* need further clarification. The *Programme* looks a lot like a general SLC programme in terms of what it does and how it does it. In contrast to many WAC and WID programmes, it primarily uses a bottom-end problem-oriented approach to assist students, rather than fully embracing the philosophies of writing-to-learn, and writing as a means of learning and communicating disciplinary knowledge. These programmes are valuable in the sense that they are designed to help students with both the content and the discourse of disciplines (Young & Fulwiler, 1990). A more comprehensive programme would address issues on a wider scale, simultaneously considering the issues of general literacy, critical thinking, improved writing, active learning in students; and disciplinary isolation, teacher training, curricular coherence, writing skills, mid-career burnout, institutional morale in faculty (Young & Fulwiler, 1990). This however, is not possible within the *Programme*, given its current institutional standing.

As mentioned, students and many members of faculty may not perceive communication skills as an important aspect of the university curriculum, or see the point in developing thinking and writing ability. Although many faculty members are aware of the communication problems of students, their views on what can be done about these and how these skills can be assessed, vary greatly.

To date, attempts to evaluate the overall effectiveness of the *Programme* include obtaining written feedback for specific workshops, and comparing the pass rates of students who attended the first year orientation programme with those that did not. In 1997, the mean pass rate of students who attended the first semester orientation was 87.6% (n=154) and the mean pass rate for those who attended the second semester orientation was 92.7% (n=17). These both compare favourably with the mean pass rate (81%) of all full-time first year Commerce students in the previous year (Student Learning Centre, 1997).

Evaluation and assessment of this type of programme, being removed from many other important influences, is certainly problematic, thus making it difficult to justify its continuation (Dickerson, Fulwiler & Steffens, 1990). Even if it was possible to demonstrate that students who utilised the *Programme* were either writing or learning better, clearly, this improvement could not be attributed solely to the *Programme*.

It seems that the "success" of the *Programme* is also measured by the number of students assisted, which does not necessarily reflect its effectiveness. The annual renewal of funding seems to be dependent on this measure and the *Programme* remains vulnerable to budget cuts. Each year the *Programme* could be dropped from the Faculty's activities without affecting the Faculty's other aspects (such as specialised courses, or postgraduate programmes) (Young & Fulwiler, 1990).

The *Programme* seems viable and cost-effective, and to some extent addresses the needs of students in the area of communication skills. Arguably, it could be viewed as a visibly successful programme that, in fact, requires a long-term commitment to resources, faculty development, and institutionalisation in order to be truly successful (Young & Fulwiler, 1990). Perhaps when students no longer have writing problems, when faculty and employers perceive that students no longer have these problems, or when the political pressure for graduates with excellent communication skills eases, such programmes will no longer be necessary (Young & Fulwiler, 1990).

The future

In 1998, the *Programme* will continue to focus on supporting both staff and students in the Commerce Faculty. Although it reduces the time available to work directly with students, continued promotion and networking with departmental staff are essential. Faculty staff play a vital role in the success of the *Programme*. If more students are to make use of the *Programme*, staff endorsement is necessary. At present, students may see the *Programme* as an SLC initiative rather than a Faculty one. By staff advertising the *Programme* and referring students to workshops or individual consultations, students may perceive the *Programme* more favourably. Also, staff must recognise how they can benefit from the *Programme*.

During the past three years, the increase in the numbers of students seeking individual assistance has been encouraging. Workshop attendance has, many times, been disappointing, but seems to reflect students' workload and their desire for content-specific assistance. The *Programme*'s development has highlighted the need for intensive and ongoing writing instruction and assistance especially for students from non-English language backgrounds.

Communication skills workshops (such as those in Stage III Financial Accounting). run in the department, in department time, and with support from the department, will help to reach more students. In 1998, the first year paper in the MER Department will be targeted. This paper, a prerequisite for a Commerce degree, has a heavy emphasis on written and oral communication in its coursework (two essays and an oral presentation) and its exam (three essays and a written case study analysis).

As well as continuing to pursue the avenues created in the first three years, in 1998 the *Programme* will target postgraduate, Maori and Pacific Islands students, and those attending classes through Summer School within the Commerce Faculty. It will also look into developing its methods for identifying at-risk students.

Endnotes

1. For example, the English Department, and the Engineering Faculty.
2. For example, the MER Department, and the Science Faculty at Tamaki campus.
3. In this programme peer tutors offer learning support in the context of specific subjects.
4. This Department runs the largest Stage I Commerce papers, which are prerequisite for a Commerce degree.
5. The checklist included aspects of structure, flow, clarity of expression, grammar, spelling and correct use of terminology.

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Workshops

Teaching modules for professional communication skills

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This workshop is designed to demonstrate and have participants evaluate learning **modules** developed to assist lecturers across campus in **enhancing the professional communication skills of their students**. This project is being conducted by a team from the University of Wollongong's ***Learning and Teaching Research Group***, a research group of 40 lecturers from all of the University's faculties. The effort is funded by an Educational Strategies Development Fund grant of AU$27,000 and is supported by the Centre for Educational Development and Information Resources (CEDIR).

The project grows from the realisation that communication skills are taught in a number of faculties, yet teaching materials are not often shared. In addition, many non-communication subjects require students to practice professional communication skills, skills for which lecturers have little time to develop learning materials. This project aims to establish a base of materials in modules that can be adapted readily to classes in different disciplines.

Communication skills that we are addressing are aimed at six areas:

1. formal **presentations** to groups
2. professional **consultation** to individuals (in nutrition, etc.)
3. conducting and participating in **meetings** (in teams, etc.)
4. **written** communication in various formats (eg., press releases)
5. providing media **interviews**
6. **multi-media** productions (eg., video or web site).

All modules are to address negotiation skills, cross-cultural communication, and reflective practice. They are also to incorporate student-centred learning, experiential learning, student-centred assessment, and flexible delivery.

Our initial effort involves (a) inventory of **communication-skill materials** currently used by lecturers, available in our Library, and accessible via the Web; (b) assessment of **needs** for communication skills in different courses, both undergraduate and postgraduate; (c) development of **pilot modules** on professional consultation and facilitating community consultation in public meetings; and (d) establishment of a Web site for access to on-campus and off-campus materials (*http://cedir.uow.edu.au/subjects/staffdev/comms/*). The Web site will also house commentary on communication-skill materials, commentary that is based on reviews and classroom experience.

A needs assessment was conducted where we collected 60 percent of all **subject outlines** on campus for Spring '97 and catalogued assessment tasks according to communication skills needed to complete assignments. For example, how many subjects require oral reports? In what disciplines do students need to learn to conduct meetings in public settings?

Interviews with lecturers are being used to gauge how they come to adopt teaching materials and methods. Input from lecturers is needed to make the modules relatively effortless to find and use given the demands on the time of lecturers today. We need to avoid reinventing communication textbooks, which are available today but are not widely used in non-communication areas.

Results from the inventory of subject outlines and interviews of lecturers will be presented at the conference. Also to be presented are two modules, which include both video and text material on professional consultation in nutrition and running public meetings for public health professionals.

An ambitious project? Perhaps. Presentation at the conference will aid us in benchmarking our effort and gaining input that can help make our materials more useful. Currently, we await word on CUTSD-organisational funding to expand this project.

Small group teaching of communication skills in the health professions

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Introduction

Small groups provide an ideal context for teaching/learning about communications for a number of reasons. If designed and run properly, they provide a familiar and "safe" setting for communication and sufficient opportunity for each member to play a part in the process, while at the same time allowing each student to evaluate his/her own performance and development against that of others. As with any other teaching/learning approach, both the content and educational process must be made clear—with stated objectives, activities which are seen as appropriate to those objectives, and assessment that is tied to both objectives and activities. However, when dealing with communication, the small group itself inevitably becomes content. That is, it is necessary to remember that the functions of groups include things other than achieving a task—such as boundary maintenance, recruitment, and sanctioning. Factors which facilitate or interfere with group functioning, such as consensus, cohesiveness, and homogeneity should become part of the content of teaching. Issues that commonly need to be dealt with include: breakdowns in group process and how they are managed; the variety of alternative approaches to the group's educational task and the roles of group leaders and members in selecting an approach; the tension between the theoretical consideration of content and the actual "real life" experience of group members; the rights and obligations of the individual within the group; and the limitations of the group context. Examples from the health professions will be used in the presentation.

