

Workplace-Oriented Instruction: A Constructivist Model in Teaching Business Communication Course

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Abstract

This is a qualitative study of the use of workplace-oriented instruction as an approach in teaching Business Communication course. In this study, through the workplace-oriented instruction, a nexus between the classroom (academe) and the workplace (industry) was established. An interplay among the learning outcomes, the teaching approaches in the Business Communication course, and the competencies desired by the industry in terms of business communication was tried out.

Introduction

Learning institutions are *sine qua non* to individual and collective development. One of the major roles of learning institutions, particularly higher institutions, is to form holistically their students, who in their own time and place form the society they serve. A significantly huge part of this all-inclusive formation is towards the students' chosen career or field of expertise such as liberal arts, information technology, engineering, teacher education, health sciences, and business management to name a few. Competencies required of a particular field or curricular program are effectively developed in the core and major courses required by a program's curriculum.

Business Communication is one of the curricular requirements in business-related programs. It covers both written and oral communication development giving emphasis on how communication is utilized in the corporate ground. Among the common learning contents from the writing component of this course are:

writing the different types of business letters, business routine reports, notices and minutes of meetings. From the speaking component, the following are the common course coverage: oral presentation, negotiating techniques, interview approaches, customer service skills and inter-office communications. Thus, business communication course is an indispensable course in a business-related program.

Quoted by Guffey and Du-Babcock (2011), Gerald R. Ford, the 38th President of the United States once said "If I went back to college again, I'd concentrate on two areas: learning to write and to speak before an audience. Nothing in life is more important than the ability to communicate effectively." In Ford's time, communication skills were very important, and today in the 21st century, they are extremely important. Surveys of employers often show that communication skills are critical to effective job placement, performance, career advancement and organizational success (Tucker and McCarthy, 2001). It is a common knowledge that effective communication is the lifeblood of a successful organization.

Teaching business writing is a tall order. It can be both interesting and uninviting. It may seem unappealing for teachers and students simply because its process may be predictable, monotonous and routine and its contents could be too narrow, routine and technical. As Louhiala-Salminen (1996) found out. "The course, Business English Communication, is taught as a mechanical skill that can be learned through specimen letters and 'fossilized' phrases. Business English Communication is too often treated as a store of phrases and idioms separate from the actual business world and professional skills." Based on this finding, one can opine that despite the modernity and advancements in terms of communication technology, in some places, there is still a gap between the teaching of Business Communication in the academe and the corporate world. In other words, the learning outcomes in Business Communication course and the mode of delivery do not guarantee a strong alignment with the industry's needs and expectations.

It is expected that each course or subject in a curricular program has significant role to play in the entire academic formation and competency building of a learner. Each course, whether a

core, major, or under the general education courses, is expected to contribute to the development of the learner's knowledge, skills and attitude. In this day and age, teaching writing – academic, technical, professional writing- can be amply aided by a surfeit of new business and academic documents that may serve as the latest models for the students. However, this can only happen if the teacher is creatively upbeat and abreast with the trend and practices in the corporate realm. Gone are the days when a business communication teacher had to rely principally on the antiquated examples in textbooks that contained “fossilized” phrases. If Business English Communication is too often treated as a store of phrases and idioms separate from the actual business world and professional skills, schools should react by way of evaluating its curriculum because effective and relevant curriculum will bridge the demand of the industry and the services provided by the academe.

Relevant curriculum, however, becomes truly relevant when the implementers –especially the teachers- are faithful in carrying out the elements of curriculum. Teachers have active participation and significant input in attaining the goals imbedded in the curriculum. Another factor that contributes to the success of a curriculum is the students' attitude not just towards the course but also towards life which includes his present status, his future career, his position in the society, his influence to others etc. Students' attitude is greatly affected by how motivated they are. Nonchalance on the part of the students is a huge barrier to learning. Thus, they should be aptly motivated. According to Pesce (2007), writing is one of the skills that deeply requires students to be motivated. If they do not have a motivating reason to write, the task set for them can hardly be an effective learning experience. Active learning is a propensity of cooperative or collaborative learning.

Having taught Business Communication course for a considerable number of years in a locale where English is a second language, the researcher has used different methods of teaching guided by the textbooks and workbooks banking primarily on the lecture method - the most convenient strategy in teaching college students - which is followed by writing activities. As mentioned earlier, teaching business writing or technical writing may seem repetitive,

monotonous, and predictable; thus unappealing. This reality has also been experienced by the researcher, and this necessitated her to design a teaching approach that would underpin the students' interest and performance in the Business Communication course. Instead of the usual *lecture-model-compose-critique-revise* approach in teaching business communication, the researcher adopted cooperative learning or collaborative learning which made use of simulated workplace situations as part of the learning conditions. The researcher surmised that this approach would result to a more enjoyable, meaningful, and successful learning, thus would reinforce instruction. Cooperation has been found to be directly related to success, and competitiveness has been found detrimental to career success. “The more competitive a person is, the less chance he or she has of being successful” (Kohn, 1996).

Moreover, the researcher also would like to determine the learners' thoughts and feelings about the use of workplace-oriented instruction in teaching the Business Communication course. A number of literatures claimed that cooperative learning as a teaching approach produced good results (www.thirteen.org/edonline), so this study looked into the students' perceptions and feedback on the workplace-oriented instruction which mainly used constructivism and cooperative learning as a teaching strategy. The researcher posited that the use of workplace-oriented instruction in the Business Communication course would result to a more enjoyable, meaningful, and successful learning, thus would reinforce instruction.

Statement of the Problem

This study rolled out to seek answers to the following questions: 1. What are the features of the workplace-oriented instruction as a teaching approach in Business Communication course? 2. How is the workplace-oriented instruction utilized in teaching the Business Communication Course? 3. What are the students' perceptions of the Business Communication course in which workplace-oriented instruction is used? 4. What are the salient meanings of the research findings?

Research Design and Methodology

This study is a descriptive qualitative research. It describes the students' thoughts, feelings and experiences in their Business Communication course where the workplace-oriented instruction was used as a teaching approach. Qualitative research method was employed because it emphasizes the natural setting and the points of view of the research participants (Denzin and Lincoln, 2005). This study used the participants' verbal descriptions of their Business Communication. Qualitative research is so apt in interpreting or finding meanings of data collected in the forms of words and pictures rather than numbers (Fraenkel and Wallen, 2008).

Conceptual Framework

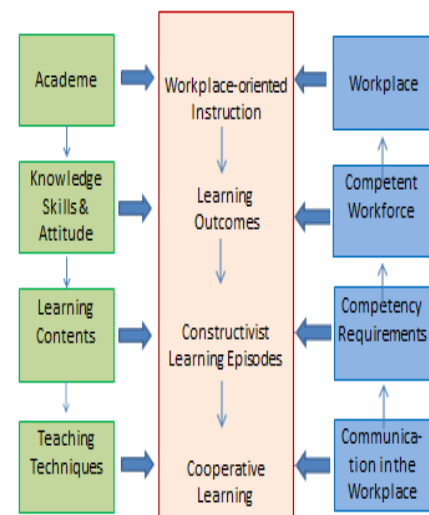
This study started with the conceptualization of a teaching model that would establish a nexus between the classroom lessons (academe) and the corporate environment (workplace) which is a distinguishing mark of relevant education. This study supports the common assertion that the academe forms graduates that cater to the industry's needs for human resource; thus, the emergence of the workplace-oriented instruction. This teaching approach made use of the constructivist learning episodes that were intended to simulate in the classroom the actual tasks, activities and scenarios in the corporate environment or industry that require business communication. Constructivism asserts that students learn by doing rather than observing that learners learn through joint interactions with adults and more capable peers, and that they learn best the concepts that are within their zone of proximal development (Dewey, Vygotsky, David, 2012).

