

**THE EFFECTS OF MODIFICATIONS OF WRITTEN MATERIAL  
ON COMPREHENSION AND ATTITUDES**

by

**Phyllis Ann Duggan**

---

A Thesis Submitted to the Faculty of the  
**DEPARTMENT OF SPEECH COMMUNICATION**  
In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements  
For the Degree of  
**MASTER OF ARTS**  
In the Graduate College  
**THE UNIVERSITY OF ARIZONA**

**1979**

## STATEMENT BY AUTHOR

This thesis has been submitted in partial fulfillment of requirements for an advanced degree at The University of Arizona and is deposited in the University Library to be made available to borrowers under rules of the Library.

Brief quotations from this thesis are allowable without special permission, provided that accurate acknowledgment of source is made. Requests for permission for extended quotation from or reproduction of this manuscript in whole or in part may be granted by the head of the major department or the Dean of the Graduate College when in his judgment the proposed use of the material is in the interests of scholarship. In all other instances, however, permission must be obtained from the author.

SIGNED: \_\_\_\_\_

*Richard Duggan*

## APPROVED BY THESIS DIRECTOR

This thesis has been approved on the date shown below:

*James W. Davis*

J.W. Davis  
Associate Professor of Speech

*5/5/79*

Date

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The investigator extends her appreciation to Dr. James Wayne Davis, whose assistance in the preparation of the thesis was invaluable.

A word of thanks also to Patty and Woody Shryock and Barb Minckley at Post Litho for their help in the final phases of production of the thesis.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
LIST OF TABLES.....	v
ABSTRACT .....	vi
CHAPTER	
I. INTRODUCTION .....	1
Theoretical Background.....	2
Related Investigations .....	3
Statement of Hypothesis .....	5
II. PROCEDURE .....	6
Subjects .....	6
Instrumentation.....	6
Administration .....	7
III. RESULTS.....	9
Analysis and Presentation of Comprehension Scores.....	9
Analysis and Presentation of Attitude Scores .....	9
IV. DISCUSSION .....	16
V. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS .....	17
APPENDIX A: FORMS 1 AND 2 OF THE COURSE POLICY/SYLLABUS HANDOUT .....	19
APPENDIX B: EXPERIMENTER REMARKS TO INSTRUCTORS .....	32
APPENDIX C: EXPERIMENTER REMARKS TO PARTICIPANTS AND TEST QUESTIONNAIRE .....	33
SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	36

## LIST OF TABLES

Table	Page
1. Comprehension Scores for Treatment A .....	10
2. Comprehension Scores for Treatment B .....	10
3. Comprehension Scores for Treatment C .....	11
4. Combined Scores for Comprehension .....	11
5. Attitude Scores for Treatment A .....	12
6. Attitude Scores for Treatment B .....	13
7. Attitude Scores for Treatment C .....	14

## ABSTRACT

The investigation was designed to determine whether organizational and visual modifications of printed material might affect comprehension or attitudes toward that material.

The study was based on the assumption that reading comprehension is a distinct form of language processing and as such, certain organizational and visual variables used in written communication might enhance comprehension of written information.

It was hypothesized that different groups of subjects, when exposed to different forms of written material, would indicate different amounts of comprehension and differing attitudes toward that information. The hypothesis was that subjects who received Form 2 of a handout, with visual and organizational modifications designed to increase comprehension, would indicate significantly higher levels of comprehension and more favorable attitudes toward the information.

The hypothesis was evaluated by a 10-question multiple choice examination for comprehension and a 4-interval rating scale to measure attitudes administered on the first scheduled day of Speech 12 classes for the Spring 1978 semester. The scores for 145 subjects were analyzed using t-tests for mean differences in a randomized-groups design.

The results of the analyses failed to reach the .05 level of confidence, suggesting that within the confines of the experimental design, no significant differences were found.

## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

The importance of message preparation and presentation in oral and written communication cannot be understated. It is an area that has attracted the interest of investigators reaching back at least to the Golden Age of Greece. Today's communicologists, teachers and scholars continue to address themselves to the relationship among the variables of human communication, and the variables of message preparation and presentation have been no exception.

A variety of questions confront the speaker or writer attempting to formulate an effective message. For example, how might major ideas be given special stress to enhance retention and understanding of the message and ultimately achieve persuasion, or attain the desired result? The precepts for improving comprehension of oral communication have been relatively well established, with research concentrating on the use of various appeals (rational and emotional), logical organization, the strategic positioning of various arguments and delivery. These are some of the variables that researchers have studied in an effort to maximize the effectiveness of oral communication. But what about written communication? Do some of the same precepts for oral message preparation and presentation hold true for written communication?

The concept of message preparation and presentation as it relates to printed material is the broad area this study seeks to explore. More specifically, the purpose of this study is to determine whether organizational and visual modifications of printed material, namely the Course Policy/Syllabus handout used in sections of the Speech 12 course at The University of Arizona, might affect comprehension of the material or attitudes toward the course itself.

### Theoretical Background

The theoretical foundation for the study rests in the areas of message preparation and presentation as well as in the broader fields of journalism and reading.

In the field of oral communication there are many variables that interact to affect the outcome of any given communication situation. Rate and intonation, the speaker's topic, his credibility and his audience are but a few of the many variables that affect oral communication. The variables involved in written communication, like oral communication, are also numerous.

Research has been done on certain variables in written communication. Legibility of print and type, eye movements in reading, the relationship of leading, type size and line width and illumination for reading are topics that have been covered extensively by Tinker.<sup>1</sup> This study however, will focus primarily on the organization and reinforcement of the message through the use of visual modifications other than those mentioned above. It will be helpful, for purposes of clarity, to compare reading comprehension and the comprehension of speech.

