

Outcomes Assessment for the Communications Department August 2000 Update

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English 010

Goal—ability to identify sentence fragments

There has not been a department-wide assessment tool planned for English 010, but an individual teacher did assess one skill – identifying sentence fragments.

Criteria: being able to identify sentence fragments when they appear in a writing and being able to correct them.

Assessment tool: She did a pretest, posttest, and retake for those who failed.

Students participating: one section of English 010

Results: On the pretest identifying sentence fragments, 4 out of 12 students (33%) could identify 75 % or more of the fragments. On the posttest, which consisted of identifying and correcting sentence fragments, 6 out of 9 students (66%) could identify 75% or more of fragments. The 3 failing students were able to identify 75% or more of fragments with a retake on new material.

Conclusions:

Assessing one skill in isolation has little meaning beyond showing how assessment works.

However, it is exciting to see a teacher take it upon herself to begin doing some kind of assessment to make it meaningful to her.

English 100

We have a year of our final exam assessment tool and we have tabulated the TABE exams administered at the end of the semester.

English 101

We have a year of using the final exam assessment tool.

Mechanics and Grammar skills assessed include sentence fragments, fused sentences, and comma splices.

- Consistently over 75% and up to 100% of students are in the acceptable range on these three sentence boundary skills.

Critical Thinking assessed in paragraph development. We assess the use of topic sentences and conclusions,

We have revamped our use of research in English 101, using a set of library search tutorials and a follow-up writing assignment. The teacher of 3 sections of 101 developed a new self-assessment tool for the students to use after the completion of the library project. The purpose of this tool is to help students integrate their understanding of process with the end results of the project as well as guide teachers in improving communication. In assessing students' replies, teachers may be able address process flow problems as well as instructional problems.

The initial tool was created under severe time restraints and was successful in helping students understand the process and their choices, their mistakes, but it did not quantify anything. The tool has been revamped to be more quantitative, and the new version appears below.

ORIGINAL VERSION: ENGLISH 101 LIBRARY SEARCH AND PAPER SELF-ASSESSMENT

1. Did you allow enough time for the searching process to find material?
2. What could you have done to make the search process go more smoothly?
3. Did you get enough material, too much material for the essay?
4. Did you have a workable method for reading, marking, and using the material in your paper? Explain.
5. Did you keep track of when you were quoting and when you were using your own words? Explain your method.
6. How hard was it to follow the MLA formatting rules? Note problems that occurred.
7. What do you think needs to be changed regarding this assignment?
8. What would you do differently if you had the assignment to start all over again?

NEW VERSION:
ENGLISH 101 LIBRARY SEARCH AND PAPER SELF-ASSESSMENT

1. Did you allow *plenty, enough, not enough* time for the searching process to find material?
2. What could you have done to make the search process go more smoothly?
3. Did you get *enough, too much, or not enough* material for the essay?
4. Did you have a workable method for reading, marking, and using the material in your paper? Explain.
5. You kept track of when you were quoting and when you were using your own words *very well, adequately, poorly*. Explain your method.
6. It was *easy, manageable, or difficult* to follow the MLA formatting rules. Note problems that occurred.
7. What do you think needs to be changed regarding this assignment?
8. What would you do differently if you had the assignment to start all over again?

RESULTS OF INITIAL USE OF ORIGINAL TOOL:

Students assessed: two of the three sections of English 101 Spring 2000. Only one class was tabulated for use here. The sheet was handed out in class, and students were encouraged to fill them out without signing their names.

15 Students assessed:

1. 8 felt they'd allowed enough time; 4 didn't; 3 felt their time was limited by other factors.
2. Ideas for making process go more smoothly included: 1. better development of topic (narrowing); 2. practicing the computer search process; 3. Knowing when to stop collecting information; 4. Asking for help; 5. Having password for remote access;
3. Four had too much information; four had enough, but 7 felt they had too little.
4. Virtually none had a method for processing and keeping track of information.
5. Tracking use of quotes was a problem for about half.
6. Most felt the handbook addressed the MLA formatting well
7. Some students wanted more time; others admitted even if given more time, they would not have used it wisely.

Teacher's evaluation:

Students needed more guidance on how to use the material they got, how to create note cards, how to keep track of research materials. More time spent in class explaining and practicing process would be valuable. For the most part, students felt that even the things they had difficulty with rewarded them in the end. They felt more powerful having survived the assignment. The fact that they got to write this down was powerful in the classroom because it seemed to “finish” the assignment, allowing them to move on to the next part of the semester; it also gave them a voice in the assignment. The self-assessment tool was useful as much for the students as for the teacher.

English 102

In a comparison of Spring 1999 and Spring 2000, we see the following results:

Mechanics and Grammar skills assessed:

Correctness:

- The percentage of Acceptable performance (3 or fewer significant errors) declined from 68-74% to 67%. The Low Acceptable performance (4 or fewer errors) stayed relatively stable (24-26% to 25%). The Non acceptable remained similar (7-8% to 8%).

Understandability:

- The percentage of Acceptable performance (1 or fewer significant problems in sentence level communication) decreased from 81-89% to 79%. The Low Acceptable (2) increased from 12-13% to 25%. The Non acceptable declined from 7-8% to 0%.

Critical Thinking skills assessed:

Claims: uses generalities well:

- The percentage of Acceptable performance decreased from 82-84% to 46%. Low Acceptable increased from 13% to 46%. Non acceptable remained unchanged.

Claims: uses specific evidence or logic:

- Percentages remain virtually the same, with only 8% in Non acceptable range.

Moves beyond emotional reasoning:

- There is a decrease in Acceptable percentage (62-63% to 54%), an increase in Low Acceptable (25-26% to 29%), with Non acceptable remaining stable.

Conclusions are valid/substantive:

- Acceptable percentage decreased from 55-58% to 46%; Low acceptable increased from 30-32% to 50%, while non acceptable decreased from 15-16% to 8%.

***Conclusions:**

The pool being assessed in Spring 2000 is smaller (24 vs. 38). The unacceptable range has decreased or remained the same, but a higher percentage of students performed at the lower-middle range. I don't know that the numbers are statistically significant, but we can keep observing the numbers to see if they constitute a trend.

Composition teachers will review the results.

INTRODUCTION OF OUTCOMES ASSESSMENT IN Communications and Journalism 130 – Public Speaking

Goals and Objectives: These are in process. They will be finalized in Fall 2000.

Criteria:

Assessment tools: Teacher has chosen to begin a first day of class and end of semester assessment by the students themselves. Assessment will begin in Fall 2000.

Students participating: Each class of C&J 130 will be assessed. It is a cornerstone course, as it is required by many certificate and associate degree programs at our campus, as well as being a transfer course.

The first day tool is primarily to assess attitudes about public speaking:

STUDENT INTRODUCTION QUESTIONNAIRE

Name _____ Year _____

Major _____

What reason(s) do you have for taking this class?

Do you have any specific goals for improving your speaking? What are they? (What would you like to learn how to do? What particular problems would you like to overcome?)

What classes in speech and related fields (such as journalism or English composition) have you had here or at other schools?

What kinds of speaking experiences have you had in your classes, jobs, church, extracurricular activities, organizations, etc.?

When did you give your last speech? What was the topic?

What are your career plans? Will public speaking be important to your career? How so?