



**EFFECTIVE ORAL COMMUNICATION SKILLS IN BUSINESS: AN ACTION
RESEARCH ON COURSE-CONTENT ENRICHMENT OF ENGLISH 14 OF BSBA
STUDENTS OF THE COLLEGE OF BUSINESS, ENTREPRENEURSHIP AND
ACCOUNTANCY AT THE CAGAYAN STATE UNIVERSITY, ANDREWS CAMPUS**

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Abstract: *The focus of this study was the enrichment of the course content of English 14, the Speech and Oral Communication Skills of the Business Students of the Cagayan State University Andrews Campus. At the onset of the first semester of Academic Year 2013-2014, the researcher has noticed some inappropriate course content that would not perfectly suit the needs of students in the business world. Looking closely at the prescribed topics for students' lessons and activities, consultations with the dean had been undertaken. Discussions about needs and priorities had been listed and plans to undergo research have been approved.*

The prescribed topics for mastery in the first and second term of the course perfectly suit the needs of the business students. All the topics in both terms closely focused on the mastery of producing sounds correctly and the importance of the different types of speeches to be delivered. Instead of giving them practice exercises in literary presentations, I opted to give them practical speaking exercises such as round-table discussions, interviews, inter-office discussions, and product presentations. The product presentations have been the highlight of their activities because they present like a professional businessmen with the power point presentations and products they open in the market. The culminating activity was a manifestation that after the basic lessons in public speaking, they were able to stand confidently before their audience like real businessmen.

Key Terms: *Course-content, Enrichment, Effective Communication, Oral presentation, Communication skills in business*

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INTRODUCTION

The significance of excellent oral communication among business students spells successful undertakings in the field. The would-be business professionals our university will produce will be at par with anyone from other business tycoons all over the world. They deal, they haggle, they negotiate, they bargain. These and all other undertakings of a businessman would be the skill they will develop if we adopt the enrichment content of the prescribed course for Speech and Oral Communication of the second year business students of CBEA at CSU Andrews or the whole Cagayan State University System.

Oral communication describes any type of inter-action that makes use of spoken words, and it is a vital, integral part of the modern business world. "The ability to communicate effectively through speaking as well as in writing is highly valued, and demanded, in business," Herta A. Murphy and Herbert W. Hildebrandt wrote in their book *Effective Business Communications*. "Knowing the content of the functional areas of business is important, but to give life to those ideas—in meetings or in solo presentations—demands an effective oral presentation." The types of oral communication commonly used within an organization include staff meetings, personal discussions, presentations, telephone discourse, and informal conversation. Oral communication with those outside of the organization might take the form of face-to-face meetings, telephone calls, speeches, teleconferences, or videoconferences. All of the above skills are developed not only for a semester but through constant practice for which students should be encouraged to use the target language all the times. In some cases when presenters develop their discourse in their native tongue, there are still problems how to eloquently progress in their discussions because they have not mastered outstanding speaking skills.

Conversation management skills are essential for small business owners and managers, who often shoulder much of the burden in such areas as client/customer presentations, employee interviews, and conducting meetings. For oral communication to be effective, it should be clear, relevant, tactful in phrasology and tone, concise, and informative. Presentations or conversations that bear these hallmarks can be an invaluable tool in ensuring business health and growth. Unclear, inaccurate, or inconsiderate business communication, on the other hand, can waste valuable time, alienate employees or customers, and destroy goodwill toward management or the overall business. In the over-all



management of business or office, effective communication is significant because the flow and procedure of day-to-day business revolves around fruitful communication.

The importance of communication skills in business can boost marketability and viability for work in a variety of business avenues. Communication skills are among the intangible skill sets most valued by employers. The ability of a presenter to communicate effectively, especially during oral presentations, dramatically increases the reputation of the company.

