

Developing a Speaking Guide for Interior Design

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NARRATIVE

The typical instructions for a student project in interior design consist of a project description detailing the type of space, existing site conditions, design parameters, and a time limit in which to complete the project. Likewise, the typical instructions for a student paper in interior design will explicitly describe the content expectations, writing style, formatting constraints, and a time limit in which to complete the paper. However, when describing the speaking component of an interior design project or paper, the typical instructions for a student consist of a simple statement of an oral presentation requirement, and possibly, the statement will include a time limit. This casual approach to oral presentation in interior design education is quite often accepted, and thus overlooks a valuable teaching opportunity due to the assumption that the students will be able to intuitively present their work.

Communication is essential in interior design. Interior designers communicate information through construction documents, pictorial drawings, rendering techniques, and written words. The graphic layouts of presentation boards communicate effectively about the project concept and intent. Students are taught to perform a variety of graphic skills. Students are expected to write well, use proper language and technical terms, and hand letter with great skill and accuracy. Graphic communication is an essential component of the interior design education. However, oral communication within interior design curriculum is often fulfilled with a limited number of basic and generalized university communication courses.

According to Richard Emanuel (2005, p. 153), “communication skills ... are essential to personal, academic,

and professional success”. Not only do good communication skills boost self confidence, the Department of Labor describes communication skills as one of the single most important components for jobs of the future. Good oral communication skills enhance a person’s ability to conceptualize, research, develop relationships, express ideas effectively, and work in a team. In fact, the ability to successfully articulate concepts verbally has been referred to as the art form of a good leader. Yet, the evidence shows that most students are not getting the communication skills needed to compete in today’s job market. (Emanuel, 2005)

Students seldom know how to properly present all aspects of an interior design project. In the typical course scenario, the student focuses his or her time on producing the project deliverables, with very little consideration of the presentation until the last moments. Because students are provided very little in the way of speaking guidelines, confusion often develops due to questions or concerns about the content, delivery, attire, and other restraints. More often than not, the confusion evolves to panic, anxiety, and/or disdain. As a result, faculty members spend a great deal of time answering repetitive questions concerning speaking content and attempting to calm the spirits of frightened students anticipating the dreaded project presentation. Additionally, the student presentations are quite frequently inconsistent, lacking in organization, and rudimentary in nature.

METHODOLOGY

In order to fully understand the issue and to further develop course resources and teaching pedagogy, the help of two recently developed university resources were sought. The first resource was the Office of Quality Enhancement’s seminar on oral and written competencies.

The second resource was the services and supplements from the university's Speaking Center.

The Office of Quality Enhancement is a recent initiative developed due to the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS) Commission on Colleges *Principles of Accreditation* Core Requirement 2.12 that requires each institution to implement an acceptable Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP) that "includes an institutional process for identifying key issues emerging from institutional assessment and focuses on learning outcomes and/or the environment supporting student learning and accomplishing the mission of the institution" (Southern Association of Colleges and Schools, Commission on Colleges, 2010, p. 19). Learning outcomes in all areas of communication were established by the Office of Quality Enhancement, including ten (10) student learning outcomes in oral communication (see Figure 1). Additionally, a ten (10) week seminar, titled "*Finding a Voice: Improving Oral and Written Competencies*", was developed to introduce and educate faculty participants on writing and speaking evaluation techniques, as well as available student resources (The University of Southern Mississippi, Quality Enhancement Plan, 2006). During the seminar, several tools for the enhancement of speaking competencies were developed. The first tool was a *Speaking Guide for Interior Design* (see Figure 2) that illustrates the context in which interior design students utilize speaking assignments and describes a variety of interior design presentation types. The second tool was a *Speaking Evaluation Rubric* (see Figure 3), outlining grading criteria and providing qualitative descriptions of each grade level for each component. Additionally, resources were provided in the form of general prepared handouts from former participants and workshop instructors that could be integrated into course materials.

