

Annual Report for Assessment of Outcomes For English as a Second or Other Language (ESOL)

Communication and Environmental Responsibility

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1. Describe changes that have been implemented towards improving students' attainment of outcomes that resulted from outcome assessments carried out in the previous academic year.

Critical thinking was the outcome addressed last year in our program. In the report of its findings, it was noted that the assignment was effective in assessing critical thinking in our transitional level (level 5). However, there were language barriers that impeded its implementation; for example, the use of the conditional to hypothesize possible future outcomes of students' goals is not taught until higher levels. Keeping in mind that language, in particular grammar and vocabulary are acquired in stages, the assessment activity was not changed.

Furthermore, it was suggested that a different form of the assignment be tried at different levels. Given the large size of our SAC, 105 faculty members, including a high percentage of part-time faculty (80%), we were not able to effectively administer and evaluate the critical thinking assessment at other levels. This, however, will be carried out in 2011-12.

2. Identify the outcomes assessed this year, and describe the methods used.

What were the results of the assessment (i.e., what did you learn about how well students are meeting the outcomes)?

English for Speakers of Other Languages is an 8-level program that aims to move students seamlessly from true beginner to college-level English. ESOL's sequence moves from Basic ESOL (Levels 1-3) to Transitional ESOL (Levels 4-5) and Academic ESOL (Levels 6-5). Basic ESOL classes integrate the skills of listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Transitional ESOL classes are designed to be a bridge to the higher academic levels, and Academic ESOL classes have the performance expectations typical of any comparable PCC class (high-level vocabulary, grammatical correctness, cited sources, appropriate use of media, etc). After Level 3, our levels divide into 3 courses, reading, writing and communication, with each focusing on the specific language learning skill. Level 7 Communication is the communication exit level for ESOL learners. By the end of this course, students should be prepared to communicate effectively in Writing 115, Reading 115 and other courses in which the majority of the students will be native English speakers. This level is where we chose to assess the two outcomes of **communication** and **environmental responsibility**.

ESOL's Communication and Environmental Responsibility Assessment

Clarity in oral and written communication is at the core of the ESOL courses. At Level 7 Communication, students are still working to improve pronunciation, listening comprehension and

organizational skills for speaking assignments. Instructors use a variety of tools to assess the students' progress in these areas; the most common in Level 7 Communication is to prepare and present two informative speeches on researched topics. These speeches include research, a visual aid, and an outline, enabling them to be a perfect tool for measuring oral, written and reading communication. A successful speech will demonstrate effective communication skills in all three.

Although in the past many instructors have chosen to focus on environmental responsibility as a research topic at this level, it has not been a specific requirement of this class. One of the goals of this assignment was to create a pilot of a formalized learning tool for environmental responsibility and to assess its outcome. As such, this one tool is addressing two outcomes: communication and environmental responsibility.

The method used for our evaluation was a graded informative speech on an issue related to the environment. Each student was required to give this speech, and submit a written outline, and each was assessed using the same rubric. In addition, each of the student's peers was given a peer review sheet in order to measure audience comprehension. This assignment was given to eight ESOL Level 7 Communication classes across the district (about 100 students).

Assignment Sheet - Environmental Speech

Goal: To educate the class on a local or global environmental issue.

Length: 5-7 minutes

Topic: For this speech, you must choose a topic related to an issue that affects the environment. This is a research speech, and your topic must be preapproved. Finding an appropriate topic for this speech is very important. Make sure your topic can be covered effectively during your time allotment. For example, “global warming” is not going to get covered in 7 minutes, but perhaps methods, an organization or business is doing to reduce carbon emissions might.

Some areas where you may want to begin your research could include:

Recycling

Pollution

Alternative energy

Global warming

Oil companies

Conservation

Nuclear issues

Genetic engineering

Environmental health

Toxins

Waste

Note that these are very broad topics. It is up to narrow them down to specific issues.

Please do research! You must find **3 - 4** sources. If it is an Internet source, just write down the URL. You must make a **bibliography** that lists your three or four sources on your outline.

Important! I will cut you off – **even if you are not finished** – at 7:30 minutes. You will lose points if your speech is over 7 minutes or under 5 minutes. Practice, practice, practice & time yourself!