Figure 1 illustrates the *workplace-oriented teaching model*. Its focal point is the workplace –oriented instruction with the *academe* and the *workplace or industry* on each side. This means that workplace-oriented instruction is a happy mix of the two realms – academe and workplace. The learning outcomes or goals of the academe are aligned with the quality of workforce needed by the industry (*competent workforce*). The *knowledge, skills and attitudes* that the workforce must possess must have been acquired from and honed by the

academe. To attain these goals, an effective teaching approach is essential, thus the use of *constructivist learning episodes* that the researcher designed. This learning episodes are considered constructivist because when they were developed guided by the theory of constructivism which could be applied employing *cooperative learning* and simulations as among the specific *teaching approaches*. Since the area of the study is on Business Communication course, the knowledge skills and attitudes that were singled out were along *communication in the workplace the roles and functions* of employees in the workplace.

Communication in the workplace occurs in the following activities: formal meetings, informal brainstorming, negotiating, reporting, issuing of memos, exchanging correspondences, company launch, product launch, handling clients' inquiries, communicating with other stakeholders, etc. The roles and functions to which graduates-turned-into-employees may be assigned are too many to mention, but those that require competence in communication include: customer service, secretarial, supervisory, managerial and administrative positions. The workplace-oriented instruction, through the constructivist learning episodes, were interspersed in the Business Communication lessons from the midterm to the final term.

Fig. 1. Workplace oriented Instruction Teaching Model



The Sources of Data

The study was conducted in one of the Higher Education Institutions in the Bicol region, Philippines, particularly in the Business Communication classes offered in SY 2014-2015. The identified classes were composed of sophomore students taking business courses. From the three classes that were exposed to the workplace-oriented instruction, 80 students emerged as research participants. In addition to the students' consent and willingness to be part of the study, the following were the criteria of the purposive sampling, specifically the maximal variation sampling. First, the student must be officially enrolled in any of the three identified Business Communication classes, regularly attending the class sessions and must be present during the group planning, meetings and presentations. These were required to ensure that each participant's description of the class is valid and based on first-hand experience. Second, the student must be a member of a pseudo business company (grouping system). This was deemed necessary as the study aimed to know whether the features of the constructivist learning approach were recognized (cognitive aspect) or felt and appreciated (affective aspect) by the students. Third, the student must be present during the day when the data gathering was conducted. Fourth, the student must have written a description of or an essay (narrative) of his or her Business Communication class. These qualifications are very important because the qualitative analysis was based on the students' descriptions of the class applying the maximal variation sampling. In terms of the students' descriptions of the Business Communication class, the study welcomed the possibility of having desirable (strength) or undesirable (weakness) descriptions from the participants. It was expected that the participants possess a variety of attitudes towards the research topic (Fraenkel and Wallen, 2008).

Research Instrument

The materials used in this study were constructivist learning episodes and the narratives written by the research participants describing their Business Communication class. The narrative writing was pilot-tested to the Business Communication classes in the previous semester. The purpose of the pilot-testing was to see the

possibility of eliciting feedback from the students regarding the delivery of instruction and the learning activities organized by the teacher in the classroom. One gray area discovered during the pilot-testing was the lack of awareness and experience of the students who were irregularly attending classes. Their narratives were about their experiences that were not so aligned with workplace-oriented instruction. Thus, in the final conduct of the study, attendance was included in the purposive sampling of respondents or participants.

The Data Gathering Procedure

The gathering of data has three parts. For problem No. 1 which established the features of workplace-oriented instruction through the use of the constructivist learning episodes, the researcher conducted a content analysis of the learning episodes. The content analysis was based on the qualities of effective teaching. This process came about before the start of the semester.

Problem No. 2 probed how the workplace-instruction was utilized in teaching the Business Communication course. The researcher identified the course contents and learning outcomes which could be more effectively attained using the workplace-oriented instruction. Then the researcher discussed the complementariness of the learning outcomes and the teaching techniques entrenched in the workplace-oriented instruction.

For problem No. 3, the researcher involved the learners' feedback to validate her findings for problem No. 1. The researcher aimed to validate if the features of the workplace-oriented instruction that had been identified in problem No. 1 were likewise perceived by the learners. To realize that goal, the students' perceptions were explored by making the learners describe their Business Communication class through narratives. The learners were instructed to describe their Business Communication class based on their experiences and process of learning. They were also informed that their narratives would be used as bases in designing more effective teaching techniques specifically for Business Communication course. The instructions were so open-ended which allowed the students to cite instances or features of the

course which they considered remarkable, unforgettable, worth mentioning, commendable, etc... Moreover, the students were also encouraged to comment on any unfavorable observations, practices, and experiences, or better still recommend ways to enhance the teaching-learning of the said course.

The aforementioned manner of generating data from the research participants sans the use of questionnaire, emanated from the research practice of narratives and verbal descriptions as reliable means of investigating a phenomenon. Besides, the research participants were students of the business management department who had little technical knowledge or background about the idiosyncrasies and characteristics of the different pedagogical practices, plus the reality that research respondents have the tendency to trivialize research surveys. The researcher deemed it wise to simply ask them to narrate in their own words what they observed, felt, experienced, and their impressions about their Business Communication class. Anonymity of feedback was assured by not requiring the participants to indicate their names and class schedules in their paper. This gathering of data for problem No. 3 was conducted a week before the end of the semester when all the constructivist learning episodes had been used in teaching by the researcher, thus experienced by the research learners.

After the gathering of data, the researcher started the qualitative data analysis using the following procedures: encoding, critical reading and content analysis, categorizing, and establishing of themes or patterns. The researcher encoded the written descriptions of the participants without altering anything. Next, the researcher read critically and analyzed the contents of the written descriptions taking into consideration the emic and the etic foci in analyzing the documents. Then categorization and labeling came after. The researcher took note of general categories to which each description would belong. Then from the large categories, patterns and sub-themes were identified by specifying the recurrent themes. A more profound content analysis was conducted in order to identify more themes. Finally, from the participants' descriptions of the Business Communication course, the characteristics and

features of the workplace-oriented instruction were established.

The data for problem No. 4 were derived from the analysis of the first three problems. Pedagogical theories and practices were used in the analysis process. The salient meanings were extrapolated by exploring further the interplay among the features of the workplace-oriented instruction, how the features were utilized in instruction, and the learners' perception of the workplace-oriented instruction.

Results

This study germinated from the idea of designing learning episodes applying the constructivist approach in order to improve the instruction or teaching-learning experience in the Business Communication course. At the outset, the researcher would like to investigate more deeply about the constructivist learning episodes that she designed. In this study, a constructivist learning episode refers to a set of classroom activities that deliberately employ teaching strategies that engage the learners in a collaborative process of learning. It is so designed to manifest the features of workplace-oriented instruction.

In problem No.1, the study aimed to determine the features of the workplace-oriented instruction as an approach in teaching Business Communication course. The data show that workplace-oriented instruction had the following features: a) workplace oriented, b) task-based, c) outcome-based, d) open-ended and integrative, e) relevant and meaningful, f) motivating, and g) challenging. Following is the detailed presentation of results:

First of all, during the conceptualization of the course syllabus in Business Communication, the Vygotskian social constructivism was considered as one of the guiding philosophies and was integrated into the mode of instruction delivery. Influenced by constructivism, the researcher believes that collaboration, cooperation, peer teaching, teamwork, problem-based tasks, real-world classroom conditions are among the basic components of successful and meaningful modes of delivering instruction in Business Communication course. Constructivism is the

philosophical and scientific position that knowledge arises through a process of active construction (Mascolol & Fischer, 2005).

