ASSOCIATION FOR BUSINESS COMMUNICATION

Proceedings of the 89th Annual International Conference

Tulsa, Oklahoma, USA – October 16-19, 2024
Virtual – October 28-29, 2024

2024 PROCEEDINGS REVIEWERS

2024 PROCEEDINGS CO-EDITORS

Veronica Rice McCray, Western Michigan University
Lisa Gueldenzoph Snyder, North Carolina A&T State University

PREFACE

The ABC Proceedings are a published record of the presentations made during the conference and are available to both members and non-members. They are designed to showcase presentations and business communication topics of merit. All presenters who proposals were accepted are invited to participate in the proceedings. Presenters, however, must meet the requirements of the editorial guidelines and accompanying deadlines to be published in the proceedings.

First and foremost, we extend our heartfelt gratitude to all the presenters who participated in the conference. Your insightful presentations and innovative research have significantly enriched the discussions and knowledge shared during the event. Your contributions are the cornerstone of these proceedings, and we are honored to include your work in this publication.

We also wish to express our sincere appreciation to the reviewers who dedicated their time and expertise to support the creation of this document. Your thorough and constructive feedback has been invaluable in ensuring the high quality of the papers included in these proceedings. Your commitment to excellence and your willingness to share your knowledge have greatly enhanced the overall quality of this publication.

The 2024 ABC Conference covered a wide range of topics, reflecting the diverse interests and cutting-edge research within our community. Highlights of the proceedings include:

- **Innovative Technologies:** Several papers explored the latest advancements in technology, including artificial intelligence, machine learning, and blockchain. These studies provide new insights into how these technologies can be applied across various industries to drive innovation and efficiency.
- **Sustainable Practices:** A significant portion of the conference focused on sustainability and environmental impact. Presentations covered topics such as renewable energy, sustainable agriculture, and green building practices. These contributions highlight the importance of developing sustainable solutions to address global challenges.
- **Healthcare Innovations:** The conference also featured groundbreaking research in the field of healthcare. Papers discussed advancements in medical technology, telemedicine, and personalized medicine. These studies underscore the potential of technology to transform healthcare delivery and improve patient outcomes.
- **Educational Strategies:** Another key area of focus was education. Presenters shared their research on innovative teaching methods, educational technology, and strategies for enhancing student engagement and learning outcomes. These papers offer valuable insights for educators and policymakers aiming to improve educational practices.

We are confident that the papers included in these proceedings will inspire further research and collaboration within our academic and professional community. Thank you once again to all the presenters and reviewers for your invaluable contributions. We look forward to continuing the dialogue and advancing our collective knowledge in future conferences.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

Ethics and Social Responsibility

Future of Business Communication

How Do You Teach DEI?

Innovative Instructional Methods

Intercultural Communication

Interpersonal and Team Communication

My Favorite Assignment

Organizational Communication

Research Roundtable

Research: Three-Minute Research Pitch

Scholarship of Teaching and Learning

Social Media and Virtual Communication

Workshops

From SST to Diversity: Rethinking Business Attire for Intercultural Communication

Rakesh Nambiar
SVKM's NMIMS Kirit P Mehta School of Law, India

This paper explores Eurocentric professional attire norms in non-Western countries, notably India, within Intercultural Business Communication. It asserts the Eurocentric attire standards as incompatible, advocating for inclusive policies aligned with DEI principles and UNDP goals. It calls for diverse attire representation to foster workplace inclusivity and challenges Eurocentric paradigms.
This paper delves into the implications of Eurocentric attire norms in non-Western countries (with a special focus on India) within the realm of Intercultural Business Communication, integrating perspectives from semiotic analysis and visual rhetoric. Drawing on historical and cultural contexts, the study highlights how the prevalent paradigm of professional attire, dominated by a sartorial Eurocentric SST (Suit, Shirt and Trouser) paradigm is incompatible, perpetuates biases and restricts diversity. Through a critical analysis of the binary narratives of modern versus traditional (cultural) attire, this research reveals the underlying power dynamics shaping identity construction within organizational settings.

This study explored the intersections of intercultural, intersectional, and geographical dimensions to uncover the impact of attire norms on gender inequity and cultural autonomy in professional environments. The paper aims to advocate for an inclusive attire ethic that aligns with Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) principles, as well as the goals of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). By examining attire choices through a semiotic and visual rhetoric lens, this study seeks to challenge Eurocentric standards and spark meaningful changes in organizational practices. By promoting dialogue on cultural representation and comfort in attire choices, this research proposes a shift towards attire policies that embrace diverse cultural practices and foster inclusivity in intercultural business communication.

Through an examination of attire's symbolic meanings across different cultural landscapes, this study calls for a re-evaluation of dress codes to achieve genuine workplace diversity, equity, and inclusion for all, with consideration of the goals set by the UNDP. It advocates the adoption of diversity in business attire by employers to manifest a “Pulse of Progress” in their organization. Future studies should investigate business attire norms across diverse cultural geographies and LGBTQI using quantitative methodologies, revealing the intricate entrenchment of the Eurocentric paradigm within discursive power relations.

In Search of Authentic Corporate Dress: A Multimodal Analysis of Goldman Sachs' Corporate Image Construction on Instagram

Luke Plagens and Jane Strong
University of Wisconsin – Eau Claire

Dress is symbolic, and in the workplace, clothing has been used as a communication tool for rank and position (Maran et al., 2021), industry (Furnham et al., 2013), and even in the case of the remote work "Zoom mullet" (Bailey et al., 2022). Clothing worn in the workplace impacts others' perceptions of the individual (Wardhana & Harsono, 2020), and as dress is a source of one's identity and self-expression (Oostrom et al., 2021), it informs others' impressions and forms identity.

Corporations are a collective of these images, and each employee is a representative of the company's reputation (Bromley, 2000). The way that organizations are perceived by internal and external groups is a neglected area of research, even though each corporation's identity is readily available online (Bromley, 2001). In March 2019, Goldman Sachs (GS) announced a change to their conservative dress code. No longer would suits and ties be expected of their corporate employees. The flexible dress code was enacted in response to the growing number of younger generations now employed by GS (Armstrong, 2019). GS had a large presence on Instagram, with 284,000 followers. Considering that Instagram is a mode of communication for GS's corporate identity, the new wardrobe policy has the potential to be reflected through their online image.

The purpose of this paper is to explore the relationship between corporate identity and authenticity in GS's Instagram posts. As GS has changed their wardrobe policy, Instagram can be used as a communicative tool to reflect the changes in their clothing culture. In this article, we use a multimodal, analytical model to evaluate the wardrobe portrayed in GS's Instagram posts, while also drawing implications for future professionals.

Research Objectives

Through the analysis, we aim to answer three research questions: (1) How does multimodal analysis help to understand how GS constructs their corporate identity through dress/attire following the 2019 corporate dress code policy change? (2) How does GS's corporate dress code multimodally/visually communicate a commitment to authenticity and diversity? (3) How does an analysis of GS's Instagram corporate identity communicate through dress/attire impact young professionals?

Methodology

This research will involve an analytical template based on Serafini & Reid (2023). Because Instagram and GS's new corporate dress code policy serve as contemporary forms of representation and communication, the affordances, limitations, and relationships between these different forms of messaging can be effectively analyzed through this template. Serafini & Reid's framework addresses the complexities inherent in the multimodal nature of GS's rhetoric, making this ideal for the analysis.

The analytical framework for multimodal content analysis is described as follows: (a) Recognizing an Area of Interest, (b) Developing Initial Research Questions, (c) Constructing the Data Corpus, (d) Defining the Object of Study, (e) Developing Initial Categories, (f) Developing the Analytical Template, (g) Testing the Analytical Template, (h) Applying the Analytical Template to the Data Corpus, (i) Constructing Potential Themes, (j) Implications of the Analysis, and (k) Dissemination of Findings.

Conclusion & Significance

The research seeks to advance the Business Communications discipline to advance knowledge on the current dynamics in the corporate environment. By employing a multimodal analysis of GS's dress code policy and online presence, implications can be shared for key users of this knowledge, such as young professionals about to enter the workforce, or possibly a career with GS. This research can serve as a case study for both managers and business communication teachers and contribute to the development of professional attire and corporate image.

References

Armstrong, R. (2019). Wall Street reacts to a dressed-down Goldman Sachs. *FT.Com,* https://www.proquest.com/trade-journals/wall-street-reacts-dressed-down-goldman-sachs/docview/2189137105/se-2

Bailey, E. R., Horton, C. B., & Galinsky, A. D. (2022). Enclothed harmony or enclothed dissonance? The effect of attire on the authenticity, power, and engagement of remote workers. *Academy of Management Discoveries*, *8*(3), 341–356. https://edoi.org/10.5465/amd.2021.0081

Bromley, D. B. (2000). Psychological aspects of corporate identity, image and reputation. *Corporate Reputation Review*, *3*(3), 240–252. https://doi.org/10.1057/palgrave.crr.1540117

Bromley, D. B. (2001). Relationships between personal and corporate reputation*. European Journal of Marketing*, *35*(3/4), 316–334. https://doi.org/10.1108/03090560110382048

Furnham, A., Chan, P. S., & Wilson, E. (2013). What to wear? The influence of attire on the perceived professionalism of dentists and lawyers. *Journal of Applied Social Psychology*, *43*(9), 1838–1850. https://doi.org/10.1111/jasp.12136

Maran, T., Liegl, S., Moder, S., Kraus, S., & Furtner, M. (2021). Clothes make the leader! How leaders can use attire to impact followers' perceptions of charisma and approval. *Journal of Business Research*, *124*, 86–99. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2020.11.026

Oostrom, J. K., Ronay, R., & van Kleef, G. A. (2021). The signaling effects of nonconforming dress style in personnel selection contexts: Do applicants' qualifications matter? *European Journal of Work and Organizational Psychology*, *30*(1), 70–82. https://doi.org/10.1080/1359432X.2020.1813112

Serafini, F., & Reid, S. F. (2023). Multimodal content analysis: expanding analytical approaches to content analysis. *Visual Communication*, *22*(4), 623–649. https://doi.org/10.1177/1470357219864133

Wardhana, D. Y., & Harsono, H. (2020). Employees' perceptions of work attire in the workplace, does it matter? *Kinerja (Yogyakarta), 24(*2), 205–220. https://doi.org/10.24002/kinerja.v24i2.3429

Integrating Narrative Inquiry with Collaborative Rubrics to Promote Social Justice in Professional Writing Courses

Kristin Bennett
University of Oklahoma

This presentation analyzes the social justice goals, limitations, and possibilities of collaborative rubrics in teaching professional writing. I analyze previously constructed rubrics and narrative student interviews to offer insights that can help instructors to center frequently marginalized perspectives in their pedagogical practices and assessments.

Following a turn to social justice, the field of technical and professional communication (TPC) has called for academic and professional practices that amplify "the agency of oppressed people…who are materially, socially, politically, and/or economically under-resourced" (Jones & Walton, 2018, p. 42). In response, recent TPC scholarship has advocated for pedagogical practices that facilitate intersectional access by challenging seemingly neutral standards that participate in systemic ableism, racism, and sexism (Bennett, 2022; Mcoy et al., 2022; Shelton, 2020). This presentation builds on such research by analyzing the social justice implications of TPC rubrics. As Asao B. Inoue (2019) articulates, standardized rubrics that measure proficiency "are exclusionary if used to assess, evaluate, or grade student writing and are already hardwired into the machine of whiteness" (p. 380). That is, standardized rubrics frequently draw on and reinforce epistemological frames and practices associated with white, wealthy, cisgender, male, able identities. This presentation offers insight into how TPC instructors can challenge systemic oppression by collaborating with students to critically construct rubrics that center professional experiences and knowledge-making practices often marginalized by dominant workplace norms.

Invested in promoting more accessible classroom spaces, previous TPC scholarship has noted how normative documentation and design practices may yield discursively and materially problematic impacts for individuals with disabilities (Colton & Walton, 2015; Gutsell & Hulgin, 2013). In addition, previous research has found that when disregarding students' diverse embodiments, instructors may endorse "homogenous" standards that erase the experiences, perspectives, and knowledge-making strategies of students with disabilities (Oswal & Melonçon, 2014). Although previous TPC scholarship has interrogated ableism in pedagogical settings (Bennett, 2022; Hitt, 2018;), it has not accounted for the systemic influence of ableism on assessment methods like collaborative rubrics. Collaborative rubrics, or negotiated rubrics, are often touted as democratic assessment methods that promote transparency by allowing all members of the classroom community to influence assessment criteria (Cirio, 2019). However, when used without critical reflection, collaborative rubrics may in fact strengthen the problematic standards they seek to dismantle. This presentation draws from Inoue's (2019) recommendations for facilitating critical and reflective engagement with collaborative rubrics to promote more equitable and accessible assessment by examining ways to center frequently marginalized perspectives through critical coalition in professional writing classrooms.

Goals

The goals of this presentation are to:

- provide an overview of the social justice potential and limitations of collaborative rubrics
- model critical analysis of collaborative rubrics and narrative methods to center marginalized perspectives in ways that promote social justice in collaborative rubric assessment
- offer insights from research participants to help attendees think critically about teaching and evaluating professional writing with attention to social justice

Methods/Methodologies

This presentation will overview a study that engages thematic coding (Saldaña, 2016) to analyze previously constructed, student-led collaborative rubrics and semi-structured interviews with 15 students previously enrolled across four sections of an Intro to Technical Writing course. Specifically, interviews engaged narrative inquiry (Jones, 2016) to ask students to identify critical incidents related to previous experiences with professional communication and to reflect on how such incidents affected a) their understandings of professional communication, b) their own professional communication habits and/or performance, and c) their contributions to collaborative rubrics in our TPC course.

Outcomes

This presentation will offer participants:

- ways to engage thematic coding to interrogate seemingly neutral collaborative assessments for the presence of dominant assumptions
- methods for using narrative inquiry to help TPC students critically reflect on professional communication standards,
- insights from student interviews that demonstrate how lived experiences influence understanding and performance of professional communication, and
- a framework for engaging collaborative rubric construction that integrates student insights with practices of intersectional coalition integral to disability justice (Berne et al., 2018).

References

Bennett, K. C. (2022). Prioritizing access as a social justice concern: Advocating for ableism studies and disability justice in technical and professional communication. *IEEE Transactions on Professional Communication, 65*(1), 226–240. https://doi.org/10.1109/TPC.2022.3140570

Berne, P., Levins Morales, A., Langstaff, D., & Invalid, S. (2018). Ten principles of disability justice. *Women's Studies Quarterly, 46*(1/2), 227–230. https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.2307/26421174

Cirio, J. (2019). Meeting the promise of negotiation: Situating negotiated rubrics with students' prior experiences. *WPA: Writing Program Administration, 42*(2), 100–118.

Colton, J. S., & Walton, R. (2015). Disability as insight into social justice pedagogy in technical communication. *The Journal of Interactive Technology and Pedagogy.*

https://jitp.commons.gc.cuny.edu/disability-as-insight-into-social-justice-pedagogy-in-technical-communication/

Gutsell, M., & Hulgin, K. (2013). Supercrips don't fly: Technical communication to support ordinary lives of people with disabilities. In Lisa Meloncon (Ed.), *Rhetorical Accessibility: At the Intersection of Technical Communication and Disability Studies* (pp. 83–94). Baywood Publishing Company, Inc.

Hitt, A. (2018). Foregrounding accessibility through (inclusive) universal design in professional communication curricula. *Business and Professional Communication Quarterly, 81*(1), 52–65. https://doi.org/10.1177/2329490617739884

Inoue, A. B. (2004). Community-based assessment pedagogy. *Assessing Writing, 9*(3), 208–38.

Jones, N. N. (2016). Narrative inquiry in human-centered design: Examining silence and voice to promote social justice in design scenarios. *Journal of Technical Writing and Communication, 46*(4), 471–492, https://doi.org/10.1177/0047281616653489

Jones, N. N., & Walton, R. (2018). Using narratives to foster critical thinking about diversity and social justice. In A. M. Haas and M. F. Eble (Eds.) *Key Theoretical Frameworks: Teaching Technical Communication in the Twenty-first Century* (pp. 241–267). University of Colorado Press.

Mckoy, T., Shelton, C. D., Sackey, D. J., Jones, N. N., Haywood, C., Wourman, L., & Hrper, K. C. (2022). Introduction to special issue: Black technical and professional Communication. *Technical Communication Quarterly, 31*(3), 221–228. https://doi.org/10.1080/10572252.2022.2077455

Oswal, S. K., & Meloncon, L. (2014). Paying attention to accessibility when designing online courses in technical and professional communication. *Journal of Business and Technical Communication, 28*(3), 271–300 https://doi.org/10.1177/1050651914524780

Saldaña, J. (2016). *The coding manual for qualitative researchers.* Sage.

Shelton, C. (2020). Shifting out of neutral: Centering difference, bias, and social justice in a business writing course. *Technical Communication Quarterly, 29*(1), 18–32. https://doi.org/10.1080/10572252.2019.1640287

Searching for Social Justice in Career Services Websites: Implications for Business and Professional Communication Pedagogy

Nicole O'Connell
University of Massachusetts Amherst

Undergraduate students are often stressed about and unprepared for life after graduation as working on career documents brings them face to face with "economic and existential anxieties" (Doan, 2021, p. 301), the job search process is rife with discrimination and biased ideas of professionalism (Bennett, 2023; Chen et al., 2023; Moeggenberg et al., 2022; Randazzo, 2020; Walwema & Arzu Carmichael, 2021), and career education may not be designed for multiply-marginalized or under-resourced (MMU) students (Bennett, 2024; Doan, 2021).

With goals of "ensuring students' professional success" (Scott, 2004, p. 289), academic programs may adopt a hyper-pragmatic approach that places profit over people, an approach scholars have rightfully criticized (Hashlamon & Teston, 2022). In order to make a more positive impact on students, and drawing from the social justice turn in technical and professional communication (Walton et al., 2019), this study aims to determine how business and professional communication instructors can provide career education in more equitable ways.

Methods

This study analyzes how university career services websites potentially empower or oppress students. In order to get a broad look at career education for a large number of college students, fifteen career services websites from public 4-year universities in the United States were reviewed to understand rhetorical moves toward social justice. Although websites do not share a complete picture of a career services' offerings, websites serve as information repositories and provide a good look into what students are offered for career education. Business and professional communication instructors may draw from their university's career resources, and their students may use these resources as a supplement to class content. Scholars have previously considered university marketing/communications in regard to social justice, specifically, analyzing recruiting and other university and academic program materials (Alexander & Walton, 2022; Dayley, 2020; Dayley, 2022), and this study extends these approaches to career services materials. Recently, Kristin Bennett (2024) analyzed university career services websites for instances of ableism, and this study looks at career services websites under a broader social justice lens.

Specifically, this study uses feminist rhetorical analysis on the career services websites to determine rhetorical moves that career education makes toward social justice. A feminist rhetorical critic's primary goal "is to identify and explicate strategies that disrupt established hegemonies and, in turn, create new ways of thinking, acting, and being" (Foss, 2017, p. 147), and this study aims to inform more socially-just career education. This study searches for rhetorical moves that disrupt capitalist market values or hyper-pragmatism and instead raise humanistic concerns.

Findings and Implications

Themes across career services websites as well as implications for pedagogy include:

- **MMU-specific resources:** Ensure students are aware of MMU-specific resources, including identity-based job boards and funding opportunities for unpaid internships. Also, acknowledge discrimination in job processes; someday students may be on hiring committees, and if they learn about discrimination in hiring processes, they will be able to recognize it and make more equitable choices when they have the power to do so.

- **Understandings of "professional":** Consider (and critique) how career education frames professionalism (is it implied, for instance, "bad" grammar in applications reflects unintelligence? Does it prescribe professional clothing?). Acknowledge different forms of professionalism and how professionalism can be tied to unjust standards.

- **Protect oneself:** Teach students to protect their rights and advocate for themselves as an applicant/worker. For example, students should know what questions are illegal for an employer to ask during an interview. Teach students how to respond if they face microaggressions at work. Encourage students to negotiate salaries.

- **Understandings of "career":** Recognize career paths are often non-linear. Consider and respect different career paths, especially non-traditional or unexpected paths.

Students should learn about career services, and students should also question career education. These suggestions stand out based on what was found in these websites, but it is important to note that these websites are representations of what institutions want to share. This career education may not reflect actual experiences of students. This study is part of a larger research project which includes focus groups and surveys with students and educators to better understand the lived experiences around career education in higher education and how it could be made more equitable.

References

Alexander, J., & Walton, R. (2022). Relational recruiting: Using black feminist theory to inform graduate recruiting strategies. *IEEE Transactions on Professional Communication*, *65*(1), 164–178. https://doi.org/10.1109/TPC.2021.3137571

Bennett, K. C. (2024). (Dis)ability deconditioning: Challenging ableist articulations of professionalism in university career centers. *Technical Communication Quarterly*, *33*(3), 309–326.

Bennett, K. C. (2023). How "well" are we DEI-ing? Applying technical and professional communication theory and disability justice to challenge intersectional ableism in job advertisements through coalitional recruitment. *Technical Communication*, *70*(3), 77–96. https://doi.org/10.55177/tc415335

Chen, C., Bose, D., Sano-Franchini, J., Keller, E., Osorio, R., & Tetreault, E. (2023). Interrogating the 4Ps: Positionality, privilege, power, and professionalism in the rhetoric and composition job market. *Composition Studies*, *50*(3), 20–39.

Dayley, C. (2020). Student perceptions of diversity in technical and professional communication academic programs. *Technical Communication Quarterly*, *29*(1), 49–69. https://doi.org/10.1080/10572252.2019.1635210

Dayley, C. (2022). Ethical deception: Student perceptions of diversity in college recruitment materials. *Communication Design Quarterly*, *10*(1), 38–50.

Doan, S. (2021). Teaching workplace genre ecologies and pedagogical goals through résumés and cover letters. *Business and Professional Communication Quarterly*, *84*(4), 294–317. https://doi.org/10.1177/23294906211031810

Foss, S. K. (2017). *Rhetorical criticism: Exploration and practice* (5th ed.). Waveland Press, Inc.

Hashlamon, Y., & Teston, C. (2022). Teaching participative justice in professional writing. *Technical Communication Quarterly*, *31*(2), 159–174. https://doi.org/10.1080/10572252.2021.2000031

Moeggenberg, Z. C., Edenfield, A., C., & Holmes, S. (2022). Trans oppression through technical rhetorics: A queer phenomenological analysis of institutional documents. *Journal of Business and Technical Communication*, *36*(4), 403–439. https://doi.org/10.1177/10506519221105492

Randazzo, C. (2020). Neo racism in résumés: Implications for a dialog about U.S. race/ethnicity and internationality in technical and professional communication. *Programmatic Perspectives*, *11*(1), 4–36.

Scott, J. B. (2004). Rearticulating civic engagement through cultural studies and service-learning. *Technical Communication Quarterly*, *13*(3), 289–306. https://doi.org/10.1207/s15427625tcq1303-4

Walton, R. W., Moore, K. R., & Jones, N. N. (2019). *Technical communication after the social justice turn: Building coalitions for action*. Routledge.

Walwema, J., & Arzu Carmichael, F. (2021). “Are you authorized to work in the U.S.?” Investigating “inclusive” practices in rhetoric and technical communication job descriptions. *Technical Communication Quarterly*, *30*(2), 107–122. https://doi.org/10.1080/10572252.2020.1829072

Socratic AI: Leveraging Generative AI for Deeper Engagement in DEI

Phil Wagner
College of William and Mary

In an era where discussions on DEI are both critical and complex, well-intentioned individuals may find the DEI discursive space too risk-laden to traverse. The purpose of this study is to explore how generative AI can facilitate a deeper, more reflective dialogue on DEI issues, challenging perceptions and enhancing understanding. By encouraging Socratic dialogue in the generative AI platform, we propose ancient thinking within the context of modern communication modalities.

Our methodology centered on a structured academic assignment where over 200 students engaged with an AI assistant in a dialogue format to discuss their DEI "hangups"—specific issues within the DEI spectrum that they found difficult to understand or accept. Each student selected a DEI topic of their own choosing, reflecting a variety of hangups, such as religious objection to LGBTQ+ inclusion, the “inappropriate elevation” of non-minority individuals into DEI leadership positions, general disdain for the organizational “DEI industrial complex,” confusion over the listing of pronouns in emails/signature lines, and beyond. Using a structured prompt, individuals engaged in a guided dialogue with the generative AI platform. These conversations aimed to mirror a Socratic dialogue, where the AI used techniques such as facilitative questioning, reflective mirroring, and scenario simulation to encourage deeper thinking and perspective shifts. Likewise, students engaged in Socratic and/or self-reflective dialogue, deepening the conversation in an effort to bring about greater understanding of the DEI “hangup.”

This research was motivated by the increasing need for innovative educational tools that can handle the delicate nuances of DEI conversations. These discussions are often fraught with emotional intensity and can lead to polarization; hence, there is a pressing need for methodologies that promote a more reflective and inclusive dialogue. Even in interpersonal contexts defined by agreed-upon principles of psychological safety, a self-censorship effect may take place in more vulnerable conversations (i.e., conversations on sensitive topics like these) to save face and/or remove the potential for shame or admonishment. Our goal was to assess whether conversations with a generative AI can provide a safe, neutral space for students to explore and challenge their preconceptions about DEI topics.

We selected a representative sample of 50 final transcripts for in-depth analysis. The dialogues were meticulously transcribed and analyzed using MAXQDA software. The analytical process began with open coding, where initial codes were generated by reading through the data to identify recurring themes and patterns. This exploratory phase allowed us to capture a broad spectrum of AI and human discourse interactions, including evidence evaluation, challenging the AI's perspectives, and reflective inquiry.

Following the open coding, axial coding was employed to refine and categorize these initial codes into more defined themes. This involved connecting and organizing the codes into a coherent framework that could illustrate the relationships among different concepts discussed during the AI dialogues. Through this methodical refinement, a codebook was developed. This codebook served as the structured guideline for subsequent analyses, ensuring consistency and depth in examining the nuanced interactions between students and the AI.

To ensure reliability and reduce bias in the thematic analysis, two independent coders independently coded a subset of the transcripts using the established codebook. Their independent analyses were then compared and discussed to resolve any discrepancies and to reach a consensus on the coding. A third independent coder also participated in the verification process to strengthen the validity of the study.

Findings from the study revealed significant outcomes regarding the role of generative AI in DEI learning and development. First, the quality of engagement was a critical factor; individuals who willingly participated in the dialogue often exhibited greater shifts in perspective and a deeper understanding of the complexities of DEI topics. These participants were more likely to challenge their initial beliefs and demonstrate a higher level of critical thinking and empathy. Second, the AI's role as a neutral facilitator was crucial in allowing students to explore sensitive issues without the fear of judgment, which may be a barrier in human-led discussions. Third, we identify opportunities to better train the generative AI model with conversational prompts to avoid common pitfalls (e.g., list-dumping, repetition, etc.). Finally, we identify value in using generative AI as a catalyst for ethical self-reflection in a judgement-free landscape—both in educational settings and beyond.

Our findings suggest that integrating AI into the DEI landscape can transform challenging DEI dialogues into opportunities for growth and understanding, thus highlighting the need for further exploration and application of AI technologies in educational settings focused on social issues.

The Business of Justice: Celebrating MLK Day at a Business School

Mary Marcel
Bentley University

Bentley University added a day to its spring calendar to celebrate MLK's legacy. All day classes were cancelled, and the university community delivered 45 events and sessions on this inaugural year's theme, The Business of Justice.

Since the national racial reckoning of 2020 over the murder of George Floyd, the business world has taken both forward and backward steps with respect to diversity, equity, and inclusion in the workplace. There was a flurry of pledges and statements in May 2020 by businesses who committed their organizations and their resources to combatting racial discrimination in both their businesses and society. However, there has also been a walking back by many organizations since then over DEI matters. In 2024, Bentley University, a business university, decided to put its time and treasure into keeping the positive momentum towards strengthening DEI in the business world and society.

Bentley has celebrated Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. for 38 years with a breakfast on the second Tuesday of the Spring semester when students have returned to campus. In 2022, the MLK Breakfast Planning Committee decided to seek approval for a whole day of events instead, where there would be no day classes and all Bentley students, faculty, staff and alumni would be invited to deliver and attend sessions celebrating and exploring the continuing relevance of Dr. King's legacy for business and society.
There were several goals driving this initiative. First, after a serious racial reckoning in 2020 after the murder of George Floyd, Bentley committed to becoming an anti-racist university. Hundreds of white faculty and staff took part in self-study groups and were trained to facilitate Brave Dialogues. With Black students comprising only 4% of the student body, Bentley internal climate studies found we have many fewer opportunities than would be desirable for interactions between people of color and white people at Bentley. So, this felt like an important step in building such opportunities. Second, since MLK Day was made a national holiday in 1983, many institutions have settled on some fairly typical ways of marking the day: breakfasts, concerts, and/or days of service. We wanted to redefine what the day could mean, by celebrating the legacy of Dr. King in both past and present times, but also to learn about current areas where business and social justice issues were either colliding or breaking new ground in positive ways. We also felt it was important for white people to listen to what their Black community members had to say about their own experiences in the context of themed sessions. Third, we hoped by designating the entire day for our MLK observance to involve at least 2000 people, out of our community of approximately 6700 people.

We began by moving the proposal to our calendar committee, then to the administration, Faculty Senate, and general faculty in 2022. In the process, we engaged with all constituencies on campus, including students and student government leaders. Our president, provost, and deans were supportive, as was the President's Cabinet. Our Vice President for Diversity and Inclusion secured $50,000 for the day's events separate from the Breakfast, which was held as always and served as the launch for the day.

Importantly, this initiative was created as a learning day, and so the Provost's office became the administrative locus.

As the only faculty member on the MLK Breakfast committee, I volunteered to initiate the planning process for the day. I made three general calls to the Bentley community asking for volunteers to serve. I also "shoulder tapped" individuals whose expertise and commitment to racial and social justice would be valuable, in my view.

On January 30, 2024, over 100 presenters delivered 45 sessions and events running from 8 AM to 6 PM. Sessions were classified as follows: The Business of Justice; Teaching, Learning and Scholarship; and Social Justice and Society. Topics ranged from entrepreneurship through acquisition, redlining in real estate, race in quantitative analysis, the CROWN Act, and professional appearance, to HBCUs and Black Greek organizations, taking on "brave" dialogues, classroom inclusivity, "invisible" racism, decoding race in brand advertising, and Black contributions to fashion. Keynote speakers addressed underrepresented students at elite colleges and universities, the myth of meritocracy, racism in the tech world, and closing the racial wealth gap. We also had four video installations on the work of three Black artists and a Black women's quilting community.

A post-event survey reported high levels of satisfaction on the part of most participants. Some faculty offered some extra credit for attendance; at least 20% of the undergraduate body attended. For next year, we plan to extend programming into the evening to enable more participation by graduate students working full-time and alumni.

The Impact of Anti-DEI Legislation on Business Communication Courses

Hailey Gillen Hoke, Weber State University
Stephanie Medden, Bentley University
Ashton Mouton, Sam Houston State University
Phil Wagner, College of William and Mary

With the recent increase in both proposed and passed legislation targeting diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) initiatives at colleges and universities across the country, faculty members must consider how these bills could impact the classes they teach, and how they teach them.

According to the Chronicle of Higher Education and the National Education Association, there are currently at least 84 anti-DEI bills introduced, with 12 already signed into law as of April 2024. These bills vary in scope and purpose, but include prohibiting colleges from having DEI offices or staff, banning mandatory diversity training, banning the use of diversity statements in hiring staff and faculty, and banning the use of race or ethnicity in admissions decisions.

This legislation, and the sentiment behind it, presents a challenge for educators who wish to prepare future organizational leaders to effectively and ethically navigate the changing cultural and political landscape. Faculty (particularly untenured faculty) may feel particular pressure to dilute this content, so as to not put themselves at risk of being denied tenure or promotion. Further, there are several limitations in the curriculum as a result of the DEI ban in public institutions impacted by these bills (e.g., decreased cultural competency, ignorance of respectful language usage, decreased empathetic communication skills, and emotional intelligence).

This panel includes faculty members from four universities across the country who will each share their unique experiences with and preparation for changes in DEI legislation, specifically in courses related to business and organizational communication. Short presentations by each participant will be followed by a roundtable discussion and questions from the audience.

Unveiling New Dimensions of Academic Diversity in an International University: Faculty Leadership Perspective

Tatiana Andrienko-Genin
Westcliff University

Introduction

The global discourse on diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) in academia has accelerated institutional efforts to foster environments reflective of multicultural societies. Faculty leadership plays a vital role in these efforts. This article explores how Faculty Senate initiatives in an international university setting can support academic diversity, offering insights into new dimensions that extend beyond traditional notions of diversity in higher education. Through the lens of leadership and business communication, this paper demonstrates the interconnectedness of academic diversity and effective organizational communication in a globalized world. The exploration of dimensions of academic diversity emphasizes the importance of inclusive communication strategies both in academia and beyond, offering practical insights for faculty leaders and administrators.

The evolving landscape of higher education increasingly mirrors the complexities of our globalized society. As universities embrace the principles of diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI), faculty leadership has become a pivotal force in shaping the policies and practices that support these values. According to UNESCO's 2020 report, over 6 million students are studying internationally (UNESCO 2020), reflecting the increasing multicultural makeup of higher education institutions. This diversification presents both opportunities and challenges for academic leadership (Altinkas, 2023; Gonzales et al., 2021). Effective communication, particularly in diverse environments, is a cornerstone of success, whether in academia or the business world.

Business Communication courses at universities are uniquely positioned to prepare the students to effectively communicate in the workplace which becomes increasingly diverse and multicultural. However, the learning outcomes in Business Communication courses in most of the published syllabi include very scarce mentioning of diversity, or do not provide for embracing diversity at all. This observation suggests the need to focus more on diversity in communication courses, but it also highlights the importance of the university culture of inclusivity and faculty leadership that shape the students' value-in-diversity mindset.

Academic diversity – comprising varied educational backgrounds, classroom cultures, and learning styles – plays an essential role in promoting inclusivity. However, its influence extends beyond the classroom. This paper argues that academic diversity serves as a model for effective communication in global business contexts, where similar challenges of multicultural engagement and inclusivity arise. Faculty leadership in international universities, particularly through the role of Faculty Senates, provides a blueprint for fostering inclusive environments. These insights offer practical applications for business communication, emphasizing the importance of adaptability, cultural sensitivity, and leadership in achieving success.

Globalization and the Changing Face of Academia

The internationalization of higher education has drastically altered the demographic and cultural landscape of universities. With students from a multitude of backgrounds and cultures, institutions must foster environments that are welcoming, inclusive, and responsive to the unique needs of their diverse populations. The challenges of globalization are not unique to academia; they are reflected in the global business environment, where companies must engage with employees, clients, and partners from different cultural and educational backgrounds.

As Barnett (2020) notes, educators must focus on transforming students into responsible citizens capable of navigating this complex, interconnected world. This transformation begins with fostering an inclusive academic environment, where diverse perspectives are not only recognized but actively integrated into the learning process (Tzovara et al., 2021). In this way, academic diversity becomes a microcosm of the broader global environment, where diversity of thought, experience, and approach is essential for innovation and success.

The Role of Faculty Leadership in DEI Initiatives

Leadership is critical in cultivating inclusive environments, both in academia and business. Research by Marchiondo et al. (2023) suggests that academic leaders serve as role models for diversity-related initiatives, shaping the attitudes and behaviors of educators. While much of the literature on DEI leadership focuses on administrative roles such as Directors of Centers for Teaching and Learning (Johnson, 2022), this paper argues for a greater emphasis on faculty leadership, particularly through governing bodies like Faculty Senates and leadership of individual classroom instructors.

Faculty Senates, representing the collective voice of the academic faculty, are uniquely positioned to influence institutional policies and promote equitable practices. As leaders in their fields, faculty members are in direct contact with students and play a crucial role in shaping the learning environment. By inclusive teaching (Jørgensen & Brogaard, 2021), as well as advocating for diversity in academic backgrounds, classroom practices, and curriculum design, faculty leaders can foster inclusivity that extends beyond surface-level identities such as race or gender. This focus on diversity aligns with the needs of businesses that operate in multicultural environments, where inclusive leadership and harmonious communication are key to success.

New Dimensions of Academic Diversity

Traditional discussions of academic diversity often focus on visible aspects of identity such as race, gender, and ethnicity (ELM Learning, n.d.). However, in an international university setting, diversity extends to a broader range of dimensions, many of which are overlooked in current DEI discourse. Based on the author's experience as Chair of the Faculty Senate DEI Committee at Westcliff University, a new framework is proposed for understanding academic diversity, which includes:

1. **Diversity of Educational Backgrounds**: Students and faculty members come from a variety of academic traditions and educational systems. This diversity influences their expectations, learning styles, and approaches to problem-solving. Understanding and integrating these differences is essential for fostering an inclusive academic environment.

2. **Diversity of Classroom Cultures**: Different countries have varying norms regarding classroom behavior, participation, and interaction between students and instructors. These cultural differences can lead to misunderstandings if not properly addressed, and affect the students' performance and motivation. On the other hand, they also provide opportunities for enriching the learning experience.

3. **Diversity of Theories and Scholarly Approaches**: In a globalized academic setting, students and faculty are exposed to a wide range of theoretical frameworks and scholarly traditions. Encouraging dialogue between these perspectives fosters a richer and more inclusive academic discourse.

4. **Diversity of Information Sources**: The sources of information that students rely on for research and analysis vary widely depending on their cultural and educational backgrounds. Faculty leaders must promote the ethical and critical use of diverse sources to ensure that all perspectives are represented in academic discussions.

5. **Diversity of Learning Styles and Delivery Modes**: Individual learning preferences vary, particularly in an international university setting. By balancing traditional instruction with innovate teaching techniques and technology, faculty leaders may foster inclusivity and create better learning opportunities for diverse students.

These dimensions highlight the need for a more comprehensive approach to academic diversity, one that goes beyond traditional DEI categories and recognizes the unique contributions of diverse academic backgrounds. In an international university, the focus on diversity and inclusivity is set by the university's mission and values, and is primarily shaped by the university leadership and administration. The values of the university are embedded in specific programs, events and trainings – from new faculty orientation to professional development workshops and professional learning communities – that educate and enlighten the educators to the academic diversity goals. In this setting, the Faculty Senate, on the one hand, represents the voices of diverse university community, and on the other – initiates actions on promoting ideas and methodologies supportive of diversity and inclusivity. Thus, the faculty Seante initiatives transform into more inclusive teaching behaviors and faculty's classroom leadership towards cultivating value-in-diversity mindset in their students. Adapting their teaching strategies to accommodate diverse learners, faculty leaders role model inclusive behaviors for their students – future business leaders who will engage with multicultural workforce and clientele.

Implications for Business Communication

The principles of academic diversity offer valuable lessons for business communication. In both contexts, effective communication requires an understanding of cultural, educational, and experiential differences (Cho, Mor Barak, 2008). Businesses, like universities, operate in increasingly global environments where diverse perspectives may only be valuable if all the team members feel included (Shore et al., 2011). Without inclusivity, diversity my wors as an adverse factor (Riordan, 2014). While diversity is a fact, inclusivity needs a deliberate leadership effort (Ashikali et al., 2021). The ability to navigate the differences with sensitivity and adaptability is a hallmark of effective leadership, an art and habit that the students need to develop while preparing for their careers at the university.

In particular, the diversity of communication styles, learning preferences, and problem-solving approaches in an academic setting mirrors the diversity found in business environments. Leaders in both fields must foster an inclusive atmosphere that encourages open dialogue, collaboration, and mutual respect. The connection between academic diversity and business communication highlights the importance of faculty leadership in promoting inclusive practices that benefit all stakeholders.

Conclusion

As international universities become more interconnected, the need for a broader understanding of academic diversity is essential. Faculty leadership, particularly through initiatives like those led by the Faculty Senate DEI Committee, plays a critical role in unveiling new dimensions of diversity that extend beyond traditional categories. These insights have important implications for business communication, where leaders must similarly adapt to diverse cultural and educational backgrounds to achieve success.

In conclusion, academic diversity offers a valuable framework for understanding and improving communication in a globalized world. By fostering inclusive environments that recognize and celebrate diverse perspectives, both academic and business leaders can drive positive change and build stronger, more interconnected communities.

References

Altinkas, E. (2023). Displaced scholars as a contribution to academic diversity. *International Journal of Middle East Studies, 55(3),* 544–547.

Ashikali, T., Groeneveld, S., & Kuipers, B.S. (2021). The role of inclusive leadership in supporting an inclusive climate in diverse public sector teams. *Review of Public Personnel Administration, 41,* 497–519.

Barnett, R. (2020). Leading with meaning: Why diversity, equity, and inclusion matters in U. S. higher education. *Perspectives in Education, 38(2),* 20–35. https://doi.org/10.18820/2519593X/pie.v38.i2.02

Cho, S., & Mor Barak M. E. (2008). Understanding of diversity and inclusion in a perceived homogeneous culture: A study of organizational commitment and job performance among Korean employees. *Administration in Social Work, 32(4),* 100–126. https://doi.org/10.1080/03643100802293865

ELM Learning. (n.d.). *Expanding the definition of diversity: Why it matters*. https://elmlearning.com/blog/expand-definition-of-diversity/

Gonzales, L. D., Hall, K., Benton, A., Kanhai, D., & Núñez, A. M. (2021). Comfort over change: A case study of diversity and inclusivity efforts in US higher education. *Innovative Higher Education, 46,* 445–460.

Johnson, A. K. (2022). Portraits of leadership in higher education: Directors of centers for teaching and learning leadership styles and DEI practices at four-year universities in the U.S. *Digital Commons @ ACU, Electronic Theses and Dissertations.* Paper 502. https://digitalcommons.acu.edu/etd/502

Jørgensen, M. T., & Brogaard, L. (2021). Using differentiated teaching to address academic diversity in higher education: Empirical evidence from two cases. *Learning and Teaching, 14(2)*, 87–110.

Marchiondo, L. A., Verney, S. P., & Venner, K. L. (2023). Academic leaders' diversity attitudes: Their role in predicting faculty support for institutional diversity. *Journal of Diversity in Higher Education, 16*(3), 323–332. https://doi.org/10.1037/dhe0000333

Riordan, C. M. (June 5, 2014). Diversity is useless without inclusivity. *Harvard Business Review.* https://ncwwi.org/files/Org_Environment/Diversity_Is_Useless_Without_Inclusivity_-_HBR.pdf

Shore, L., Randel, A., Chung, B., Dean, M., Ehrhart, K. & Singh, G. (2011). Inclusion and diversity in work groups: A review and model for future research. *Journal of Management, 37.* DOI: 10.1177/0149206310385943

Tzovara, A., Amarreh, I., Borghesani, V., Chakravarty, M. M., DuPre, E., Grefkes, C., & Badhwar, A. (2021). *Embracing diversity and inclusivity in an academic setting: Insights from the Organization for Human Brain Mapping*. Neuroimage, 229.

UNESCO Institute for Statistics. (2020). *Global flow of tertiary-level students*. http://uis.unesco.org/en/uis-student-flow

Utopian Aspirations, Dystopian Realities: Women in Corporate Communication

Medha Bakhshi
Indian Institute of Management Lucknow

Papiya De
School of Business Management, NMIMS, Mumbai

The communications and public relations (PR) industry stands as a notable outlier among industries, characterized by a predominance of female professionals, as evidenced by numerous empirical studies indicating a female representation exceeding 70% (Janus, 2008; Shah, 2015). However, this demographic trend belies a disheartening reality: the persistence of gender imbalances within corporate boardrooms remains largely unchanged. Notwithstanding the slight uptick in gender parity observed in some boardrooms, as highlighted in the 2023 Global Women in Public Relations Report (2023), the broader statistics paint a less optimistic picture. A significant proportion of female communications and PR practitioners find themselves operating within corporate environments where male dominance pervades the boardroom landscape. Metaphors like glass ceiling, glass cliff, glass wall, glass escalator, and labyrinth have often been used to remind women leaders that their access to coveted leadership roles is not as smooth as that of their male counterparts.

Considerable scholarly attention has been devoted to the status of women within the Communications and Public Relations (PR) industry since the 1980s, marked by seminal studies such as the Velvet Getto report. However, contemporary literature underscores persistent challenges characterized by two overarching themes: workplace discrimination and bias against women. A comprehensive review spanning the period from 2010 to 2019 reveals a persistent underrepresentation of women in leadership roles (Dubrowski et al., 2019; Fitch & Third, 2014; Iniesta Aleman et al., 2018; Place & Varderman Winter, 2018; Tench et al., 2017, Topić, 2020; Yeomans, 2013), with figures cited by scholars indicating proportions as high as 80%. The feminization of the PR and corporate communications profession has not eradicated entrenched stereotypes, perpetuated by societal perceptions and media portrayals (Lee et al, 2018). Conventional beliefs persist regarding the distribution of organizational power, attributing greater authority to men than women. A critical aspect in the scholarship of women and leadership is also the predominance of Western-origin research. Most of the research remains U.S.-centric, which is not surprising given that most of the public relations research on women generally gets produced by U.S.-based scholars (Topić et al., 2020). Recent work in other parts of the world include the EUPRERA project on "Women in Public Relations" that delves into leadership, lived experiences, and office culture, uncovering inequalities and barriers faced by women (Polic & Holy, 2020). But to regard women's experiences as similar around the world is misleading. It is therefore, imperative to add newer voices to the burgeoning literature in women's leadership from the underrepresented and peripheral parts of the world.

In this light, the present study makes an attempt to extend the scholarly investigation to understanding the challenges women face and the ways in which they enact leadership roles in the context of Indian, Corporate Communication and PR industry. We aim to understand how women leaders *perform* leadership by adopting, modifying, or rejecting forms of hegemonic femininity that interpellate their constructions of subjectivity. Judith Butler's (2004) performativity is used as a theoretical lens to understand how women articulate their gender. The paper employs a Foucauldian Discourse Analysis of interview texts with nine women in senior leadership positions in the corporate communication space to understand how they construct their subjectivities.

Research Question

How do women discursively construct their subjectivities as leaders in a field that's dominated by women but led by men in the Indian Communications industry?

Methodology

The data was collected online through semi-structured interviews conducted on zoom. The respondents were selected through purposive sampling technique with one of the authors approaching a select few senior women leaders in corporate communication space, who further provided referrals for women leaders they knew. The criterion was women in senior leadership positions in the corporate communication and PR space in India. The sampling strategy was to maximize the variety of participants' experience, from their diverse religious, ethnic, and organizational experience. The interviews were conducted between October 2023 and March 2024, with each interview lasting between 30 to 90 minutes. The interviews were conducted primarily in English language, but some respondents intermittently peppered Hindi, Bengali, and Punjabi expressions as well; this was not discouraged. Since discourses are constructed through language, we wanted the participants to freely use the expressions that best described their experiences and sentiments. The interviews were transcribed verbatim, but the analysis includes English translation wherever alternate languages were used.

The method of analysis used the Foucauldian framework of discourse analysis/FDA (Willig, 2008, 2014). The six steps of FDA, following Willig (2008, 2014) included: 1) discursive constructions; 2) Discourses; 3) Action Orientation; 4) Positionings; 5) Practice; 6) Subjectivities.

Findings

The analysis of the data on the experience of being a leader was contextualized in terms of how discourses produce certain identities while marginalizing others. The social constructivist approach surfaced the following subjectivities that women constituted:

SUBJECTIVITIES	BRIEF DESCRIPTION
The Good Girl	The one who is compliant.
The *Baaghi* Bitch	Rebellious streak while necessary to exert presence, earns women the moniker of the 'bitch.'
Brains (not bimbo) in the boardroom (not just a pretty face)	Prove to the world repeatedly why you have a seat at the table.

The Juggler	Cannot just be just a leader: there's always another role in the background. The mother, the wife, the daughter, the daughter-in-law, the teacher, the caretaker, the home maker.
The Fearless *Woman*	Have to be unafraid of consequences of not fitting in or conforming to the socially accepted norms of what constitutes a 'leader.' Always caught-up in the gender double-bind.

The study contributes in understanding the role critical discursive leadership plays in delineating the construction of femininity and its impact on the way women perform leadership.

References

Butler, J. (2004). *Undoing gender*. London: Routledge.