In addition to providing a seminar, the Office of Quality Enhancement developed interventions to enhance the oral and written competencies of students across the curriculum. One of the interventions is the newly developed Speaking Center. Available to all university students, faculty, and staff, the Speaking Center provides assistance for the development of speaking components in coursework, research presentations, and/or any other speaking activity. Resources provided by the Speaking Center include, but are not limited to, introductory tours for students, class speaking presentations, one-on-one skill development, video critique rooms, and handout

supplements. The extensive assortment of prepared handouts includes topics such as self evaluation guides, peer evaluation guides, basic speaking outline guides, and speaking tips. (The University of Southern Mississippi, Quality Enhancement Plan, 2006)

APPLICATION

In order to implement the newly developed speaking guidelines into the curriculum, a project was added to the end of a semester, separating the presentation portion of a semester long project, and allowing students proper time to develop a purposeful presentation development. The course project, previously divided into two (2) projects, was comprised of Project One (1), consisting of a concept board and preliminary project proposal, and Project Two (2), a final comprehensive project presentation book and verbal presentation. The project presentation book portion was separated from the verbal presentation portion in order to clearly define the distinct differences between the written presentation book format and the accompanying slide show format for the verbal presentation portion. The separation of the project verbal presentation portion of Project Two (2) into a Project Three (3) allowed students time to focus solely on the presentation aspects, rather than continuing to work on the interior design of the project.

Project Three (3) instructions (see Figure 4) outline each component for successful completion of the speaking requirement, including instructions pertaining to visual aids. Prior completion of the project deliverables in Project Two (2) allows students dedicated time to work through supplemental assignments designed to complete the steps of developing the presentation and enhance student speaking abilities. Speaking assignments (see Figure 5) include a preliminary outline, self evaluation, peer evaluation, and a scheduled, video recorded visit to the university's Speaking Center.

RESULTS

Students spent more time preparing for the speaking component and reported that they felt more confident due to preparedness. Overall student understanding of the speaking requirements increased, as demonstrated in higher aggregate project speaking scores. Individual results included increased abilities in the areas of verbal content, organization, language, context, vocal delivery, non-verbal delivery, and audio-visual presentations aids. Additionally, students communicated an overall

decreased speaking anxiety after completing the structured speaking assignments.

FUTURE IMPLICATIONS

Currently, the comparison of interior design student scores on public speaking anxiety are being evaluated utilizing the results from a pre-PRPSA (Personal Report of Public Speaking Anxiety) and a post-PRPSA data collection instrument. The pre-PRPSA and post-PRPSA data collection is currently implemented as an initiative to all University of Southern Mississippi Capstone courses, as required by the QEP (The University of Southern Mississippi, Quality Enhancement Plan, 2006). Similarly to the prior Project 3 and assignments, specific project directions and a series of assignments for oral communication have been furthered developed and implemented into the Capstone course. Furthermore, future studies of both qualitative and quantitative methods could ascertain ancillary methods for enhancement of speaking skills, reduction of speaking anxiety, and possibly, define essential components for inclusion into the interior design curriculum.

REFERENCES (APA)

- Emanuel, R. (2005). The case for fundamentals of oral communication. *Community College Journal of Research and Practice*, 29, 153-162. doi:10.1080/10668920490891638
- Southern Association of Colleges and Schools, Commission on Colleges. (2010). *The principles of accreditation: Foundations for quality enhancement* (4th ed.). Retrieved from <http://sacscoc.org/pdf/2010principlesofaccreditation.pdf>
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STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES IN ORAL COMMUNICATION

Content: Students will demonstrate the ability to develop and orally deliver content in which the central idea/purpose is clearly stated, the content is accurate and relevant, and credible support is provided.

Organization: Students will demonstrate the ability to organize and deliver presentations with an identifiable structure.

Language: Students will demonstrate the ability to deliver oral presentations that are free of serious errors in grammar, pronunciation, and word usage.

Adaptation to Audience and Context: Students will demonstrate the ability to adapt content and style to the audience and context within set time parameters.

Vocal Delivery: Students will be able to deliver presentations in which the rate, volume, and tone facilitate audience comprehension.

Nonverbal Delivery: Students will be able to deliver presentations in which eye contact, posture, attire, gestures, movement and facial expression enhance the presentation.

Communication Apprehension: Students will achieve reduced levels of communication apprehension.