Jonassen (1994) proposed eight characteristics underlying constructivist environment, and four of those characteristics strongly underpin the designing of the workplace-oriented instruction particularly for this study. According to Jonassen, “constructivist learning environments emphasize authentic tasks in a meaningful context rather than abstract instruction out of context; provide learning environments such as real-world settings or case-based learning instead of predetermined sequences of instruction; encourage thoughtful reflection on experience; enable context- and content-dependent knowledge construction; and made use of collaborative construction of knowledge through social negotiation, not competition among learners for recognition.” When the learning episodes were aligned with the course syllabus, the selection of activities that would mirror the actual workplace scenarios and organization structure were deliberately factored in.

Workplace-oriented. From constructivism emanated the researcher’s idea of designing a workplace-oriented instruction. Thus, the teaching approach made use of authentic tasks in meaningful contexts simply because the students were not just made to learn cognitively. The learners did not just learn facts, theories, forms, updates and new trends, but they learned how to operationalize the theories and knowledge by simulating workplace activities. Further, characteristics of a constructivist learning environment are real-world settings and case-based learning. This study adhered to these characteristics by anchoring the learning tasks to real-life situations that were simulated in the classroom. For instance, the founding of a company (though not operational in terms of resources) replete with vision, mission and goals, with organization structure and students holding the needed administrative positions, with products to sell, problems to solve and goals to achieve -- are real-life affairs of the workplace. All these were simulated in a classroom that resembled a real world of business. There were make-believe transactions that were documented through actual correspondences, minutes of meetings and memorandums of agreement. The students played the roles of CEO, COO,

executive secretary, manager, investor, chef, designer, product endorser, human resource officer etc. The students taking the role of any of the positions mentioned put into practice knowledge in other courses like management, business ethics, communication, and other core courses.

Constructivist environment is also characterized by its aim to enable context-and-content-dependent knowledge construction. This characteristic was actualized in the workplace-oriented teaching model by combining the workplace activities with the target competencies of the course. Through the workplace-oriented instruction the content of the course was delivered in a workplace context. At the very least, it was like shooting two birds with one stone. Table 1 shows sample business names and lines of business adopted by the students. The data show a variety of students’ interests.

Table 1
Business Names and Lines of Business Adopted by the Students

Business Name	Line of Business
Bubble Tea Café	Restaurant
DJ Auto Body Care	car repair shop
OctaGo	global cruise
AeroFilipino	international airlines
Happy Feet	Travel magazine
JeunesseDoree	international fashion
Paradise Dream Real	real estate
Aphrodite: Ur Sole Sister	foot wear
BungangAraw Company	solar-powered equipment
Wow Bicol Travel & ToursBTours	travel and tours
Dulche Beanery	cake and croissant
Beans and Sugar	Restaurant
New Age Advertising	Advertising
Skylet Drive	Internationaltravel Agency
Lotus Hotel	hotel services
La Maison	hotels and resorts
Techicom	computer business
Pork Barrel Bar and Grill	Restobar
Burp and Gulp	Restobar
Clothing Rack	fashion clothing & accessories

Outcome-based. The learning episodes in this study were drafted to provide the learners with experiential opportunities to produce concrete

outcomes relevant to their personal goals. This characteristic was made feasible primarily because the course syllabus in Business Communication was OBE compliant as required by the school. OBE proceeds from an approach in business and manufacturing that shows the conviction that the best way for individuals and organizations to get where they are going is first to determine where they are and what they want to be – then plan backwards to determine the best way to get from here to there (Education Commission of the States,1995). In this study, the constructivist learning episodes were outcomes-based as the activities in the episodes were anchored on an outcomes-based school syllabus. The learning outcomes included knowledge, skills and attitudes related to communication in business, both oral and written, which at the same time were taught in corporate-like conditions. Apparently, as far as the Business Communication course is concerned, there has been a meeting between the minds of the academe and the industry. The Commission on Higher Education (CHED, 2014) defines OBE as an approach that focuses and organizes the educational system around what is essential for all learners to know, value and be able to do to achieve a desired level of competence. It specifies the program outcomes which refer to a set of competencies (knowledge, skills and attitudes) that all learners are expected to demonstrate. Table 2 presents a summary of the tasks and learning outcomes in the Business Communication course.

Task-based. This means that the instruction or the course contents are learned by the students through simulated activities, thus learning becomes experiential. In doing the tasks, several communicative activities such as brainstorming, planning, strategizing, visioning, decision-making, negotiating, correspondence writing, product launching, report writing, evaluating, etc. were experienced by the learners. The task-based approach in teaching is an alternative to the traditional teaching approach called PPP or present, practice and produce, wherein the teacher plays a huge role, leaving the students a narrow space for deep thinking. The task-based approach adopted in this study followed the task-based approach by Wills (2000) which includes the following steps: a) pre-task, b) task, c) planning, d) report, e) analyze, and f) practice. Table 2 shows the list of tasks that the students

engaged into while in the Business Communication class.

Table 2
Summary of Tasks and Learning Outcomes

Task	Learning Outcomes
	<i>At the end of the semester the students must have:</i>
Forming of groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> formed groups (pseudo companies) and built rapport and teamwork within a group made an inventory of skills and available resources
Deciding on a line of business	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Finalized a line of business based on the set criteria
Naming the group or business	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> come up w/ original and appealing business or company name
Deciding on the Business location	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> identified a strategic business location based on valid considerations
Forming of organization Structure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> created an organizational structure formed a set of officers
Formulating the company's VMG and core values	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> formulated the company's Vision, Mission, Goals and Core values
Planning & producing the company's paraphernalia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> creatively designed a company logo, stationery and organization chart produced promo materials (brochure, token, poster, etc.) for distribution during the launching
Company launching	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> organized an event to present their company's name, line of business, VMG core values and organization structure
Transacting through writing with different groups in the class	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> communicated claims and adjustments written convincing application letters, cv and resume.
Product launching	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> planned out a product launch event simulated product launch activities per group
Preparing the reports on the activities held	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> prepared accurate documents of events held formulated written recommendations for improvement based on evaluation results

Open-ended and Integrative. This feature of workplace-oriented instruction allowed students to express their creativity or employ their unlimited skills such as hosting, event organizing, designing, and developing animations to be used in their presentations. Because learning tasks were conceptualized in a way that the learning objectives were met in various ways. Its open-ended style provided the students some leverage to incorporate their interests and to use available resources in the tasks that were customizable. Likewise, the design of the learning episodes provided ample opportunities for learners to integrate their prior knowledge through communication and in other courses such as Information Technology, Management, Marketing, Business Law and Ethics, Obligations and Contract, and Economics among others.

Relevant and Meaningful. The constructivist learning episodes were drafted to provide the learners with crystalizing experiences and concrete outcomes that promise authentic and meaningful learning. It is meaningful because it simulated some of the workplace jobs that involve communication. The learners were actively engaged in activities by playing the roles or positions that they wished they would have when they become members of corporate outfits. The tasks served as training activities that would make them adroit employees in the future. Education is said to be relevant if it prepares the learners for their future employment, their present and future life, and the ever competitive and demanding world. Education is meaningful if the learners see its connection with their present concerns and with what they aspire to be in the near future or in their long term plans. Education is meaningful if the students are led to their calling and mission in life.

Motivating. Motivation is the force that initiates, guides, and maintains goal-oriented behaviors (Cherry, 2015). It is an important quality that pervades all aspects of teaching and learning; thus should be given emphasis by school stakeholders because when motivation fails other educational outcomes suffer. Schunk et al. (2008) observed that motivated students display interest in activities; feel self-efficacious; expend effort to succeed; persist at tasks; and typically use effective task, cognitive, and self-regulatory strategies to learn. The constructivist learning episodes in this study were so designed that they

could motivate the learners to participate in the attainment of the group's success in order to gain good grades, be recognized as initiators, leaders, artists, planners etc. Since cooperative learning approach operates in a group, it is expected among others that there would be leader-follower relationship. Likewise, it was also expected that when workplace-oriented instruction is at work, the students would have the chance to experience the following: sense of belonging to a group, the challenge to contribute something for the group, feeling of being accepted and safe whenever with the group, and self-fulfillment when the assigned task has been carried out successfully.