Small groups provide an ideal context for teaching and learning about interpersonal communication. This paper discusses the reasons why we believe this is so, and also discusses the use of small groups, using examples drawn primarily from the health professions. A variety of small group approaches will subsequently be presented in a one-hour workshop.

While there is general agreement that interpersonal communication skills are vitally important in all of the professions (Ladyshewsky & Gotjamanos, 1997)—particularly in those such as the health professions where many activities are carried out in face-to-face settings (Sanson-Fisher & Maguire, 1980)—there is not a universal consensus that they can be taught (eg. Evans, Coman & Goss, 1996; Royston, 1997) or that they will all be retained as they were taught (Kauss et al., 1980; Davis & Nickolaou, 1992; Evans, et al., 1996; Cantwell & Ramirez, 1997). Frequently, the concerns which people express about the teaching of communication skills arise either from the use of inappropriate methods of teaching, or from a failure to follow some basic guidelines in the design of teaching (Davis & Nickolaou, 1992). Our experience has led to the development of some guidelines for teaching, and the view that small groups provide significant advantages over other approaches to interpersonal communication skills teaching.

Relevance

The relevance of teaching about interpersonal communication skills must always be evident to the students. This includes the relevance of interpersonal communication skills to professional needs, and also the relevance of the teaching method to the skills being taught.

Relevance of interpersonal communication skills to professional needs

As Royston (1997) notes, students often report that formal teaching of interpersonal communication skills—for example, by lectures—is "irrelevant". There may be a variety of reasons for this. Whitehouse (1991) found that the aims and objectives of many communication skills courses were vague and unfocused. If the exact behaviours to be learned and assessed are not spelled out, statements in favour of skills learning can seem like "motherhood statements". Simply learning communication skills by rote will not persuade students that those skills are critical, or even useful beyond the limits of the specific course (Batenburg & Smal, 1997). For example, if students see "successful" role models in the profession who are deficient in interpersonal communciation skills, they may come to believe that those skills are unnecessary, or that they are impractical under the constraints of actual practice, or that they are only useful under specific and limited circumstances. However, the failure of communication skills teaching to modify such attitudes seems to be directly related to the environment of a total course of study. There is considerable variation among courses and institutions in the pattern of student attitudes (Batenburg & Smal, 1997). Much of this variation has to do with the philosophy towards communciation skills expressed by a course or institution through the amount of class time and staff resources which are made available for teaching. Large commitments of time, regular teaching over the duration of the course, and allocation of staff to teaching make it clear to students that these skills are important. Small groups may be expensive of resources, but they help to make the argument for the significance of communication skills by their very existence.

Relevance of communication skills teaching to success as a student

The amount of assessment which is devoted to an area tells students a great deal about what is regarded as important by an institution or profession (Jones & Cockburn, 1993). It is unfortunately true that some students' primary focus is more on completing a subject—or their course of study—successfully than it is on becoming a successful practitioner. This means that attaching teaching about communication skills to an unrelated content subject is likely to be unsuccessful in indicating its importance, simply because it is not seen as integral to passing that subject. This problem is less likely to occur where skills teaching is clearly embedded in the objectives and assessment for a subject, or where individual students are highly motivated towards their future profession as a goal in itself. Small groups present many opportunities for assessment, and students gain a clear perception that evaluation of their communication skills is a significant contributor to their standing as students. Standing within the group is of considerable importance to each student as well, and being a competent and insightful communicator contributes in a major way to that standing. This provides another link between skills learning and success as a student.

Relevance of small group teaching methods to acquisition of communication skills

Small groups can serve as a counter to perceptions of a lack of relevance, because they provide a context in which communication skills are routinely used and valued. Teaching about face-to-face communication by face-to-face communication reinforces theory with experience. Failures on the part of students in the group to communicate effectively tend to be obvious, even early in learning when the reasons why they constitute failures may not yet be apparent to the students. The same holds true for successes, as students know who they themselves respond well to, even before they are made aware of why. The coupling of small groups with clear behavioural objectives makes it much easier to show students how skills are manifested, and what immediate impact those skills have on successful outcomes. This is particularly true where the group tasks have a high degree of similarity to professional activities. This can be achieved by use of professional settings, the use of practitioners as tutors, and the use of professionally relevant role-plays and simulations. The small group can utilise the same activities for assessment—eg, role-plays—that are used for teaching, and

it is easier to build assessment into the teaching process with a small group than it is for many other styles of teaching—and thus to provide feedback and reinforcement.

The importance of feedback, reinforcement and remediation

The opportunity to receive feedback and reinforcement for appropriate behaviour, and to remedy mistakes, is an essential part of learning. Large group methods such as lecturing allow students who are unmotivated, or unsure of themselves, to avoid actually demonstrating their communication skills, and therefore also to avoid evaluation of those skills. Even individual written exercises such as essays allow students to avoid direct and immediate information about their skills because the feedback which is provided usually comes slowly, and usually only once for each exercise. There is generally no opportunity, or need, for students to rectify the errors they have made in the assignment. Any remediation that takes place will occur long after the behaviour itself, and changes in behaviour will not necessarily be evaluated until much later—eg, the next course, or year—if at all.

If designed and run properly, small groups provide a familiar and "safe" setting for interpersonal communication, and opportunity for each member to play a significant part in the group process. This provides numerous opportunities for evaluation by others—most significantly, "experts" such as teachers—while at the same time allowing each student to measure his/her own performance and development against that of other members of the group. Expert (Jones, 1997), peer (Ladyshewsky & Gotjamanos, 1997) and self-assessment (Jones & Cockburn, 1993) can all play major roles in the improvement of communication over the long term. This involves continual repetition and reinforcement of the theoretical concepts underlying communication skills as well, so that this more abstract content is learned in parallel with the behaviour.

It has been argued (Cantwell & Ramirez, 1997; Davis & Nicholaou, 1992). that students may forget, or even unlearn, what they have learned at early stages in a course of study. No matter how good training in communication skills is, if skills are not adequately reinforced before other training interferes with their expression, they will tend to fade. Medical students, for example, often report that they learn open-ended questioning early in their courses, and then are taught medical history taking in a routinised way which emphasises closed questions. As their later teachers are seen as emphasising fact-finding or diagnostic skills (Batenburg & Smal, 1997; Royston, 1997) more than interpersonal communication skills, students are placed in a situation of being more immediately successful—as students—if they unlearn the very skills that will make them more successful as practitioners.

In order to avoid this happening, it is helpful for students to have "overlearned" their skills at the earlier stage. A wide range of the psychology literature (eg social facilitation) indicates that increasing the uncertainty in a situation tends to elicit the individual's dominant behavioural responses—that is, his/her most well established ones. Early in the learning process, these dominant responses are likely to be incorrect, or random ones. At this stage, increasing uncertainty by increasing stress or giving contradictory instructions will increase the occurrence of errors. Late in learning, however, the dominant responses are likely to be correct, so increasing uncertainty can even increase the occurrence of correct responses. This is one reason why middle-aged people are the safest drivers. By maximising opportunities for practice, and for feedback, the small group contributes to rapid learning, and overlearning, of good communication behaviours. There is immediate reinforcement. It tends to be instantly apparent when communications have failed—people look uncertain and unhappy, or report being unsatisfied, and closure is not achieved (that is, people do not feel the the communication episode is complete). It is also apparent when communication has succeeded, because closure is achieved and the parties are happy to move on. Behaviour changes in desired directions even when the individual is not necessarily insightful about her/his behaviour. As this overlearning takes place, appropriate and "professional"

behaviours become the dominant ones, and this increases the likelihood of their persistence into the future (Evans et al., 1996). Although it requires a significant resource commitment on the part of a department or faculty to create small groups, those groups are actually quite cost-effective in producing rapid skills learning. When additional skills—such as formal history-taking—are later introduced, they can be integrated with the overlearned responses instead of replacing them.