On the day of your speech, you MUST bring the following:

1. **Outline.** Use this during your speech & then give it to me when your speech is over. I am not giving you an outline form for this speech, so please create your own outline from scratch.
2. At least 1 **visual aid** to use *during your speech*.
3. **Copies of your newspaper or magazine sources or URLs or printouts of your Internet sources.** Please give them to me after your speech.

1. Instructor Assessment

The instructor assessment rubric was drawn up by the assessment committee to assess program success in both instruction of the communication core outcomes (reading, writing, speaking and listening), as well as ability to organize an informative speech on an issue related to the core outcome of environmental responsibility (demonstrating knowledge of scientific method, cultural impact, and community based solutions for local and global environmental issues.). We think it correctly measures success in both of the college outcomes. For communication it evaluates organization, presentation, and intelligibility. In addition, it evaluates the student's demonstration of understanding of a specific environmental issue. We modeled some of the rubric after indicators of the communication core outcomes:

Zero: Skill not present in any form (Absent)

Level 1

Limited demonstration or application of knowledge and skills. (Poor)

Level 2

Basic demonstration and application of knowledge and skills. (Fair)

Level 3

Demonstrates comprehension and is able to apply essential knowledge and skill. (Good)

Level 4

Demonstrates thorough, effective and/or sophisticated application of knowledge and skills (Excellent)

Assessment Guide - Environmental Speech

Pts.		1 Absent	2 Poor	3 Fair	4 Good	5 Excellent
5	1. Hook/ Opening	Absent	Not interesting/ doesn't introduce topic	Introduces topic, but lacks an interesting hook	Interesting hook, introduces topic	Captures interest, creative, presents topic clearly
20	2. Topic & Main Ideas	No apparent organizational structure	Lacks some main ideas and/or points	Topic & most main ideas present	Topic & main ideas all present - but may be unclear	Topic & main ideas clear; organization easy to understand
5	3. Conclusion	Absent	Speech doesn't seem to clearly end/ lacks closure	Ends speech clearly (i.e. not just "Thank you")	Summarizes main ideas	Summarizes main ideas and ends powerfully
5	4. Transitions & Timing	Unsatisfactory preparation	Many timing & transition problems	Does not always uses transition words or pay attention to timing	Makes connections between ideas; successful transitions between points.	Smooth flow of ideas; well planned for timing
20	5. Content	Does not convey adequate grasp of content; content inappropriate or off topic	Speech either is inappropriate for level or is not successful in goal	Identifies and explains current environmental issue. Limited success in application and delivery of content	Demonstrates understanding of an environmental issue and how it effects a community	Successfully educates the class on a local or global environmental issue. Demonstrates thorough and sophisticated application of knowledge and skills.
5	6. Eye Contact/ Rapport	Little or no eye contact, reads speech from paper	Eyes stay in one spot (e.g. on instructor)/uses speech outline or written speech in excess	Looks at some of the audience some of the time/ inconsistent or awkward body language	Looks at most of audience most of the time; body language suggests confidence and preparation	Intentional eye contact with everyone/ uses gestures effectively to convey points
20	7. Pronunciation	Unintelligible	Majority unintelligible; no compensation	Satisfactorily intelligible; some problems remain uncorrected	Mostly intelligible; minor problems may be present	Intelligible & clear; conscious compensatory effort (slowing down)

Results

Data from a random selection of twenty-five graded rubrics were taken by the assessment committee and compiled below. The goal of this was to try and locate strengths and weaknesses of our program's fulfillment of these outcomes.

Pts.		1 Absent	2 Poor	3 Fair	4 Good	5 Excellent
5	1. Hook/ Opening	1		6	10	8
20	2. Topic & Main Ideas		2	5	4	14
5	3. Conclusion	1	2	6	13	3
5	4. Transitions & Timing		2	7	10	6
20	5. Content		3	2	10	10
5	6. Eye Contact/ Rapport		3	4	10	8
20	7. Pronunciation		1	5	12	7
5	8. Volume & Speed				5	20
5	9. Visual Aid (PowerPoint)	4	1	4	10	6
10	10. Questions & Answers	1	2	2	7	13
	Totals:	8	16	41	91	95
	Grades:	F=2	D=2	C=6	B=8	A=7

The general pattern reveals that most students are achieving the communication and environmental responsibility outcome for this level. The content of the assignment, which included research, written outline and understanding of issue demonstrated a moderately high to high level in 20 out of 25

students. We feel that the ESOL program does a good job of teaching these outcomes as measured by this particular tool. However, the results might be skewed by teacher's individual interpretations of the rubric. One way to correct this would be to normalize the rubric by having all Level 7 Communication teachers meet to use it to evaluate the same set of videotaped speeches from this past spring. We also think that improvements in the breadth and depth of understanding of environmental issues could be achieved. Thus, we would like to add more environmental content to the CCOGs as a requirement, in order to ensure students have reached the highest level of the core outcome (demonstrates thorough, effective and/or sophisticated application of knowledge and skills). Ensuring a module of specific research based assignments such as this one is required in our upper level communication courses can accomplish this.