Motivations can be intrinsic or extrinsic. Extrinsic motivation refers to human's tendency to perform activities for known external rewards whether tangible or psychological in nature (Brown, 2007 as cited by Cherry, K. 2015). It results from some extrinsic rewards such as good grades or to avoid punishment (Dörnyei, 1994a). Intrinsic motivation is the result of an interest in the subject. In other words, it is the joy and satisfaction gained from doing something (Littlejohn, 2008). Also, motivation results from felt needs, and according to Maslow (1970), humans' needs are the following: physiological needs, safety needs, belonging needs, self-esteem needs, and self-realization needs. These are the same needs that guided the making of the constructivist learning episodes. It is worthy to note that Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs Theory as basis of motivation found its place in this study. Along extrinsic motivation, the learning episodes covered the students' goals to ace high grades or at least pass the course, be praised by the professor, be known in the class based on demonstrated competencies, talents, and personal qualities. The tasks in the learning episodes called for actual presentations of the group outputs such as their company name, line of business and company products.

Challenging. The researcher deliberately considered the application of higher order thinking skills (HOTS) in designing the learning episodes in order to challenge the advanced and more experienced learners in the class. Students who are confident about learning and performing well in school seek challenges, expend effort to learn new materials and ways, and persist at difficult tasks (Schunk, 1995). Moreover, when

the tasks are challenging, there is a chance to utilize Vygotsky's principle of "More Knowledgeable Other, MKO" with the more advanced learners and the teacher acting as the MKOs.

The Utilization of Workplace-oriented Instruction in Business Communication Course

Problem No. 2 intended to derive the utilization of workplace-oriented instruction in the Business Communication. The following results pointed out how the work-oriented activities were imbedded in the lessons through the appropriate activities: a) forming of groups (pseudocompanies), b) choosing the group's line of business, c) naming of the group's business or company and deciding on their business location or place of operation, d) forming of organizational structure, e) formulation of company's Vision, Mission and Goals (VMG), f) conceptualizing the company's logo, stationery and promotion materials, g) launching of their companies, h) transacting through writing with the different companies in the class, i) launching of best company product/service, j) reporting about the conduct of each activity or output, k) business meeting, and l) mini lecture on given topics related to business and communication.

The use of workplace-oriented instruction in Business Communication course could be traced in the tasks or activities in each learning episode. It should be noted that cooperative learning approach was adopted by this study because it matches the main objective of simulating a corporate setup wherein the teaching and learning of subject contents is carried out. The researcher thought that the target competencies such as correspondence or letter and memo writing, oral presentations, report writing, event planning, advertising and documenting of activities would become more relevant, meaningful and real when simulation and cooperative learning approach are employed. In simulating and situating business communication, the students were exposed to the tasks and procedures shown in Table 2. The study found, more or less, a dozen of simulated tasks which are routine activities in the corporate arena, thus the instruction was adjudged as workplace-oriented. The relevance of each task

could be seen in the stated objectives or learning outcomes.

The utilization of the work-place instruction in Business Communication course was realized in the following procedures: First, in each class, the teacher organized groups of 6 to 7 members or depending on the size of the class, and made sure that each student belonged to a group. The formed groups were later transformed into pseudo companies. In forming the groups the teacher ranked all the students in the class based on their prelim grades. Then each student was assigned to a group. Example, the teacher decided that there should be 6 groups. The teacher assigned rank one student to group 1, rank two to group 2, rank three to group 3, rank 4 to group 4, rank 5 to group 5, and rank 6 to group 6. These were the first six ranks. The second six ranks were then assigned to group 1 to group 6. This procedure was repeated until the student in the last rank was given assignment and each group had six to seven members of diverse profile. It is also possible that the students in each group have different interests, economic status, learning styles and intelligences. This formation of groups had to be done after the prelim term.

Second, after organizing the groups, rapport and teamwork among the members were ensured by appropriate activities such as games, and by solving moderately difficult open-ended problems. When the group members had been comfortable with each other, they were guided to make an inventory of their group's resources by determining the group's skills, and provisions like, who can be a leader, an artist, a spokesperson, a writer, a documenter, a technology savvy etc., and who can provide laptop, sound facilities, projector and other needs. These alone require cooperation and collaboration. These are opportunities for each member to share, to be part of the group and feel important by merely being able to contribute to the group's success. One can also feel confident being chosen as a leader or an officer and being assigned to a task that is vital in attaining the group's goals.

Third, the groups were formed into business groups or companies. The members had to decide what line of business they would engage into. The students were encouraged to choose line of business which had bearing to their

interests and academic program such as tourism, hospitality management, financial management or accountancy.

Fourth, after deciding on the line of business, the groups were required to give their business a name suited to their line of business and their group's advocacy. Their place of business was likewise decided upon for it could influence the naming of their business.

Fifth is the forming of the business' organization structure. The group determined the type of organization structure they would adopt and objectively selected the company's officers – CEO, COO, VPs etc.

Sixth is the formulation of the company's vision, mission and goals. Here the students' prior knowledge was tapped. In case the students have no prior knowledge of VMGs, samples of these were provided by the teacher and some coaching was given by the teacher.

Seventh, at this point, the groups were tasked to plan and design their company logo, stationery, and promo materials like flyers. The logo, the business name and the business address were used in designing the company stationery which later on was reproduced and used by a company in communicating internally or externally.

Eighth, when the basic items about the company had been set up, each group organized a company launching event. Each company was launched or inaugurated. Each group assigned their emcees, presenters and speakers and their added effects to make the launching convincing and fun.

Ninth, at this point, it was assumed that companies had already found their respective places in the corporate world and they were already operational. Thus, it was necessary to make business within the company and between and among companies. The teacher assigned tasks for them to do, e.g. to inquire about the products or services of any of the companies; to place orders or reservations; to forward claims; to make adjustments to claims received; to venture into collaborative projects or partnerships.

Tenth, is the most exciting part. Each company launched a product or a service to the market. The groups were expected to launch or introduce cogent and awesome ideas, products, or services that are novel and unique. This part is

challenging, but many students loved the challenge.

Eleventh, the groups were required to submit reports of their activities such as: assignments, planning discussions, reflections, evaluations and recommendations for the improvement of the activities. Evaluations and reports were filed in a clear book and submitted to the professor. The reports were formal and were made to adhere to the rules of technical writing or business writing. Here, filing of records was also given emphasis.

The aforementioned activities were identified as activities of a constructivist learning episode. They required collaborations. Each student was urged to be involved, engaged and active. These are characteristics of learning episodes that utilize constructivist approach. The activities were workplace oriented, thus, relevant and reflective of the corporate world for which the students are supposed to be formed and honed. The lessons are motivating because they are not just lecture and writing, instead they are authentic, real-world, challenging and they used higher order thinking skills (HOTS). The lessons allowed teamwork and cooperation, peer teaching or coaching thus paved the way for the use of more knowledgeable other (MKO) theory.

The major collaborative tasks expected of every group are as follows: put up a business name and line of business; formulate VMG; design business logo and stationery; prepare their organizational structure; launch their company; launch a product; deliver a mini lecture; submit written reports. The time table for these activities was from midterm to final term, that is about 10 to 15 hours distributed in eight to ten weeks. Other lessons contained in the syllabus were covered by the teacher using other techniques. Table 2 shows the tasks and at the same time the utilization of workplace-oriented instruction in the Business Communication course.

