Faculty instructional development and oral communication in freshman seminars at the College of William and Mary

Tamara Louise Burk
William & Mary - School of Education

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FACULTY INSTRUCTIONAL DEVELOPMENT
AND ORAL COMMUNICATION IN FRESHMAN SEMINARS
AT THE COLLEGE OF WILLIAM AND MARY

A Dissertation
Presented to
The Faculty of the School of Education
The College of William and Mary in Virginia

In Partial Fulfillment
Of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Philosophy

by
Tamara Louise Burk

November 1997
Dedicated in loving memory to my grandmother,
Marjorie Griffith Burk (1904-1997),
who instilled in me the belief that education is power, and whose monthly letters of encouragement and five dollar bills will always remain priceless.
To succeed in college, undergraduates should be able to write and speak with clarity, and to read and listen with comprehension. Language and thought are inextricably connected, and as undergraduates develop their linguistic skills, they hone the quality of their thinking and become intellectually and socially empowered.

- Ernest Boyer, 1987

I believe the challenge facing us now is to recognize that knowing one's field or subject is a necessary but not sufficient force for quality teaching in higher education. One must also understand students in all their diversity and complexity as they enter higher education today. This entails sustained consideration of human ways of knowing and learning, patterns of development, linkages between life experiences and learning that is to take place, consideration of the ways students know and make meaning related to the patterns of inquiry and basic methods that shape our disciplines.

- W. Lee Humphreys, 1993
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Results from a fall 1995 survey of faculty and students participating in freshman seminars: "To what extent did this seminar help your students (you) improve their (your) skills in group discussion?"

Results from a fall 1995 survey of faculty and students participating in freshman seminars: "To what extent did this seminar help your students (you) improve their (your) skills in oral presentation?"

Results from a fall 1995 survey of faculty and students participating in freshman seminars: "To what extent did this seminar help your students (you) improve their (your) skills in critical thinking?"

A simple model of a teaching/learning system.

Results from a fall 1996 survey of faculty and students participating in freshman seminars: "Overall, how valuable do you think the freshman seminar was in developing and providing practice for your students' (your) oral communication skills?"

Results from a fall 1996 survey of students (treatment and comparative groups) participating in freshman seminars: "Overall, how valuable do you think the freshman seminar was in developing and providing practice for your oral communication skills?"

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This study was an exploratory effort to describe the process and outcomes of a faculty instructional development program designed to promote pedagogical techniques focused on the improvement of oral communication skills in first-semester college students enrolled in a variable-content freshman seminar curriculum. The approach was to examine the participants' responses to the training, identify any instructional strategies adopted by faculty as a result of the training, and to explore the impacts of these strategies on classroom dynamics and on perceptions of student oral communication skill development. To this end, multiple data sources were utilized, including historical information, descriptive observations, assessment tools, surveys, interviews, and recordings of actual classroom communication. Two groups of freshman seminar instructors and their students were examined: a treatment group in which the instructors took part in the instructional development training, and a parallel comparative
group in which the instructors did not participate in the training. Both faculty and student responses to the freshman seminar curriculum were positive. Instructional development participants observed that their students overcame communication apprehension and developed identity, critical thinking skills, and classroom community as a result of interactive teaching techniques. They also recognized the difficulties associated with interactive pedagogy and made a case for more peer and institutional support in this type of instructional development. Students in the treatment group reported higher perceptions of involvement and overall course value than those in the comparative group, despite the fact that actual classroom recordings did not indicate any significant difference in student involvement.

TAMARA LOUISE BURK
SCHOOL OF EDUCATION
THE COLLEGE OF WILLIAM AND MARY IN VIRGINIA
FACULTY INSTRUCTIONAL DEVELOPMENT
AND ORAL COMMUNICATION IN FRESHMAN SEMINARS
AT THE COLLEGE OF WILLIAM AND MARY
CHAPTER 1

The Nature and Significance of the Study

Introduction

This study is an examination of the impact of instructional techniques and teacher behaviors on both classroom dynamics and perceptions of the development of student oral communication skills within a freshman seminar curriculum. Specifically, this research explores the impact of an instructional development program designed to promote the use of pedagogical strategies which target the improvement of oral communication skills in first-semester students. It is my hope that this research will result in a heightened awareness of how faculty training to promote interactive instruction and the experiences of first-semester students intersect within the educational process.