Dubrowski, M., McCorkindale, T., & Rickert, R. (2019). Mind the gap: Women's leadership in public relations. *KPMG and Institute for Public Relations*.

Fitch, K., & Third, A. (2014). Ex-Journos and promo girls: Feminization and professionalization in the Australian public relations industry. In *Gender and Public Relations: Critical Perspectives on Voice, Image and Identity* Edited by C. Daymon, C & K. Demetreious, 247–268. London: Routledge.

Global Women Public Relations Report. (2023). *Annual Index 2023,* https://globalwpr.com/annual-index/

Iniesta-Alemán, I., Marta-Lazo, C., & Ruiz-Del Olmo, F. J. (2018). La influencia del género en el management de la comunicación corporativa: Estudio de caso en Aragón (España). *Revista Prisma Social, 20*, 273–286.

Janus, J. M. (2008). *Gender roles, leadership and public relations.* University of Missouri-Columbia.

Lee, H., Place, K. R., & Smith, B. G. (2018). Revisiting gendered assumptions of practitioner power: An exploratory study examining the role of social media expertise. *Public Relations Review, 44*(2), 191–200.

Place, K. R., & Vardeman-Winter, J. (2018). Where are the women? An examination of research on women and leadership in public relations. *Public Relations Review, 44*(1), 165–173. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pubrev.2017.10.005

Polic, M., & Holy, M. (2020). Women in public relations in Croatia. *EUPRERA Report, 2*(2), 1–47.

Tench, R. (2017). One step forward, two steps back? An analysis of European PR practitioners' views on the position of women in the PR industry (2009-2015). *Current Politics and Economics of Europe, 28*(1).

Topić, M., Joäo Cunha, M., Reigstad, A., Jelen-Sanchez, A., & Moreno, A. (2020). Women in public relations (1982–2019). *Journal of Communication Management, 24*(4), 391–407.

Shah, A. (2015, Apr.). Why aren't there more female CEOs in PR? *The Holmes Report.* http://www.holmesreport.com/long-reads/article/why-aren't-theremore-female-ceos-in-pr

Yeomans, L. (2013). Gendered performance and identity work in PR consulting relationships: A UK perspective. In *Gender and Public Relations*, pp. 87–107. Routledge.

Willig, C. (2008). *Introducing qualitative research in psychology: Adventures in theory and method.* 2nd Ed. Berkshire, England: Mc Graw Hill.

Willig, C. (2014). Discourse and discourse analysis. In *The SAGE Handbook of Qualitative Data Analysis*, edited by Uwe Flick, 341–354. London: Sage Publications, Ltd.

How to Come Back from a Setback
Restoring or Maintaining Ethics After a Failure

Michael Walker
Jacksonville State University

Company setbacks happen. Period. It is possible for responsible and responsive companies to restore stakeholder's trust. This action-packed presentation will discuss effective communication techniques that can help companies navigate ethical setbacks.

Amidst the rapid pace of today's business environment, maintaining ethical practices has become a paramount challenge for companies. The ability to identify and address ethical issues is not just a matter of reputation, but a key factor in attracting and retaining talent and preserving customer loyalty. This proposal is a crucial step towards equipping participants with the necessary tools to restore ethics in their company through effective business communications.

The primary goal of this proposal is to provide participants with components of a comprehensive communication strategy that will help their companies rebuild trust when faced with an ethical setback. The plan focuses on internal communications, external communications, and crisis management. The methodology would include giving participants quantitative research, case studies, and best practices that demonstrate how ethics are restored. These include:

- A thorough analysis of the company's current communication practices.
- Identifying gaps and weaknesses.
- Developing a plan that aligns with the company's values and business goals.

The outcomes of this proposal would be significant for the participants and their companies. By restoring ethical practices and rebuilding trust among stakeholders, companies could improve their reputations and attract and retain talent. The proposal would also help participants and their companies avoid legal and regulatory issues that can arise from unethical practices. I am also planning for this to be an interactive session.

In conclusion, I plan to help participants learn how to restore ethics in a company using effective business communications, a critical issue that requires attention. The primary goal of this proposal is to help participants develop a comprehensive communication strategy to help their companies rebuild trust among their stakeholders. The methodology would involve thoroughly analyzing the company's current communication practices, identifying gaps and weaknesses, and developing a plan that aligns with the company's values and business goals. By restoring ethical practices and rebuilding trust among stakeholders, the company could improve its reputation and attract and retain talent.

In Good Faith: Ensuring the Reliability of AI-Generated Content

Slavica Kodish
Southeast Missouri State University

Reliable and truthful information is a necessary component of meaningful and ethical human relationships and organizing efforts. As the use of generative AI continues to increase, it is important to understand how generative AI creates content. A case study is used as an illustration of an issue that some users of generative AI have encountered and practical suggestions how to avoid the issue are provided.

Purpose and Goals

Generative AI has become a part of our personal and professional lives. Percentage of workers who currently use or plan to use generative AI is considerable – over 60% (Salesforce, 2023). It is expected that by 2025, 30% of messages from large organizations will be AI generated (Chew, 2023). Campo (2023) writes that AI will play a role in businesses and personal lives "in ways we haven't imagined" (para. 12). Lawton (n.d.) predicts that AI technology "could help write code, design new drugs, develop products, redesign business processes and transform supply chains" (para. 6). Before we proceed, an explanation of generative AI is warranted.

Generative AI is "a type of artificial intelligence technology that can produce various types of content, including text, imagery, audio and synthetic data." (Lawton, n.d., para. 1). According to Atkins (2023), generative AI "can develop new content based on data. . . . It does this by learning from a large dataset of existing content" (para. 6). AI-generated content – business proposals, academic papers, poems, lyrics, and other types of written work – are seemingly of high quality and even flawless. Over time, however, as generative AI continued to create more and more content, concerns began to arise. The seemingly perfect and flawless content is sometimes marred by mistakes and fabrications that are typically referred to as hallucinations.

According to IBM (2023), hallucination refers to the case when "a large language model (LLM)—often a generative AI chatbot or computer vision tool—perceives patterns or objects that are nonexistent or imperceptible to human observers, creating outputs that are nonsensical or altogether inaccurate" (para. 1). Alston (2023) writes: "ask any AI chatbot a question, and its answers are either amusing, helpful, or just plain *made up*" (para. 1). *Soatto (2024) writes that hallucinations refer to* "synthetic data that is different from, or factually inconsistent with, actual data, yet realistic" (para. 3). It is interesting to see how ChatGPT itself views hallucinations.

Halem et al. (2023), in their article on how healthcare professionals can mitigate the risks of hallucinations, include ChatGPT3.5's explanation of hallucinations. We learn that hallucinations take place when generative AI is tasked with completing an assignment that it has not been trained for and that sometimes it can create "content that seems plausible but is actually a blend of various learned elements, resulting in content that might not make sense or could even be surreal, dream-like, or fantastical" (Halem et al., 2023, para. 2). It is comforting to know that ChatGPT acknowledged the issue. It is also interesting what words ChatGPT used to describe the problematic content – "surreal," "dream-like," and "fantastical." Let us now focus on the case study that is at the center of this paper – the phantom legal cases.

Attorneys typically support the case they are presenting to the court by providing similar cases. Finding similar cases is no facile task because over the years, the case law and statutory material have grown tremendously, and sifting through the volumes of legal material requires both time and effort. In this particular case, attorneys representing a client in a personal injury case turned to ChatGPT for assistance. Per the news reports, ChatGPT provided six cases that the attorneys presented to the court in support of the plaintiff's case. The defendant's attorneys researched the six cases and found out that all six were fake. They then presented the evidence to the judge. The judge found that the attorneys for the plaintiff "acted in bad faith and made 'acts of conscious avoidance and false and misleading statements to the court' "(Merken, 2023, para. 3).

Attorneys for the plaintiff accepted responsibility for consulting ChatGPT, but they disagreed with the judge that they acted in bad faith. They believe that they acted in good faith (see Merken, 2023). It may well be that cases of generative AI's hallucinations are, indeed, instances of acting in good faith, while the outcomes seem to suggest otherwise.

The above case is only one of a number of instances of AI's hallucinations reported in the media. The case suggests that we need, first, to understand how generative AI works and what its limitations are.

Methodology

A method combining a case study and theoretical research was utilized in this paper. The case study served as an illustration of issues with generative AI, whereas theoretical research served to explain the manner in which generative AI creates content. The underlying philosophical foundation is based on the principles of veracity, truthfulness, and reliability that are necessary components of teamwork and collaboration.

Outcomes

The starting point for avoiding hallucinations is an understanding of how LLMs such as ChatGPT function. They are trained on data, and the quality of data has an impact on the output. Second, input prompts must be clear and specific. Third, an understanding of the purpose of LLMs is necessary. A professor of computer science and VP of Amazon Web Services explains that LLMs are typically used as a component of more complex systems and that "it's important to remember that generative models . . . surely can answer some questions correctly, but this is not what they are designed and trained for" (Soatto, 2024, para. 5).

References

Alston, E. (2023, September 5). What are AI hallucinations and how do you prevent them? *Zapler.* https://zapler.com/blog/ai-hallucinations/

Atkins, B. (2023, June 22). Generative AI: The next frontier for business innovation. *Forbes.* https://www.forbes.com/sites/betsyatkins/2023/06/22/generative-ai-the-next-frontier-for-business-innovation/?sh=1f05744e4d6d

Campo, J. (2023, May 17). With great AI comes great responsibility. *Forbes Agency Council.* https://www.forbes.com/sites/forbesagencycouncil/2023/05/17/with-great-ai-comes-great-responsibility/?sh=2ed2fbb0282f

Chew, D. (2023). Generative AI and ChatGPT in 2023. *Dialpad.* https://www.dialpad.com/blog/generative-ai-stats/

Halem, R., Simmons, B., & Thornton, J. E. (2023). A call to address AI "hallucinations" and how healthcare professionals can mitigate their risks. *Cureus, 15*(9). https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC10552880/

IBM. (2023). *What are AI hallucinations?* https://www.ibm.com/topics/ai-hallucinations

Lawton, G. (n.d.). What is generative AI? Everything you need to know. *Techtarget.* https://www.techtarget.com/searchenterpriseai/definition/generative-AI

Merken, S. (2023, June 26). New York lawyers sanctioned for using fake ChatGPT cases in legal brief. Reuters. https://www.reuters.com/legal/new-york-lawyers-sanctioned-using-fake-chatgpt-cases-legal-brief-2023-06-22/

Salesforce. (2023, September). *Top generative AI statistics for 2024.* https://www.salesforce.com/news/stories/generative-ai-statistics/#:~:text=Three%20out%20of%20five%20workers,AI%20and%20machine%2Dlearning%20models

Soatto, S. (2024, January 16). Generative AI models are built to hallucinate: The question is how to control them. *Inside AI News.* https://insidebigdata.com/2024/01/16/generative-ai-models-are-built-to-hallucinate-the-question-is-how-to-control-them/

Revisiting the Ethics of Document Design in Business Communication: A Comparative Analysis 25 Years Later

Leslie Seawright, Missouri State University
Amy Hodges, University of Texas at Arlington
Timothy Ponce, University of Texas at Arlington

Sam Dragga's pivotal 1996 study, "Is This Ethical? A Survey of Opinions on Principles and Practices of Document Design," marked a significant step into understanding ethics within the field of technical and business communication. By evaluating responses to hypothetical scenarios related to document design, Dragga laid foundational groundwork for discourse about ethics in both workplaces and classrooms. In our study, we replicated Dragga's survey, comparing responses in 2023 to those from 1995 and introducing new scenarios reflecting modern concerns, such as multimedia and cultural diversity.

Purpose

The primary purpose of this study is to evaluate how perceptions of ethics in document design and business communication have evolved over the past quarter-century. We examine changes in ethics by comparing historical responses with those of present-day participants and by introducing two new scenarios that address current issues. The goal is to underscore shifts and pinpoint newly emerging ethical priorities in the field, as well as encourage a reevaluation of ethical practices and pedagogy.

Methodology

The survey presents six scenarios in which respondents must choose if the action in the scenario is "completely ethical, mostly ethical, ethics uncertain, mostly unethical, or completely unethical." Four scenarios were the same as the 1995 study, and two were developed by the research team to examine how participants' ethics were impacted by cultural diversity and multimedia in document design.
For example, the present study included this original scenario from the 1995 study:

You are preparing an annual report for the members of the American Wildlife Association. Included in the report is a pie chart displaying how contributions to the association are used. Each piece of the pie is labeled, and its percentage is displayed. In order to de-emphasize the piece of the pie labeled "Administrative Costs" you color this piece green because "cool" colors make things look smaller. In order to emphasize the piece of the pie labeled "Wildlife Conservation Activities" you color the piece red because "hot" colors make things look larger. Is this ethical?

Respondents would select whether they believed the design choice was ethical or not, using the scale above, and then justify their response in one to two sentences. Researchers analyzed each of these qualitative responses and coded them using Dragga's original codes. Researchers distributed the survey to both industry and academics through social media, LinkedIn, email, and physical cards with a QR code. Nearly 200 responses were received, analyzed, and recorded for this study.

Outcomes

Preliminary findings indicate notable differences between past and present ethical perspectives. While "common practice" was a significant factor in ethical judgments 25 years ago, current respondents emphasized "consequences" and "writer's intentions" as primary considerations for their ethical choice. This shift suggests a broader ethical awareness that extends beyond adherence to established norms, reflecting a more consequence-oriented and intention-aware approach to ethical decision-making in document design.

Responses to the new scenarios reveal a growing concern among technical and business communicators regarding issues of social justice, cultural sensitivity, and accessibility. These findings align with the broader trend towards integrating ethical considerations with social responsibility, as seen in the works of scholars advocating for a foundational approach to ethics in technical and business communication (Costanza-Chock, 2020; Jones et al., 2016; Walton et al., 2019).

Conclusion

The evolution of ethical perspectives in technical and business communication, particularly in the realm of document design, underscores the field's responsiveness to societal changes and emerging global challenges. This study not only highlights shifts in ethical considerations but also encourages a continuous dialogue on creating and updating ethical standards in business communication practices and pedagogy. By revisiting the ethics of document design through the lens of both historical and contemporary concerns, this research contributes to a deeper understanding of the ethical imperatives guiding the field today and into the future.

This conference presentation will delve into these findings, offering insights into the changing landscape of ethics in business communication and proposing directions for future research and practice in ethical document design.

References

Costanza-Chock, S. (2020). *Design justice: Community-led practices to build the worlds we need*. The MIT Press.

Dragga, S. (1996). "Is this ethical?" A survey of opinion on principles and practices of document design. *Technical Communication*, 43(3), 255–265.

Jones, N. N., Moore, K. R., & Walton, R. (2016). Disrupting the past to disrupt the future: An antenarrative of technical communication. *Technical Communication Quarterly*, *25*(4), 211–229. https://doi.org/10.1080/10572252.2016.1224655

Walton, R. W., Moore, K. R., & Jones, N. N. (2019). *Technical communication after the social justice turn: Building coalitions for action* (First edition). Routledge.

AI in BCOM: Exploring the Early Reactions of Business Communication Faculty

Carol Wright
Stephen F. Austin State University

Kayla Sapkota
Arkansas State University at Beebe

The rollout of ChatGPT in November 2022 has created much discussion about the use of artificial intelligence (AI) in the business communication curriculum. Our students need the ability to effectively use the latest technologies, and educators should be proficient in the value and use of new technologies to integrate them in the curriculum.

The U.S. Office of Educational Technology defines "creating a culture and conditions for innovation and change" as a priority for the country's educational leaders, defining technology as a key to transformative learning (2023). AI and other new technologies will continue to play an important role in this transformative learning process. Equipping educators with the necessary tools and training to succeed will have a cascading positive impact on the workforce of tomorrow. Cardon, et. al (2023) called for business communication instructors to promote AI literacy in the curriculum.

Joglekar et. al. (2022) identified a clear shift of businesses to digital communication, necessitating the need for business communication instructors to update their courses to prepare students for the workforce. This shift in preparing students was highlighted by Explorance (2023) and urged educators to expose students to common tools and skillsets in today's workplace. Cardon et. al (2023) reminded educators that students already use such tools, so they should aid students in extending this technological usage from personal to professional scenarios.

The current emerging technology focus in higher education is on AI. Bieger and Kolmar (2023) believed that if higher education is to prepare students for the real world, higher education must teach AI in the curriculum. Likewise, Getchell et. al (2022) advocated that business communication instructors should educate students about the proper use of AI to prepare students for their future careers, and students need to understand how AI can be a tool to accomplish tasks. McMurtrie (2023) acknowledged that the impact of AI on learning is unclear, but the technology should be presented to students to show how it can be used effectively and what its limitations are. Grassini (2023) warned that "students without training in AI tools could find themselves at a competitive disadvantage in the job market compared to their peers with extensive exposure and practical experience" (p. 9).

A "revolution" in the business communication curriculum may be on the horizon, necessitating course revision. McMurtrie (2023) stated that "poorly designed writing courses in which generic prose is considered passable" (para. 32) could become obsolete, forcing business writing instructors to rethink how they approach their courses. At the same time, instructors can harness extensive amounts of online information to find real-world examples for students by using AI (Grassini, 2023).

Educators have played an important role in technology proficiency by infusing concepts into instruction and activities, as well as encouraging critical thinking and problem solving, both of which are foundationally valuable to effective and innovative technology use in the workplace. By taking an early, leading role in adopting and promoting technology, educators are uniquely positioned to graduate students with the digital literacy necessary to succeed.

The purpose of this study is to address the perceptions of business communication faculty shortly after the release of ChatGPT and to address ways to help others find a place for AI in the curriculum. It answers the following research questions.

- How did business communication instructors view AI?
- What use will AI have in the business context?
- What are the opportunities of AI in relation to the business education curriculum?

Using the online survey tool Qualtrics, ABC members were sent an email request to complete the survey. A total of 156 surveys were started and used for this presentation. Respondents have been teaching business communication for a variety of years: less than 5 years (14.52%), between 5-10 years (30.65%), between 11-15 years (20.97%), and more than 15 years (33.87%). Regarding the use of technology, respondents report using it less than 10% of the class (10.92%), between 10-24% (33.61%), between 25-49% (32.77%), and more than 50% (22.69%).

A self-evaluation of proficiency indicates respondents are "curious users" who will try new technology after some research (52.5%), and 30% consider themselves early adopters who are often the first to try new tools. Most respondents (63.37%) consider themselves a "techie."

To address each of the research questions, a textual analysis will be used to identify trends among responses. This full analysis will be presented at the Association for Business International Conference in Tulsa, OK, in October 2024.

References

Aldunate, R., & Nussbaum, M. (2013). Teacher adoption of technology. *Computers in Human Behavior, 29*(3), 519–524. https://doi-org.libproxy.library.unt.edu/10.1016/j.chb.2012.10.017

Bieger, T., & Kolmar, M. (2023, May 29). Examining, teaching, and learning in the age of generative AI: A first assessment of the consequences for higher education. *Global Focus: The EFMD Business Magazine, 17*(2), 22–27.

Cardon, P., Fleischmann, C., Aritz, J., Logemann, M., & Heidewald, J. (2023). The challenges and opportunities of AI-assisted writing: Developing AI literacy for the AI age. *Business and Professional Communication Quarterly, 86*(3) 257–295. https://doi.org/10.1177/23294906221074311

Explorance. (2023). 7 reasons why students need technology in the classroom. *Explorance, Inc.* https://explorance.com/blog/7-reasons-students-need-technology-classroom/#:~:text=Access%20to%20information%20and%20resources,be%20available%20in%20traditional%20textbooks

Getchell, K. M., Carradini, S., Cardon, P. W., Fleischmann, C., Ma, H., Aritz, J., & Stapp, J. (2022). Artificial intelligence in business communication: The changing landscape of research and teaching. *Business and Professional Communication Quarterly, 85*(1), 7–33. https://doi.org/10.1177/23294906221074311

Grassini, S. (2023). Shaping the future of education: Exploring the potential and consequences of AI and ChatGPT in educational settings. *Education Sciences, 13*(7), 692. https://doi.org/10.3390/edusci13070692

Haleem, A., Javaid, M., Qadri, M. A., & Suman, R. (2022). Understanding the role of digital technologies in education: A review. *Sustainable Operations and Computers, 3*(2022), 275–285. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.susoc.2022.05.004

Joglekar, Y., Purdy, D., Brock, S., Tandon, A., & Dong, A. (2022). Developing digital communication competency in the business classroom. Research and teaching. *Business and Professional Communication Quarterly, 85*(2), 141–168. https://doi.org/10.1177/23294906221074311

McGovern, E., Moreira, G., Luna-Nevarez, C. (2019). An application of virtual reality in education: Can this technology enhance the quality of students' learning experience? *Journal of Education for Business, 95*(7), 490–496. doi: https://doi.org/10.1080/08832323.2019.1703096

McMurtrie, B. (2023, September 8). What will determine AI's impact on college teaching? 5 signs to watch. *The Chronicle of Higher Education*. https://www.chronicle.com/article/what-will-determine-ais-impact-on-college-teaching-5-signs-to-watch

Office of Educational Technology. (2023). Leadership: Section 3 – Creating a culture and conditions for innovation and change. *Department of Education.* https://tech.ed.gov/netp/leadership/

Rospigliosi, P. (2022). Metaverse or simulacra? Roblox, Minecraft, Meta and the turn to virtual reality for education, socialisation and work. *Interactive Learning Environments, 30*(1), 1–3.

Sapkota, K. N., & Vander Putten, J. (2018). Social media acceptance and usage by business communication faculty. *Business and Professional Communication Quarterly, 81*(3), 328–350. https://doi.org/10.1177/2329490618777818

Authorship Attribution in the Era of AI

Mina Richards
California State University Los Angeles

Emphasizing machine over human creativity overlooks valuable contributions and diminishes the importance of collective achievement. Human creativity has been a tradition to identify human contributions to art, music, and literature. Millet et al. (2023) conducted four studies to prove that human-made art is still preferred, concluding that stronger creativity beliefs dominate. As AI tools proliferate everywhere, many articles promote the efficiency and advantages of using GenAI for writing. While some people observe those advantages, others show emotions that AI threatens human creativity as the belief and fundamental attribute of humanity. This study demonstrates that personal emotions and consciousness of self-authorship have a limited impact on the adoption of GenAI for writing. Its findings suggest that challenging human creativity in business writing is less significant than in the art and music domains.

AI, as a competitor of human creativity, is a powerful indicator of the cultural evolution and shift brought about by AI (Oksanen et al., 2023). To understand social change, Millet et al. (2023) introduced anthropocentrism with a lens to consider human creativity as a significant entity in the center of the world. Although creativity beliefs are more prominent in art, creativity in writing also causes similar reactions in business writing using GenAI. By showing human tendencies and reactions to AI, modern technology shapes attitudes and perceptions about AI and its impact on society (Kobis et al., 2021; Oksanen et al., 2023).

While creative work typically inspires authors to be sole originators and fosters self-pride, this sentiment can be challenged when authors encounter feelings of shame associated with using AI tools. Millet et al. (2023) discussed that anthropocentric attitudes toward AI-made artifacts are perceived less creative than human-made ones while showing a lesser emotional response. Conversely, Oksanen et al. (2023) compiled 44 studies on AI responses, and some participants could not distinguish between AI and human-made art and music. Pentina et al. (2023) reviewed several studies, noting that humans cannot attribute traits and emotions to AI, hindering the relationship between humans and AI.
The study described in this paper was a straightforward experiment involving 25 Business Communication students. The objective was to determine which of two "welcome letters for new employees" was written by a human or AI, and which letter was more engaging. One letter utilized GenAI, while the other was a student submission from a prior session. The participants were allocated five minutes to discern the letter's origination and determine which letter had the most captivating content. They provided their selection in one or two sentences. Consistent with Oksanen et al. (2023) that people do not immediately recognize human versus AI-made art, only 55% of the students correctly identified the human-written letter; however, 70% found the AI letter more enticing at first glance. Students had a second chance to review the letters and examine the content, but the experiment only allowed for one read.

This study draws attention to challenges for employees and organizations using GenAI for communication. Notably, recipients demonstrated reduced emphasis on authorship and maintained a positive response (Fortuna et al., 2023) even if humans sign documents. Consequently, these findings narrow the distinction between self-creativity and authorship pride. In contrast to evaluations of art and music, it was noted that GenAI is constantly improving to emulate human writing styles, augmenting its credibility within the business community. The presented study holds significance in laying the groundwork for future investigations into GenAI and authorship. Analysis of sample letters suggests the potential for further exploration into additional document genres, particularly those requiring greater personalization and in search of human authorship.

References

Fortuna, P., Łysiak, M., Chumak, M., & McNeill, M. (2023). Barriers of human and nonhuman agents' integration in positive hybrid systems: The relationship between anthropocentrism, artificial intelligence anxiety, and attitudes towards humanoid robots. *Journal for Perspectives of Economic, Political, and Social Integration*, *28*(2), 121–149.

Köbis, N., Bonnefon, JF. & Rahwan, I. (2021). Bad machines corrupt good morals. *Nature Human Behaviour 5*, 679–685.

Millet, K., Buehler, F., Du, G., & Kokkoris, M. D. (2023). Defending humankind: Anthropocentric bias in the appreciation of AI art. *Computers in Human Behavior*, *143*, 107707.

Pentina, I., Xie, T., Hancock, T., & Bailey, A. (2023). Consumer–machine relationships in the age of artificial intelligence: Systematic literature review and research directions. *Psychology & Marketing*, *40*(8), 1593–1614.

Oksanen, A., Cvetkovic, A., Akin, N., Latikka, R., Bergdahl, J., Chen, Y., & Savela, N. (2023). Artificial intelligence in fine arts: A systematic review of empirical research. *Computers in Human Behavior: Artificial Humans*, *1*(2), 100004.

Comparative Analysis of Generative AI Perceptions and Usage Among American and Finnish Business School Students: A Cross-Cultural Perspective

Victoria McCrady, The University of Texas at Dallas
Mari Rytisalo, Tampere University of Applied Sciences
Leslie Seawright, Missouri State University

Introduction

In 2024, professors Victoria McCrady, Leslie Seawright, and Mari Rytisalo, members of the Association for Business Communication (ABC)—set out to compare the perceptions and usage of generative AI between American and Finnish business students. The goal was to explore how students from these two countries interact with AI tools in both academic and business contexts. However, this comparison quickly faced several challenges, including the overwhelming increase in AI-related research and the significant differences in access to AI tools between American and Finnish students.

As the professors began shaping the study, the surge of generative AI research from 2022 to 2024 required continuous background research to avoid redundancy and ensure the approach remained unique. New large-scale surveys and reports from consulting companies, government organizations, NGOs, and academia emerged at every stage of question development, complicating efforts to craft meaningful and relevant questions. This research explosion posed the risk of making the work seem irrelevant in a crowded landscape.

Additionally, Mari Rytisalo, the Finnish colleague, highlighted a key concern: the lack of robust Finnish-language AI tools, which limits Finnish students' access to generative AI compared to their American counterparts, who have easy access to English-based AI. The Stanford AI Index Report (March 2023) confirms this disparity, reflecting uneven investment between languages with smaller populations—such as Finnish, with six million native speakers—and those with larger global audiences. Moreover, creating “large generative models for a small [in terms of available training material] language” presents unique challenges, further delaying the development of open-source solutions (Luukkonen et al., 2023, p. 1). This disparity raised the risk of misinterpreting Finnish students' lower engagement or negative perceptions of AI, not due to their attitudes toward the technology but due to limited access.

This led the professors to confront key issues:

1. What questions are most relevant when comparing students from different cultural and linguistic backgrounds?

2. How can researchers account for AI access disparities to ensure our findings reflect real attitudes rather than technical limitations?

3. With new AI tools and services (such as AI-powered job application platforms) emerging daily, how can researchers capture changing student perceptions as these technologies and access evolve across different cultures?

These challenges underscored the need for thorough and ongoing background research to shape the study's focus. Each stage required the refinement of survey questions to account for new developments in AI, access limitations, and cultural differences. The researchers wanted a survey that was not unnecessarily long, could be approved by three institutional review boards, and could run for multiple years. Moving forward, the study will need to carefully compare AI perceptions and usage while factoring in access issues, ultimately providing a more accurate and nuanced understanding of AI's role in students' academic and professional lives.

Background

The value of a comparative survey of perceptions and use is dependent on considerations of access and how that survey complements the wider field of international surveys and research.

AI Model Access. Before looking at surveys, consider the timelines of access. In November 2022, the English-language model of ChatGPT became widely available to the public, marking the start of a race to deliver GPTs commercially. In December 2022, You.com's YouChat offered integrated AI search functionalities with conversational capabilities. By March 2023, Google's DeepMind released Bard, which evolved into Gemini in December 2023. Around the same period, Anthropic launched Claude in March 2023, focusing on safe conversational AI, and OpenAI followed with GPT-4 in March 2023, significantly improving multimodal capabilities.

What was access like worldwide in 2023? The Stanford AI Index Report (March 2023) uses aggregated data from multiple global sources to offer key insights into the macro-level trends of AI adoption across various sectors. One takeaway is that "the United States leads China, the EU, and the U.K. as the leading source of top AI models. In 2023, 61 notable AI models originated from U.S.-based institutions, far outpacing the European Union's 21 and China's 15." This indicated the first key issue with AI model usage and attitudes – that access is defined by language.

In contrast to U.S. development, Finnish language model development in 2023 centered on the FinGPT project, with Turku University serving as a key player alongside industry partner Silo AI. Together, they introduced GPT-3-based models tailored to Finnish in December 2023 (Silo AI, 2024). The LUMI supercomputer was instrumental in this effort (HPCwire, 2023). While milestone updates followed in July 2024, challenges persist: "Creating large generative models for a small language is inherently difficult due to the scarcity of comprehensive datasets" (Luukkonen et al., 2023). This academic-industry collaboration highlights Finland's research-focused AI development, differing from the U.S.'s more commercial approach.

In 2024, English-language AI models benefit from cloud-native architectures like Kubernetes, an open-source platform designed to automate the deployment, scaling, and management of containerized applications. Initially developed by Google and now maintained by the Cloud Native Computing Foundation (CNCF), Kubernetes enables organizations to efficiently run workloads in cloud-native environments. It serves as a cornerstone for hosting AI models by streamlining infrastructure, making it ideal for applications that require high scalability and fast deployment cycles.

In 2024, the FinGPT project offers eight Finnish-language generative models in various sizes, from 186M to 13B parameters, plus BLUUMI (a 176B multilingual BLOOM model with Finnish tuning) (TurkuNLP, 2024; Luukkonen et al., 2023). While these models enhance AI accessibility for Finnish users and leverage LUMI (as well as cloud-based architecture), they are limited compared to the vast number of English-language models, such as OpenAI's GPT series and Google's Bard, which benefit from abundant datasets and faster development cycles. This disparity underscores the challenges smaller languages face due to data scarcity.

Surveys. A series of foundational surveys between 2022 and 2024 laid the groundwork for understanding cross-cultural AI use among Finnish and American students. Early surveys primarily focused on trust, regulation, and innovation concerns related to AI. As research progressed, the focus shifted to how AI is being integrated into business, education, and society, setting the stage for the cross-cultural comparisons that will be key in studying the experiences of Finnish and American students.

The Edelman AI Trust Barometer (February 2022), which surveyed over 36,000 participants across 28 countries, revealed early concerns about trust, transparency, and bias in AI applications. This focus on public trust and ethics reflected the initial anxieties surrounding AI's growing role in both personal and professional settings.

As AI became more embedded in business operations, the Accenture Technology Vision Survey (April 2023) and the World Economic Forum's Future of Jobs Report (May 2023) marked a pivotal shift in research focus. Accenture surveyed 6,000 business and IT leaders across 25 industries, highlighting AI's role in driving innovation. Similarly, the World Economic Forum's survey of 800 companies focused on AI's influence on workforce dynamics, including job displacement and the need for reskilling. These reports showed how AI had moved beyond theoretical concerns to practical implementation, shaping businesses and job markets.

The rise of AI in education became a crucial topic with the UNESCO global survey (June 2023), which collected data from over 450 schools and universities worldwide. This survey revealed that fewer than 10% of institutions had developed formal guidance for using generative AI, highlighting the lack of preparedness in academic settings. These findings are crucial for understanding how AI policies in education have lagged behind business adoption, providing context for Finnish and American students' unique challenges when integrating AI into their learning processes.

Simultaneously, the World Economic Forum's Global AI Survey (July 2023), which surveyed 19,504 adults across 28 countries, and the Oliver Wyman Forum Generative AI Survey (January 2024), which surveyed 12,160 respondents, shifted focus to AI's societal impact. These studies examined AI's broader implications, from productivity improvements to concerns about privacy and accuracy. The IBM C-Suite Study (June 2023) surveyed 3,000 CEOs from over 30 countries, while McKinsey (July 2024) and KPMG (August 2024) surveyed 876 business professionals and 225 senior leaders, respectively. These studies consistently revealed concerns about AI's influence on decision-making, business strategies, and privacy risks.

As AI research expanded, cross-cultural studies revealed how geographical and cultural factors shape AI adoption. A survey of 1,217 participants across 76 countries, published in the International Journal of Educational Technology in Higher Education (March 2024), found that cultural factors significantly shaped AI adoption. Access to AI tools, privacy concerns, and the need for ethical guidelines are, the article concluded, all influence perceptions of generative AI, aligning with global concerns about AI adoption.

Educational adaptation often lags behind technological advancements, making it essential to understand student perceptions of generative AI. In March 2024, UC Davis released a survey of 1,361 students that assessed their perceptions of generative AI, focusing on its role in both academic and personal contexts. Similarly, the Inside Higher Ed Student Voice Survey, conducted in May 2024 with Generation Lab, included 5,025 students—over 3,500 from four-year institutions and about 1,400 from two-year colleges. This survey found that only 16% of students understood generative AI policies. It also revealed that marginalized students, particularly those from two-year institutions, had lower confidence in using AI. The Oregon State eCampus survey, published in September 2024, involved 669 students and focused on their perceptions, skepticism, and experiences with generative AI tools like ChatGPT in online learning environments. Across all three surveys, findings indicated mixed emotions and practical concerns regarding job displacement and the use of AI for educational purposes, with students particularly worried about inconsistent course policies, misinformation, and a potentially negative impact on learning quality.

Returning to the Edelman Trust Barometers for 2023 and 2024, we see a growing erosion of public trust in AI technologies, driven by concerns about privacy, misinformation, and societal impact. Trust in AI companies dropped globally from 62% in 2019 to 54% in 2024, reflecting a shift from trust to neutrality (Edelman, 2024). In the U.S., this decline was even more pronounced, with trust levels falling from 50% to 35% over the same period (Edelman, 2024). This downward trend highlights the increasing skepticism surrounding the management of AI innovations, a continuation of the anxieties first captured in the 2022 Barometer, where trust, transparency, and bias were central concerns. The reports emphasize the need for better regulation, transparency, and ethical practices to rebuild public confidence in AI's potential (Edelman, 2023, 2024).

This paper outlines background research and methodology for our survey, highlighting where our questions align with common themes from previous surveys and where they diverge to address under-explored areas. It serves as a foundation for our study, guiding our exploration of the most frequently asked – and unasked – questions about AI use and perceptions to create a useful and complementary addition to the field.

Survey Name	Month and Year	Number Surveyed	Who Was Surveyed	Focus of the Survey
2022 Edelman Trust Barometer	Feb-22	36,000+	General public	Trust, transparency, and bias in AI
2023 Edelman Trust Barometer	Jan-23	32,000+	General public	Trust, transparency, and bias in AI
Stanford AI Index Report	Mar-23	Multiple sources	Multiple sources	Global AI trends and adoption
Accenture Technology Vision Survey	Apr-23	6,000	Business and IT leaders	AI in business innovation and technology
World Economic Forum Future of Jobs Report	May-23	800 companies	Business executives	AI's impact on jobs

IBM C-Suite Study	Jun-23	3,000	CEOs	AI and decision-making
UNESCO Global Survey on AI in Education	Jun-23	450 institutions	Schools and universities	AI use in education
World Economic Forum Global AI Survey	Jul-23	19,504	General public	AI adoption globally
2024 Edelman Trust Barometer	Jan-24	32,000+	General public	Trust, transparency, and bias in AI
Oliver Wyman Forum Generative AI Survey	Jan-24	12,160	General public	Generative AI in society
Oregon State Ecampus AI Usage and Trust Survey	Jan-24	669	College students	AI use and trust in educational settings
UC Davis Generative AI Student Survey	Mar-24	1,361	College students	Student perceptions of AI in education
Northeastern University Student Survey on Generative AI	Mar-24	679	College students	Use of generative AI in enhancing learning and research, and ethical concerns
Deloitte 2024 Global Workforce Management Survey	Apr-24	12,160	Various respondents	Governance, technology, analytics, and operational strategies
Inside Higher Ed Student Voice Survey	May-24	5,025	College students	AI in education, ethics, and career readiness
PwC Cloud and AI Business Survey	Jul-24	1,030	Business executives	Cloud and AI business adoption
McKinsey Generative AI and Workforce Dynamics Survey	Jul-24	876	Business professionals	Generative AI and workforce impacts
KPMG GenAI Survey 2024	Aug-24	225	Business leaders	Data privacy and security risks in AI
Korn Ferry Workforce 2024 Report	Oct-24	10,000	Business professionals	AI trends and workforce
Protiviti & IIA Global Technology Audit Risks Survey	Oct-24	Not reported	IT audit leaders	Cybersecurity and AI risks

Commonly Asked Questions in Surveys

Across these surveys, several common themes and questions emerged regarding AI usage.

1. Frequency of AI Use: One of the most frequently asked questions concerns how often students or business professionals use AI tools in their academic or work-related tasks. For instance, the Oregon State Ecampus survey asked students how frequently students used AI in their courses, revealing that many were hesitant due to a lack of trust in the technology's accuracy (January 2024).

2. Context of Use: Surveys from Harvard (June 2024) and McKinsey (July 2024) frequently questioned how AI tools were applied in specific contexts—whether for market research, content generation, or writing assistance – and perceptions of efficiency.

3. Perceptions of Accuracy and Trust: Both students and business professionals were consistently asked about AI's accuracy and trustworthiness. For example, Deloitte's survey (April 2024) found that nearly 72% of organizations report increased trust in AI technologies, but only 36% of businesses actively measure employee trust in AI.

The IBM C-Suite Study (June 2023), which surveyed 3,000 CEOs from over 30 countries, revealed widespread leadership concerns about data privacy, bias, and security in AI-generated outputs, despite growing interest in using AI for strategic decision-making. Similarly, academic surveys like UC Davis's Generative AI Student Survey (March 2024) explored how students perceived the trustworthiness of AI-generated academic content (UC Davis, 2024).

4. Ethical Concerns and Academic Integrity: Several recent surveys addressed ethical concerns surrounding AI usage, particularly in academia. The UC Davis Generative AI Student Survey (March 2024) concluded that while many students valued AI as a tool for organizing and enhancing their learning, students frequently indicated concerns about its accuracy and potential misuse. The Inside Higher Ed Student Voice 2024 survey (May 2024) concluded that many students are unclear about the acceptable use of AI tools, with concerns about both its potential for misuse and its growing role in career readiness.

In the business world, recent surveys include questions about perceptions of data privacy and intellectual property risks (KPMG 2024). Surveys by Protiviti and Deloitte have examined business leaders' concerns about data privacy and intellectual property risks related to AI. The Protiviti-IIA Global Technology Audit Risks Survey (October 2024) found that 68% of IT audit leaders see AI, particularly as it relates to cybersecurity and data privacy, as a significant risk over the next two to three years. Business leaders expressed heightened concerns about sensitive data being fed into generative AI models, which could lead to compliance risks and data breaches if not properly managed. Similarly, Deloitte's survey found that 74% of business leaders ranked data privacy as a top concern when deploying AI technologies.

5. Risk: The PwC Cloud and AI Business Survey (2024) surveyed 1,030 executives in the United States, with 308 in business roles and 722 in technology roles, across various industries, including technology, finance, and healthcare. This survey explored how businesses are adopting AI and addressing related risks such as data privacy and the use of AI in cloud environments.

Omitted or Rarely Asked Questions

Despite the depth of insights gathered in these surveys, several important questions were either omitted or rarely asked, especially in areas where a more nuanced understanding of AI's role could be beneficial.

1. Long-Term Cognitive Impact of AI on Learning and Decision-Making: One significant gap in the surveys was a lack of questions exploring the long-term cognitive impact of AI on students' critical thinking and problem-solving abilities. Obviously, these models are new. However, establishing a baseline or incremental change could be an area of potential future research. It would require a more intense study and perhaps involve subject compensation for the multiple-session obligation. As has been noted by several researchers, while current surveys address students' frequent use of AI, they rarely examine whether prolonged reliance on AI tools might negatively affect their ability to think independently, a critical issue for both academic success and business decision-making (UC Davis, 2024; Oregon State Ecampus, 2024).

2. Effective Prompting Strategies: Most surveys focus heavily on the outputs of AI tools but do not delve deeply into how users can refine their prompting strategies to generate more accurate and relevant results. Questions such as "How do you modify your prompts to improve AI output?" could give insight into whether users truly understand how to optimize AI tools. While some students reported refining prompts, few surveys actively explored this skill.

3. Understanding of the AI Data Set: Another rarely asked but crucial question relates to the users' understanding of the data sets powering generative AI tools. Most surveys asked users whether they trusted AI outputs but rarely inquired about how well users understood where AI gets its information. Such a question is essential in both academic and business settings. Understanding the source of AI data can significantly impact how much trust users place in AI-generated content (UC Davis, 2024).

4. Cross-Cultural Differences in AI Usage: While many surveys were conducted globally, few addressed the cross-cultural differences in how students or business professionals use AI. For instance, in non-English-speaking countries like Finland, where Finnish-language LLMs are limited, it would be valuable to ask whether users rely on English-based AI models and whether this impacts their results. This set of questions is what we determined is critical for our own survey. Questions about language accessibility in AI usage were notably absent, even though such inquiries could highlight significant usability and accuracy issues across different linguistic and cultural contexts.

Complications

The first complication for this comparison is the disparity in access between English and Finnish generative AI models. The second complication is the sudden and growing popularity of auto-apply platforms like JobCopilot, AutoApply.Jobs, and Sonara (Toolify, 2024; Product Hunt, 2024). All are growing rapidly due to their ability to automate job applications at scale, reshaping job search strategies. These platforms allow users to apply to hundreds or even thousands of jobs per month with minimal manual input. The platforms tailor resumes and cover letters to each job based on uploaded information and then run in the background, applying as quickly as jobs matching a user’s criteria are posted. For example, JobCopilot lets users auto-apply to up to 50 jobs each day, for a potential 1,500 applications filed automatically per month (Veris Insights, 2024).

According to an October 2024 report from Korn Ferry, the use of AI tools by candidates is increasing rapidly, with two-thirds of Gen Z job seekers using AI at least weekly in their job searches. These services are expected to see further growth as AI tools become more sophisticated, with the global generative AI market predicted to exceed $1 trillion by 2028. Once the use of auto-apply AI platforms becomes normalized and accepted, students' attitudes towards business documents like resumes and cover letters (but perhaps not other documents) will inevitably change. This needs to be anticipated in the survey design.

Proposed Survey Questions

These questions are designed for a comparative survey of American and Finnish business students, focusing on the frequency of AI use, perceptions of ethics, and trust in AI outputs. Some questions include branching logic and providing follow-up questions based on previous answers.

For the survey questions themselves, the researchers return to key issues:

1. What questions are most relevant when comparing students from different cultural and linguistic backgrounds?

   Note: Demographic and university information make cross-tabulations more valuable.

2. How can researchers account for AI access disparities to ensure findings reflect real attitudes rather than technical limitations?

   Target access and type of access via questions.

3. With new AI tools and services (such as AI-powered job application platforms) emerging daily, how can we capture changing student perceptions as these technologies and access evolve across different cultures?

   Update the survey when needed. Try to leave room for comparison to new technologies.

The survey is intended to collect demographic data for cross-tab comparisons while ensuring consistency in question types, particularly closed-ended and Likert scale formats. It will maintain core questions over time to facilitate longitudinal analysis of trends and perceptions related to AI usage.

Part of demographic data: "The Inside Higher Ed Student Voice Survey, conducted in May 2024 with Generation Lab, included 5,025 students—over 3,500 from four-year institutions and about 1,400 from two-year colleges. This survey found that only 16% of students understood generative AI policies. It also revealed that marginalized students, particularly those from two-year institutions, had lower confidence in using AI."

Section 1: Demographic Questions

1. Age: What is your age?
   [Under 18, 18-24, 25-34, 35-44, 45-54, 55-64, 65 and older]

2. Gender: What is your gender?
   [Male, Female, Non-binary, Prefer not to say, Other (please specify)]

3. Language: What languages do you speak?
   [Select All That Apply: Finnish, English, Other(s) - please explain]

4. Field of Study: What is your major or field of study?
   [Business Administration, Accounting, Marketing, Finance, Human Resources, Supply Chain Management, Information Technology, Healthcare Management, Other (please specify)]

5. Year of Study: What year of study are you currently in?
   [Freshman (1st year), Sophomore (2nd year), Junior (3rd year), Senior (4th year), Graduate student, Other (please specify)]

6. Work Experience: Do you currently work while studying?
   [Yes (part-time) Yes (full-time), No, Other - please explain]

7. First-Generation College Student: Are you the first person in your family to attend college?
   [Yes, No, Prefer not to say]

Section 2: Comparative Data

8. Which university do you attend?
   [The University of Texas at Dallas, Missouri State University, Tampere University, Other - please explain]

   BRANCH if Tampere University. Do you primarily use generative AI in another language or in English? [Finnish, English, Other (Please specify)]

   (BRANCH if Finnish) If you use Finnish AI tools (like Silo AI), do you find them more effective than English-language tools for your academic or business tasks? [Yes, Finnish tools are more effective; No, English tools are more effective; I use both equally]

   What tool(s) do you use? [text]

   How are the results different when you use Finnish AI tools and English AI tools? [Text]

   Is it important to further develop Finnish generative AI tools? [Yes, No, Other – please explain]

   Do you feel that your country's business culture encourages the use of AI tools for rapid decision-making, or is there more emphasis on critically analyzing AI-generated data? (More emphasis on rapid decision-making, More emphasis on critically analyzing data, Balanced approach)

   [BRANCH if The University of Texas at Dallas or Missouri State University] Do you primarily use generative AI in another language or English? [Another language, English]

(BRANCH if Another language) Do you find the tools you use in another language more effective than English-language tools for your academic or business tasks? [Yes, the tools in the other language are more effective; No, English tools are more effective; I use both equally; Other - please explain]

What is the language of your favorite tool? [text]

What tool(s) do you use? [text]

9. Do you agree with the following statement? “I understand my university’s policies for using AI-models to do academic work.”
   [Yes, No, Other - please explain]

   Do you have concerns about using AI-models to do academic work?
   [Yes, No, Other - please explain]

   (BRANCH if Yes) Question 9: What concerns do you associate with using AI for academic work? (Select all that apply: Plagiarism, Inaccuracy, Misrepresentation of work, Data privacy, Lack of Learning, Academic integrity, Other (please specify)

Section 3: Experience

10. Have you completed an internship in your field?
    [Yes, No, Other - please explain]

    (BRANCH if Yes) Have you used generative AI in a job or internship for tasks such as market research, content creation, or data analysis? [Yes, No]

    Which departments or business functions have you seen most frequently using generative AI in your workplace? [Marketing, Human Resources (HR), Customer Service, Finance, Information Technology (IT), Other (Please specify), None]

    Does your company provide training or guidelines for using AI in your business tasks? [Yes, No]

Section 4: Understanding

11. Do you agree with the following statement? “I have a good understanding of what artificial intelligence is.”
    [Yes, No, Other - please explain]

12. Do you agree with the following statement? I understand how generative AI tools like ChatGPT, Google Bard, and Silo AI are trained.
    [Yes, No, Other - please explain]

Section 4: Trust

13. On a scale of 1 to 5, how much do you trust AI-generated content for academic purposes?
    (1 = Not at all, 5 = Completely)

14. Are you concerned about the accuracy of AI-generated information?
    (1 = Not at all, 5 = Very concerned)

15. Do you agree with the following statement? “I trust that companies using AI will protect my personal data.”
    [Yes, No, Other - please explain]

Section 5: Emotion

16. Do you agree with the following statement? “Products and services using AI make me excited.”
    [Yes, No, Other - please explain]

17. Do you agree with the following statement? “Products and services using AI make me nervous.”
    [Yes, No, Other - please explain]

Section 6: Daily Life and Work Impact

18. Do you agree with the following statement? “Products and services using AI will profoundly change my daily life in the next 3-5 years.”