Audio-Visual Aids: When using audio-visual aids, students will demonstrate the ability to develop and use audio-visual aids that are free of serious errors, legible, and used to enhance the presentation.

PowerPoint Presentation: When using PowerPoint, students will demonstrate the ability to use PowerPoint presentations that reflect a logical sequence, include an appropriate number of slides and graphics, and incorporate transitions and other stylistic effects that are used appropriately and to enhance the presentation.

Overall: Students will demonstrate overall proficiency in oral communication.

Figure 1. Student learning outcomes in oral communication identified by the University of Southern Mississippi Office of Quality Enhancement (The University of Southern Mississippi, Quality Enhancement Plan, 2006, p. 21).

Figure 2: Speaking Guide for Interior Design

Speaking Guide for Interior Design

Speaking in the discipline of interior design can vary dramatically depending on the context or objective. Topics of speaking may include project proposals and/or presentations, conceptual ideas for designs, informational presentations for products and/or processes, and intellectual discussions of theories, standards, and design-related law. Presentations can be formal or informal, as well as vary in length.

Speaking situations can range from very formal to very informal. Interior design students and professionals have to be able to discuss design concepts that are very abstract in nature, without particular reference to any design solution, in order to convey the thought process and design intent for the aesthetics of a project. For example, color could be described as warm or bright, but not as a specific color name. Project proposals and/or presentations, although somewhat conceptual, will often include very technical discussions of product specifications, design standards, and or federal or state regulations and codes. Careful outlining of speaking content can help organize technical information and eliminate confusion.

The typical audience for interior design speaking can also vary dramatically. Audience for the interior design student is most often the professor of a course. However, accreditation requires some formal presentations to clientele, or persons from other disciplines. For the design professional, the typical audience can vary from a layperson to other interior designers, in both formal and informal settings. In speaking to a layperson, the individual(s) may or may not have prior knowledge of interior design practices or terminology. Therefore, speaking components may be more explanatory in nature, with an emphasis on accurate language and definition of technical terminology. Speaking opportunities with other professionals tend to be concise and direct, with embellishments reserved for technical information or applications of interest.

Interior design speaking can be compared to other disciplines within the university. In most situations, the student or professional is ultimately selling ideas or information, whether literally or figuratively. However, clear instructions for approach, organization, and content, even in general terms, is easily adapted and a necessary component for effective speaking within interior design or any other discipline.

Figure 3: Speaking Evaluation Rubric

Speaking Evaluation Rubric – The Project Presentation

For each category, multiply the noted weight value times the appropriate grade (1-4).

| | Grade Weight | Distinguished 4 | Proficient 3 | Marginal 2 | Minimal 1 |
|----------------------------------|--------------|--|---|---|---|
| Content | 4 | Central idea/purpose is vividly stated; content is accurate, thorough, and directly on point; strong support is provided for each assertion. | Central idea/purpose is clearly stated; content is accurate and relevant; credible support is provided for each assertion. | Central idea/purpose is stated; content is accurate but not always relevant; support is offered but inadequate for some assertions. | Central idea/purpose is not stated; content is erroneous or irrelevant; support for assertions is largely absent. |
| Organization | 4 | Identifiable structure is presented in a purposeful, interesting, and effective sequence and remains focused. | Identifiable structure is present and consistently executed with few statements out of place. | Identifiable structure is present but inconsistently executed; may contain several statements out of place and occasionally deviate from topic. | Little or no structure present. Presentation is confusing to the audience; no logical sequence of ideas; frequently off topic. |
| Language | 2 | Presentation is free of errors in grammar and pronunciation; word choice aids clarity and vividness. | Presentation is free of serious errors in grammar, pronunciation, and/or word usage. | Isolated errors in grammar, pronunciation, and/or word choice reduce clarity and credibility. | Grammar, pronunciation, and/or word choice are severely deficient. |
| Adaptation to Audience & Context | 2 | Content and/or style are consistently appropriate and targeted to audience and context. Presentation makes full, effective use of time and stays within time parameters. | Content and/or style are consistently appropriate to the audience, and/or context. Presentation meets set time parameters. | Content and/or style are occasionally inappropriate to the audience and/or context. Presentation falls slightly outside set time parameters. | Content and/or style are frequently inappropriate to the audience and/or context. Presentation falls well outside set time parameters. |
| Vocal Delivery | 2 | Vocal delivery is varied and dynamic. Speech rate, volume, and tone enhance listener interest and understanding. | Vocal delivery is clear and distinct. Rate, volume, and tone facilitate audience comprehension. | Vocal delivery is audible. Rate, volume, or speech disruptions only occasionally distract from audience comprehension. | Vocal delivery is too soft to hear, too fast to understand and/or long, unintended silences and speech disruptions (repetitions; filled pauses, e.g., "um") frequently distract audience. |
| Nonverbal Delivery | 2 | Most or all of the following apply: Eye contact, posture, attire, gestures, movement or facial expressions enhance the presentation. | Some but not all of the following apply: Eye contact, posture, attire, gestures, movement or facial expressions enhance the presentation. | Eye contact, posture, attire, gestures, movement, and facial expressions neither enhance nor hinder effectiveness significantly. | Eye contact, posture, attire, gestures, movement, and/or facial expressions are inappropriate and significantly distracting. |