As Parsons (1951) indicated, groups develop a variety of functions which are not just focussed on task achievement, but also on increasing cohesiveness and controlling deviance. The existence of the group depends to some extent on shared goals, but also on a shared sense of belonging, and an obligation to be helpful to the group. If the students most in need of skills training are the most reluctant to get that training, the other members of the group are likely to feel an obligation to help them get it. Groups instil values that can be resistant to change—and this is important if subsequent experience is to be integrated with, rather than replacing, good habits of communication. In time, these attitudes can even change the teaching that students are subsequently exposed to. Monash medical and nursing students, for example, appear to have developed high expectations for the communication skills of their tutors during their clinical teaching, and this has helped to modify the teaching itself—shifting greater emphasis to the evaluation of communication as well as diagnostic skill.

Skills development and insight

Most of the approaches to teaching that are used at universities have been developed with the teaching of knowledge as the primary goal. They are usually aimed towards the "summative" assessment of students; that is, what absolute level of knowledge the students have acquired. It is quite possible for this knowledge to have been gained completely outside of the present teaching setting. Usually, there is no interest in the level of knowledge brought into the course, only whether the amount taken out is sufficient. With regards to interpersonal communication skills training, the concern is more likely to be that all students form adequate and appropriate skills, and that they understand the process by which they have done so. It is not sufficient that a student is able to communicate adequately: they also need to know about the processes that have allowed them to do so (Jones & Cockburn, 1993). This means that it is not acceptable to ignore the development of communication skills in a student simply because that student's skills are satisfactory. Each student, from the best to the weakest needs to receive evaluation of his/her skills which is formative—and responsive to his/her individual situation (Jones, 1997).

Small groups allow the individual to be taken into account in assessment and reinforcement in a way that large group approaches have difficulty matching. The tutor will develop knowledge of the level of skills brought to the group by each student, the further development of that student's skills, and that student's acquisition of insight. Everybody already communicates, so the function of the group is usually not to produce the behaviour, but to enhance the individual's self awareness of it. Then, the student can make appropriate use of the skills in a variety of settings, responding in a reflective rather than a routine way. For example, this often involves helping her/him to recognise emotional states and how these are linked to communication. This will lead to consideration of concepts such as sympathy, empathy, and reassurance as part of the communication process.

Conclusion

Active participation in the small group provides a basis of concepts, skills and appropriate attitudes for the ongoing development of good interpersonal communication skills. A properly run small group has clear goals and objectives. It utilises a variety of techniques to feed back to the student the information necessary for immediate improvement. It also encourages the validation by the group of whatever the individual student brings to the group. Each individual can then appreciate the direct relevance of the training for him or

herself. Through experiences provided in the group, the student develops the insight necessary to provide his/her own self-evaluation, feedback, and self-reinforcement for appropriate behaviour—both within and outside the group setting. When individuals contribute things to the group which not all members of the group share—such as culture, past experiences, or even fears and failures—other members of the group are assisted in developing a broader range of application for their own skills. Therefore, it is well worth making the commitment of resources which small group teaching of communication skills requires in order to be effective.

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Appendix A: Description of a workshop about the techniques for small group teaching of interpersonal communication skills

A variety of small group techniques is available which encourage group learning. A Workshop session will present a selection of the following techniques in some detail.

Although each technique is a valuable teaching strategy in its own right, greater success is achieved by appropriately and conceptually combining these techniques.

Role play

The use of role play allows students to see live examples of the communication skills which are to be learned. This can include expert examples provided by the tutor, or by actors. Role-plays provide opportunities for students to experience the roles of client, practitioner and feedback agent, and to also practise the same skill repeatedly if necessary. Role plays also allow students to work through personal issues that are relevant to the theoretical content of the teaching session. A useful support for role plays is the debriefing session, which allows students to share their perceptions of the session and their understanding of the theoretical concepts.

Modelling

The facilitator\expert him\herself displays appropriate communication skills behaviour on a continuous basis thereby allowing students to learn by observation. Students can learn to recognise significant theoretical concepts in action. They can also be brought to see the role that modelling will play in their future professional practice, where they themselves can model desirable behaviour in a variety of situations. These can include for example, improving parenting skills and working effectively in multidisciplinary teams.

Integration with personal experience

This is one of the richest sources of information for the group. The members of the group will already share enormous amounts of the knowledge and experience of communication issues which they need to learn about. All will have been consumers of health care, personal services, etc., and will know how they felt in their own contacts with professionals. The safe comfortable environment of the small group generally means that students feel comfortable enough to volunteer personal information, and will do so particularly easily because they see personal relevance to the information.

Integration with practical experience in professional settings

The same principle above can be extended to the students' experiences in professional settings during their training. Students can be prepared to handle the interpersonal communication requirement of specific professional settings by practising within the small group first, and then exercising their skills in the real setting. For example, giving a family news regarding terminal illness can be rehearsed in the group and difficult issues can be addressed. This means students can avoid confronting this situation first in the field when they are unprepared for it. They can also be helped to develop and practice solutions to problems that they have already observed in the actual professional context.

Assessment procedures: peer- and self-assessment

The safe and interactive nature of the small group means there is considerable opportunity for self-assessment and the receiving of feedback from others. Instant informal assessment of levels of understanding and the effectiveness of skills practised can occur. This ensures a constantly improving template of performance against which students can assess their progress. Formal structured peer- and self-assessments can be used to communicate and clarify the theoretical constructs and give students practice in applying them.

Videotaping

There are a number of purposes in using videotaping. Obviously, students can "see" themselves in roles they have practised. This can occur immediately, or tapes can be worked on individually or in groups later to assist in the process of self assessment. Tapes also provide a record of the history of improvement over time. Group discussion with the students handling the video cameras can be useful in highlighting why they were attracted to certain characteristics of the role play and filmed it in the manner they did. Videotaping can be combined with many of the techniques described above to enhance the effects.

Workbooks and journals

These provide students with written records of their thoughts and feelings about situations they experience either in or outside the training group environment. They also provide information which students can assess regarding the skills areas in which they are either confident or require more development. Their content also provides valuable resource material for group exercises. Peer assessment is also possible through the sharing of the written material. Workbooks and journals—like videos—provide data for discussion by the group, but add the extra dimension of enabling the feelings, interpretations, and evaluations which accompanied behaviour to be recorded.

Casino Royale Canberra: Experiential Learning in Cross-Cultural communication using Jamieson's simulation

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Participants in this workshop will be given an opportunity to experience challenges which can occur in an intercultural business meeting, as well as a student's perspective in using a simulation as a communication exercise.

This assignment exercise is being used successfully with first year tertiary students at UNITEC Institute of Technology to provide practical experience in communicating with people from other cultures in a business setting. The scenario involves managers from a development company, who are planning the construction and operation of a casino and hotel complex, hosting a meeting with managers from a construction company and a commercial bank. Each group of managers has a specific set of cultural attributes assigned to it and time to become familiar with them.

The exercise includes a preliminary briefing and cultural attributes practice session; suggestions for the intercultural meeting; guidelines for a de-briefing discussion; group or individual follow-up questions; and marking keys for assessing competency in linking intercultural communication with communication theory.

The workshop involves taking participant-observer roles in a short simulation of the exercise and gives the opportunity to discuss its effectiveness as a learning experience.

