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ABSTRACT

This booklet describes how to set up a multisection college-level course in basic communication skills, built around the concept of "learning activities" conducted within a "learning center." The ideas presented are based on four years of experience in operating such a course at the University of Hawaii. The first section of the booklet discusses key concepts that have been operationally defined for the learning center at Hawaii; it considers the selection of specific communication skills to be emphasized and the development of learning activities; and it examines details of operation and desirable course outcomes. The second section describes objectives, procedures, and evaluation methods for 16 learning activities designed for use in a communication learning center. The activities teach a wide range of communication skills, including those skills involved in seeking and giving information, working cooperatively with others, writing clear instructions, and making oral presentations. (GW)

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A Learning Center Approach to Basic Communication Courses

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Foreword

The Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC) is a national information system developed by the U.S. Office of Education and now sponsored by the National Institute of Education (NIE). It provides ready access to descriptions of exemplary programs, research and development efforts, and related information useful in developing more effective educational programs.

Through its network of specialized centers or clearinghouses, each of which is responsible for a particular educational area, ERIC acquires, evaluates, abstracts, and indexes current significant information and lists this information in its reference publications.

The ERIC system has already made available—through the ERIC Document Reproduction Service—much informative data, including all federally funded research reports since 1956. However, if the findings of specific educational research are to be intelligible to teachers and applicable to teaching, considerable bodies of data must be reevaluated, focused, translated, and molded into an essentially different context. Rather than resting at the point of making research reports readily accessible, NIE has directed the separate ERIC clearinghouses to commission from recognized authorities information analysis papers in specific areas.

In addition, as with all federal educational information efforts, ERIC has as one of its primary goals bridging the gap between educational theory and actual classroom practices. One method of achieving that goal is the development by the ERIC Clearinghouse on Reading and Communication Skills (ERIC/RCS) of a series of sharply focused booklets based on concrete educational needs. Each booklet provides teachers with the best educational theory and/or research on a limited topic. It also presents descriptions of classroom activities which are related to the described theory and assists the teacher in putting this theory into practice.

This idea is not unique. Several educational journals and many commercial textbooks provide teachers with similar aids. The ERIC/RCS booklets are unusual in their sharp focus on an educational need and their blend of sound academic theory with tested classroom practices. And they have been developed because of the increasing requests from teachers to provide this kind of service.

Topics for these booklets are recommended by the ERIC/RCS National Advisory Committee. Suggestions for topics to be considered by the Committee should be directed to the Clearinghouse.

A Note about This Booklet

The learning center approach emphasizes individualized instruction and performance of specific skills at selected levels of mastery. The approach described in this booklet has effectively met the needs of students at the University of Hawaii. However, readers are cautioned that, while the Hawaii Learning Center illustrates an appropriate concept for basic communication courses throughout the United States, they may wish to select communication skills and to design criterion levels tailored to the needs of their own students. One other caution: communication skills emphasized in the Hawaii Learning Center do not reflect an SCA-endorsed basic course curriculum. Such an officially endorsed curriculum, were it to exist, might negate desirable attempts to develop individualized instructional approaches. Basic course instructors are encouraged to experiment with the approach used by the faculty at Hawaii, adapting it to the needs of learners. In summary, this booklet is viewed as an example of, rather than a prescription for, a learning center approach to communication instruction.

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Theory

Introduction to the Learning Center

The growth in college enrollment has brought with it some special problems for the performance course in basic communication skills. The goal of such courses is for students to develop skills through planning, presenting, and receiving evaluations of their communication efforts. The most common approach has been to divide total course enrollment into sections with twenty to thirty students each and to conduct the course with lectures, textbook readings, student presentations, and examinations. This format provides some opportunity for attention to individual student needs, but it has two apparent limitations. One is that the amount of active, real performance time per student seldom exceeds an hour during an entire semester or term. The other concerns the problem of standardizing instruction across a number of sections taught by faculty members with a variety of levels of experience and areas of specialization. High control over procedures stifles creativity and individuality for both instructors and students. Minimal control and standardization of schedules and assignments may result in a number of different courses being taught under the same course title. Difficulties in this traditional approach have been heightened by the financial plight of many colleges, which has resulted in pressure to reduce instructional costs. A further complication is the increasing diversity of student populations, with accompanying needs for individualized instruction. Experiments with computer-based methods and videotape laboratories have been encouraging, but this high-technology approach is beyond the financial reach of many colleges.

In the context of these problems, the learning center approach to the traditional communication skills course was designed for the purpose of providing individualized instruction and high levels of participation, while reducing the total cost per student.

Toward that end, this booklet describes how to set up a multisection course in basic communication skills built around the concept of "learning activities" conducted within a "learning center." The ideas presented are based on four years of experience in operating such a course for several thousand students at the University of Hawaii.

Four Operational Definitions

The following key concepts have been operationally defined for the learning center at Hawaii. Readers should note that other skills might be selected by other centers.

Communication Skill: A person's ability to speak and write, or to behave nonverbally, so that the outcome of the effort is immediately apparent. This outcome can be compared to the intended outcome to evaluate its successfulness. If success is not demonstrated, another approach may be used.

Communication Success: The attainment of a specific level of performance on a communication skill. This approach is like the measurement system used in golf, tennis, or bowling, where the score is a measure of behavioral success. A criterion level tells the student/player the "winning" score for an activity.