19. Do you agree with the following statement? “AI will change how you do your job.”

20. Do you agree with the following statement? “AI products and services have more benefits than drawbacks.”

21. Have you used an AI-powered job application platform?
    [Yes, No, Other - please explain]

    [Branch if No] Would you use an AI-powered job application platform if it was inexpensive and available? [Yes, No, Other - please explain]

    [Branch if Yes] Why did you decide to use the platform? [Text]

Conclusion

This cross-cultural study, to be launched in 2025 by Victoria McCrady, Leslie Seawright, and Mari Rytisalo, should highlight generative AI perceptions and usage among business students in the United States and Finland while taking into account disparities in access to native-language AI models and AI tools tailored to the English-speaking job market. It will anticipate further development in both markets and update questions yearly based on current developments and practices while preserving key comparison metrics. The research aims to provide meaningful and complementary insights within this evolving field.

References

Accenture. (2023). Accenture technology vision survey 2023. *Accenture*. https://www.accenture.com/us-en/insights/technology/technology-trends-2023

Deloitte. (2024). 2024 global workforce management survey. *Deloitte*. https://www2.deloitte.com/content/dam/Deloitte/us/Documents/human-capital/us-2024-deloitte-global-workforce-management-survey.pdfl

Edelman. (2022). Edelman AI trust barometer 2022. *Edelman.* https://www.edelman.com/trust/2022-trust-barometer

Edelman. (2023). Edelman trust barometer 2023: Technology sector insights. *Edelman*. https://www.edelman.com/insights/rebuilding-trust-reach-ai-potential

Edelman. (2024). 2024 Edelman trust barometer: Special report on AI and technology. *Edelman*. https://www.edelman.com/trust/2024/trust-barometer/special-report-tech-sector

IBM. (2023). IBM C-suite study: Perspectives from 3,000 CEOs. *IBM*. https://www.ibm.com/thought-leadership/institute-business-value/en-us/c-suite-study

Inside Higher Ed. (2024). Student voice survey 2024. *Inside Higher Ed.* https://data.generationlab.org/InsideHigherEd/AnnualSurvey.html#q1

Korn Ferry. (2024). Workforce 2024 report: AI trends and talent acquisition. *Korn Ferry*. https://www.kornferry.com/insights/featured-topics/workforce-management/workforce-planning-insights

KPMG. (2024). Generative AI survey 2024. *KPMG.* https://kpmg.com/us/en/media/news/gen-ai-survey-august-2024.html

Luukkonen, R., Komulainen, V., Luoma, J., Eskelinen, A., Kanerva, J., Kupari, H.-M., Ginter, F., Laippala, V., Muennighoff, N., Piktus, A., Wang, T., Tazi, N., Le Scao, T., Wolf, T., Suominen, O., Sairanen, S., Merioksa, M., Heinonen, J., Vahtola, A., Antao, S., & Pyysalo, S. (2023). *FinGPT: Large generative models for a small language*. arXiv. https://arxiv.org/pdf/2311.05640

McKinsey & Company. (2024). Generative AI and the future of work in America. *McKinsey & Company.* https://www.mckinsey.com/mgi/our-research/generative-ai-and-the-future-of-work-in-america

Northeastern University. (2024). Student survey on the use of generative AI: Spring 2024 addendum. *Northeastern University.* https://faculty.northeastern.edu/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2024/03/Addendum-2-Student-Survey-on-use-of-generative-AI-Spring-2024-Boston-Northeastern-University-002.pdf

Oliver Wyman Forum. (2024). Generative AI survey. *Oliver Wyman Forum*. https://www.oliverwymanforum.com/global-consumer-sentiment/how-will-ai-affect-global-economics/workforce.html

OpenAI. (2024, October 14). Personal communication with ChatGPT.

OpenAI. (2024, October 20). Personal communication with ChatGPT.

Oregon State Ecampus. (2024). Student AI usage and trust survey. *Oregon State University.* https://ecampus.oregonstate.edu/research/study/ai-survey/

Product Hunt. (2024). *Sonara: Product information and updates.* https://www.producthunt.com

Protiviti & The Institute of Internal Auditors (IIA). (2024). Global technology audit risks survey: AI and cybersecurity. *Protiviti.* https://www.protiviti.com/us-en/survey/it-audit-survey?utm_source=press+release&utm_medium=PR&utm_campaign=TechAuditSurvey2023

PwC. (2024). Cloud and AI business survey. *PwC.* https://www.pwc.com/us/en/tech-effect/cloud/cloud-ai-business-survey.html

Silo AI. (2024). Poro: A family of open models that bring European languages to the frontier. *Silo AI*. https://www.silo.ai/blog/poro-a-family-of-open-models-that-bring-european-languages-to-the-frontier

Stanford University. (2023). AI index report 2023. *Stanford University.* https://aiindex.stanford.edu/report/2023/

Toolify. (2024). *JobCopilot: AI job application automation*. https://www.toolify.ai

UC Davis. (2024). Generative AI student survey 2024. *UC Davis*. https://cee.ucdavis.edu/GenAISurvey

UNESCO. (2023). Global survey on AI in education. *UNESCO.* https://www.unesco.org/en/articles/unesco-survey-less-10-schools-and-universities-have-formal-guidance-ai

Veris Insights. (2024). From auto-apply to auto-reject: Navigating AI in job applications. *Veris Insights.* https://verisinsights.com/blogs/from-auto-apply-to-auto-reject-navigating-ai-in-job-applications/

World Economic Forum. (2023). Future of jobs report 2023. *World Economic Forum.* https://www.weforum.org/reports/the-future-of-jobs-report-2023

Embracing the Use of AI in Teaching Business Communication

Peter Davidson and Catherine Nickerson
Zayed University

In their *Future of Jobs Report*, the World Economic Forum (2023) report that just under 75% of organizations surveyed were likely or highly likely to adopt AI in the next five years. The widespread adoption of AI in the workplace has had significant implications for the business communication classroom (Getchell et al., 2023), prompting a major reevaluation of what we teach, how we teach it, and how we assess it (Cardon et al., 2023). There is no doubt that AI is now a significant part of the learning process for students, and the workflow process for working professionals. In our experience, many business communication teachers are at the stage where they would like to utilize AI in their classrooms, but they are not entirely sure what AI tools to use, or how to advise their students on how to actually use them.

This talk aims to outline a range of AI tools and strategies that students and teachers can exploit in business communication classes to make teaching and learning more effective, and to better prepare students for a workplace that will likely be unrecognizable by the time they graduate (Cardon et al., 2023). The purpose of suggesting how AI tools can help students and teachers is not to provide a definitive list of AI tools for use in the business classroom – as in the rapidly changing world of AI, such a list of AI tools is at best only temporal. The aim of providing such a list is to identify the myriad of classroom activities where AI tools can be exploited by business communication students and teachers, and to suggest some possible AI tools that they could both explore to help to achieve specific tasks.

Firstly, we have outlined below several different AI tools (although not all are exclusively AI-driven) that students can utilize when studying business communications:

ACTIVITY	HELPFUL AI TOOLS FOR STUDENTS
Choosing and narrowing down a topic	Quillionz; TopicBot
Brainstorming/Ideation	ChatGPT; Heursitica; Stormboard; Figjam
Finding relevant sources	Semantic Scholar; Zymergy; Iris.ai
Translating sources	Google Translate; DeepL
Taking notes	Otterai; Evernote; OneNote
Generating an outline	WriteWell; Outwrite
Summarizing a reading text	SummarizeBot; SMMRY; Blinkist
Text mining (searching for chunks of text)	TextRazor; Google
Finding relevant quotations	Quillionz
Writing a text	ChatGPT; Copy.ai; ShortlyAI
Humanizing an AI-generated text	Copy.ai; ShortlyAI; Writesonic
Getting feedback on written work	Turnitin; Kritik; Scribbr; Hemmingway Editor
Getting feedback on presentations	Rehearse with Coach [PowerPoint]; VirtualSpeech
Correcting language	Grammarly; ProWritingAid; ShortlyAI; Quillbot
Revising	Quizlet; Socratic; Brainscape

AI tools can also help teachers in the business communication classroom in the following areas:

Activity	HELPFUL AI TOOLS FOR TEACHERS
Creating lesson plans	Planboard; Snow to Grow
Generating texts	ChatGPT
Providing a sample model text	ChatGPT; Copy.ai; ShortlyAI
Creating texts with varying register	Heursitica; ChatGPT
Creating questions from text and video	twee; Quillionz; VidReader
Creating images	DALL-E; Midjourney; Firefly
Generating class videos with avatars	HeyGen; Sythesia; Spark Video; Animaker
Generating text-to-video	Vidnami; Renderforest; Lumen5; Sora
Creating classroom simulations	GoGreen.Inc; Classcraft; VirBELA
Personalizing student learning	Khanmigo; Duolingo; Rosetta Stone
Grading assignments	GradeCam; Turnitin; Crowdmark
Developing a course	EdApp; Course Builder [Cousera]

We will then move on to explore how teachers can exploit hybrid writing tasks in the business classroom, where the writing task is a mixture of AI and human-generated text, reflecting the realities of writing tasks that students will be required to complete in the workplace. The use of hybrid writing tasks, coupled with scenarios and case studies (Nickerson & Davidson, 2024), and collaborative assignments that require multiple drafts and teacher feedback, are a constructive way to ensure that students use AI responsibly and ethically in the business classroom. As Cardon et al. (2023) note, it is only by improving the AI literacy of our students in teaching and assessing business communication that we will enhance the learning experiences of our students and better prepare them for a continually transforming workplace.

References

Cardon P. W., Getchell K., Carradini S., Fleischmann C., & Stapp J. (2023). Generative AI in the workplace: Employee perspectives of ChatGPT benefits and organizational policies. *SocArXiv.* https://doi.org/10.31235/osf.io/b3ezy

Getchell, K., Carradini, S., Cardon, P., Fleischmann, C., Ma, H., Aritz, J., & Stapp, J. (2022). Artificial intelligence in business communication: The changing landscape of research and teaching. *Business and Professional Communication Quarterly, 85*(1), 7–33. https://doi.org/10.1177/23294906221074311

Nickerson, C., & Davidson, P. (2024). Using scenario-based assessment in the development of students' digital communication skills and professional competence*. Business and Professional Communication Quarterly, 87*(2), 1–13. https://doi.org/10.1177/23294906241240

World Economic Forum. (2023). *Future of jobs report*. https://www.weforum.org/reports/the-future-of-jobs-report-2023/

Finding Your Voice, Navigating Contexts, and Connecting Audiences: A Case Study in Reimagining Business Communication with Rhetoric

J. Gaana, Apurva Apurva, and Barnali Chaudhary
Institute of Management, Jammu, India

Introduction

This panel explores a novel approach to business communication (BC) pedagogy implemented at a leading Indian Institute of Management. Informed by narrative inquiry, the panel will deliberate how a single student cohort participated in three sequential BC courses, each designed around a core communication stakeholder (self, context, audience) through a rhetorical lens. This approach replaced the traditional LSRW (listening, speaking, reading, writing) focus with a competency-based model emphasizing diversity, equity and inclusion (DE&I) for the Indian business landscape. The panel will discuss the impact of rhetoric on curriculum design, the development of DE&I-related competencies, and the effectiveness of the three-course structure. We will also explore the potential for adapting this framework to other educational contexts.

Context

Triangulating the three iterations around rhetoric required that the business communication pedagogy be reimagined at various levels. Moving away from merely administering LSRW skills, as was mostly the practice until a few years ago, the course was turned to a competency-based approach, an innovative shift in the pedagogy of business communication in India (Getchell & Lentz, 2019). These competencies were derived purely on the basis of the Indian context of emerging discourses around diversity, equity and inclusion at Indian business workplaces. Therefore, while the rhetoric has always accorded primacy to the audience in its training practice, the three iterations turned this around to move across other stakeholders: audience, context, and the self.

Focus of the Panel

Informed by narrative inquiry as the research method (Webster & Mertova, 2007), the panel will highlight critical events within their experiences to frame the development of this innovative pedagogy. The panel discussion will delve into the following key areas:

- **The Impact of Rhetoric:** Analyze the influence of rhetorical principles on the design and delivery of the business communication curriculum.
- **The Shift from LSRW to Competencies:** Explore the development of specific competencies crucial for effective communication in diverse Indian workplaces, with a focus on diversity, equity, and inclusion (DE&I).

- **Course Iterations:** Discuss the rationale and design of three distinct courses within the business communication domain, each focusing on a different stakeholder in the communication process:
    - Author/Writer/Self: Emphasizing self-awareness and ethical communication.
    - Context: Building intercultural communication competencies.
    - Audience: Developing strong interpersonal communication skills.
- **Effectiveness and Generalizability:** Evaluate the impact of these iterations on student learning and engagement. We will also explore the potential for adapting this approach to other educational contexts.

Research Questions

- How did the integration of rhetoric influence the learning outcomes of BC students?
- What specific competencies are crucial for navigating DE&I challenges in Indian work environments?
- How did the focus on self, contexts, and audience compare in terms of student development?
- Can this pedagogical framework be applied in other educational settings?

Panel Composition

The panel will comprise faculty members who were course instructors as well as academics involved in the case study.

Target Audience

This panel discussion is aimed at educators, faculty members, curriculum designers, and researchers interested in:

- innovative approaches to business communication pedagogy,
- the application of rhetorical principles in business communication education, and
- developing communication competencies relevant to diverse and inclusive workplaces.

Expected Outcomes

- This discussion will provide valuable insights for educators seeking to
- enhance the effectiveness of their business communication programs.
- integrate a rhetorical framework into their curriculum to build competency-based pedagogies.
- develop communication skills essential for navigating the complexities of contemporary business communication.

- We believe this panel discussion will spark a stimulating conversation about the future of business communication education, particularly in the context of emerging economies like India.

References

Getchell, K., & Lentz, P. (2019). *Rhetorical theory and praxis in the business communication classroom*, Routledge.

Kahl Jr., D. H. (2023). Responding to neoliberal individualism: Developing an ethic of empathy through critical communication pedagogy. *Journal of Communication Pedagogy*, *7*(1), 181–189. https://doi:10.31446/JCP.2023.1.12

Maricle, J. A. (2017). Risky business: Case study pedagogy and business communication. (Doctoral dissertation). https://scholarcommons.sc.edu/etd/4011

Webster, L., & Mertova, P. (2007). *Using narrative inquiry as a research method: An introduction to using critical event narrative analysis in research on learning and teaching*. Routledge.

Giving Business Communication Students an Edge: Unwrapping the Black Box of LLMS

Jeanine Aune and Jo Mackiewicz
Iowa State University

As future business communication professionals, our students will undoubtedly become users of generative AI tools for some part of their communication needs (Getchell et. al., 2023). This presentation addresses how this should affect our business communication curriculum; that is, are there elements that become redundant and are there new elements that should be added to our curricula?

Generative AI does not change the principles of good business communications, but effective use of generative AI has the potential to raise the bar. However, students do not enter our classes knowing enough to effectively use generative AI, and illiterate use may be counterproductive and lead to unnecessary time being spent on correcting poorly generated text. Our curricula should help students understand what can be expected of generative AI, when its use is appropriate, and how to incorporate already established principles of good business communication into what they use generative AI to help create.

To understand what can be expected of generative AI, students need to appreciate the Large Language Models (LLMs) used by generative AI tools as models of language rather than models of knowledge or thought processes. LLMs appear to understand our students' questions and prompts in ways that appear sensible to our students (see Kasneci et. al., 2023; Meyer et. al., 2023). However, a deeper reading of LLMs' output text by a discipline professional often reveals serious issues (see Nascimento et. al., 2023), whether it is a lack of effective structure, content, or good practice. The deeper understanding requires a level of discipline knowledge and analysis that our students may lack. But these issues are not unexpected when LLMs are appropriately viewed as models that generate language rather than knowledge.

The need to understand what LLMs aim to achieve means that we need to add some description of language modeling into our curricula. While this may seem outside the usual scope of a business communication class and the expertise of faculty, it can in fact be done in a relatively straightforward and intuitive manner as will be briefly illustrated in this talk. Most of the technical details can be omitted because as future users of generative AI, our business communication students do not need to understand the nitty-gritty of how algorithms are run to train the models (or do it themselves), but simply to have enough understanding to know what to expect from the models.

Once the LLMs are appreciated as models of language, their appropriate use and usefulness becomes easier to define. When students understand how LLMs were trained to model language and how they function, students better appreciate LLMs value and limitations; make more strategic decisions about using LLMs, that is, providing input to the pretrained models; and develop more effective strategies for analyzing and working with output text produced by LLMs.

None of this changes the principles of good business communication or how it should be presented in our curricula. We still need to discuss audience, purpose, context, content, organization, style, expression, and delivery. The knowledge our students need to create prompts for LLMs is largely the same knowledge that our students need to create business communication texts on their own. Just because our students can use an LLM to produce text doesn't mean they should skip learning the concepts underlying effective business communication. The knowledge remains the same; its application is shifting.

References

Kasneci, E., Sessler, K., Küchemann, S., Bannert, M., Dementieva, D., Fischer, F., Gasser, U., Groh, G., Günnemann, S., Hüllermeier, E., Krusche, S., Kutyniok, G., Michaeli, T., Nerdel, C., Pfeffer, J., Poquet, O., Sailer, M., Schmidt, A., Seidel, T., Stadler, M., Weller, J., Kuhn, J., & Kasneci, G. (2023). ChatGPT for good? On opportunities and challenges of large language models for education. *Learning and Individual Differences*, *103*(6), 102274. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.lindif.2023.102274

Getchell, K., Carradini, S., Cardon, P., Fleischmann, C., Ma, H., Aritz, J., & Stapp, J. (2022). Artificial intelligence in business communication: The changing landscape of research and teaching. *Business and Professional Communication Quarterly*, *85(*1), 7–33. https://doi.org/10.1177/23294906221074311

Nascimento, C.M.C. & Pimentel, A. S. (2023). Do large language models understand chemistry? A conversation with ChatGPT. *Journal of Chemical Information and Modeling*, *63*(6), 1649–1655. https://doi.org/10.1021/acs.jcim.3c00285

Meyer, J.G. Urbanowicz, R. J., Martin, P. C. N., O'Connor, K., Li, R., Peng, P.C., Bright, T. J., Tatonetti, N., Won, K. J., Gonzalez-Hernandez, G., & Moore, J. H. (2023). ChatGPT and large language models in academia: Opportunities and challenges. *BioData Mining*, *16*, Article 20. https://doi.org/10.1186/s13040-023-00339-9

Improving Your Generative Artificial Intelligence Search by Constructing an Effective AI Prompt

Marsha Bayless
Stephen F. Austin University

Technology adoption and development in the past has often been limited due to requiring new computers, software, and skills to develop over time. However, the adoption of generative artificial intelligence has been different because much of the needed equipment, software, cloud-access, and power are currently available to users. McAfee et al. (2023) indicate that current availability of resources is the big reason that a generative artificial intelligence platform like ChatGPT grew from zero to 100 million users in only 60 days.

While generative AI can create new content, it is not perfect. At times it produces distorted or entirely fabricated output and can be unaware of privacy and copyright concerns (McAfee et al, 2023). Perhaps a key word might be editing. A human is needed to review the output from generative AI to determine its value and to decide where corrections need to occur.

Purpose: Getting the best results from generative AI may require a carefully crafted prompt that asks specific questions. A very general prompt will result in a very general answer that may not be helpful at all and might not give a direct answer to the question. It might also discourage the user of the generative AI. The purpose of this presentation will be to share strategies for creating improved prompts when using the generative Artificial Intelligence platform ChatGPT.

Goal: The goal for the presentation is to increase access to valuable information while reducing misinformation that could be created by generative AI. Developing a skill set for writing prompts can be known as "prompt crafting" or "prompt engineering" (Kenney, 2024).

Learning how to write effective prompts is valuable for the business communication faculty member who wishes to use generative AI for research and improving his or her writing. It will also be valuable to share the techniques with students to improve their business communication writing in such things as emails, memos, letters, and reports while also demonstrating the importance of editing the work generated by AI.

Methodology: The presenter will be developing and creating prompts to have a better idea of the effective use of prompts in the generative AI platform ChatGPT. The results will be shared with business communication faculty from two perspectives: 1) how the faculty member can use carefully crafted prompts in their personal and business use of ChatGPT, and 2) activities that could be used by business communication students in developing prompts to assist them in improving their writing.

Outcomes: The presenter will provide a prepared handout that can be of assistance in using prompts for ChatGPT for both faculty and students.

References

Kahn, J. (2024, April/May). AI isn't coming for your job—at least not yet. *Fortune, 189*(2), 17–18.

Kenney, A. (2024). Gen AI for accountants: 10 prompt-writing tips: The emerging art of "prompt crafting" can deliver more powerful results from platforms like Chat GPT and Google Gemini. *Journal of Accountancy 237(*4), 8–14.

McAfee, A., Rock, D., & Brynjolfsson, E. (2023, November-December). How to capitalize on generative AI: A guide to realizing its benefits while limiting its risks. *Harvard Business Review, 101*(6),42–48.

Morton, J. (2024, January 26). Using prompt engineering to better communicate with people. *HBR.org.* Reprint AH07ZL1.

Moving from Generative AI Chatter to Brass Tacks: Genre Implications for ChatGPT Users

Brent Lucia
University of Connecticut

Brian Hentz
University of Massachusetts, Amherst

Discussions surrounding ChatGPT and classroom applications tend to operate within two extremes: one side argues that AI promises to usher in a new era of enhanced thinking and communication skills, while another side argues that we are marching towards a dystopia that tempts us to outsource all our basic communication skills. These polarities are playing out in recent scholarship that foregrounds ChatGPT's benefits and drawbacks. Positive effects of ChatGPT captured in this scholarship include, but are not limited to, transformative possibilities for student learning, robust meaning-making processes, and invention attributed to ChatGPT use. With respect to professional communication, studies have noted ChatGPT's ability to improve the responsiveness and availability of communication (Nugroho et. al., 2023), to replace search engines and hence provide more accurate and reliable input to students (AlAfnan et. al., 2023), and even able ChatGPT users to respond to and comprehend complex questions while they simultaneously improve interactions between internal and external communication platforms (Waghmare 2023). However, critics have noted Chat GPT's limitations, as evidenced by biases in training data, suspect academic integrity, and diminished student creativity (Baidoo-Anu & Owusu Ansah, 2023; Bolukbasi et al., 2016).

While these studies explore larger implications surrounding ChatGPT, a more practical, "brass tacks" understanding of ChatGPT will help classroom instructors understand how textual features of popular business communication genres are impacted when students rely primarily on ChatGPT to compose these genres. Indeed, there seems to be a need for this type of local engagement with text generator (TG) technologies in individual writing classrooms (Vetter et. al 2023). The presentation focuses on how ChatGPT impacts popular genres' features central to business communication. ChatGPT—like any technology or tool—has its share of affordances and restraints, and session attendees will receive examples and resources that they may use to demonstrate ChatGPT's impact on two categories of messages: email correspondence and career communications (i.e., job search messaging).

Our first presenter will explore how ChatGPT can be leveraged to compose email messages, respecting ChatGPT's limitations in terms of structure, repetition, and style. This presenter will showcase examples of how to prompt ChatGPT for short messaging. The presenter will argue that while professionals are necessarily faced with a complex array of opportunities and restraints as email writers and may be tempted to view ChatGPT as a writing "savior," the chatbot has specific limits that users should acknowledge in their editing process.

Our second presenter will focus on the affordances and limitations that ChatGPT offers to professionals who are engaged in the job search process. Although business communication scholars have largely focused their attention on workplace communication (Cardon 2023), attention on career communications genres (e.g., networking communications, end-of-internship presentations) has not been as robust. Therefore, our second presenter will share how ChatGPT can underserve job seekers' messaging; to do so, this presenter will share examples that he uses with MBA students in Career and Professional Development seminars at the presenter's home institution. This presenter hopes to provide classroom examples and resources that attendees may easily integrate into similar career communication courses. Both presenters will highlight a key takeaway: students who understand how genres are intended to function rhetorically are more likely to leverage ChatGPT appropriately, rather than trust the technology with blind faith.

References

AlAfnan, M. A., Dishari, S., Jovic, M., & Lomidze, K. (2023). ChatGPT as an educational tool: Opportunities, challenges, and recommendations for communication, business writing, and composition courses. *Journal of Artificial Intelligence and Technology*, *3*(2), 60–68.

Baidoo-Anu, D., & Ansah, L. O. (2023). Education in the era of generative artificial intelligence (AI): Understanding the potential benefits of ChatGPT in promoting teaching and learning. *Journal of AI*, *7*(1), 52–62.

Bolukbasi, T., Chang, K. W., Zou, J., Saligrama, V., & Kalai, A. (2016). Quantifying and reducing stereotypes in word embeddings. *arXiv preprint arXiv:1606.06121*.

Cardon, P. W., Getchell, K., Carradini, S., Fleischmann, C., & Stapp, J. (2023). *Generative AI in the workplace: Employee perspectives of ChatGPT benefits and organizational policies. SocArXiv.*

Nugroho, S., Sitorus, A. T., Habibi, M., Wihardjo, E., & Iswahyudi, M. S. (2023). The role of ChatGPT in improving the efficiency of business communication in management science. *Jurnal Minfo Polgan*, *12*(1), 1482–1491.

Vetter, M. A., Lucia, B., Jiang, J., & Othman, M. (2024). Towards a framework for local interrogation of AI ethics: A case study on text generators, academic integrity, and composing with ChatGPT. *Computers and Composition*, *71*, 102831.

Teaching Tone in AI-Mediated Business Communication: Tools, Techniques, and Best Practices

Anthony Coman
University of Florida

Peter Cardon
University of Southern California

This presentation shares techniques for teaching business communication students best practices for managing tone in workplace communication by working with Generative-AI tools in the classroom. The presentation is premised on current research in AI-mediated business communication, including current and forthcoming publications from the presenters. Attendees will leave the presentation with a sense of the current state of AI-mediated business communication, particularly regarding perceptions of tone, a heightened interest in teaching tone in light of the prevalence of AI-mediated communication, and specific examples of classroom activities they can adopt for their students.

Current research into AI-mediated communication has shown that it is well-perceived but that workers prefer to use the tools rather than be on the receiving end, in part due to the impersonal nature of the messages. It's a fact: professionals are using AI at work, including to help them write workplace messages (Cardon et al., 2023). In our study of perceptions of tone in workplace messages, we found that respondents rated AI-generated messages highly, regardless of whether they knew the message was AI-generated (Coman & Cardon, 2023). Although ratings for sincerity and caring dipped when the messages were more sensitive, respondents were still likely to send those messages themselves. However, in a separate study, researchers found that users of generative AI tools were happy to use the tools themselves but were wary of legislators using them to communicate with constituents (Fu et al., 2023). Other researchers have warned of "agency loss" as messages composed with AI can look human while also augmenting an author's writing due to training data and bias (Wenker, 2022). Lastly, in our own study (currently in progress), we are researching perceptions of authorship, how those perceptions shift based on the quantity of human-authored text, and the impact of those perceptions on relationships at work.

In light of this research, teaching students to ensure their messages sound human, sincere, and caring is more important than ever, particularly if they intend to use AI tools in the workplace. Based on the research and the teaching need, we offer three classroom exercises that help students learn to identify, evaluate, and create documents with an effective tone. These activities use AI as a teaching tool in class. Students benefit both from the ability to critically assess tone in AI-generated communication and from deeply considering tone in a way that primes them to write effectively with or without assistance from AI.

References

Cardon, P., Fleischmann, C., Logemann, M., Heidewald, J., Aritz, J., & Swartz, S. (2023). Competencies needed by business professionals in the AI age: Character and communication lead the way. *Business and Professional Communication Quarterly, 87(*2), 223–246. https://doi.org/10.1177/23294906231208166

Coman, A. W., & Cardon, P. (2024). Perceptions of professionalism and authenticity in AI-assisted writing. *Business and Professional Communication Quarterly* (published online). https://doi.org/10.1177/23294906241233224

Fu, L., Newman, B., Jakesch, M., & Kreps, S. (2023). Comparing sentence-level suggestions to message-level suggestions in AI-mediated communication. *Conference on Human Factors in Computing Systems – Proceedings* (103), 1–13. https://doi.org/10.1145/3544548.3581351

Wenker, K. (2023). Who wrote this? How smart replies impact language and agency in the workplace. *Telematics and Informatics Reports, 10*(100062), 1–9. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.teler.2023.100062

The Pulse of Progress: Utilizing Contemporary Visual Aid Assignments to Prepare Future Business Communicators for the Modern Workplace

Cheryl Croall
University of North Texas

Visual media, such as video, makes communication more memorable, persuasive and improves a business communicator's chance of being understood. For example, YouTube is not just for entertainment, but also has a tremendous influence on consumers. Viewers around the globe watch more than 1B hours of YouTube content every day. Further, YouTube streams content in over 100 countries and has over 8M subscribers. Viewers are four times more likely to use YouTube versus other platforms for information about products and brands, two times more likely to buy things they see on YouTube and 70% of viewers report that YouTube increases their awareness of new brands. Because of its vast reach and influence on consumers, businesses are increasingly creating video content to leverage YouTube for marketing and brand awareness. Nearly 60% of companies use video across various platforms in their marketing strategies. Future business communicators need skills in creating contemporary visual aids, such as videos, for careers in the modern workplace.

Purpose

The purpose of this presentation is to discuss how to incorporate video creation assignments in business communication courses. To prepare students for careers in modern business communications, educators should include contemporary visual aid assignments such as video creation.

Goals

The goal of this presentation is to equip instructors with knowledge and example curriculum to immediately utilize video creation assignments in their business communication courses.

Methodology

The presentation will include instructional strategies that utilize technologies with which many students are already familiar and provide a step-by-step process for leading students through a video assignment. The assignment fosters creativity, allows students to self-select technologies for video creation, challenges students to apply their visual communication skills in new ways, teaches new skills and develops student's business acumen.

Outcomes

Participants of this presentation will learn how to keep their pulse on progress by utilizing contemporary visual aid assignments, specifically videos, to prepare future business communicators for the modern workplace. An example assignment and rubric will be provided. The example assignment includes a business scenario and is divided into phases including pre-production, production, editing and post-production.

True Crime Meets Business Communication: An Academic Community Engagement Project in Investigative Genetic Genealogy

Traci Austin
Sam Houston State University

Introduction and Purpose

Investigative Genetic Genealogy (IGG) uses DNA analysis to trace relationships and identify individuals by connecting genetic data with genealogical information. IGG came on the scene as a field in the late 2010s and was originally used by law enforcement to identify perpetrators of crimes and to give names to unidentified human remains or UHR (Greytak, Moore, & Armentrout, 2019). In the past few years, the endeavor has spread beyond law enforcement as businesses and nonprofit organizations devoted to IGG have emerged (Erturk, & Kuang, 2021).

For IGG organizations outside law enforcement, the challenges are many. Two particular challenges are revenue creation and communication. The stakeholders for IGG—e.g., states and counties with UHR, families of victims, and small police and sheriff departments—often do no have the resources to pay for services. Thus, many IGG organizations rely on grants and donations to fund their work. In addition, communication within the IGG space is a complex and largely unresearched area; based on the experiences of IGG professionals, it involves an understanding of the principles of victim studies, business communication, ethics, and the law.

Many IGG organizations require help with both of these challenges. This presentation will discuss the outcomes of a partnership between a college-level business communication course and a nonprofit that specializes in Investigative Genetic Genealogy. The primary purpose of this collaborative project is to provide students with real-world experience while assisting the nonprofit organization in their fundraising, research, and communication endeavors.

The Project

Academic Community Engagement. Our university's Academic Community Engagement (ACE) program positions itself as "a teaching method that combines community engagement with academic instruction. This pedagogy encourages students to use the skills, knowledge, and dispositions learned in the classroom to collaborate with community partners to contribute to the public good." This project was developed in cooperation with the IGG organization over the summer of 2024 and implemented in two junior-level business communication courses in the fall semester of 2024.

In addition to IGG, the partner organization is involved in the following activities:

- Cold Case Consultation: Applying advanced research methods to assist law enforcement and other investigating agencies (e.g., medical examiner's offices) in cold case investigations.
- Case Triage: Furthering casework in difficult-to-solve, previously investigated cases.

- Laboratory and Funding Assistance: Facilitating communication between investigative agencies and independent DNA labs and consulting on avenues of funding.

As part of this project, students will be asked to create various materials to support the nonprofit's objectives. Options for these may include:

- Promotional Content: Infographics, presentation materials, and videos that explain the nonprofit's mission and highlight their successful "solves" or identifications.
- Digital Media: Social media posts and new text for the organization's website.
- Fundraising: Ideas and/or materials for fundraising for the organization. This may include online platforms, events, or proposals.

As part of this project, students will explore the ethical, legal, and social implications of IGG and how these impact the way IGG professionals communicate with the public, with donors and customers, with victims and families, and with law enforcement.

Outcomes

The presentation will discuss the following:

- Communication Challenges in IGG: Unique challenges of communicating in the IGG space, informed by IGG professionals as well as victim studies faculty at our university.
- Student Projects: Overview of the materials and artifacts created by the students, including how they addressed and integrated the interpersonal, ethical, legal, and social implications of IGG in their projects.
- Explorations and Revelations: As a largely unresearched area, what faculty, students, and IGG professionals will learn is not predictable by any means. Lessons learned and questions raised will be discussed.
- Ethical, Legal, and Social Considerations: Conclude by discussing how students will address and integrate the ethical, legal, and social implications of IGG in their projects, affecting how professionals in the field communicate with various stakeholders.

References

Erturk, M. S., & Kuang, X. (2021). Private genetic genealogy search. *Working Papers (Faculty–Stanford Graduate School of Business*, 1–48.

Greytak, E. M., Moore, C., & Armentrout, S. L. (2019). Genetic genealogy for cold case and active investigations. *Forensic Science International, 299,* 103–113.

Understanding the Impact of Workplace Environment and Gelotophobia: A Comprehensive Investigation and Strategies for Mitigation

Ridham Gupta
Indian Institute of Technology, Jammu

Barnali Chaudhary
Indian Institute of Management, Jammu

The workplace and its surroundings play crucial roles in everyday life, significantly impacting holistic well-being. This structured environment holds considerable influence over emotions, motivation, mental and physical wellness, and work output. Adverse workplace conditions, characterized by stress, interpersonal conflicts, insufficient support or mockery by the other employees, can deeply affect psychological and emotional health. Prolonged exposure to these stressors may trigger feelings of anxiety, dissatisfaction, or exhaustion, leading to detrimental effects on mental well-being. Additionally, the quality of the workplace environment significantly influences both productivity and performance levels. Moreover, the presence of gelotophobia, which entails an intense fear of ridicule or mockery, can further worsen the adverse effects of unfavorable workplace conditions on individuals' psychological well-being.

This study aims to conduct a thorough investigation into the impacts of gelotophobia within various workplace settings, acknowledging the diversity among employees which encompasses a wide range of characteristics, such as age, gender, ethnicity, educational background, job role, and tenure within the organization. By considering the diverse demographic profiles of employees, the research seeks to explore how gelotophobia manifests and affects individuals across different groups and hierarchy levels within the workplace environment. Understanding the nuanced experiences of employees from diverse demographic backgrounds is crucial for developing targeted strategies to mitigate the effects of gelotophobia and promote a supportive and inclusive workplace culture for all employees, irrespective of their demographic characteristics. It seeks to elucidate how gelotophobia, characterized by an acute apprehension of ridicule or mockery, influences the psychological well-being and professional dynamics of individuals within the workplace environment. Moreover, the study aims to identify effective strategies to alleviate the detrimental effects of gelotophobia, both at the individual and group levels. By delving into the multifaceted impacts of gelotophobia, this research endeavors to provide insights into mitigating its effects and fostering a more supportive and inclusive workplace environment.

This study utilizes a mixed-methods methodology, integrating qualitative interviews and surveys including GELOPH <15> method to investigate the implications of gelotophobia within the workplace, specifically within the Indian setting. The research delves into the psychological effects of gelotophobia, examining its potential impact on workplace productivity, levels of job satisfaction, and dynamics of interpersonal relationships. Participants encompass employees across different hierarchical levels, including those in leadership positions. A survey and interview questions were designed which aimed to determine the gelotophobia elements. The research questions unravel the intricacies surrounding workplace humor, including colleagues' use of wordplay, the intended purpose behind jokes, the perception and interpretation of humor's intent, comprehension of social alienation, different categories of jokes, their impact on job satisfaction and performance, the underlying message conveyed by jokes, how jokes that evoke anxiety are perceived, and feelings of inadequacy among individuals.

This study specifically targeted individuals occupying corporate roles with a minimum of six months of work experience. The selection criteria aimed to ensure a sample group with a sufficient level of familiarity with the corporate work environment, allowing for meaningful insights into the impact of gelotophobia within this context.

Thematic analysis is employed for qualitative data, while statistical methods are used to discern associations between gelotophobia and workplace outcomes. The research outcome highlights pervasive fear among the employees is prevalent. This fear significantly affects their psychological well-being and professional interactions. The study indicates that raising awareness, providing necessary workshops, offering support resources, and conducting regular check-ins can successfully tackle these issues. These measures contribute to cultivating a more supportive and inclusive atmosphere that promotes productivity and contentment. It argues that by creating an environment that embraces humor respectfully and inclusively, educational institutions can effectively address gelotophobia and promote employee well-being, collaboration, and overall job satisfaction.

When AI Deep Dives into Subjectivity and Abstraction: Implications for the Future of Written Business Communication

Debmalya Biswas
Shiv Nadar Institution of Eminence Delhi-NCR, India

In business communication and organizational science, technology-enhanced learning (TEL) has evolved to mean adaptive learning with AI-based tools (Caspari-Sadeghi, 2023). In the rapidly evolving business communication classroom, the rise and influence of generative AI tools (like ChatGPT, Claude, Jasper AI) has significantly changed the way instructors have to plan for a lecture on written business communication (Jochim & Lenz-Kesekamp, 2024). This is also witnessed in the way freelancers, content creators and professionals make use of such tools for many forms of written communication, including collaboration between the internal and external stakeholders of organizations (Iaia et al. 2024). Furthermore, there are AI humanizers (like writehuman.ai, bypassgpt.ai) that have grown in popularity to bypass AI detection by plagiarism-detection tools (like TurnItIn, ZeroGPT, etc.). With the addition and interest in improving stakeholder trust, the application emphasis has moved from summarization to generation and summarization as the roots became a very important part of the pre-training of all other AI text applications (Gill et al.2022). However, the seemingly unchallengeable dexterity of such generative AI tools comes undone when they encounter the tricky trench of subjectivity.

Subjectivity, here, is being explored through the avenue of qualitative adjectives (good, desirable, effective, etc.), whose varying interpretations, controlled by time-governed parameters, create challenges in the meaning-making process. For instance, in a business report, a sentence like “These are good recommendations for the expansion of the company into the FMCG sector,” can cause lack of clarity and concreteness, as readers would not know how are the “recommendations” “good” – from the profit maximization point-of-view, from the revenue maximization point-of-view, from the long-term market share point-of-view, from the short-term visibility point-of-view, and so on and so forth. One can argue that the preceding sentential context can provide cues to understand why the “recommendations” are “good,” but that would require readers to regress to connect the interpretation to the factors/parameters controlling it. And this exercise has shortcomings when readers have not closely followed or have to deal with multiple preceding paragraphs, each with different topic sentences, from different rational standpoints.

When generative AI (like ChatGPT 4) is prompted with: “Hello ChatGPT. I want to buy a car in India. Act as an automobile expert and using simple language, give me information about the 10 best cars in India in 2024,” what sort of factors does it rely on to make sense of the broad abstract qualitative expression (BAQE) ‘best.’ In the generated output, users find a chaotic salad of perspectives (quoted from the ChatGPT 4 output: “reliability,” “fuel efficiency,” “handling,” “exterior,” “interior,” “engine options,” “safety features,” “build quality,” “off-road capabilities,” “tech features” and so on) and there is no fulcrum or reference point around which the suggestions can be comparatively analyzed. So, the challenge in an increasingly technologized written business communication classroom (for courses like “Written Analysis and Communication”), where instructors are leveraging the power of generative AI writing tools, is how to better engineer the prompt or how to train students to edit the output to clear such interpretative ambivalence.

Followingly, the prompt is edited in two ways:

(a) Hello ChatGPT. I want to buy a fuel-efficient car in India. Act as an automobile expert and using simple language, give me information about the 10 best cars in India in 2024.

(b) Hello ChatGPT. I want to buy a car in India. Act as an automobile expert and using simple language, give me information about the 10 best fuel-efficient cars in India in 2024.

The outputs generated have some overlap but are not similar. There are four unique suggestions (Maruti Suzuki Alto, Renault Kwid, Renault Kiger, Tata Altroz, Maruti Suzuki Celerio) out of the list of ten that is generated. In the edited prompts, the differentiator is the adjacency of the parameter "fuel-efficiency" and the qualitative adjective (BAQE) 'best.' In (b), "fuel efficient" intervenes between "best" and "car" and is exactly adjacent to "best," whereas in (a), the parameter "fuel-efficiency" is adjacent to just the qualified noun "car". So, the challenge lies in how to prompt generative AI to make sense of interpretative variations brought about by time-governed parameters controlling qualitative adjectives and thereby BAQEs, so that the generated output is more useable and acceptable in written business communication. How can students be made mindful of such BAQEs in the prompts that they supply to AI writing tools, and also about the outputs that are generated, which have to be edited following the 7Cs of written communication? The ongoing research constitutes a refined approach to Silverstein's (1993, 2003) indexicality or indexical field, whereby controlling variables and linguistic meanings are connected. While there are connections between BAQEs and parameters, not all apply equally at a particular point of time, and hence temporality narrows down on the specific set active at a specific point of time (Biswas, 2023).

References

Biswas, D. (2023). *Temporality in differential discursive interpretation of adjectives & adverbs: An analysis of narrative discourses in Bangla* [Unpublished doctoral dissertation]. Jawaharlal Nehru University.

Caspari-Sadeghi, S. (2023). Artificial intelligence in technology-enhanced assessment: A survey of machine learning. *Journal of Educational Technology Systems*, *51*(3), 372–386. https://doi.org/10.1177/00472395221138791

Gill, S. S., Xu, M., Ottaviani, C., Patros, P., Bahsoon, R., Shaghaghi, A., ... & Uhlig, S. (2022). AI for next generation computing: Emerging trends and future directions. *Internet of Things*, 19. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.iot.2022.100514

Iaia, L., Nespoli, C., Vicentini, F., Pironti, M., & Genovino, C. (2024). Supporting the implementation of AI in business communication: The role of knowledge management. *Journal of Knowledge Management*, *28*(1), 85–95. https://doi.org/10.1108/JKM-12-2022-0944

Jochim, J., & Lenz-Kesekamp, V. K. (2024). Teaching and testing in the era of text-generative AI: exploring the needs of students and teachers. *Information and Learning Sciences*. https://doi.org/10.1108/ILS-10-2023-0165

Silverstein, M. (2003). Indexical order and the dialectics of sociolinguistic life. *Language & Communication*, *23*(3–4), 193–229. https://doi.org/10.1016/S0271-5309(03)00013-2

Silverstein, M. (1993). Metapragmatic discourse and metapragmatic function. In J. A. Lucy (Ed.), *Reflexive Language: Reported Speech and Metapragmatics* (pp. 33–58). Cambridge University Press.

Silverstein, M. (1992). The indeterminacy of contextualization: When is enough enough? In P. Auer & A. di Luzio (Eds.), *The Contextualization of Language* (pp. 55–76). John Benjamins.

Our Virtual Class Quilt: Creating Our Mutual and Diverse Identity

Evelyn Plummer
Seton Hall University

Purpose

This learning activity is designed to facilitate teaching diversity and inclusion by incorporating multiple avenues for introspection, artistic creativity, semiotics, and sharing of insights among classmates. It also provides a rudimentary opportunity for exploring computer imagery and/or graphics. "Our Virtual Class Quilt" is applicable to all course formats and is well suited for encouraging student-student interaction in an asynchronous online course.

The rationale draws on the long tradition of quilt creation as an inclusive practice of folk art (e.g. quilting circles), producing both a pragmatic artifact as well as providing a means for inclusive participation.

By their very nature, quilts consist of diverse and symbolic components. Throughout the years of human existence, quilts, and variations thereof, have been vehicles for the expression of creative and cultural identities in addition to serving functional purposes. As a model for the kind of diverse compilation being used in this activity, one can look to "crazy quilts", "patchwork quilts", "narrative quilts", and even the complex "story quilt" artworks of Faith Ringgold with their unique blend of story, culture, texture, imagery, and advocacy.

As a further opportunity for a teachable moment, quilting provides a forum for exploring the formerly popular "Melting Pot" metaphor with its flawed presumption of 100% assimilation. Clearly diverse elements can combine and operate in complementary ways while retaining their distinct characteristics.

Goals

Considering the instructor's pedagogical needs, several teaching goals are possible.

- to provide an interactive class activity usable for a variety of instructional formats;
- to simulate the cooperative, micro-cultural nature of quilt creation;
- to provide an opportunity for students to work with design technology—as specialized as Adobe or as simple as copy-&-paste;
- to explore such dynamics of semiotics as how nonword-based signs and symbols are used to express cultural identity;
- to make available an outlet for individual artistic and/or personal expression; and
- to accomplish the shared ownership of a class artifact.

Methodology

Any LMS or online application that enables group editing (in the manner of a WIKI or a Google Doc) can be used for this co-creation of this document.

Step 1. Instructor explains the concept of semiotics as applied to a collaboratively created artifact as a means to combine individuals' identities and eventually create a representation of the class's collective culture.

Step 2. Instructor gives the submission specifications (e.g. size of contributed square, recommended software, originality expectations, any open access requirements).

Step 3. Instructor posts a blank document or space within the course's online shell to which all students have editing permission. Students are assigned to contribute images/graphics that represent some aspect of their personal cultural identity.

Step 4. Students craft and post their virtual quilt "squares" into the designated master document/space resulting in a simulation of a class quilt. Depending upon resources and preferences, this could be done via simple means (e.g. copy & paste) or more sophisticated design technologies can be used (e.g. Adobe Express).

Step 5. A variety of debrief procedures can be used such as reaction posts in a discussion board, or via a series of oral or written explanations on the cultural symbolism and design choices.

Outcomes

At the completion of this activity, students will have explored and experienced various aspects of diversity and inclusion. As explained, this activity can be adapted to a variety of teaching formats and instructor goals.

At the most basic level, an artifact has been created which illustrates class members' cultural/micro-cultural/co-cultural alignments. Individual and group identities will be amplified on several levels such as: (1) self – via the choices made for selecting/creating the representative image, and (2) group –via the combined semiotics of the completed quilt resulting from "sewing together" the virtual pieces of fabric.

Additional outcomes can include: (1) collaborative contact among the students; (2) demonstration that the compilation and blending symbolic identities does not necessarily result in homogenization of identities; (3) diversification of learning modes to incorporate nonverbal and/or design capabilities.

References

Gillespie, S. (2010). *Quilts around the world: The story of quilting from Alabama to Zimbabwe*. Minneapolis, MN: Voyageur Press.

Ortega, Y., Passi, A. L., dela Cruz, J. W. N., Nii Owoo, M. A., Cale, B., & Sarkar, M. (2023). Beginning the quilt: A polyvocal and diverse collective seeking new forms of knowledge production. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, *22*, 1–17. https://doi.org/10.1177/16094069231186131

Ringgold, F. (2018). Bearing witness. *Art in America*, 106(3), 80–87.