Introduction

"Teaching Communication Skills in the Disciplines" is a theme, which this paper and the conference workshop to follow, specifically addresses. The paper gives the background to the use of Daphne Jameson's cross-cultural simulation exercise (1993, pp. 3–11) which is student centred and which has been proven to be successful and fun to do at both lower and higher levels of tertiary education. The area of interpersonal communication we focus on is the vital one of **intercultural** communication—an increasingly important subject area in Australia and New Zealand as these nations recognise both the necessity and the value of good intercultural and cross-cultural communication in their increasingly multi-cultural societies. "Global education implies preparing students for global citizenship." (Volet & Ang, 1998, p. 6). The teaching notes and student briefings, given out at the workshop, will show how the interpersonal communication skills of students at any tertiary level and in any discipline can be enhanced.

Before discussing the exercise, which participants will have the opportunity to model during the workshop, we thought it may be of interest to give the background to its inclusion in a communication skills course for Computing students at UNITEC Institute of Technology in Auckland.

In 1996 UNITEC's Department of Information Systems and Computing (DISC) launched a new set of qualifications for computing students. The qualifications included a Certificate in Computing (CC), a one semester bridging programme designed to help students reach satisfactory entry levels for further study, and a three-year Bachelor of Business Studies with a major in Information Technology. This three-year degree programme includes two nested qualifications obtainable by students who choose to leave the programme part-way through a one-year Certificate in Computing Systems and a two-year Diploma in Computer Systems.

DISC decided to establish these qualifications as independent UNITEC awards rather than seek registration for them as national awards linked to the New Zealand Qualifications Authority framework. This decision was taken in consultation with the Department's industry Advisory Committee, which supported the development of qualifications specific to UNITEC and designed for the Auckland marketplace.

Entry to this pre - degree CC programme is based on qualifications (a maximum grade total of 24 in the student's best four sixth form - year 12 certificate subjects) or satisfactory achievement in an aptitude test administered by DISC. Included in the programme are support courses in Language Skills and Mathematical Skills, success in which provides part of the entry requirements for the higher level courses. This programme requires a high level of practical, work-linked activities which is signalled by the learning outcomes for each module.

UNITEC's School of Communication was asked to develop three modules for the bridging Certificate in Computing programme - Interpersonal Skills, Business Communication and Thinking Skills. The programme was developed at level three (approximately Year 13) in the NZQA levels, with each module involving 36 hours of teaching over a 12 week period. Students are expected to work a further 36 hours in each module on assignments and further study.

Assessment in the Certificate in Computing programme is competency based. Interesting arguments for and against the development of competency standards and their implications for higher education in Australia are discussed in an article by Andrew Gonczi, (1993). UNITEC'S Academic Statute specifies two grading systems for non-degree programmes: Merit Pass (Merit); Pass (P); and Not Completed (NC): or, where grades are allocated according to the level of achievement, Pass with Distinction (A); Pass with merit (B); Pass (C); Fail (D); Restricted Pass (R); Course result not finalised (Def).

Most CC modules are assessed on numerically determined grades of merit (95%+), pass (80-94%) or incomplete (<80%). Students are allowed resits or re-submissions of tests and assignments, with limits on the number of second attempts within any one course (two) and within the complete CC programme (no more than one-third of the assessments). Initially the Interpersonal Skills and Business Communication modules used this numerical-based grading system, while the Thinking Skills course piloted a competency-list based merit / pass / incomplete assessment. The success of this latter method has meant its adoption now for the two communication courses as well.

The CC programme is now in its third year with the sixth intake of students. Initially, classes were predominantly New Zealand born students with about a third Non English Speaking Background (NESB) students. By semester 2 of this year the balance has shifted to two thirds NESB students. 1996 intakes showed 60 % male students and they now outnumber females by four to one. Age range is from 16 to 46 with a mean age of 23. The increasing proportion of overseas students is steadily raising the mean age of the intakes.

Aims for the Interpersonal Skills module are for the students to be able to:

1.0 Demonstrate interpersonal and personal skills effectively and appropriately

2.0 Demonstrate aspects of effective written communication

All of the seven specific learning outcomes for 1.0 and the two for 2.0 listed below **could** be assessed from the participation in and the reflection upon the exercise as given in outline here and in detail at the workshop:

1.1 The requirements of effective communication are listed

Range: the communication process model

1.2 A selection of non-verbal communication processes is described and used appropriately

Range: body language, proxemics, para-language, behaviour styles, one-to-one, one-to-many

1.3 The roles of individuals of individuals in group situations are identified

Range: group problem solving, generation of ideas, decision making

1.4 The effect of cultural context on communication is discussed

Range: European, Maori, Pacific Island and Asian

1.5 Group communication is demonstrated effectively and appropriately

Range: informal, meeting participation

1.6 Listening and questioning skills are used effectively and appropriately

Range: instructions, interviews

1.7 Techniques for time and stress management are used appropriately

2.1 Accurate note-taking and summary of key points of a discussion are demonstrated

Range: interviews, meetings

2.2 The main points of written articles (on a given topic) are outlined in summary

Range: case studies, journals, books, CD Rom

In planning for "The effect of cultural context on communication" as an outcome, we wished to ensure a student centred methodology was used. Experiential Learning Theory defines learning as a process whereby knowledge is created through the transformation of experience. Our aim was to develop a student centred learning experience in which the process would be as valuable as, or even more valuable than, achieving the stated learning outcome. While the multi-cultural classroom creates many opportunities to see intercultural communication in action, it is not easy at undergraduate level to use that experience directly in an analysis of cross–cultural communication without having some people feel defensive and/or upset. We wanted learning to take place that would be valuable now, and could lead students to analyse the multicultural dimensions of their present and future environments.

To be effective the learning needed to be fun and to have a setting which would enable students from all cultural backgrounds to participate fully without feeling threatened in any way. The simulation described by Daphne Jameson was selected and is the model we follow in our classes and will demonstrate at this conference.The students would be encouraged to relearn aspects of their own culture and to see where challenges to intercultural communication and solutions to intercultural misunderstandings lie, in both social and personal terms.

Experiential learning theory sees learning as a holistic process of adaptation which involves the integrated functions of thinking, feeling, perceiving and behaving. On the experiential learning cycle (Figure 1), based on Kolb's work, our students begin this topic in the conceptualisation-active experimentation quadrant, proceed through the sequence, and

hopefully continue the cycle well beyond the doors of the institute in which they study. This topic could be adapted to begin at any stage of the cycle.

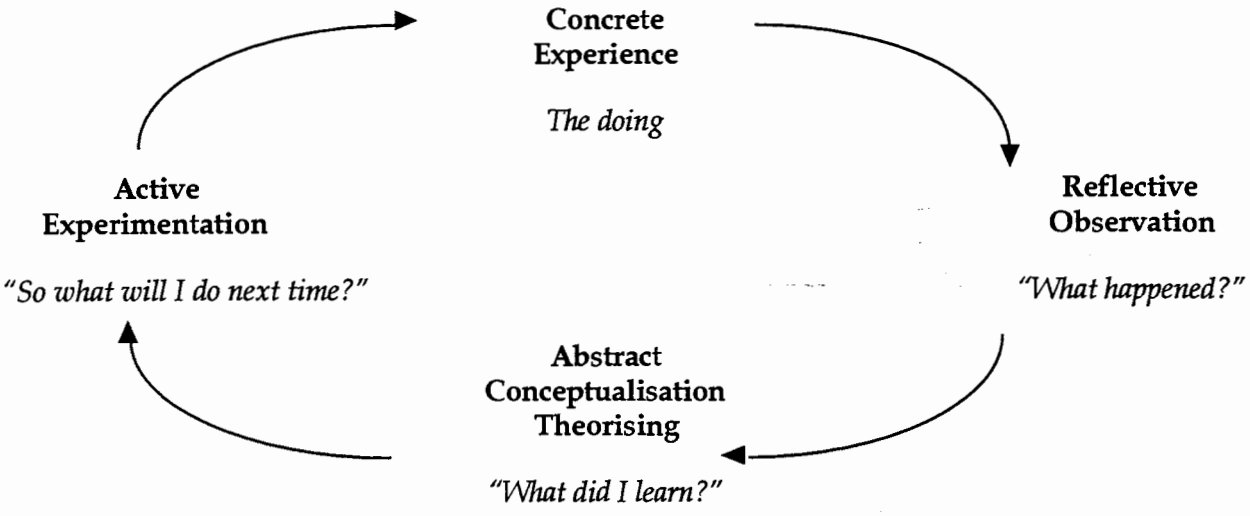

Figure 1. Experiential Learning Cycle (Gibbs, 1988)

