This annotated bibliography contains 31 references of articles and papers in the ERIC database that deal with communication apprehension (CA). The first section provides strategies for instructors and students to alleviate communication apprehension, speech anxiety, stage fright, and other problems people have with public speaking. The second section presents several programs that have utilized these and other strategies to help with fear and avoidance of communication. Articles and papers in the last section deal with recent research on CA. (MS)
Communication Apprehension

by Michael Shermis

It would be rare to find a classroom where someone was not experiencing communication apprehension (CA) or some form of speech anxiety. As a matter of fact, fear and avoidance of public speaking is quite common. Knowing this leads to several questions: What is CA? What causes CA? What are the consequences of CA? How can CA be prevented or reduced? Documents in the ERIC database cite several sources that treat these and related questions on this topic.

The first section of this bibliography provides strategies for instructors and students to alleviate CA, speech anxiety, stage fright, and other problems people have with public speaking. The second section presents several programs that have utilized these and other strategies to help with fear and avoidance of communication. Articles and papers in the last section deal with recent research on CA.

Abstracts for some of the articles cited here have been abbreviated to conform to the FAST Bib format. The ED numbers for sources included in Resources in Education have been included to enable the user to go directly to microfiche collections to order from the ERIC Document Reproduction Service (EDRS), or to go to RJE for the full abstract on those sources not available through EDRS. The citations to journals are from the Current Index to Journals in Education, and these articles can be acquired most economically from library collections or through interlibrary loan. Reprint service, are also available from University Microfilms International (UMI) and from the Original Article Tearseated Service (OATS) of the Institute for Scientific Information.

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Strategies


Applies an emotion-based theory of human response to resolve conceptual and measurement problems associated with anxiety. Support the conceptuazion of CA as a personality trait predisposing certain individuals to higher levels of anxiety in oral communication.


Examines the achievement levels of college students taking a bioethics course who demonstrated high and low degrees of speech anxiety. Finds that students with high speech anxiety interacted less with instructors and did not achieve as well as other students. Suggests strategies instructors can use to help students.


Describes the use of the Communication Anxiety Graph (CAG) to help students trace the pattern of their anxiety when making a speech. Provides advice for student speakers based on when their anxiety peak occurs.


Describes a noncredit course called "Overcoming Speech Anxiety" that used four different approaches: (1) creating a support group atmosphere; (2) employing relaxation exercises and systematic desensitization techniques; (3) improving confidence through cognitive restructuring; and (4) completing an abbreviated public speaking assignment.


Defines CA as fear or anxiety associated with either real or anticipated communication with another person, and discusses its causes, consequences, and prevention.


Describes a program to help secondary school students develop speech skills by exploring social issues through role-playing. Notes that this method motivates discouraged students, reduces communication anxiety, improves research skills, fosters appropriate verbal and nonverbal skills, and stimulates affective learning.


Defining the problem of CA, i.e., fear of oral communication, and its effects on teaching English as a second language (ESL). Focuses on the specific problems of Japanese ESL students. Suggests and explains classroom techniques designed to alleviate anxiety and to promote positive communication.


Describes a nonthreatening method for introducing videotaping to a speech class by allowing students to construct videotaped projects, such as news programs or interviews in groups.


Suggests several strategies to reduce speech anxiety in CA.
Enhances the variety of activities to help children develop skills in public speaking. Asserts that confidence is built when children participate, thereby both visually and orally.

Explains how the confidence model attempts to provide instruction in anxiety reduction and skill development, combining features of both the behavior therapy and the psychotherapy theories. CA conclusions that both for alleviating speech anxiety and developing oral communication skills, the confidence model appears to be an excellent alternative to college basic speech courses.

Discusses how developmental college students may experience the inhibiting fear of CA. Suggests that the alleviation of CA whether related to conditioned anxiety, negative cognitive appraisal, or skills deficit, may be approached through one or a combination of the following approaches: (1) systematic desensitization—a six-step procedure, including relaxation techniques, development of hierarchies, combating relaxation and imagery, and a written assignment; (2) cognitive modification—a seven-step procedure in which students learn to understand unreasonable beliefs about communication and how to change those beliefs; and (3) goal setting—a five-step procedure in which students turn abstract goals into specific plans for behavior.

Special Programs

Describes a special section of the public speaking curriculum, a "speech anxiety" program, taught by faculty and graduate students from the speech and theater department, educational psychology department, and staff from the counseling services center at the University of Tennessee (Knoxville).

Describes program that created stage fright sessions within the basic speech course at the University of Illinois. Finds that students in these sections were able to define stage fright and recognize its common symptoms, describe personal symptoms and their physical and psychological causes, state and use methods for controlling stage fright, and exhibit normal levels of physical manifestations of stage fright during classroom presentations.

Describes and evaluates a conversational skills program designed to teach apprehensive communicators how to develop comfortable and effective social behavior in a variety of interpersonal contexts.

Describes a reticence program initiated at Pennsylvania State University intended to provide special instruction for students who report fear and avoidance of communication.

Describes a speaking laboratory at the University of Iowa that parallels existing reading and writing labs and that is based on three approaches to the fear of communication: systematic desensitization, cognitive modification, and skills training.

Describes course in social psychology developed to help students explore CA, reticence, and shyness.

Recent Research

Examines the relationship between CA and general people orientations.

Investigates the relationship between beginning public speakers' self-reported performance anxiety and audience perception of that anxiety. Indicates that audiences perceive speaker anxiety levels to be lower during performance than the speakers themselves report.

Daly, John A. "Communication Apprehension in the College Classroom," New Directions for Teaching and Learning n26 p21-31 Jun 1986.
Presents research and theory about CA that offer ways of understanding and dealing with this barrier to learning.

Investigates the relationship between students' CA levels and their attitudes toward the use of video recording in a basic speech course. Finds that speech teachers should use videotaping cautiously in beginning courses. Suggests that student skills are more likely to be enhanced by videotaping in advanced elective courses where the levels of CA are generally lower.

Points out that a review of the literature suggests that the use of video playback of classroom assignments for students who are CA, shy, or unassertive is potentially harmful.

Indicates that the "Sharing Feelings Speech" assignment failed to support the hypothesis that self-disclosure reduces stage fright in public speaking situations more than other forms of public speaking.


Concludes that the videotape recorder can be used effectively as an instructional feedback tool without fear of serious negative effects on speaker performance or on the emotional condition of students.


Examines the communication reticence of high school students enrolled in required speech and writing courses. Finds that over 40% of the students were apprehensive about public speaking and over 30% did not enjoy writing.


Examines the relationship between the personality constructs of self-concept and CA and the use of self-confrontation (self-viewing of videotaped speeches) as a potential self-concept enhancement strategy.


Uses the extensive research on CA as the basis for a description and comparison of three conventional approaches toward the treatment of excessive communication apprehension: systematic desensitization, social skills development, and cognitive modification/ rational emotive therapy.


Shows that a basic course in speech communication (1) produced significant reduction in students' CA scores; (2) yielded more positiveness about self-disclosure; and (3) reduced discrepancies between self-concepts and ideal self-concepts.


Reiterates that the use of an individualized approach to the alleviation of CA has been shown to increase students' class interaction and to improve their verbal skills. Suggests that since students develop CA in various ways, individualized methods should be used to assess and remedy different types of CA.