The differences between reading comprehension and the comprehension of speech are worth noting. Walker posited that because of channel differences and differences in the linguistic structure of formal writing and extemporaneous speech, reading comprehension is a more precise form of language processing than listening.<sup>2</sup> The idea that reading comprehension is a unique process differs from the philosophy that the understanding of written material is a function of a larger process, comprehension in general.<sup>3</sup>

Cue sampling, the principle that the organism does not receive and process all the sensory information available, and meaning reconstruction, the principle that information

---

1. M.A. Tinker, *Legibility of Print* (Ames, Iowa: The Iowa State University Press, 1963), p. 5.

2. Laurence Walker, "Comprehension of Writing and Spontaneous Speech." *Visible Language*, XI 1 (Winter 1977), p. 37.

3. Moffett, as cited by Laurence Walker, "Comprehension of Writing and Spontaneous Speech." *Visible Language*, XI 1 (Winter 1977), p. 37.

processing involves reconstruction, where processing is the result of an interaction between the received cues and existing cognitive structure, are two ideas that operate differently due to channel characteristics: "Reading involves a spatial dimension using a static array of visual cues while listening utilizes transient, acoustic cues in a temporal dimension."<sup>4</sup>

While cue sampling and meaning reconstruction apply to both listening and reading, Walker argues that there is some difference in the way they apply to the two activities.

. . . In a listening situation one may be more likely to hear what one wants to hear or expects to hear than in a reading situation. If this hypothesis is true, one might predict that cue sampling and meaning reconstruction in reading are more precise processes than in listening, bearing greater fidelity to the message than is true in the latter.<sup>5</sup>

Reading comprehension then, is distinct from listening comprehension, and a more precise process than listening. Therefore the author believes it would be worthwhile to examine what effects organizational and visual modifications of printed matter might have on reading comprehension, independent of supplementary oral communication.

### Related Investigations

Although research in this area is not extensive, studies have investigated whether modifications in wording and organization for written material affect comprehension. Three studies point to organizational variables in written communication as important considerations to enhance understanding; one study suggests the use of white space to increase comprehension and legibility.

Freedman was concerned with determining whether or not teaching time could be saved by the use of abstracted information without sacrificing comprehension and retention.<sup>6</sup>

---

4. Walker, p. 39.

5. Ibid.

6. William Freedman, "A Study in Communication." *The Journal of Communication*, 9 (1959), p. 27.

Using two articles from an aircraft company's publication with three lengths for each article, the study revealed that the elimination of details in expository communication did not seem to significantly affect the retention of the main ideas.

In a related study by Parker, the effect of varying organizational patterns of factual prose was examined. Sixteen different forms of a 2,000 word pamphlet were constructed, including combinations of cueing techniques such as topic sentences, crossheadings, beginning summaries and concluding summaries. Subject comprehension was measured using a multiple choice test. The study conclusions indicated that the use of topic sentences and concluding summaries increased comprehension when subjects were tested immediately; opening summaries however, did not seem to enhance comprehension either immediately or after a one-week period.<sup>7</sup>

The question of order and its effect on comprehension in oral communication was investigated in a study done by Darnell.<sup>8</sup> The independent variable in the study was sentence order. Seven treatment conditions were used in which the sentence orders were rearranged; comprehension scores for the seven forms of the message were significantly different. Darnell's conclusion was that while order may not be a major consideration in oral communication, order is an important factor in written communication.

The significance of the appearance of the printed page, or visual aspects in increasing legibility and comprehension, was documented in a study performed by Bostian. He found that legibility was increased by "...the greater amount of white space on the page and white space around the type."<sup>9</sup> He concluded that the use of white space isolated key facts in the text and increased comprehension.

---

7. John P. Parker, "Some Organizational Variables and Their Effect Upon Comprehension." *The Journal of Communication*, 12 (1962), p. 30.

8. Donald K. Darnell, "The Relation Between Sentence Order and Comprehension." *Speech Monographs*, 30 (1963), p. 100.

9. Lloyd R. Bostian, "Effect of Line Width on Reading Speed and Comprehension." *Journalism Quarterly*, 53, 2 (Summer 1976), p. 329.

All of these studies, to some extent, have implications for the experimental study presented here. Organizational and visual modifications would appear to have some effect on comprehension of written material.

### **Statement of Hypothesis**

Based on the background research cited, it was hypothesized, for purposes of experimentation, that when different groups of subjects are exposed to different forms of printed material they will differ in their comprehension and attitudes toward that information.

## CHAPTER II

### PROCEDURE

#### Subjects

Subjects for this experiment included 145 male and female undergraduate students from six Speech 12 (Business and Professional Communication) classes at The University of Arizona. They were tested as intact groups, using a randomized-groups design.

#### Instrumentation

The independent variable was alternate forms (Forms 1 and 2) of the Course Policy/Syllabus handout.<sup>10</sup> The informational content of each form is essentially the same; however, there are some differences that require explanation.

Percentages (and therefore emphasis) for each assignment are contained on both forms on page one of the handout. Form 2 has this information repeated on subsequent pages as headings for each unit of the course, highlighted through the use of spacing and centering. Also, Form 2 has critique sheets included for oral assignments, while Form 1 does not have these accompanying pages.

Course objectives for each unit are defined in Form 2. This information is not contained in Form 1. Assignment objectives for each unit are listed in both forms; however, student objectives for oral assignments are contained in the critique sheets found at the end of the Form 2 handout. Student objectives are not found in Form 1.

Modifications of the Course Policy/Syllabus handout were designed to enhance comprehension of the material and the course by (1) offering important information in a highlighted manner and (2) providing additional information, the critique sheets in Form 2, so

---

10. Both Forms appear in Appendix A.

that students would know the expectations for each assignment and how they would ultimately be graded on those assignments.

The dependent variables were comprehension and attitudes. These variables were measured by use of a questionnaire; all test questions pertained to information common to both forms. The first dependent measure, that of comprehension scores, consisted of correct responses to ten questions. There were five possible multiple choice responses for each question. Scores were measured based on the number of correct responses (i.e., 9 correct responses out of 10 questions equalled a score of 9).

The second dependent variable, the evaluation of attitudes toward the course, was measured using a 4-interval Likert-type scale. The four intervals of possible responses were:

- (1) agree strongly
- (2) agree
- (3) disagree
- (4) disagree strongly

Scores were computed by using numerical values to correspond to each response. "Agree strongly" was scored as "1," "Agree" as "2," "Disagree" as "3" and "Disagree strongly" as "4."