The cultural communication topic is developed in the following stages:

- Ingredients of culture—Students are asked to brainstorm and build a list of what Jandt calls "the important elements of culture." He says: " To fully understand a culture, you need to understand all the experiences that guides its individual members through life, such things as language and gestures; personal appearance and social relationships, religion, philosophy, and values; courtship, marriage, and family customs; food and recreation; work and government; education and communication systems; health, transportation, and government systems; and economic systems. Think of culture as everything you would need to know and do so as not to stand out as a 'stranger' in a foreign land. (Jandt, 1995, pp. 6-7)]

- Profile of a culture—Students conduct interviews in pairs to build a detailed profile of the culture of a class mate. " International and multicultural student campuses represent ideal social forums for promoting cultural understanding; fostering tolerance of diversity; discovering alternative ways of thinking; and developing inter-cultural skills" (Volet & Ang, 1998). We have found dyad interviews a valuable tool for promoting these skills.

- Introduction of the simulation exercise—Students are briefed on the exercise, then move to a group practice/planning session. Additional briefing suggestions are available for lecturers, as we have found that level three students often need lecturer input on ways to represent cultural traits.

- Simulation exercise—Students role-play the simulation. This exercise is very flexible and allows alterations in detail to suit the academic discipline the participants are from, and the level and size of the group.

- Post-exercise debriefing—Students reflect upon what happened during the simulation and how they felt as a group and in their individual roles.

- Definitions are clarified—Culture, intercultural, intracultural, host/minority/sub-cultures, bicultural, multicultural, cross-cultural. Useful discussions of these areas are found in Lewis and Slade (1994, ch. 6) and Hugenberg, LaCivita and Lubanovic (1996, pp. 205-213)

- Assignment work—Students use the exercise to illustrate understanding of areas of communication theory, particularly the communication process; the range of non-verbal communication behaviour and challenges and strategies in intercultural situations.

Our experience in using this exercise with a number of classes at the same level has been that the exercise can vary considerably in the range and depth of response by students to the challenge of role-playing in a complex situation. Some classes develop remarkably rich role-plays, with layered dimensions of cultural ingredients from overt behaviours to well-considered nuances; others produce rather minimalist role-plays with superficial behaviours which are easily read and provide little basis for enriching the exercise. A key factor influencing the quality of each group's contribution to the exercise is the selection of a person for the leader of the delegation role, eg. the Vice-president. This person often assumes on appointment a leadership role in the group and significantly influences the commitment of the group to the simulation.

A further observation made was that a class of largely New Zealand students with some NESB students in each group found participating in the role play easier than groups in which there was a majority of foreign students. Since success of the learning is to a large extent linked with the success of the simulation exercise, it is crucial that students are well-prepared for this and that challenges of a multi-cultural class are overcome. Australian authors, Ballard and Clanchy (1997, ch.3) suggest there are "two important strategies at your disposal for assisting these (foreign) students to adjust to your own system. You can adapt the ways in which you manage the course (and they suggest some); and you can provide explicit modelling of the most appropriate intellectual approaches to your subject matter."

Particularly interesting for us was a 1996 semester 2 class consisting of all students from mainland China apart from one from Bangledesh. The students in this class demonstrated a very high commitment to all course work and approached the cross-cultural simulation with intensity and enthusiasm. In their group planning session they used their first language, Mandarin, at times to explore the parameters of their assigned culture and to plan their strategies. The simulation exercise was, of course, in English as was the later assignment. Marked success was evident in both the group simulation and in the individually written assignments. This is consistent with Volet and Ang's description (1998) of Chinese-ethnic students' "well-established and academically successful collectivist approach to study" (p. 8). We both worked (in different courses) with this class and found the students well-motivated, hardworking and critically reflective of their learning experiences.

While it may be obvious that a homogeneous class makes learning and teaching easier, we probably generally think of this in terms of the dominant culture or language, ie. New Zealand or Australia and English. We were unable to repeat the exercise with a homogenous class as a majority of other lecturers in DISC found this group demanding, overly assertive and their use of Mandarin in class as exclusive, ill-mannered and limiting of their development of English language skills. Classes from 1997 have been deliberately multicultural, a policy we agree with from an interpersonal and particularly an intercultural communication point of view and which is supported by recent research (Volet & Ang, 1996, 1998). Volet and Ang (1998) conclude "...the educational benefits of intercultural contact, social integration and cohesion between local and international students should not be underestimated." (p. 20)

Each semester staff review this topic as part of *their* experiential learning cycle, including considering student feedback and the availability of new resources. Our experience, which indicates that the principles of intercultural communication identified by Jameson that *"Cultural values are relative, not absolute... We all react emotionally, not just rationally, to cultural differences.... What is seen is easier to deal with than what is unseen....*[and] *flexibility is the key"* can be easily simulated in homogeneous classes rather than multi-cultural ones. Since

knowledge is the result of the transaction between social (objective) knowledge and personal (subjective) knowledge, the multi-cultural classroom is the perfect environment in which to practise, continue to experiment with, reflect upon and conceptualise what has been learned.

We concur with Jameson's assertion that "Despite ... differences in outcome, every group that has used this simulation has been enthusiastic and positive about the insights they have gained. This simulation has been successful in allowing people to learn with their feelings as well as with their intellects what intercultural communication in a business context truly means."(1993,p.7). In addition it provides an excellent basis through experiential learning to demonstrate an understanding of aspects of communication theory which can lead to the conscious application of new or more highly developed communication skills.

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Works in progress

The challenge of tertiary literacy: Implementation of a multi-campus language and learning program

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Tertiary literacy has been identified as 'the fastest growing sub-field' of literacy research in Australia. It has also developed into a key element in higher education planning for the creation of learning environments which enable students from diverse backgrounds to communicate their knowledge in their chosen areas.

One way of addressing these needs has been to set up Language and Learning Units which are flexible enough to target the varying language and academic skills needs of all student groups, but which are also able to embed themselves in the teaching and learning processes of the disciplines on different campuses.

This paper charts the establishment and development of such a unit since 1996 for the 40,000 students on the six Victorian campuses of Monash University. The effectiveness of a range of critical policy, planning and procedural approaches will be explored. These include a principled base for the design and delivery of the program, the important human and public relations dimensions of the exercise, the satisfying of pragmatic needs for staff to work at their optimal level, the establishing of systems which permit the sharing of resources and information, and a research agenda.

Implications of this implementation will be highlighted with respect to funding and the degree to which electronic delivery can allow for expansion of the program's offerings.

Notions of identity in cross-cultural communication

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This paper investigates the infinite capacity of identity for metamorphosis, expressed within different language, societal and cultural contexts. A group of migrant professionals is at the centre of examination while searching for work in their own areas of expertise. They form a unique multicultural group in a TAFE classroom by attending an employment access course for overseas qualified professionals. The purpose of the course is to help them cross both visible and invisible labour market barriers in obtaining employment in their respective professions. The main obstacles are perceived to be related to the English language proficiency, the recognition of overseas qualifications, the lack of knowledge of Australian work culture as well as the lack of local work experience.