Learning Center: A regular classroom accommodating about forty students, assigned to the course for a block of time each day. While some departments may have video-tape recorders, audio booths, and the like, these are not necessary, unless activities requiring them are developed. A good analogy to the learning center is the food-service cafeteria found on most campuses. A cafeteria is open at posted hours each day. Students enter it at their convenience and select from a variety of items which vary in price and substance. They leave when they are satisfied, but may return again that day, or any other day. The cafeteria has a manager and staff responsible for preparation and operation. In the learning center, there is also a daily "menu" of learning activities. Particular items are available only at scheduled times during the day. However, instead of paying for the activities, the student is reimbursed in points for successful completion of activities. If the student fails to meet the designated level of success, he or she is free to return for that or any other activity. Cost to the student is time spent, and this time may be invested during those periods that the center is open. When the student is satisfied, usually by attaining a point total which translates into a desired letter grade, he or she has completed the course and does not return

to the center. There are no lectures, textbooks, or final examinations. The entire emphasis is upon practice and demonstration of skill development.

Learning Activities: The activities or selections of the center. Some are in heavy demand and are repeated frequently in the schedule; less-popular activities are offered less often. Some can be attempted once (or more than once) during a class period. Others may require from two to four class periods during the course of a week. A convenient guideline is to assign point values to activities on a "one class period—ten point" basis. This makes possible a grading system in which 450 points equal an A, 400 equal a B, 350 are needed for a C, and 300 generate a D. Thus, a student earning an A would have spent a minimum of forty-five classroom hours in the center. Very likely, more than the minimum time will have been spent in earning each grade, because the student will not be successful in demonstrating mastery of each of the skills on the first attempt.

Selecting Communication Skills

Activities are based on a list of skills developed and accepted by a department's faculty. For example, an English department might place more emphasis on writing and vocabulary development, while a speech department might emphasize oral communication skills. Planners will need to establish standards for determining whether a learning activity is suitable for inclusion in the learning center. The following evaluation standards, for which much credit must be extended to Robert Mager (Mager and McCann, 1961), are illustrated by examples drawn from the first exercise described in the practice section, "Getting Acquainted":

1. The learning activity must involve the performance of a communication behavior which demonstrates the specified skill.
Example: Demonstrate a close relationship between exchange of personal information and "being remembered."
2. The behavioral skill must be described in such a way that the learner knows in advance what he or she should achieve. An observer should know when the communication skill is performed successfully. In short, the skill must be operationally defined.

Example: Operationally define "being remembered" specifically in terms of others' ability to recall the learner's first and last names and two personally descriptive words.

3. The learning activity must contain a statement of how well the student must perform in order to be successful. This standard is, therefore, the *criterion*.

Example: Specify a point system, such as one point for recalling first name, one for last name, and one for each descriptive word. Since 100 percent success is unlikely, the criterion, or necessary total score, should be lower. The criterion for an activity must be set arbitrarily or by pretesting and then maintained or modified, as a function of experience.

4. The activity should not rely on the judgments of others (teacher, critic, majority vote) to determine success, failure, or quality of performance.

Example: Determine performance level solely by the computation of pre-established points.

Developing Learning Activities

The course planners should apply these four standards to each item on their list of desired communication skills and discard those skills which do not meet the standards. Planners will need to assess the number of class periods required to complete one trial of each activity and establish the appropriate point value for success. For example, the activity used previously as an illustration can be completed in one fifty-minute period and would be assigned ten points. The only materials needed for it are a blank piece of paper, or a duplicated form with numbers and lines for each participant. If a multisection course employing traditional instruction is operating, the activities can be pretested for a semester in these classes before the learning center is opened.

How many activities are enough to open the center? This is primarily a function of how many course sections are to be served. If, for example, there are ten sections of a course which would normally meet for three hours weekly, the center would be open for thirty hours, corresponding to the total periods the course sections would have met. However, offerings might consist entirely of one-period activities with additional "packages" requiring two, three, or four periods for training, learning, and testing. With this variety, from ten to fifteen activities would be adequate to supply a thirty-hour weekly schedule. Each activity might be repeated at least six times during the semester to accommodate both students taking it for the first time and those who wish to repeat it. More difficult activities, with a lower rate of success per trial, as well as those which attract large enrollments, should be offered even more frequently. Another factor enters into

schedule-making. Because students may complete the course whenever their grade goals are reached, a majority of students is likely to have exited by about midsemester. After that, the hours of operation can be reduced to accommodate the declining number of students, but a minimal schedule must be retained through the last day of classes to accommodate tardy and unsuccessful participants.

Operating Details

Orientation. Because both the learning center itself and the learning activities required are probably unfamiliar ideas to students, the first week of the course should be conducted like a traditional classroom, with students registered for the various sections meeting at scheduled times with their instructors. This week is for the purpose of informing students about what will happen, distributing schedules and activity descriptions, and answering questions. A desirable feature is a "check out" examination over the information provided in the orientation class, which students must pass at a 90 percent level before they are permitted to participate in the learning center. Although the orientation class ends the formal existence of the classroom sections, the instructor retains the responsibility of issuing final grades for the students in assigned sections at the end of the semester.

Faculty role: The faculty of the department or unit will be involved in several ways.

1. A development committee of three or four persons should be established with overall responsibility for creation and operation of the course.
2. The whole faculty should be involved in generating a list of communication skills for potential development into learning activities. They should understand the restraints imposed by center operation, activities, and criterion levels.
3. The development committee should determine a final list of communication skills and develop activities, invent necessary forms, and obtain materials and equipment.
4. The committee should obtain any necessary administrative and faculty clearances and permissions in advance. (For example, some schools may require a final examination or specify that students must attend class throughout the term to receive credit.) The committee should also request

that all sections of the course be scheduled in the same room, using continuous blocks of time, when the operation is ready to begin.

5. A course chairperson should be appointed with responsibility for staff training, materials inventory, and day-to-day supervision.
6. The instructors should be trained in the course philosophy and operation and in the supervision of assigned activities, in preparation for the role of monitor. Each activity should have one or more "specialists," so that continuity may be maintained if the staff changes from semester to semester.
7. Once the course is underway, the development committee should continue to function as a policy-making group and as evaluators of the operation.

