Assessment Design for Powerful Learning

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Workshop Description:

Carefully and strategically designed assignments can lead to powerful learning and development in students. This workshop is designed for faculty interested in developing students' oral communication skills. In this workshop, participants will learn to apply oral communication assignment design strategies based on learning principles and oral communication development research; select and adapt tools commonly used in excellent oral communication assignments (e.g., rubrics, scaffolding techniques); have ample opportunity to provide and receive constructive peer feedback; and learn to assess student learning meaningfully and efficiently.

Level: Beginner

Who should attend: All faculty interested in developing student oral communication skills, especially faculty teaching Oral Communication General Education designated courses.

Format: Presentation + Interactive Activities

Date/time/location:
Monday, October 3, 12:00-1:30 pm, KUY 106
OR
Wednesday, October 12, 2016, 11:30-1:00 am, KUY 106

What to Bring: Please bring 3 copies of an oral communication assignment you would like to work on.
Workshop Contributors:
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Hokulani Aikau, Associate Professor & Director, General Education Office.
At the end of the session, you would be able to use and reflect on strategies to:

- Develop student learning outcomes for oral communication tasks
- Scaffold learning for successful performance on the assignment
- Engage students in reflection and self-assessment
- Use rubric for both learning and assessment purposes

Most importantly, you will receive concrete peer feedback on your oral communication assignment.
The first strategy to assignment design is to make student learning outcomes clear and explicit to your students. If students are aware of the outcomes, they can make better sense of the assignment and better engage in self-engaged learning.
Oral communication competencies can be classified into three categories: context of communication, communication content, and content delivery.
In many oral communication tasks, we don’t ask students to analyze the context. However, analyzing context should be the first step in making the oral communication task relevant and effective. We emphasize two competencies under this category: ability to identify the purpose and ability to analyze and describe the audience.

In terms of context, students need to clearly identify the purpose of the oral task. Is it to inform, to persuade, or to entertain the audience. In terms of persuade the audience, specifically, are we trying to convince, inspire or to advocate? Is there a desired action that we want the audience to take after our presentation?
In addition to purpose, understanding who is the audience is crucially important to making the oral communication task relevant and trustworthy. Very often, we prepare our students to present to an academic audience in their discipline or academic community. If that is the case, citing sources, clearly explaining the project approach and methods can be very relevant and important to establishing your authority in the topic.

On the other hand, we also need to prepare our students to communicate with people in the non-academic world. We need to consider their culture, gender, age, and knowledge level. For example, if we ask students to give a class presentation to their peers on the topic of Instagram, they may prepare the presentation very differently than giving a presentation to seniors in a community center. With peers, they don’t have to go over a lot of terminologies and can quickly move from introduction to advanced features of Instagram. With seniors, they really want to stick with plain language and using examples relevant to a senior’s life: seeing pictures of grandchildren, and so on.

Whether the audience are asked to attend the presentation (like in a classroom setting) or whether they come voluntarily (in community events) would also make a difference in preparing the presentation. For a captured audience, you might be able to provide more in-depth information and provoke deeper thinking.

In the handout, you can see two examples of Audience Analysis assignment. One assignment asks students to investigate the audience’s prior knowledge by asking them several interview questions, such as ‘have you used it before?’ ‘What do you use it for?’ ‘How often do you use it?’ Another task asks the students to clearly identify an interest group (e.g., legislature, building association board, college students) when presenting their sustainability topic.
Example assignment for different audience

Prepare two senior honor thesis presentations.
- One 30-minute presentation for academic committee
- One 5-minute presentation for lay audience outside of their discipline

Motivating assignments:

Increase value of the tasks – relevant authentic real life tasks

One effective strategy to make the assignment motivating is to use real life tasks with the audience beyond the walls of the classroom. Students can produce a news and put it on YouTube, make a PodCast, or make a mock TedTalk.

In terms of content, oral communication is no different than other forms of communication in that students need to convey a central main idea, support the idea with relevant supporting evidence, and organize the information flow in a clear and organized manner appropriate for the intended audience.

One source to check out:
Last but not least, we should expect students to effectively deliver the oral task using both verbal and non-verbal strategies. Verbal strategies include: using varied pace or tone to emphasize main points and capture audience’s interest, appropriately using pauses, maintain audible and variable volume of speech and so on. For a lot of non-native speakers, teaching students using verbal strategies are very important to help them make the message across effectively.
In addition to face-to-face presentation, you can also consider asking students to record their presentations as videos. One tool to do so is the movenote google app. It allows the presenter to display the slides on one side of the screen and the presenter on the other side of the screen.