### **Administration**

The experiment was conducted on the first day of classes for the Spring 1978 semester, during regularly scheduled class periods. Each instructor was given written instructions by the experimenter on how to conduct the experiment in his/her class.<sup>11</sup> Three instructors, two female and one male, were involved in the study.

After preliminary remarks were made by instructors in each class, copies of each form of the Course Policy/Syllabus handout were distributed. Students were given ample time to read the handout. Then the handouts were collected by instructors and copies of the

---

11. Experimenter remarks to instructors appears in Appendix B.

questionnaire were passed out.<sup>12</sup> After students finished filling out the questionnaires, instructors collected them and the data was turned over to the experimenter at the end of each class session involved.

---

12. A copy of the questionnaire, including experimenter remarks to participants, appears in Appendix C.

## **CHAPTER III**

### **RESULTS**

Data from questionnaires were scored and prepared for analysis. T-tests were performed for each of three treatment conditions for comprehension and attitude test scores. Hereafter comparisons between Form 1 and 2 for Instructor 1 will be termed Treatment A, comparisons between Form 1 and 2 for Instructor 2 Treatment B and comparisons between Form 1 and 2 for Instructor 3 Treatment C.

#### **Analysis and Presentation of Comprehension Scores**

The data were analyzed for significant differences in scores for each treatment and for differences in combined comprehension scores.

Table 1 summarizes the results of comprehension scores for Treatment A. The t value of .0700 was small and failed to reach the .05 significance level. Therefore the research hypothesis, that the comprehension score means for Forms 1 and 2 differ, was rejected at the .05 level of significance.

Table 2 summarizes the results of comprehension scores for Treatment B. The t value of .0390 also failed to reach the .05 significance level, and the research hypothesis was again rejected. In Table 3, the t value of 0 likewise failed to meet the .05 significance level. The research hypothesis was rejected.

It was theorized that combining across all comprehension scores for all instructors for Forms 1 and 2 might reach the .05 significance level. However, Table 4 indicates this was not the case, evidenced by a t of .2900.

#### **Analysis and Presentation of Attitude Scores**

Tables 5, 6 and 7 represent an analysis of attitude scores for each treatment. In Table 5, data was analyzed for Questions 11-16 for Treatment A. All t values failed to meet the .05

TABLE 1  
COMPREHENSION SCORES  
FOR TREATMENT A

	N	Mean	Difference Between Means	Standard Error	t
F <sub>1</sub>	25	5.84			
			-12	1.720	.0700
F <sub>2</sub>	28	5.96			

TABLE 2  
COMPREHENSION SCORES  
FOR TREATMENT B

	N	Mean	Difference Between Means	Standard Error	t
F <sub>1</sub>	19	5.10			
			-.07	1.780	.0390
F <sub>2</sub>	25	5.80			

TABLE 3  
COMPREHENSION SCORES  
FOR TREATMENT C

	N	Mean	Difference Between Means	Standard Error	t
F <sub>1</sub>	24	5.00	0	1.530	0
F <sub>2</sub>	24	5.00			

TABLE 4  
COMBINED SCORES  
FOR COMPREHENSION

	N	Mean	Difference Between Means	Standard Error	t
F <sub>1</sub>	68	5.34	-27	.9308	.2900
F <sub>2</sub>	77	5.61			

TABLE 5  
ATTITUDE SCORES  
FOR TREATMENT A

	N	Mean	Difference Between Means	Standard Error	t
Question 11					
F <sub>1</sub>	25	2.24	.13	.6364	.2043
F <sub>2</sub>	28	2.11			
Question 12					
F <sub>1</sub>	25	2.12	-.13	.6525	.1992
F <sub>2</sub>	28	2.25			
Question 13					
F <sub>1</sub>	25	1.32	-.25	.4502	.5553
F <sub>2</sub>	28	1.57			
Question 14					
F <sub>1</sub>	25	2.92	-.19	.8510	.2233
F <sub>2</sub>	28	3.11			
Question 15					
F <sub>1</sub>	25	1.92	.13	.5188	.2506
F <sub>2</sub>	28	1.79			
Question 16					
F <sub>1</sub>	25	2.48	.30	.8076	.3715
F <sub>2</sub>	28	2.18			

TABLE 6  
ATTITUDE SCORES  
FOR TREATMENT B

	N	Mean	Difference Between Means	Standard Error	t
Question 11					
F <sub>1</sub>	18	1.94	-.14	.5451	.2568
F <sub>2</sub>	25	2.08			
Question 12					
F <sub>1</sub>	18	2.50	.54	.7190	.7510
F <sub>2</sub>	25	1.96			
Question 13					
F <sub>1</sub>	18	1.39	-.21	.5150	.4078
F <sub>2</sub>	25	1.60			
Question 14					
F <sub>1</sub>	18	3.00	-.28	.7593	.3688
F <sub>2</sub>	25	3.28			
Question 15					
F <sub>1</sub>	18	1.72	0	.5672	0
F <sub>2</sub>	25	1.72			
Question 16					
F <sub>1</sub>	18	2.61	-.23	.9190	.2500
F <sub>2</sub>	25	2.84			

TABLE 7  
ATTITUDE SCORES  
FOR TREATMENT C

	N	Mean	Difference Between Means	Standard Error	t
Question 11					
F <sub>1</sub>	23	1.83			
			-.21	.6150	.3415
F <sub>2</sub>	23	2.04			
Question 12					
F <sub>1</sub>	23	2.43			
			-.09	.7660	.1175
F <sub>2</sub>	23	2.52			
Question 13					
F <sub>1</sub>	23	1.35			
			-.04	.4370	.0915
F <sub>2</sub>	23	1.39			
Question 14					
F <sub>1</sub>	23	2.74			
			-.22	.8750	.2514
F <sub>2</sub>	23	2.96			
Question 15					
F <sub>1</sub>	23	1.61			
			-.22	.5390	.4082
F <sub>2</sub>	23	1.83			
Question 16					
F <sub>1</sub>	23	2.96			
			-.13	.9350	.1400
F <sub>2</sub>	23	3.00			

level of significance, rejecting the hypothesis that significant attitudinal differences exist between the two Forms. In Table 6 for Treatment B and Table 7 for Treatment C,  $t$ 's also failed to meet the .05 significance level. Because the  $t$  values failed to reach the level of significance, an analysis of the combined attitude scores across treatments was not done.