2. Peer Assessment

Peer assessments of formal speeches are assigned for two purposes: to evaluate the clarity of the speaker's presentation and to assess the listener's comprehension, which is the reason for choosing it as a complementary assessment tool. Their classmates' assessments of their speech were given to them at the end along with their graded rubric:

Peer Assessment Your name: _____ Speaker's name: _____

What was the topic of the speech?

How did the speaker support their main point? (Circle as many as apply)

Examples statistics personal experience expert quote

Pronunciation: How much did you understand of what the speaker said?

Less than 50% 50% 75% 90+%

Write one analytical question based on the content of the speech.

Results

We intended this as a communication outcome assessment: however, in reviewing the samples, it is obvious that we should consider this to be more useful as a listening outcome tool. The samples made it clear that the speeches provoked a wide range of reactions that often had very little to do with the speaker. This was due to the wide variety of listeners in the classroom; for unknown reasons, most samples received very high scores combined with very low scores on peer comprehension. This would be very difficult to norm, and it would not be a fair way to evaluate the speaker, due to the wide range of listening skills in an ESOL classroom. Conversely, it would be a very difficult way to accurately

measure listening due to the fact that it may be too hard to accurately fault the listener or the speaker for lapses in comprehension. However, it is valuable as a tool to keep the audience engaged with the speech, but not valuable for giving evaluation. It does not measure the success of the speaker, as it would if the classroom had native speakers in it. We feel that the outcome of a course is to teach students to communicate effectively with native English speakers outside of the classroom—evaluated and represented by the instructor.

Recommendations

We think that the results of this assessment have demonstrated moderate to high success in the communication outcome. The ESOL program puts effective communication at the forefront of all of its courses. Its success is evidenced by the results of this assignment: students by the exit point are clear, organized speakers, able to plan and formulate remarks on a variety of issues. The rubric evidences our commitment to verbal and non-verbal communication, a practice that is emphasized in all the transitional and upper level communication courses. Active, engaged, critical listening is evidenced in the interaction between students in the question and answer sessions and the peer evaluation of the speeches.

The environmental responsibility outcome is newer to our program. We feel that several changes need to be made and several practices need to be formalized in order to continue progress towards to goal of successfully meeting this core outcome. Firstly, we will keep the environmental speech as a way of measuring both the communication and environmental outcomes for this level. We will also keep the rubric but we will ask teachers to use videotaped speeches to norm the rubrics as assessment tools, at the next SAC meeting. The lack of normalizing the rubrics and presenting them to the SAC limited the success of this assignment. Although some subjectivity is inevitable, it is essential for every instructor to have a similar understanding of what we are measuring for. The peer review rubric will be used for listening assessment only and not for evaluating the speaker's success. In future SAC meetings next year, results of this project will be explained and evaluated in full.

Although critical thinking was not specifically assessed as a line in the speech-grading rubric, it is measured in the content and organization of the speech. At this level, we are looking for students to demonstrate the ability to choose an appropriate topic, research, read, and analyze information and then organize it into the required outline while prioritizing key points and supporting them with quotes, statistics and examples. A student's ability to independently learn and then teach their peers about an environmental problem and how it affects the world around them is a demonstration of successful critical thinking. However, we need to separately identify critical thinking as its own line on the rubric. Both the content and organization of the speech as well as the speaker's handling of the impromptu question and answer period immediately after the presentation of their speech are parts of the assignment where critical thinking can be directly assessed, and we will implement that in next Fall's version of the rubric for the speech.

This assignment was not simple, nor was it easy for our instructors to prepare and grade. However, we believe assessment of communication at this level requires so many interrelated skills that it demands an assignment such as this one. Allowing our students, some of whom are learning both basic adult communication skills in conjunction with a new language to demonstrate their knowledge through larger projects such as this one is essential. We are confident in both our students and our program to meet these core outcomes.