Smith, D. M. (2012). The American melting pot: A national myth in public and popular discourse. *National Identities, 14*(4), 387–402. https://doi.org/10.1080/14608944.2012.732054

Building Professionalism One Atomic Habit at a Time

Emily Marett
Mississippi State University

With current headlines drawing attention to large numbers of recent college graduates being underemployed or unemployed (Pew Research Center, 2022), soft skills are seeing a resurgence in focus as universities seek to help students successfully navigate an increasingly competitive job market. Communication skills consistently top employers' competency wish lists, along with teamwork, sales/customer service, leadership, and problem-solving/complex-thinking skills (Georgetown University, 2020). But other soft skills like resilience, optimism, curiosity, accountability, adaptability, and responsibility are also highly sought after by employers (Calder, 2023). Most job readiness or competency-based studies include many of these previously listed traits more broadly under the category of "professionalism." Professionalism faces a particular challenge for college programs to teach, due to students possessing inflated self-perceptions of their professionalism skills that don't match employer evaluations of their skills on the job (Gray, 2024). For example, 84.6% of students reported having excellent proficiency in professionalism but only 50% of employers agreed with this assessment (Gray, 2024). So how can business communication courses tackle this disconnect?

To address aspects of professionalism that are harder for traditional college courses to "teach" the author has utilized James Clear's NYT best seller, *Atomic Habits,* as the structure for a semester-long professional development assignment in their business communication courses for the past four years. This assignment seeks to build resilience, accountability, and responsibility by using Clear's guidance for setting up habit structures within your life that support larger goals and objectives.

Students adopt two micro-habits for the semester that will assist them in achieving a larger goal of their choice. One micro-habit is required to support academic success (e.g. more effectively using a planner, checking Canvas on a daily basis, reviewing notes after course lectures) while the other micro-habit is the student's choice. The author recommends a choice that supports the student "feeling like their best self" or something that makes them feel balanced and happy. Many students choose micro-habits that support fitness and health goals, financial goals, faith practices, or maintaining creative hobbies that tend to get neglected during stressful semesters. After establishing their two micro-habits, students then complete weekly accountability check-ins to report on their success at adopting the micro-habits each week. At the end of the semester, students complete a reflection assignment that celebrates their growth over the semester. The lessons learned from this strikingly simple assignment are astounding. Students report lower stress levels, reduced anxiety, improved self-confidence and self-efficacy, and more. Most importantly, they end the semester with a realistic road map for adopting change in any area of professional development they'll face in the future.

This presentation will guide participants through the concepts taught through this assignment, in addition to data the author has collected on its impact on student attitudes, beliefs and other outcomes. Attendees will be provided assignment instructions and guidelines for replicating this assignment in their courses.

References

Calder, R. (2023, April 6). What college students need to succeed in the corporate world. *Harvard Business Review.*

Georgetown University, Center on Education and the Workforce. (2020). *Workplace basics: The competencies employers want.* Retrieved from https://cew.georgetown.edu/cew-reports/competencies/

Gray, K. (2024). Recruiters and students have differing perceptions of new grads' proficiency in competencies. *National Association of Colleges and Employers.* Retrieved from https://www.naceweb.org/career-readiness/competencies/recruiters-and-students-have-differing-perceptions-of-new-grads-proficiency-in-competencies

Pew Research Center. (2022, April 12). *10 facts about today's college graduates*. Retrieved from https://pewrsr.ch/3uATci3

ChatGPT in the Business Communication Classroom: Developing Strategies and Assignments for Success

Kevin Carr, Heather Philip, and Karen Raskopf
University of Texas at Arlington

There are many challenges to integrating artificial intelligence (AI) platforms such as ChatGPT into the university classroom. Business Communication faculty are evaluating the value of introducing tools like ChatGPT into their classroom in the face of ambivalence among their peers, a lack of leadership and policy guidance from administrators, and a lack of discipline-specific scholarship.

Research demonstrates very mixed attitudes towards ChatGPT as a teaching resource among college and university faculty. According to the Primary Research Group's *Survey of US Higher Education Faculty* (2023), approximately one-quarter of faculty members surveyed felt that they should integrate ChatGPT into the classroom, while a slightly larger group (30 percent) felt that they should not. Close to half (44 percent) had no opinion. According to the same survey, only 14 percent of college administrations have developed institutional guidelines for the use of ChatGPT or similar programs in classrooms. Further, few instructors (18 percent) have developed guidelines for their own use or that of their students (cited in D'Agostino 2023). Finally, little scholarship currently exists as a resource to help Business communications faculty integrate artificial intelligence platforms like ChatGPT into the BCOM classroom.

On the other hand, businesses are reporting much more positive attitudes towards platforms such as ChatGPT and much higher rates of adoption of the platform. According to the *Future of Jobs Report* (2023) published by the World Economic Forum, more than 75% of companies are looking to adopt technologies such as AI in the next five years (World Economic Forum). In another survey of six hundred U.S. business owners, "Almost all (97%) business owners believe ChatGPT will help their business. One in three businesses plan to use ChatGPT to write website content, while 44% plan to use ChatGPT to write content in other languages. Nearly half (46%) of business owners use AI to craft internal communications" (Haan, 2023). ChatGPT is quickly gaining popularity among many industries. Given these trends, businesses are demanding knowledge of AI, and colleges and universities are poised not to deliver.

To meet the future challenges and expectations of the workforce, business communication students must be comfortable, competent, and ethical using ChatGPT. In this panel session, we will share our diverse experiences integrating ChatGPT into the Business Communication classroom to create innovative and impactful assignments at the introductory and advanced course level. We will also discuss our experience using ChatGPT to develop rubrics, and to assess student work. We will share how these assignments not only help to improve student communication skills, but also critical-thinking and problem- solving skills. We will also share results of a recent survey of Business Communication students at the University of Texas at Arlington which measured students' attitudes and experiences using ChatGPT in the classroom. Finally, we will recommend syllabi and classroom policies to increase the effectiveness of ChatGPT as a teaching and learning tool.

Although this panel will focus on faculty teaching experience using ChatGPT, exclusively, the panelists are confident that insights shared will prove useful for incorporating other AI platforms into the Business Communication classroom, as well.

References

D'Agostino, S. (2023, March 21). GPT-4 is here. But most faculty lack AI policies. *Inside Higher Ed.* https://www.insidehighered.com/news/2023/03/22/gpt-4-here-most-faculty-lack-ai-policies

Haan, K. (2023). How businesses are using artificial intelligence in 2024. https://www.forbes.com/advisor/business/software/ai-in-business/

Primary Research Group (2023). *Survey of U.S. higher education faculty: Views on and use of ChatGPT.* Primary Research Group, Inc.

World Economic Forum (n.d). *The future of jobs report 2023.* https://www.weforum.org/publications/the-future-of-jobs-report-2023/digest/

Developing an Executive MBA Communication Seminar at the Wisconsin School of Business

Elizabeth Malson-Huddle and Liam Kane-Grade
University of Wisconsin – Madison

This presentation will discuss how we created a Communication Seminar for the relaunch of the Executive MBA program at the Wisconsin School of Business (WSB). We will explain how the course meets the needs of this hybrid program and addresses the directive from the Dean's Office and the WSB External Advisory Board to focus on key audiences for executive communication: employees, the senior leadership team, followers on social media, and the executive board or investors. The purpose is to share our methods for creating a rewarding educational experience for advanced professionals seeking C-suite positions. We will explicate how we created content based on two leadership challenges: announcing an organizational change and responding to a crisis; we will also use theories of andragogy to describe how we structured our sessions and assignments to meet the needs of adult learners.

One challenge we faced in our development of the course is that we need to deliver the seminar in a highly condensed format. We teach for three days during each of two residencies that occur six months apart. To ensure engagement and test the timing and logistics of this condensed one-credit seminar, we ran two pilots for Executive MBA alumni volunteers with the help of the Career Management team. The feedback we received after the first pilot demonstrated what andragogy theorists have long agreed: it is imperative to center learning sessions on the personal experiences and expertise of the participants.

In our first pilot, we created team-directed projects that drew on the participants' professional experience; however, we focused too much on delivering content we believed would be useful to advanced professionals hoping to rise in corporate leadership. While faculty and EAB members agreed that many EMBA participants need instruction on presenting, the pilot volunteers did not find lecture content on best practices engaging. As andragogy theorists Sharan Merriam and Laura Bierema (2013) observe, adult learners self-direct and evaluate their own learning; content that does not clearly align with their learning goals or does not acknowledge their experience will fall flat.

After reviewing the feedback and what we felt was most successful, we restructured our second pilot sessions to solicit what the participants believed were best practices in their industries based on their experience; for example, they engaged energetically in a discussion around leaders whose communication styles they admired. In each session for the second pilot, we began with participants telling stories and reflecting on their experience with crises, then moved to lecture with interactive questions, and provided open-end activities to practice the skills.

Upon reflection, we noticed that the liveliest sessions articulated complex theoretical strategies for successful leadership communications in challenging situations that we drew from our synthesis of scholarly works. For example, the participants enjoyed discussing academic theories such as Situational Crisis Communication Theory (Coombs & Halladay, 2002). We employed well-known examples like the

Norfolk Southern derailment to illustrate each concept (Paris, 2023); these stories generated lively discussions on how successful the strategies would be for their organizations. Then they tried out the strategies in their team assignments, which they felt was surprisingly rewarding.

In both pilots, the team assignments drew on participants' professional experience and were grounded in one team member's organization. We chose to have them create and self-direct their own "case" in response to our prompts rather than having them respond to a prescribed business case. For the first pilot, the teams composed emails and a presentation announcing an organizational change to employees and the senior leadership team. For the second pilot, they created a crisis communication response plan, a mock-up of several social media posts, and a presentation for the board. The teams developed different cases, one for a large pharmaceutical company and one for a local hotel chain, which generated productive discussions of how to best use evidence to persuade different audiences.

We recognized the in-depth learning that had taken place in each pilot when the teams presented their written materials and did their presentations while the audience of participants played the role of the target audience and asked difficult questions. Participants learned the most from each other's experiments and from evaluating the implementation of seminar strategies in real time. In this regard, our advanced-career participants, like our younger students, enjoy the most social and interactive learning sessions. As Merriam and Bierema (2013) recommend for teaching adult participants, instructors need to play more of a "facilitator" role than a "content expert" to create the ideal structure and conditions for hands-on learning.

Short Abstract. This presentation discusses the creation of a communication seminar for a new Executive MBA program that focuses on key audiences and two leadership projects: announcing an organizational change and responding to a crisis. We apply theories of andragogy to describe how the sessions facilitate learning for professionals seeking C-suite positions.

References

Coombs, W. T., & Holladay, S. J. (2002). Helping crisis managers protect reputational assets: Initial tests of the situational crisis communication theory. *Management Communication Quarterly*, *16*(2), 165–186.

Merriam, S. B., & Bierma, L. L. (2013). *Adult learning: Linking theory and practice*. John Wiley & Sons.

Paris, C. (2023, March 9). Norfolk Southern CEO apologizes, pledges change at senate hearing on Ohio derailment. *Wall Street Journal*.

From Ugly Duckling to Swan: Transforming Raw Data into Beautifully Effective Graphics

Nancy Mahon
Pennsylvania State University

The next time consumers go out for a meal, they should look around. Look beyond the salt and pepper shakers and icy cold beverages to see what else sits on the table. Chances are they'll see smart phones by several place settings. And boy are they smart! What once took rooms full of computing equipment now sits between the bread plate and water glass. The information that took months or even years to collect is now readily available with a quick Google search. Unlike past years, information and data surround consumers, constantly available to inform decisions and enrich lives. From the moment people strap on their smartwatches in the morning, to afternoons in front of laptops and evenings scrolling through social media sites, people's brains are presented with an ongoing stream of information. In fact, as of January 2024 there was a whopping 3.5 billion internet users worldwide (Statista, n.d.), and that number is only expected to grow. Indeed, consumers are bombarded with data.

The incredible amount of information available, added to the breathtaking speed at which it can be processed and analyzed, has brought tremendous progress to professional and personal lives. Indeed, having access to virtually unlimited information, along with the ability to analyze immense amounts of data, often leads to robust inferences and concrete findings. According to the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (2021), "Evidence shows that data access and sharing can generate positive social and economic benefits for data providers (direct impact), their suppliers and data users (indirect impact), and the wider economy (induced impact). Virtually limitless information enables people to make truly informed decisions, and to draw conclusions backed by concrete occurrences versus tentative impressions.

However, having easy and immediate access to information can create challenges in the ability to process and represent it in professional contexts. Everyone, at one time or another, has experienced information overload and decision fatigue. Coining the phrase 'infoxication,' Cazaly (2023) states, "When our brains are overloaded with too much data from the outside world, we can struggle to absorb, process, and make sense of it — hampering our ability to make smart decisions and perform at our best." Abundant information forces people to make countless choices, often leading to decision fatigue, an exhausting phenomenon. As noted by Cleveland Clinic's Mental Health (Cleveland Clinic, 2024), "the volume, complexity, or potential impact of the decisions you have to make in a day can leave you so physically, mentally and emotionally drained that "fries or a salad?" feels like a riddle." Also an issue is the desire to share this abundance of information with audiences. Unfortunately, "more is better" does not always apply in a presentation context.

As individuals increasingly utilize artificial intelligence to gather information, and graphics-generating tools like Tableau, Adobe, SAS Canva, Procreate, and Vectr to name only a few, the need increases for explicit guidelines to avoid information overload while creating graphics that avoid data-dump designs as they are used effectively to build strong business arguments. As Stobierski (2021) points out, visually representing data can provide businesses with various benefits, including the ability to communicate data to a wider audience and to enable stakeholders to make decisions based on data.

This session explores the implications of information overload for business communicators as they create messages incorporating concrete proof to build solid business cases. The session will share theoretical frameworks for managing information and explore guidance for the creation and delivery of graphics used in business presentations. The session will share strategies for developing design plans and review best practices for the creation and delivery of graphics. Ultimately, an awareness of the implications of information overload and the need to adjust the design and discussion of graphics in business talk will enable participants to transform data-rich graphics into beautifully effective presentation tools.

References

Bad data visualization: 5 examples of misleading data. (2021, January 28). Business Insights Blog. https://online.hbs.edu/blog/post/bad-data-visualization

Cazaly, L. (2023, December 11). *How to save yourself from "Information overload."* Harvard Business Review. https://hbr.org/2021/09/how-to-save-yourself-from-information-overload

Cleveland Clinic. (2024, September 12). *8 signs of decision fatigue and how to cope.* https://health.clevelandclinic.org/decision-fatigue

OECD. (2019). *Enhancing access to and sharing of data: Reconciling risks and benefits for data re-use across societies*. OECD. https://doi.org/10.1787/276aaca8-en

Statista (n.d.). *Internet and social media users in the world 2024*. https://www.statista.com/statistics/617136/digital-population-worldwide/

Stobierski, T. (2021, June 15). 15 eye-opening corporate social responsibility statistics. *Harvard Business School Online's Business Insights.* [Blog]. https://online.hbs.edu/blog/post/corporate-social-responsibility-statistics

Online Learning Platforms: Instructional Tools Used by Faculty

Marice Kelly
Stephen F. Austin State University

Higher education institutions must stay abreast of modern innovations to compete in a forever-changing, profitable educational industry. According to Verified Market Research (2023), the global "higher education market is valued at USD $736.81 billion and is projected to reach USD $1,569.36 billion by 2030. Those numbers proved that higher education is big business, and institutions intentionally market their curriculum to be unique, seeking the brightest minds. Institutions create recruitment strategies that market their innovative curriculum to potential students and retain current students (Hanover Research, 2022). Institutions rely on departments and faculty to create innovative classroom assignments that will show students and parents that the institution is worth their investment.

A modern innovation that higher education institutions are using more is online learning platforms (Shah, 2020). Online learning platforms (such as Coursera, SkillShare, In Learning, etc.) have increased in demand at higher education institutions because of their ability to offer a diverse range of courses (Raouna, 2023; Shah, 2020). The diverse range of courses allows institutions to reach students globally (Raouna, 2023; Shah, 2020). Students are able to access learning materials anytime and anywhere from various institutions that partner with online learning businesses (Almaiah & Alyoussef, 2019). Moreover, online learning platforms allow professors to supplement their curriculum with new technology and concepts that benefit the students through cost-effective communication channels for courses.

Online Learning Platforms

Since the late 1990s, traditional classroom learning in higher education has transformed to embrace online learning. According to Bernard et al. (2004) study findings, there were no significant outcome differences for students who studied online versus face-to-face classes. Over the years, various research studies about online learning have concluded that there are no significant variances in student outcomes between online learning versus face-to-face classes (Ashby et al., 2011; Bowen et al., 2014; Mollenkopf et al., 2017; Stocker, 2018). Hence, online learning has become a permanent modality that is offered to students from higher education institutions.

In the fall of 2021, post COVID-19 pandemic, there were 9.4 million undergraduate students enrolled in at least one online class (National Center for Education Statistics, 2023). Since COVID-19 pandemic, online learning platform services have increased (ColorWhistle, 2023), which gives professors options to select the platform most suitable for their classes. Research has been conducted on student usage of online learning platforms (Abuhassna et al., 2020; Bernard et al., 2004; Shah, 2020). Thus, more research is needed on how to use online learning platforms as supplemental resource tools to a curriculum.

Aim and Scope

Online learning platforms are a relatively new phenomenon that has craved a permanent place in the online education industry. Faculty are constantly seeking new instructional ideas to integrate into their curriculum and online learning platforms are a new approach that will also use new technology applications. Few studies have examined faculty experiences as online learning platforms are used in their curriculum (Almaiah & Alyoussef, 2019; Hsu, 2024; Wei et al., 2021). The following question guides this qualitative research study.

RQ1: What are faculty experiences in using online learning platforms as supplemental resource tools?

Methodology

Organizational Content and Sample Section. The participants will be recruited through colleges, universities, and professional organizations where the faculty is a member. Purposeful random sampling is the method chosen for the criterion-based selection process. They have to be faculty (full-time/lecture/adjunct). Participants must have taught any communication class that used an online learning platform in their curriculum within the last two years.

Data Collection and Data Analysis. Data collection will be through in-depth, semi-structured interviews to understand faculty experiences using online learning platforms in their classes. Once the interviews have been completed and transcribed, the researcher will do member-checking with the participants for an "accurate account of the knowledge constructed through inquiry" (Johnson & Parry, 2015, p. 47). Member checking will be done by giving a copy of the report to the participants and will invite them to add additional comments (Roulston, 2013). Data analysis will be done using the Charmaz (2011) grounded theory method, which is "a systematic yet flexible method that involves simultaneous data collection and analysis that uses comparative methods to construct theories" (p.165). There are studies that have researched students' perspectives, but few have examined faculty experiences in using online learning platforms. This study is significant because it adds to the literature on how faculty can integrate online learning platforms into their curriculums, which will help prepare students for the workforce by using up-to-date technology.

References

Abuhassna, H., Al-Rahmi, W., Yahya, N., Zakaria, M., Kosnin, A., & Darwish, M. (2020). Development of a new model on utilizing online learning platforms to improve students' academic achievements and satisfaction. *International Journal of Educational Technology in Higher Education, (17)*38, 1–23. DOI: 10.1186/s41239-020-00216-z

Almaiah, M., & Alyoussef, I. (2019). Analysis of the effect of course design, course content support, course assessment and instructor characteristics on the actual use of e-learning system. *IEEE Access, (7)*, 171907–171922. DOI: 10.1109/ACCESS.2019.2956349

Bernard, R. M., Abrami, P. C., Lou, Y., Borokhovski, E., Wade, A., Wozney, L., . . . Huang, B. (2004). How does distance education compare with classroom instruction? A meta-analysis of the empirical literature. *Review of Educational Research, 74*(3), 379–439. https://doi.org/10.3102/00346543074003379

Charmaz, K. (2011). A constructivist grounded theory analysis of losing and regaiing a valued self. In F. Wertz, K. Charmaz, L. McMullen, R. Josselson, R. Anderson, & E. McSpadden, *Five Ways of Doing Qualitative Analysis* (pp. 165-204). New York: The Guilford Press.

ColorWhistle. (2023, December 18). *Top 6 online learning platforms in the world*. ColorWhistle. https://colorwhistle.com/top-online-learning-platforms/

Elmghaamez, I. K., & Olarewaju, J. I. (2022). Corporate social responsibility and financial performance of product and service-based firms listed on london stock exchange. *Corporate Social-Responsibility and Environmental Management, (29)5*, 1370–1383. https://doi.org/10.1002/csr.2275

Hall, B. H. (2004). Innovation and duffision. *Journal of Economic Literature*, 1–34.

Hanover Research. (2022). *2022 trends in higher education.* Arlington, VA.

Hsu, R. (2024 (13)). A grounded theory exploration of language massive open online courses (LMOOCS): Understanding students' viewpoints. *Sustainability*, 2577.

Janelli, M., & Lipnevich, A. (2021). Effects of pre-tests and feedback on performance outcomes and persistence in massive open online. *Computers & Education*, 1–13.

National Center for Education Statistics. (2023, July 20). *Distance learning*. Fast Facts. https://nces.ed.gov/fastfacts/display.asp?id=80

Raouna, K. (2023, March 21). *18 best online course platforms comparison guide*. LearnWorlds. https://www.learnworlds.com/best-online-course-platforms/#Course_Marketplaces

Rogers, E. M. (1995). *Diffusion of innovation.* New York: Free Press.

Shah, D. (2020, November 30). *By the numbers: MOOCs in 2020*. The Report. https://www.classcentral.com/report/mooc-stats-2020/

Turner, J. W., Thomas, R. J., & Reinsch Jr., N. L. (2004). Willingness to try a new communication technology. *Journal of Business Communication, (41)*1, 5–26.

Wei, X., Saab, N., & Admiraal, W. (2021). Assessment of cognitive, behavioral, and affective learning outcomes in massive open online courses: A systematic literature review. *Computers & Education.* https://doi.org/10.1016/j.compedu.2020.104097

Williams, J., & Violanti, M. (2024). Don't wess with mama bear: How workplace bullying bystanders find meaning in their role. *International Journal of Business Communication*, 1–26. DOI: 10.1177/23294884241226561

Progressing a Student Employability Initiative: Full-College Collaboration to Implement MOS Certifications

Leah Schell
Cleveland State University

Employees who earn Microsoft Office Specialist (MOS) certifications get hired faster, are recognized as invaluable, earn 15 percent higher salaries, and are more often promoted than their uncertified peers (Sullivan & Pachatt, 2023). For these reasons, many institutions of higher education are offering MOS certifications to students. However, these certifications are often offered through the institution's information technology department or through a 2-year Microsoft Office Specialist degree. These formats force students to either prepare for exams on their own or work through two years of coursework that may not be associated with their four-year program.

Cleveland State University found value in providing access and opportunity to students for preparation of these certifications through coursework already required for all business majors. A committee of faculty, administrators, and graduate assistants designed a pathway for students to earn MOS certifications as part of their degree. It is important to note that students are not required to take additional courses or fund their exams. The only cost to the student is a one-time $70 fee to access materials during their full tenure at the University.

Innovations in Business Communication

Business Communications (BC) is a required course for all business majors at the university and is predominately taught during a student's first or second year of study. As part of an initiative to make the College of Business the cornerstone for northeast Ohio's business graduates, the committee assessed and implemented Microsoft Office certification into existing courses.

Through the initial assessment period, BC was identified as the best course for the PowerPoint certification. A product for all Microsoft Office trainings was collaboratively chosen by the committee since it added the most value in terms of cost savings for students, longevity for student usage, and consistency in quality of the materials.

To successfully implement MOS PowerPoint Certification products into BC, I created a master course that could be copied by part-time instructors into their BC sections. Not only did this create much-needed consistency throughout these sections, but it also provided an opportunity for consistent measurement of written and oral communications goals for the AACSB Assurance of Learning Standards for institutional accreditation.

As part of the BC redesign, I incorporated PowerPoint modules and developed a course project that required students to transfer their learning from the modules to a PowerPoint presentation. My goals for this assignment were twofold. First, I wanted students to understand that the modules weren't "busy work" and that their content makes more dynamic and professional presentations. Second, it gave students practice in PowerPoint skills to prepare for the certification exam.

During the Fall 2023 semester, all students in my BC sections were required to complete the PowerPoint modules and take the certification exam. This provided students with the opportunity to earn a badge for their career readiness materials. It also provided the College with benchmark data focused on course completion and certification exam pass rates. Our research is ongoing; however, we've found that 62 percent of BC students passed the certification exam.

College-Wide Collaboration

In addition to incorporating the PowerPoint certification into BC, other freshman and sophomore-level courses were redesigned to include other Microsoft certifications. For example, the Software Applications course prepares students for the Excel certification, and the World of Business course introduces students to the first two modules for Word, Outlook, and Excel. These modules are reinforced in other courses such as Introductory Accounting I and a senior-level marketing research course. Overall, our goal is for students to continue using what they've learned through the certification exam preparation process throughout their tenure as undergraduates.

The implementation process was not without its setbacks. For example, before our first assessment, we found that some Software Applications courses were requiring students to interact with modules outside of Excel. This caused overlap in student assignments. Additionally, the certification exam fees are funded by outside donors. We've quickly realized that there are more students ready to take exams than there is funding to cover them. Finally, we found that some students do not take the exam process seriously and fail to prepare, causing exam vouchers to be used without any intention by the student to pass the certification.

Conclusions

The College of Business has seen success in having over 1000 unique students interact with the MOS modules. We continue to collect success data to evaluate program effectiveness. Faculty have also readjusted to eliminate overlap in modules. This College-wide initiative has been mostly successful, and future plans include requiring students to earn at least one MOS certification to graduate.

Reference

Sullivan, M., & Pachatt, B. (2023, September 18). *Why get certified?* Microsoft 365. https://learn.microsoft.com/en-us/credentials/certifications/posts/microsoft-learn-why-get-certified

Redesigning Business Communication: Incorporating High Impact Quality Dimensions

Melynda Conner
Austin Peay State University

Purpose

High impact practices (HIPs) are a set of classroom interventions empirically shown to foster student success and retention for college students. The term was introduced by George Kuh in 2007 as he discussed the evidence behind the benefits of interventions such as undergraduate research, learning communities, internships, and capstones. By 2013, Kuh and O'Donnell in partnership with the AAC&U published a list of curricular inclusions necessary for every HIP to be done well. These inclusions are evidence-based classroom practices shown to improve student success in any course. In 2017, as the grant-funded HIP Specialist for TBR: The College System of Tennessee, this presenter constructed a curricular framework based on the HIP quality dimensions for TBR faculty to use as a guide when developing HIP courses. Once the grant-supported position ended, this presenter reentered the classroom as a business communication instructor and decided to take advantage of the rare opportunity to design a course from scratch and walk the walk she had been talking.

When this presenter was hired in the fall semester of 2023 at a public four-year institution, the new sophomore-level business communication course had recently been adopted as a required course for all College of Business graduates. The course had only run for one semester, was offered only online, was taught by an adjunct, and used only textbook and publisher materials. This presentation discusses how the presenter's redevelopment incorporated the eight HIP quality dimensions in a project-based learning design that works for all modalities.

Goals

There were three primary goals for this redesign. The first was to provide students with class experiences that stretch beyond the textbook and publisher materials. The second was to create an engaging, interactive, and equitable course experience for both online and in-class students as well as for the instructor. The third goal was to support student success in this course that is required for all College of Business graduates.

Methodology

To create the new interactive course, a backwards course design methodology was applied with the Universal Design for Learning (UDL) and Quality Matters (QM) principles in mind. Additionally, a structural framework of the eight HIP quality dimensions (high expectations, diversity, discussion, feedback, reflection, integrative learning, presentation, and student research) served as the curriculum creation guide to meet the course-level learning outcomes. The result was a Quality Matters certified project-based learning course.

Outcomes

For the past two semesters, this presenter has delivered the high-impact-infused business communication course in two modalities with a total of 280 students in multiple course preparations. To ensure incorporation of high expectations, clear performance guidelines were provided within the syllabus, module learning outcomes, assignment instructions, and rubrics. Additionally, a growth-mindset-focused class motto was adopted and repeated weekly.

Real world relevance and integrative learning were included within an Employment Communication project. Students created resumes and cover letters to pass the Applicant Tracking System (ATS). Additionally, they attended a career fair, practiced emailing hiring managers, created a LinkedIn bio, and searched for "next-step" positions like internships, summer jobs, and graduate school.

The Global Awareness Team Presentation project encompassed many quality dimensions including diversity, research, discussion, and presentation. Additionally, course materials were provided from contributors with diverse backgrounds and perspectives. Class activities on similarities and differences were conducted, as well.

A scaffolded student research project was conducted within each class. Students completed a survey about habits and opinions regarding business communication skills. The object of the research was to discover which topics should be included in today's business communication courses to best prepare students for the workplace. The resulting data was provided to learners who then completed a slide with chart representation of data from at least one survey question, a research report revolving around that question, and a proposal for change at the university based on their findings.

Direct student-faculty interaction was facilitated by low-stakes discussions on module concepts, weekly class-level feedback, and substantive, personalized grading feedback. Rubrics and feedback support documents assisted with reducing the large grading load for this course. Feedback support documents include original draft messages for all announcements, weekly messages, assessment comments, and emails. Reflections were assigned both pre and post semester concerning students' knowledge and application of business communication skills, grammar skills, and emotional intelligence. Additional reflections were incorporated throughout the semester for the teamwork, employment, and research projects.

What went right? Pedagogical goals were met. Students appeared engaged and interested.

What lessons were learned? This design requires loads of grading. Going forward, alternative methods of assessment will be explored. Also, assignment instructions need more clarity.

References

Kuh, G. D., & O'Donnell, K. (2013). Ensuring quality and taking high-impact practices to scale. *Peer Review*, *15*(2), 32. https://link.gale.com/apps/doc/A339018909/AONE?u=tel_oweb&sid=googleScholar&xid=1e3865a8

National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE). (2007). *Experiences that matter: Enhancing student learning and success—Annual report 2007.* Indiana University Center for Postsecondary Research. https://doi.org/10.5967/axhv-jb45

Simplicity is (Still) a Virtue: Using Generative AI in the Classroom

Carl Follmer
University of Iowa

Ryan Sheets
University of Arkansas

The prospect of teaching communication skills alongside developments in Artificial Intelligence is daunting, and one that instructors have wrestled with for nearly two years. The rapid pace of AI progress makes it untenable for overworked faculty to constantly iterate their guidance for students about these programs.

In this presentation, we will discuss a principles-based approach to teaching effective AI use in business communication to undergraduate and Master's students. By focusing instruction on the principles of using AI for effective document creation, idea generation, and perspective taking, instructors can make their course content more relevant to students while increasing resilience to future AI developments.

In the 2023-2024 academic year, presenter 1 taught "Principles of Business Communication" to business undergraduates and, in Spring 2024, due to a schedule conflict, also taught a general writing course "Writing with Integrity" to a variety of majors at Arkansas. With regard to generative AI platforms, these courses sought both to gauge students' familiarity, comfort level, and barriers to use with these platforms and to try and go beyond basic prompt engineering to thinking holistically about these platforms. Although we covered the basics of prompt engineering, we also discussed:

- Generic aspect of outputs and developing students' editorial eye to refine them so they're useful – the goal is a better output, not good enough output
- Ability of platforms to repurpose and repackage content as the audience or rhetorical situation changes
- Value of slowing down as a writer and develop a healthy skepticism towards one's content – resist the urge to speed through work and instead use the time gains from GAI to maximize quality
- Use of existing prompt engineering best practices as a springboard for deeper tinkering and engagement
- Sustainability and ethical concerns surrounding these products; developing a knowledge of when and why to use them

The assignment that students found most useful was a wrinkle on the straightforward "use AI to edit (or rewrite) this document." In it, students are tasked with using AI to rewrite a document for a different rhetorical situation; in particular, they take a persuasive document, namely a recommendation report, and then are tasked with rewriting it to create shared understanding and build consensus. This style-shifting assignment provides a low-stakes way of helping students understand the value of not holding on too strongly to their ideas, develop a deeper understanding of others' perspectives, and reinforce rhetorical principles and theories we discussed earlier in the semester. Students are then tasked with reflecting on their usage of the platform and the quality of their outputs.

In Spring of 2024, presenter 2 debuted his MBA course entitled "Communicating with AI and Business Technology." Rather than centering the class on demonstrating the functional details of a variety of AI programs, presenter 2 followed a simple, principles-based approach to AI that guards against future technological development. This class included standard instruction about effective AI prompt generation but focused on additional aspects of AI usage as well.

These principles include:

- The authority of the human user over the technology
- The need to optimize AI output for human audiences
- User satisfaction as a benchmark of AI success
- The value of AI for idea generation and perspective taking

The innovative course featured a narrative structure to walk working professional students through an 8-week scenario designed to increase their familiarity with and mastery of AI usage in business contexts. In this scenario, students work with multiple AI programs to create short and long business documents to internal and external audiences, investigate AI applications for routine business tasks to increase efficiency and quality of work, use third-party AI tools to improve writing, presentation, and visual communication skills, explore ethical implications AI poses, and finally, deliver the results of these activities to a hypothetical supervisor.

Additionally, the course included a custom-made AI chatbot that served as an AI teammate for each student group. The chatbot (named Impy) is programmed to disagree with any statement a user provides. In this way, each team had access to alternative ideas and perspectives that human teams often struggle to generate.

The courses and assignments outlined in this proposal offer a simple, principles-based gateway to teaching AI in business communication curricula that is sustainable for the instructor. While faculty certainly need to stay current with AI's capabilities (whether they teach AI or not), integrating content about the principles of working with AI increases relevance for students and limits the burden on instructors.

Solutions in the Problem: Problem-Based Technical Writing Pedagogy

Justin G. Whitney
Tennessee State University

Problem-Based Learning (PBL) is a pedagogical approach where instructors pose "real-world" problems for students to analyze and solve. PBL helps students learn by doing. They first research a problem before integrating theoretical knowledge with practical application to develop effective remedies. Proponents of PBL suggest that grappling with complex realistic challenges achieves important educational outcomes because students learn concepts and principles through engagement rather than direct presentation (Hmelo-Silver, 2004). PBL is designed to promote active student participation while also drawing attention to the contextual factors influencing the outcome of one's work (Kumar & Refaei, 2013).

Correspondingly, Technical Writing (TW) is frequently conceived as "pragmatic" because it prioritizes communication over self-expression, often for the purpose of helping readers understand concepts and perform important tasks (Atkinson & Corbitt, 2021). This perspective lends itself to thinking of and teaching TW as an important mechanism for helping readers solve problems (Markel, 1998).

The direct attention paid to real-world problem solving shared by PBL and TW is a pedagogical opportunity. PBL suggests it can help students learn the concepts and principles of effective TW through engagement with the kinds of complex issues Technical Writers face in "real-world" situations. Such engagement may promote an awareness of the contextual factors that are important for effective technical communication, such as audience, purpose and constraints. Further, PBL may increase student motivation while also avoiding emphasis on direct grammar instruction.

This presentation reports on findings from an ongoing IRB approved qualitative research study investigating PBL as TW pedagogy. Data analysis is thematic and from three primary sources: written reflections completed by students after each assignment, class discussions, and interviews. Preliminary findings suggest important benefits, such as motivation for both completing assignments and participating in some classroom practices. PBL seems to foster robust class discussions that focus on contextual factors impacting writing success. Nevertheless, adjusting to PBL pedagogy can be difficult and emotionally taxing. Further, the extent to which PBL fosters an awareness of the contextual factors important for effective TW remains uncertain. In addition, problem design is a difficult and lengthy process.

References

Atkinson, D., & Corbitt, S. (2021). *Mindful technical writing*, TRAILS.

Hmelo-Silver, C. E. (2004). Problem-based learning: What and how do students learn? *Educational Psychology Review*, *16*(3), 235–266. https://doi.org/10.1023/b:edpr.0000034022.16470.f3

Kumar, R., & Refaei, B. (2013). Designing a problem-based learning intermediate composition course. *College Teaching*, *61*(2), 67–73. https://doi.org/10.1080/87567555.2012.741079

Markel, M. H. (1998). *Technical communication: Situations and strategies*. St. Martin's Press.

Strategic Methods to Integrate and Assess Critical Thinking Skills in Business Communication

Lisa Gueldenzoph Snyder
North Carolina A&T State University

"Learning is no longer a process of transferring knowledge from teacher to student. Learning must adapt to the age of globalization by practicing the skills needed in the 21st century…. Critical thinking is vital for success"—both in the classroom and in the workplace (Anggraeni et al., 2023). The advent of artificial intelligence has created even more need for students to sharpen their critical thinking skills to determine what is credible, identify implications, and make informed decisions about information.

Instructors of business communication courses have a unique opportunity to integrate critical thinking practice in their application of theory to practice. Business communication activities (whether in class or assigned as homework) can be designed to encourage students to analyze situations, question assumptions, and consider multiple perspectives. Interactive classroom experiences where students engage in debates, case studies, and role-playing exercises will further enhance students' critical thinking capabilities. Whether focusing on persuasive communication, bad-news messages, or even routine emails, business communication instructors can integrate and assess students' critical thinking skills through several strategies, including but not limited to:

- adopting a critical thinking model to apply content, such as the Model of the Elements of Reasoning explained in this presentation

- integrating critical thinking requirements into content delivery by using methods that encourage analysis, evaluation, and synthesis of information (e.g., the ACE Communication Process)

- using assessments that require students to demonstrate their critical thinking skills and provide feedback that helps them improve, such as case studies and role-playing opportunities

- leveraging digital tools and platforms to create interactive and engaging learning experiences that promote critical thinking. (Dimock et al., 2015)

The Model of the Elements of Reasoning is based on the work of Dr. Richard Paul, the former Director of Research and Professional Development at the Center for Critical Thinking and the former Chair of the National Council for Excellence in Critical Thinking. The model proposes as universal structures of thought ((The Critical Thinking Community, n.d.):

> *whenever we think, we think for a purpose within a point of view based on assumptions that lead to implications and consequences. We use data, facts, and experiences to make inferences and judgements based on concepts and theories to answer a question or to solve a problem.*

Critical thinking is “thinking about thinking,” so to put the universal structures of thought into context, the Model of Elements of Reasoning applies the following questioning techniques, which can be adapted to different business communication activities:

ELEMENTS OF THINKING	QUESTIONS TO ASK	CONTEXT
1. Purpose	What is my fundamental purpose?	goal, objective, function
2. Question	What is my point of view with respect to the issue?	problem, issue
3. Information	What assumptions am I using in my reasoning?	data, facts, evidence, observations, experiences, reasons
4. Interpretation & Inference	What are the implications of my reasoning (if I am correct)?	conclusions, solutions
5. Concepts	What information do I need to answer my question?	theories, definitions, laws, principles, models
6. Assumptions	What are my most fundamental inferences or conclusions?	presuppositions, axioms, taking for granted
7. Implications & Consequences	What is the most basic concept in the question?	that which follows logically, effects
8. Point of View	What is the key question I am trying to answer?	frame of reference, perspective, orientation, world view

Source: *The Elements of Reasoning,* https://community.criticalthinking.org/elementsOfReasoning.php

Assessing critical thinking in business communication involves evaluating an individual’s ability to analyze information, understand different perspectives, and make informed decisions. Instructors need to assess students’ individual ability to follow instructions and apply knowledge in practical situations, such as case scenarios that require students to analyze, compose, and evaluate (e.g., the ACE Communication Process). Audience analysis provides one of the best opportunities to hone students’ critical thinking, both in terms of the audience’s needs as well as the context of the communication situation. The most engaging case scenarios challenge students to look beyond the obvious, to think deeply about how and why they think the way they do, and suggest viable solutions based on analysis and synthesis of information. Additional assessment strategies include adapting communication style to different situations and ensuring clarity and effectiveness (Knight, 2014; Plummer, 2019).

Assessing critical thinking, especially in the context of business communication, presents several challenges. The lack of a universally accepted definition of critical thinking makes it difficult to create quantifiable measures of consistent assessment—“thinking about thinking” is a vague construct. It often requires subjective judgement, which can vary among instructors, leading to inconsistent assessment outcomes. Using a rubric, such as the one that will be shared during this presentation, can provide an effective tool to objectively assess critical thinking (Barthel, 2013; Dimock et al., 2015).

References

Anggraeni, D. M., Prahani, B. K., Suprapto, N., Shofiyah, N., & Jatmiko, B. (2023). Systematic review of problem based learning research in fostering critical thinking skills. *Thinking Skills and Creativity, 49*. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tsc.2023.101334

Barthel, L. (2013). Developing communication skills through focusing on critical thinking across the business curriculum. *Federation of Business Disciplines Journal, 1,* 1–7.

The Critical Thinking Community. (n.d.). *Welcome to the Center for Critical Thinking Community Online*. https://community.criticalthinking.org/

Dimock, J. P., Treinen, K. P., Cronn-Mills, D., & Jersak, R. S. (2015). Infusing critical thinking into communication courses. *Communication and Theater Association of Minnesota Journal, 35*(1). https://doi.org/10.56816/2471-0032.1018

Knight, M. (2014). Finding ways to teach critical thinking in business and professional communication, *Business and Professional Communication Quarterly, 77*(3). https://doi.org/10.1177/2329490614546853

Plummer, M. (2019, October 11). A short guide to building your team's critical thinking skills. *Harvard Business Review.* https://hbr.org/2019/10/a-short-guide-to-building-your-teams-critical-thinking-skills

Voices in the Bot:
Uncovering Student Insights to Reshape AI Teaching Strategies

Timothy Ponce, University of Texas Arlington
Ashton Mouton, Sam Houston State University
Katrin Fischer, Brandeis University

Exigence/Purpose

The rapid evolution of artificial intelligence (AI) impacts educational practices significantly. At the 2023 ABC International Conference in Denver, discussions during a pedagogy breakout session highlighted a knowledge gap in students' perceptions of Generative AI in writing. This gap prompts the need for educators to reevaluate teaching methodologies to integrate AI effectively. We responded by implementing think-aloud assignments in diverse classrooms to gather students' real-time reflections on using AI for writing tasks.

Goals for Students and Faculty

The think-aloud method, complemented by screen recordings, enhances understanding of AI tool usage. By the assignment's conclusion, students are expected to understand their relationship with AI (e.g., expert or assistant) and acquire skills to critically engage with AI in writing. This practice is pivotal for refining educational approaches and informing strategies to integrate AI in ways that bolster student learning and engagement.

Context/Literature Review

The AI Think-aloud process is rooted in constructivist and experiential learning theories. Constructivist learning is active, involving student engagement with AI tools; socially constructed through class discussions; and personal, integrating new skills with existing knowledge (Elliott et al., 2000). Experiential learning involves practical, reflective actions that apply new insights in varied contexts (Kolb, 1984; Fenwick, 2001).

Visible Thinking Routines from Harvard's Project Zero enhance learning by making thought processes visible and by aiding reflection. These routines help instructors track and customize learning experiences, providing effective feedback throughout the thinking, writing, and research stages. They also develop students' metacognitive skills, enhancing critical thinking (Ritchhart, Church, & Morrison, 2011). Think-alouds have been used to activate problem-solving in various disciplines (Qi et al., 2022; Reinhart, 2022).

Our project leverages these learning theories and techniques to explore how students use Generative AI for writing, fostering reflection, and refining ethical AI use pedagogies.

Methods

The study spans two phases across four courses at three universities, engaging students from introductory to advanced levels. Phase One involved upper-level students producing AI-generated texts for professional contexts, with assignments ranging from corporate communication to technical writing, resulting in 73 submissions. Phase Two will expand to lower-level courses, focusing on design and business storytelling, aiming to engage additional students in similar exercises.

Emerging Themes

Preliminary analysis indicates that students are keen to master AI tools, noting the importance of prompt management to avoid unusable outputs. There is also a notable urgency to acquire AI writing skills for future employability, albeit with some uncertainty about the specific skills needed and their market value. These findings highlight the need for educational programs to develop clear AI literacy that aligns with job market trends.

References

Cardon P., Fleischmann C., Aritz J., Logemann M., & Heidewald, J. (2023). The challenges and opportunities of AI-assisted writing: Developing AI literacy for the AI age. *Business and Professional Communication Quarterly*, *86*(3), 257–295. https://doi.org/10.1177/23294906231176517

Cardon, P., Fleischmann, C., Logemann, M., Heidewald, J., Aritz, J., & Swartz, S. (2023). Competencies needed by business professionals in the AI age: Character and communication lead the way. *Business and Professional Communication Quarterly*, *87*(2). https://doi-org.ezproxy.uta.edu/10.1177/23294906231208166

Elliott, S. N., Kratochwill, T. R., Littlefield Cook, J., & Travers, J. (2000). *Educational psychology: Effective teaching, effective learning* (3rd ed.). McGraw-Hill College.

Fenwick, T. J. (2001). Experiential learning: A theoretical critique from five perspectives. *RIC Clearinghouse on Adult, Career, and Vocational Education* (ER 385:11). http://www.cete.org/acve/textonly/mp_fenwick_01.asp

Harvard Graduate School of Education. (2022). *Project Zero's Thinking Routine Toolbox.* https://pz.harvard.edu/thinking-routines

Kolb, D. (1984). *Experiential learning*. Prentice-Hall.

Qi, H., Phan, A., Liu, H., Lubada, M., Ghazinejad, M., Gedney, X., Gong, R., & Chen, H. (2022). Improving engineering students' problem-solving skills through think-aloud exercises. *Proceedings of the Frontiers in Education Conference (FIE)*.

Reinhart, A., Evans, C., Luby, A., Orellana, J., Meyer, M., Wieczorek, J., Elliott, P., Burckhardt, P., & Nugenta, R. (2022). Think-aloud interviews: A tool for exploring student statistical reasoning. *Journal of Statistics and Data Science Education*, *30*(2), 100–113.

Ritchhart, R., Church, M., & Morrison, K. (2011). *Making thinking visible: How to promote engagement, understanding, and independence for all learners*. Jossey-Bass.

Can LLMs Account for Cultural Differences in Professional Communication?

Emily Dejeu and Ewuradwoa Dorothy Hammond
Carnegie Mellon University

Introduction

A major affordance of LLMs is their ability to communicate fluently in numerous languages: ChatGPT, for instance, supports over 80 languages. Therefore, these tools could be useful resources for intercultural communication. This said, today's most popular LLMs (OpenAI's ChatGPT, Google's Gemini, and Anthropic's Claude, to name a few) were all built in the United States and trained primarily on English language texts. Since language reinforces and circulates cultural values, it seems possible that LLMs might inadvertently have an English bias. Indeed, a recent study of Llama-2 transformer models found that, functionally, these platforms "think" in English, even when they are asked to communicate in other languages (Wenderler et al., 2024).

A possible bias toward English could, by extension, reflect a bias toward Western communication values (AI Meets Culture, n.d.; Cao et al., 2023; Tao et al., 2023). As Hofstede's (2011) influential theory of cultural dimensions suggests, Western nations, which are typically characterized as low-context and low-power-distance, value explicit, direct, and egalitarian communication, while high-context, high-power-distance nations like India, China, and South Korea value more indirect communication that reflects relationship hierarchies. An implicit bias for Western communication values would, of course, render LLMs less useful for cross-cultural communication – particularly professional communication, where issues of respect, deference, and tone are particularly important.

This study seeks to better understand the extent to which ChatGPT, currently the most popular LLM on the market, can produce culturally appropriate output when tasked with writing a professional email to a non-Western recipient.

Methods

We pursued a three-step methodology for this study. To begin, we recruited three senior undergraduate business majors at Carnegie Mellon University – Kay, Tia, and Jay (pseudonyms) – who had extensive experience living and working in India, China, or South Korea, respectively (the three countries most represented in Carnegie Mellon's population of international students).

Then, we conducted initial exploratory interviews during which we asked participants their experience living and working in India, China, or South Korea as well as their experience using LLMs for school and work-related communication. Next, we asked participants to describe a scenario from their own work experience that involved sending an important email to a person whose impressions of them mattered. Finally, students were asked to write that email, in the language they had sent it in originally. Our South Korean and Chinese participants wrote their messages in Korean and Mandarin, respectively, while our Indian participant wrote her message in English.

Once we had students' emails, we ran them through a series of prompts in ChatGPT aimed at revising and improving each email. One prompt specified the email's cultural context and asked ChatGPT to make suggestions and revisions that were culturally appropriate; the other prompt did not reference cultural context and instead asked broadly for suggestions and revisions to improve the message.

Results

All three participants indicated that ChatGPT's suggestions for improvement, based on its observations about communication best practices, were generally accurate and helpful, if a bit overbroad. Participants agreed that general suggestions like "Add a polite greeting", "Clarify your request," or "Propose flexibility" when suggesting a meeting time were helpful, as were more culturally specific suggestions like "Use polite language", "Elaborate on mutual benefits", and "Show humility."