After activities are developed and procedures defined for each activity, it is necessary that each activity be run according to the specified instructions. The activity monitor is a faculty person who understands activities well enough to distribute materials and to give instructions to students in accordance with the proper procedures for the activity. A department may wish to assign some activity monitoring to upper-division students as part of a class on communication learning or teacher preparation. Once an activity has been perfected and optimized so that it runs predictably, it can be managed by either faculty or advanced students. A set of "monitor's instructions" should be written for an activity after it is perfected. These instructions provide a step-by-step explanation of the activity that any instructor can follow. (See the appendix for an example of monitor's instructions for an activity.)

Recordkeeping. An orderly system for keeping student records, with cross-checks for accuracy, is essential. In its simplest form, this can consist of "point certificates" indicating student name, activity number, points earned, and date, which are completed in duplicate by activity monitors. The original goes to the orientation instructor and the copy to the student. If enrollment is large and resources are available, recordkeeping can be computerized. The monitor then completes an "activity point recording sheet" which includes student codes, activity number, and points earned. The information is entered on cards and the computer prepares a weekly printout showing each student's achievement. The end-of-semester printout is used by the orientation instructor for preparing the final grade reports.

Course Outcomes

If the learning center has functioned as described, the following statements can be made at the end of each semester or term:

1. Each student was actively involved in developing a variety of communication skills during at least forty-five class hours (as contrasted with a traditional speech fundamentals class, in which the student might have performed for less than an hour during the entire semester, with intervals of inactivity while classmates presented their material).
2. Each student was able to tailor the course to his or her own individual needs and interests by selecting from a variety of activities (as contrasted with an instructional method where all students complete all course assignments devoted to a small number of communication skills).
3. Each student proceeded at his or her own pace in order to reach established criteria for success. No one was penalized by a low grade or for minimal performance on an assignment, and everyone could repeat assignments until success was achieved. Each student was allowed to exit the course when his or her grade goal had been reached.
4. Each student knew in advance what was expected and that success would be measured objectively and independently of any factor unrelated to performance.
5. Each student had the experience of being assigned goals and of having to invent and test strategies and techniques for reaching those goals.

Practice

In this section, the reader will find descriptions of sixteen learning activities designed for use in a community learning center. Some can be conducted without preparation of special materials, equipment, or forms. Others require some advance preparation of materials and equipment. Model forms and descriptions of needed equipment are provided for most of these exercises. Study of the model forms can assist developers in writing materials to be used for training and for testing of skills.

Two additional comments about the practice exercises may be useful. One concerns the physical arrangement of the room. As indicated in the theory section, the learning center must be located in a room with movable chairs, so that seats can be arranged in ways appropriate to the activities. Except at the beginning of each activity, when the monitor is giving instructions, conventional "theater-style" seating is not used. The various configurations are described for each exercise, where applicable. The second comment is that some activities have carefully timed trials. In these activities, all participants begin working at a signal from the monitor and stop on command usually to change partners. Time limits are also indicated in the descriptions.

1. GETTING ACQUAINTED [20 Points]

Objective: To develop strategies for being remembered in an informal social group.

Description: Each student will have forty minutes to communicate to as many other persons in the class as possible his or her first name, last name, and two descriptive phrases of one to three words each, concerning such things as occupations, psychological traits, attitudes, or the like. No physical descriptions or intimate revelations may be included. Students stand and move freely about the room in their efforts to contact as many others as possible during the established time period. Usually, the noise level is high, as it might be at an animated social

gathering. This interchange continues until the last ten minutes of class time, when the monitor asks the students to be seated. Then, the monitor calls on students randomly to stand, one at a time, for fifteen seconds each. All the seated students write, from memory, the four descriptive items communicated by the standing student. For this purpose, the monitor may distribute a prepared form or students may make their own from blank sheets of paper. This process continues until all students have stood to be recognized.

Evaluation: The written answers are checked against each student's chosen descriptions for correctness. Since the goal is for the student to be remembered, a person scores one point for each item correctly recalled by another. Perfect recall of one student by another would, therefore, yield four points. Each student who is remembered by a class average of 70 percent has reached criterion, or achieved "success" by established standards.

2. TECHNICAL INFORMATION PROCESSING [50 Points]

Objective: To gain skills in communicating unfamiliar technical information in such a way that it can be recalled and repeated by others and to become proficient in listening to and accurately repeating technical information.

Description: As the starting point of this activity, each student will prepare, outside of class, a list of sixty technical words. (A technical word is defined as one which is probably used less than twice a week by the average person in social conversation.) This is done on a form, distributed by the monitor or made by the student, numbered from one to twenty down the left margin of a sheet of paper. After each number are three blanks into which technical words can be written. Groups of three words are drawn from the same specialized field—all three should make sense if used together in a sentence. For example, an entry on a list of mathematics terms might look like this:

1. *normality* *factorial* *binomial*

The activity is done in groups of three students: two participants and an evaluator. The two participants sit, facing each other, about five feet apart. The evaluator sits midway between the two but slightly to one side, in the manner of a tennis spectator. The first participant selects

a group of three words and says a six- to ten-word sentence including them. Using the example given, a sentence might be "Factorial and binomial are tests of data normality." The second participant must respond in one of three ways: by indicating that the sentence does not fit the rules; by indicating that he or she is not able to repeat the sentence, although it fits the rules; or by attempting to repeat the sentence.

The repeated sentence must not only contain the words but must also be repeated with the same pitch, emphasis, and loudness. If the evaluator believes that the sentences were worded and expressed the same way, he or she marks the participant's evaluation form accordingly. If not satisfied, the evaluator indicates a content error, or an error in delivery. If the effort is not judged to be an accurate duplication, the exchange must be repeated until the evaluator indicates success. The first participant introduces a new sentence, using the second group of words from his or her list, and the exercise continues. After fifteen minutes, roles are exchanged.