Explanation of the Problem

Evidence of interrelationships between oral communication and student learning can commonly be found in the literature produced by educational researchers (Booth-Butterfield & Rocco Cottone, 1991; Comstock & Rowell, 1995; Glaser, 1981; McCroskey, 1990). As a result, many educators now
view interactive instruction as being more practical and meaningful for enhancing student learning than traditional lecturing techniques (Bateman, 1990; Bonwell & Eison, 1991; Menges & Weimer, 1996). Currently, a large body of "how to" application-oriented material is available for educators who choose to promote interactive learning environments (Angelo & Cross, 1993; B. G. Davis, 1993; Meyers & Jones, 1993; Weimer, 1993). However, beyond traditional course evaluations, little research has been done which explores students' classroom experience of oral communication as impacted by faculty pedagogical strategies. Therefore, while many educators believe that oral communication is at the heart of interactive learning (Brookfield, 1995; Palmerton, 1989), it remains unclear how to best guide faculty in their strategies to empower the classroom communication skills of their students (Weimer & Lenze, 1991).

The issues surrounding oral communication skill development may be particularly relevant to students who are entering their first college classrooms and setting the foundation for their future academic success (Rubin & Graham, 1988). Unfortunately, the oral communication skills of entering college students are often neglected in classrooms due to high levels of communication apprehension—an effect further magnified by social and academic adjustments and large lecture-oriented introductory courses (Brown & Christiansen, 1990; Johnson, Staton, & Jorgensen-Earp, 1995; Klopf & Cambra, 1991; Richmond & McCroskey, 1995). For first-semester
students struggling with issues of identity and purpose, the search for meaning through classroom participation is critical (Erickson & Strommer, 1991; Upcraft & Gardner, 1989). Therefore, the examination of the interplay among the oral communication perspectives and skills brought to first-semester classrooms by faculty members and novice students is imperative.

One of the ways that schools have addressed the unique needs of entering college students in the last 15 years is through the use of freshman seminars. A freshman seminar is a class which is open only to freshmen and is intended to provide new students with a small, interactive classroom experience focused on developing academic skills, providing orientation to campus resources and facilities, and easing the transitional adjustment to college (Barefoot, 1992; Barefoot & Fidler, 1996). Although the development of oral presentation and discussion skills is not always included as a formal part of course content, the maintenance of a small, participatory classroom environment reflects the critical importance of oral communication skills to the goals of the freshman seminar curriculum (Erickson & Strommer, 1991). A 1994 national survey of freshman seminar programs indicated that over 70% of American campuses now offer such an experience for entering students (Barefoot & Fidler, 1996). The potential of this format to meet the unique needs of freshmen should not be underestimated. The positive effects that these courses have on critical higher education issues
such as attrition, retention, and academic achievement are well documented (Cuseo, 1991; Davis, 1992; Fidler, 1991; Fidler & Moore, 1996; Levitz & Noel, 1989; Maisto & Tammi, 1991; Pascarella, Terenzini, & Wolfe, 1986; Shanley & Whitten, 1990; Stupka, 1986; Tinto, 1993; Wilkie & Kuckuck, 1989).

Faculty instructional development programs have played a particularly important role in the establishment of freshman seminar curricula nationwide. In fact, approximately 70% of all institutions with freshman seminars currently offer some form of faculty training to affect quality delivery of these critical courses (Barefoot & Fidler, 1996). In some cases, this training ensures consistency in a standardized course. In others, it focuses on specific tasks required by the curriculum, such as promotion of student academic skills or college orientation (Barefoot & Fidler, 1996). Unfortunately, despite the widespread application of this instructional development, there is little evidence of its assessment beyond the reactions of faculty participants (Boyer, 1990; Seldin, 1995). While abundant research exists addressing teacher and student perspectives on classroom climate (Banning, 1989; Lederman, 1992; Sutherland & Bonwell, 1996), Nunn (1992) observed that, "To date, no reported studies have compared teacher and student perspectives regarding teaching techniques that encourage participation" (p. 158). As a result, the impact of instructional
development on student oral communication skills, classroom dynamics, and the experiences of all classroom participants remains poorly understood.

This study was undertaken in an effort to explore the process and outcomes of a faculty instructional development program designed to promote pedagogical techniques focused on the improvement of oral communication skills in first-semester college students enrolled in a variable-content freshman seminar curriculum. The approach was to examine the participants’ responses to the training, identify any instructional strategies adopted by faculty as a result of the training, and to explore the impacts of these strategies on the classroom dynamics and on the perceptions of student oral communication skill development. To this end, multiple data sources were utilized, including historical information, descriptive observations, assessment tools, surveys, interviews, and measurements of actual classroom communication. The intents were two-fold: to clarify the interplay between the application of pedagogical strategies and student perceptions of the educational experience, and to provide applicable assessment information to direct future faculty instructional development efforts. Thus, the results represent useful insight into the academic philosophy and application of teaching techniques as they relate to classroom oral communication and first-semester college students. This type of examination is critical in the process of focusing higher education
curricular reform efforts targeted on specific areas of student skill
development and learning (Weimer & Lenze, 1991).