The focus of this study centers on the enrichment of the course content of English 14, the Speech and Oral Communication Skills of the Business Students of the Cagayan State University Andrews Campus. At the onset of the first semester of Academic Year 2013-2014, the teacher/researcher has noticed some inappropriate course content that does not perfectly suit the needs of students in the business world. Looking closely at the prescribed topics for students' lessons and activities, consultations with the dean had been undertaken. Discussions about needs and priorities had been listed and plans to undergo research have been approved.

The prescribed topics for mastery in the first and second term of the course perfectly suit the needs of the business students. All the topics in both terms closely focused on the mastery of producing sounds correctly and the importance of the different types of speeches to be delivered. Towards the last term of the syllabus, there are those exercises that are perfect for practice in terms of application of sounds, however; if we look at the practical usefulness of the exercises, the business students would not need them because the artistic enunciations of literary pieces are far beyond what they need in the real business scenario. Instead of giving practice exercises in literary presentations, I opted to give practical speaking exercises such as round-table discussions, interviews, inter-office discussions, conducting meetings using the parliamentary procedures, and product presentations. The product presentation was the highlight of the students' activities because they present like professional businessmen with the power point presentations of the products they open in the market. They were dressed like professionals too. The culminating activity was a manifestation that after the basic lessons in public speaking, they were able to stand confidently before their audience like real businessmen.

The significance of excellent oral communication among business students spells successful undertakings in the field. The future business professionals our university will produce will



be at par with anyone from other business tycoons all over the world. They deal, they haggle, they negotiate, they bargain. These and all other undertakings of a businessman would be the skill they will develop if we adopt the enrichment content of the prescribed course for Speech and Oral Communication of the second year business students of CBEA at CSU Andrews or the whole Cagayan State University System.

The concept of oral communication is an important skill to develop in the business arena. More and more employers worldwide are emphasizing to their employees that good communication skills is a primordial ability that enables businessmen to conquer the challenges they face in the business scene.

One of the many concerns of business institutions is to produce business individuals who take the frontline in aggressive business competitions everywhere. This study focused on the needs of business students who would work in offices, in field, or present their products in the market. The prescribed syllabus in their English 14 with a descriptive title: Speech and Oral Communication does not conform to the needs of future businessmen. The course content is more beneficial for students who belong to the teacher education courses. It is at this point that I have searched for answers in books, journals, and researches to support my move to enrich the content of the syllabus.

The avenues in business would bring infinite opportunities for profit and self-satisfaction if the key players possessed one of the most important skills like speaking. The following are the reasons why the speech and oral communication skills of the BSBA students should be revised and enriched:

1. For Presentations

One form of oral communication in a business setting is presentation. Presentations are organized conveyance of information to group of people. Stylistically, they tend to be far more formal than informal, and rely more heavily on data and facts than they do analysis. Presentations are sometimes more persuasive in nature, like a pitch for an ad campaign, but tend to be informative more often, such as an employee briefing or a report on quarterly earnings. Though presentations are oftentimes a solo presentation (more of a monologue), it may include some dialog after the sender of the message has finished her/his speech. This makes it important for the speaker to anticipate possible objections to the message and address them in the actual speech. Oftentimes, excellent presentations are the best



avenues speakers would elaborate persuasively to their listeners when clarifications are raised. That is why the training of students' in their spoken communication should be addressed to develop confidence and spontaneous delivery of messages.

2. For Client Interaction

Another form of oral communication in business encompasses interaction with clients. Depending on the level of connection between the employee and the client, the communication in these interactions can range from incredibly formal to informal and casual. These interactions usually include a combination of data and analysis, and will be more persuasive than informative in nature, as the employee is trying to encourage continued and expanded business with the client. Because of the nature of these interactions, the communication is definitely a dialog, making listening skills incredibly important. At this point, establishing the listener/speaker relationship is essential because it would mostly likely spells the success of one transaction to the other. Giving and explaining details about business transaction would take lengthy discussions depending on the interests of both the client and the entrepreneur.