## CHAPTER IV

### DISCUSSION

In each treatment for both comprehension and attitude scores, the research hypothesis that the means would differ for Forms 1 and 2 was not supported at the .05 significance level. While differences between the two forms may have existed, they were not detectable according to the design of the study at the .05 level of significance.

Given the experiment results, the following reasons are offered as to why none of the analyses conducted reached the .05 level of significance. One possibility is that organizational and visual modifications of the Course Policy/Syllabus handout may simply have been too small to be detectable. An alternate hypothesis is that the impact of content was dominant over form, thereby resulting in a lack of significance at the .05 level according to the design of the study. Also, the design of the study itself or instruments used to measure dependent variables may not have been sufficiently sensitive to pick up small differences between forms. Or perhaps differences were of a kind not measurable by these instruments. Any of these factors alone or in combination might have mitigated against the finding of significant differences between forms.

The use of printed matter as a communication tool warrants further investigation particularly in the field of teaching, where handouts like the Course Policy/Syllabus handout are used to explain course policy, assignments and expectations for student performance. A closer analysis of the impact of printed material, investigating other variables in written communication, might provide more definitive conclusions as to how written communication could be improved to enhance comprehension and retention or attitudes toward the material.

## CHAPTER V

### SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

This study was conducted to determine if organizational and visual modifications of the Speech 12 Course Policy/Syllabus handout might affect comprehension or attitudes toward the material. It was hypothesized that students who received Form 2 would indicate significantly higher levels of comprehension and indicate different attitudes toward the course in general. The theoretical assumption of this hypothesis was that reading comprehension is a distinct form of language processing, and that organizational and visual modifications could enhance comprehension of the information, resulting perhaps in attitudinal differences toward the material.

A 10-question multiple choice examination was employed to measure comprehension of each form of the Course Policy/Syllabus handout. A 4-interval rating scale pertaining to perceptions of the course was used to measure attitudes toward the course.

145 subjects from six Speech 12 classes at the University of Arizona were tested in a randomized-groups design.

The following statistical results were obtained:

1. The comprehension scores between Forms 1 and 2 for each treatment condition revealed no significant differences.
2. Combining comprehension scores across treatments for all Forms 1 and 2 revealed no significant differences.
3. An analysis of attitude scores for Forms 1 and 2 revealed no significant differences.

Although the .05 level of significance is not reached for any of the analyses conducted, the experimenter believes further experimentation is warranted. More testing, perhaps from different populations, with larger sample sizes, might furnish more conclusive results. Also, due to the numerous variables involved in comprehension of written material, it is

suggested that further tests be done involving these other variables. Experimentation involving the use of typography and different spatial arrangements of the printed page, taking into account the role of eye movement in reading and the nature of legibility, might produce interesting test results. Future research in the realm of written communication, focusing on ways to improve comprehension using this medium, offers limitless possibilities. For while the assumption seems to have been that message preparation and presentation are important in enhancing comprehension of written material, few objective experimental studies have been conducted to support the use of various organizational and visual techniques for printed matter.

## APPENDIX A

### FORMS 1 AND 2 OF THE COURSE POLICY/SYLLABUS HANDOUT

(FORM 1)

#### BUSINESS AND PROFESSIONAL COMMUNICATION

Course Policy

Spring 1978

#### Assignment Weights:

1. Each assignment evaluated will carry the same percentage value in each of the sections.
2. The following assignment descriptions indicate the percentage of the course grade for each oral assignment, written assignment and test in the course:

Oral Assignments -	50%	Written Assignments -	15%	Tests -	35%
Group Project	5%	Job Description	5%	Test I	10%
Organization Report	10%	Application Letter	5%	Test II	10%
Interview (R)	10%	Resume	5%	Test III	15%
Interview (E)	10%				
Policy Speech	15%				

#### Assignment Values:

Each 10% assignment completed will receive a letter grade which will be translated into a number according to the following scale:

A+ = 40	B+ = 30	C+ = 23	D+ = 16	E = 7
A = 35	B = 28	C = 21	D = 14	Missed
A- = 33	B- = 26	C- = 19	D- = 12	Assignment = -7

#### Determination of Final Grade:

1. Final point totals will be accumulated by determining the points for each assignment based upon the Assignment Values Category.
2. Acquiring the following points guarantees the student his grade will be no less than indicated if the Missed Assignments and General Requirements criteria are met.  
A = 335 points      B = 265 points      C = 195 points      D = 125 points  
E = less than 125 points
3. Improvement over the course of the semester and classroom participation may result in additional points being awarded.

#### Missed Assignments:

1. The Group and Organizational Report assignments and tests may not be made up whether the absence is excused or unexcused.
2. Other missed assignments which are excused may, if time permits, be made up with no grading penalty assigned.

3. Missed assignments which are unexcused may not be made up.
4. Missed assignments which are not made up will result in seven points subtracted from the total for each 10% assignment.

General Requirements:

1. Each student must complete 86% of the required work and pass 71% of the course assignments to receive his contracted grade for the points accumulated.
2. A student completing less than 86% of the assigned work or passing less than 71% of the assignments will receive, at the discretion of the instructor, an E, incomplete, or one grade level lower than the accumulated point total indicates.
3. The University absence policy will be followed.

Business and Professional Communication

Syllabus

Spring 1978

Testbook required:

Rosenblatt, Cheatham and Watt. *Communication in Business*. Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1977.

Reserve Room Reading: Redding and Sanborn, *Business and Industrial Communication*.

Unit I - Organizational Communication

Assignment Objectives:

1. To ease the students into their first oral communication experience.
2. To explain the communication process and stress the importance of feedback as the primary determinant of effective oral communication.
3. To provide the students an opportunity to synthesize and apply their organizational communication knowledge acquired through lecture and assigned readings.
4. To show student that oral communication is a means to an end rather than an end in itself.
5. To provide the students an opportunity to develop and to use visual aids in presentational speaking.
6. To provide students an opportunity to develop an extemporaneous oral response.
7. To provide students an opportunity to develop an understanding of group processes.