Evaluation: Criterion is nine successive duplications of sentences in the role of repeater without an error. If an error is made, the repeater must begin again. While it is possible for a student to reach criterion within two class periods, the activity is valued at fifty points because of the out-of-class work required in preparing the technical word lists.

3. WORD INTELLIGIBILITY [20 Points]

Objective: To develop skill in expressing commonly used words so that they can be accurately received and recognized in print and to increase awareness of words which have different meanings but may be pronounced the same in regional subdialects. (The emphasis in this exercise is on being understood, not on an adherence to any elite standard for pronunciation.)

Description: Each student will perform with eight different partners on a word intelligibility task. Each person has a form with columns headed either "read this list" or "respond to this list." One trial of this task consists of one person reading a word from the task form to a second person. If the second person believes the spoken word is the same as one of those printed on his or her form, the item is marked by both persons. If the

response is negative, the item is left blank. The partners alternate reading and responding. The activity monitor times each trial and allows twenty-five seconds for its completion. For example, the first partner might see the word "thick" on his or her "read" list and pronounce the word. The second would look at his or her form under "respond" and see the words "tick, thick, sick, pick," would decide whether the spoken word appeared in this group and, if so, would circle it. At the end of the trials, the forms are checked and each correct response earns one point for both participants. As part of the development process, faculty members should identify words which have similar pronunciations but which have different meanings in the particular area, region, or subdialect of the speakers where the learning center is located.

Evaluation: Criterion for this activity is a total of at least fifty-eight correctly marked items while acting both as pronouncer and as identifier.

4. SENTENCE PROCESSING [10 Points]

Objective: To encourage the ability to detect similarities and differences in the meaning of sentences which arise from variations in syntax or structure. (See the appendix for a sample of monitor's procedures for this activity.)

Description: The activity is preceded by instruction in determining differences in the intended meaning of sentences based on syntax and word context. Each student then performs with eight other partners, one at a time. Each trial consists of one partner reading a sentence from his or her form. The other partner checks a second form for the sentence printed there and if, in that person's judgment, the two sentences mean "about the same thing," assigns a check mark. If it appears to mean a "different thing," the space is left blank. The monitor times and announces thirty-five second intervals, which is the time allowable per item. Partners then exchange roles.

Evaluation: Criterion is a total score of at least forty-eight correct responses, operating in the roles of both speaker and receiver.

5. GIVING AND RECEIVING INFORMATION [30 Points]

Objective: To improve skill in seeking and giving information by asking and answering questions.

SENTENCE PROCESSING

Person A

- The rabbit was caught by the boy.
- His friend likes to make jokes.
- The fisherman wades in the stream.
- Cheese sandwiches do not please me.
- His wife is happy.
- Please return soon.
- One, two, three, stop!
- I published this letter to the editor.
- My friend writes stories for the newspaper.
- I have read my book more than once.
- She is not good to look at.
- His good taste in shirts is well-known.
- She chooses her clothing well.
- He computed the mean.
- Please do not overcook my steak.
- I drive a vintage sedan.
- The shirt was a melange of color.
- I do not believe that a man ever climbed that mountain.
- To say that people interact is to suggest a two-way flow of influences.
- The students' classes were highly related.

Person B

- The boy caught a rabbit.
- His friend is a joker.
- The fisherman is in his boat.
- I like cheese sandwiches.
- He has a happy wife.
- Do come again.
- One, two, three, go!
- This letter to the editor is mine.
- My friend writes letters to me.
- My book has been read three times.
- She is a pretty girl.
- He wears attractive shirts.
- She is well dressed.
- He is mean.
- I like my steak rare.
- I drive a white, four-door sedan.
- The shirt was a nice medley of color.
- It is too much to believe that a man could climb that mountain.
- The term interaction suggests a reciprocal influence.
- The students' classes were highly integrated.

Description: Each student participates with three different partners, using sets of oral interview forms. Each item consists of a series of five similar abstract shapes, only one of which appears on the other form. For the next item, this pattern is reversed, with the five shapes appearing on the second form. For the third item, the pattern is again reversed. The individual with the series of five shapes asks questions of his or her partner in the attempt to discover which of these appears on the partner's form. Questions can only be answered by a response of "yes" or "no." When the questioner believes that he or she has discovered which item appears on the other form, the guess is entered on both partners' forms. Time allowed per item is one minute, as announced by the monitor. When the exercise is completed, each student moves to a new partner and repeats the procedure using a different version of the form.

Evaluation: The forms are checked for correctness, with credit for a correct item going to both partners. Criterion is a total score of twenty correct items from three trials.

ORAL INTERVIEW

Person A.

2
 A A A B B
P
 M M M N N
Z
I I I Y Y
 3
C C C E E
 K I
D D D V V
3
 Z G G G Z
D

Person B.

2 Z Q O O
 A
B B P P P
 M
 G G Z Z Z
Y
3 3 T T T
 E I
A A K | K | K
V
 3 T T 3 I
Z
D V D V D

6. ORAL INTERCHANGE [Points]

Objective: To develop skills in working cooperatively with a partner. The task is, again, to pool information to complete a task.

Description: In this task, partners have forms with identical lists consisting of "trigrams"—sequences of three-letter nonsense words, three-digit numbers, or a combination of letters and numbers. Each also has three rules for the acceptability of trigrams. All six rules must be applied in order to determine whether a trigram is acceptable. Using any strategy, other than showing one another their rules or exchanging forms, partners must discover as many trigrams which conform to all six rules as they can within one minute. Each partner notes those which he or she believes are acceptable.

Evaluation: A correctly marked trigram earns a point for each person; an incorrectly marked one deducts a point. Criterion is a total score of at least twenty-six correctly marked trigrams, earned while working with three partners. (Instructors recognize that abilities will vary. Therefore, assignment is randomized throughout, so that chances are minimal of getting the three least or the three most adept individuals as partners.)