3. For Inter-office Interaction

Oral communication in the office can be referred to as interoffice interaction. This is comprised of conversations with superiors, subordinates and co-workers. Depending on the levels of power separation between the individuals engaging in conversation, the communication will fluctuate between formal and informal, though it should always remain professional. The eloquence of speakers depends on the context of topics discussed during exchanges of ideas. Conversations in this context may require reference data, but will be much more on in-depth analysis, and will be a serious dialog by nature. That is why it pays to know the details for one to be able to comment and keeps the communication flow progressing.

The Benefits

Oral communication in business provides variety of benefits. First, oral communication is accompanied by nonverbal signifiers, which provides context that can enhance understanding in the communication process. Posture, facial expressions, and habitual movements may provide clues as to an individual's feelings about the ideas being discussed. Even in telephone conversations, pitch, rate, volume and tone of the respective speakers



can help in understanding sentiments. The manner a speaker delivers his message whether personally, video-conferencing or through telephone calls would send messages that would not only convince but also affirms veracity of information.

Oral communication also provides springboard for relational development because the camaraderie a speaker may create with whom he deals with would bring closer understanding about common interests. Unlike with email, memos and chat functions, which tend to take a task-oriented approach to communication, the immediacy involved in oral communication allows for instant feedback and a more relational approach. In times like there are confusions or misunderstanding, it would be easier to clarify things and straighten out conflicts through verbal exchanges making the communication open. This is important, as strong relationships in business often lead to more profitable and productive cooperation. The ability of an individual speaker to establish genuine relationship is through successful interpersonal communication.

While oral communication can provide a lot of benefits in a business setting, there are also limitations to its utility. Initially, oral communication usually takes a lot more time than written communication to complete, as oral communication's relational nature can blur the focus of a conversation. To this effect, a speaker must master the craft of presenting the topics in a more concise manner so as not to bore or wear out the listener. In a world where time is often equated with money, oral communication can be construed as inefficient but brilliant designs of presentation in a concise manner would always pay in the end. The business students in the class would have a knack at beginning to speak like real businessmen in the course of the study.

Moreover, the capability of individuals to effectively communicate orally varies greatly. Some individuals have no problem engaging in oral communication effectively but for others the task is far more difficult. The pairing of people on these opposite ends of the spectrum can lead to frustration and an overall lack of productivity. It is at this point that thorough training of business individuals must be one of the main concerns of the institutions.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

This study is anchored on Searle's (1979) concept of Speech Acts, which rests on the notion that when speakers utter something, they are actually performing something. Searle formulated the taxonomy of illocutionary acts, wherein speech acts were classified into:



commissives; representatives; expressives; declaratives; and, directives. Directives include commands, orders, requests, suggestions, and could either be positive or negative (e.g., “Give me a cup of tea”; “Don’t touch that”; “Could you lend me a pen please?” Directives have to meet certain felicity conditions to be recognized as intended, and to establish that the content of the utterance is “not play-acting or being non-sensical” (Yule, 1996:50). In using a directive, the speaker attempts to make the world fits the world *via* the hearer on conditions that the utterance is about a future event (propositional), the hearer has the ability to perform the directive (preparatory), that the speaker wants the hearer to do the action (sincerity), and that the utterance counts as an attempt to get the hearer to do the act (essential).

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

This study aimed at identifying the needs of BSBA students along the pragmatic implications of proficiency in form and function of Speech and Oral Communication.

Specifically, it revealed the students’ the physical display of emotions and violations of rules in formal delivery of speech.

1. Stammering - nervousness
2. Head scratching – doubtful
3. Swaying - unmindful
4. Code switching – mixture of English statements and the Filipino language
5. Code mixing – mixture of words in both English and Filipino language in a sentence
6. Dialect (speaking) – speaking of the local/mother tongue
7. Filipino (speaking) – speaking of the Tagalog language

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

This study was undertaken to identify the needs of BSBA students in the Speech and Oral Communication course of the College of Business, Entrepreneurship and Accountancy at the Cagayan State University, Andrews Campus. The result of this study hopes to benefit students who shall become effective and excellent communicators, teachers, administrators, businessmen and leaders in the society.