Short tutorial: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CYGMdEEjuJE

[Movenote image]: https://www.movenote.com/
Key Competencies

Context
- Purpose
- Audience

Content
- Main idea
- Supporting evidence
- Organization

Delivery
- Verbal
- Non-verbal
- (Supporting materials)

Scaffold learning experience

Building scaffold: https://freeimages.red/photo/building-renovation-8879.html
To develop mastery, students must acquire component skills, practice integrating them, and know when to apply what they have learned.

This means, to help students master oral presentation, we will need to help students with each of the three competency areas.
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Scaffolding Context

Purpose:
• setting outcomes (what do you want your audience to achieve?)

Slide 18

Scaffolding Context

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Audience
1. Audience prior knowledge analysis (see handout)
2. Audience/Organization description (see handout)
Slide 19

**Scaffolding Content**

1. Topic selection: Narrow it down
2. Locate and select relevant evidence
3. Write thesis statement/purpose statement
4. Presentation story board

Feedback → Revision

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In the handout

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Slide 20

**Scaffolding Delivery**

1. Stage fright

2. Verbal
   - Vocal techniques
   - Articulation
   - Attract audience’s attention

3. Non-verbal

   Rehearse → Reflect → Feedback → Refine

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More examples are in the handout
It is possible to explore the scaffolding strategies together with your students. The most important strategy to improve oral presentation would be giving students the opportunities to practice, allowing them to receive feedback from you and the peers, and reflecting on ways to achieve their desired performance goal.
Slide 23

Promote reflection


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Meta-cognition:

the process of reflecting on & directing one’s own thinking  
(National Research Council, 2001, p. 78)
To become self-directed learners, students must learn to
- assess the demand of task
- evaluate their own knowledge and skills
- plan their approach
- monitor their progress
- adjust their strategies as needed. (Ambrose et al., 2010)

Cultivate meta-cognition skills
Implications for assignment design
1. Ask students to assess the task
2. Train students to self-assess and peer assess
3. Provide performance criteria in a rubric
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Rubric as key scaffolding & reflection tool

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Mānoa uses VALUE rubrics
Slide 29

Ways to use a rubric

- Assist students in understanding your expectations
- Students self- & peer assess
- Students monitor one’s own progress
- Annotate presentations with rubric criteria to assist learning
- Assist grading/feedback

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Oral Assignment Design Tools

- Clear Competencies
- Scaffolding
- Reflection & Self-Assessment
- Rubrics
We have a lot of General Education requirements. How are we making sure that our Gen Ed requirement is helping students achieve what we want them to gain? How can we promote cross discipline conversations about oral communication? What are the essential skills that we all want our students to be able to demonstrate? How do we develop signature assignments to allow students to demonstrate those skills?
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Signature Assignment

A generic task, problem, case, or project that can be tailored or contextualized in different disciplines or course contexts.
(Driscoll, 2016, p. 11).


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Possible Signature Assignment for OC

Task: A formal oral presentation
Purpose: persuade or inform
Requirement:
- Specify intended audience
- 10-12 minute
- performed live
- Use supporting material
The final product is scaffolded
Slide 35

Peer sharing: 20 min per assignment

1. Author explains assignment (5 min)
2. Peers ask clarification questions and offer feedback (8 min)
3. Author summarize improvements to be made (2 min)
4. Peer write down feedback (5 min)

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Sources used

- [Building scaffold] https://freeimages.red/photo/building-renovation-8879.html
Workshop Handout

1. Make student learning outcomes clear to your students

Key Oral Communication Outcomes Areas
A. Analyze context
   a. Identify purpose: persuade (advocate, inspire), inform, entertain
   b. Analyze and describe audience: academic, community, decision-maker
B. Content
   a. Select appropriate content
   b. Present information in a clear and organized manner appropriate for the intended audience and purpose
C. Demonstrate effective verbal and nonverbal delivery
   a. (May include: Use supporting materials such as handouts, visual aids, models to promote clarity and interest)

2. Scaffold learning experiences

Scaffolding Context

Example 1: Audience Prior Knowledge Analysis (Sample Instructions)

Survey the potential audience on their knowledge of the key points that you want to cover in your presentation.

Use the results to determine the coverage of key points and your language choices (e.g., whether you need to provide background information before you introduce the key points, skip certain points, determine the extent to define the jargons).