The course offers its participants training in cross-cultural communication, the knowledge of job search strategies such as effective written communication skills (resumes) and oral communication skills (interviews), knowledge of Australian management concepts and an industry placement where they can immediately apply the acquired knowledge and communication skills within Australian context. This program has been part of the Best Practice Project, demonstrating highly positive outcomes in terms of the student job readiness and employment.

The notion of identity is pluralised here, thus reflecting a range of practices to which it responds. The formation of overseas qualified professionals' identity is closely related to ethnicity/race, gender and class factors. Communication, both verbal (either in English or other languages of the migrant professionals) and non-verbal, impacts on the sense of self, self-talk and identity construction. Successful intercultural communication depends on increasing the shared knowledge of interlocutors coming from different discourses as well as on sharing the assumptions of what they mean by what they say.

In addition, I shall look at discourses that strongly impact on identity constructs that are either imposed or self-imposed. The students' own views and feelings about the aspects of their identity are presented and discussed as well. Some of them are faced with the difficulty of externalising their experiences, others with internalising new language. In the course of their studies we are dealing with the issues of mastery and appropriation of and resistance to new genres and discourses.

Finally, the paper also deals with the following questions. Are professional migrants given a fair go? Do they have a sense of belonging in their new country? How can we integrate cultural differences and communicate with greater effectiveness?

English for Specific Purposes—communicating understanding of content in first-year undergraduate units

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Programs to improve student communication skills and to provide additional English language support in content areas are being looked to as one means of reducing the level of attrition of undergraduates. Efforts to retain students are being stepped up to ensure that equity of access also translates into equity of retention. In small specialised 'English for Specific Purposes' groups, the focus is on enhancing student use of language to analyse course content and to produce improved learning outcomes.

This paper in progress describes the process being followed by one section of the University of Southern Queensland in liaison with Faculties, to develop a workable administrative structure which will provide 'compulsory' targeted language support to specific first year subject disciplines for students identified 'at risk'.

It is USQ Equity in Education Policy to be 'proactive in promoting and supporting fair access to higher education opportunities and ensuring that all students have the opportunity to achieve according to their own individual potential.' Educational equity is overtly embedded in the culture of USQ and is reflected in the University Mission, which, in part, describes USQ as an: "educational community committed to the nurture of the individual potential of each person" (USQ University Calendar, 1.2).

The paper also presents an overview of the types of communication strategies used in small group tutorials. A learning environment, conducive to building confidence is developed to enhance student use of effective communication strategies. Within the context of communicating their understanding of course content students are required to express relationships between features of text. Most often this language production is in the form of oral presentations to articulate understanding: prepared summaries of readings, short talks on a topic, impromptu problem-solving tasks in pairs, and information-gap activities in groups.

Politicising pedagogy in business communication

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When International students commence study in an Australian university it is generally accepted that it will be a challenging experience for them to come to terms with the various cultural contexts that they will encounter during this time.

Many universities at first year level offer courses for credit, some of which focus on teaching academic skills through thematic units while others teach explicitly subject-related communication skills. These courses give instruction in academic skills as well as background knowledge of the content material. However it is not clear to what extent students in these courses are given the opportunity to develop in Pennycook's (1997) sense "a voice" in order to become as he says "authors of at least part of their own worlds" (p. 49).

In this paper I will outline a communication skills subject that has been introduced this year into the School of Business at undergraduate level at Swinburne University of Technology. The course is project-based and proceeds on the basis of mutual exchange between the participants in a pedagogical framework which recognises and attempts to deal with the cultural, political and social differences that our students experience when they begin their Business degree.

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International students: "They just won't say anything"

Local students: "They just don't prepare the questions, so it's difficult to get a discussion going"

Sound familiar?

Enhancing student intercultural communication skills: Some practical strategies for instructors

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The issue of international students studying at Australian universities is of broad significance across disciplines in tertiary settings, as evident in the literature surveyed. Observations, surveys, and interviews indicate that international and local students do not mix readily either in class or outside, socially (documented on our campus by Romm, Patterson, & Hill, 1994; Pe Pua, 1995).

In the current environment of internationalisation of teaching and learning, a number of issues arise. How do we best include international students in small group situations? What teaching strategies are appropriate for a multicultural student group? How can the needs and concerns of international students best be addressed? How can we enhance interaction among local and international students?

This paper presents a description and analysis of some of the teaching and learning strategies that, in our experience, stimulate class discussion and improve student communication skills. Experiential, student centered activities beginning with a topic close to the students' daily lives (Shor & Freire, 1987) help to encourage student participation and establish an environment that promotes intercultural communication skills.

Anecdotal evidence, as well as student surveys, suggest that students appreciate opportunities to develop their communication skills with people from diverse backgrounds and have used this new found confidence to learn from others and to speak up in class to their benefit in other subjects. Instructors too report a much more rewarding teaching experience when employing some of these strategies and activities.

These lesson plans and strategies were developed, documented, and evaluated with the support of a University Teaching Development Grant in 1996. This paper is representative of a current research study in progress. The issues explored relate to a theoretical and ethnographic examination of the perceptions and experiences in the university classroom in Australia of international and local students.

The paper will offer some practical insights into how to encourage student participation and interaction in culturally diverse classrooms. A range of evaluation techniques, that include student voices, will also be discussed.

Using simulation to develop communicative competence among non-native speakers of English

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The author of this paper teaches English for Vocational Purposes in a course which prepares overseas qualified nurses for registration in Australia and entry to the workforce. An integral component of the course is the Clinical Simulation which is facilitated jointly by the lecturers in English as a Second Language and lecturers in Nursing. This paper aims to explore the strategies that the interlocutors are using to negotiate meaning within the simulation which is one of the ways they can further develop their communicative competence.

The paper will describe the simulation process where students are organised into nurse-patient dyads and engage in extended role play using case scenarios. Important aspects of the simulation to be discussed are: the composition of the dyads; the nature of initiated interactions; the role of the teacher and the development of socio-linguistic competence.

Through viewing video sequences of interactions and transcript analyses based on work done by Varonis and Gass (1985), Van Lier (1988) and Long (1983) on the negotiation of meaning, the paper will attempt to uncover some of the ways that simulation presents opportunities for the students to develop communicative competence.

Stand and deliver! Message and person oriented discourse in explanation

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Explanation is an essential aspect of human interaction as it acts as an interpersonal bridge to clarify concepts and ideas among people. Without explanation, knowledge and understanding are virtually impossible to achieve. In the educational context, explanation permeates every teaching and learning activity. It enables teachers and learners to make sense of the physical world and the human world, as teaching is not just to transmit knowledge but fundamentally to make sense of it. Individuals employ different strategies of explanation. Two basic types of explanation strategies are identified in this study: firstly, strategies dealing with delivery of an explanation which are person-oriented such as using repetition, paraphrasing, and simplification in explanation, and secondly strategies which are message-motivated and more concerned with the thematic nature of explanation such as using analogy, synonym or illustration. It is argued that for teachers and students the choice of explanation strategy depends heavily on cognitive, social and linguistic factors. In a tertiary educational discourse, the study of explanation strategies gives some insights into the nature and use of explanation as a significant academic genre. It can considerably enhance the clarity of understanding in any learning-teaching interaction, and the understanding of explanation strategies is of considerable benefit to the development of flexible communication skills for teaching.

Ethnic and gender differences in communication skills of preclinical medical students at the University of Melbourne

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Gender and ethnic differences in verbal and non-verbal communication have been reported in the medical literature. This study aims to explore the impact of ethnic and gender differences on the communication skills of third year medical students at the University of Melbourne, where nearly 50% of medical students are female and 60% of students are from a non-English speaking background. The majority of these are from Asia.