However, participants took issue with other culturally specific suggestions ChatGPT made. For instance, ChatGPT suggested that it's appropriate in Korean culture to use honorifics, but Jay indicated this is not common in Korean workplace communication. Kay, likewise, indicated that ChatGPT's suggestion to use a respectful salutation like "Shri" was "not applicable at all" for a work-related email, stating, "this is an old, traditional title you'd use with an older person to show respect" but not in a workplace message. Tia also indicated that ChatGPT's suggestion to express gratitude to her recipient was not necessary, "especially in communicating a daily work matter."

When it came to assessing ChatGPT's revisions, all three participants agreed that the revisions ChatGPT made when prompted to consider a particular country's cultural values and norms were not effective and could not be sent to readers without substantial revision because they were overly polite, to the point of being odd and thus inappropriate. For instance, Tia noted that the first revision was "just too much" for a cultural context; for example, at one point, ChatGPT's revision used the phrase "恳请", which Tia said "means more like "beg" than "kindly ask" as well as the phrase "竭尽所能," which she said roughly translates to "giving my everything to you." The emails' closing was also inappropriate, in her estimation: it closed with the phrase "身体健康," which translates to "wishing you good health," something that Tia says would only be appropriate as a farewell to relatives after seeing them for a holiday, perhaps, but not for colleagues. All three phrases, she said, were over the top in terms of their politeness and not necessary in workplace communication. Jay, likewise, indicated that ChatGPT's choice to use the Korean word "귀하," which roughly translates to "dear" and is a highly formal term, was not appropriate for an email to a colleague, nor was the phrase "귀하의 소중한 의견을 기다리겠습니다," which roughly translates to "I'll be waiting for your valuable feedback" – both were too "extra," in Jay's words, and not appropriate for a routine email to a manager asking for a meeting to discuss feedback. Kay similarly felt that ChatGPT had gone overboard in its efforts to strike a polite note in its revisions to her message: she noted that ChatGPT had added phrases and sentences to express appreciation and deference that, in her opinion, were not necessary. "It's too long," she explained, "and it's saying the same thing again and again. It would be more culturally appropriate to be short and direct" to respect the reader's time, she suggested.

By contrast, when ChatGPT was not prompted to consider Indian, South Korean, or Chinese cultural context, and was simply prompted to make revisions that would improve the message, all participants indicated that it fared at least slightly better because its messages were more concise and struck a more appropriate, balanced tone between friendly warmth and formal politeness. Tia, for instance, noted that the second email's tone "expressed a reasonable amount of gratitude toward a more senior person" without sounding too over the top. Furthermore, while Tia felt that some phrases, such as "我非常重视这次合作的机会，并希望能为项目的成功贡献我的力量,"(which translates to "I really value the opportunity to work with you and hope to contribute my efforts to the project") were unnecessary, she also noted that this was probably a personal preference, and that such phrases would be fine if they were in line with a different employee's writing style. Kay, likewise, suggested that the revised version made some helpful additions to her message; for example, it added a clear call to action and an appeal to mutual benefits without being overly formal and remained reasonably concise and efficient. Jay was somewhat less optimistic about ChatGPT's second revision of his message, noting that it still seemed overly formal and lacked the friendliness and warmth he'd expect in a message to a supervisor he knows well, but he also indicated that its tone was an improvement over the first revision.

Our findings suggest that ChatGPT can produce reasonably culturally appropriate workplace communications but that prompting the tool to consider cultural context results in the LLM going too far to signal politeness and deference, to the point of rendering the message ineffective.

References

AI meets culture: A Harmony or a work in progress? (n.d.). Theculturefactor.com. Retrieved November 13, 2024, from https://news.theculturefactor.com/news/ai-meets-culture

Cao, Y., Zhou, L., Lee, S., Cabello, L., Chen, M., & Hershcovich, D. (2023). *Assessing cross-cultural alignment between ChatGPT and human societies: An empirical study.* In arXiv [cs.CL]. http://arxiv.org/abs/2303.17466

Hofstede, G. (2011). Dimensionalizing Cultures: The Hofstede Model in context. *Online Readings in Psychology and Culture, 2*(1). https://doi.org/10.9707/2307-0919.1014

How culturally aligned are large language models? (2024, January 27). *Montreal AI Ethics Institute.* https://montrealethics.ai/how-culturally-aligned-are-large-language-models/

Tao, Y., Viberg, O., Baker, R. S., & Kizilcec, R. F. (2023). *Cultural bias and cultural alignment of large language models.* In arXiv [cs.CL]. http://arxiv.org/abs/2311.14096

Wendler, C., Veselovsky, V., Monea, G., & West, R. (2024). *Do llamas work in English? On the latent language of multilingual transformers.* In arXiv [cs.CL]. http://arxiv.org/abs/2402.10588

Cultivating Intercultural Competence for Business Students and Faculty

Xin Chen, Lenka Beranova, and Joshua Ford
Indiana University, Blooomington

In an interconnected world, understanding cultural nuances is paramount. The Intercultural Communication Network at the Kelley School of Business is a dynamic faculty-led initiative that bridges the gap between theory and practice. This network provides a vibrant platform for students and faculty to engage in meaningful dialogue, workshops, and collaborative learning experiences.

We invite you to an interactive panel where we delve into the heart of intercultural competence. The panelists will share insights and practices for creating culturally informed learning environments and empowering students to thrive in intercultural contexts. Discussion topics include:

1. **Embrace Curiosity**: Differences are not barriers; they are pathways to discovery. Curiosity fuels our journey toward understanding.

2. **Inclusive Practices**: Discuss how to work effectively with culturally diverse student groups and foster an environment where everyone thrives.

3. **Faculty Development**: Discover strategies to integrate intercultural assignments and inclusion principles into teaching.

Intercultural competence is a competitive advantage in today's globalized landscape. Let's build bridges together. Participants will leave with actionable ideas to enrich their own academic community with intercultural competence.

Enhancing Immediate Response Capabilities in English Language Learners Through "3 x 3 Table English Training (TET)": A Study on its Effectiveness and Application in Business Communication

Masaki Yamada, Sapporo Otani University
Nonoko Shinohara, Hokkai-Gakuen University
Toshiyuki Sakabe, Hokkaido University of Science
Nozomi Ishikawa, Sapporo Otani University
Hisashi Naito, Hokkai-Gakuen University

The primary aim of this study is to evaluate the effectiveness of the "3 x 3 TET" (Naito et al. 2018, 2019) material, specifically designed to enhance the immediate response capabilities of students learning English as a foreign language. Drawing on the foundational research of Coffelt et al. (2022) on measuring business and professional communication skills, this study seeks to explore how structured material can support the acquisition and improvement of crucial communication skills for effective business communication. Importantly, many English learners in Asia, including Japan, face difficulties in speaking English fluently due to significant differences in grammatical structures between their native languages and English, resulting in considerable disadvantages in the context of business communication.

Goals

This research has two main objectives. First, to quantitatively assess the impact of the "3 x 3 TET" material on students' abilities in business communication. Second, to understand the broader implications of enhanced immediate response capabilities on overall communication proficiency in a business setting, thus providing insights into curriculum development for English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners.

Methodology

Utilizing a quantitative research approach, this study employed a questionnaire derived from Coffelt et al. (2022)'s 186-item inventory that was tailored to the context of business communication. Out of this inventory, 39 items directly relevant to the aims of the "3 x 3 TET" material were chosen for analysis. The study involved 124 freshmen undergoing 15 sessions with the "3 x 3 TET" material. Data were gathered through a post-intervention survey to evaluate improvements in communication skills. Statistical analysis, including Pearson correlation coefficients and cross-tabulation, was conducted on the collected data to identify significant correlations and assess the material's effectiveness.

Outcomes

Analysis of the questionnaire data revealed substantial improvements in participants' basic communication skills, particularly in delivering concise messages, maintaining clarity in communication, explaining concepts clearly, and enhancing listening skills. A notably high Pearson correlation coefficient of .618 was observed between the abilities to "accurately deliver messages" and "clarify information," with a p-value <.001, indicating a statistically significant enhancement and suggesting that the material effectively contributes to strengthening these fundamental communication skills.

The results highlight the potential of the "3 x 3 TET" material to positively affect the immediate response capabilities of EFL learners. By enabling learners to convey information precisely and understand others' intentions accurately, the material proves to be an invaluable asset in developing competent communicators within a business environment. These findings shed new light on the importance of immediate response training in language education and its crucial role in preparing learners for real-world business communication challenges.

Implications for Future Research

The study paves the way for further research into the long-term effects of the "3 x 3 TET" material, its suitability for diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds, and its incorporation into broader EFL curricula. Future studies could investigate adaptive learning strategies tailored to individual learner profiles and evaluate the material's effectiveness in various learning settings and modalities.

In conclusion, the "3 x 3 TET" material represents a significant advancement in EFL education, particularly in enhancing communication skills crucial for business contexts. This study not only underscores the material's effectiveness in improving immediate response capabilities but also opens the door for future explorations into optimizing language learning for practical communication needs. Through continued research and curriculum development, there is potential to further refine EFL teaching strategies, making them more attuned to the requirements of global business communication.

Acknowledgement

This work was supported by JSPS KAKENHI Grant Number 23k00700.

References

Coffelt, T., Cosgrove, S. & Vance, B. (2022) Measuring business and professional communication skills. *Business and Professional Communication Quarterly*, 85(2), 169–191. https://doi.org/10.1177/23294906221082235

Naito, H., Sakabe, T., Yamada, M., Shibata, A. & Ishikawa, N. (2018, October 24–27) *3 x 3 table English training method for improving a quick response at business scenes* [Poster presentation]. ABC 83rd Annual International Conference, Miami, FL, United States.

Naito, H., Sakabe, T. Yamada, M., Ishikawa, N. & Shibata, A. (2019, October 23–26) *3 x 3 table English training method for improving a quick response at business scenes part 2* [Poster presentation]. ABC 84th Annual International Conference, Detroit, MI, United States.

Implementing the Principles of *Guanxi* for Doing Business in a Globalized World

Fangfang Ma, Johns Hopkins University
Shiran Guo, HR Global Connect, China
Yue Liu, Columbia University
Melanie Gao, University of Maine
Zhankun Dai, Johns Hopkins University

Much has been written about the Chinese business concept of *guanxi* (Dobrucalı, 2020; Nowland & Rowley, 2020; Taube & Hourak, 2023). Translating simply to mean "relationships," *guanxi* refers to the capacity to draw upon one's social network as a means for facilitating and brokering business deals (Wong, 2007). In today's increasingly globalized world and business context, both business scholars and practitioners alike are reflecting on how a better understanding of *guanxi* and its methods for implementation may facilitate more fruitful commercial negotiations with overseas partners (Barnes et al., 2011; Gao et al., 2012). As the single biggest offshoring destination for U.S. firms (United States International Trade Commission, 2017), and a significant source of revenue for innumerable U.S.-based corporations, China remains a point of interest for American business professionals. But a fundamental component of successful business communication is intercultural competency, which in the case of interactions with Chinese businesspeople, necessitates a thorough understanding of *guanxi*.

Purpose & Goals

Rather than just summarize previous scholarship, however, the purpose of our session is to invite discussion and reflection on (1) knowledge of *guanxi* in both theory and practice as a form of intercultural competency; (2) the extent to which *guanxi* is applicable in a Western context, or if it is a culturally specific phenomenon; and (3) how it differs from more straightforward rapport-building with prospective clientele as well as Western notions of business networking.

Additionally, while a primary objective of this panel discussion is to outline the merits of *guanxi* as a mechanism of business communication, attendees will critically reflect on and even debate the pitfalls of this approach, including how it may inadvertently reinforce nepotism by advancing the interests of those already within one's social circle. Participants will consider how this practice can be utilized without coming at the expense of business ethics and equity.

Methods

To facilitate discussion, several case studies are included from experiences working for global corporations, including UNESCO, SmartStart Education, and HR Global Connect. The three selected case studies represent the promise of *guanxi* as an instrument for facilitating business communication. All panel members are of Chinese heritage but have differing levels of engagement with the concept of *guanxi*. Our first panelist is currently a professor of business communication at Johns Hopkins University.

She has an extensive industry career, and still consults for national organizations, like Girl Scouts of America, in addition to multi-national enterprises, such as Pricewaterhouse Cooper. One of our other panel members is an intern at a global recruiting company with headquarters in China and frequently serves as a liaison between U.S.- and China-based operations. The next two panel members are graduate students in communication programs at Columbia University and the University of Maine, and as such, bring with them a wealth of knowledge on intercultural communication concepts. Our final panelist is a graduate student in finance at Johns Hopkins Carey Business School, and so contributes his understanding of international finance.

In addition to the unique insights offered, these presenters furthermore supplement this discussion with excerpts from interviews conducted with six Chinese business professors from Johns Hopkins University's Carey Business School. Our goal in introducing this material into our discussion is to avoid presenting *guanxi* as a monolithic concept. Instead, through the interview extracts, *guanxi* will be reframed as a multifaceted construct with diverse applications across varied settings. In demonstrating guanxi's relevance to multiple industries and contexts, attendees are encouraged to consider its utility for their own enterprises.

Outcomes

There are two primary outcomes from attending this panel. The first of these outcomes is directly relevant for those who already conduct business with individuals from Chinese backgrounds. A better understanding of the origins and means of incorporating the principles of *guanxi* within their current business practices could result in both tangible (e.g., higher profits and annual revenues) and intangible (e.g., strengthened partnerships) results. The second outcome is geared towards those looking to expand their operations into Chinese markets; for this group of attendees, they can gain a better understanding of how to leverage *guanxi* for these purposes.

References

Barnes, B. R., Yen, D., & Zhou, L. (2011). Investigating guanxi dimensions and relationship outcomes: Insights from Sino-Anglo business relationships. *Industrial Marketing Management*, *40*(4), 510–521.

Dobrucalı, B. (2020). The role of Guanxi on international business-to-business relationships: A systematic review and future directions. *Journal of Business & Industrial Marketing*, *35*(7), 1125–1140.

Gao, H., Knight, J. G., & Ballantyne, D. (2012). Guanxi as a gateway in Chinese-Western business relationships. *Journal of Business & Industrial Marketing*, *27*(6), 456–467.

Nolan, J., & Rowley, C. (2020). Whither guanxi and social networks in China? A review of theory and practice. *Asia Pacific Business Review*, *26*(2), 113–123.

Taube, M., & Horak, S. (2023). Guanxi and networking: China's hidden business matrix. In J. Nolan, Z. Shuming, K. Komache (Eds.), *Routledge Handbook of Chinese Business and Management* (pp. 311–325). Routledge.

United States International Trade Commission. (2017). *The size & composition of U.S. manufacturing offshoring in China*. https://www.usitc.gov/publications/332/executive_briefings/sizecompositionebot.pdf

Wong, M. (2007). Guanxi and its role in business. *Chinese Management Studies*, *1*(4), 257–276.

Training Intercultural Competence in the Healthcare Sector

Melanie Moll
Europäische Fernhochschule Hamburg

Intercultural competence plays an enormous role in our daily lives. More business sectors are requiring a strong intercultural awareness from their staff – including in the healthcare field. Healthcare organizations recognize that a firm pillar of their sustainable business success includes an attention to cultural variables, and healthcare specialists cannot ignore the importance of learning critical intercultural competence skills (Gibson & Zhong, 2005; Majda et al., 2021).

This presentation outlines how understanding the differences in cultural norms, values, expectations, and practice are crucial for healthcare experts (Knezevic & Ivkovic, 2022; Marek & Nemeth, 2020). Culture as a dynamic construct is examined in a global context and how healthcare practices have changed or adapted over time from world events. A 4-pronged approach is proposed to training intercultural competence in the healthcare sector. Specifically, the presentation is focused on intercultural communication, cultural ethics, cultural psychology, and cultural humility in an attempt to strengthen and sustain the business of healthcare.

While healthcare training institutions do recognize the need for cultural sensitivity, the topic is often treated as secondary or offered in elective format. It is argued that not only is intercultural management critical for the healthcare field, but that this approach can be successfully adapted for a variety of educational contexts.

References

Gibson, D., & Zhong, M. (2005). Intercultural communication competence in the healthcare context. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, *29*(5), 621–634.

Knežević, S., & Ivković, I. (2022). Contribution of intercultural management to developing cultural competence in healthcare sector. *Ekonomski izazovi*, *11*(21), 1–14.

Majda, A., Bodys-Cupak, I. E., Zalewska-Puchała, J., & Barzykowski, K. (2021). Cultural competence and cultural intelligence of healthcare professionals providing emergency medical services. *International journal of environmental research and public health*, *18*(21), 11547.

Marek, E., & Németh, T. (2020). Intercultural competence in healthcare. *Orvosi Hetilap*, *161*(32), 1322–1330.

A Media Richness Theory Based Approach to Job and Worker Remote Work Viability

Edward Paulson
ProChango LLC/DePaul University

Management forcing remote workers to return to the office is causing friction between workers, who believe they should be entitled to work remotely, and managers, who want workers in the office. Remote work has been experimented with for over 20 years, but it had never been used on a full-scale basis, until The Pandemic forced remote work on everyone. Prior to the Pandemic there were major concerns from leaders about whether workers would keep the same level of performance working remotely as they did in the office. The COVID Pandemic showed that for many job functions, efficiency increased due to reduced interruptions and recovered time that was previously spent commuting.

A major issue is that during the Pandemic workers adopted lifestyles based on remote work that offered personal and family benefits, and now they are being asked to give that up. Indeed, some workers moved to distant geographic locations specifically because they were able to work remotely and successfully complete their jobs. They may have bought a new home, put their children in new schools, and developed a remote-dependent lifestyle. Social science theory is clear that people may be resistant to change, but once they have done the work to adapt to the change, they are less likely to give up the benefits obtained from the change. Management is now asking workers to give up the benefits of working remotely because management believes that they should, and workers are resisting. In many cases, they are speaking with their feet by changing jobs instead of moving back to the office.

For certain types of jobs there is a sound rationale for working in the office for at least part of the work week. For other types of jobs, there is little gained from forcing someone who has successfully been working remotely to make the commute into the office. If the company forces the satisfied remote employee to commute unnecessarily to the office, the employee may leave to work for another firm that allows them to work remotely. Both employee and employer lose in this situation.

When resolving any dispute, it is important for both parties to agree on a communication framework with which they can understand each other’s positions and work toward a reasonable compromise. This presentation offers just such a communication framework that is based on media richness theory.

Media richness theory states that different communication media, such as e-mail, text, video teleconference or in-person meetings, have a different richness level. Media richness level is determined, in part, by the communication cues provided and the speed at which those cues are provided, in combination with feedback cues and feedback speed between message sender and receiver. Using a common framework, managers can explain their rationale for wanting the employee to work in the office, enabling the employee to see ways in which working from the office may make them better at their jobs. In other words, moving back to the office will be perceived as a request based on communication science instead of a management power play, which may make the request more acceptable to the worker.

The Paulson Media Matching Method is a unique communication framework that is directly applicable to remote work decisions. Media richness levels 1 to 4 do not involve in-person interaction and as such are independent of whether they are used in the office or remote. Level 5 richness includes video teleconferencing (low level 5 richness) as well as in-person interaction (higher level 5 richness). The remote analysis framework covered in this presentation divides Level 5 into separate levels with the lowest level being video conference and the others involving some type of in-person meeting. From this starting point, an evaluation is performed whereby the specific worker experience and job characteristics are analyzed to determine whether remote technology is adequate for this particular person and job, or if richer communication is needed which would mandate working from the office.

Time permitting, a brief discussion will be included about ways in which management can adjust performance tracking to evaluate remote worker performance. Those who attend this presentation will leave with a high-level understanding of the relationship between a specific job, the assigned worker, the information processing requirements needed to perform the job, and the media needed for proper worker support. Using a common framework will allow workers and managers to better communicate about the possibility of remote work with the hope of reducing employee turnover, increasing worker efficiency, and reducing operating costs.

Reference

Paulson, E. (2023) *Getting through: A systematic approach to being understood.* ProChango Publishing.

Active Listening, a Neglected Communication Cornerstone: Teaching a Fundamental Skill for Empathy and Collaboration

Melanie Hoftyzer
Cornell University

Background

When redesigning the required business communication class in 2015, the Business Communication instructors made listening skill development a main learning outcome. As we began developing curriculum, however, we realized that we viewed listening as more than just a communication skill. We wanted more nuance than the commonly cited definition of "hearing what the speaker says, interpreting it accurately, and responding appropriately" (Galanes and Brilhart, 1997); we wanted what Lynn Cooper (1997) identifies as three additional aspects of listening: listening as a multidimensional, complex skill; listening as behavior – a verb not a noun; and listening as non-linear (p. 76-77).

Listening is fundamental to successful peer review workshops and group collaboration. Without targeted training, students often do not approach collaboration with empathy and openness to their peer partners' needs, insecurities, strengths, or ideas. The speaker has found that starting with active listening instruction has strengthened relationships and encouraged students to develop agency in previously passive conversations.

Two Primary Imperatives for Teaching and Practicing Listening Skills in our Classrooms

I. The first imperative is that *listening skills are sought by employers and are crucial to career success*. Listening appears on almost every desired skill list. In fact, the 2017 Graduate Management Academic Council (2017) survey report places listening as the second most important skill in their "communication and teamwork domains" (p. 49). Brigitta Brunner found in her study that "participants seemed unable to describe a good [workplace] relationship without using the terms listening, trust, and communication" (p. 78). Stephanie Schartel Dunn and Peggy Lane (2019) found that listening and interpersonal skills were highly important in the workplace, but supervisors felt interns were the "least prepared and would benefit from additional coverage (p. 210).

II. The second imperative is that *explicitly teaching and practicing listening skills is one way to support diversity and inclusion* (and to share a process with students which they can use in other professional spaces). With growing attention to identifying and mitigating bias, the business communication classroom provides an opening for instructors to increase audience awareness (including increasing the visibility of respect and providing space for belonging). We wanted the students to listen through what Dorothy Leeds (2000) identifies as the four organs of listening: their ears, eyes, brain, and heart (p. 133-135). Leeds suggests that true empathic listening is also borne from asking thoughtful questions, which increase productive and relationship-building conversation.

The Challenge

Despite listening's importance, there is not much literature about incorporating listening instruction into the classroom. A key term search for "listen*" in the *Business and Professional Communication Quarterly (BPCQ)*, *Journal of Education for Business*, and the *International Journal of Listening*, articles about teaching listening were few and far between. In 1994, Judi Brownell (1994) wrote the following exhortation: "efforts to better understand the listening process and the way in which individual's listening can be improved must be among business communication educators' top priorities" (p. 23). And yet, listening is a topic rarely written about.

The Innovation

To address both our imperatives surrounding listening skills, the Business Communication instructors developed curriculum to enhance skill-building around listening and increased audience awareness (including increasing the visibility of diversity and providing space for belonging). Activities include listening inventories, both individual and small-group activities, and developing skills in question-asking. Reflection activities allow students to identify intrinsic rewards for being a strong listener as well as deepening their commitment to inclusion and creating space for diverse ideas and perspectives.

References

Brunner, B. (2008). Listening, communication & trust: Practitioners' perspectives of business/organizational relationships. *The International Journal of Listening, 22*, 73–82.

Cooper, L. O. (1997, December). Listening competency in the workplace: A model for training. *Business Communication Quarterly, 60*(4), 74–84.

Galanes, G. J., & Brilhart, J. K. (1997). *Communicating in groups: Application and skills* (2nd ed.) Madison, WI: WCB Brown and Benchmark.

Leeds, D. (2000). *The 7 powers of questions: Secrets to successful communication in life and work*. New York: Perigree.

Schartel Dunn, S. G., & Lane, P. L. (2019). Do interns know what they think they know? Assessing business communication skills in interns and recent graduates. *Business and Professional Communication Quarterly, 82*(2), 202–213.

Civility in the Workplace: The Role of Business Communication

Sam DeKay, BNY Mellon Corporation (Retired)
Virgina Hemby, Middle Tennessee State University
Susan Luck, Pfeiffer University
Susan Schanne, Schanne Academic Resources
Clive Muir, Washington University, St. Louis
Marcy Orwig, University of Wisconsin, Eau Claire

Civility has long been a concern of business communication professionals. In 1909, one of the earliest twentieth-century "how to" manuals dedicated to business writing emphasized the importance of courtesy in letters to customers. The author—Charles R Wiers, Chief Correspondent of the Larkin Soap Company of Buffalo, NY—insisted that

> When you want to talk to your customer through a letter, do it kindly, do it friendly, so when the letter is finished you will have a clear conscience because you have acted the part of a gentleman in all that the word expresses. (Wiers, 1909, p. 16).

More than a century later, civility remains a concern for business communication professionals. Indeed, the vision of mutually respectful workplace interactions has extended beyond customer relations to include all employees and co-workers. In November 2023, for example. the Forbes Coaches Council published a listing of "18 Powerful Ways Leaders Can Create a Respectful, Productive Workplace" (Forbes Coaches Council, 2023). Most of the coaches' suggestions emphasize that managers and supervisors must themselves lead by modelling courteous, respectful behavior and by clearly communicating that employees will be recognized for exemplary civility and held accountable for uncivil acts or language.

However, despite the continuing concern for maintaining civility in the workplace—while also confronting challenges posed by employees working remotely and in globally dispersed teams—there remains a dearth of research concerning this subject. Although business journals frequently publish articles that provide quantitative evidence of the considerable financial expense associated with incivility, there are few studies that explore effective methods for effectively modelling and encouraging civil behavior. Similarly, there are few analytic studies pertaining to specific kinds of uncivil behavior that erode mutual respect among managers, employees, and customers.

The Business Practices Committee will sponsor a panel hosted at the 2024 ABC International Annual Conference; its focus will be "Civility in the Workplace: The Role of Business Communication." The panel will include three presentations that offer original research concerning ways in which workplace civility (or incivility) is promoted (or discouraged) by business communication practices.

References

Forbes Coaches Council. (2023, November 6). *18 powerful ways leaders can create a respectful, productive workplace.* https://www.forbes.com/councils/forbescoachescouncil/2023/11/06/18-powerful-ways-leaders-can-create-a-respectful-productive-workplace/

Wiers, C. R. (1909). *How to write a business letter for use in offices, schools, and as a general reference book.* Gies & Co.

My Favorite Assignment

The "My Favorite Assignment" sessions are designed for participants to quickly (within just a few minutes) share their favorite assignments, which are then posted to the ABC website under membership resources. More than 50 assignments where shared throughout several sessions during the conference and are listed alphabetically here …

- A Letter from a Nut, Lucia Sigmar
- A Student Project Using ChatGPT 3.5, Ana Lucia Magalhaes and Carlos Lima
- AI-Enhanced Business Writing Workshop, Xin Chen
- AI-Inclined Daily Task Audit, Stephen Lind
- An Analog Small Language Model to Maximize Creative Learning, Aaron Phillips
- Basketballing Your Way to Clear and Complex Style, Jake Zucker
- BCOM Poster Mini Conference, Kristen Waddell
- Beyond the Headlines: Using Televised Litigation to Explore the Impact of Witness Credibility on Conflict Resolution, Aubree Walton and Justin Walton
- Chatbot Analysis Assignment, Sarah Clements
- Communication as Empathy: Enhancing Communication Skills Through Experiential Learning, Raihan Jamil
- Conversational Ballgames: Intercultural Communication Business Memo, Sabrina Pasztor
- Creating an Executive Summary & Presentation Slides to Solve a Workplace Problem, Laura Barrett
- Delivering Bad News in Context, Stacey Overholt
- Design Sprints for Service Learning - A Contest and a Consulting Project, Daniel Usera
- Disruptive ChatGPT: A Persuasive Message, Li Wang
- Examining Three Mini-Cases on the Efficacy of Proxies to Enhance Credibility & Authenticity, Kathryn Canas and Dr. Georgi Rausch
- From Crowdfunding to Mainstream: Practicing Presentational and Visual Communication Skills Through Persuasive Messages, Yuxiang Du
- How About This? Wait! What About That?: Cooperative Games as Decision-Making Tasks, Greg Rouault
- Humans vs. Centaurs, Anthony Coman
- I versus AI, Medha Bakhshi

My Favorite Assignment, continued …

- Influence Summit Days: Real-world Authenticity Training with Research & AI, Meg Barnes
- Inform, Persuade, or Instruct - Pick your Pitch Poison, Jessie Richards
- Integrating Genre Analysis into ChatGPT Prompting for Creating a Business Correspondence Message, Dr. Junhua Wang
- Intergenerational Communication, Scott Springer
- International Communications Short Report: Practice in Collaborative Research and Writing, Generative AI usage, and Intercultural Competence Development, Beth Grbavcich
- Introducing 'Hieroglyphs' to Improve Student Interviewing Performance, Chris McKenna
- Is it "Green" Yet?: Team Presentation Amplifying a 5-Part Vetting Criteria to Determine Green Business Certification for B-Corps, Lisa Barley
- Missed Communication: A Critical Assessment of Communication in Relationships, Stephanie Medden
- Pass the Persuasion, Please, Katherine Ryan
- Personalized Pitches, Sara Mangat
- Pitch Perfect: Elevator “Conversations” at the Job Fair, Jill Huang
- Positive Communication Interventions for Real Organizations, Ryan Fuller, Antonio La Sala, Andrew Pyle, and Laura Riolli
- Product Safety: A Historic Retrospective, Ellis Hayes
- Providing Insights: Constructive Criticism for Professional Development, Carol Wright
- Puzzling Pedagogy: Using Crossword Puzzle Strategies to Demonstrate the Impact of Audience Analysis, Dacia Charlesworth
- Rhetoric and The Required Presentation Assignment: Students as Recruiters for Real Companies, Megan Hill
- Roleplaying Culture Shocks in Executive MBA Class, Tatiana Andrienko-Genin
- Selecting Harry Potter Themed Case Teams Using EQ and MBTI, Deidre Kelly
- Sharing your WHY, Jenna Haugen
- Socrates, AI, and DEI--Oh My!, Phil Wagner
- Student Storytellers: Using Stories to Connect and Communicate, Kimberley Williams
- Support This Organization: Effective Donor Communications, Colleen Coyne
- Table Talk: Using Strategy Tables to Support Effective Business Communication, Patricia Harms

My Favorite Assignment, continued …

- Teaching Digital Communication Skills Using the Email "Audit", Emily Marett
- Teaching Organizational Behavior through Behaving as an Organization, Laura Nicole Miller
- Team Creativity Challenge: Pitching Your Winning Team, Jennifer Cummings
- TEDx Talk Assignment, Cara Jacocks
- The Conciseness Contest, Emily Goenner Munson
- The Miscommunication of Emoticons, Marice Kelly
- The Personal Culture Action Plan, Bethany Tisdale
- The Syllabus Game, Rachel Slivon
- The Tuckman (1965) Process for Group Projects: Trials or Triumphs?, Mikelle Barberi-Weil
- The Virtual Check-In, Hollywood Style, Susan Luck
- Trisociation: An AI-Powered Approach to Group Discussion, Suwichit Chaidaroon
- Turning our MBA Class into CEO Meeting, Vlad Genin
- Understanding Storytelling in Scientainment: Producing a TEDx of the Bachelor Thesis, Marlies Whitehouse
- Unlock the Industry: A Hands-On Virtual Job Simulation Experience through Forage, Kathryn Lookadoo and Victoria McCrady
- Unlocking the AI Alchemy, Brenda Jones
- You're the Boss: You Decide, Sarah Clark

A Communicative Analysis of Workers' Retrospective Accounts of Workplace Sexual Harassment

Nici Ploeger-Lyons
University of Wisconsin – Eau Claire

There is a strong body of organizational ethics scholarship that explores how working adults respond to a variety of *hypothetical* unethical organizational scenarios (e.g., Bisel & Adame, 2019; Bisel, et al., 2011; Bisel & Kramer, 2014; Ploeger, et al., 2011; Ploeger-Lyons & Bisel, 2023; Ploeger-Lyons, et al., 2022). While these language production experiments pass stringent manipulation and validity checks, the future directions of such studies often point to this question: How do workers describe *their own* experiences and responses when they were victims of unethical organizational dilemmas in their working lives? Thus, this project analyzes working adults' retrospective accounts detailing a time when they experienced workplace sexual harassment (WSH)—a phenomenon that persists despite its illegality and unethicality.

The U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) (1990) defines sexual harassment as unwelcome conduct—verbal or physical and of a sexual type—that is unsolicited, undesirable, and/or unwanted. If prevention efforts (e.g., zero tolerance policies) fail and workers *do* experience sexual harassment, the EEOC (1990) stresses the importance of the victim communicating that the behavior they are experiencing is unwelcome. While such communication might include formal reporting and direct complaints or protests, responses could also be indirect or even nonexistent (e.g., silence). The purpose of this study is to analyze employees' accounts of WSH in terms of how they describe the WSH they experienced, their role (e.g., bystander, target, or support person), their response, and how they made sense of the WSH.

Two communication-centric theoretical lenses guide this project: politeness theory (Brown & Levinson, 1987), which draws upon facework scholarship (Goffman, 1959), and sensemaking (Weick, 1995). Face is the public self-image one claims for oneself; and face*work* includes the communicative efforts to bolster, uphold, or restore one's own or another's face (Goffman, 1959). Politeness theory offers an extension to Goffman's foundational work by considering both positive face (e.g., the desire to be esteemed) and negative face (e.g., the desire to be free from imposition), as well as associated positive and negative politeness strategies. Taken together, facework and politeness research are fitting lenses to help understand communicative responses to a face-threatening action (FTA) such as WSH, as retrospective accounts of WSH may indeed reveal different politeness strategies and degrees of (in)directness in responses.

Sensemaking, or the process of interpreting and understanding, is often triggered in effort to reduce uncertainty (Weick, 1995). As noted by Bisel and Arterburn (2012), "Workers frequently perceive the need to make sense of workplace interactions. The ubiquity and reliability of their sensemaking becomes apparent when individuals engage in interactions that make interpretation difficult" (p. 218). Workplace sexual harassment is one such interaction that likely instigates sensemaking, since it (likely) violates expectations about how workplace interactions should unfold. The sensemaking resources (e.g., hierarchy, workplace norms, and identity) employees draw upon to interpret sexual harassment could be revealed in the retrospective accounts of their responses to the given sexual harassment.

Participants for this study were recruited as part of a larger language production experiment through the participant sampling service, Prolific. Parameters were selected (e.g., 18 years of age or older, residents of the United States, and work 25 hours or more per week) to ensure a relevant sample, and precautionary measures (e.g., attention checks, reverse-coded questions, and participant approval rating on Prolific of 95-100%) were taken to ensure a quality sample. Following the experimental portion of the survey, participants were asked:

> Have you experienced or witnessed sexual harassment in the workplace, as the target of sexual harassment, as a bystander, or as a support person to someone who was sexually harassed? If you have, please write "yes." If you feel comfortable, please describe in detail what happened, who was involved, and your response. If you have not, write "no."

Of the 890 participants in the larger study, 426 participants (47.9%) indicated "yes." Many of these participants went on to describe their experience, who was involved, and how they responded.

To analyze these accounts, I will use an inductive, analytic process (e.g., Charmaz, 2000; Bisel & Arterburn, 2012). Using a constant comparative method, I will read and reread responses in an effort to identify similar responses and to begin forming categories (Lindlof & Taylor, 2011) of WSH experiences; participants' reported communicative responses, both response type and (in)directness; and sensemaking resources called upon to understand their experience. The study at hand is important not only for the implications it will generate for multiple areas of organizational ethics and business communication research, but also for the potential to offer recommendations for employees and businesses regarding communication about and in response to workplace sexual harassment.

References

Bisel, R. S., & Adame, E. A. (2019). Encouraging upward ethical dissent in organizations: The role of deference to embodied expertise. *Management Communication Quarterly, 33*(2), 139–159. https://doi.org/10.1177/0893318918811949

Bisel, R. S., & Arterburn, E. N. (2012). Making sense of organizational members' silence: A sensemaking-resource model. *Communication Research Reports, 29*(3), 217–226. https://doi.org/10.1080/08824096.2012.684985

Bisel, R. S., Kelley, K. M., Ploeger, N. A., & Messersmith, J. (2011). Workers' moral mum effect: On facework and unethical behavior in the workplace. *Communication Studies, 62*(2), 153–170. https://doi.org/10.1080/10510974.2010.551314

Bisel, R. S., & Kramer, M. W. (2014). Denying what workers believe are unethical workplace requests: Do workers use moral, operational, or policy justifications publicly? *Management Communication Quarterly, 28*(1), 111–129. https://doi.org/10.1177/0893318913503382

Brown, P., & Levinson, S. C. (1987). *Politeness: Some universals in language usage*. Cambridge University Press.

Charmaz, K. (2000). Grounded theory: Objectivist and constructivist methods. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *Handbook of Qualitative Research* (2nd ed., pp. 509–535). Sage.

Equal Employment Opportunity Commission. (1990, March 3). *Policy guidance on current issues of sexual harassment*. Retrieved January 31, 2022 from https://www.eeoc.gov/laws/guidance/policy-guidance-current-issues-sexual-harassment.

Goffman, E. (1959). *The presentation of self in everyday life*. Doubleday.

Lindlof, T. R., & Taylor, B. C. (2011). *Qualitative communication research methods* (3rd ed). Sage.

Ploeger, N. A., Kelley, K. M., & Bisel, R. S. (2011). Hierarchical mum effect: A new investigation of organizational ethics. *Southern Communication Journal, 76*(5), 465–481. https://doi.org/10.1080/1041794x.2010.500343

Ploeger-Lyons, N. A., & Bisel, R. S. (2023). Confronting idea stealers in the workplace: The unfortunate moral credentialing granted to power holders. *International Journal of Business Communication, 60*(4), 1123–1147. https://doi.org/10.1177/232948842110479

Ploeger-Lyons, N. A., Butler, J. A., & Modaff, D. P. (2022). The roles of hierarchy and relational closeness in confrontations about idea stealing. *Ohio Communication Journal, 60*, 1–15.

Weick, K. E. (1995). *Sensemaking in organizations*. Sage.

A Self-Assessment Tool for Leadership Communication

Hilde Hanegreefs, Bert Jans, and Mark Pluymaekers
Zuyd University of Applied Sciences

Leadership is communication. Managers not only need to be able to communicate, they need to be good at it. However, all too often they overestimate their communication skills. In this presentation we present a self-assessment tool that enables managers to monitor their communication skills and map out their own development.

Context

Research shows that managers spend up to 90% of their time on communication. Therefore, it is not surprising that communicative competence is seen as one of the most important attributes of a manager or leader (Mikkelson, et al. 2015; de Vries & Bakker-Pieper, 2010), a prerequisite for effective leadership (Flauto,1999), or a vehicle through which leaders achieve their goals (de Vries & Bakker-Pieper, 2010). Leaders must not only be able to communicate, they must also be good at it, because good communication is necessary to, on the one hand, clarify and achieve the goals of the organization, and on the other hand, create a relationship of trust, openness and understanding with employees. When leaders actively invest in a constructive dialogue with their employees by openly sharing information and involving them in decision-making, it has a profound impact on employees' attitudes, well-being and performance (Johansson, Miller & Hamrin, 2013).
Surprisingly enough, relatively little time and money is invested in training good communication skills within an organization. Managers often overestimate their communicative competence and do not sign up for the training courses offered or there is simply no training offered or specific attention given to developing good communication skills (Van Der Velde et al., 1999).

Leading by example

In this specific case study, a large educational institution in the Netherlands is confronted with a poor score on internal communication in the latest employee satisfaction survey. In line with their principles of self-organization and autonomy, they would like to create more awareness about communicative strengths and development points of their managers so they could lead by example and contribute to a healthy communication climate. We were asked to develop a research-based self-assessment tool that enables managers to monitor their communication skills and, consequently, map out their own development path. This instrument should thus give managers (a) insight into the specific communicative situations they feel most comfortable or least comfortable with, and (b) feedback on skills that they could further develop.

Approach

When we looked into the literature on communicative leadership or leadership communication, however, we quickly got lost in what you could call a “jungle of lists”, terminology or classifications of communication skills, contexts, behaviors, purposes, etc. We therefore needed additional input to identify the elements needed to design this self-assessment tool. We first delved into the mission and vision on communication and leadership offered by the institute itself. Then, we interviewed the target group and organized four focus groups with different management teams within the organization to:

1. identify “authentic” examples of communicative situations specific for the organization and the distinctive communicative dimensions and their features that could be used to differentiate between or categorize these situations

2. gain insight into the most important communication skills or competencies needed by managers in this organization, and

3. collect concrete ideas on the desired form and layout of the deliverable (since we really want the manager to use it).

In combination with the literature review, this led to a longlist of “recognizable” communicative situations that managers encounter in this educational institute, and a set of four communicative dimensions with distinctive features that we can use to further distinguish or categorize these situations. The participants expressed their wish for a short survey tool, resistant to socially desirable answering, with feedback that would highlight areas for further development and a reference to possible trainings or courses.

Prototype

In line with the collected insights, we designed the self-assessment tool as a short survey or self-scan in which participants are asked to rank three authentic communicative situations in order of ‘communicative ease’. Every situation is linked to a combination of dimensions and features which are not explicitly mentioned in the situation’s description. This way, by ranking the situations, the underlying/latent dimensions and features are ranked as well and provide us with insights on the specific features managers are most or least comfortable with. These, in turn, are connected to specific communication skills that are addressed in the feedback with suggestions for further development.

This self-scan has certain advantages. Working with a relative scale prevents managers from giving socially desirable answers or (un)consciously overestimating their abilities. Everyone, including good communicators, gains valuable insights into their communicative behavior.

In this session we will present the prototype of the self-scan for leadership communication and share some insight into how members of the target group assess its usefulness.

References

de Vries, R. E, Bakker-Pieper, A., & Oostenveld, W. (2010). *Journal of Business and Psychology, 25*(3), 367–380. DOI:10.1007/s10869-009-9140-2

Flauto, F. J. (1999). Walking the talk: The relationship between leadership and communication competence. *Journal of Leadership Studies, 6(*1–2), 86–97. https://doi.org/10.1177/107179199900600106

Johansson, C., Miller, V. D., Harmin, S. (2014). Conceptualizing communicative leadership: A framework for analysing and developing leaders' communication competence, *Corporate Communications: An International Journal, 19*(2), 147–165. https://doi.org/10.1108/CCIJ-02-2013-0007

Mikkelson, A. C., York, J. A., & Arritola, J. (2015). Communication competence, leadership behaviors, and employee outcomes in supervisor-employee relationships. *Business and Professional Communication Quarterly, 78*(3), 336–354. https://doi.org/10.1177/2329490615588542

Communication Strategies for Success: Insights from Academic Institutions

Barnali Chaudhary, Gaana J, and Apurva Apurva
Indian Institute of Management, Jammu, India

Communication stands as the cornerstone of organizational success and growth, serving as a pivotal tool for enhancing productivity and fostering positive outcomes. While this holds true across diverse industries, as reported in several studies (Ebrahimi, et.al. 2014; Giesberg, 2001; Kalogiannidis, 2020), the context of communication within academic institutions presents unique challenges and dynamics. Unlike other workplaces such as banking sectors, advertising agencies, or production houses, etc., academic institutions involve a multifaceted ecosystem where students also play a crucial role as stakeholders. It is important to note that students' role in communication dynamics is not easily categorized as either upward or downward. Although, miscommunication or ineffective communication strategies can lead to challenges in student engagement, academic performance, and overall institutional success. Thus, a study that investigates the complex communication channels, specific to academic institutions, will highlight the importance of multidirectional communication and its impact. This study aims to delve into the unique challenges and opportunities presented by business communication, both oral and written, within academic institutions in the Indian context. By conceptualizing communication into horizontal, downward, and upward forms, this study aims to explore how different communication channels influence employee as well as student performance and contribute to organizational success within the intricate dynamics of academia.

The primary goal of this study is to examine the impact of communication channels—horizontal, downward, and upward—on employee performance within academic institutions while recognizing students as key stakeholders. Furthermore, the research aims to explore the critical role of effective communication in nurturing engagement and aligning objectives among all stakeholders, including faculty, staff, administration, and students. Additionally, the study aims to identify and address potential barriers or challenges that hinder communication effectiveness within the academic context, taking into account the diverse perspectives and needs of students. Finally, the research aims to propose actionable strategies aimed at enhancing communication practices to optimize employee performance and foster organizational success within academic institutions, with due consideration to the involvement and impact on students.

This study employs a mixed-methods approach, combining quantitative surveys and qualitative interviews to explore communication dynamics within academic institutions. The study was conducted with a total of 150 participants, including faculty, staff, administration, and students of a higher education institute of Management in India. Participants were selected through purposive sampling to ensure diverse representation. The quantitative data is collected through structured surveys designed to measure the impact of participants' perceptions of communication effectiveness and satisfaction levels on their performance. Qualitative data is obtained through semi-structured interviews to delve deeper into participants' experiences, challenges, and suggestions for improvement regarding business communication within academia.

Drawing upon a comprehensive review of existing literature and theoretical frameworks, our study hypothesized a strong positive correlation between effective communication practices, employee performance and satisfaction within academic institutions. The results of the study revealed statistically significant findings regarding the correlation between the perception of effective communication, satisfaction, and performance within upward and horizontal communication setups in written communication. For upward and horizontal communication setups in written communication, a strong positive correlation was observed between the perception of effective communication, satisfaction, and performance, with an r-value of 0.75 ($p < 0.05$). This indicates that as the perception of effective communication increases, satisfaction and performance also tend to increase among students, staff, and faculty. Conversely, in the case of downward communication setup in written communication, a significant negative correlation was found between perception of effective communication, satisfaction, and performance, with an r-value of -0.68 ($p < 0.05$). This suggests that as the perception of effective communication decreases, satisfaction and performance are likely to decrease among all stakeholders in written communication. Interestingly, similar significant correlations were not observed in verbal communication setups across all stakeholders.

References

Al-Tokhais, A. (2016). *The relationship between communication effectiveness and multicultural employees' job outcomes.* Master's thesis, Kent State University.

Ebrahimi, R., Chamanzamin, M. R., & Sourati, P. (2014). Investigating the effect of organizational communications on the performance of managers in government agencies of Astara. *International Review of Management and Business Research, 3*(4), 2095.

Giesberg, J. (2001). The role of communication in preventing workplace sabotage. *Journal of Applied Social Psychology, 31*(12), 2439–2461.

Kalogiannidis, S. (2020). Impact of effective business communication on employee performance. *European Journal of Business and Management Research, 5*(6).

Ljajić, S., & Pirsl, D. (2021). The role of internal communication and workplace language in positioning of organizations. *Društvene i humanističke studije, 6(*1), 441–452.

Wang, Y. (2011). *The role of communication in enhancing employees' organizational commitment: Exploring the relationship between social-emotional-oriented communication, work-oriented communication and organizational commitment in China.*

Employee Connection and Engagement While Working Remotely

Wenli Yuan
Kean University

Purposes and goals

Advancement in information and communication technology has enabled modern organizations to incorporate virtual components (e.g., emails, instant messaging, and teleconferencing) into their operations. Virtual work or telework emerged around the 1970s. However, it was not until March 2020 (due to the COVID-19 pandemic) that remote work became a daily practice for many organizations; millions of workers began remote work for the first time and getting their first experiment of Zoom meetings. Although the pandemic is over, the trend of remote work doesn't stop. A growing number of organizations have decided to continue the practice of remote work (fully or partially). It is estimated that 36.2 million Americans will work remotely by 2025, a nearly 50% increase from the pre-pandemic level (Ozimek, 2021). Remote work has a number of advantages, such as greater flexibility, less commuting time, reduced cost, and environmental benefits. On the other hand, remote workers also experience isolation, loneliness (Muller, 2021), lack of emotional support at work (*Startling Remote,* 2023). In particular, some traditional ways of connecting with coworkers, such as random encounters or chats in the break room, are still absent in a remote work environment. It is anticipated that advancement in technology may bring new possibilities for social interaction in an online environment. As Oh, Bailenson and Welch (2018) pointed out, the level of social presence may increase with virtual reality. Therefore, this paper aims to explore how remote work affects employee engagement, and how employees build connections while working remotely.