Dates & Unit Development

Assignments

1/23	1. Lecture: Communication and the Organization	R&S Chps. 1 & 2
	A. Orientation	
	B. The Communication Process	

## 1/30 II. Lecture: Structure of Organizations

Comm. in Business

Chps. 1,2,3,4,5,11

- A. Group Process: Task Organizations
  - 1. Invent an organization that is compatible with group interests.
  - 2. Determine the function of the organization.
  - 3. Structure to accomplish the function.
- B. Organizational Report Study Question: "What should be done to facilitate effective communication within the organization?"
  - 1. Choose leader, report dates and discuss the question for study.
  - 2. Choose a unit of personal interest.
  - 3. Analyze problems and solutions.

## 2/6 III. Lecture: Organizational Communication

- A. Each student report should:
  - 1. Explain the nature and function of the organizational unit under study through the use of visual aids.
  - 2. Identify the major potential internal (downward, upward, and horizontal) and external communication problems which are likely to result from the devised structure and the job functions of each unit.
  - 3. Develop methods and procedures to facilitate "effective" communication by preventing or resolving communication problems.
- B. Organizational Report Format
  - 1. The group will present its project in a Symposium Forum.
  - 2. The leader will be responsible for introducing the report, providing transitions between each speaker, concluding the report, opening the forum, moderating questions and answers, and concluding the forum.
  - 3. Each member of the symposium will be responsible for handling questions.
  - 4. Each speaker will be responsible for handling visual aids effectively.

## 2/13 IV. Lecture: Channels of Communication

Test on 2/20

- A. Organizational Report - Group #1
- B. Organizational Report - Group #2

2/20 V. Test I - Lecture material plus Chapters 1,2,3,4,5 & 11 in *Communication in Business*

- A. Organizational Report - Group #3
- B. Organizational Report - Group #4

2/23

NO CLASSES

## Unit II - Job Descriptions and Interviewing

## Assignment Objectives:

## Job Descriptions

- 1. To approximate the job hunting experience by developing a realistic job in a familiar organization.

2. To develop an information base (job description) enabling adequate preparation for interviewing.

#### Interviewing

1. To provide the students an opportunity to develop a letter of application and prepare a job resume.
2. To provide the students interview experience from two perspectives.— the interviewer (R) and the interviewee (E).

- 2/27 VI. Lecture: Principles of Interviewing Chps. 6,8,10,13,14
- A. Job Description Discussion Due 3/7
  - B. Letter of Application and Job Resume Discussion Due 3/14
- 3/6 VII. Lecture: Interviewing - The Interviewer (R)
- A. Interview "R" Discussion:
    1. Review Job Descriptions
    2. Assign Pairs
  - B. Interview "E" Discussion
- 3/13 VIII. Lecture: Interviewing - The Interviewee (E) Test II on 4/3
- A. Interviewing Videotape
    1. Distribute Letters and Resumes
    2. Finalize Assignment
  - B. Interviews (3)
- 3/19 -  
3/27 SPRING VACATION
- 3/27 NO CLASS
- A. Interviews (4)
  - B. Interviews (4)
- 4/3 IX. Test II - Lecture materials plus Chapters 6,8,10,13 and 14 in *Communication in Business*
- A. Interviews (4)
  - B. Interviews (4)
- 4/5 Last day for dropping class with W

#### Unit III - Oral Reporting

##### Assignment Objectives:

1. To provide the student an opportunity to identify, research, and analyze a problem of major importance in organizations.
2. To provide the student an opportunity to develop the issues and to support an appropriate application.

3. To provide the students an opportunity to use traditional evidence forms and motivational appeals in providing support and gaining acceptance of an idea.
4. To provide the student an opportunity to develop a polished oral presentation utilizing evidence construction and techniques necessary for introducing and concluding formal oral presentations effectively.
5. To provide the student an opportunity to develop audience interest through use of language style, audience analysis and appeal, and structured material.
6. To provide the student an opportunity to defend a suggested course of action extemporaneously.

- 4/10 X. Lecture: Policy Presentation - Format Chps. 7,9,12,15
- A. Interviews (5) Policy topics
- B. Interviews (5) due 4/18
- 4/17 XI. Lecture: Policy Presentation - Structure
- A. Policy Discussion and Topics Approved
- B. Public Speaking Discussion
- 4/24 XII. Lecture: Policy Development
- A. Oral Reports (3)
- B. Oral Reports (5)
- 5/1 XIII. Lecture: Test Review and Course Evaluation Test III on 5/8
- A. Oral Reports (5)
- B. Oral Reports (5)
- 5/6 XIV. Test III - Lecture materials plus Chapters 7,9,12 and 15 in *Communication in Business*
- A. Oral Reports (5) - Last day of scheduled classes

**Final Examination Period:** Check the Final Examination Schedule in the Spring Schedule of Hours and confirm with your lab instructor the date and time to meet and conclude Oral Reports.

## (FORM 2)

BUSINESS AND PROFESSIONAL COMMUNICATION

## Course Policy

Spring 1978

Assignment Weights:

1. Each assignment evaluated will carry the same percentage value in each of the sections.
2. The following assignment descriptions indicate the percentage of the course grade for each oral assignment, written assignment and test in the course:

Oral Assignments -	50%	Written Assignments -	15%	Tests -	35%
Group Project	5%	Job Description	5%	Test I	10%
Organization Report	10%	Application Letter	5%	Test II	10%
Interview (R)	10%	Resume	5%	Test III	15%
Interview (E)	10%				
Policy Speech	15%				

Assignment Values:

Each 10% assignment completed will receive a letter grade which will be translated into a number according to the following scale:

A+ = 40	B+ = 30	C+ = 23	D+ = 16	E = 7
A = 35	B = 28	C = 21	D = 14	Missed
A- = 33	B- = 26	C- = 19	D- = 12	Assignment = -7

Determination of Final Grade:

1. Final point totals will be accumulated by determining the points for each assignment based upon the Assignment Values Category.
2. Acquiring the following points guarantees the student his grade will be no less than indicated if the Missed Assignments and General Requirements criteria are met.  
 A = 335 points      B = 265 points      C = 195 points      D = 125 points  
 E = less than 125 points
3. Improvement over the course of the semester and classroom participation may result in additional points being awarded.