Example 2: Audience Description Exercise (Sample Instructions)

Examples of different audiences (there are many more):
- college undergraduates at the University of Hawai‘i (or some particular branch campus);
- members of the Hawai‘i State Legislature;
- residents of Hawai‘i – or some subset such as homeowners, those interested in growing their own food, inactive potential voters, those in a certain geographical area, etc.)

Descriptions should include:
- How this sustainability issue would affect them?
- Why they should potentially care about this issue?
- Their characteristics that would influence your rhetoric/word choice/communication style. Examples include: age, education background, power to affect community, people they can influence, etc.


Scaffolding Content Example
1. Select topic and read 5-7 credible, relevant articles to supplement textbook: submit bibliography using (YYY) style to instructor; get feedback
2. Annotated Bibliography: Write a 750-1,000 word summary of the three most relevant articles and submit to instructor; get feedback
3. Write a “stated purpose” statement (in class pair & share activity)
4. Write and submit a presentation story board; complete out-of-class peer review
5. Revise presentation story board using feedback

Scaffolding Delivery

1. Techniques for dealing with stage fright
   a. Arrive at the venue early and be prepared
   b. Visualize oneself presenting to the audience beforehand
   c. Use calming techniques (e.g., breathing techniques)
2. Verbal strategies (e.g. pace/rate, volume, pitch, tone/animation, enunciation & pronunciation, silent/vocal pauses, fluidity)
   a. Articulation techniques (e.g., “red, leather, yellow, leather;” talking with a candy in mouth)
   b. Ways to attract an audience’s attention (e.g., quotation, startling statistics, rhetorical questions, humor)
3. Non-verbal strategies (e.g., posture, gestures, facial expression, eye contact)
4. Practice presentation at home (including timing) and ask students to self-assess
5. Practice presentation (in class small group activity) and ask students to give constructive feedback to each other

Assignment Example

- You should focus on extracting the most relevant information from your paper for the presentation.
- 15 minutes is a much shorter period of time than you imagine – practice repeatedly and time yourself.
- Project your slides in a classroom and stand at the back of the room. Can you see all important graphics and figures? If not, make the text/images larger.
- Find ways to engage the class. Have them do an activity, answer a question, make a guess about an example, etc.
- You should not read your slides during the presentation. You should be familiar with the material and the order of the slides so that you can make eye contact with the class. Practice, practice, practice.
- While you are practicing, have someone record you using a phone or camera. When you look at yourself talking you will gain some insights about good and bad habits, and can prepare your final talk accordingly.
- Empty your pockets…. One of the most annoying tics that people display when giving a talk is rattling keys, change, etc. in their pockets. Remove the temptation.

3. Self-assessment & Reflection
   A. Assess the task:
      i. Demand
      ii. Connection/Resource need
      iii. Plan
   B. Self-assessment example questions:
      i. I am able to...
      ii. I am confident that I can...
      iii. I can improve in my ability to...
   C. Reflection assignment example

   - FSHN 480 Oral Presentation
     Self-Evaluation and Reflection

     Please review your oral presentation on the videotape/CD and answer the following questions about what you learned.

     1. How effective were you in translating the research information topic to your audience?
     2. How effective were you in answering questions about the topic?
     3. What would your score be if 100 = no improvement needed? What would you need to do to improve your score?
     4. How did preparing and presenting the information improve your understanding of the topic?
     5. What did you learn about yourself while preparing/presenting the research information?
     6. How will you approach this experience the next time you have to interpret scientific information to a lay audience?


4. Rubrics Resources
   - VALUE rubric (https://www.aacu.org/value-rubrics)
   - Speaking and listening competencies for college students from National Communication Association (Link is here)

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Assessment Design for Powerful Learning in Oral Communication
Joint workshop by Assessment Office, General Education Office, Oral Communication Board, and Institutional Learning Objectives Implementation Committee

Assignment-Design Feedback Sheet:

Assignment: ________________________________________________________________

Comments From: ____________________________________________________________

1. What outcomes do you think students will be able to demonstrate with this assignment?

2. What are the main strengths of this assignment for assessing the identified outcomes?

3. Thinking about the assignment from the point of view of students, what questions or suggestions do you have?

4. Other suggestions and possibilities – especially in response to the author’s questions about improving the assignment?

Adapted from the National Institute for Learning Outcomes Assessment Assignment Design Charrette