Method

Qualitative interviews were conducted to collect relevant data. To be eligible for this study, participants need to have experiences working remotely as a full-time employee. Following the Institutional Review Board (IRB) requirement, the author recruited participants via LinkedIn and referral. Each participant signed a consent form before the interview. Participation was completely voluntary. The author conducted a one-on-one interview with each participant via the HIPAA compliant version of Zoom. A semi-structured interview protocol was used which allowed the researcher to ask follow-up questions. Most interviews last approximately 60 minutes. Among the 15 participants, there were 10 females and 5 males. The age range of participants was: 4 in the 20s, 7 in the 30s, 1 in the 40s, and 3 in the 50s. Ten participants have received at least a master's degree, and five participants had a bachelor's degree. Participants were from various industries, including advertising/public relations, finance, health care, legal, marketing consulting, real estate, staffing, and nonprofit. All but one participant started working remotely since March 2020, and most of them (and their organizations) eventually shifted to hybrid work.

All the interviews were recorded with permission from each participant. The audio recordings were transcribed and verified for accuracy. Thematic analysis was performed to identify common themes in the data. This presentation only used part of the data from those interviews. Necessary measures have been implemented to protect participants' privacy and ensure confidentiality of the data.

Outcome

In order to help facilitate connections among remote employees, individual employees and organizations have utilized various strategies, such as virtual happy hour and online interest groups. However, participants expressed mixed opinions about the effectiveness of those strategies. Some believed that remote work negatively impacts employee connection, while others had positive experiences with online team building. This presentation will explain the narratives from participants and the role of organizations, as well as discuss the theoretical and practical implications of the research findings.

References

Muller, J. (2021). 24 surprising remote work burnout statistics. *Ergonomic Trends*. https://ergonomictrends.com/remote-work-burnout-statistics/#etrefmark6

Oh, C. S., Bailenson, J. N., & Welch, G. F. (2018). A systematic review of social presence: Definition, antecedents, and implications. *Frontiers in Robotic and AI, 5*, 114. Doi: 10.3389/frobt.2018.00114

Ozimek, A., (2021). Future workforce report 2021: How remote work is changing businesses forever. *Upwork.* https://www.upwork.com/research/future-workforce-report

Startling remote work burnout statistics (2022). *Appolo Technical.* https://www.apollotechnical.com/remote-work-burnout-statistics/

Healing Narratives and Leadership Communication: Stories of Resilience in the Aftermath of a Campus Tragedy

Heidi Schultz
University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

When tragedy strikes an organization, such as a college or university campus, leaders need to rely on communication skills that carry the enterprise forward with compassion and resilience (Lee & Jahng, 2020). This lesson became apparent in the aftermath of the tragic shooting at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill on August 28, 2023, in which a graduate student killed his professor on campus. Experiencing the terror in real time, students, faculty, and staff needed to process the disturbing events of that day. The university responded with messages from the chancellor, statements from university leaders, vigils, a webinar, a bell tower tribute, and the opening of a communication feedback portal ("Aug. 28 campus incident," 2023).

Even with this care and level of communication, the reality of that day raised important pedagogical questions: (1) How do faculty members re-enter the classroom after a tragedy like this one? (2) How can course goals pivot to acknowledge and embrace this immediate and new reality – one of fear and sadness – on campus after a tragedy? (3) How can students, themselves, become more empathetic communicators?

To answer these questions, this presentation recounts how a course on "Storytelling to Influence and Inspire" pivoted from its planned class session to a new class session focused on "Healing Narratives: Leadership Stories of Resilience" when classes resumed. The class session was designed to accomplish two important goals: (a) to allow students to construct and share their own healing narratives, which proved to be both insightful and cathartic, and (2) to equip students with an important leadership communication tool for developing and sharing healing narratives should they find themselves needing to lead organizations in the aftermath of a tragic event.

The class session included the rationale for narratives as part of the healing process after tragedies, provided an equation linking tragedy and storytelling to healing, provided a five-part storytelling framework, included several examples of healing narratives, tasked students with creating their own narratives related to experiencing the tragedy, and gave students a platform for sharing their stories. The results of the class were profound, with several students bravely sharing their stories and grappling with the emotional aftermath of the tragedy. Their narratives underscored the deep impact of traumatic events on individuals and communities, highlighting the importance of empathy, support, and resilience with storytelling communication as part of the healing process. By sharing and listening to each other's stories, students found solace and solidarity, recognizing the transformative power of narrative in fostering understanding and connection.

Through this presentation, participants will uncover the vital role of narrative for leading others in tragic times, explore best practices for teaching future business leaders to embrace the power of storytelling as a powerful force for positive change and healing, hear some of the student stories that came out of the class session, and come away with a toolkit to teach a class session on “Healing Narratives and Leadership Communication.”

References

Aug. 28, 2023 campus incident frequently asked questions. (n.d.). https://www.unc.edu/aug-28-2023-campus-incident-frequently-asked-questions/)

Lee, H., & Jahng, M. R. (2020). The role of storytelling in crisis communication: A test of crisis severity, crisis responsibility, and organizational trust. *Journalism and Mass Communication Quarterly*, *97*(4). https://doi.org/10.1177/1077699020923607

"I Always Felt Like a Subpar Employee": How Organizational Rank Factors into Workplace Bullying Sensemaking Processes

Jenilee Crutcher Williams
Murray State University

Purpose

Workplace bullying affects 80+ million adults in the U.S. alone (Namie, 2021) and occurs at higher rates within academic institutions (Keashly & Neuman, 2010). However, many colleges/universities rarely have policies addressing these issues (Smith & Coel, 2018). Statistically, bullying occurs at higher rates for junior faculty, staff, and students (Keashly & Neuman, 2010) while many full-time tenured faculty may experience prolonged bullying throughout their career (Keashly, 2021). The purpose of this study was to understand how organizational rank affects workplace bullying experiences for both faculty and staff employed in academia.

Goals

Faculty are often encouraged to exhibit power displays, competition, or aggression due to the normalized 'publish or perish' culture of academia, which may become a catalyst for bullying behaviors (Farley & Sprigg, 2014; Keashly, 2021). Research has also revealed that faculty are more highly valued than staff (Botterill, 2018) and many staff experience higher rates of workplace aggression (Fratzl & McKay, 2013). These complexities provide a rich area of inquiry as well as the opportunity to highlight often-overlooked voices. Therefore, this study asks the following question: RQ: *How does a person's rank within the organizational hierarchy play a role in workplace bullying sensemaking processes?*

Methodology

Recruiting included both faculty (*n*=18) and staff (*n*=19) within higher education institutions throughout the United States. Staff positions included administrative assistant, coordinator, or director. Faculty positions included adjunct, lecturer, assistant-, associate-, or full-professor. In-depth interviews were conducted with 37 participants as part of a larger study on workplace bullying in academia. Sensemaking in Organizations (Weick, 1995) theoretical framework and grounded theory data analysis methods (Charmaz, 2014) were used to uncover how organizational rank affected workplace bullying issues for those employed within higher education institutions.

Outcomes

Overall, participants' rank within the organization played a role in their workplace bullying narratives. Faculty identity was interwoven while narrating their experiences with workplace bullying. Staff talked about their positions as lower, or less than, to faculty and other administration as they made sense of their bullying experiences.

Faculty. Joon Jae (associate professor) mentioned, "I think I fell in love with the idea of the school, and that it's a sleeping giant that will eventually get there." Bobby (assistant professor) revealed, "It illustrated a side of academia that I didn't know existed…I went into it thinking, 'Oh, boy, these are the people that form the intellectual fabric of society'… Now, it's a curse." Erin (assistant professor) exclaimed, "You're higher in the system, you're protected versus if you're lower, you're told not to say anything." Nick (assistant professor) also reiterated, "[Bullying] comes with the territory because of the tenure system. For this crazy system, for six years, you must watch what you say and be afraid of offending people and never speak up." Wallace (assistant professor) likened it to hazing, "After a critical mass of the junior faculty got tenure and promotion, the atmosphere shifted drastically…I feel like…higher ed is essentially academic hazing…And the only reason they're doing that is because it was done to them."

Staff. Patty (a librarian) detailed, "I am unique because I don't have tenure. So, I didn't feel like I could stand up, which is ridiculous. Like, I should have just done it [standing up for a colleague]." Patty also mentioned that she was told, "I had heard, classism and the hierarchy. Be mindful that you're going to be victim to that." Henry (full professor and administrator) saw the disconnect between faculty and staff as he narrated, "I've seen those situations where faculty attack staff and are just kind of condescending. It could be a gender issue because many staff are female…the staff person felt so undervalued…it's this pecking order." Dana (department administrative assistant) expressed, "I mean, it's your word against somebody who's a world-renowned researcher, and they're going to take their word because they make the university money…there needs to be more done to protect staff…I always felt like a subpar employee."

Discussion

This study examined how a person's position in the hierarchy plays a role in making sense of workplace bullying experiences. Data indicated that faculty often understood bullying through their position within the tenure process. Junior-level faculty voiced feelings of vulnerability due to their lack of tenure as they wanted to report their situations to administration, which often lead to feeling helpless. Staff participants saw their role as less than faculty as they made sense of bullying. This study adds a greater understanding of how organizational rank plays a large role in workplace bullying sensemaking processes.

References

Botterill, M. (2018). Crossing boundaries: Projects, discourses, and visibility in the third space. In C. Bossu & N. Brown (Eds.), *Professional and Support Staff in Higher Education, University Development and Administration* (pp. 91–107). Springer.

Charmaz, K. (2014). *Constructing grounded theory* (2nd ed.). Sage.

Farley, S., & Sprigg, C. (2014, November 3). Culture of cruelty: Why bullying thrives in higher education. *The Guardian*. https://www.theguardian.com/higher-education-network/blog/2014/nov/03/whybullying-thrives-higher-education

Fratzl, J. & McKay, R. (2013). Professional staff in academia. In J. Lester (Ed.), *Workplace Bullying in Higher Education* (pp. 60–73). Routledge.

Keashly, L. (2021). Workplace bullying, mobbing and harassment in academe: Faculty experience. In P. D'Cruz, E. Noronha, L. Keashly, & S. Tye-Williams (eds.) *Handbook of Workplace Bullying, Emotional Abuse and Harassment* (Vol. 4, pp. 221–297). Springer.

Keashly, L., & Neuman, J. (2010). Faculty experiences with bullying in higher education: Causes, consequences, and management. *Administrative Theory & Praxis, 32*(1), 48–70. https://doi.org/10.2753/ATP1084-1806320103

Namie, G. (2021, June). *WBI U.S. workplace bullying survey June 2021*. http://www.workplacebullying.org/wbiresearch/2021-wbi-survey/

Smith, F., & Coel, C. (2018). Workplace bullying policies, higher education, and the First Amendment: Building bridges, not walls, *First Amendment Studies, 52*(1–2), 96–111. https://doi.org/10.1080/21689725.2018.1495094

Weick, K. (1995). *Sensemaking in organizations*. Sage.

Junk Mail: How the Historical Evolution of Form Letters Shaped the Study of Business Communication (and Vice-Versa)

Sam DeKay
BNY Mellon Corporation (Retired)

"The Pulse of Progress" is this year's conference theme. The words are ambiguous—perhaps deliberately so. Could this mean, for example, that the study of business communication is a creator of progressive change? Or could it mean that our research and our instruction seek to understand and explain the implications of changes created by other disciplines? Or could it mean both? This presentation is a historical examination of the study of business communication as an agent of change.

From 1913 until approximately 1930, a small group of university professors of business communication in the United States was a genuine "pulse of progress." These academics – four of whom were among the six who later founded the association now called "ABC" -- were largely responsible for changing the ways that practitioners and students in the United States thought about the purposes and rhetorical composition of sales letters. These letters—sent to millions of potential customers throughout the globe—were a primary source of profit for manufacturing and service industries; they were called by various names: "circular letters," "processed letters, "form letters." Today we often refer to them as "junk mail" or "junk email." Yet, they have remained, even now, a major means of communication between for- and not-for-profit organizations and their customers. And the lessons taught by these early twentieth-century professors have remained standard practice for writers of sales correspondence today.

This presentation will explain how early twentieth-century academics—whose books and articles were intended for professional business writers as well as college students—insisted that authors rethink strategies for composing mass-produced sales letters. For nearly two decades, between 1900 and 1920, non-academic letter specialists had attained consensus concerning the most effective methods for ensuring that readers will not simply toss correspondence into the dreaded waste basket. According to these specialists, sales letters will be read if customers believe that a form sales letter *appears* to be a personal missive; this is best accomplished by using a typewriter (or a machine that can replicate type script, such as a multigraph). In addition, the customer's name must be typed in the letter's body; the "filled-in" name should always match the font and ink tone of the pre-typed or printed letter.

University professors of business communication adopted a contrary perspective. These academics maintained that letters must appeal to the personal interests of customers; however, a persuasive appeal does not consist of mechanical flourishes intended to simulate personal correspondence. Rather, the content of sales form letters must be rhetorically constructed to adopt a reader's point of view by addressing the reader's needs, emotions, and economic situation. The actual words of a letter—not its mechanical construction—provide the impetus to "pull" customers and profits. By the latter half of the 1920s, this university-led approach to the rhetoric of sales form letters was widely accepted, including by non-academic letter specialists.

These early twentieth-century academics reconceptualized thinking about the objectives of sales letters. But, in addition, they introduced new purposes for the college-level study of business communication: The study of rhetoric, they insisted, must be a central focus of instruction. And, when an organization was founded for college teachers of business communication (in 1936), this focus was retained. Beginning with its first conference in 1937 and continuing through 1941, every annual conference of this organization (now ABC) devoted considerable attention specifically to the rhetoric of form sales letters. Although the discipline of business communication no longer focuses upon the study of direct mail advertising, rhetorical and discourse analysis of workplace documents and spoken language has remained a critical concern at ABC conferences and in scholarly journals.

This historical study is based upon examination of trade journal and newspaper articles, how-to-manuals, and books published between 1890 and 1930 by academic and non-academic authors. In addition, the *Bulletin* of The Association of College Teachers of Business Writing (1936) and the *Bulletin* of the American Business Writing Association (1937-1942) have proven invaluable sources; these organizations were the immediate predecessors of ABC. The study will also present actual form letters sent to customers from businesses in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. All documents are intended to provide data for historical triangulation.

Pathos for Impact on Business Communications

Ana Lucia Magalhaes, State of Sao Paulo Technological College
Carlos Lima, State of Sao Paulo Educational System

In today's business arena, competition is relentless. As Fairclough (2001) notes, discourse plays a crucial role in social change, which is evident when companies fight for market share, customer loyalty, and innovation supremacy. Impactful speeches and texts are essential to keep businesses successful, growing, or even afloat. This applies to product launches, investor pitches, rebranding, crisis management, employee motivation, industry conferences, and sales presentations, where the effective use of rhetoric, as discussed by Aristotle (2003), can be decisive.

In business communication, pathos, a term popularized by the philosopher Aristotle (2003), is how you influence your audience's emotional state. It is not about manipulation; it is recognizing that emotions can be as powerful as facts. Ducrot (1987) emphasizes the importance of what is said and how it is said, reinforcing the idea that word choice can have a significant emotional impact.

To implement pathos meaningfully in a discourse, the speaker must, first and foremost, know the audience's values and, if possible, their education and habits. Kerbrat-Orecchioni (1997) discusses the enunciation of subjectivity in discourse, highlighting the importance of tailoring the message to the audience's values and experiences to maximize emotional impact.

In the realm of business communication, data-driven reports and logical arguments often take center stage. But there’s an ingredient that can elevate messages from mundane to memorable: pathos. While pathos (emotional appeal) is crucial for engaging an audience, it must be presented alongside ethos (credibility) and logos (logical reasoning) for several reasons. A well-rounded message combines all three elements as pointed out by Joseph (2002). Overemphasizing pathos can lead to emotional manipulation, while neglecting it makes communication dry and unrelatable. Ethos establishes trust: if your audience doesn’t perceive you as credible, emotional appeals may fall flat. Logos provides the backbone: facts, evidence, and reasoning support emotional appeals. Without logic, pathos lacks substance. Together, ethos, pathos, and logos create a holistic impact. Ethos lends authority (Foucault, 1984), logos provides structure, and pathos stirs emotions. The result? A compelling and persuasive message.

The goals of the exposé are to explain what pathos is (Isocrates, 1894), in a context that includes ethos (how the speaker is perceived by the audience) and logos (logical thinking) as well as to show strategies to maximize pathos content in business messages, while keeping those messages serious and to the point. Each story is a real business case and includes a hook (an attention-grabbing statement), objectives, challenge description, and, most importantly, the solution with the use of pathos. The methodology will be based on the analytical presentation of three case studies, one involving marketing and branding, another conflict resolution, and the third employee engagement. The intended outcome is to make the participants more conscious of the importance of pathos in their business communications and aware of the strategies involved in using pathos to communicate with more impact.

These citations help to ground the discussion in established theories and perspectives, enhancing the credibility and depth of the text.

References

Aristotle. (2003). *Arte retorica e arte [oetica [Rhetoric and poetic art]* (A. P. Carvalho, Trans.) (14th ed.). Rio de Janeiro: Ediouro.

Barthes, R. (1975). *Crítica e verdade [Criticism and truth].* (L. Perrone-Moisés, trans.) São Paulo: Perspectiva.

Benveniste, E. (1974). *Problemes de linguistique generale [Problems in general linguistics].* Paris: Gallimard.

Ducrot, O. (1987). *O dizer e o dito [The saying and the said*]. (trad. S.F. Campos) Campinas: Pontes Editores, SP.

Fairclough, N. (2001). *Discurso e mudanca social [Discourse and social change*]. (I. Magalhães, Trans.). Brasilia: Editora Universidade de Brasilia.

Foucault, M. (1984). *The Foulcault reader: On the genealogy of ethics: An overview of work in progress; Beyond structuralism and hermeneutics.* New York: Pantheon Books.

Isocrates (1894). *Encomium of Helen* (J. H. Freese, Trans.). http://fxylib.znufe.edu.cn/wgfljd/%B9%C5%B5%E4%D0%DE%B4%C7%D1%A7/pw/isocrates/pwisoc10.htm

Joseph, M. (2002). *The trivium: The liberal arts of logic, grammar and rhetoric.* Philadephia: Paul Dry Books. (Original work published 1937)

Kerbrat–Orecchioni, C. (1994). *Les interactions verbales [The verbal interactions].* Paris: Armand Colin.

Kerbrat–Orecchioni, C. (1997). *La enunciacion de la subjetividad en el lenguaje [The enunciation of subjectivity in language].* Buenos Aires: Edicial.

Professional Communications Consulting: Lessons Learned from the Field

Melissa Geil, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill
Andrew Quagliata, Cornell University
Kelley O'Brien, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill
Rose Helens-Hart, Fort Hays State University

This panel considers adaptation strategies and lessons learned from moving between academic and professional stakeholders when delivering communication content. Featuring four business communication academics who perform consulting work for a broad spectrum of clients, from multinational banks and pharmaceutical companies to nonprofits and government services, we offer key insights about:

A) Differentiators between client-based communication services and academic environments
B) Lessons learned from working with various stakeholders

Bringing together stories from the field and key takeaways, we seek to offer guidance and best practices based on our own experiences. Below are the four abstracts for the panelists.

All the Feels: Consulting for Mission-Driven Organizations

Consulting with mission-driven organizations (whether nonprofit, for-profit, or governmental) requires understanding the different pressures leaders face from both internal and external stakeholders. Some stakeholders may perceive a leader's methodical and deliberate approach to decision-making or implementation as too slow or not recognizing the urgency of a situation. Other stakeholders may perceive a leader who expedites process as not being inclusive. Lessons learned in working with mission-driven clients include the importance of understanding a leader's overarching goals or vision (or helping them develop these foundational elements), spending time with key internal stakeholders, learning about the history of an organization, and gathering information about the sector.

Lessons Learned Consulting with a Multinational Bank

This session will include four lessons learned during a multi-year consulting engagement with a large multinational bank. Lessons relate to multiple stages of the project including helping the client develop the training program, documenting your agreements, maintaining relationships, and protecting your intellectual property.

Connecting Across a Demographic Divide

Consultants working with clients who are demographically different than they are may face additional challenges in demonstrating their credibility and providing insight into businesses as if they were true insiders. I will discuss lessons learned from my long-term training/consulting engagements with local utilities companies where perception gaps were influenced by gender, age, level of education, and professional experience differences. My key take-aways address active listening and empathy, contextualizing communication, developing shared goals, and accessing industry-specific resources.

Beware the Curse of Knowledge: Lessons from Big Pharma

Working with science-based industry clients requires specific attention to something the Heath Brothers define as “the curse of knowledge”: when your expertise on a subject so far exceeds the knowledge base of those around you that you forget what it’s like not to understand expert-level information. In my transition between working with STEM Ph.D. students and to clients in the pharmaceutical industry, I have had to adapt my approach to talking about the curse of knowledge to facilitate more successful internal and external communication strategies. I discuss three lessons learned, relating to ego, audience, and translating science for business solutions.

How Can We Encourage Our Gen Z Students to Take Class Notes?

Lisa Bailey
University of Illinois Chicago

Research Questions

I want to research the most effective ways to teach and encourage students to take notes in class and when they are reading and studying on their own.

Methodology

I would like to survey various groups of stakeholders (see below). I would like to help my students learn basic study skills. Many of them do not take notes in class or do their assigned reading. This puts them at a disadvantage with regard to learning the material. It's also changing how we teach them. Many of them expect us to provide "study guides" so they don't have to actually read their textbooks at all. This is not preparing them well for the age of information where there is more to read now than ever before. As entry-level employees, they are most likely going to be expected to take large amounts of information and summarize it for their employers, but they aren't getting experience doing that in our classes. What I would like to accomplish is two-pronged:

1) I want to encourage students to take notes in class so they have a record of what happened to refer to later.

2) I want to encourage students to do their assigned course reading and also take notes when reading so that they will be able to remember and relocate the information.

These two things seem basic, but our students are not doing them. It could be life-changing for their learning if they would adopt these two practices. I think there are two reasons why students are not doing these things now:

a) They don't think they need to. They don't understand the value of it. They don't realize that supervisors are going to expect them to write down instructions and read and summarize large amounts of material.

b) They don't know how.

I think that b) is the easy part. We can work study skills into our lessons in appropriate ways. Part a) is more difficult. If our students don't think it's necessary, why would they do it? I have some ideas for some empirical research projects that could address these concerns.

We could survey employers to ask the extent to which students will be expected to read and take notes at work. We could also ask about employers' current level of satisfaction with their new hires' reading and note-taking skills. Then we could show this data to our students to encourage them to take note-taking seriously. We could survey instructors about their perceived need for this instructional focus. Are others recognizing the same things I'm seeing? We could also ask instructors what they do to teach note-taking, what works best, etc. We could do a study in which some instructors teach one type of note-taking, other instructors teach another, and then we could compare the results. We could survey students to inquire why they don't read or take notes, and what it would take to get them to do so.

How Personal Should Interpersonal Communication Be?

Susan Luck, Pfeiffer University
Virginia Hemby, Middle Tennessee State University
Susan Schanne, Schanne Academic Resources

This study seeks to identify the impact of overly familiar personal communication habits in professional relationships, including at the workplace, and with student interactions.

Consider how many times a day you hear, in casual conversation, terms of endearment used, such as "honey", "friend," "baby," "dude," or even "sugar." Do you hear these same terms of endearment used in professional conversations? How do you perceive these comments when they are directed at you? How do they affect your perceptions of the person who uses them in professional conversations? Do you use them? If so, when and under what circumstances? Also, consider that the more mature people become—and perhaps the more advanced they are in their careers-- the more comfortable they are with being their authentic selves. For many, the use of those endearments is a cultural aspect of who they are. But is that authentic self who they need to bring to the situation? Added to this conundrum are the ethical and legal implications of the use of language.

The question then may become, to paraphrase Orwell, all people should be allowed to bring their authentic selves to the workplace, although some authentic selves are more allowed than others. When personal communication norms or mannerisms cross into the professional communication realm, especially when we work with people over extended periods of time, the potential for illegal or harassing language may develop.

Our goal was to identify whether, when what one may perceive as overly familiar personal communication habits cross into the professional realm, the use of terms native to the authentic self changes the dynamics of a relationship between the person who uses the term and the recipient of the communication. More specifically, the study considers how demographics such as age, ethnicity, geographic region, sexual orientation, and culture impact the perception of overly personal communication patterns.

Methodology

To answer the questions, we prepared and distributed a survey that gave respondents scenarios wherein what could be perceived as an overly familiar term was used. Respondents were asked to choose whether the use of the term in this particular scenario made them feel very comfortable, slightly comfortable, neutral, slightly uncomfortable, or very uncomfortable. We then asked questions intended to reveal in what sorts of professional situations the use of these terms may possibly be seen as more important or less important: did the power level between the two people play a part in the response? The age difference between the two people? The tone of voice used when these terms were deployed? The emotional context of the situation?

With over 160 responses to our survey, we have some answers to the research question—and more questions that grew out of the conclusions. While some respondents indicated that they did not feel endearments were appropriate at any time, others found those who used them warmer and friendlier, more caring about the person/employee and his personal well-being. Age and region of origin also played a part in the results. We will present these results as well as others in this round table.

Questions that still remain—and which we intend to discuss in the round table—is whether one person's perception of how these terms are used can be discriminatory against those for whom the use is culturally innate.

Power Skills 2025!

Marcel Robles
Eastern Kentucky University

With the power of information comes the power of skills. What types of skills? Power skills. Due to the high demands and easy access of information, many jobs place an even greater emphasis on integrity, communication, and discretion more than ever before. Hard or technical skills are not enough to keep individuals employed any longer. Organizations are right-sizing and cutting positions due to technology and automation (James & James, 2004). Because "soft" skills, better known now as "POWER" skills, are critical for productive performance in today's workplace, current and future business leaders are emphasizing the development of these essential skills (Jennings, 2015). While hard technical skills are a part of many excellent educational curricula, the power skills need further emphasis in curricula so students learn the importance of soft skills early in their academic programs before they embark on a business career (Sommers, 2015).

Much research has been done on the importance of soft skills in the workplace (Maes, Weldy, & Icenogel, 1997; Melden, 2020; Pulian & Cargil, 2020; Ragley, 2015; Renson et al., 2007). One study found that 75 percent of long-term job success depends on people skills, while only 25 percent is dependent on technical knowledge (Melden, 2020). Another study indicated that hard skills contribute only 15% of one's success; whereas, 85% of success is comprised of soft skills (Watts & Watts, 2008, as cited in John, 2009). As employers are progressively looking for employees who are mature and socially well adjusted, they rate soft skills as number one in importance for entry-level success on the job (Wilhelm, 2004).

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to determine the critical soft skills employers expect from their employees so business educators can promote these skills in their curriculum to improve the employability of business graduates.

Methods and Procedures

Students in a junior-level business communication class will each be required to interview two executives each semester for their final project. After the interview, the student will give the executive a "thank you" letter and an evaluation survey from the course professor, along with a self-addressed, stamped envelope (SASE). The evaluation survey will ask the business executive to comment on the performance of the student during the interviewing process. Additionally, the survey will ask about topics the business executives deem important for business graduates to study.

A five-point Likert scale will be used to measure the strength of importance of each attribute. The questionnaire will ask the executive to rate the level of importance of each of the ten soft skills attributes. The range of Extremely Important (5), Very Important (4), Somewhat Important (3), Not Very Important (2), and Not Important (1) was used.

Research suggests that power skills are as good an indicator of job performance as traditional job qualifications (hard skills). Hard skills are the technical abilities and knowledge that one possesses, whereas soft skills are those personal attributes and interpersonal qualities that are intangible. Although soft skills are important to recognize and improve, hard skills are critical on the job as well. While employers exceedingly want new employees to possess strong soft skills, the hard and soft skills must complement one another. Business executives consider interpersonal skills a very important attribute in job applicants. They want employees who are honest, can communicate well, get along with others, and work hard.

This study will identify those top ten soft skills as perceived the most important by business executives.

Outcomes

Corporate recruiters want candidates with soft skills who add value with their soft skills, along with the ability to make a difference in the workplace. Business employees need to communicate effectively, get along well with their coworkers, embrace teamwork, take initiative, have high work ethic, and portray professionalism. This study will identify the top ten soft skills attributes deemed critical by business executives. Even though all of the soft skills appear very important, not all are perceived by business executives to be equally important. This study seeks to determine the most important interpersonal skills for success.

References

Dean, S. A., & East, J. I. (2019). Soft skills needed for the 21st-century workforce. *International Journal of Applied Management & Technology, 18*(1), 17–32. https://doi.org/10.5590/IJAMT.2019.18.1.02

Dhopte, S., & Sinha, M. (2017). A study of essential components of corporate skills. *Journal of Commerce & Management Thought, 8*(1), 120–135. https://doi.org/10.5958/0976-478X.2017.00006.4

Hendarman, A. F., & Cantner, U. (2018). Soft skills, hard skills, and individual innovativeness. *Eurasian Business Review, 8*(2), 139–169. https://doi.org/10.1007/s40821-017-0076-6

Ibrahim, R., Boerhannoeddin, A., & Kayode, B. K. (2017). Organizational culture and development: Testing the structural path of factors affecting employees' work performance in an organization. *Asia Pacific Management Review, 22*(2),104–111. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.apmrv.2016.10.002

Iyengar, R. V. (2015). MBA: The soft and hard skills that matter. *IUP Journal of Soft Skills, 9*(1), 7–14.

Lazarus, A. (2013). Soften up: The importance of soft skills for job success. *Physician Executive, 39*(5), 40–45.

Majid, S., Eapen, C. M., Ei Mon Aung, & Oo, K. T. (2019). The Importance of soft skills for employability and career development: Students and employers' perspectives. *IUP Journal of Soft Skills, 13*(4), 7–39.

Mishra, K. (2014). Employability skills that recruiters demand. *IUP Journal of Soft Skills, 8*(3), 50–55.

Rangnekar, S. S. (2011). Soft skills in management. *International Journal of Business Insights & Transformation, 5*(1), 108–109.

Sharma, V. (2018). Soft skills: An employability enabler. *IUP Journal of Soft Skills, 12*(2), 25–32.

This panel invites presenters to present a research question or issue in three minutes and to solicit feedback or advice from the audience and other panelists. It aims to parallel successful conference events such as My Favorite Assignment. It is an opportunity for researchers to sound their projects within a supportive and informed peer group and to exchange ideas and information.

Data-Informed Process Feedback: Amplifying the Impact of Business Communication

Justin Young and Charlie Potter
Metropolitan State University of Denver

Most feedback in business communication instruction focuses on a final product: a written text or the delivery of a presentation. Developing process feedback tools for both writing and speaking is key to progress in the field of business communication education. This pitch will focus on expanding the presenter's research on utilizing software to provide data-informed feedback on the writing process itself (including the use of GenAI). The new project will include the evaluation of tools that record practice presentations and provide feedback to speakers in the form of data on delivery criteria such as volume, pitch, and eye contact.

Developing process feedback tools for writing *and* speaking is key to progress in the field of business communication education. This pitch will focus on expanding the presenter's research on utilizing software to provide feedback on the writing process, to include the evaluation of tools that provide data-informed feedback on presentations.

Research: Three-Minute Research Pitch

This panel invites presenters to present a research question or issue in three minutes and to solicit feedback or advice from the audience and other panelists. It aims to parallel successful conference events such as My Favorite Assignment. It is an opportunity for researchers to sound their projects within a supportive and informed peer group and to exchange ideas and information.

Researching the Human: Human Connection and Community in an Age of AI

Barbara George
Carnegie Mellon University

In an age when "loneliness" has become a health epidemic (Murthy, 2023), discussing community-building and human interaction is particularly salient, as noted in student persistence and belonging research (SEP).

This survey research will explore the differences between human interactions and AI interactions in several assignments in a professional writing course (professional portfolio, communications plan, and expert interview assignment). Students will be surveyed in terms of - past AI writing experience (in co-ops, etc.), past human interaction experience (in co-ops, etc.), and application of both to writing assignments in the context of building a classroom community (instructor and student groups).

This small study will shed some light on the intersections of rising technology and student mental health and well-being. While AI has some excellent capabilities, it is important to not disregard teaching and nurturing in real time human connection. AI can then complement existing and emerging research about human connections and communities.

References

Murthy, V. (2023). Our epidemic of loneliness and isolation. *The U.S. Surgeon General's Advisory on the Healing Effects of Social Connection and Community.* https://www.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/surgeon-general-social-connection-advisory.pdf

The student experience project. (2024). https://studentexperienceproject

Research: Three-Minute Research Pitch

This panel invites presenters to present a research question or issue in three minutes and to solicit feedback or advice from the audience and other panelists. It aims to parallel successful conference events such as My Favorite Assignment. It is an opportunity for researchers to sound their projects within a supportive and informed peer group and to exchange ideas and information.

Teamwork: Quantifying Students' Experiential Learning

Carol Watson and Sarah Clark
Indiana University

Research Background/Purpose

The presenters' research is centered on students' perceptions, characteristics, and strategies of an effective or ineffective team. Given that teamwork is not explicitly taught in most classes, the presenters were curious to know what students learn simply based on their team experiences. Both presenters teach Business Communication at Indiana University Bloomington. At the end of the semester, students are asked to reflect, assess, and share their teamwork experiences, using a Google Form provided by the instructors. The purpose of the research is to: 1) gain key insights regarding students' perceptions, characteristics and strategies on working with teams, and 2) identify any patterns among the students by gender; length of team collaboration; and/or education level. 3) enrich student learning with possible curricular modifications.

Since team collaboration is a Student Learning Outcome (SLO) for all students, the presenters sought to compare students' feedback with industry and academic literature to discover any gaps that could potentially be explicitly addressed in class during the semester.

Methodology

Nearly 400 students were asked to:

- describe in detail how your team worked together (or not) to complete team projects
- consider each team member's effectiveness and contributions to the team process, including the final case deliverables
- rank yourself and each team member on a scale from Excellent to Needs Improvement and provide a detailed explanation for your ranking, including who, if anyone emerged as the team leader.

The responses from the nearly 400 students have been sorted by gender; the length of team collaboration; and education level. The majority of the students in the data set are undergraduate students enrolled in a Business Writing course and 36 are graduate students (Master of Science, Finance) enrolled in an Effective Communication course.

Potential Scope of Team Collaboration Research/Next Steps

Initial results from the research indicate that students, from their experience(s) already have a keen understanding of what qualities and strategies are necessary to be effective in a team setting. The presenters seek additional information on what gaps or obstacles may prevent students from applying the information that they clearly possess in their teams.

The presenters welcome the opportunity to hear feedback from ABC colleagues on next steps, possible new directions, and collaboration on their research project.

This panel invites presenters to present a research question or issue in three minutes and to solicit feedback or advice from the audience and other panelists. It aims to parallel successful conference events such as My Favorite Assignment. It is an opportunity for researchers to sound their projects within a supportive and informed peer group and to exchange ideas and information.

The Pulse of Progress: Student Classroom Satisfaction After Employment

Cheryl Croall
University of North Texas

Communication departments measure student satisfaction and instructor effectiveness to take the pulse on how well students are prepared for careers in business communication.

Business communication instructors prepare students to create work in industry. Often, given students' limited exposure to employment, it is difficult for students to grasp assignments with confidence. Industry focused assignments may veer from traditional academics and not align with student's expectations. Due to this, industry focused assignments may lead to negative perceptions and teacher evaluations during the semester.

After a period of employment, students may reflect on the industry focused assignments and have a different perception of the assignment's value.

Communication departments should consider evaluating instructors based on student's perceptions of teaching after a student is employed in industry.

Research: Three-Minute Research Pitch

This panel invites presenters to present a research question or issue in three minutes and to solicit feedback or advice from the audience and other panelists. It aims to parallel successful conference events such as My Favorite Assignment. It is an opportunity for researchers to sound their projects within a supportive and informed peer group and to exchange ideas and information.

Tracing the Antecedent and Extension of Acceptable Use Policies

Christina Davidson
University of Louisville

As workplaces gravitate toward greater integration with generative artificial intelligence (GenAI) writing technologies and tools, business communication researchers have the opportunity to study the sociocultural and ethical concerns that will accompany this current moment. In particular, this project will examine a common policy document (the Acceptable Use Policy) caught within a contradiction of expectations concerning employee use of GenAI. On one hand, business leaders hold enthusiasm based on promises of increased productivity from Gen-AI use. However, managerial discourse on GenAI integration also reveals anxiety based upon potential harm that may come to organizations from employee use of GenAI tools. These fears were realized in April 2023 as engineers in Samsung's semiconductor division unknowingly leaked trade secrets through use of ChatGPT (Computerworld, 2023). As a result, organizations are turning to a revision of their Acceptable Use Policies (AUPs) as a means to mitigate potential harm and to provide instruction to employees concerning GenAI use. Many theorists commonly cited in workplace communication studies have contributed to the study of how organizations use documents to exert power and to mediate employee behavior (Foucault, 1977; Latour, 1987; Suchman, 1987). Considering how the AUP will be used to guide workplace communication in the GenAI disruptive environment, business communication research is uniquely situated to critically evaluate and examine the genre as it transforms.

To learn more about our current AUP form and how this genre is transforming, this project explored documents which informed the earliest versions of the AUP. I discovered that as a policy genre, the Acceptable Use Policy (AUP) originated in the 1970s as a result of the development of ARPAnet (Advanced Research Projects Agency Network), the world's first computer network. I wanted to examine the antecedent of the AUP genre in hopes to understand ways in which we might interrogate its current uptake. Over the lifespan of any AUP, an organization will regularly revise the document to accommodate new technologies. As organizations respond to increased access to generative AI in the public domain, a necessitation for such a modification has become apparent. And as AUPs are revised, the genre appears to be fracturing, resulting in a partner document: the Artificial Intelligence Acceptable Use Policy (AI AUP) (Carmichael, 2023). The emergent genre of the AI AUP is worthy of rhetorical study, as these documents are being written during a moment of social and cultural disruption. And since the AI AUP genre will be used to mediate the actions of employees governed by the policy, it calls into question the efficacy, ethics, and accuracy of AI AUPs being developed under duress.

Therefore, the following research questions emerged for this study:

1. What were the key characteristics of the AUP in its earliest forms and how do these characteristics reveal certain values and orientations of the document?

2. When considering the ways key characteristics of the AUP genre have changed over time, how may that study inform our understanding of future iterations of the document?

This three-minute pitch will discuss the conclusions that may be drawn from tracing the AUP document from the late 1970s into current uptake. Also discussed will be coding strategies of the publicly available AUP documents with a textual analysis of their content and creation while tracing the emergent genre from the originating organization (Spinuzzi, 2003). While coding this data, additional analysis was given to the interaction of the human activity in connection with systems. Although mediated by humans, GenAI tools nevertheless remain networks of technologies (Rogers et al., 2023). Maintaining alignment with CHAT and the attention to how human activity is mediated and influenced by activity systems, data will be coded according to the cultural and historical findings from the textual analysis (Vygotsky 1978).

References

Carmichael, M. (2023). Key considerations for developing organizational generative AI policies. *@ISACA Newsletter*, *44*(1). Information Systems Audit and Control Association. Online.

Foucault, M. (1977). *Discipline and punish: The birth of the prison*. Pantheon Books.

Latour, B. (1987). *Science in action: How to follow scientists and engineers through society*. Harvard University Press.

Rogers, P. M., Russell, D. R., Carlino, P., & Marine, J. M. (Eds.). (2023). *Writing as a human activity: Implications and applications of the work of Charles Bazerman*. The WAC Clearinghouse; University Press of Colorado.

Spinuzzi, C. (2003). *Tracing genres through organizations: A sociocultural approach to information design*. MIT Press.

Suchman, L. A. (1987). *Plans and situated actions: The problem of human-machine communication*. Cambridge University Press.

Vygotsky, L. S. (1978). *Mind in society*: T*he development of higher psychological processes*. Harvard University Press.

Caring, Sharing, and the Management of Student-Faculty Boundaries

Emily Dutton and Katherine Ryan
Indiana University

At the heart of every successful learning experience is a positive student-teacher relationship. Instructors strive to support students and remove barriers to achievement. Recently, however, it seems that an increasing number of students seek counsel and students come to instructors with deeper, more complex, more distressing issues (Abrams, 2022; Flaherty, 2021). This session focuses on how instructors enter into the teacher-student relationship space and encourages participants to consider relational boundary issues as an integral part of the scholarship of teaching and learning.

Participants will:

- Engage in meaningful contemplation and Q&A around issues of student support, empathy, professionalism, and role expectations.
- Identify motivations and consequences of investing in student rapport, concerns, and crises.
- Benchmark with colleagues while clarifying personal limitations and relationship management strategies.

Role Clarity and Boundaries

All instructors desire to be responsive to student requests for guidance, advice, and assistance as they pursue their learning goals. But how much do they welcome students to share, and how much are they comfortable sharing back in return? The answers to these questions can have a profound impact on how instructors experience their roles as professional educators, and they reveal beliefs about what students need to be successful learners.

There are two sides to the boundary conversation, both driven by an underlying need to be clear about instructors' roles as educators. In addition to being subject matter experts, content creators, and evaluators of performance, are they also advisors, mentors, in loco parentis, or confidants to their students? Are they friends? The answers to these questions are likely to be driven by how instructors define job breadth (Peariasamy, et al., 2020), school norms, cultural expectations (Espinoza 2012), and the assumptions made about how relationships impact learning (Chory & Offstein, 2017).

One side of the boundary conversation considers what students are invited to share, and to what degree. As recently noted, "…the more we immerse ourselves in our students' personal lives, the more energy and time we lose, and the more our risk of burnout increases" (Wyrick, 2022). In other words, there is clear tension between honoring one's own well-being and engaging in the desire to listen, to help, and to express empathy. Women and women of color may be particularly impacted by ideologies and role expectations around nurturing and caring for others (Hua, 2018; Rockquemore, 2015). Those who are reading this and who identify as a woman may recall receiving feedback about how “nice” they are.

The other side of the boundary conversation concerns an instructor’s approach to self-disclosure. What motivates them to share personal information with students? Researchers have found that instructors disclosed personal information when they believed it to be relevant to course content, but also to “connect” with students, to be seen as “approachable” and to “foster relational closeness” (Hosek & Thompson, 2009 p. 334-335). These latter motivations are in line with broader trends of bringing one’s ‘whole self’ to work, but in an academic environment, important considerations about power distance, credibility, and role confusion also exist.

If instructors don’t carefully navigate the boundaries of student-faculty relationships, they may take on more than they can psychologically and emotionally handle and become an ineffective resource for students in the process.

References

Abrams, Z. (2022). Student mental health is in crisis. Campuses are rethinking their approach. *Monitor on Psychology*, *53*(7), 60.

Chory, R. M., & Offstein, E. H. (2017). “Your professor will know you as a person.” Evaluating and rethinking the relational boundaries between faculty and students. *Journal of Management Education*, *41*(1), 9–38.

Espinoza, C. (2012). Millennial values and boundaries in the classroom. *New Directions for Teaching and Learning*, *2012*(131), 29–41.

Flaherty, C. (2021, April 7). *Faculty: ‘Gatekeepers’ of student mental health*? Inside Higher Ed. https://www.insidehighered.com/news/2021/04/08/faculty-gatekeepers-student-mental-health

Hosek, A. M., & Thompson, J. (2009). Communication privacy management and college instruction: Exploring the rules and boundaries that frame instructor private disclosures. *Communication Education*, *58*(3), 327–349.

Hua, L. U. (2018). Slow feeling and quiet being: Women of color teaching in urgent times. *New Directions for Teaching and Learning*, *2018*(153), 77–86.

Peariasamy, S. D., Omar, Z., Basri, R., & Alias, S. N. (2020). Magnitude of role-breadth self-efficacy in teacher proactive work behaviour. *International Journal of Academic Research in Business and Social Sciences*, *10*(7), 446–459.

Rockquemore, K. (2015, November 3). *How to listen less*. Inside Higher Ed. https://www.insidehighered.com/advice/2015/11/04/setting-boundaries-when-it-comes-students-emotional-disclosures-essay

Wyrick, A. (2022, August 29). *How to define boundaries with your students-and stick to them*. Harvard Business Publishing. https://hbsp.harvard.edu/inspiring-minds/how-to-define-boundaries-with-your-students-and-stick-to-them

Developing Digital Multimodal Communication Literacy in a Business Communication Course

Jane Strong
University of Wisconsin – Eau Claire

The current qualitative study aims to evaluate business communication students' use of the four meta-literacies (FML) model for digital multimodal communication. It seeks to understand how students interpret and apply the four dimensions to self-diagnose their digital multimodal communication artifacts. The objective is to test a theoretical model (i.e., FML) for pragmatic use to evaluate student slide decks. In doing so, students' ability to use the model as a diagnostic framework will be identified and conclusions will be drawn about the strengths and weaknesses of the model itself as applied as a diagnostic tool in higher education.

A workplace communication gap has been extensively noted (Coffelt et al., 2019; Weritz, 2022;). In the "new visual economy," workers must possess effective multimodal communication skills (Canva, 2023). In their seminal article, the New London Group proposed a pedagogy of multiliteracies to address the digital future (Cazden et al., 1994). The FML model was conceived as a simplified framework and constructed from multiple taxonomies and frameworks developed following the 1994 article (Cook, 2002; Feerrar, 2019; McGrail et al., 2021; Ng, 2012; Selber, 2004; Sindoni & Moschini, 2022; Strong, 2022).

The four meta-literacies theorized are digital literacy, multimedia skill literacy, multimodal design literacy, and rhetorical literacy. Business communication classes should seek to focus pedagogy and training to ensure that developing communicators are multiliterate and able to meet the communication demands of a work landscape characterized by disruptive innovation and digital transformation.

The proposed multiple-case study consists of two cases and uses purposive sampling to respond to the research questions (Cresswell & Poth, 2018; Yin, 2018). In both cases, students were introduced to the four dimensions of digital multimodal communication literacy and so the data is relevant to this inquiry. The students used the framework to inform their multimodal projects and to self-evaluate their work.

Case study one examines two sets of data from a former undergraduate course, Technology for Business Communication. The first set of artifacts are 188 slides from the students' initial slide deck project. For their slides, students presented their findings from a self-audit of their business communication technology use within their professional and academic life. Self-audits examined productivity applications (e.g. slide decks, spreadsheets, word processing, emails, etc.), social media, and a SWOT analysis of their communication technology usage. The second set of data to be collected is 23 student self-evaluations of their initial course slide decks. Students were trained to evaluate digital multimodal communication ensembles using four dimensions in the FML model: digital literacy, multimedia skill literacy, multimodal design literacy, and rhetorical literacy. Their self-evaluations were written following the training. The narrative evaluations measure their perceived competencies in each of the four dimensions found in the FML model.

The second case study is from a later iteration of the same course, Technology for Business Communication. In this course version, the first set of artifacts is ≈20 screencast presentations that include the slide decks from students' first major project in the course. Because the recordings were created in a variety of applications (e.g. Screencastify, Zoom, PowerPoint), not all 20 recordings are still viable. The second set of data to be collected is 20 student self-evaluations of their initial course slide decks written at the end of the multimodal communication unit. The narrative evaluations measure their competencies in each of the four dimensions found in the FML model. The third set of data to be collected will be students' quantitative ranking of their perceived digital multimodal communication literacy across the four dimensions: digital literacy, multimedia literacy, multimodal literacy, and rhetorical literacy.

For the current study, multiple case research methodology is being used along with a combination of numerical content analysis and qualitative content analysis. The FML model will form the basis for a numerical coding scheme. Each category will provide specific criteria based on each of the four meta-literacies using a simple numerical ranking. It will mirror the coding of the textual artifacts so comparisons and conclusions can be drawn. The results of the numerically scored slide decks will be compared to the typologies resulting from the content analysis. The findings will be analyzed for patterns and themes that emerge. The themes of each case will be compared, and cross-case analyzed for overall research study findings and themes.

References

Canva. (2023). *The visual economy report 2023*. https://canvavisualeconomy.com/

Coffelt, T. A., Grauman, D., & Smith, F. L. M. (2019). Employers' perspectives on workplace communication skills: The meaning of communication skills. *Business and Professional Communication Quarterly*, *82*(4), 418–439. https://doi.org/10.1177/2329490619851119

Cook, K. C. (2002). Layered literacies: A theoretical frame for technical communication pedagogy. *Technical Communication Quarterly*, *11*(1), 5–29. https://doi.org/10.1207/s15427625tcq1101_1

Creswell, J. W. & Poth, C. N. (2018). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches*. Sage.