ORAL INTERCHANGE

Person A

1. No group contains an R.
2. If the middle letter is U, one of the other letters is T.
3. If one letter is L, another letter must be A.

<input type="checkbox"/> TUC	<input type="checkbox"/> TAC
<input type="checkbox"/> LIA	<input type="checkbox"/> ERA
<input type="checkbox"/> GGE	<input type="checkbox"/> BUT
<input type="checkbox"/> TIF	<input type="checkbox"/> BAC
<input type="checkbox"/> ERO	<input type="checkbox"/> OGA
<input type="checkbox"/> TUB	<input type="checkbox"/> BOS
<input type="checkbox"/> TAB	<input type="checkbox"/> GUH
<input type="checkbox"/> YOM	<input type="checkbox"/> YAL
<input type="checkbox"/> DLO	<input type="checkbox"/> LLA
<input type="checkbox"/> NIB	<input type="checkbox"/> POH

Person B

1. No two letters are the same.
2. The trigram spelled backwards is an English word.
3. If any letter is a B, the group does not contain an A.

<input type="checkbox"/> TUC	<input type="checkbox"/> TAC
<input type="checkbox"/> LIA	<input type="checkbox"/> ERA
<input type="checkbox"/> GGE	<input type="checkbox"/> BUT
<input type="checkbox"/> TIF	<input type="checkbox"/> BAC
<input type="checkbox"/> ERO	<input type="checkbox"/> OGA
<input type="checkbox"/> TUB	<input type="checkbox"/> BOS
<input type="checkbox"/> TAB	<input type="checkbox"/> GUH
<input type="checkbox"/> YOM	<input type="checkbox"/> YAL
<input type="checkbox"/> DLO	<input type="checkbox"/> LLA
<input type="checkbox"/> NIB	<input type="checkbox"/> POH

7. ORAL INSTRUCTIONS [10 Points]

Objective: To develop strategies for working with another person to accomplish a simple task, to demonstrate the importance of feedback in oral communication, and to promote selective listening.

Description: Each student will perform with three different partners. The monitor will assign the students to groups of three and give each group two identical sets of eight to ten small wooden objects in a variety of sizes and shapes. A simple erector set or a child's put-together toy, two for each group, is ideal; pieces cut from cardboard or wood may be substituted. One student, in the role of evaluator, will select five of the objects from one set and arrange them on a desk top at which the second student is seated in the role of "source." The third person, as receiver, is seated back-to-back with the source and cannot see which objects are selected or how they are arranged. The source must then give oral directions to enable the receiver to correctly select and arrange the five objects. Time allotted per trial is one minute. Roles are rotated every twelve minutes to give each of the students an opportunity to assume all three roles.

Evaluation: A trial is scored by assigning one point for each object correctly selected and one point for each one correctly positioned. Each point awarded is credited to both source and receiver. Criterion is a total score of twenty-six points, earned with three different partners.

8. SIMPLE WRITTEN INSTRUCTIONS [10 Points]

Objective: To improve skills in writing clear and effective instructions and to demonstrate the importance of "empathy," or anticipating a reader's needs.

Description: This activity is similar to "Oral Instructions" except that both partners are given assignments at the same time by the evaluator, who selects three objects for one and the same three for the other but arranges them differently on each partner's desk. Each partner then has three minutes to write instructions, using complete sentences and no diagrams, on how to arrange the objects on his or her desk. At the end of the allotted time, both sets of instructions are scanned by the evaluator to be sure they are in sentences and contain no diagrams. Each partner then has seventy-five seconds to read the

instructions and arrange the objects. When a trial is completed, new partners are chosen and the activity proceeds until each person has worked with six partners.

Evaluation: One point is scored for each object correctly placed, in the opinion of the evaluator, and awarded to both writer and arranger. Criterion is a total score of fifteen points with six different partners.

9. COMPLEX WRITTEN INSTRUCTIONS [10-40 Points]

Objective: To improve skills in writing instructions for more complex tasks and to improve rewriting skills through observation of others' responses.

Description: This activity is a logical progression from "Simple Written Instructions" and may be chosen by the student who seeks a mastery of instruction-writing beyond the simple object-arranging task. Each student will write instructions, without diagrams, that will enable another to assemble a complicated wooden puzzle. If this effort is successful, the student may then rewrite the instructions with the goal of reducing, by 25 percent, the amount of time needed for a different person to assemble the puzzle. A supply of wooden puzzles which consist of ten to fifteen interlocking pieces is needed. A panel of student volunteers first experiments with assembling the puzzles and with writing instructions in order to generate an "average" time needed for each puzzle. During the activity itself, three assemblers must use only the instructions the student has written to accomplish the task. The author watches but may not comment or assist.

Evaluation: Two out of three assemblers must complete the task in the previously established time. If they do, the author receives ten points. The writer may then revise the instructions based on his or her observations of the assemblers' progress. For a revision that generates a 25 percent reduction in assembly time, the writer receives an additional thirty points.

10. AFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION [10-30 Points]

Objective: To encourage the accurate communication of affects such as status, anxiety, and mood through voice, facial expression, and other nonverbal cues. This activity is especially valuable where students of various subcultures are present.

Description: Each student will perform with at least four others, one at a time, on an affect communication task. The task involves saying a simple sentence, such as "I want to see you now," in such a way as to convey relative status (superior, peer, subordinate), amity (like, neutral, dislike), and mood (serious, noncommittal, relaxed). On the task forms, these characteristics are given in pairs, so, for example, a student might be asked to convey that he or she is in a superior role and is relaxed, or that he or she is a peer and feels dislike. The speaker has eight seconds to say the standard phrase with the indicated pair of affects and to obtain identification of the affects from his or her partner. The roles of speaker and interpreter are then reversed. After a set of four items, students rotate and work with another partner on a different set of items. The procedure continues until a student has worked twice in each role.