Administrators may use the outcome of this study as basis in composing carefully planned course curriculum that would facilitate better learning of oral communications skills.



Teachers may refer to the result of this study in the teaching-learning process of Speech and Communication. The suggested activities in the result will be useful in the over-all impressions of learners' spoken outputs.

The result of this study would give more insights on how to improve speaking ability among learners of English through guides on professional speaking techniques.

Other researchers may also use the result of this study as a reference in order to come up with other related studies.

SCOPE AND LIMITATION

The scope of this study is limited to Speech and Oral Communication classes handled by the proponent. The subjects of the study are the students from the four sections handled in Academic Year 2013-2014.

DEFINITION OF TERMS

Oral Communication – the process of oral interaction

Code mixing – composition of single statement making use of two or more languages

Code switching – composition of one (1) statement making use of one particular language and then another use of language in support or continuation of the latter ideas

METHODOLOGY

Study Design

The research design is descriptive method. The purpose of descriptive research is to observe, describe, and document aspects of a situation as it naturally occurs (Polit&Hungler 1999). This involves the collection of data that will provide an account or description of individuals, groups or situations. The instruments we use to obtain data in descriptive studies include questionnaires, interviews (closed questions), and observation (checklists, etc.). There is no experimental manipulation or indeed any random selection to groups, as there is in experimental research. This type of research is used to describe characteristics of a phenomenon being studied. It addresses the "what" question (What are the characteristics of the population or situation being studied?). Descriptive research generally precedes explanatory research. For example, over time the periodic table's description of the elements allowed scientists to explain chemical reaction and make sound prediction when elements were combined.



The description is used for averages, frequencies and other statistical calculations. Often the best approach, prior to writing descriptive research, is to conduct a survey investigation. The survey is a good starting point to begin gathering data which are already at hand.

Participants/Subjects

The data used for the study are the students under the four sections handled in the Academic Year 2013-2014 of the College of Business, Entrepreneurship and Accountancy of the Cagayan State University, Andrews Campus, Tuguegarao City. The total number of students is 207.

Measures

The data analysis is based on percentages of the different categories of the tabulated behavioral manifestations and speech delivery rules. The descriptive method is employed to emphasize on the weaknesses of students oral communication skills. The result is the bases for recommendations.

Procedure

This study used the observation and tabulation techniques in arriving to the conclusions. In the daily classes undertaken in the sections handled, the researcher used the observation table at hand to prove that the assumptions are validated. The tabulation of all the behavioral observations is done and interpretations followed. The following behavioral manifestations and violations of oral communication rules are listed in the table:

Observed sections	Stammering	Head scratching	Swaying	Code switching	Code mixing	Dialect	Filipino
BSAcc 2 (52)	43	13	27	43	45	12	10
BSBA-MM (55)	50	42	39	48	50	20	18
BSBA-MA (50)	46	37	37	40	49	19	15
BSBA-MM2B (50)	48	42	45	49	50	18	17
TOTAL	187	134	148	180	194	69	60

Day after day when classes were held, index cards were brought to class to note some observations for behavioral observations of student speakers.

The Research Process

The Four sections handled in second year BSBA students in the college were observed on their ability to produce sounds according to the international phonetics guide. In the group, the learners seemingly have done all the exercises correctly. But when they worked



individually on their own, the reality set in. Student learners have not fully developed the sound of the target language. Time and again the sound in the dialect/vernacular would surface. And the funny part of the exercises was when students would laugh at how sounds are produced for some words. It was a very helpful activity though that in the end when they presented in their culminating activity in product presentations; they demonstrated confidence as they progressed in their speech. Some video clips had been taken for further reviews on how to help the student speakers improve their skills.