Missed Assignments:

1. The Group and Organizational Report assignments and tests may not be made up whether the absence is excused or unexcused.
2. Other missed assignments which are excused may, if time permits, be made up with no grading penalty assigned.
3. Missed assignments which are unexcused may not be made up.
4. Missed assignments which are not made up will result in seven points subtracted from the total for each 10% assignment.

General Requirements:

1. Each student must complete 86% of the required work and pass 71% of the course assignments to receive his contracted grade for the points accumulated.
2. A student completing less than 86% of the assigned work or passing less than 71% of the assignments will receive, at the discretion of the instructor, an E, incomplete, or one grade level lower than the accumulated point total indicates.

3. Absence policy:
  - a. After 2 absences a University Absence report will be filed.
  - b. The fourth absence may result in:
    1. the student being dropped from class
    - or-
    2. the student's course grade lowered one grade level.

## Business and Professional Communication

### Syllabus

Spring, 1978

Testbook required:

Rosenblatt, Cheatham and Watt. *Communication in Business*. Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1977.

Reserve Room Reading: Redding and Sanborn, *Business and Industrial Communication*

Course Objectives: Unit - Understand, identify, and explain organizational communication problems and their solutions:  
                           Unit - Prepare, conduct and respond to an employment interview.  
                           Unit III - Deliver a well organized, clearly stated public speech.

### UNIT I - ORGANIZATIONAL COMMUNICATION (25%)

Group Project	- 5%
Organizational Report	- 10%
Test I	- 10%

Assignment Objectives:

1. To ease the students into their first oral communication experience.
2. To explain the communication process and stress the importance of feedback as the primary determinant of effective oral communication.
3. To provide the students an opportunity to synthesize and apply their organizational communication knowledge acquired through lecture and assigned readings.
4. To show student that oral communication is a means to an end rather than an end in itself.
5. To provide the students an opportunity to develop and to use visual aids in presentational speaking.
6. To provide students an opportunity to develop an extemporaneous oral response.
7. To provide students an opportunity to develop an understanding of group processes.

Student Objectives: See Organizational Report Critique Sheet

Dates & Unit DevelopmentAssignments

- 1/23 I. Lecture: Communication and the Organization R&S Chps. 1 & 2
- A. Orientation
  - B. The Communication Process
- 1/30 II. Lecture: Structure of Organizations Comm. in Business  
Chps. 1,2,3,4,5,11
- A. Group Process: Task Organizations
    - 1. Invent an organization that is compatible with group interests.
    - 2. Determine the function of the organization.
    - 3. Structure to accomplish the function.
  - B. Organizational Report Study Question: "What should be done to facilitate effective communication within the organization?"
    - 1. Choose leader, report dates and discuss the question for study.
    - 2. Choose a unit of personal interest.
    - 3. Analyze problems and solutions.
- 2/6 III. Lecture: Organizational Communication
- A. Each student report should:
    - 1. Explain the nature and function of the organizational unit under study through the use of visual aids.
    - 2. Identify the major potential internal (downward, upward, and horizontal) and external communication problems which are likely to result from the devised structure and the job functions of each unit.
    - 3. Develop methods and procedures to facilitate "effective" communication by preventing or resolving communication problems.
  - B. Organizational Report Format
    - 1. The group will present its project in a Symposium Forum.
    - 2. The leader will be responsible for introducing the report, providing transitions between each speaker, concluding the report, opening the forum, moderating questions and answers, and concluding the forum.
    - 3. Each member of the symposium will be responsible for handling questions.
    - 4. Each speaker will be responsible for handling visual aids effectively.
- 2/13 IV. Lecture: Channels of Communication Test on 2, 20
- A. Organizational Report - Group #1
  - B. Organizational Report - Group #2
- 2/20 V. Test I - Lecture material plus Chapters 1,2,3,4,5 & 11 in *Communication in Business*
- A. Organizational Report - Group #3
  - B. Organizational Report - Group #4

## UNIT II - JOB DESCRIPTIONS AND INTERVIEWING (45%)

Job Description	- 5%
Letter & Resume	- 10%
Interviewer (R)	- 10%
Interviewee (E)	- 10%
Test II	- 10%

### Assignment Objectives:

#### Job Descriptions

1. To approximate the job hunting experience by developing a realistic job in a familiar organization.
2. To develop an information base (job description) enabling adequate preparation for interviewing.

#### Interviewing

1. To provide the students an opportunity to develop a letter of application and prepare a job resume.
2. To provide the students interview experience from two perspectives — the interviewer (R) and the interviewee (E).

Student Objectives: See Interviewing Critique Sheet

2/27 VI. Lecture: Principles of Interviewing Chps. 6,8,10,13,14

- |  |          |
|--|----------|
| A. Job Description Discussion                      | Due 3 7  |
| B. Letter of Application and Job Resume Discussion | Due 3 14 |

3/6 VII. Lecture: Interviewing - The Interviewer (R)

- A. Interview "R" Discussion:
  1. Review Job Descriptions
  2. Assign Pairs
- B. Interview "E" Discussion

3/13 VIII. Lecture: Interviewing - The Interviewee (E) Test II on 4/3

- A. Interviewing Videotape
  1. Distribute Letters and Resumes
  2. Finalize Assignment
- B. Interviews (3)

3/19 -

3/27 SPRING VACATION

3/27 NO CLASS

- A. Interviews (4)
- B. Interviews (4)

4/3 IX. Test II - Lecture materials plus Chapters 6,8,10,13 and 14 in *Communication in Business*

- A. Interviews (4)
- B. Interviews (4)

4/5 Last day for dropping class with W

### UNIT III - ORAL REPORTING (30%)

Policy Speech - 15%

Test III - 15%

#### Assignment Objectives:

1. To provide the student an opportunity to identify, research, and analyze a problem of major importance in organizations.
2. To provide the student an opportunity to develop the issues and to support an appropriate application.
3. To provide the students an opportunity to use traditional evidence forms and motivational appeals in providing support and gaining acceptance of an idea.
4. To provide the student an opportunity to develop a polished oral presentation utilizing evidence construction and techniques necessary for introducing and concluding formal oral presentations effectively.
5. To provide the student an opportunity to develop audience interest through use of language style, audience analysis and appeal, and structured material.
6. To provide the student an opportunity to defend a suggested course of action extemporaneously.