Evaluation: For a correct identification, both the speaker and identifier receive a point. Criterion is a score of twelve correct out of sixteen items.

Person A

DYCOM LEVEL II EXAMINATION

Name _____

1. I am the superordinate, and I am nonchalant	1 2 3	1 2 3	2. My partner:	3 1 2	is my superordinate is my peer is my subordinate	2 1 3	is serious is nonchalant is playful
3. I dislike my partner, and I am the subordinate	1 2 3	1 2 3	4. My partner:	2 1 3	is serious is nonchalant is playful	4 2 3	likes me is noncommittal dislikes me
5. I am serious, and I like my partner	1 2 3	1 2 3	6. My partner:	1 3 2	is my superordinate is my peer is my subordinate	3 2 1	is serious is nonchalant is playful
7. I am noncommittal, and I am playful	1 2 3	1 2 3	8. My partner:	1 2 3	is my superordinate is my peer is my subordinate	1 2 3	is serious is nonchalant is playful
9. I am the superordinate, and I dislike my partner	1 2 3	1 2 3	10. My partner:	2 1 3	is my superordinate is my peer is my subordinate	2 1 2	likes me is noncommittal dislikes me
11. I like my partner, and we are peers	1 2 3	1 2 3	12. My partner:	3 2 1	is my superordinate is my peer is my subordinate	1 3 2	likes me is noncommittal dislikes me

Person B

DYCOM LEVEL II EXAMINATION

Name _____

2. I am playful, and we are peers	1 2 3	1 2 3	1. My partner:	2 3 1	is my superordinate is my peer is my subordinate	1 3 2	is serious is nonchalant is playful
4. I am noncommittal, and I am serious	1 2 3	1 2 3	3. My partner:	4 2 3	is my superordinate is my peer is my subordinate	2 1 3	likes me is noncommittal dislikes me
6. I am nonchalant, and I am the superordinate	1 2 3	1 2 3	5. My partner:	2 3 1	is serious is nonchalant is playful	2 3 1	likes me is noncommittal dislikes me
8. I am serious, and I am the subordinate	1 2 3	1 2 3	7. My partner:	2 1 3	is serious is nonchalant is playful	3 1 2	likes me is noncommittal dislikes me
10. I like my partner, and we are peers	1 2 3	1 2 3	9. My partner:	3 2 1	is my superordinate is my peer is my subordinate	1 3 2	likes me is noncommittal dislikes me
12. I dislike my partner, and the superordinate	1 2 3	1 2 3	11. My partner:	3 1 2	is my superordinate is my peer is my subordinate	2 3 1	likes me is noncommittal dislikes me

11. PERSONAL ATTITUDE PREDICTION [20-40 Points]

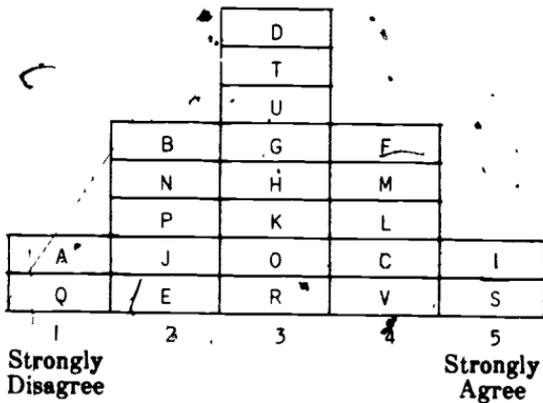
Objective: To refine and test the ability to predict the attitudes of an associate on local, national, and international issues of the day involving political, legal, and ethical matters. (This activity assumes that attitudes play a key role in interpersonal communication.)

Description: If close associates are enrolled in the course, they may work together as a pair. If not, an associate may be willing to come to class for the activity. Each student who selects this activity will be given a set of twenty-two previously prepared statements, each written separately on an index card. Examples of such statements are "Marijuana should be decriminalized," "Television violence encourages real violence," "Marriage is outmoded," "The United States should go to war to check the spread of Communism," and "Student government on this campus is a waste of time." After examining the statements, the student will sort them into five categories to express a range of attitudes from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree." Note this important point: the sorter is not describing how he or she feels about the matters on the cards, but rather how the close associate feels about them. That is, the sorter is predicting the attitudes of the friend and is making a "sort for the other." Meanwhile, the other individual is sorting the same cards, using the same procedure, but describing how he or she feels about the statements, or making a "sort for self." The two work separately, without any discussion, and then record the results on separate forms.

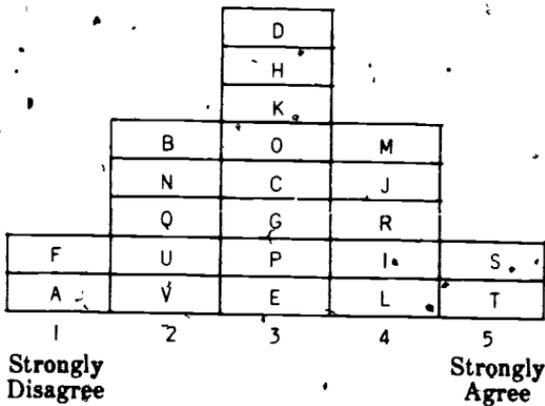
Evaluation: The two forms are compared. Each time there is a difference, or discrepancy, in the way the two cards are sorted; the student who "sorted for the other" person receives one discrepancy point. Criterion for the student making the prediction ("sort for the other") is a total of ten or fewer discrepancy points. The activity can end here, or the roles can be reversed and the cards resorted. If there are ten or fewer discrepancy points at this time, the student receives twenty more points. If both the friend and the acquaintance are enrolled in the class, each may complete a "sort for self" and a "sort for the other," and the points can be handled in the way already described.