Communication skills are taught in a one-hour X 13-week course and, as part of their assessment, students are required to make a videotape of an interview in which they take a social history. Seventy of the students' videotaped interviews were randomly selected (15 Asian and 20 European males; 16 Asian and 19 European females) and then rated by an independent researcher who was blind to the aims of the study. The rater categorised the communication skills used by the students during their interviews into 15 micro-skill categories and analysis of variance was used to compare ethnic and gender groups. Students were also rated on eight interview behaviours and the ethnic and gender groups were compared using chi-square analysis.

Significant differences between the groups were identified. Male students demonstrated fewer open-ended questions and less respect for interviewees. The Asian students used less eye contact, minimal encouragers and empathetic responses than their European counterparts and European male students showed inappropriately relaxed styles will less involvement and concern. These differences in the use of communication skills have a significant impact on the rapport established with interviewees and the quality of the information gained during an interview. It is thus recommended that communication skills teaching must take gender and ethnicity differences into account.

Integrating the teaching and assessment of communication skills into a fourth-year mechanical engineering subject

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Teaching communication skills in engineering courses is often undertaken in subjects which are not technical subjects, a teaching practice which reduces the perceived relevance to students of communication skills. This paper reports the very successful integration of the teaching of communication skills into a fourth-year Mechanical Engineering subject. This subject has been developed over a number of years through the close collaboration of the subject lecturer and lecturers from academic support units. The Engineering subject, which is a laboratory-based subject, aims to develop the students' technical skills and knowledge to enable them to solve particular technical problems. Integrated into the course is the development of the students' communication skills as the students work in groups towards the solution of these problems and report their solutions in oral presentations to the class and in written reports to the lecturers. The paper describes how the teaching of communication skills has been integrated into the subject and outlines the methods of assessment of spoken and written reports by lecturers and peers. The reasons for the marked improvement in the communication skills, particularly the oral communication skills, of the students are discussed, reasons which include the students' evaluation of the communication skills involved as being relevant not just to the course but to the workplace, and the emphasis on the importance of communication skills given by the allocation of marks.

Ideological tensions in constructivist-based communication skills writing programs: Issues of collaboration and assessment

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Collaborative writing tasks are commonly found in communication skills writing programs that have developed using a social constructivist model, a model that promotes collaborative, student-centered instruction (Driscoll, 1994) where students work together to solve problems associated with their writing skills and style. These programs reflect the view that learning in most settings is a communal activity, a sharing of culture (Bruner, 1986) and that higher mental processes develop through social interaction (Vygotsky, 1978).

Often students do not share their lecturers' enthusiasm for collaborative tasks or constructivist ideology, particularly when it comes to assessment. They tend to perceive the incorporation of the principles of *social constructivism* into their writing programs as an attempt to promote *social constructionism.*

Focusing on this perception, they concur with Santos (1992) that social constructionism is allied to a Marxist ideology that regards "as exclusively social what has long been thought of as individual—denying in essence the very notion of individuality" (p. 4). This paper will discuss the continuing development of a communication skills writing program that attempts, through the constructivist principle of reflexivity, to deal with students' resistance to collaboratively written assignments. Issues of assessment will also be addressed.

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Video analysis in the teaching of communication skills to osteopathy students

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Victoria University offers one of only two Osteopathy training programs in Australia. The first three years of the five year program, which started in 1994, lead to a Bachelor of Applied Science award and years four and five culminate in a Master of Applied Science qualification. Students are introduced to psychosocial concepts and theories in the third year and then consider applied psychological issues in year 4, both in whole year subjects. While the curriculum for the fourth year subject is wide-ranging, the first half of semester 1 is devoted to basic communication and counselling skills. Early in 1997, this subject was presented to the first cohort of Masters students (N=22). Lectures on communication and counselling principles were complemented by tutorial role-playing sessions each focused on specific skills. To complete this element of the program, students undertook a video analysis exercise. Video recording of the intake (first) session with a new client was analysed for the use of the communication and counselling skills presented in lectures and tutorial sessions. The video recording was made at any time in the first eight weeks of the semester, so many student made it before all the communication and counselling skills had been presented in class. In any event, their instructions were to conduct a typical session, so they could observe omission, as well as use of the skills. Students then wrote a paper discussing this process. Formative evaluation in the form of comments made on progress in class and written conclusions to the analysis assignment indicated that, while the lecture/tutorial format made the communication principles clear, it was through examination of their own use of communication and counselling skills that the importance of these skills for them as practising health professionals became meaningful for students. A summative evaluation reflected the same view about the communication and counselling section of the program. Students observed that they could see from the video how their use of simple techniques like minimal response and mirroring had encouraged more openness and disclosure from their client, while they also observed many occasions when they could have used basic communication and counselling techniques, but failed to do so, resulting in reduced client responsiveness. Adopting an educational action research approach (Bryant, 1996; Kemmis, 1997), it is intended to modify the counselling and communication skills component for presentation to the second cohort in 1998. Again, formative and summative evaluation will be employed to examine the value of the content, as well as the efficacy of the lecture, tutorial role play, and video analysis components. The paper will consider a full action research cycle from initial program through evaluation to revised program and reevaluation, drawing out implications for effective modes of teaching communication and counselling skills to health professionals.

Collaboration within Internet-based project groups: A case study of the Research Writing Facility

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The paper describes a pilot project involving students who develop research writing skills by working together in small project groups on-line. The Research Writing Facility was developed in the Criminology Department at the University of Melbourne and trialled with criminology research methods students at Melbourne working with English students in Lane Community College, Oregon. The aim is to enhance learning through engaging in collaborative research activities. The facility included on-line mentors for a variety of areas (library, reading, writing and computers), a virtual reader, forums to debate issues with postgraduates, and publication of student work for other students to read. The communication issues that arose included developing workable affinity groups, increasing computer literacy, structuring peer-instructor interactions through a mentor system, developing useful peer review procedures (both in workshops and on-line), and coping with national and disciplinary differences in use of language.

Communicating assignment expectations to undergraduates through varying task structures

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The focus of this paper relates to first year undergraduate education students.The assignments in question were designed to measure students' academic writing skills and their ability to describe, analyse and synthesise information from a range of sources. The same student group was subjected to two parallel assignments in different strands of the course. One had a traditional question structure and the other had a multi-layered structure designed to communicate to students expectations for different award levels. Feedback was gathered from students at three stages—before, at the point of submission, and after—about their understanding of the assignment expectations and their reactions to those perceived expectations. The feedback suggested a far more complex interaction of students' concerns and understandings than was anticipated. It was found that in the assignment where students were allowed to make a choice relating to the level of difficulty of assignment—and therefore award possible—that they generally chose to attempt the assignment at a level which their final results suggested was compatible with their capability. However, presenting an assignment in an unfamiliar format that allowed for students' choice of this kind, greatly increased students'stress levels and negative attitudes. One conclusion from this research is that if assignment structures and task communication are changed, then there is a greater need for a supportive structure.

Plagiarism as a communication issue in a culturally diverse academic setting

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International students, particularly those from Language Backgrounds Other Than English (LBOTE), face a number of cultural communication issues of which they have to make sense when they study at Australian universities. This paper focuses on one of these issues, plagiarism, and argues that, from a LBOTE perspective, plagiarism is largely a text practice rather than a behavioural practice issue. This is because academic writing, being indicative of culturally specific practices beyond conscious intention, is an epistemological representation of different forms of knowledge creation—in this case via the varied cultural backgrounds of the LBOTE students.

I will argue that LBOTE students encounter three major communication gaps: the client/criminal gap, the teaching/learning gap and the reader/writer gap, when trying to make sense of plagiarism in this academic context.