- 4/10 X. Lecture: Policy Presentation - Format Chps. 7,9,12,15
- A. Interviews (5) Policy topics
- B. Interviews (5) due 4. 18
- 4/17 XI. Lecture: Policy Presentation - Structure
- A. Policy Discussion and Topics Approved
- B. Public Speaking Discussion
- 4/24 XII. Lecture: Policy Development
- A. Oral Reports (3)
- B. Oral Reports (5)
- 5/1 XIII. Lecture: Test Review and Course Evaluation Test III on 5, 8
- A. Oral Reports (5)
- B. Oral Reports (5)
- 5/6 XIV. Test III - Lecture materials plus Chapters 7,9,12 and 15 in *Communication in Business*
- A. Oral Reports (5) - Last day of scheduled classes

#### Final Examination Period:

1. Check the Final Examination Schedule in the Spring Schedule of Hours.
2. Your final examination period is determined by the time your laboratory section meets.

BUSINESS AND PROFESSIONAL COMMUNICATION

Organizational Report		Section _____				
Speaker _____	Selection _____	Time _____				
Assigned Objectives	Comments	5-Superior	4-Good			
		3-Average	2-Fair	1-Poor		
I. Communication Structure		1	2	3	4	5
A. Introduction						
1. Attention Material						
2. Orientation Material						
3. Specific Purpose						
B. Body						
1. Main Points						
2. Transitions						
3. Organization						
C. Conclusion	1. Summary      2. Interest Factors					
3. Concluding Statement						
II. Communication Content						
A. Organizational Structure		1	2	3	4	5
1. Function						
2. Structure						
3. Rationale						
B. Communication Problem		1	2	3	4	5
1. Identification						
2. Analysis						
C. Solution		1	2	3	4	5
1. Specific Methods and Procedures						
2. Rationale and Evaluation						
D. Documentation		2	3	4	5	5
1. Adequate						
2. Relevant						
III. Communication Presentation						
A. Visual Aids		1	2	3	4	5
1. Clarity						
2. Size						
B. Forum Period		1	2	3	4	5
1. Understanding Question						
2. Answering Question						

Overall Impression:

Recorded Grade:

Evaluator \_\_\_\_\_

BUSINESS AND PROFESSIONAL COMMUNICATION

## Employment Interview Evaluation

Section \_\_\_\_\_

R _____	E _____	Time _____					
Assigned Objectives	Comments		5-Superior 3-Average	4-Good 2-Fair	1-Poor		
Introduction:			1	2	3	4	5
Greeting/Impression							
Climate/Adaptability							
Purpose							
Preparation:			1	2	3	4	5
Outline							
Information							
Readiness							
Objectives							
Organization of Information:			1	2	3	4	5
Direction/Organization							
Questions/Answers							
Probes/Expansions							
Analysis							
Adaptability:			1	2	3	4	5
Education Related to Job							
Experience Related to Job							
Uniqueness of Personality							
Initiative							
Conclusion:			1	2	3	4	5
"R" Summary (Verify/Clarify)							
Opportunity to Add Information							
Opportunity to Question							
Opportunity to Close							
"E" Expressed Interest							
Commitment to Job							
Future Contact							
Request for Action							
Verbal:			1	2	3	4	5
Directness							
Transitions							
Grammar & Usage							
Pronunciation							
NonVerbal:			1	2	3	4	5
Interested							
Enthusiastic							
Sincere							
Positive							
		POINT TOTAL	_____				

Overall Impression:

Recorded Grade: \_\_\_\_\_

Evaluator \_\_\_\_\_

**BUSINESS AND PROFESSIONAL COMMUNICATION**

<b>Policy Evaluation</b>		<b>Section</b> _____				
Speaker _____	Selection _____	Time _____				
<b>Assigned Objectives</b>	<b>Comments</b>	<b>5-Superior</b>	<b>4-Good</b>			
		<b>3-Average</b>	<b>2-Fair</b>	<b>1-Poor</b>		
<hr/>						
<b>I. Communication Structure</b>						
A. Introduction:		1	2	3	4	5
1. Attention Material						
2. Orientation Material						
3. Specific Purpose						
B. Body:		1	2	3	4	5
1. Main Points						
2. Transitions						
3. Organization						
C. Conclusion:		1	2	3	4	5
1. Summary						
2. Interest Factors						
3. Concluding Statement						
<hr/>						
<b>II. Communication Content</b>						
A. Objective Criteria:		1	2	3	4	5
1. Objective						
2. Justification						
3. Support						
B. Research and Analysis Criteria:		1	2	3	4	5
1. Issues						
2. Evidence/Documentation						
3. Suitability & Appropriateness						
C. Policy Criteria:		1	2	3	4	5
1. Explanation						
2. Workability						
3. Future Impact						
<hr/>						
<b>III. Communication Presentation</b>		1	2	3	4	5
A. Standard Dimensions:						
1. Language (Jargon)						
2. Eye Contact						
3. Use of Notes						
4. Nonverbal Appeal						
5. Verbal Appeal						
6. Topic Interest						
B. Additional Dimensions:						
1. Visual Aids						
2. Forum Period						

---

**Overall Impression:**


---

**Recorded Grade:**


---

**Evaluator**

## APPENDIX B

### EXPERIMENTER REMARKS TO INSTRUCTORS

In order to maximize uniformity of treatments, I would like you to follow these instructions:

1. As you know, in one of your sections you will give out Form 1 of the handout; in the other section you will distribute Form 2. Please keep data collected for each handout separate and return the questionnaires to me at the end of each class session involved.
2. At the beginning of class, you may give your students your name, office number, office hours, etc. You may take roll.
3. Next hand out the Course Policy/Syllabus. Tell students "This is the Course Policy/Syllabus handout for Speech 12. Please take the next 10 to 15 minutes to read over this handout. After everyone is finished reading the information, we will discuss the material."
4. After students have finished reading the handout, collect the material. Then distribute copies of the questionnaires that you have been provided.
5. Ask students to thoroughly read the cover sheet of the questionnaire.
6. Allow students about 15 minutes to complete the questionnaire. Collect the questionnaires. Copies of the Course Policy/Syllabus handout may be redistributed and you can feel free to discuss the handout at this point.