Figure 4: Project Description

Project 3: Musical Studio – The Project Presentation

Points
 #% of Final Grade
 Due: [Date]

Project Presentation Content

Each presentation will discuss the following components:

- The Client
- Concept / Inspiration Music
- Translation of music to interior materials and furnishings
- Organization and special features of the space

Presentation Criteria

Each presentation should last approximately 6-8 minutes, and allow 2-4 minutes for questions. Make sure to format material toward a mixed audience of laypersons, teachers, and/or professionals, and provide concise and exact language.

Presentation Materials

Each student will create a PowerPoint presentation that is visually cohesive with the Concept and Project Proposal Boards (Project 1) and the Project Book (Project 2). Quality of illustrations, graphs, charts, and overall professionalism of the presentation materials will be evaluated.

Materials should be visually coordinated and easy to read/follow and include the following project components:

- Concept Statement
- Inspiration Music (Playing in Background)
- Concept Board
- Floor Plan
- Individual Room Floor Plans
- Perspective Views
- FF&E
- Notations of Special Features
- Video Walkthrough of Revit Model

Creating the PowerPoint

Create a folder on your computer titled "ID ### Your Name". Place all project files into the folder, including the concept music and video walkthrough. Make a copy of the Project Book PowerPoint file. Modify the PowerPoint presentation to be suitable for class presentation with music and walkthrough video (see below for example storyboard). Remove table of contents, schedules, or other unnecessary items. Make sure to insert the music and video walkthrough into the PowerPoint directly from the "ID ### Your Name" folder. Then copy the entire folder to the CD/DVD.

Presentation Attire & Preparation

Please dress professional and make sure all presentation materials work properly on the provided presentation equipment!

Figure 5: Speaking Assignments

Project 3: Musical Studio – Assignments

Assignment P1: Preliminary Presentation Outline

#pts.

Due: [Date]

Develop an outline of the presentation using the Basic Outline Format guide sheet and the Citing Sources guide sheet. Note each presentation material needed for each component of the outline. Submit a copy of the completed outline.

Assignment P2: First Delivery / Self Evaluation

#pts.

Due: [Date]

After completing the first draft of the presentation outline, use the General Tips guide sheet and the Delivery guide sheet to enhance the presentation. Then use the Self Evaluation guide sheet to check the organization and content. Submit a copy of the Self Evaluation.

Assignment P3: Second Delivery / Peer Evaluation

#pts.

Due: [Date]

After completing the second draft of the presentation outline, present the project to a peer. Have the peer use the Speaking Evaluation Rubric and the Presentation Critique to properly evaluate the presentation and the content of the project presentation. Submit a copy of both evaluation forms.

Assignment P4: Speaking Center

#pts.

Due: [Date]

After completing the third draft of the presentation outline, meet with a consultant at the Speaking Center to further review and develop the content/delivery. Have a completed participation form sent to the instructor **and** a link to the video. Make an appointment as soon as possible to assure availability!