Historical Background

In 1989, the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS)

stated in its Criteria for Accreditation that, "Complete requirements for an
associate or baccalaureate degree must include competence in reading,
writing, oral communication, and fundamental mathematical skills" (p. 17).
SACS also required that the general education core of colleges and
universities "provide components designed to ensure competence in reading,
writing, oral communication, and fundamental mathematical skills"
(pp. 17-18). This was the first time that a focus on oral communication had
been included as part of the accreditation requirements adopted by SACS.
This development and other similar events across the nation resulted in an
increased awareness of the importance of oral communication skills to both
academic performance and later career goals of college students (Fleuriet,
1993). Consequently, the first few years of this decade saw a national
increase in educational programming at the college level designed to promote
classroom oral communication across the curriculum (Bowers, 1997).

In the fall of 1994, The College of William and Mary in Virginia began the
implementation phase of a new Freshman Seminar Program as part of a
larger Arts and Sciences curricular reform. This program involved the
creation of courses which are open only to freshmen, and which are intended to develop the academic skills of newly-enrolled students in hopes of enhancing later classroom experiences. The need for curricular reform with respect to freshmen was identified by a 1988 "Freshman Experience Committee" which examined issues such as typical class size, the teaching of writing skills, and advising. Research done by this committee indicated that student reports of their curricular experience differed greatly from corresponding perceptions held by many faculty and administrators. Specifically, few freshmen reported having small classes, and many students indicated that they had little or no writing practice during their first academic year (J. D. Schwartz, personal communication, June 20, 1996). These anecdotal findings were woven into the ongoing curricular remodeling, and a formal recommendation to institute a diverse and flexible system of freshman seminars (and associated instructional development) was included in the Curriculum Review Steering Committee’s final proposal. The program was approved by the faculty of Arts and Sciences on April 15, 1993, and as a result, all entering freshmen at the College are currently required to enroll in a freshman seminar during their first year of classes.

The new curriculum adopted at The College of William and Mary focuses on broader general education requirements, as opposed to area sequence requirements. This approach is evident in the Freshman Seminar Program goal statement (Bosworth, 1997):
To help the student develop his or her ability to engage in critical thinking and independent learning, and...to provide the student with an active small-class experience that includes opportunities for discussion, writing, and other modes of expression appropriate to the subject matter of the course.

In view of the past dominance of large lecture courses in the introductory curriculum at the College, all freshman seminars have been limited to 15 students per section and designated as pedagogically interactive through a reading-, writing-, and discussion-intensive format. The reference to "subject matter" in the above statement is particularly important because these courses are also intended to target student interests in specific academic topics. This variable-content academic seminar format accounts for only 8% of national freshman seminar offerings (Barefoot & Fidler, 1996), but is slightly more common among selective institutions (Barefoot, 1992). A benefit of this model is that it ensures that each course is unique. However, this format offers less opportunity for quality control of consistency when it comes to faculty delivery or student experience of the freshman seminar, a potential problem in light of the above goal statement.

Although faculty and student feedback gathered during the first full year of William and Mary's Freshman Seminar Program (1995-96) was generally positive, some inconsistencies in the application of teaching strategies and student reactions to those strategies were noted in assessment surveys (Bosworth, 1997). With regard to classroom oral communication, the majority of students and faculty felt that the seminars improved student
group discussion skills (Figure 1). However, some students indicated that their freshman seminars were too lecture-oriented, that the use of small groups was not rewarding, or that discussions were typically dominated by the teacher or by individual students. Furthermore, students indicated (much more so than faculty) that the seminars did little to improve their oral presentation skills (Figure 2) and their critical thinking skills (Figure 3). These concerns suggested that some additional steps might be necessary to prepare faculty to teach these courses in a manner which meets the Freshman Seminar Program objectives.