PERSONAL ATTITUDE PREDICTION

Sort for Partner



Partner's Sort for Self



	Sort for Partner	<i>minus</i>	Partner's Sort for Self	<i>equals</i>	Discrepancy
A	1		1		0
B	2		2		0
C	4		3		1
D	3		3		0
E	2		3		1
F	4		1		3

12. ORAL INFORMATION GAIN [30 Points]

Objective: To develop strategies for promoting learning of factual information by others through oral presentation.

Description: The class is divided into teams of five or six students each. Each team is presented with a sheet of paper containing fifteen symbols such as squares, circles, triangles, trapezoids, stars, and punctuation marks. Following each symbol is an English word for which the symbol is to stand. There should be five nouns, five verbs, and five adjectives or adverbs. The symbols should be randomly and arbitrarily assigned to the words, so that there is no pattern of using geometric shapes for nouns, punctuation marks for verbs, or the like. The assignments should be carefully examined for other clues, such as sound (use of a square for "sand" would be avoided because of the beginning "s" sound) or shapes (a rounded figure might be suggestive of "ball," "globe," or even "fat" and would not be used for such words). After receiving the information sheet, the team meets to consider strategies for teaching this "artificial language" so that learners can translate simple sentences into English. They may do this by lecturing, by using visual aids, by establishing one-to-one or small group tutoring, by testing, or by any other way they can devise. In addition to planning a presentation strategy, each group composes twenty statements in the "language" and writes each on a separate, numbered note card.

The next phase of the activity involves teaching and testing. After the class has been divided into groups, half are assigned to the role of teacher, the other half to the role of learner. During the next class period, teaching and learning roles are reversed. On the day assigned to a group for teaching, the group gives its artificial language sentences to the monitor, together with the English language translations (on a separate sheet). The teaching group then has ten minutes to work with the learning group. Meanwhile, the monitor randomly selects ten of the twenty sentences created by the group for use as a test. When the teaching interval ends, the learners circulate the test items among themselves, and each writes an English translation of the symbolic sentences. Finally, a member of the teaching team reads the English translation of the test items, and the learners check one another's translations.

Evaluation: Any error in the translation of a sentence makes the whole sentence incorrect. The scores of the learners are totaled and averaged. Criterion is an average of 75 percent correct. If criterion is reached, each member of the teaching team receives thirty points.

13. WRITTEN INFORMATION GAIN [50 Points]

Objective: To develop strategies for writing information in order to promote learning.

Description: This activity is similar to "Oral Information Gain," except that the teaching group plans a strategy and writes their lesson in such a way that learners can master the artificial language. A period of fifteen minutes is allowed for the individual learners to read and study the material. They are then tested, as in the oral version of the exercise.

Evaluation: An average of 75 percent correct is required for the writers to reach criterion.

14. PROCESS DESCRIPTION [20 Points]

Objective: To become familiar with a systematic process for individual decision making which specifies the planning of action steps and provides for a test of the action at each stage of the plan and to think systematically, and write a narrative statement reflecting the logic of a "flow chart."

Description: This particular exercise should be used only by instructors who have had experience in such processes as computer programming, Fault Tree Analysis, Pert Charting, or other binary logic systems. Each student will first be trained in how to make an analytical flow chart, which resembles the logic of a computer program, in which each proposed action step is followed by a binary (yes/no) test which provides the basis for planning the next step. The procedure continues until the plan leads to the goal or is demonstrated as being unattainable. This type of strategy may be applied to decision making in various personal and professional areas: job application; social situations; scholastic aspirations, and so on. The flow chart must contain action statements (written inside rectangles), followed by test questions (written inside diamonds). If the answer to a given question is "yes," an arrow leads to the next action statement. If it is "no," the arrow leads back to an earlier stage in the process so that the difficulty

which produced the "no," can be evaluated. Rules for this flow chart are that it contain a maximum of seven action statements and a total of five binary test questions. Having prepared a flow chart as indicated, the student then writes a prose narrative describing the plan, using the flow chart as an outline. The author may choose to revise the flow chart or the narrative during the composition process, if he or she discovers problems of logic or continuity in decision making. The students then exchange the narratives with one another. The task for each student is to reproduce the original flow chart from the information in the narrative.

Evaluation: Points are awarded to the first author for the generation of a second flow chart by another person which bears a 90 percent correspondence to the first. One point is scored for each diamond, arrow, and rectangle that is the same for both flow charts, and one point is deducted for each step added by the person following the description. The monitor evaluates the charts outside of class.

15. TELEPHONE INFORMATION ACCESSING [20 Points]

Objective: To develop ability in obtaining information quickly and accurately by telephone, as a time and energy-saving alternative to letters and direct contact.

Description: Although most of the work is done individually, participants are grouped into pairs. Each member of the pair generates and writes a list of ten information-seeking questions, the answers to which can probably be obtained over the telephone. No questions may involve information printed in the telephone directory, such as where to call for the correct time. An appropriate question might be, "If I live in the east part of the city, where is the closest place that I can obtain a dog license?" or "What's the fine for a traffic ticket at an expired parking meter?" Three rules must be followed: (1) No two items on the list can be obtained from the same source. (2) The items on the list must not limit the caller to one particular source. (3) Every question on the list must request information that is unknown to the caller prior to the call. The partners exchange lists, go to a telephone, and monitor one another while the calls are being made. Each has twenty minutes to seek answers to as many questions as possible, using only the directory as a resource.

Evaluation: Seven of the ten questions must be answered within twenty minutes for criterion to be achieved. (The Hawaii program utilizes a time factor as the criterion for this activity with the rationale that efficiency in processing information is important. Both information givers and information receivers benefit from saving time in the bureaucracy.)

16. AESTHETIC COMMUNICATION [10-75 Points]

Objective: To communicate emotions or moods through a form such as oral reading of literature, music, dance, or pantomime and to compare the intended emotion or mood with that received by the audience.

