ADDRESSING THE COMMUNICATION PERFORMANCE GAP IN AN ONLINE ENVIRONMENT: STUDENTS SELF-PERCEPTIONS OF THEIR ABILITY TO COMMUNICATE EFFECTIVELY

DEBORAH MIXSON-BROOKSHIRE

RUTH GOLDFINE
PRELIMINARY STUDY
SURVEY INFORMATION

• Volunteer student participation
• Conducted over 1 semester in different courses
• 37 respondents (with majority in Management courses)
• Age 18-49 (with majority 18-29)
• Male and Female (with majority female)
• We asked various questions about effective communication
Q6 - My emails and letters are clearly written.
Q7 - The responses I received to my emails/letters typically provide a clear answer to the question or issue I presented.
Q15 - Those who read my writings often have questions about the message I am trying to convey.
Q24 - There is a proper way to write an email.
Q25 - To become a more effective communicator, I would be willing to (please rank order):

1. Meet with a tutor
2. Use a course step-by-step guide provided by my instructor
3. Review examples of assignments completed by prior students
4. Attend a one-on-one meeting with my instructor
5. Go to the Writing Center
6. Look for online resources
7. Conduct an interview with someone in my career field to learn about the typ...
8. Attend writing workshops on campus
SUMMARY OF PRELIMINARY STUDY

• Students believe they are communicating well
• Students are more likely to go online for resources

• How can we assist them to become more effective communicators?
STRATEGIES AND ASSIGNMENTS
STRATEGY: SCAFFOLDING

- Draws on existing knowledge
- Assist in advancing to next level of learning
- Challenging to help students reach the next level
STRATEGY: RELEVANCE

- Make activities relevant to real-world situations/scenarios
- Examples:
  - Letter to an editor of a newspaper sharing their view
  - Email to a company to complain or compliment a product or service
  - Email or letter to someone working in the student’s chosen field requesting an informational interview
  - Case scenarios
STRATEGY: CLEAR EXPECTATIONS

• To set these expectations, instructors should provide (1) examples, (2) guidelines, and (3) rubric.
STRATEGY:
HUMOR
DESIGNING ASSIGNMENTS
ASSIGNMENT: DISSECTION

1. Provide students with a writing sample that is a good example of the genre they are attempting to master.

2. Ask students to dissect the writing into individual sentences (i.e., literally “cut and paste” each sentence of the sample as a single line of text).

3. Instruct students to examine each sentence and respond to prompts that ask them to critically assess those elements deemed most important by the instructor.
ASSIGNMENT: RECONSTRUCTION

• Reconstruction
• Identify a professional writing sample, such as an email, letter, or memo.
• Create a brief bulleted summary of the idea contained in each sentence (just a few words).
• Provide students with the bulleted list that captures the idea/sentiment expressed by each sentence. Bulleted list should be in the same order as the sentences.
• Ask students to produce a document (of the same type as the sample from which the bulleted list was derived) that includes one sentence for each bulleted item.
ASSIGNMENT: CRITICAL COMPARISON

Critical Comparison

1. Provide students with the sample used as the basis for the Reconstruction Assignment.
2. Ask students to compare the documents they produced with the original document.
3. Have them write a reflection in which they compare their document to the original.
ASSIGNMENT:
RECONSTRUCTION 2.0

Reconstruction 2.0

1. Identify a professional writing sample, such as an email, letter, or memo,

2. Create a brief bulleted summary of the idea contained in each sentence (just a few words).

3. Mix up the list of bulleted items so that they do not appear in the order in which they are expressed in the writing sample.

4. Provide students with the bulleted list that captures the idea/sentiment expressed by each sentence.

5. Ask students to produce a document (of the same type as the sample from which the bulleted list was derived) that includes one sentence for each bulleted item. Make sure to inform them that it is up to them to choose the appropriate order for the ideas presented in the bulleted list.
ASSIGNMENT: CREATION

- **Creation**
  - Provide students with a scenario that requires them to produce a written document of the same genre as that explored in the preceding assignments.
  - Instruct students to reflect on and identify the following before they begin writing:
    - Purpose of the document
    - Most appropriate tone (formal, informal, etc.)
    - Optimal length of the document
    - Approach (e.g., direct and to the point, qualifying language to soften a difficult message, etc.)
    - Flow of document/sequencing of ideas
    - Other elements deemed important by the instructor
  - Provide students with guidelines for the assignment and a grading rubric that details how the assignment will be assessed. Have students write an original document that addresses the scenario presented and adheres to the elements identified in the guidelines provided by the instructor.
SOURCES


THANK YOU!

PLEASE COMPLETE THE OLC EVALUATION