Traditional treatment of plagiarism primarily as a moral deficit largely fails to consider cross-cultural and linguistic issues. Australian universities characteristically couch the concept of plagiarism in the terminology of intention and cheating, portraying it as a social practice issue. Plagiarism is thus seen as an affront to the traditionally dominant modernist paradigm of textual authorship (Pennycook, 1996). Although plagiarism is seen as reprehensible, it is very often dealt with ambivalently and it is this very ambivalence which creates the criminal/client communication gap. In other words, responses to perceived plagiarism do not always match policy statements—these mixed messages have the potential to undermine any perceived morality the concept of plagiarism may be seen to represent.

Underpinning this gap, is the problematic notion that teaching equates with learning, an all too common presumption in the pragmatism of university plagiarism policies. This equation implies that mere explanation of the academic value system and practice in the mechanics of referencing is sufficient for knowledge transfer to occur, and that any resultant plagiarism is indicative of some sort of moral deficit on the part of the student.

The third gap lies in the concept of academic "voice" in the written text, where in fact the LBOTE writer, often of Confucian heritage, might unconsciously be writing out of a more reproductive paradigm of knowledge representation, subconsciously deferring to the source, showing honour and subordination by using the words of another. However, the reader following the dominant modernist Western paradigm, interprets unacknowledged sources as indicative of an intention to cheat.

In this paper, I will examine in detail the causes and consequences of these three communication gaps, making use of authentic student texts. I intend to show that little will be achieved just through such awareness-raising issues as defining what plagiarism is and how to 'avoid' it, or through the use of warnings and threats. I will suggest, through a re-examination of values and responses, how these communication gaps can be more satisfactorily addressed in a university context.

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Teaching medical students about effective communication at the University of Melbourne

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Communication skills have been recognised as an essential ingredient for medical practice and it has been agreed that they should form part of the undergraduate medical curriculum. To be effective, these skills must be taught early and then reinforced throughout the medical course. Like most other medical schools in Australia and overseas, the University of Melbourne has taught communication skills formally as a subject since 1989. This occurs in the second semester in third year, coinciding with the introduction of the clinical medicine course as students commence formal teaching in the hospitals. These skills are then reinforced in the clinical years

Most communication skills courses in the undergraduate medical curriculum aim to provide basic concepts of communication and interviewing skills and to demonstrate how effective communication affects the process and outcomes of medical care. Teaching strategies vary from interactive role playing to using simulated patients and real patients. Most courses provide structured feedback to the students based on performance criteria. In the clinical years, videotaping of consultations with either simulated or real patients continues to provide reinforcement of the skills.

Ongoing evaluation of our communication skills course has demonstrated that these important skills ought to be introduced early in the medical course. In addition, more work still needs to be done in assisting students with identified difficulties and in responding to the needs of specific student groups especially those from non-English speaking backgrounds. The new medical curriculum at the University of Melbourne commencing in 1999 aims to address these issues.

Play = text practice, rather than behavioural.
Criminal / morally deviant. See Scollon.
Who is author vs how are we authored.
Electronic text: authorship ? Diminishing sense of ownership?
vs. printed / written by self
Reader constructs ie hypertext.
Anti id. of Plagiarism = costs / LBOTE...
If pointed out + taught referencing then OK — ? No.

Annie Teaching practice + feedback also encourages
ie. comment on Gram vs ideas

Position + voice : differences.

TRANSITION TAKES TIME + EFFORT.

Need to review authorship / ownership notions

Egdale & Glyn.? Gruber

Impromptu speech/presentn on conferencing WAC

How to help stks. organise a conference as part of WAC.

Providing web "modules" to students for self access.

Is self access then dead cos no need for materials.

Uni Melb. Science + Communication home page @ Parkville. Password protected.

→ "Bunch bookmarks to hopefully generate a bunch of questions!

Hours put in: 70–80 stks. 800 hrs to conference

credits

formal assessn. = 3 hrs work

Poster Presentations

Developing oral and written communication skills in Science and Engineering

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In recent years there have been significant efforts made to incorporate the teaching of oral and written communication skills into technical disciplines. Various models for teaching communication skills exist, including stand-alone communication subjects, communication components added to existing courses and communication skills integrated into content subjects. However, it is not clear that there has been enough emphasis on the systematic and progressive development of these communication skills over the years of an undergraduate degree. In order to gain an understanding of how the communication skills required by specific disciplines are being developed, oral and written assessment tasks from subjects in particular undergraduate courses in two departments in both the Science and Engineering Faculties at Monash University were analysed. The communication skills involved were identified and the extent to which these are developed over successive years was analysed. The findings are presented and the implications for curriculum designers, communications lecturers and content lecturers explored.

Writing a lab report: Computer-based integration of academic literacy skills

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Both universities and employers consider the ability to communicate disciplinary knowledge in writing to be a highly desirable attribute of graduates. Increasing emphasis is being placed on the benefits of teaching the skills required to develop such an ability within the curriculum and on the need to provide more guidance in specific writing tasks. Attempts are currently being made to address these issues through the development of computer-based support materials. In general, existing computer-based materials which aim to support the development of students' academic literacy skills are not discipline sensitive, are not fully integrated into the curriculum, and do not to move beyond the level of sound advice and guidelines of what is expected in producing a particular academic genre. They generally do not raise students' level of understanding of how and why language is used in a particular way, nor do they provide an overall conceptual and theoretical framework for learning *about* language, and learning *through* language. Furthermore, the levels of activity, interactivity and feedback tend to be insufficient to optimise student engagement.

This presentation reports on the first stage of a project which will develop a series of computer-based learning modules aimed at improving students' academic literacy skills within disciplines. While the series will encompass several genres of report writing, the first module focusses on the writing of lab reports in the biological sciences. It derives from recent research into the form and function of lab reports (Murison, 1996) from which a print-based version of the learning materials has already been developed (Drury, 1997). The module has been developed specifically for second year Botany students at the University of Sydney: it is integrated into their curriculum as part of a range of computer-based resources and is relevant and timely in terms of both content and task. The module has been designed for delivery via the World Wide Web. It provides students with explanations, model texts and exercises with built-in feedback, actively engaging students in the processes of the analysis and construction of text. Future versions of the module will allow for the production of reports and will incorporate facilities for teacher and peer feedback.

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Developing and validating a learning skills matrix for first year students in agriculture and related courses

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Academic success in higher education entails the acquisition of generic academic learning and literacy skills, which are a challenge for many students entering university today. On-going work to address the consequences of this reality is being carried out at Orange Agricultural College (OAC), at the University of Sydney. This poster reports on a needs assessment which was carried out for first year units of study in three courses at OAC– Farm Management, Horticulture, and Equine Business. The assessment was conducted in two phases, resulting in a skills matrix which represents the views of both staff and students. The three courses analysed are offered by both distance education and on campus mode and the views of both student groups were therefore canvassed.

Phase 1 of the inquiry involved an analysis of academic expectations stated or implied in unit outline documents and in the detailed assessment descriptions provided to on-campus and distance education students. Phase 2 consisted of a focus group discussion with students to further substantiate the analysis.

The skills identified were categorised initially into two main groups – those needed for: (a) successfully attempting the initial unit activities (*assumed entry skills*), and (b) successfully completing all assessment tasks and associated activities during first year (*essential first year skills*). These 2 groups were further analysed to identify the individual skills needed for each assignment in all units. The data was then compiled into a matrix of skill acquisition.

The analysis of the focus group discussion showed that students were able to clearly identify their problems/ needs in the area of learning skills. There was strong agreement in most of the areas of the skill matrix, although students generally were not able to distinguish between assumed entry skills and those needed for on-campus success. All students recognised that their lack of ability in academic literacy and learning skills impacted on their success in assignments but many commented that although assessments required skills such as critical thinking or report writing these were not "taught".

The results of the analysis will be used to develop learning resources within the specific curricular contexts to improve first year student academic learning and literacy skills.

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