Description: Each person comes prepared to communicate affects by reading literature aloud, by singing or playing a musical instrument, or by pantomime or dancing. All students who wish to participate are divided into groups of six to seven, preferably with some variety in the nature of their intended performances. Before coming to class, the performer prepares a rating form containing at least five bipolar scales, with five descriptive terms on each scale. These might include such items as "sad—happy," "depressed—elated," or "troubled—carefree," which the performer sees as legitimate aspects of his or her performance. Students then meet in class and work out schedules so that each person performs before two different groups. After the first performance, the performer may either keep or change the intended affects for the second performance.

Evaluation: The assignment of points for this activity depends on the medium of communication selected and the extent to which the audience members receive the performer's intended message. Reading aloud is regarded as the easiest mode, then singing, then playing an instrument without singing. Pantomime or dancing is regarded as most difficult. After each performance, each audience member marks the prepared affect rating sheet. If the performance involved oral reading of literature, there must be a 90 percent correspondence between intended and received affects. Standards for other modes are as follows: for singing—80 percent; for playing an instrument—70 percent; for dancing or pantomime—60 percent. The two performances are tabulated separately; the appropriate

A LEARNING CENTER APPROACH

critereon must be reached on at least one of them. These critereon levels are based upon experiences with Hawaii's student population. Levels are arbitrary and should be modified if necessary.

Appendix

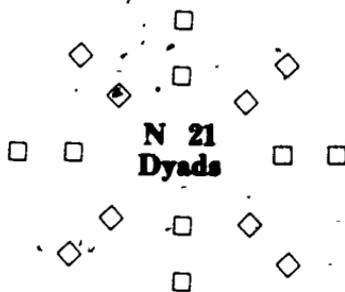
SENTENCE PROCESSING

Monitor's Procedures

The objective of these instructions is to acquaint the instructor with the procedures for administering the sentence processing activity, including materials, room arrangement, activity objective, training procedures, testing procedures, and scoring.

The materials needed for this activity are (1) tape recorder, (2) audio timing tape, (3) clicker, (4) blue and white training forms, (5) green and yellow testing forms, (6) scoring pencils, and (7) desk masks.

Arrange an equal number of desks in an inner and outer circle. The inner circle of desks should be facing outward from the center of the room. The outer circle of desks should be facing and paired with the inner circle of desks. The diagram below shows this seating arrangement:



An even number of students is necessary for this activity. If you have an odd number, excuse the last student entering the room.

The objective of sentence processing is to find sentences on the two forms that mean about the same thing. This activity "will make students able to detect similarities in meanings of sentences."

Training Procedures

When the students are seated, distribute the blue training forms to the inner circle and the white training forms to the outer circle. The "source" for each sentence is always indicated by the dot to the left of the sentences on the form. The source reads the first sentence to his or her partner, the receiver. The receiver responds by saying "same" if the sentence on his or her form means about the same thing. If the receiver responds with "same," then both the sender and receiver place an "X" in the parenthesis to the left of that sentence. If the receiver responds by saying "different" to that sentence, both partners leave the space blank.

The source and receiver alternate roles on the form. Allow students to work with one partner on one column for one minute. In another one-minute period, allow students to compare their answers and discuss why they chose to respond as they did. After a one-minute trial per column, and a one-minute answer comparison period, rotate the students in the outer circle one chair to the left. Repeat the same procedure for four columns. On the fifth trial, reduce the one-minute column to thirty-five seconds by using the audio timing tape. Again, allow them to compare answers after each column. Use the thirty-five second time intervals for the remaining four trials. Rewind the tape and have the students put their training forms under their desks.

Students usually request the instructor's opinion on sentence comparisons. Do not give any information. The student should discover which sentences mean about the same thing without relying on an "expert."

Testing Procedures

Distribute the green forms to the inner circle and the yellow forms to the outer circle with columns five, six, seven, and eight face-up. Start the audio tape. The students will turn the forms face up when the tape says "get ready" and will follow the instructions as stated on the tape. When the tape says "stop," use a clicker or blink the lights to indicate the end of a column. After eight trials, have students put their name, code, date, and trial number for that day on the front of the form. This procedure is followed to prevent students from working on off-time. Next, have the students place forms underneath the desks. Rewind the tape and distribute yellow forms to the inner circle and green forms to the outer circle in the same manner as for the first test. Start the tape and follow the audio instructions.

Scoring Procedures

After the two testing trials have been completed, have the students exchange forms with their partners. Then have students locate their first test form. Distribute the scoring pencils. Each student writes his or her name and code on both testing forms. Use the audio answer key, and allow students about fifteen minutes to score. The scoring procedure is as follows: Have the students count the number of correct "X's" and the number of incorrect "X's" in each column. *Do not count blanks as correct or incorrect.* If the answer key says there should be an "X" by a sentence and the student being graded did not mark an "X," that blank is not considered incorrect. Only correct and incorrect "X's" are counted. Criterion is a score of thirty-four on one sheet of eight columns using this scoring method.

Finally, have the students place criterion papers in one designated pile and noncriterion papers in another pile and hand in the scoring pencils. Check those papers indicated as being at criterion after the class period and fill out point certificates according to the instructor's syllabus.

The authors wish to acknowledge the role of several colleagues at the University of Hawaii who have been active in developing the learning center and learning activity approach described here. They are Burton Byers, Paul Heinberg, Emily Reese, Harry Reese, and Terry Welden. Special recognition is due to Roger Virta, a former instructor, who served as course coordinator during the 1973-75 developmental period. Richard D. Newman is the present course coordinator. If further information on any or all of the activities contained in this booklet or complete sets of forms for particular activities is desired, please write to:

Communication 145 Coordinator
Department of Communication
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2560 Campus Road, GRG 313
Honolulu, HI 96822

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