The Learners' Perceptions of the Workplace-oriented Instruction

Problem No. 3 aimed to determine the dominant features of the constructivist learning episodes that were perceived by the learners. The participants were simply asked to write narratives that described their thoughts, feelings and experiences in their Business Communication class. The descriptions were considered as

perceptions. Consequently, the participants' narratives proffered the following themes: a) classroom atmosphere, b) relevance and motivational factors, c) confidence building, d) connectedness with the business world and future career, e) knowledge and skills development, and teaching style or mode of delivery. Table 3 presents the students' descriptions of their learning experiences in their Business Communication course that are categorized under the theme "classroom atmosphere." This refers to the kind of ambience created when the constructivist learning episodes were implemented in the class. Of the 80 participants, 31 gave comments on the class atmosphere. The students' descriptions include the following: *warm atmosphere; open to new ideas, suggestions and opinions; not boring; enjoyable; memorable; full of fun; challenging; great, memorable, unforgettable, cool, and very active, participatory.* Also, there were descriptions like *challenging, hard and difficult.*

Based on the students' descriptions, it is safe to conclude that a learning atmosphere that provides the learners with freedom to mingle with each other in several tasks and activities such as brainstorming, planning, business meeting, team building, and group presentations was perceived by the students as a classroom atmosphere with fun, enjoyment, openness, and challenges. The students' descriptions, thus, support the idea that workplace-oriented instruction used in Business Communication course helps create a classroom atmosphere that is conducive to learning. When students experience joy and fun, they think freely and they welcome lesson-related challenges, therefore, learning is not far behind and learning can be optimized. When students have fun in the classroom, they attend class regularly, and when students are regular in attendance there is a big possibility that they will participate in instructional activities, thus they learn.

Table 3
Students' Descriptions of Classroom Atmosphere

No.	Description
1	. . . the class was very attentive.
12	Our class is not a boring subject. So far, we are learning quite well and at

	the same time enjoying each meeting.
16	The learning experience was totally fun and memorable.
35	Writing lessons used to be boring but my teacher uses activities that make the class enjoyable.
42	Learning all the writing techniques in formal/business writing is quite enjoyable
44	The class was great because we had a chance to stand and talk in front of everyone else and show skills, confidence and teamwork.
50	There were lots of learning because our teacher gave various activities that the students enjoyed.
75	We were serious but we had fun.
79	The group reporting is fun because we made it well. The product launch was kind of hard because our ideas sometimes do not match the ideas of other members, but we are happy because at some point we made it until the end because of our good teamwork.
80	Our class is unforgettable. The company launching was such a good thing and so memorable because even though we were only students we already experienced to have a company and products of our minds.

As regards relevance of the lessons in the Business Communication course, Table 4 shows the students' descriptions. Below are just a few of the articulated descriptions. Participant No. 1 wrote "*We were taught very important things in life especially on how to become a manager of a business. Our Business Comm class is a way to the fulfillment of my dreams.*" Participant No. 20 likewise wrote: "*Business Comm class is not a major subject but lessons learned here could be applied in the workplace.*" And Participant No. 76 described the class by saying: "*It helps me dream of that future which I want to happen in real life. I can see my future job in our activities like product launching, business meeting and reporting.*" Participant No. 25 wrote about being motivated to report to class "*I am usually late going to school but now I am always excited to go to school because of my Business Comm class.*"

Among the major goals of a learner is to learn important things and acquire skills that he may apply in real life especially his career life. His goal in attending school is to acquire enough skills that can define who he is as a career person, skills that he can sell to an employer during job application, that he can further hone later and use as his stepping stone for promotions. Moreover, if acquiring skills and knowledge is a major goal of students, it is also the major role of learning institutions - to provide venues and opportunities for learning.

Based on the students' descriptions of the course, it is safe to say that for a learner to be able to say that a lesson is relevant, he weighs the lesson's value and significance in the context of his present life as well as his future life which is basically associated with a successful career. When students perceive the relevance and value of the classroom activities, the lessons and the course, motivating them is not much of a challenge. Motivation is a process not a product. (Schunk et al. 2008). Motivation as a process is not seen directly but inferred from the students' action and verbalizations. On the contrary, a motivation is the state of lacking intention to act. It is owing to the fact that the individual does not value the activity, does not feel competent or thinks that the activity is unfeasible (Ryan, and Deci, 2000). For more students' comments and descriptions refer to Table 4.

Table 4
Excerpts of Students' Descriptions
along Relevance

N	Description
6	It is a good subject and class for a nice background after graduation for it teaches a lot of communication skills improvement, especially for students like me who want to learn more about English.
9	The lessons that I have learned are very practical. I can use them in several situations even now that I am just a student.
20	This subject is not a major subject, but the lessons learned here could be applied in the workplace.
23	This class made me realize how important

	technical writing is in daily life.
25	I am usually late going to school but now I am always excited to go to school because of Business Comm class
32	I am now so excited to do actual business communication.
40	This class makes my mind wide open with new pieces of information which are very useful in my future career.
42	I find the subject important because the teachings can be used in my field which is entrepreneurship.
49	All the things we discussed in this class prepare me for the corporate world. After I graduate, the things I have learned will be put to use.
66	It's like doing our own future career and job. We combine some of our ideas to come up with a company which is related to our program.
68	Thank you for these activities Madam because through them we are able to show and share our talents and skills and you let us do some of the soft skills of CEO which gives us experience of our future.
69	The activities were very practical and useful. We were assigned to make our own business company. We learn how to build and make our own product suited and aligned to our course.
70	After all the activities, I realized that Business Comm class had a great contribution to me especially in relation to my chosen course.
71	The lessons are very applicable in the corporate world. It gave me the thrill to experience this stuff of being a CEO.
76	It helps me dream of that future which I want to happen in real life. I can see my future job in our activities like product launching, business meeting and reporting.

Table 5 indicates the students' descriptions of the Business Communication class along confidence building. It should be noted that the students repeatedly mentioned the development of their confidence by involving in classroom activities. The following are some of the descriptions of experiences that are related to confidence development: *boosted their level of*

confidence; helped in gaining confidence; enabled them to overcome their fear; developed their social skills, improved their attributes such as confidence; taught them to speak confidently.

Participant No. 77 commented: *“I am proud of myself and of my group mates because we were able to build our company and launch our company business very remarkably.”* Participant No. 43 averred: *“It’s not easy to stand in front of your classmates and teacher, but I was able to conquer my fear. I did it and I learned that it is okay to try.”* Participant No. 45 said: *“I have learned a lot of things. I have experienced how it is to do a reporting in front of the class in corporate attire. It was a new experience for me, thus, it helped me improve my attributes such as confidence. It helps me overcome the fear of being the center of attention.”* This comment is from Participant No. 50. *“English 105 is one of the most memorable experiences I’ve had. I experienced how to be confident in front of many people to defend my point and explain in a real-like business world.”* Participant No. 43 stated: *“I got used to it and I feel like I am ready for the corporate world.”*

It is clear, based on the students’ descriptions of their Business Communication class, that they liked the approach used by the teacher especially in terms of confidence building. Based on the students description one can surmise that confidence is developed in series of exposures and series of attempts until such time that the students can say “I have done that or I have experienced that and I know I can do it.” Participant No. 70 developed her confidence by being able to build ...remarkably. Thus, there should be an active involvement, and performance should be good, should be remarkable. Participant No. 45 realized that she had developed self-confidence after going through the task and realized that it felt okay. For Participant No. 45, she was able to build confidence after experiencing something new like new way of reporting and wearing of corporate attire. For Participant No. 43 confidence is gained by conquering of one’s fear. From the experience of Participant No.43, confidence meant being ready.