Feerrar, J. (2019). Development of a framework for digital literacy. *Reference Services Review*, *47*(2), 91–105. https://doi.org/10.1108/RSR-01-2019-0002

McGrail, E., Turner, K. H., Piotrowski, A., Caprino, K., Zucker, L., & Greenwood, M. E. (2021). An interconnected framework for assessment of digital multimodal composition. *English Education*, *53*(4), 277–302.

Ng, W. (2012). *Empowering scientific literacy through digital literacy and multiliteracies*. Nova Science Publishers.

Selber, S. A. (2004). *Multiliteracies for a digital age*. Southern Illinois University Press.

Sindoni, M. G., & Moschini, I. (Eds.) (2022). Introduction. In M. G. Sindoni & I. Moschini (Eds.), *Multimodal literacies across digital learning contexts* (pp. 1–17). Routledge.

Strong, J. E. K. (2022). Four meta-literacies model in digital multimodal communication: A brick-by-brick construction using qualitative interpretative meta-synthesis. *Doctoral Dissertations and Projects*. 3746. https://digitalcommons.liberty.edu/doctoral/3746

Weritz, P. (2022). Hey leaders, it's time to train the workforce: Critical skills in the digital workplace. *Administrative Sciences*, *12*(3), 1–13. https://doi.org/10.3390/admsci12030094

Yin, R. K. (2018). *Case study research and applications: Design and methods*. Los Angeles: Sage.

Enhancing L2 Fluency through Error Analysis and Feedback in Business Communication Courses for Oral Communication

Sweta Mukherjee, Gaana J, Apurva Apurva, Raksha Sahu, and Tanu Tanu
GITAM School of Humanities and Social Sciences and
Indian Institute of Management

The debate on accuracy vs. fluency in second language (L2) learning, particularly in multilingual classrooms, has shifted focus from formal correctness to communication (Katayama, 2007). However, unaddressed errors can fossilize, hindering fluency. Therefore, it is suggested that second language learning does require a balanced focus on both form and function. Analysing L2 learners' oral communication errors can pinpoint their speaking difficulties and help teachers identify the causes of errors and pay closer attention to addressing learner challenges in speaking. Hence the study focuses to address the following questions:

1) What are the predominant categories and frequencies of errors committed by L2 learners in their spoken communication within a multilingual learning environment?

2) To what extent do various linguistic and extralinguistic factors contribute to L2 learners' production of errors in oral communication within a multilingual setting?

3) Is there a significant association between the identified factors contributing to L2 learners' oral communication errors within a multilingual context?

Design and Methodology

One hundred thirty students of business communication course studying at a premier institute of national importance in India participated in the study. The students could speak more than two languages and hence the study was set in a multilingual context, where English was regarded as the second language (L2); the mother tongue of the students was referred to as L1. The oral communication data was obtained from a 'Just a Minute' task, where students had to speak spontaneously for a minute on a given topic. Fifty percent of the was selected using a random sampling method to ensure that there is a representative sample of students' oral communication and was transcribed.

The study used a mixed-method approach to categorize student errors. All the errors in the oral communication sample were identified, they were then grouped into interlingua and intralingua errors based on the framework by Richards (1974) to determine the basic categories of errors. Then Dulay's Surface Strategy Taxonomy was used to classify the types of errors. Frequency count and percentage were used to determine the category and number of errors that the participants committed. The causes of errors were determined based on the types of errors. This was followed by a discussion with teachers teaching the course to determine teacher perceptions of causes for learner errors in oral communication. A Structural Equating Model (SEM)was then designed to explore the relationship between the types of errors and the causes for errors in oral communication of L2 learners in a multilingual context.

Findings

The findings of the study revealed that errors in second language speaking are not merely a matter of transfer from the first language. One of the most frequent errors was that of overgeneralization of the plural ‘s’ rule in English. This also led to the second frequent error, subject-verb agreement. Apart from other grammatical errors, the data revealed that L2 speakers also frequently omitted or added grammatical categories in sentences. Sometimes these were a result of direct transfer from the mother tongue, whereas in many cases grammatical errors also resulted from lack of awareness of grammatical rules. These grammatical errors tend to interfere with fluency as well in spoken communication. Additionally, there were misformation and misordering errors in learner utterances. It was further observed that learners made errors in vocabulary, sometimes using faulty or made-up vocabulary, and incoherent phrases.

Teacher responses to the questionnaire highlighted a key factor: limited opportunities to speak English, especially outside the classroom with a multilingual environment that enables easier communication in languages other than English. Consequently, learners had fewer chances to practice speaking the target language. The study also revealed that a lack of awareness of basic grammatical structures contributed to errors in forming words (misinformation) and sentence structure (misordering).

Real-time error correction (grammar, vocabulary) on conversational mistakes and targeted instruction (plurals, subject-verb agreement) were implemented. One of the most important changes was to create situations where learners were compelled to speak in English; no two learners with the same L1 were paired together for speaking tasks, ensuring that English is the only language that can be used for communication. Apart from this, learners were also explicitly made aware of some basic rules of English grammar such as the formation of plurals and subject-verb agreement rules. The study further proposes that error analysis can be used effectively to provide constructive, real-time feedback to students which can help them speak fluently, thus also contributing to action research potential within business communication contexts.

References

Katayama, A., (2007). *Japanese EFL students’ preferences toward correction of classroom oral errors. 9*, 289–305.

Richards, J. C. (1974). *Error analysis: Perspectives on second language acquisition.* London: Longman.

Eye Contact and Professionalism: Thoughts on Autistic Inclusivity

Bethany Tisdale
University of South Carolina

Eye contact has long been regarded as a positive non-verbal communication cue, and thus often makes its way into lessons about successful interviewing, presenting, and interpersonal communication. However, increasing knowledge about neurodiversity indicates that eye contact can be difficult if not painful for autistic individuals.

The tension between what we know about eye contact in a business setting and what autistic individuals experience with eye contact could have a substantial negative impact on autistic workforce participation. The emphasis on eye contact in business communication can be traced back for over forty years in the literature, beginning with Huegli and Tschirgi's 1979 ABCA Bulletin article, which noted the potential negative impact of lack of eye contact on a job interviewee's success. Carl (1980) also found that poor non-verbal communication skills, including eye contact, can "undermine" an otherwise strong candidate; Watson and Smeltzer (1982) also stressed the importance of eye contact, second only to a firm handshake, in interviews. Their study highlighted how eye contact can serve as an advantage for applicants because interviewers remember those with consistent eye contact favorably. Further research has found that professionals cited eye contact as one of the top five competencies they look for in employees (Waner, 1995) and that neurotypical interviewees routinely outperform autistic candidates (Whelpley and May, 2023). Looking at the history of business communication scholarship, a clear trajectory of the importance of eye contact and other non-verbal skills from "best practice" to "necessity" emerges. It is not surprising, then, that eye contact has long been taken as a chief contributor to successful communication.

However, as autism diagnoses are on the rise (CDC, 2023), we must contend that for a significant portion of our students, eye contact is unfavorable. As business communication instructors accommodate this population, we must also rethink our reliance on eye contact as an indicator of successful professional communication. Ortiz (2020), in an early treatment of the topic, suggests a positive, strengths-based viewpoint is necessary for integrating neurodiversity in the classroom. Cardon's (2023) recent BCPQ article discusses autistic professionals' experiences of communicating in the workplace and suggests many methods for including neurodiversity and neurodivergent perspectives in the classroom, and as such, it is the first study in the field of business communication to address the needs of both business students and autistic professionals. Following this lead, I will integrate narratives from autistic voices about their own experiences communicating in the workplace (Blake, 2022; Green, 2021; Jack, 2022; Praslova, 2021; Vance, 2019) with recent research on eye contact and autism that indicates the prevalence of eye avoidance and the irrelevance of eye contact for effective autistic communication (Clin & Kissine, 2023; Trevisan et al., 2017; Uono et al., 2021).
How can business communication instructors and consultants ensure inclusivity when a maxim of professional behavior centers on a non-verbal skill that is out of reach or even damaging to some students and professionals? This project aims to address the growing body of knowledge on autism and

business communication in order to propose new ways of teaching non-verbal communication skills and conceptualizing "professionalism" in an inclusive classroom.

References

Blake, N. (2022, January 28). *As an autistic jobseeker, please stop perpetuating neurotypical standards of professionalism*. LinkedIn. https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/autistic-jobseeker-please-stop-perpetuating-nesceda-blake

Cardon, P. (2023). Communication apprehension among autistic professionals. *Business and Professional Communication Quarterly,* (Online), 1–28. https://doi.org/10.1177/23294906231191272

Carl, H. (1980). Nonverbal communication during the employment interview. *ABCA Bulletin, 43*(4), 14–19. https://doi.org/10.1177/108056998004300410

Centers for Disease Control. (2023, April 4). *Data and statistics on autism spectrum disorder.* https://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/autism/data.html

Clin, E., & Kissine, M. (2023). Neurotypical, but not autistic, adults might experience distress when looking at someone avoiding eye contact: A live face-to-face paradigm. *Autism 27*(7), 1949–1959. https://doi.org/10.1177/13623613221148553

Green, A. (2021, March 31). *Interview with an employee at a majority-autistic company*. Ask A Manager. https://www.askamanager.org/2021/03/interview-with-an-employee-at-a-majority-autistic-company.html

Huegli, J. M., & Tschirgi, H. D. (1979). Preparing the student for the initial job interview: Skills and methods. *ABCA Bulletin, 42(*4), 10–13. https://doi.org/10.1177/108056997904200404

Jack, C. (2022, November 18). Why autistic people can struggle in the workplace. *Psychology Today*. https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/women-autism-spectrum-disorder/202211/why-autistic-people-can-struggle-in-the-workplace

Ortiz, L. A. (2020). Reframing neurodiversity as competitive advantage: Opportunities, challenges, and resources for business and professional communication educators. *Business and Professional Communication Quarterly*, *83*(3), 261–284. https://doi.org/10.1177/2329490620944456

Praslova, L. (2021, December 13). Autism doesn't hold people back at work. Discrimination does. *Harvard Business Review*. https://hbr.org/2021/12/autism-doesnt-hold-people-back-at-work-discrimination-does

Trevisan, D., Roberts, N., Lin, C., & Birmingham, E. (2017). How do adults and teens with self-declared autism spectrum disorder experience eye contact? A qualitative analysis of first-hand accounts. *PLoS One, 12*(11). https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0188446

Uono, S., Yoshimura, S., & Toichi, M. (2021). Eye contact perception in high-functioning adults with autism spectrum disorder. *Autism: The International Journal of Research and Practice*, *25*(1), 137–147. https://doi.org/10.1177/1362361320949721

Vance, T. (2019, April 18). *Autism: Why I don’t do eye contact*. NeuroClastic. https://neuroclastic.com/eye-contact/

Waner, K. K. (1995). Business communication competencies needed by employees as perceived by business faculty and business professionals. *Business Communication Quarterly, 58*(4), 51–56. https://doi.org/10.1177/108056999505800410

Watson, K. W., & Smeltzer, L. R. (1982). Perceptions of nonverbal communication during the selection interview. *ABCA Bulletin, 45*(2), 30–34. https://doi.org/10.1177/108056998204500210

Whelpley, C. E., & May, C. P. (2023). Seeing is disliking: Evidence of bias against individuals with autism spectrum disorder in traditional job interviews. *Journal of Autism and Developmental Disorders*, *53*(4), 1363–1374. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10803-022-05432-2

Humanizing Our Online Teaching and the Impactful Difference It Makes

Patty Ann Bogue
Mississippi State University

Purpose--- As an educator, I believe It is essential to humanize our online courses to meet our students "where they are." I seek to cultivate a strong student community in the distance courses I teach, and I enjoy sharing about this powerful transformative teaching pedagogy as we learn more about its powerful potential. Michelle Pacansky-Brock states that, "Humanizing leverages learning science and culturally responsive teaching to create an inclusive, equitable online class climate for today's diverse students. When (we) teach online, it is easy to relate to your students simply as names on a screen. But (our) students are much more than that. They are capable, resilient humans who bring an array of perspectives and knowledge to your class. They also bring life experiences shaped by racism, poverty, and social marginalization. In humanized online courses, positive instructor-student relationships are prioritized and serve "as the connective tissue between students, engagement, and rigor" (Pacansky-Brock et al., 2020, p. 2).

In any learning modality, human connection is the antidote for the emotional disruption that prevents many students from performing to their full potential and in online courses, creating that connection is even more important (Jaggars & Xu, 2016)." Now, more than ever, I identify the importance of authentic connection as educators. Furthermore, how we interact, challenge, lecture, and handle ourselves overall with our students will set the course for how they grow and respond in the classroom. Goals--- I wholeheartedly believe that the tone, sincerity, and language we bring to our written and spoken messages resonate positively or negatively with our students based on we seek to connect. By focusing on trust, presence, awareness, and empathy, faculty can connect with students in meaningful ways. Pacansky-Brock specifically suggests 8 elements of learning to incorporate into distance teaching, including--- 1) a liquid syllabus, humanized homepage, getting to know you survey, warm/wise feedback, self-affirming ice breaker, wisdom wall, bumper video, and the use of micro lectures. This presentation seeks to uncover the most effective elements for teaching a business writing course based on my experiences to date, as well as anticipated outcomes for various approaches. I strive to share realistic expectations, specific scenarios, and lessons learned as a collection of my findings.

At Mississippi State University, I was recently invited to participate in the Online Course and Tools Showcase, a unique event designed with online MSU faculty experiences. I was invited to share about my success with humanizing MGT 3213: Organizational Communications, a junior level Business writing course. The presenting faculty members will speak with faculty peers and other online experts at MSU about thriving in the online environment. Through this event, I seek to share my perspectives about this important topic and will be even more eager than ever to share with additional colleagues.

References

Jaggars, S. S., & Xu, D. (2016). How do online course design features influence student performance? *Computers & Education, (95),* 270–284.

Pacansky-Brock, M., Smedshammer, M., & Vincent-Layton, K. (2020). Humanizing Online Teaching to Equitize Higher Education. *Current Issues in Education*, *21*(2), 1–21.

I'm Here for the Students: Designing Community Engaged Learning that Satisfies Everyone's Demands (and Needs)

Jennifer Coon
University of Michigan-Dearborn

As we design courses that employ best practices for impactful learning, community engaged coursework is the ne plus ultra. The benefits are known and celebrated.

Pairing with a non-profit community partner for a business communications class creates students who respond to first-person learning experiences. They have witnessed impact and will then, in turn, promote impact (Caines, 2023). Research shows that service learning helps students retain more information learned in class, achieve higher course grades, and have greater satisfaction with the course. It also shows that service learning increases students' awareness of their community and its needs, helps change stereotypical beliefs, and increases understanding of social and cultural diversity (Menen, 2006)

Community-based service learning with a non-profit partner offers students experience with diverse people and circumstances which is exactly what management students need (Gosling and Mintzberg in Silva, 2018). Students will have interactions about substantive matters. Further, they will learn relevance through the application of their business communications and will have valuable opportunities to reflect. And ultimately, student work with a community partner can embody an intentionality that does not exist with classroom-type exercises (Tandet, 2022).

Community invested, project-based learning "looks good on paper," too, as it hits many other criteria for innovative learning. An ideal community-engaged course would include High Impact Practices which lead to greater chance of student success (Kuh, 2008). My own students' work with Humble Design Detroit supports several UN Sustainable Goals with an eye toward progressive pursuits of global impact. Additionally, our partnership addressed at least three of the AACSB Standards that our College of Business tackled.

However, for a service-learning project to be educationally valuable, the experience students will have with the project must be amenable to the pedagogical aims of the course (Judge, 2006) and above all, be of value to the students.

When we crowd a course full of all of these frameworks, are we addressing what students want to learn and need to know in order to advance in their new workplaces? Judge (2006) posits that the most important element of our business communications is the "real-world" service they provide and that without this facet, the assignment is just another made-up scenario for students to practice writing. But in the quieter conversations, are we designing community-engaged courses, based on alumni and employer feedback, which serve to answer the needs of the students? Do students care about High Impact practices? Do they know what securing accreditation involves? One class responded that they were just excited that the administration expressed interest in attending their presentations (Judge, 2006).

In this 15-minute presentation, participants will learn how to design a community-engaged course that delivers what chairs, universities, and accrediting bodies demand AND one which meets the requirements students will be facing in their new workplaces.

References

AACSB Business Accreditation Standards. AACSB. (n.d.). https://www.aacsb.edu/educators/accreditation/business-accreditation/aacsb-business-accreditation-standards

Caines, A. (2023, January 23). Personal conversation. Hub Instructional Designer. University of Michigan-Dearborn.

High-Impact Practices. University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire. (n.d.)., https://www.uwec.edu/acadaff/academic-master-plan/high-impact-practices

Judge, T. M. (2006). Service learning on campus. *Business Communication Quarterly, 69*(2), 189–192. https://doi.org/10.1177/108056990606900208

Mennen, K. (2006). Use service learning to add real-world writing experience to your course. *Business Communication Quarterly, 69(*2), 192–195. https://doi.org/10.1177/108056990606900209

Presence: Blog: What high-impact practices are and why they matter for student success. (n.d.). http://sapro.moderncampus.com/blog/what-high-impact-practices-are-and-why-they-matter-for-student-success

Silva, A. B., Bispo, A. C., Rodriguez, D. G., & Vasquez, F. I. (2018). Problem-based learning. *Revista De Gestão (tr. "Management Magazine")*, *25*(2), 160–177. https://doi.org/10.1108/rege-03-2018-030

Tandet, J. (2022). What high impact practices are and why they matter for student success. *Student Affairs and Services, Modern Campus.* https://sapro.moderncampus.com/blog/what-high-impact-practices-are-and-why-they-matter-for-student-success

Innovation at All Stages of Course Design

Michelle Cowan, Washington & Lee University
Callie Kostelich, Texas Tech University
Alison Wells, Texas Tech University

Standard first-year writing and speech courses often do not address critical aspects of business communication, such as concision, business-specific genres, plain-language writing, pitches, and project management. As students progress through the business major and launch their careers, they need not only a firm foundation in business genres and conventions but also increasingly specialized awareness of different professional situations and audiences.

When designing writing-intensive courses for business students, instructors must develop effective classes and curricula that require collaboration, awareness of business trends, and continual innovation to meet the needs of business students and the programs where instructors teach. Instructors often answer to multiple stakeholders, including writing program directors, business program deans, communications faculty, and partner organizations where students may be recruited for internships and jobs.

This presentation explores the competing needs of instructors, students, departments, and institutions, offering concrete approaches to address those needs at different levels of teaching business communication—from first-year writing in the disciplines (WID) to upper-level communication courses within the business school.

Collaborating with the Business School to Develop a Business-Specific First-Year Writing Curriculum

This section overviews a recent collaboration between the First-Year Writing Program and the College of Business Administration at an R1 state institution in Texas. When the College of Business Administration reached out to the Writing Program Administrator about the potential for a WID offering for business students, they began a year-long collaboration to create a core curriculum writing-intensive course specifically aimed at first-year business administration students.

This section will discuss the benefits and challenges of collaborating across disciplines and the strategic ways in which navigating the diverse stakeholders has proven to be a fruitful and engaging endeavor. Moreover, this presentation will provide an account of how first-year writing objectives align with the strategic plan of the business school and will close with how the project strengthens stakeholder support and buy-in across campus, as well as funding and research opportunities.

Designing a Forward-Thinking Business Writing Course

This section outlines a business writing course centered on building communication skills by developing a deeper understanding of human connection and relationships. At this level of course design, students analyze a wide range of genres and texts to understand rhetorical situations and increase audience awareness within the context of business and professional communication. In addition to analysis of and response to stakeholders in issues affecting both business and community partners, students practice multiple genres through intentional community engagement and service-learning activities. To further expand students' humanistic approach to business, students analyze business case studies with a focus on ethics to better understand and respond to the layered complexities involved in the relationships between business and communities locally, regionally, and globally.

Professionalizing Assessment to Challenge Students and Drive Curricular Innovation

As students advance toward graduation and their future careers, instructors infuse their courses with projects that simulate work situations and provide increasingly specialized training. Too often, assessment methods can stay stagnant. But what if the assessment method drove curricular advancement, rather than the other way around?

Based on instructor surveys, interviews, and a review of assessment scholarship for business, this presentation offers three assessment approaches that strike a balance between non-traditional and traditional grading, simulating work situations while acknowledging the significance of students' prior experience. Designed to be adapted according to course level, student preparedness, and departmental constraints, these approaches include: specifications + quality, grading-contract-as-learning-object, and corporate performance reviews. The hybrid approaches outlined in this presentation support students and fuel curricular innovation as students progress through the business major.

Lead Like a P.A.N.D.A.: Toward an Instructional Heuristic for Teaching Leadership

Curtis Newbold
University of Utah

Leadership communication has been gaining increased scholarly attention in business and management fields as being critical to the success of a company and its employees (Chen et al., 2018; Kelleher et al., 2019; Liu et al., 2023; Men & Robinson, 2018). Leaders' ability to communicate well has been tied to many individual and organizational impacts including perceptions of leader competence (Shaw, 2005); overall employee satisfaction (Wikianingrum, 2018); a company's ability to compete in a global market (Okoro, 2012); the establishment of trust and support for change (Men & Chen, 2020); and employee motivation (Men et al, 2021), among many others.

Yet, despite its importance for both the success of employees and the companies they work for, leadership communication as an area of study is conspicuously limited in both business communication journals and instruction. Editors of the *International Journal of Business Communication* acknowledged that there is a "dearth of inquiry which clarifies both leadership communication processes and their rapports with key organizational outcomes" (Mayfield & Mayfield, 2016). Additionally, a survey of undergraduate textbooks in business, professional, and strategic communication shows only limited acknowledgement of leadership communication, hinting at a lack of integration into undergraduate business and strategic communication classrooms.

One of the challenges, perhaps, of effectively integrating leadership communication as a topic of instruction in broader courses on business communications is its breadth of touchpoints. Liu et al. (2023), in a survey of leadership communication research from 1980 – 2021 suggest that leadership communication covers at least the following areas: rhetoric, charisma, morality, values, image repair, hostility, roles, gender, politics, policy, crises, interventions, outcomes, effectiveness, attributions, attitudes, intentions, mood, performance, ethical behavior, stakeholder responses, organizational performance, and many others.

In this presentation, I seek to amalgamate the vast array of leadership communication topics into an instructional heuristic that focusses on applied leadership skills. In this 15-minute presentation, I point to the need for leadership communication instruction to be embedded in business communication classrooms. I then pitch a five-part framework that uses a helpful mnemonic—P.A.N.D.A.—for teaching five domains and subsequent categories of applied leadership communication skills: **P**ersuasion (credibility, emotional intelligence, vision); **A**ssertiveness (clarity, empathy, discrepancy, consequence); **N**egotiation (conflict management, career advancement, company benefit); **D**elegation (time management, coaching, feedback); and **A**ccountability (responsibility, ethics, transparency).

References

Chen Z. F., Hong C., & Occa A. (2018). How different CSR dimensions impact organization-employee relationships: The moderating role of CSR-culture fit. *Corporate Communications: An International Journal*, *24*(1), 63–78.

Kelleher T., Men L. R., & Thelen P. (2019). CEO ghost posting and voice: Effects on perceived authentic leadership, organizational transparency, and employee-organization relationships. *Public Relations Journal*, *12*(4), 1–23.

Liu, E. H., Chambers, C.R., & Moore, C. (2023). Fifty years of research on leadership communication: What we know and where we're going. *The Leadership Quarterly, 34*(6). https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S1048984323000607?via%3Dihub

Mayfield, J., & Mayfield, M. (2016). International Journal of Business Communication Special Issue: Leadership Communication. *International Journal of Business Communication, (53)*1, 3–4.

Men, L. R., Ji Y. G., & Chen Z. F. (2020). *Strategic communication for startups and entrepreneurs in China*. Routledge.

Men, L. R., Chen, Z. F., & Ji, Y. G. (2021). Cultivating relationships with wtartup employees: The role of entrepreneurs' leadership communication. *Management Communication Quarterly, 35*(4), 518–545. https://doi.org/10.1177/08933189211017918

Men, L. R., & Robinson K. L. (2018). It's about how employees feel! Examining the impact of emotional culture on employee–organization relationships. *Corporate Communications: An International Journal*, *23*(4), 470–491.

Okoro, E. (2012). Cross-cultural etiquette and communication in global business: Toward a strategic framework for managing corporate expansion. *International Journal of Business and Management*, *7*(16), 130–138.

Shaw, K. (2005). Getting leaders involved in communication strategy: Breaking down the barriers to effective leadership communication. *Strategic Communication Management,* (9),14–17.

Wikaningrum, T., & Yniawan, A. (2018). The relationships among leadership styles communication skills, and employee satisfaction: A study on equal employment opportunity in leadership. *Journal of Business and Retail Management Research, 13*(1), 138–147.

Preference vs. Necessity: Nontraditional Student's Perceptions of Online and In-Person Classes

Hailey Gillen Hoke
Weber State University

In 2020, higher education experienced a swift, forced, and nearly ubiquitous move to online learning due to the COVID-19 pandemic. U.S. Department of Education statistics indicate the number of students enrolled in at least one online class jumped from 6 million in 2019 to 11.8 million in 2020 and those *exclusively* enrolled in online courses jumped 186% (NCES, 2022). In 2024, it appears that synchronous and asynchronous online learning is here to stay (Hamilton & Beagle, 2024). Some students appear to have been impacted more intensely, including nontraditional students, who reported an "increased number of life stressors during the pandemic compared with their traditional peers" (Babb et al. 2021, p. 140).

Nontraditional Students

While "what constitutes a nontraditional student has been the source of much discussion" (NCES, nd), some of the markers of nontraditional status include being 25+, having a spouse/committed partner, being divorced or widowed, being a parent, and/or working full-time (e.g. Choy, 2002, Kim, 2002).

One issue that may impact nontraditional students more than their traditional peers is family and/or work responsibilities. These obligations may stop them from attending on-campus and/or during daytime hours. This could lead these students to not be able to remain full-time and graduate, as research suggests that students who attend part-time are less likely to graduate with their intended degree (NCES, 2019). In addition to issues with scheduling, burnout, and work-life-school balance, nontraditional students also may experience higher levels of anxiety in the classroom than their traditional peers (Gillen-Hoke, 2022).

Course Delivery Method

Research suggests that more courses are now offered online than pre-pandemic (Hamilton & Beagle, 2024) and universities must understand how these different course formats impact their students. Research suggests differences in how students learn and engage with different teaching formats. Warden et al. (2020) found that learners less comfortable with technology reported lower self-efficacy in social interactions with classmates and academic-specific social interactions in online courses. Additionally, while age is only one component of nontraditional status, it may also play a role. Kaspar et al. (2023) found age impacted online learning perceptions and argued "age is a crucial factor that should be considered in online learning" (p. 13). It is imperative to better understand how nontraditional students perceive and perform in different formats compared to traditional peers.

Research Questions

RQ1: What influences nontraditional student class format preferences?

RQ2: What factors do nontraditional students consider when enrolling in courses?

Method

Individuals were recruited through network sampling and had to be at least 18 and currently taking college classes. At the time of submission, 10 nontraditional students had participated in three focus groups, with more scheduled for summer 2024. The principal investigator asked a series of open-ended questions and follow-up questions to spur discussion among participants. The data was analyzed for emerging themes related to the research questions. Themes were generated inductively using the framework of grounded theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967).

Results

The first research question concerned nontraditional student class format preference. Ninety percent of respondents indicated that they preferred face-to-face classes. Despite this, most reported that they could not take them as often as they like due to external factors such as course availability, work commitments, and family duties. When considering in-person and online, respondents indicated that relationships with professors and classmates, engagement, overall learning, and course quality were generally higher in face-to-face classes. For online classes, respondents noted that they appreciated (and oftentimes required) the flexibility and convenience.

The second research question concerned what factors nontraditional students consider when enrolling in courses. Scheduling was most commonly reported, with students explaining that they had many obligations outside of the classroom including work and family responsibilities. This theme of scheduling is closely related to a second theme, availability of courses. Students indicated that they often had to take classes online because they were not offered days/times they could attend or were only offered one semester. Other themes included specifically needed classes and course professor.

Preliminary Discussion

Preliminary analysis indicates that the students involved may prefer (that is, “like”) in-person classes more, but out of necessity, need to take online classes more frequently. Respondents frequently mentioned the quality of online classes varied quite dramatically, indicating that they did not mind taking online classes when they were “well-designed” but found that was not always the case.

Further, respondents did note practical solutions that they believed could help them succeed, specifically higher quality advising, more flexible and varied scheduling of classes, and general understanding from faculty members.

References

Alamar, A., & Almulhum, F. (2021). The interrelation between language anxiety and self-determined motivation; A mixed methods approach. *Frontiers in Education, 6,* 1–12.

Babb, S. J., Rufino, K. A., & Johnson, R. M. (2022). Assessing the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on nontraditional students’ mental health and well-being. *Adult Education Quarterly, 72*(2), 140–157. https://doi.org/10.1177/07417136211027508

Choy, S. (2002). *Findings on the condition of education 2002: Nontraditional undergraduates.* Washington, DC: National Center for Education Statistics. http://nces.ed.gov/programs/coe/2002/analyses/nontraditional/index.asp

Fortune, M. F., Shifflett, B., & Sibley, R. A. (2006). A comparison of online (high tech) and traditional (high touch) learning in business communication courses in Silicon Valley. *Journal of Education for Business, 81*(4), 210–214 Mar–Apr 2006.

Gillen Hoke, H. (2023). *Traditional and nontraditional students' anxiety in and preference for online and face-to-face classes.* Paper presented to the annual meeting of the Association of Business Communication, Denver, CO.

Glaser, B. G., & Strauss, A. L. (1967). *The discovery of grounded theory: Strategies for qualitative research*. Chicago, IL: Aldine Publishing Company.

Hamilton, I., & Beagle, V. (2024, March 22). By the numbers: The rise of online learning in the U.S. *Forbes*.

Hoss, T., Ancina, A., & Kaspar, K. (2022). German university students’ perspective on remote learning during the COVID-19 pandemic: A quantitative survey study with implications for future educational interventions. *Frontiers in Psychology, 13.* Doi: 10.3389/fpsyg.2022.734160

Kaspar, K., Burtniak, K., & Rüth, M. (2023). Online learning during the Covid-19 pandemic: How university students' perceptions, engagement, and performance are related to their personal characteristics. *Current Psychology (New Brunswick, N.J.)*, 1–20. Advance online publication. https://doi.org/10.1007/s12144-023-04403-9

Kim, K. (2002). Exploring the meaning of “nontraditional” at the community college. *Community College Review, 30*(1), 74–89.

National Center for Education Statistics. (n. d). *Nontraditional undergraduate students. Definitions and data.* U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences. https://nces.ed.gov/pubs/web/97578e.asp

National Center for Education Statistics. (2019). Postsecondary outcomes for nontraditional undergraduate students. Condition of education. *U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences*. https://nces.ed.gov/programs/coe/indicator/tta

National Center for Education Statistics. (2022). Postsecondary outcomes for nontraditional undergraduate students. Condition of education. *U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences.* https://nces.ed.gov/programs/coe/indicator/tta

Prentiss, S. (2021). Speech anxiety in the communication classroom during the COVID-19 pandemic: Supporting student success. *Frontiers in Communication, 6*, 1–4.

Richmond, V. P., Wrench, J. S., & Gorham, J. (2001). *Communication, affect, and learning in the classroom*. Acton, MA: Tapestry Press.

Taibu, R. & Ferrari-Bridgers, F. (2020). Physics language anxiety among students in introductory physics course. *EURASIA Journal of Mathematics, Science and Technology Education, 16* (4), 1–12.

Taniguchi, H., & Kaufman, G. (2005). Degree completion among nontraditional college students. *Social Science Quarterly, 86*(4), 912–927. doi:10.1111/j.0038-4941.2005.00363

Preparing Students for Communicating in Business: A Framework for Informing Literacy Practices

Bridget Kurtenbach, Marcy Orwig, and Jane Strong
University of Wisconsin – Eau Claire

Purpose

Preparing students to communicate in business has often been an overlooked area within literacy studies. With current calls by Cardon, et al. (2023) to focus on core competencies in the business communication classroom with the emergence of generative AI, it is more important than ever to remember Berkenkotter and Huckin's (1994) explanation that students will always learn in a form of "situated cognition embedded in disciplinary activities" (p. 3). This project provides a framework to explore student experiences with business communication before they arrive on a college campus to better inform higher education stakeholders, such as instructors, administrators, and policy makers.

Goals

Researching the experiences (or lack of experiences) that students bring with them to the college-level business communication classroom is a necessary component of any conversation surrounding literacy practices.

This project presents a localized, research-based framework to encourage other business communication instructors to use a similar approach if they are interested in exploring the literacy experiences of their students. Adopting such a framework is more important than ever with the challenges presented to higher education. These challenges are being felt globally and are not specific to just one geographic area.

Methodology

To capture the business communication experiences at the secondary level, this research project uses a framework that was created specifically for the process. This framework is presented in *The Qualitative Landscape of Information Literacy Research: Perspectives, Methods and Techniques* by Lloyd (2021). Within this framework, which borrows on research related to information literacy by Wang (2007) and Eisenberg, Lowe, and Spitzer (2004), a four-step method is outlined. This method includes the following descriptions:

1. Intra-curricular: where an information literacy programme is integrated into the learning outcomes, learning activities and the assessment strategies and criteria of an academic course. In this category, library and academic collaborate to ensure information literacy is embedded in the curriculum.

2. Inter-curricular – where information literacy classes are provided as an additional class by the librarian in consultation with the academic or upon request by the academic.

3. Extra-curricular – where information literacy is offered to students as part of the library's programme of user education.

4. Standalone – where an information literacy programme is taught by the library as a standalone subject related to the course curriculum. These courses may be credit-bearing or compulsory and not credit-bearing. (37)

By using this framework, instructors can better understand the literacy practices *local* to their business communication students since it draws on different, yet related, avenues to learning experiences.

All data collected during this case study process includes publicly available high school district course catalogs, websites, and social media to correspond to the framework provided. More specifically, the researchers approach the work following the descriptions and definitions below:

1. Intra-curricular: Business Communication topics *within* the curriculum
2. Inter-curricular: Business Communication topics *embedded* across the curriculum
3. Extra-curricular: Business Communication topics in *extracurricular* opportunities
4. Standalone: Business Communication topics in *outside* opportunities

While gathering the data that corresponds to each of these categories was, at times, challenging since schools all use differing styles of communication, these openly available resources did provide enough material for analysis.

Outcomes

The 30 districts in the CESA 10 area indicated that business communication is, at times, being taught as a class within business departments. Of the 30 CESA 10 schools, only 5 offer business communication courses in a business department, which is only 16% of the total districts. These districts are all located in small, rural communities, perhaps not surprising given the geographic region researched in this study. The results of this research, which showed the limited offerings of business communication courses at the secondary level in this geographic area, provided evidence that most students do not have access to specific courses teaching communication for business. When considering the extra-curricular and standalone components of literacy practice, there was evidence that supported a lack of options.

References

Berkenkotter, C., & Huckin, T. N. (1994). *Genre knowledge in disciplinary communication: Cognition, culture, power.* Routledge.

Cardon, P., Fleischmann, C., Logemann, M., Heidewald, J., Aritz, J., & Swartz, S. (2023). Competencies needed by business professionals in the AI age: Character and communication lead the way. *Business and Professional Communication Quarterly*, *87*(2), 1–24.

Eisenberg, M., Lowe, C., & Spitzer, K. (Eds). (2004). *Information literacy: Essential skills forthe information age* (2nd ed.). Libraries Unlimited.

Lloyd, A. (2021). *The qualitative landscape of information literacy research: Perspectives, methods and techniques*. Facet Publishing.

Wang, L. (2007). Sociocultural learning theories and information literacy teaching activities in higher education. *Reference and Users Services Quarterly*, *47*(2), 149–58.

RUIN-ed Ethics: Documentary as a Pedagogical Tool in a Business Communication Classroom

Pratibha
Bennett University, India

Debmalya Biswas
Shiv Nadar Institution of Eminence Delhi-NCR, India

The documentary *RUIN: Money, Ego, and Deception at FTX* presents an intriguing case for exploring the intersection of business communication, ethics and pedagogy. This research paper analyzes the documentary not just as a media product, but also as an innovative tool for instruction in a business communication classroom for a session on crisis communication and management (Champoux, 1999). It shows how documentaries can enhance learning about organizational communication, ethical compliance and social responsibility.

The paper grounds its arguments using theories of media pedagogy (Frey & Fisher, 2008), ethical communication (Johannesen, 2002), and the use of case studies in teaching. These frameworks support an exploration of how real-life business narratives in documentary form can serve as compelling learning resources.

A mixed-method approach has been employed, combining content analysis of the documentary with empirical data collected from a rating survey in which the documentary is used in a business communication course and its usefulness is assessed by student respondents. The analysis focuses on narrative techniques, ethical challenges and their alignment with key principles of organizational and interpersonal business communication.

RUIN provides a vivid narrative on the internal dynamics of FTX, showcasing various aspects of organizational communication, including leadership communication, crisis management and stakeholder engagement. By interrogating these elements, the documentary offers a rich resource for understanding the complexities of communication within organizations, especially in times of turmoil (Billsberry, 2013).

Privacy (Warren & Brandeis, 1890) emerges as a pivotal theme in *RUIN*, not only in the context of financial transactions and corporate secrecy but also in the shaping of Bankman-Fried's identity. The documentary's exploration of his personal life against the backdrop of his professional downfall offers insights into how privacy, or the lack thereof, influences public perception and personal identity (Bondebjerg, 2014). This analysis extends to consider the intersectionality of social capital, public persona and media-fueled market perception to catapult such figures to fame, creating a larger-than-life image, that feeds into the development of brand perception and manufacturing of trust in the digital age.

The instance of *RUIN* underscores the blurring lines between public and private spheres, particularly in the digital era, where leaked chats, online exposés and personal lives come under scrutiny. This paper discusses the implications of such narratives for individuals' privacy rights, ethical considerations in documentary making, and the societal consumption of personal stories. It argues that while documentaries like *RUIN* play a crucial role in shaping the discourse around the public-private divide, there are challenges like how audiences reconsider their perceptions of privacy, identity, and how the ethics of media consumption comes under the spotlight (Couldry, 2003).

The ethical quandaries faced by Sam Bankman-Fried and his team, as depicted in the documentary, provide rich fodder for classroom discussions on ethics and social responsibility. By dissecting the decisions and actions of Bankman-Fried, the documentary navigates the delicate line between public interest and sensationalism (Couldry, 2008). As an allied organic objective, the paper critically evaluates the responsibilities of documentary filmmakers in communicating sensitive personal information, especially when depicting living individuals with ongoing legal and personal battles. It also looks at how multifaceted classroom engagement with ethical dilemmas and problematic decision-making processes can offer real-world examples of ethical issues in business settings.

Through the example of *RUIN* and its reception in a business communication classroom, the paper discusses the potential of documentaries to bridge theoretical knowledge and practical application (Smith, 2009). Documentaries focusing on the lives and decisions of mercurial leaders not only enrich the curriculum but also foster critical thinking, ethical reasoning, and a deeper understanding of organizational dynamics. Captivating storytelling format is arguably more potent in gaining and retaining student attention as real life scenarios, perspectives and authentic voices engage learners on an emotional and intellectual level (Proserpio & Gioia, 2007). Furthermore, the paper addresses the challenges and limitations of using documentaries in educational settings, such as the need for careful selection of content and the potential for bias in documentary narratives.

References

Billsberry, J. (2013). From persona non grata to mainstream: The use of film in management teaching as an example of how the discipline of management education is changing. *Journal of Management Education*, *37*(3), 299–304. https://doi.org/10.1177/1052562913487497

Bloomberg Originals. (2023, October 26). *RUIN: Money, ego and deception at FTX* [Video]. YouTube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3QpdU9LS540

Bondebjerg, I. (2014). Documentary and cognitive theory: Narrative, emotion and memory. *Media and Communication*, *2*(1), 13–22. https://doi.org/10.17645/mac.v2i1.17

Champoux, J. E. (1999). Film as a teaching resource. *Journal of Management Inquiry*, *8*(2), 206–217. https://doi.org/10.1177/105649269982016

Couldry, N. (2003). Media meta-capital: Extending the range of Bourdieu's Field Theory. *Theory and Society*, *32*(5/6), 653–677.

Couldry, N. (2008). Mediatization or mediation? Alternative understandings of the emergent space of digital storytelling. *New Media & Society*, *10*(3), 373–391. https://doi.org/10.1177/1461444808089414 da Rocha, L. C. (2022, November 15). *Corporate crisis management in the age of social media: How FTX missed its chance*. New York University Journal of Law & Business. https://www.nyujlb.org/single-post/corporate-crisis-management-in-the-age-of-social-media-how-ftx-missed-its-chance

Dey, A., Heese, J., Pacelli, J., & Hancock, M. (2023). *The rise and fall of FTX*. HBS No. 124014. https://hbsp.harvard.edu/cases/

Frey, N., & Fisher, D. (2008). *Teaching visual literacy: Using comic books, graphic novels, anime, cartoons, and more to develop comprehension and thinking skills*. Corwin Press.

Johannesen, R. L. (2002). *Ethics in human communication*. Waveland Press.

Moon, J. A. (2004). *A handbook of reflective and experiential learning: Theory and practice*. Routledge.

Proserpio, L., & Gioia, D. A. (2007). Teaching the virtual generation. *Academy of Management Learning & Education*, *6*(1), 69–80. https://doi.org/10.5465/amle.2007.24401703

Smith, G. W. (2009). Using feature films as the primary instructional medium to teach organizational behavior. *Journal of Management Education*, *33*(4), 462–489. https://doi.org/10.1177/1052562909335861

Warren, S. D., & Brandeis, L. D. (1890). The right to privacy. *Harvard Law Review*, *4*(5), 193–220.

So, You Are New to B-Comm? Lessons Learned in the Deep End

Sarah Clements, University of Arkansas, Little Rock
Geoff Clegg, Midwestern State University, Texas
Chris McKenna, Stephen F. Austin State University
Michelle Dawson, Missouri Southern State University
Laura Graham, North Carolina Central University
Raihan Jamil, University of Liberal Arts, Bangladesh

The panel will provide a pedagogical toolkit for instructors new to teaching B-Comm. Our experts will share best practices, difficult lessons learned, and strategies for creating effective and engaging classes. Attendees will gain the confidence to develop a sense of their ethos as instructors. Q&A segment will be provided.

The purpose of this academic panel discussion is to provide valuable insights and practical advice to instructors new to teaching Business Communication courses. Panelists will cover a range of topics that reflect the full scope of effective teaching practices in recognition that, in addition to building effective courses, instructors "are held responsible for making effective interpersonal relationships, creating bonds of trust between themselves and students, and building an enjoyable learning environment." (Xie & Derakhshan, 2021, p. 6).

By sharing experiences, strategies, lessons learned, and best practices, we aim to empower new B-Comm educators with the tools they need to create engaging and effective learning experiences for their students–both initially, and during subsequent course redesigns. This panel will allocate pedagogical and classroom resources geared to new instructors and those transitioning from other disciplines.

Lentz, et al (2020) identified areas that significantly affect instructors' ability to be successful. Our panel will discuss:

- **Teaching and Learning Resources**: Facilitate an exchange of ideas and experiences among seasoned instructors and new educators
- **Strategies for Student Issues**: Equip new instructors with practical techniques to build classroom culture and enhance their teaching effectiveness
- **Collegial Support**: Foster a supportive community where instructors can collaborate and learn from each other from across the college divides

The idea behind this panel is to facilitate an exchange of ideas and experiences among seasoned instructors and new educators. Through this discussion, faculty new to B-Comm will feel equipped with practical techniques and approaches to enhance their teaching effectiveness. We want to foster a supportive community where instructors can collaborate and learn from each other from across the college divides.

The panel discussion will follow a structured format, combining expert insights, pedagogical pathways, and interactive dialogue. Panelists will share their personal experiences as business communication instructors and discuss common challenges new instructors face (e.g., classroom management, curriculum design, student engagement).

Throughout the discussion, we will highlight successful classroom scenarios by using business simulations to enhance communication skills, integrating industry guest speakers for real-world insights, as well as designing collaborative projects that mirror workplace dynamics. Panelists will present evidence-based strategies for teaching Business Communication effectively:

- **Active Learning Techniques**: Incorporating group activities, community partnerships, service engagements, and real-world scenarios
- **Feedback and Assessment**: Providing constructive feedback and assessing student progress
- **Technology Integration**: Leveraging digital tools
- **Inclusive Teaching**: Addressing diverse student needs

An interactive discussion is important in this session. The participants will be encouraged to engage in question-and-answer time and depart with a pedagogical toolkit. Panelists will address specific challenges faced by new instructors and share additional teaching tips and resources.

Our expected outcomes support the task of professional development, one of the six tasks of an expert University instructor, as described by van Dijk, et al (2020). Our panel encourages participants to reflect on teaching and take action, seek feedback from colleagues, and engage in workshops or other growth opportunities (van Dijk, et al, 2020). To wit:

- **Reflect and Take Action**: Participants will leave with practical strategies to enhance their teaching effectiveness.
- **Seek Feedback from Colleagues**: New instructors will feel part of a supportive network.
- **Pursue Professional Development**: Attendees will be able to increase their effectiveness which will positively impact student outcomes.

Finally, the participants will leave with a pedagogical toolkit, which will include technical resources, assignment ideas, and sample students' assignments. This panel will provide an enriching discussion that celebrates the art of teaching Business Communication.

References

Lentz, P., Coffelt, T., Cardon, P., Cresap, L., Nelson, A., & Remley, D. (2020). An analysis of the academic environment in business and professional communication. *Business and Professional Communication Quarterly, 83*(4), 434–468. https://doi.org/10.1177/2329490620949862

van Dijk, E. van Tartwijk, J. van der Schaaf, M.,& Kluijtmans, M. (2020). What makes an expert university teacher? A systematic review and synthesis of frameworks for teacher expertise in higher education. *Educational Research Review, 3.* https://doi.org/10.1016/j.edurev.2020.100365

Xie, F., & Derakhshan, A. (2021). A conceptual review of positive teacher interpersonal xommunication behaviors in the instructional context. *Frontiers in Psychology, 12*(708490). http://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2021.708490

Sustainability Development Goals for Business Communication Pedagogy and Spatial Rhetorics

Christopher Peace
Georgia Institute of Technology

The exigence of sustainability has evolved from a distant issue to one of encroaching concern. Stances on individual ethics and collective business branding must join through communication design and rhetorical messaging to encourage positive messaging of ecological change for its valued communities. During the spring semester of 2024, I received a sustainable development grant to include some of the UN's sustainability development goals into a technical communications course for business students. The goal of this proposal is to amplify the interdisciplinary emergence of business communication pedagogy with sustainability communication that I shared with students across three business communication courses. The course, "Business Communication: Sustainable Places," focused on the rhetoric of sustainability: its communication to public audiences, its transferability to present and future audiences; its impact on social, digital, workplace, and gendered realities through method/ologies involving document design, report writing, pitch presentations, sacred business practices, and service-learning projects. The course, its structure, and all readings were created and selected with Sustainable Development Goals #5 (Gender Inclusivity) and # 12 (Responsible Production and Consumption), forging the intersections of sustainability and its rhetorical effects in business communication and the professional ecologies. At the beginning of the course, I centered some initial research questions: How can we (as effective communicators) convince audiences to practice sustainability, while making its practice more believable, transferable, and actionable through business communication? How can effective communication about sustainability and environmental awareness promote gender equality in the workplace and other spaces?

For this presentation, I want to reflect on the outcomes an interdisciplinary approach to business communication pedagogy offers through the contextual knowledge of spatial layouts and their communicative effects, which aimed to develop students' rhetorical skills as flexible communicators for audiences across social, discursive, and environmental contexts. The course's exploration of rhetorical spatiality and environmental awareness provided a chance for students to think about personal and communal ethics, social engagement, and visual/spatial designs as sources and effects of communication. Through a multimodal focus on stances in sustainability communication, I hoped to develop a professional ethos of sustainability that students can carry with them throughout their professional careers and communities, one that is shared from a personal alignment with ecoliteracy and sustainable action.