Thanks for your help.

Phyllis Duggan

## **APPENDIX C**

### **EXPERIMENTER REPARKS TO PARTICIPANTS AND TEST QUESTIONNAIRE**

To students enrolled in Speech 12:

I am requesting your voluntary participation in the completion of a questionnaire for a study entitled "The Business and Professional Communication Course Policy/Syllabus Handout: Its Presentational Effectiveness Based on Student Recall and Attitudes." The purposes and objectives of this study are twofold. First, this research seeks to determine how college students enrolled in Speech 12 perceive and interpret the information presented in the Course Policy/Syllabus handout; second, this study hopes to elicit information as to student attitudes at the outset of the course. If you should decide to participate in this study, please answer as many of the questions as possible. Completion of this questionnaire will require approximately 15 minutes of your time and will be an indication of your consent as a willing participant in this study. Your Speech 12 lecture and lab instructors will not have access to the gathered data; all data received will be treated with anonymity and confidentiality. There are no costs, benefits, or risks to you from your participation in this study. You are free to withdraw from the study at any time without incurring ill will or affecting your grade in this course.

Phyllis Duggan  
Graduate Teaching Assistant  
Department of Speech Communication

Please read the following questions and select the best response of the alternatives listed. There is only one right answer to each question. Circle the letter (A,B,C,D or E) that corresponds to the response you think is correct.

1. Oral assignments constitute what percentage of the overall course grade?
  - A. 40%
  - B. 60%
  - C. 50%
  - D. 55%
  - E. 35%
2. In the Oral Reporting Unit, the Policy Speech and Test III combined constitute what percentage of the overall course grade:
  - A. 30%
  - B. 25%
  - C. 20%
  - D. 10%
  - E. 40%
3. Emphasis in Unit II is placed on which of the following topics?
  - A. Employment interviewing
  - B. The structure of organizations
  - C. Oral reporting
  - D. A study of group processes
  - E. Writing job descriptions
4. In Unit I, the Organizational Report assignment is what percentage of the overall course grade?
  - A. 5%
  - B. 10%
  - C. 15%
  - D. 20%
  - E. 25%
5. What is the stated absence policy for this course?
  - A. After 2 absences a student may be dropped from class.
  - B. After 3 absences a student may be dropped from class.
  - C. After 4 absences a student may be dropped from class.
  - D. After 5 absences a student may be dropped from class.
  - E. The University Absence Policy will be followed.
6. The primary course objective for Unit I might best be described as which of the following:
  - A. To prepare, conduct and respond to an employment interview.
  - B. To develop and use visual aids in presentational speaking.
  - C. To understand, identify, and explain organizational communication problems and their solutions.
  - D. To deliver a well organized, clearly stated public speech.
  - E. To obtain interviewing experience from the perspective of the interviewer (R) and the interviewee (E).

7. In the Job Descriptions and Interviewing Unit, the letter of application and resume combined constitute what percentage of the overall course grade?
  - A. 30%
  - B. 10%
  - C. 15%
  - D. 35%
  - E. 20%
8. "To provide the student an opportunity to defend a suggested course of action extemporaneously" is an assignment objective for which assignment?
  - A. Interviewee assignment
  - B. Group Process assignment
  - C. Letter of application assignment
  - D. Job Description assignment
  - E. Policy Speech assignment
9. How many written assignments are there in the course?
  - A. 1
  - B. 2
  - C. 3
  - D. 4
  - E. 5
10. Test I constitutes what percentage of the overall course grade?
  - A. 15%
  - B. 5%
  - C. 20%
  - D. 10%
  - E. 25%

Please circle your response to the items listed by marking AS, A, D or DS. Mark "AS" if you agree strongly with the item, "A" if you agree moderately with the item, "D" if you disagree moderately with the item, and "DS" if you disagree strongly with the item. Circle only *one* response.

- |   |    |   |   |    |
|---|----|---|---|----|
| 11. I think I will like this course.  | AS | A | D | DS |
| 12. I think the course material will be difficult.  | AS | A | D | DS |
| 13. This course will provide me with worthwhile information that I can use in the future. | AS | A | D | DS |
| 14. It will be easy to obtain an "A" in this course.                                      | AS | A | D | DS |
| 15. I think I will like this instructor.  | AS | A | D | DS |
| 16. The Course Policy/Syllabus handout is difficult to understand.                        | AS | A | D | DS |

## SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Bostian, Lloyd R. "Effect of Line Width on Reading Speed and Comprehension." *Journalism Quarterly* 53, 2 (Summer 1976): 328-330.
- Campbell, Donald T., and Stanley, Julian C. *Experimental and Quasi-Experimental Designs for Research*. Chicago: Rand McNally Publishing Company, 1963.
- Darnell, Donald K. "The Relation Between Sentence Order and Comprehension." *Speech Monographs* 30 (1963): 97-100.
- Dinham, Sarah M. *Exploring Statistics*. Monterey, California: Brooks/Cole Publishing Company, 1976.
- Freedman, William A. "A Study in Communication." *The Journal of Communication* 9 (1959): 27-31.
- Pace, R. Wayne; Boren, Robert R.; and Peterson, Brent D. *Communication Behavior and Experiments: Scientific Approach*. Belmont, California: Wadsworth Publishing Company, Inc., 1975.
- Parker, John P. "Some Organizational Variables and Their Effect Upon Comprehension." *The Journal of Communication* 12 (1962): 27-32.
- Tinker, M.A. *Bases for Effective Reading*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1965.
- Tinker, M.A. *Legibility of Print*. Ames, Iowa: The Iowa State University Press, 1963.
- Walker, Laurence. "Comprehension of Writing and Spontaneous Speech." *Visible Language* XI 1 (Winter 1977): 37-51.