Confidence is not built overnight; just like motivation, it is not a product but a process. Therefore, providing students with opportunities to demonstrate their competencies, intelligences, talents, creativity, leadership etc. is recommended for confidence building. With the series of

collaborative tasks used in this study the students were able to perceive confidence building or development as a characteristic of their Business Communication class. To sum it up, this study supports the cognitive development theory which assumes that focus of teaching should be on what happens within a single person (Johnson, Johnson & Holubec, 1998). With constructivism and cooperative learning in the classroom the students were able to develop themselves cognitively, socially and behaviorally.

Table 5
Excerpts of Students’ Descriptions of the Business Communication Class along Confidence Building

No.	Description
20	They boost our confidence and prepare us to become successful employees.
28	Our Business Comm class boosts my confidence level as we present business proposals in front of the class.
43	It’s not easy to stand in front of your classmates and teacher, but I was able to conquer my fear. I did it and I learned that it is okay to try.
44	Our learning experiences in Business Comm class were great because in our class we had a chance to stand and talk in front of everyone else and show skills, confidence and teamwork.
45	I have learned a lot of things. I have experienced how to do reporting in the class in corporate attire. It was a new experience for me, thus, it helped me improve my attributes such as confidence. It helps me overcome the fear of being the center of atte
50	In this class I experienced how to be confident in front of many people to defend my point and explain in a real-like business world.
52	This subjectme in understanding many things like the jargons and the future of my profession. It boosts my confidence.
57	My learning and experiences in Business Comm class taught me how to speak confidently in front of the class during our group presentation
58	My experiences in this class are awesome! I learned new things and I am proud to say

	that I gained 50% more self-confidence through reporting and the presentation of our company in front of my classmates and my very beautiful professor.
73	I got used to it and I feel like I am ready for the corporate world.
77	I am proud of myself and of my group mates because we were able to build our company and launch our company business very remarkably.

Table 6 showcases the students' views of the lessons in the Business Communication course and their connection to the corporate world. Connection of the academe and the industry is a major goal of curriculum developers to be able to say that instruction is indeed relevant. Based on the descriptions of the students, there is no doubt that the designed learning episodes have successfully established and attained relevance and connection with the corporate field. It is interesting to note that the students were already engrossed into their future careers and business. Some saw themselves as CEOs or managers, while others have commenced dreaming of prolific companies that they run and own. It is also worth mentioning that through the use of the learning episodes, the students were inspired to aim higher because they could clearly see the connection between what they do in school, particularly in Business Communication course, and the industry that awaits them for employment.

Participant No. 71 wrote. *“The lessons are very applicable in the corporate world. One of my favorite experiences was when we simulated our own business company. It gave me the thrill to experience this stuff of being a CEO.”* This participant recalled being a CEO, this means that he or she is the leader of the group and that task or role gave him/her some thrill. Moreover, his/her favorite experience was the simulation of their own company. Participant No. 4 articulated: *“My learning helps me to put up my own business in the future, especially that effective communication is part of effective leadership.”* He perceived communication as component of leadership. James Humes, cited in Beebe & Mottel (2013) asserts that the art of communication is effective leadership and communication is very vital in any corporate arena and transactions.

Participant No. 10 connected the lessons with his future and said: *“In relation to our lesson, I can say that my learning experiences in this course are a good take off point for my career in the future, especially, that I am a business student. It will serve as a guide for me to be able to work effectively and efficiently.”* This description has so much conviction that he is going to apply the lessons he learned and the experiences he acquired. He clearly sees the relations of the lessons with his present status as business student and his future career. Participant No. 12 wrote: *“We are able to know what it's like in the business world – the roles and responsibilities of each member of a company or organization through our activities. This subject prepares us when we search for jobs in the future.”* This recollection of the class activities talks about the business world and what the people in the business must be doing. The lessons made him realize that as part of the business organization one has significant role or roles to play. He further realized that somehow the course has prepared him for that.

Participant No. 66 wrote: *“In building/ simulating our own business company we take a lot of time to think of a company. It's like doing our own future career and job.”* This description is about one's realization that to put up a business requires long-term planning. If they spent a lot of time organizing their make-believe company, how much more if it is a real venture. This also implies that for one to be effective and efficient in an organization, academic preparation and experience are necessary. Perhaps the student has also realized that being a good student is the start of being an effective career person.

In Table 6, there are other striking and rich descriptions of the Business Communication course that utilized constructivist approach in teaching. These are feedback about the delivery of instruction. Pieces of feedback like these are heartwarming on the part of the teacher as lesson designer because it is clear that the students were motivated and challenged, and entertained. Above all, they learned what they should learn because the lessons were connected to their future career and the subject prepared them for employment and for life.

Table 6
Excerpts of Students' Descriptions of the
Business Communication Class along the
Lessons' Connection with the
Business World and their Career

No.	Description
3	In Business Comm course, we were not only taught how to speak English but also how build our confidence in public speaking, by dividing us into groups and making us build our own model company. It gave us a chance to promote or market our imaginary company
4	My learning helps me to put up my own business in the future, especially that effective communication is part of effective leadership.
5	The reporting taught me some ideas in business which I thought I would never learn.
	In this class I learned a lot from our professor, especially how technical writing works in the workplace
18	We really learned about employment and the different positions in a company
21	I learned how to start a business.
29	We are able to create our own business and its parts. Creating an imaginary business makes us ready for the future. It enhances my skills in organizing, planning and interacting with group mates.
41	It prepares me to become a successful business man in the future and how to run a company.
46	I felt I was already a professional because of the activities in this class especially the business meeting.
47	When we were given group project where we had to act as professionals and start our own business, we really strived hard and did our best. We figured things out by ourselves and we worked as a team.
49	All the things we discussed in Business Comm prepared me for the corporate world. After I graduate, the things I have learned here will be put to use
55	This class keeps me aware of how important writing is, especially, when

	we step into the business world. Though we are not yet professionals, I know already how it feels to be one because of this class which helps us to grow and develop our business mind.
59	The most interesting part in our class was when we were tasked to build our own company, and we must think deep to come up with an interesting business. With that idea I became so interested and I started dreaming of my own business. In the presentation of our own company, I realized that we must have enough knowledge about our company so that we would be able to introduce it formally and confidently.
60	We advertised and promoted our company. From that experience I felt that I am really a professional person
61	I would say that this subject is a training ground where one must always do his best and continuously improve, thus making him/her a better businessman or a hopeful CEO in the future.
67	The company launching and product launching are the best part of the activities
68	Thank you for these activities Madam because through this we are able to show and share our talents and skills and you let us do some of the soft skills of CEO which gives us experience of our future.
71	The lessons are very applicable in the corporate world. One of my favorite experiences was when we simulate our own business company. It gave me the thrill to experience this stuff of being a CEO.

Table 7 provides a listing of the students' descriptions of their learning experiences in terms of the knowledge acquired and skills developed aided by the workplace-oriented instruction. The descriptions show the students' recognition of the skills and knowledge fostered in the Business Communication class that they would be needing when they become full-fledged professionals, employees or business owners. It is so inspiring to know that in the business communication class, the business students admittedly learned

not just how to communicate but also to start a business and become a manager. It is safe to say that with the use of the workplace-oriented instruction the students were able to see and prove that the skills and knowledge they acquired through their various subjects are all contributive to their holistic formation. Sixty-two of the 80 participants explicitly mentioned about the development of their knowledge and skills such as: planning, organizing, interacting, communicating, working with groups, responsibility, corporate attire, product launching, company launching, making presentations, prioritizing things, and a lot more. Below are few of the descriptions articulated by the students:

Participant No. 25: *“I learned many things such as how to start a company.”* Participant No. 28: *“I learned to be more responsible. I learned to communicate better with other students.”* Participant No. 28: *We were able to create our own business and its parts. Creating an imaginary business makes us ready for the future. It enhances my skills in organizing, planning and interacting with group mates.* Participant No. 31: *“We have to actually apply our knowledge about our own fields. We are not just a bunch of robots sitting in the class and uploading knowledge to our brains from our teacher.”* Participant No. 39: *“One of the things I achieve in this class is developing my understanding not only in the field of English but its connection with other courses especially in business.”* Participant No. 49: *“When we were given group project where we had to act as professionals and start our own business, we really strived hard and did our best. We figured things out by ourselves and we worked as a team. After our presentation our teacher gave comments which served as our guide for our next presentation.”* Participant No. 51: *“I have learned to become a more responsible student. I have learned to prioritize things and do first things first. I’ve become more disciplined in handling my time.”*

Table 7
Excerpts of Students’ Descriptions of the
Business Communication Class
along Knowledge and Skills Development

No.	Description
3	We are not only taught how to speak English but we are also taught to build our confidence in public speaking, build our own model company, promote or market our imaginary company.
4	I learn in our class how to develop our communication skills in a very practical way.

