

Studying Impromptu Speaking through Scholarship of Teaching & Learning

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Design & Results

Background

Impromptu speaking (speaking with minimal preparation) is a critical public speaking skill that can be used in a variety of professional and public settings. This study draws from two previous investigations of this topic. Yale (2014) examined how frequency of impromptu speeches could improve student comfort and Rumbough (1999) compared ungraded and graded speeches. This current study focused on the impact of graded speeches on student comfort.

Methods

This study used two sections of an Advanced Public Speaking Class.

Participants completed the Self Perceived Communication Competence (SPCC) (McCroskey & McCroskey, 1988) on the first (pretest) and last day (posttest) of class.

- 12 item scale of communication situations
- Participants rate perceived communication competence on a scale of 1-100
- 100 represents highest self-perceived communication competences.
- Scale reliability of .85 or higher (Cronbach's Alpha).

References

- McCroskey, J. C., & McCroskey, L. L. (1988). Self-report as an approach to measuring communication competence. *Communication Research Reports*, 5, 108-113.
- Rumbough, T. B. (1999). The effects of impromptu exercises on reducing trait and situational communication apprehension. *New Jersey Journal of Communication*, 7, 206-215.
- Yale, R. N. (2014). The impromptu gauntlet: An experimental strategy for developing lasting communication skills. *Business and Professional Communication Quarterly*, 77, 281-296. doi: 10.1177/2329490614537874

Research Design:

- Both groups delivered six impromptu speeches
- Both groups received feedback based on a rubric
- Control group (n = 22) assigned points based on performance.
- Experimental group (n = 21) assigned points for completing speech.

Data was reliable (Cronbach's Alpha):

- Control Pretest .78, Posttest .88
- Experimental Pretest .94, Posttest .94

RQ: To what extent do ungraded impromptu speeches increase student self perceived comfort in public speaking?

Results

For the purposes of this study, two measures of the SPCC were reported.

1. Self Perceived Communication Competence (combination of scores of stranger, acquaintance, & friend):
 - Pretests
 - Control 77.22 (\bar{x}), 23.43 (SD)
 - Experimental 82.46 (\bar{x}), 10.56 (SD)
 - Posttests
 - Control 90.40 (\bar{x}), 6.11 (SD)
 - Experimental 92.11 (\bar{x}), 4.44 (SD)
2. Public
 - Pretests
 - Control .76 (\bar{x}), 23.35 (SD)
 - Experimental .80 (\bar{x}), 11.84 (SD)
 - Posttests
 - Control .89 (\bar{x}) 7.80 (SD)
 - Experimental .91 (\bar{x}) 6.98 (SD)

Discussion

A number of observations can be drawn from this study:

Both groups demonstrated increased self-perceived level of comfort

- Control group had a bigger increase in mean scores
 - SPCC - 13.18 point increase
 - Public - 13 point increase
- Experimental
 - SPCC - 9.65 point increase
 - Public -11 point increase
- Both groups benefited from giving six separate impromptu speeches over the semester.
 - Classroom observations suggest improvement in both sections
 - Quicker preparation time for speeches.
 - Many participants indicated on SEIs that impromptu speeches were the most helpful part of the class.

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