While all assignments of the course will be reviewed, I am particularly interested in the outcomes of their service-learning project with three Atlanta-based, woman-owned businesses, which represented Black, professional, and queer identities throughout their respective brands. I will review student reflections and survey results to gauge how analyzing multimodal genres of communication for these organizations impacted their personal stance on sustainability practices, spatial awareness, and organizational branding.

Technical and Business Writing:
A Curriculum Profile of Texas Two-Year Colleges

Brad Lucas
Texas Christian University

This presentation shares preliminary findings from a statewide research project focusing on “the” technical and business writing course (ENGL 2311) taught in Texas two-year colleges. The research is motivated by a desire to develop an aggregate picture, a baseline, for this introductory course as a preliminary measure of "common practices” for building community among two-year faculty across college campuses—and identifying professional development opportunities across the state.

The study was first motivated by the planning and program considerations around a new two-course sequence in technical and professional writing at Texas Christian University (TCU) and ways to establish parity with the ENGL 2311 course taught elsewhere. Beyond the curriculum makeover, however, this study grew in scope to ask, “What is taught in ENGL 2311 across the state?” The broad aims of the project are to build a database of courses, to draw connections to programmatic research, to reflect both local and statewide contexts, and to focus on learning outcomes leading to program development. The TCU course sequence was designed to facilitate course-credit transfer, but it indirectly raised questions about the standards and values by which a “business and technical” curriculum is addressed, not only in a general education context but also at the junction of business communication and technical fields. More broadly, this approach to curriculum development supports an argument for the use of programmatic research in curriculum development, the sharing of regional concerns around course articulation, and the creation of clearer pathways to certification and employment.

First offered in 1948, the singular technical and professional writing course at TCU has reflected the topics and core concepts/topics identified by Allen and Benninghoff (2004) as prevalent in such courses. As a “multimajor professional writing course,” it was a service class taken “by students from across the university at all levels of degree completion and often also as electives by English or Writing majors and minors” (Read and Michaud, 2018, p. 228). Yet, as an upper-division course that required completion of a sophomore-level composition course, the course was not a viable option for first- and second-year students and, for many, perceived simply as an “advanced” course disconnected from other curricular options within the major. As Melonçon & Henschel (2013) made the distinction between a “basic” and an “introductory” course, the course attempted to be both, similar to the combined aims described by Chen (2021). It was part technical writing, part business communication, and not clearly identifiable by students as either.

In 2018, I redesigned the course to align with Society for Technical Communication certification competency areas, similar to the process documented by Newmark and Bartolotta (2021), yet the course remained a “curriculum design challenge” in terms of how “to position knowledge about technical and professional writing in a way that emphasizes its humanistic approaches, and demonstrates its value to a broad audience” (Rehling and Lindeman, 2010, p. 11). The next step in our program’s evolution will be to develop a “track” within the major, enabling “students to identify a clear area of specialization” (McKee, 2016 p. 147), perhaps as important as a minor (Steiner, McCracken, Moeller, 2020) and a step toward a vertical curriculum, the “curricular coherence” that is a “hallmark of a discipline” (Mendenhall, 2013, p. 84). As decisions about the upper-division course took shape, the elements of the lower-division course became even more important, so I turned to a statewide research scope to describe the multiple iterations of the lower-division course.

To bridge local practice with larger contexts, I studied the “official declarations” via course catalogs (Melonçon, 2012; Melonçon & Henschel, 2013) of introductory technical and business writing course descriptions across all 54 two-year colleges in Texas, grounded in the work by Bivens, Elliott, & Wiberg (2020). My research is ongoing, but as it moves from textual analysis of course catalogs to syllabi content, it will also include interviews with instructors to learn their personal stories and teaching philosophies around business and technical communication. The next stage of research involves an embedded, systemic “outcomes perspective” (Barker, 2012; Allen, 2004) informed by Dayley and Walton’s (2018) program descriptions to develop our two-course sequence.

Informed by catalog descriptions, collected syllabi, and faculty perspectives, I will present an aggregate picture of technical and business writing pedagogy in two-year colleges across Texas not only to inform curriculum decisions but to create conditions for community expansion and enrichment between four-year and two-year schools, between business communication and technical communication, and between academia and industry (and the professional organizations that are poised to assist them).

References

Allen, J. (2004). The impact of student learning outcomes assessment on technical and professional communication programs. *Technical communication quarterly, 13*(1), 93–108.

Allen, N., & Benninghoff, S. T. (2004). TPC program snapshots: Developing curricula and addressing challenges. *Technical communication quarterly, 13*(1), 157–85.

Barker, T. (2012). Program assessment: The role of outcomes. *Programmatic Perspectives, 4*(2), 183–210.

Bivens, K. M., Elliott, T. J., & Wiberg, G. K. H. (2020) Locating technical and professional communication at two-year institutions. *Programmatic Perspectives, 11*(2), 6–66.

Chen, C. (2021). Trial and error: Designing an introductory course to technical communication. In Michael J. Klein (ed.), *Effective Teaching of Technical Communication: Theory, Practice, and Application* (pp. 111–29). The WAC Clearinghouse/University Press of Colorado.

Dayley, C., & Walton, R. (2018). Informing efforts to increase diversity: Academic programs and student motivation in technical and professional communication. *Programmatic Perspectives, 10*(2), 5–46.

Melonçon, L. (2012). Current overview of academic certificates in technical and professional communication in the United States. *Technical Communication, 59*(3), 207–222.

Melonçon, L., & Henschel, S. (2013). Current state of US undergraduate degree programs in technical and professional communication. *Technical Communication, 60*(1), 45–64.

Mendenhall, A. (2013). The historical problem of vertical coherence: Writing, research, and legitimacy in early 20th century rhetoric and composition. *Composition Studies, 41*(1), 84–100.

McKee, H. A. (2016). Researching a new professional writing major: Miami University. *Programmatic Perspectives, 8*(2), 142–62.

Newmark, J., & Bartolotta, J. (2021). Creating the "through-line" by engaging industry certification standards in SLO redesign for a core curriculum technical writing course. In Michael J. Klein (ed.), *Effective Teaching of Technical Communication: Theory, Practice, and Application* (pp. 147–65). The WAC Clearinghouse/University Press of Colorado.

Read, S., & Michaud, M. (2018). Hidden in plain sight: Findings from a survey on the multi-major professional writing course. *Technical Communication Quarterly, 27*(3), 227–248.

Rehling, L., & Lindeman, N. (2010). Including technical communication in general education: The proposal, design, and outcomes of a new course. *Programmatic Perspectives, 2*(1), 3–22.

Steiner, L., McCracken, C., & Moeller, M. (2020). The minor is major: An adhocratic, relationship-based view of TPC curriculum and curriculum revision. *Programmatic Perspectives, 11*(2), 94–112.

Peeking into the Black Box of Metacognition: Designing Reflections for Writing Success

Christina Iluzada, Baylor University
Xin Chen, Indiana University Bloomington
Shaun Eide, Baylor University

Business communication instructors aim to develop students' ability to transfer writing skills across diverse professional contexts. Metacognitive reflection—where students evaluate their strengths, weaknesses, and strategic choices—can facilitate this skill transfer by enhancing students' adaptability to various rhetorical situations (Bransford, Brown, & Cocking, 2000). This study investigates how reflection assignments, structured around a metacognitive taxonomy, can deepen students' engagement with their writing processes and improve rhetorical skill transfer.

Literature Review

Metacognition, as defined by Flavell (1979), involves both "knowledge about cognition" (awareness of oneself as a learner, task demands, and available strategies) and "regulation of cognition" (planning, monitoring, and controlling cognitive activities). Building on this definition, Gorzelsky et al. (2017) developed a metacognitive taxonomy for writing, including seven subcomponents: person, task, strategy, planning, monitoring, control, and evaluation. This study uses this taxonomy to structure student reflections and explore which subcomponents predict improvements in rhetorical skills, as measured by assignment grades. The research questions are:

(1) Do students who engage in structured reflection demonstrate stronger rhetorical performance?

(2) Are specific subcomponents more predictive of higher grades?

(3) What benchmarks do students use as indicators of writing success?

Methodology

We conducted a study with Business Communications students from a public and a private university by dividing them into control and test groups, with the test group completing a reflection worksheet during a "bad news message" assignment. The worksheet included 16 prompts covering all seven subcomponents, such as "What do you want your audience to do next?" (planning) and "Before taking this class, how would you have addressed this situation?" (person). Students' responses were coded for depth (shallow, middling, or deep), and assignment grades were analyzed to assess the relationship between reflection depth and rhetorical performance.

Findings

An independent samples t-test indicated that students in the test group scored significantly higher on rhetorical skills (mean = 91.43) than the control group (mean = 89.36), with a statistically significant 2.07-point difference ($t(102) = 1.826$, $p = .035$). In a multiple regression analysis, depth of reflection in the “person” and “planning” subcomponents emerged as significant predictors of higher rhetorical scores.

The “person” subcomponent, which falls under “knowledge about cognition,” invites students to reflect on their prior use of writing strategies and conventions. Deep engagement in “person” reflection was associated with a beta weight of 3.02 ($p < .05$), indicating that students who thoughtfully linked prior strategies to their current assignment received higher scores.

The “planning” subcomponent, part of “regulation of cognition,” involves analyzing the rhetorical situation and selecting strategies accordingly. Planning had an even stronger impact on grades, with a beta weight of 3.71 ($p < .01$). Students who engaged deeply in planning often referenced the specific needs of their audience, anticipating reactions and adapting their strategies to meet them. For instance, one student noted, “Since I need to maintain a positive professional relationship with both the direct recipient and my supervisor (who’s CC’d), I decided to lead with a buffer and emphasize positives before delivering the bad news.” This type of strategic planning appeared highly beneficial for students’ rhetorical performance.

Further analysis of students’ reflections revealed their three primary benchmarks for writing success: audience perspective, instructional content, and personal experience. Audience expectations were referenced in 55.9% of reflections, underscoring their central role in effective business communication. Instructional content appeared in 45.3% of responses, with students applying course principles to shape their messaging approach. Additionally, about 32.8% of reflections included personal experiences, such as how students had previously approached similar writing tasks. A chi-square goodness-of-fit test confirmed that audience perspective was the most frequently referenced benchmark ($\chi2(11) = 70.138$, $p < .001$).

Pedagogical Implication

Our findings highlight the value of structured reflection assignments, especially those focusing on person and planning subcomponents, in enhancing rhetorical performance. The study results suggest that focusing on “person” and “planning” reflections can be particularly beneficial for business communication students, as these components facilitate deeper rhetorical engagement and more effective writing outcomes. Students who integrated multiple benchmarks (e.g., audience needs, instructional content, and personal experience) in their reflections achieved higher grades. Therefore, instructors might prompt students to consider multiple benchmarks, how their communication approach aligns with their course content, audience expectations, and prior experience. Additionally, instead of assigning a single reflection at the end of an assignment, instructors could incorporate shorter, focused reflections throughout the writing process. This incremental approach fosters continuous engagement with metacognition, allowing students to refine their strategies throughout the writing process.

References

Bransford, J. D., Brown, A. L., & Cocking, R. R. (2000). *How people learn: Brain, mind, experience, and school.* National Academy Press.

Flavell, J. H. (1979). Metacognition and cognitive monitoring: A new area of cognitive-developmental inquiry. *American Psychologist, 34*(10), 906. https://doi.org/10.1037/0003-066X.34.10.906

Gorzelsky, G., Driscoll, D. L., Paszek, J., Jones, E., & Hayes, C. (2017). Cultivating constructive metacognition: A taxonomy for writing studies. In C. M. Anson & J. L. Moore (Eds.), *Critical Transitions: Writing and the Question of Transfer* (pp. 215–246). The WAC Clearinghouse; University Press of Colorado.

Unleashing the Power of Storytelling through "The Significant Creatures" Project: How Narratives Integrated into Traditional Web Descriptions Impact Shelter Pet Adoptions

Elise Hochber
East Chapel Hill High School

Heidi Schultz
University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

Storytelling has long played a significant role in persuasion and business communication. Research has shown that products presented with stories not only capture consumer interest but also command higher prices and sell faster than their counterparts without stories (Weiner et. al., 2022). Moreover, stories create so much emotional resonance that their impact on the perceived value of an object can be quantified through objective measures (Glenn & Walker, 2024). Recognizing the power of storytelling, in this presentation, the researchers will share findings from their pilot study, "The Significant Creatures Project," which focuses on how storytelling impacts adoptions for animals in shelters. In partnership with a local animal shelter, Paw4Ever in Orange County, North Carolina, this project investigates the empirical impact of adding narratives to traditional web descriptions of shelter pets to understand how stories influence adoption rates and reduce time animals spend in shelters. By relying on theoretical frameworks from business communication, storytelling, and psychology, this pilot study shows how narratives can mitigate escalating animal shelter populations and contribute to reducing euthanasia rates, while further supporting the effectiveness of storytelling in persuasive communication (shelteranimalscount.org; Junior, 2023).

The primary goal of "The Significant Creatures Project" assesses the impact of storytelling on adoption prospects of a cohort of Paws4Ever shelter pets. Through a mixed method research approach, the study reveals the role that narrative elements play on adoption rates and explores the underlying psychological mechanisms that drive adopter decision-making processes (Hamelin, 2020; Escalas, 2004). Leveraging narrative transportation theory and emotional contagion theory, "The Significant Creatures Project" takes inspiration from the Significant Objects Project (Walker & Glenn, 2012), which shows how attaching narratives to otherwise mundane items significantly increases the value of those items. In the Significant Objects Project study, items purchased for minimal sums at yard sales and thrift stores were sold at substantially higher prices (a 3900% increase) when paired with fictional narratives (Walker & Glenn, 2012).

For this pilot project, a treatment group and a control group of dogs and cats have been identified at the shelter. After meeting the animals in the treatment group and learning about their individual personalities from one-on-one interactions, from staff insights, and from shelter intake forms, the researchers have created customized narrative packages for each animal. These narrative packages include a fictional story for each (along with a disclaimer about the fictional nature of each story), a photograph of each animal to reflect the theme of each story, and an original drawing of each animal. Working with the shelter's director of communication, the researchers will post these narrative packages on the shelter's website, which will remain active and visible for three months or until an adoption occurs. Meanwhile, the control group will undergo standard adoption procedures without the addition of narrative packages. The primary outcome measure will be the 'time to adoption rate,' which the researchers will track and record. This timeframe will allow the researchers to assess differences in adoption rates between the treatment and the control groups. To understand adopter decision-making processes, the researchers will interview adopters and analyze the results of an administered questionnaire. To understand the impact of the narrative packages on adoption rates, the researchers will facilitate a Paws4Ever post-study focus group with shelter staff. By aligning shelter pets with engaging narratives, we anticipate that the shelter pets perceived intrinsic value will increase – elevating their significance in the eyes of prospective adopters, enhancing their adoptability, and reducing their time spent in a shelter. Ultimately, the researchers anticipate extending the project to additional shelters and believe that business communication in general – and storytelling in particular – can play a significant and important role in changing the landscape and outcomes for more shelter pets.

From a purely business perspective, the implications of this study extend beyond the realm of shelter animal adoption rates. That is, the results of "The Significant Creatures Project" hold promise for multiple business-focused applications, including enhancing customer engagement, creating value for products and services, promoting brand image and reputation, differentiating products and services in the marketplace, guiding data-driven decision-making, and sparking innovation and creativity.

References

Escalas, J. E., (2004). Imagine yourself in the product: Mental simulation, narrative transportation, and persuasion. *Journal of Advertising, 33*, 37–48.

Hamelin, N., Thaichon, P., Abraham, C., Driver, N. Lipscombe, J. & Pillai, J. (2020). Storytelling, the scale of persuasion and retention: A neuromarketing approach. *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services*, *50.* https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jretconser.2020.102099

Junior, J. R., Limongi, R., Lim, W. M., Eastman, J. K., & Kumar, S. (2022). A story to sell: The influence of storytelling on consumers' purchasing behavior. *Psychology & Marketing, 40*(2), 239–261.

Shelter Animals Count. (n.d.). The National Database. https://www.shelteranimalscount.org/

Walker, R., & Glenn, J. (2012). *Significant objects*. Fantagraphics Books.

Weiner, H.D., Wiener, J., & Arnold, T. (2022). Enhancing perceived product value through peripheral product anecdotes. *European Journal of Marketing, 56*(2), 375–399.

Exploring the Discourse Dimension of Digital Branding: Insights into Strategic Communication Research and Practice

Walter Spezzano
University of Palermo (Italy)

Strategic communication is defined as “the purposeful use of communication by an organization to fulfill its mission” (Hallahan et al., 2007, p. 3). It is applied across various fields of practice—including business, military science, politics, and public health—each adopting unique perspectives and approaches to achieve specific objectives (Botan, 2018). Strategic communication has also emerged as a major interdisciplinary research area (Werder et al., 2018), with particular relevance in Business Studies (Thomas & Stephens, 2015).

Within the broader domain of strategic communication, significant attention has been directed toward branding, which has been explored by both practitioners and researchers since the mid-1980s (Heding et al., 2020). Branding includes two main components: *brand identity* (i.e., how a brand wants to be perceived) and *brand image* (i.e., how a brand is actually perceived).

> While brand image is usually passive and looks to the past, brand identity should be active and look to the future, reflecting the associations that are aspired for the brand. While brand image tends to be tactical, brand identity should be strategic, reflecting a business strategy that will lead to a sustainable advantage. (Aaker, 1995, p. 70)

A strategic process that aligns brand identity and image is *brand positioning*, which involves understanding the target audience and recognizing key competitors to guide effective brand communication, thereby achieving differentiation and competitive advantage (Ries & Trout, 2000).

Central to this research is the recognition of branding as a multifaceted communicative phenomenon that extends beyond mere promotional activities to encompass broader discursive processes. Following the discursive turn in the Social Sciences (Alvesson & Kärreman, 2000), branding can be conceived as grounded in discourse; both can be thought of as systematic ways for shaping and viewing the world through the deployment of specific semiotic choices (Ledin & Machin, 2015). As a discursive practice, branding involves the construction, negotiation, and dissemination of meanings within socio-cultural contexts. From this perspective, brands are ideological referents, framing cultural rituals, economic activities, and social norms (Schroeder, 2009). They operate as tools for managing power dynamics, exerting control over their mediated meanings and prioritizing certain ideologies while suppressing others (Lischinsky, 2017).

Business literature has witnessed a growing interest in discourse-oriented research, with investigations into how discourse shapes the social practice of strategizing (Balogun et al., 2014) and the discursive aspects of marketing and consumption (Fitchett & Caruana, 2015). However, discourse-oriented research on branding, particularly in digital contexts, remains relatively underdeveloped. This study, therefore, aims to analyze the dynamic interplay between discourse and branding, focusing on how brands shape ideologies and power relations in digital environments.

The study explores how digital media have transformed branding practices by examining how online platforms provide brands with opportunities to disseminate messages and engage with audiences. Digital media play a crucial role in strategic communication (Lutzky, 2021) as (i) they allow organizations to swiftly reach their target audience and share real-time information; (ii) they facilitate the construction and maintenance of stakeholder relationships at a relatively low cost; and (iii) their interactive nature empowers consumers to actively engage in content creation, transforming them into *prosumers* (i.e., individuals who simultaneously participate in the creation and consumption of content).

In conclusion, this study aims to highlight the discourse dimension of branding in digital environments, recognizing the complexity and multifaceted nature of this communicative phenomenon. The insights gained from this research provide strategic communication practitioners with essential tools to craft effective communication strategies that resonate with online audiences. By understanding the discourse dynamics of digital branding, practitioners can strengthen brand identities, foster positive perceptions, and stimulate greater consumer engagement. Furthermore, the study underscores the need for further discourse-oriented research on branding, particularly as the digital landscape continues to evolve and shape the future of strategic communication.

This study is part of a broader research project that examines digital branding from a discourse perspective, specifically within the hospitality and tourism industry. The project involves collaboration among the University of Palermo (Italy), Florida International University (United States), and the Greater Miami Convention & Visitors Bureau (United States).

References

Aaker, D. A. (1995). *Building strong brands*. The Free Press.

Alvesson, M., & Kärreman, D. (2000). Taking the linguistic turn in organizational research: Challenges, responses, consequences. *The Journal of Applied Behavioral Science*, *36*(2), 136–158.

Balogun, J., Jacobs, C., Jarzabkowski, P., Mantere, S., & Vaara, E. (2014). Placing strategy discourse in context: Sociomateriality, sensemaking, and power. *Journal of Management Studies*, *51*(2), 175–201.

Botan, C. H. (2018). *Strategic communication theory and practice: The cocreational model*. Wiley Blackwell.

Fitchett, J., & Caruana, R. (2015). Exploring the role of discourse in marketing and consumer research. *Journal of Consumer Behaviour*, *14*(1), 1–12.

Hallahan, K., Holtzhausen, D., van Ruler, B., Verčič, D., & Sriramesh, K. (2007). Defining strategic communication. *International Journal of Strategic Communication*, *1*(1), 3–35.

Heding, T, Knudtzen, C. F., & Bjerre, M. (2020). *Brand management: Mastering research, theory and practice* (3rd ed.). Routledge.

Ledin, P., & Machin, D. (2015). A multimodal critical discourse analytic approach to university rebranding. In G. Rossolatos (Ed.), *Handbook of Brand Semiotics* (pp. 328–363). Kassel University Press.

Lischinsky, A. (2017). Critical discourse studies and branding. In J. Flowerdew & J. Richardson (Eds.), *The Routledge Handbook of Critical Discourse Studies* (pp. 540–552). Routledge.

Lutzky, U. (2021). *The discourse of customer service tweets: Planes, trains and automated text analysis*. Bloomsbury.

Ries, A., & Trout, J. (2000). *Positioning: The battle of your mind* (20th ed.). McGraw Hill.

Schroeder, J. E. (2009). The cultural codes of branding. *Marketing Theory*, *9*(1), 123–126.

Thomas, G. F., & Stephens, K. J. (2015). An introduction to strategic communication. *International Journal of Business Communication*, *52*(1), 3–11.

Werder, K. P., Nothaft, H., Verčič, D., & Zerfass, A. (2018). Strategic communication as an emerging interdisciplinary paradigm. *International Journal of Strategic Communication*, *12*(4), 333–351.

Humanizing Virtual Communication through Instructor Presence

Kimberley Williams
University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

The purpose of this research study was to contextualize how my communication modes and my presence shaped the experiences of students within a single business communication online course. Within the online learning environment, an instructor's interaction and relationship with students is complex given the physical and geographical distance between themselves and their students. This distance, while aiding students in flexible learning, creates the challenges of isolation and lack of interpersonal connection. Muri et al., (2019) stated that "the presence of the online teacher or instructor is vital for building interaction and connectedness between teacher and student, and student and student" (p. 264). This research study provides the stories and experiences of nine students in an online business communication course to explore their perceptions of instructor presence.

Research Question and Rationale

Given my experience as an online course instructor, I needed to explore a potential solution to the challenges of isolation and lack of interpersonal connection within the online learning environment. Therefore, the guiding research questions for this study were, "How do the communication modes I used shape students' online course experiences?" and "How does my presence shape students' online course experiences?".

To answer these research questions, I conducted a qualitative case study to gain a better understanding of my communication and presence from students enrolled in my online Business Communication course. Using this approach allowed me to analyze my pedagogy based on the experiences of my students. This method created a powerful research approach where I got the opportunity to reflect and take accountability for my actions within the online environment. Additionally, through this study, I offer an in-depth example or resource for faculty members teaching and designing online courses. The data collected can "offer insight and illuminate meanings that expand its readers' experiences" in understanding, at large, the instructor-student communication dynamic within the online learning environment (Merriam, 1988, p. 41). The instructor-student communication dynamic explored within this study aligns with the positive communication pedagogy as it focuses on the positive values underlying communication.

Data Collection and Theoretical Framework

I collected data from three sources: in-depth qualitative interviews with nine former students of the course, fifteen comments from two student opinions of instructions (SOI) reports, and over two hundred comments from the course's GroupMe chat. The data collected were analyzed using thematic analysis and interpreted through the lens of the Community of Inquiry (CoI) Model. I focused specifically on instructor presence (the combination of the teaching and social presence construct). The CoI framework has three interconnected constructs: teaching presence, social presence, and cognitive presence. Teaching presence is often used interchangeably with instructor presence, and thus, for this study, instructor presence was referenced throughout and served as the main element of inquiry. Instructor presence focuses on "how an instructor positions [themselves] socially and pedagogically in an online community" (Richardson et al., 2016, p. 259). As instructors direct and organize content within an online course, they also interact and communicate, all of which inform a student's online course experience. This term links both teaching and social presence constructs within the CoI framework due to the inter-connectedness of the two presences.

Research Findings

The findings of this study suggest that students' experiences were positively shaped by combining communication modes that focused on creating an environment for interaction, learning, and immediacy among students and between students and myself. Of the five communication modes used within the study, the top modes were the discussion board, GroupMe chat, and synchronous live sessions. The use of these three communication modes created a social environment for students that helped shape their experiences by facilitating their learning, providing an opportunity for collaboration between peers and instructor, and creating a course environment for open and positive communication.

The findings of this study also suggest that my presence positively shaped students' online course experiences by allowing for greater instructor immediacy and by eliciting feelings of mattering among students. My social and pedagogical interaction with students was facilitated by the various communication modes creating an environment for learning, collaboration, and communication. Additionally, this interaction shaped students' experiences by eliciting feelings of mattering where students felt valued, appreciated, and important, elements that also contributed to their learning, collaboration, and communication within the course.

Implications

This research study aligns with the positive communication research as a descriptive example of Socha, Christman, and McCall's (2023) positive communication within a business communication classroom. The positive communication pedagogy is expressed through the stories and descriptions of positive communication and interactions between students and me that support their feelings of immediacy and mattering. The communication modes I used within the online learning environment served as the medium through which positive communication values were expressed and greater interpersonal relationships were formed. The findings of this study will extend the instructional communication research and practice by focusing on the relationships between teacher and learner. The descriptive data collected imply a need for instructors to "humanize" their course using a combination of interactive communication modes as the transmitter of instructor immediacy and dialogue, creating a solution to the challenges of isolation and lack of participation faced by students within the online learning environment.

References

Merriam, S. (1998). *Qualitative research and case study applications in education: Revised and expanded from case study research*. Jossey-Bass.

Muir, T., Milthrope, N., Stone, C., Dyment, J., Freeman, E., & Hopwood, B. (2019). Chronicling engagement: students' experience of online learning over time. *Distance Education*, *40*(2), 262–277. https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ1216325

Richardson, J. C., & Swan, K. (2003). Examining social presence in online courses in relation to students' perceived learning and satisfaction. *Journal of Asynchronous Learning Networks*, *7*(1), 68–88. doi:10.1016/j.chb.2017.02.001

Richardson, L.C., Koehler, A., Besser, E., Caskurlu, S., Lim, J., & Mueller, C. (2016). Conceptualizing and investigating instructor presence in online learning environments. *International Review of Research in Open and Distributed Learnin*g, *16*(3), 256–297.

Socha, T. J., Christman, K., & McCall, J. (2023). *Positive communication pedagogy.* The Positive Communication Conference.

Not Your Grandfather's UAW: Social Media and Organized Labor

William Carney
Cameron University

Much research in the use of social media in an organization concerns the ways upper- and middle-managers use social media to communicate policy information to employees in an organization or to customers and stakeholders of the organization. Only recently, however, has there been any sustained study of the use of social media by organized labor to form a united front for its members during periods of negotiation and labor unrest Carneiro & Costa, 2022). Here, we explore the 2023 UAW strike as the setting for a study of social media and organized labor.

The United Auto Workers (UAW) union represents approximately 145,000 automobile workers employed at Ford Motor Company, General Motors, and Stellantis. No stranger to labor actions including strikes, the union went on strike against General Motors from November 1945 to March 1946, Then-UAW president Walter Reuther believed in targeting on a single company. Since the 1950s, UAW has faced declining union membership and a growing service sector, reducing the economic impact that a strike could have. Nevertheless, there were a number of short-term actions over the years. In 2019, UAW autoworkers went on strike against General Motors. The 40-day work stoppage cost General Motors US$3.6 billion and caused a single-quarter recession in Michigan (Lichtenstein, 2024).

In 2023, after stagnant salaries and benefits since the 2008-9 financial crisis, Shawn Fain was elected head of the union and promised dramatic action against the Big 3 (GM, Ford, Stellantis) automakers. In 2023, Fain launched an unprecedented strike against the Big 3 that was notable for its use of social media communication. Fain uploaded short videos to Facebook summarizing the goals of a strike and used Facebook Lives throughout the strike to communicate with workers about which individual plants would be targeted by UAW walkouts. Additionally, the Facebook Live videos discussed union intersectionality with the environmental movement (Brecher, 2024).

The strike strategically targeted individual automobile plants with walkouts and workers going back to work after certain demands were met. This “whack-a-mole” approach was designed to baffle the management of the auto makers by encouraging workers to engage in contemporary versions of wildcat strikes. The wildcat strike was an early tool of organized labor in which workers would surprise management by simply walking off the job. Using social media to communicate directly with workers, Fain was able to deliver timely instructions to UAW members before management knew about the next steps of the strike (Flowers, 2023).

The strike was suspended in the last week of October as the automakers made tentative deals that largely matched the UAW demands, starting with Ford on October 25, followed by Stellantis on October 28 and finally General Motors on October 30. In announcing the deals with the automakers, the UAW instructed workers to return to the job, thus ending the 46-day labor strike on October 30th. The new contracts were ratified when individual UAW membership from all three companies voted to end the strike November 16-17 2023 (Pottenger, 2024).

The use of social media by the UAW represents a new chapter in union organizing. Geelan (2021) suggests that, because of the rapidity and ubiquity of social media communication, unions now have a strategic advantage in organizing their members. Carneiro & Costa (2022) also suggest that social media helps to level the playing field between management and labor. Indeed, the presentation discusses the use of Facebook Live, early uses of social media communication by organized labor, and the "just-in-time" communication offered by social media during periods of negotiation. Facebook Live was suggested as a tool for organized labor to do both organizing and mobilizing as the UAW opened the Facebook Live broadcasts to new, established, and potential union members. Certainly, Facebook Live seems to offer an attempt to bridge the gap between organizing and mobilizing (Kelly, 2002). The presentation also explores how management and labor might use social media communication during negotiations.

References

Brecher, J. (2024). From climate alienation to climate solidarity. *New Labor Forum*, *33*(2), 108–111. https://doi.org/10.1177/10957960241242053

Carneiro, B., & Costa, H. A. (2022). Digital unionism as a renewal strategy? Social media use by trade union confederations. *Journal of Industrial Relations*, *64*(1), 26–51.

Flowers, B. (September 9, 2023). UAW union embraces social media as labor talks toughen ahead of deadline. *Reuters*. https://www.reuters.com/business/autos-transportation-2023-09-09/

Geelan, T. (2021). Introduction to the special issue – The internet, social media and trade union revitalization: Still behind the digital curve or catching up? *New Technology, Work and Employment, 36*(2), 123–139.

Kelly, J. (2002). Mobilization theory. *Industrial relations: Approaches to Industrial relations and trends in national systems, 1*, 135.

Lichtenstein, N. (2024). The "Stand-Up" strike of 2023 takes its place in UAW history. *New Labor Forum, 33*(2), 48–55. https://doi.org/10.1177/10957960241245944

Pottenger, K. (2024). The UAW won, but the fight continues. *New Labor Forum, 33*(2), 89–94. https://doi.org/10.1177/10957960241241814

Storytelling in Financial Discourse: Implications of Social Media Influence on Financial Decision-Making

Annalisa Zanola
University of Brescia (Italy)

The media has a well-known significant impact on the global financial landscape, shaping and influencing financial discourse on an unprecedented scale (Bednarek & Caple, 2017). The advent of technological advancements has led to a significant increase in the complexity of the relationship between media and finance, with implications that extend far beyond the realm of investors, financial institutions, and society at large. The relationship between the media and finance is complex and subject to a multitude of influences, making it an intriguing subject for in-depth exploration and analysis (Wu & Lin, 2017). The influence of the media extends beyond mere reporting to encompass the framing of economic narratives, the creation of financial paradigms, and the potential to impact market behaviour (Bednarek, 2010).

The purpose of this contribution is to investigate the constructive and functional nature of evaluative language resources in financial news. Prior studies in accounting have identified the methods through which financial reporting is employed to influence stakeholders and operate as a highly effective communicative instrument (Baranidharan et al., 2023). However, an analysis of the data suggests that those engaged in the communication of financial news on social media platforms question the manner in which corporate entities represent such information, employing strategies that create a sense of distance and contrast. Nevertheless, they tend to endorse the corporate results in question. The findings of this study will demonstrate the diverse ways in which social media can construct financial realities by conveying and reinforcing negative or positive evaluations. In particular, it is argued that the media have the capacity to problematise a given financial situation, create a distance between themselves and the positive corporate evaluation of financial results, endorse positive corporate evaluations, and make positive or negative evaluations through the use of storytelling techniques that are typical of business communication (Zanola, 2024).

In order to facilitate a comprehensive analysis of financial news texts, three case studies were selected for examination: the Y2K Bug Scare (1999-2000), the 2008 financial crisis, and the Housing Bubble and Financial Crisis (2007-2008). It was found that sensationalism emerged as a consistent element influencing public reactions across all three cases. In the Y2K Bug Scare, sensationalist reporting led to widespread panic and hoarding behaviour. Similarly, during the Flash Crash of 2010, exaggerated reports fueled investor panic, contributing to market volatility. The Housing Bubble and Financial Crisis case studies illustrate the pitfalls of oversimplification. By framing complex issues in simplistic terms, media outlets influenced public opinion, potentially hindering a nuanced understanding of the events. The Flash Crash of 2010 resulted in regulatory reforms, highlighting how media-induced panic can prompt significant changes in market infrastructure. Similarly, the economic consequences of distorted news coverage were exemplified by the market volatility that accompanied the Brexit referendum. The interplay between media representation and market dynamics underscores the need for accurate reporting to maintain market stability. The 2008 Financial Crisis case study highlights how misleading media coverage may contribute to delayed regulatory responses. Ill-informed decisions stemming from media-induced misperception can exacerbate the severity of a financial crisis. This emphasises the importance of prompt and informed regulatory action to mitigate the impact of financial downturns.

The analysis was conducted qualitatively, examining the various ways in which the media exercise their power to incorporate their own evaluations into financial news. The press releases were used as support material, and the study did not provide quantitative insights into the prevalence of evaluation strategies or the balance between negative and positive evaluations. This is because these evaluations are influenced by material aspects of the companies' financial results and the economic climate at the time of news publication.

The case study research involved analysing media narratives and investigating the impact of media coverage on financial markets. The aim was to uncover the underlying dynamics of this mutually beneficial relationship. Ultimately, a nuanced understanding of the media-finance power dynamic is crucial for policy-makers, investors and the public as they navigate an era where information is not only valuable but also has significant influence in shaping the financial landscape.

References

Baranidharan, S., Vasani Sankarkumar, A., Chandrakala, G., Narayanan, R., Sathyanarayana, K. (2023). The role of social media in empowering digital financial literacy. In IGI Global, *Global Perspectives on Social Media Usage Within Governments* (pp. 80–96). http://doi.org/10.4018/978-1-6684-7450-1.ch006

Bednarek, M. (2010). Evaluation in the news. A methodological framework for analysing evaluative language in journalism. *Australian Journal of Communication, 37*(2), 15–50.

Bednarek, M., & Caple, H. (2017). *The discourse of news values: How news organisations create newsworthiness.* Oxford University Press. https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780190653934.001.0001

Wu, C. H., & Lin, C. J. (2017). The impact of media coverage on investor trading behavior and stock returns. *Pacific-Basin Finance Journal, 43,* 151–172. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pacfin.2017.04.001

Zanola, A. (2024). Once upon a time in science: Storytelling and the narrative spectrum. In Gatti, M. C., & Hoffmann, J. (Eds.), *Storytelling as a Cultural Practice: Pedagogical and Linguistic Perspectives* (pp. 321–346). Peter Lang. https://doi.org/10.3726/b21689

Faculty Onboarding: Gateway to Teaching and Learning Success

Polly Graham, Jamie Hook, Joseph Morgan, Katherine Ryan, Christopher Thomas, and Shannon Winston
Indiana University, Bloomington

This dynamic workshop explores the pros and cons of various onboarding practices designed to prepare new faculty members to enter their classrooms with confidence and to quickly become active members of their academic units. Group discussions, idea sharing, and the presentation of an array of best practices will be included.

Introduction

Perhaps you remember what it was like to have far more questions than answers in the days (or weeks or months) after joining your department. If so, you may also agree that when we feel uncertain as new faculty members, it's hard to be effective in the classroom or to be engaged colleagues. This is why comprehensive faculty onboarding programs are essential for teaching and learning success and the future of business communication education (Doepner-Hove, 2012; Eisner, 2015; Klein & Polin, 2012).

Effective faculty onboarding programs provide both task and interpersonal support. They may provide this support for an extended length of time, and they are inclusive and responsive to the needs of the newcomers. In this way, onboarding is different from an orientation insofar as onboarding acclimates new faculty to a particular culture and community to set them up for success (Roberts-Leib & Best, 2024). As Petzer et al. (2021) note, "Onboarding processes are multidimensional. A good onboarding process not only focuses on providing employees with technical information like appropriate policies…, it also provides insight into an organization's values and culture…" (p. 166).

In addition to providing structured support, effective faculty onboarding programs are also responsive to the diverse identities, experience, and expectations of newcomers, attending to issues of inclusion and belongingness, especially for new faculty with marginalized identities. To succeed, new faculty need to feel safe and welcomed as they acclimate to department norms and, at the same time, the department needs to be agile and open to changing its norms as its composition changes (Petzer et al., 2021).

The **PURPOSE** of this workshop is to highlight the role of effective faculty onboarding as an essential component of a robust, cohesive, and productive academic unit. As we consider the future of business communication, hiring, supporting, and retaining talented and dedicated colleagues is essential. Initial experiences in a department can set the tone for new faculty members' early career success in the classroom and their subsequent commitment to an academic department.

The **GOALS** of this workshop are to have participants consider best practices and engage in constructive dialogue regarding the structure and implementation of faculty onboarding approaches and the concomitant complicating factors.

Workshop **METHODS** that will be used to share content and to encourage participation include interactive polls, small group breakout room discussions, and large group sharing and reflection. Workshop facilitators (both designers of our onboarding system and faculty who were recently onboarded) will share their own onboarding experiences in a Communication and Professional Skills area that comprises over 60 full-time faculty members. Facilitators will share extant onboarding approaches and best practices in a large group setting, solicit input via online interactive features, and lead breakout room discussions to ensure participants have the space to discuss their individual questions and issues relevant to their contexts.

OUTCOMES for workshop participants include benchmarking with peers and taking away practical ideas and strategies for faculty onboarding to implement in their own academic departments or areas.

References

Doepner-Hove, S. (2012). The development of a comprehensive onboarding program at a Big Ten research university. In C. R. Wanberg (Ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of Organizational Socialization* (288–302). Oxford University Press.

Eisner, S. (2015). Onboarding the faculty: A model for win-win mentoring. *American Journal of Business Education 8*(1), 7–22.

Klein, H. J., & Polin, B. (2012). Are organizations on board with best practices onboarding? In C. R. Wanberg (Ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of Organizational Socialization* (267–287). Oxford University Press.

Petzer, D. J., Kleyn, N. S., & Ruiters, M. (2021). Inclusive onboarding in academic departments. In A. Lindgreen, A. Irwin, F. Poulfelt, & T. U. Thomsen (Eds.), *How to Lead Academic Departments Successfully* (164–180). Edward Elgar Publishing.

Roberts-Lieb, S., & Best, R. G. (2024). Starting on the right foot: Faculty onboarding with a purpose. *Association of American Medical Colleges*. https://www.aamc.org/professional-development/affinity-groups/gfa/faculty-onboarding-purpose

From Slides to Stories: Elevating Business Communication with PowerPoint Karaoke

Heather E. Philip
University of Texas at Arlington

Public speaking, a skill that is highly sought after in the workforce, is also a source of significant anxiety among college students. This prevalent fear can have far-reaching consequences, often leading to avoidance behaviors that may hinder academic performance and career progression. Employers today are looking for individuals who can not only communicate effectively but can do so with adaptability and creativity (World Economic Forum, 2023). Real-world business situations often require one to present with little preparation or to speak on topics not entirely within their realm of experience or expertise. This is not an "if" but a "when" scenario, highlighting the need for students to be adept at thinking on their feet.

To address this prevalent issue, I propose a 1–2-hour workshop utilizing PowerPoint Karaoke (Stiles & Skarupski, 2014) as an innovative instructional method, tailored with a "training wheels" approach to foster both narrative understanding and improvisational storytelling skills (Woodhouse, 2011). This adaptation involves scaffolding the PowerPoint Karaoke experience to guide participants in mastering the flow of different presentation structures and types. By creating and delivering their own PowerPoint slides, participants practice being effective "tour guides," ensuring audience engagement through clear transitions and coherent narratives. This method not only eases public speaking anxiety but also instills essential presentation design principles, preparing students for professional scenarios where they must seamlessly present unfamiliar content.

PowerPoint Karaoke with “training wheels” is a novel instructional approach that enhances student engagement, bolsters public speaking confidence, and fosters a deeper comprehension of presentation design principles. The goals of this workshop are to:

- Demonstrate the efficacy of improvisational exercises in refining public speaking and presentation skills.
- Guide educators in constructing and implementing a narrative framework that students can adapt spontaneously.
- Establish a pedagogical space where participants can experience firsthand the transformative impact of active learning methodologies.

The workshop will unfold in a collaborative environment, beginning with an illustrative presentation that showcases the fusion of narrative structure with the unpredictable nature of storytelling—as manifested in PowerPoint Karaoke. Participants will then engage in scaffolded activities:

- Narrative Guides: Hands-on exercises to create and utilize narrative templates.

- Thematic Depth: Interactive discussions on integrating course concepts with impromptu elements.
- Design Basics: A walk-through of PowerPoint design principles culminating in the creation of a karaoke slide deck.
- PowerPoint Karaoke: Attendees will step into the shoes of students and navigate the unpredictable waters of presenting unseen content.

Educators will leave the workshop with tangible takeaways:

- A narrative template to help students outline and organize their presentations.
- Techniques for guiding students in spontaneous content generation that aligns with the narrative.
- Best practices for PowerPoint design that emphasize clarity and engagement.
- A framework for fostering a classroom environment that reduces the anxiety associated with public speaking and promotes adaptability.

With the strategic "training wheels" approach to PowerPoint Karaoke, this workshop equips participants to transform slides into compelling stories, enabling a transition from public speaking apprehension to confident, effective communication.

References

Stiles, D. J., & Skarupski, K. (2014). Improving public speaking with PowerPoint karaoke. *Transformative Dialogues: Teaching and Learning Journal, 7*(2), 1–3.

Woodhouse, H. (2011). Storytelling in university: Emotion, teachable moments, and the value of life. *The Journal of Educational Thought, 45*(3), 211–238.

World Economic Forum. (2023). *The future of jobs report 2023.* https://www.weforum.org/publications/the-future-of-jobs-report-2023/digest/

Workshop

Motivating Language Theory and Reframing Organizations: The Four Frame Model Plus Change

William T. Holmes
Kansas State University

This 90-minute interactive teaching workshop is designed to help those who focus on organizational communication by focusing on the integration of Motivating Language Theory (Mayfield & Mayfield, 2018) with Reframing Organizations and the Four Frame Model (Bolman & Deal, 2021). This hands-on workshop uses published research and materials from a series of three articles published in *Development and Learning in Organizations: An International Journal* that provide:

- An integrated framework for connecting the Four Frames and Motivating Language Theory
- A leadership script to reframe organizational problems into solutions with leadership actions and communications
- A framework connecting Kotter's Change Model with the Four Frames and Motivating Language Theory
- A leadership decision-making sequence connecting the Four Frames and Motivating Language Theory (Holmes, 2023; Holmes, 2024; Holmes & Scull, 2019).

The purpose of this interactive teaching workshop is to give participants the research, the tools, and the information needed to leave the conference and return to their educational settings and teach their students how to bring together the Four Frames of Reframing Organizations and Motivating Language Theory. Therefore, this workshop will provide some background information on Motivating Language Theory, as well as background on Reframing Organizations and the Four Frames before bringing the two together in an integrated manner as outlined above.

The goals of this workshop are for participants to feel comfortable with Motivating Language Theory and the Four Frames of Reframing Organizations and to have the resources and confidence necessary to teach others how to integrate them within the classroom.

The methodology of this workshop will focus on the needs of adult learners. The information shared will be relevant, practical, and timely, geared towards immediate implementation upon leaving the conference. Therefore, the workshop will include hands-on materials, participant-to-participant conversation and reflection, sharing and discussion regarding the application of information, and role-play and modeling of materials.

The outcomes of this workshop are for participants to gain a greater understanding of Motivating Language Theory and how it can be connected and integrated with the Four Frames of Reframing Organization and Kotter's Change Model in an educational environment.

Workshop participants will walk away from this workshop with copies of each of the three articles (each article is about four to five pages long), handouts to take back and implement in their teaching, and multiple examples of how to utilize both the articles and handouts within their teaching environments.

References

Bolman, L., & Deal, T. (2021). *Reframing organizations: Artistry, choice, and leadership*. (7th ed.), Jossey-Bass.

Holmes, W. T. (2024). The four frames of leadership and motivating language theory: Version 2.0. *Development and Learning in Organizations: An International Journal.* https://doi.org/10.1108/DLO-01-2024-0016

Holmes, W. T. (2023). Motivating language theory, the four-frames, and change: An infused model. *Development and Learning in Organizations: An International Journal.* https://doi.org/10.1108/DLO-04-2023-0105

Holmes, W. T., & Scull, R. (2019). Reframing organizations through leadership communications: The four-frames of leadership viewed through motivating language. *Development and Learning in Organizations: An International Journal,* 33(5), pp. 16–19. https://doi.org/10.1108/DLO-09-2018-0107

Mayfield, J., & Mayfield, M. (2018). *Motivating language theory: Effective leader talk in the workplace.* Palgrave McMillian.

"Where's This Coming From?" Taking the Pulse of Citation Styles in GenAI

Marcy Orwig, University of Wisconsin – Eau Claire
Sara Moore, The University of Texas at Dallas
Kathryn Lookadoo, The University of Texas at Dallas

What is the Association for Business Communication?

When that prompt was asked of ChatGPT (3.5 Version), it responded with the following:

> The Association for Business Communication (ABC) is a professional organization dedicated to enhancing communication education and research within the field of business communication. It serves as a platform for educators, researchers, and practitioners to collaborate, share resources, and advance the understanding and practice of effective communication in various business contexts.

However, a different GenAI (Generative Artificial Intelligence) tool, Perplexity, provides the following response to the above prompt:

> The Association for Business Communication (ABC) is an international, interdisciplinary organization committed to advancing business communication research, education, and practice.

While the responses are similar in content, they vary with the delivery. More specifically, the end of the Perplexity response includes footnote-style references whereas the ChatGPT does not. Why does it appear that there are such different approaches to citation styles for GenAI technologies? Further, what role do the major style guides (APA, MLA, Chicago, etc.) play in such different approaches?

This workshop, as a result, will ask participants to investigate various approaches to citing GenAI tools. The topic of GenAI has already impacted the field of Business Communication, as evidenced by numerous textbook publisher webinars, conference presentations, and journal articles. The learning objectives of this workshop, though, will specifically focus on the following:

- Understanding the challenges with GenAI citations, as academics and/or professionals
- Applying best practices for effective and appropriate GenAI content use
- Analyzing pedagogical and practitioner approaches to GenAI citation guidelines

Participants should arrive ready to research and discuss GenAI tools and will leave with a better idea of how to teach and apply citations in GenAI—which could include the following:

- Part One: Look for current policies and practices

- Part Two: Scenarios and Discussion
    - How and when should students and professionals cite the use of GenAI?
    - How and when should teachers and researchers cite the use of GenAI?
    - Should companies have citation guidelines and what should they look like?
    - What role should technology corporations and business communication faculty or departments play in setting citation styles?

- Part Three: Leave with a better idea of how to teach students how to cite GenAI and a deeper consideration of the complexity of originality and attribution