The study further aims to design teaching/learning modules to assist students in improving speaking skills. In this way, towards the end of the course the student learners will hopefully be able to present themselves in a group confidently by professionally and persuasively presenting before other people in the business world.

RESULT AND DATA ANALYSIS

The table shows the result of the observations of the classes handled.

Observed sections	Stammering	Head scratching	Swaying	Code switching	Code mixing	Filipino	Dialect
BSAcc 2 (52)	43	13	27	43	45	12	10
BSBA-MM (55)	50	42	39	48	50	20	18
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N = 207							
TOTAL	187	134	148	180	194	69	60
Total in %age	90.34	64.73	71.49	89.55	93.72	33.33	28.98

The table shows that in the three (3) physical manifestations of students' display of nervousness and lack of confidence, stammering rated the highest. This proves that students in the four classes handled have not developed confidence in speaking even in the early years of learning. In the rule of presenting statements, code mixing garnered the highest percentage. This explains that students are too comfortable in mixing words from two or more languages in one statement to develop their ideas.

The behavioral manifestations of students' lack of confidence in speaking namely; head scratching, swaying, and stammering make speaking a lot more difficult to undertake especially when novice communicators are task to present in a big event like promotion of products or events. The audience can easily detect when presenters are nervous or even unsure of what they are saying because nervousness sets in before even they could open their mouths to speak.



In delivering speech, speakers should strictly use one particular language in presentation. It is against formal speaking principle to mix many different words in one statement. It is also inappropriate to say one statement in one language and then next will be another language. For example: English for the first statement which will be followed by Filipino statement and so on.

For the above findings, students must be trained to speak eloquently not only during times of business presentations but also when dealing with teachers, professionals in the university, and even with classmates and school mates.

DISCUSSIONS

The implementation of the approved move took effect on the first semester of Academic Year 2014-2015. All the faculty members who are assigned to teach the subject updated one another with the progress of the lessons taken. Further, the identified issues on the course content were discussed with the dean. The needs of the business students were also brought to the attention of the professors to identify inter-disciplinary lessons on activities to be carried in the class. The move is of primordial concern to be able to extend the training to the students for them to be able to develop what they lack especially when they are already in their on-the-job training or worse; when they are already hired in the business arena.

The focus on the oral communication development of students in BSBA would prepare them to be confident business professionals who would demonstrate effective verbal communication skills. The use of spoken words to convey a message clearly and concisely spells the success of business transactions. To get a message across, the businessman as the speaker needs to ensure the receiver correctly interprets his words. If not, confusion and conflict typically results. By successfully delivering a message, business professionals describe ideas, thoughts and directives that allow colleagues to work better together. Effective verbal communication begins by acknowledging and explaining what the audience needs. By planning what he wants to say, how he wants to say it and seeking feedback on how the message was received, a business professional ensures successful communication.

Above all the practical reasons enumerated for the revisions of the syllabus in Speech and Oral Communication course of the BSBA students, the author moves for the approval of the content revision for which it is beneficial for professional businessmen. Since verticalization



is one of the professional agenda of the university, the researcher has considered it of great importance to align also the course content suited to the students' needs.

The added activities aside from the prescribed lessons proved to have helped the students in the Speech and Oral communication. Before the final examinations for the semester, the students have started preparing their group outputs: Product Presentation in PowerPoint. They were instructed to develop their culminating activity using the principles of presenting products in the market. They were further reminded to use the power point as prompter only. It was strictly emphasized that the use of technology is to remind them of the succession of presentation not to read entirely what they have written about their products. As a whole, the culminating activity turned out successfully carried. The students dressed and acted like real businessmen. The casual manner they used to carry themselves in everyday life has evolved to something very formal and serious.

The move to enrich the course-content of the students' course must be realized to address the students' needs in oral communication. For in business, the success is in one's hand depends on how well he/she presents important points not only in meetings but in any business endeavor.

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