5	I learned how to speak in front of many people through the various reporting activities that our teacher gave. The reporting taught me some ideas in business which I thought I would never learn.
6	it teaches a lot of communication skills improvement, especially for students like me who want to learn more about English.
12	We are able to know what it’s like in the business world – the roles and responsibilities of each member of a company or organization through our activities. This subject prepares us as we search for jobs in the future.
16	I learned many things about technical writing and how to manage a company because of the presentation we had to do in the class
18	We really learned about employment and the different positions in a company. Though some of us were shy of wearing corporate attire, we find it helpful to start practicing being in corporate attire and communication with real stockholders and professionals.
19	Every day I learn new words/jargons that I’m sure will be a lot of help.
21	I learned how to speak good English and how to deliver and communicate the message. I also learned how to start a business.
22	I have been able to cooperate with the people or students whom I see only in this class.
25	I learned many things such as how to start a company
27	It helps us in building teamwork and each of us helps so that the task will be accomplished more easily
28	I learned to be more responsible. I learned to communicate better with other students.
29	It enhances my skills in organizing, planning and interacting with group mates.
34	This subject is totally great. It allows my mind to think the best way to improve it. It allows me to improve myself, my abilities and skills
50	I experienced to defend my point and explain in a real-like business world.
51	I have learned to prioritize things and do first things first. I’ve become more disciplined in handling my time.
57	This class taught me how to speak confidently in front of the class during our group presentation. I have improved my communication skills and writing techniques.
68	We are able to show and share our talents and skills and you (professor) let us do some of the softskills of CEO which gives us experience of our future.

Indubitably, the theme which ranks second in the number of comments and commendations is the teaching style or delivery mode. Of the 80 participants, 72 gave comments to it. Though the students were not prompted to comment on a particular aspect of their learning experience in this course, it turned out that the teaching style or delivery mode has been the second most dominant theme. Ninety percent of the participants expressed their thoughts and feelings about the teaching strategy or mode of delivery. This means that the impact of the strategy was so perceptible. The scale of the students' reactions also included the teacher's expertise, attitude and innovative qualities. They appreciated not only their ability to learn and their wholesome experiences but also the teacher's roles as lesson developer, task manager, coach, guide, challenger and assessor. To a teacher, nothing could be more fulfilling than being appreciated by his/her students who acknowledge their relevant learning experience through his/her efforts.

The students' descriptions identified the following as part of the teaching techniques: *reporting, play, groupings, simulation of company, use of imaginary company, presentations, reporting in corporate attire, team building, company launch, business meeting, application of knowledge, various reporting activities, serious lessons, product launch* etc. Further, the students described the teaching style as: *awesome, very practical, fun, very unique, effective and created harmonious relationships between and among students and professor*. The following are a few of the many comments worth highlighting:

Participant No. 1 stated: *"The techniques in teaching of our professor are awesome! It's really fun learning English."* Participant No. 2 wrote: *"... and after all the discussion through our report there was an awesome experience to have that kind of play."* Participant No. 4 avowed: *"I learn in our class how to develop our communication skills in a very practical way."* Participant No. 7 said: *"I've learned so many things in different ways. Our professor has her talent to maximize the lessons wherein we can participate well and understand them well."* Participant No. 13 recalled: *"I learned a lot from our professor, especially how technical writing works in the workplace."* Participant No. 24 shared: *"It is a serious subject with serious lessons but our professor manages to make it fun. You will never get bored!"* Participant No. 26 wrote: *"My learning experience in English is different from other classes because our professor is good in her very unique techniques in*

teaching." Participant No. 43 averred: *"I learned something different from my other subjects. Here everybody participates with fun."* Table 8 presents more participants' descriptions of their experiences along teaching styles or mode of delivery.

Table 8
Excerpts of Students' Descriptions of the
Business Communication Class
along Teaching Style or Delivery Mode

No.	Description
1	The techniques in teaching of our professor are awesome! It's really fun learning English.
9	I have already learned a lot in this class because of the teaching methods of the instructor. The lessons that I have learned are very practical that I can use it in several situations even now that I am just a student.
15	Our class is very good and very nice because we have an instructor who is very intelligent in terms of teaching communication.
26	My learning experience in English is different from other classes because our professor is good has very unique techniques in teaching.
30	This subject gave us a way to associate and socialize and learn better.
36	Writing lessons used to be boring but my teacher uses activities that make the class enjoy and participate.
37	I have learned a whole lot of new things because of the effective methods and harmonious relationship between and among students and professor.
43	I had the best learning experience when we had the group act, when we presented our own company and we wore corporate attire.
46	I felt I was already a professional because of the activities in this class especially the business meeting. Thank you for the wonderful experience!
47	we were given group project where we have to act as professionals and start our own business, we figured things by ourselves and we worked as

	a team.
56	. . . challenging because of the activity that our teacher assigned to us. It required an extensive brainstorming before we finally decided what company services we would provide the market.
61	I garnered many experiences in this class, from writing definitions using jargons to belting out reports as a company CEO or president. My group and I are constantly being guided and administered to by our professor who keeps us on our toes and makes us continue to find ways to improve our business. No easy task for our professor because there are many groups to mentor.

The Salient Meanings derived from the Utilization of Workplace-oriented Instruction

As perceived by the participants the utilization of workplace-oriented instruction created a classroom atmosphere that is cool, fun, open, warm or accommodating, thus, conducive to learning. Thirty-one participants remembered the fun they experienced in the classroom over other things. It is interesting and even intriguing to note that none of the participants said that the class was boring. This is an indicator that the workplace-oriented instruction engaged the students to active involvement in relevant class activities and lessons. For the participants, the word “cool” refers to something great, fantastic or terrific. It refers to something or someone that they like because it is appealing, interesting, and sensible. Also, fun refers to enjoyment while in the class. Thus, the class under study did not pose so much anxiety to the students. Though some said it was challenging; nobody expressed anxiety or boredom, on the contrary, many found the class cool and fun.

The second theme that showed dominance tends towards the lesson’s relevance and motivational factor. Twenty-four participants directly commented on the relevance of the lessons and their motivating effects to learners. They viewed relevance in terms of the lessons’ practicability, usability, connection to real-life, and preparation for business and employment.

The participants articulated their motivation to learn by the relevance of the lessons in the Business Communication course. This is an indicator that the use of the workplace-oriented approach was viewed by the participants as a contributing factor to their learning the lessons and taking the lessons more seriously.

Another effect of the workplace-oriented instruction which the participants admitted is the instruction’s input to the participants’ confidence. This indicates that confidence-building is indeed a feature of the learning episodes. This has been corroborated by 20 participants who considerably gained confidence from the activities and lessons.

Along connectedness of the lessons and activities with the corporate world or the life that awaits them when they join the workforce, 47 of the participants expressed their experiences, feelings and thoughts. The participants expressed very clear insights into the significance of the lessons to their life after graduation. This means that the instruction strategies as well as the instruction contents were viewed by the participants as aligned and consistent with the expectations of the corporate world in terms of knowledge and skills necessary in workplace communication.

