

Exploration of oral assessment in a distance English for business communication module

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1. About the project

This study aimed to investigate perceptions of business management students and their tutors about oral business communication skills, considered important in workplace (Angouri, 2018), as taught and assessed in a Level 1 core-option module called *LB170 Communication skills for business management*, and offered to OU Business School (OUBS) students. Additionally, the study was intended to examine the link between module materials and students' performance in their oral assessment.

2. Methodology

We surveyed students (N=22) and telephone-interviewed students (N= 5) and their tutors (N= 3) on their perceptions about oral business communication skills and how they are taught and assessed in *LB170*. Additionally, the interviewee students' oral assignments were collected and analysed.

5. References

Angouri, J. (2018). *Culture, discourse, and the workplace*. Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxon ; New York: Routledge.

CBI. (2015). *Inspiring growth: CBI/Pearson education and skills survey 2015*. London: Confederation of British Industry.

Shrestha, P. N., Fayram, J., & Demouy, V. (2015). Innovative use of mobile technologies in EAP oral assessment: a pilot study from The Open University. In P. N. Shrestha (Ed.), *Current Developments in English for Academic and Specific Purposes: Local innovations and global perspectives* (pp. 157–177). Reading: Garnet Education.

3. Findings

- Oral business communication skills are crucial for both study and workplace, supporting CBI (2015) call.
- In this respect, the module appropriately identifies and teaches various fundamental business communication skills (e.g., oral negotiation, presentations) for distance business management students.
- The current design of assessment is perceived to be effective in assessing these oral business communication skills by both students and tutors.
- However, both students and tutors suggest that more opportunities for oral assessment and practice would further enhance these skills, supporting previous research (Shrestha, Fayram, & Demouy, 2015).
- There is also a concern about the lack of face-to-face opportunity for oral presentations despite one half-day school.
- Although these concerns cannot be addressed for pedagogical reasons (e.g., module workload), a future redesign of the module may address them.

4. Student quote

'I can only suggest to make this module a compulsory starting module to all business studies towards a degree as it allows you to build your skills in communication for business/academic purpose and with the skills I have gained here I would have done so much better in my previous module's assignments.'

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