The category which has the second highest number of comments is about the lesson’s input to the learner’s knowledge and skills development. Out of the 80 participants 62 shared their views on how the course developed their skills and deepened their knowledge about business communication. Among the skills identified by the participants are public speaking, business/technical writing, time management, product promotion, event organizing, organizing, planning, negotiating, audio-visual presentation, etc. In terms of knowledge, they learned communication theories which covered both oral and written communication. The participants’ descriptions support the generalization that the cooperative learning as an approach to teaching is effective in attaining the learning objectives of Business Communication course.

The category about the teaching style or mode of delivering instruction got the highest number of comments with a frequency of 72. The participants described the teaching approach as awesome, practical, fun, serious but fun. They found the Business Communication course and

the way the teacher taught them awesome and fun. It is to be noted that this category overlapped with the other categories. This overarching is expected because the categories are all characteristics or features of the same topic or subject. The descriptions support the claim that the use of workplace-oriented instruction is taken favorably by the participants. They had good impressions on them and they attributed their interest in the lessons and their positive attitudes towards the course to the teaching approaches of the professor. This means that workplace-oriented instruction is an effective teaching strategy in Business Communication course.

In summary, the derived meanings from the participants' descriptions and perceptions of the workplace-oriented instruction as applied in Business Communication course highlighted the efficacy of workplace-oriented instruction as a teaching approach. The latitude of the approach is vivified by the categories that spell out the ideal instruction particularly for business communication course.

Discussion

The constructivist learning episodes which were specifically designed to meet the integration of content (workplace-oriented) and teaching approach (constructivist and cooperative learning) have the following features: a) workplace-oriented, b) task-based, c) outcome-based, d) open-ended and integrative, e) relevant and meaningful, f) motivating, and g) challenging.

Utilization

The workplace-oriented instruction was utilized through the constructivist learning episodes which adhered to the tenets of constructivism such as a learning environment that is context-and-content-dependent. This characteristic was actualized in the workplace-oriented teaching model by combining the workplace activities with the target competencies of the Business Communication course. Another tenet of constructivism is the utilization of collaborative or cooperative learning and Vygotsky's "More Knowledgeable Other, MKO." In the grouping of students heterogeneously, collaborations were repeatedly adopted. Mostly, if

not all, of the activities in the learning episodes called for sharing and collaborations. Likewise, the MKO was also at work when each of the groups identified what each member could do and share. Those who were more capable became the leaders and they coached or taught their members to do the tasks assigned to them for the sake of their group.

Students' Perceptions

The students' brief narratives that described their feelings, thoughts and experiences in their Business Communication classes showed evidence that the features identified by the researcher had been similarly perceived by the students. The participants' narratives proffered the following themes: a) classroom atmosphere, b) relevance and motivational factors, c) confidence building, d) connectedness with the business world and future career, e) knowledge and skills development, and teaching style or mode of delivery. These identified themes are not far from, but rather complimented, the following features of the constructivist learning episodes: a) workplace oriented, b) task-based, c) outcome-based, d) open-ended and integrative, e) relevant and meaningful, f) motivating, and g) challenging.

As perceived by the participants, workplace-oriented instruction created a classroom that is so apt for relevant learning in an interactive and enjoyable way. In terms of the course content and the teaching-learning scheme, the participants found them motivating and relevant as they were able to build a nexus between the role of the academe and the demands of the industry in terms of human resource. The workplace-oriented instruction, through the constructivist learning episodes, made easier the building of the participants' level of confidence, knowledge and skills. Finally, the participants commended the teaching style applied in the business communication class. These are aligned with the teacher's main goal of designing a teaching model that could improve the learners' interest in the course, positive attitude towards learning the course, overcoming challenges, appreciating the knowledge content of the course content, and acquire skills that they

would be needing as students and as future employees.

The salient meanings of the utilization of the workplace-oriented instruction

The utilization of the workplace-oriented instruction through the constructivist learning episodes could be considered as fruitful. Through the learners' very positive descriptions of their Business Communication class, the workplace-oriented instruction has proven its relevance, meaning, and worth as a teaching model. Although the academic performance of the participants was not included in the study as a measure of the model's effectiveness, the participants themselves were the ones claiming that they learned, and saw the connection of the lesson with their career and their future life, therefore, they found the course motivating and appreciable. If this teaching model has yielded positive results for the Business Communication course, it is most likely to yield similar results in courses such as: Oral Communication, English for Special Purpose, Interactive English, and other core courses in the business programs.

Conclusions

Based on the findings of the study, the following conclusions have been arrived at:

Features of Workplace-oriented Instruction

Workplace-oriented instruction which created a happy mix of constructivist teaching approach and the workplace activities is considered to have succeeded in contributing an alternative teaching methodology, especially, but not limited to the Business Communication course. The learning outcomes, tasks, strategies, challenges, relevance and other features of the workplace-oriented instruction are all workable and sustainable. Its open-ended and integrative qualities encourage additional inputs from both the professors and the students. The idea of workplace-oriented instruction is always in sync with modernization and with future technological advancement. This teaching model for Business Communication is highly adaptable because it is backed up by pedagogical theories.

Utilization of Workplace-oriented Instruction

Workplace-oriented instruction applied in business communication course will yield good results. The model's favorable utilization and applicability are evident. It has been proven in this study that the model is very much feasible as evidenced by the participants' positive perceptions and experiences. Adoption of this teaching model coupled with the necessary support from professors and school administrators will significantly yield estimable results such as highly motivated learners and teachers, improvement in academic performance, minimal cases of student apathy, more confident students, more collaboration and less competition in the classroom, and heightened level of satisfaction of the students and the professors. Adoption of workplace-oriented instruction, offers numerous possibilities to highly succeed in teaching Business Communication

Students' Perceptions of the Use of Workplace-oriented Instruction in Teaching Business Communication Course

The participants perceived the workplace-oriented instruction as a relevant, meaningful, and motivating academic exercise in an open and cool classroom atmosphere. It is safe to say that they found the workplace-oriented instruction effective and commendable, especially that the participants' perceptions of the consistent are aligned with the features of the teaching model.

Salient meanings

The adoption of the workplace-oriented instruction in the Business Communication course will most likely improve instruction, more particularly in establishing the connection between the learning outcomes and the demand of the workforce. The various activities in the constructivist learning episodes are replicable in other courses.

Recommendations

The identified features of workplace-oriented instruction should be adopted by professors in teaching Business Communication

course in the tertiary level or even in the graduate level and in designing course curriculum, syllabi and instructional materials.

Program chairs in communication and in business programs should consider the inclusion of the workplace-oriented instruction in their respective programs by identifying courses which can adopt this teaching technique. Using this study as guide, professors handling business core courses should collaborate in buttressing the development of students' knowledge, skills and attitude. If there is collaborative learning among students, there should be collaborative teaching among professors. Learning from this study, the school should support the faculty by providing them with appropriate venues and facilities for the activities so that the corporate physical environment could be simulated more effectively. One difficulty of the professor is the limitations posed by the use of classroom and the transfer of equipment, gadgets and furniture from one classroom to another. The school should also consider the possible need of the professors handling the Business Communication course to update his/her knowledge and exposure to actual workplace activities. Inclusion of the Business Communication professors in the faculty development activities of the College of Business Education such as seminars and tours could be of great help to the professor, especially, if the professor has limited exposure to the business world. The professors and program chairs should initiate and facilitate the development of instructional modules to optimize the use of the workplace-oriented instruction. To verify further the positive effects of workplace-oriented instruction to the learners, a study of the learners' academic performance in classes where workplace-oriented instruction is applied should be conducted.

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