Because the Freshman Seminar Program at The College of William and Mary emphasizes flexibility, the central goals represent a teaching philosophy which is left up to the instructor to interpret and translate into pedagogical practice. In recognition of these dynamics, the College scheduled its' first faculty instructional development program focused on oral communication and writing skill development in freshman seminars in 1996. The program was entitled "Freshman Seminars: Making Them Work." Its guiding philosophy asserted that freshman seminars call for a pedagogical shift on the part of the classroom participants. The intent of this program was to encourage the participants to examine teaching behaviors and instructional strategies as they applied to the specific context of the freshman seminar, in which students were expected to take more responsibility for their own learning. The goal was that the faculty would
Figure 1. Results from a fall 1995 survey of faculty and students participating in freshman seminars at The College of William and Mary. The bars represent the percent occurrence of each ordinal category (1-5) of response to the question: "To what extent did this seminar help your students (you) improve their (your) skills in group discussion?"
Fall 1995 - Group Discussion Skills

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<th>% of Respondents</th>
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<tr>
<td>1</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>&quot;not at all&quot;</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>&quot;not at all&quot;</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>&quot;a great extent&quot;</td>
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<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>&quot;a great extent&quot;</td>
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Students (707)
Faculty (46)
Figure 2. Results from a fall 1995 survey of faculty and students participating in freshman seminars at The College of William and Mary. The bars represent the percent occurrence of each ordinal category (1-5) of response to the question: "To what extent did this seminar help your students (you) improve their (your) skills in oral presentation?"
Fall 1995 - Oral Presentation Skills

- Students (707)
- Faculty (46)

Category of Response:
1. "not at all"
2. "a great extent"

% of Respondents
Figure 3. Results from a fall 1995 survey of faculty and students participating in freshman seminars at The College of William and Mary. The bars represent the percent occurrence of each ordinal category (1-5) of response to the question: "To what extent did this seminar help your students (you) improve their (your) skills in critical thinking?"
develop strategies to foster student abilities to synthesize and internalize course material through the processes of talking, listening, reading, thinking, and writing. The participants in the instructional development program gathered for nine sessions between May and December of 1996 (once in May, daily for a week in late August, and three times during the fall semester). During these meetings, four broad objectives were addressed:

1) To learn how to integrate meaningful oral communication and writing activities into courses, regardless of discipline.

2) To review models and specific techniques to help prepare seminar students for in-class oral communication and writing activities such as class discussions, individual or group presentations, free-writing, or reaction papers.

3) To review and practice techniques for evaluating oral communication and writing assignments.

4) To complete a substantial draft or revision of a course syllabus, including both formal and informal oral communication and writing assignments.

To these ends, a range of topics was discussed and many activities were undertaken to help the faculty participants improve their understanding of the crucial factors involved in interactive instruction and in fostering student
oral communication skills (see Appendix A for a full agenda). Thus, this study was an exploration of the process and outcomes of "Freshman Seminars: Making Them Work," with a specific focus on issues relating to classroom oral communication. Using data from the faculty meetings, evaluation responses, interviews, surveys, a self-report assessment tool, and audio recordings of classes, I examined the process faculty went through as they implemented strategies intended to promote student communication skill development. My final intention was to examine the impact of the faculty development program by comparing two groups of freshman seminars (one with "trained" faculty, one without), to explore how the training impacted both faculty and student perceptions of classroom oral communication and student learning.

Research Questions

The questions I addressed through this research fell into three categories. The first two corresponded logically to the classroom participants (faculty and students) whose perceptions had to be examined and compared in order to evaluate the impact of the faculty instructional development program. The third category was based on the necessity of testing the self-reported perceptions of the classroom participants against the reality of actual classroom communication patterns. This last category was particularly important in the interpretation and future application of the study results.
Questions about faculty

Did the instructional development program result in the use of teaching strategies intended to promote development of student oral communication skills in the classrooms of the faculty participants? If so, how were these strategies applied? How did the faculty perceive the impact of these strategies? Did these perceptions change during the semester? Did these strategies differ from those used by faculty not participating in instructional development?

Questions about students

How did students perceive the instructional strategies used by participating faculty to promote the development of their oral communication skills? Did these perceptions differ from those of students in classes taught by faculty not participating in the instructional development program?

Questions about classroom dynamics and the perceptions of participants

How much did students contribute to the oral communication in freshman seminars? Did the level of student contribution vary as a result of faculty participation in instructional development? Were student and/or faculty perceptions of classroom communication consistent with actual levels of student involvement?

Significance of the Study

As stated earlier, the primary goal of the Freshman Seminar Program at The College of William and Mary is to help the incoming student develop his or her ability to engage in critical thinking and independent learning through an interactive classroom experience at a critical time (upon first entering the institution). While this effort is clearly justifiable, the measure of its success is a difficult matter. The learning process is sensitive to a wide range of student and faculty characteristics, many of which are highly interactive.
(Brookfield, 1986; Civikly, 1992; Copeland, Birmingham, DeMeulle, D’Emidio-Caston, & Natal, 1994; Menges & Svinicki, 1991). As a result, the use of mechanistic models of classroom dynamics can become problematic (Bonwell & Eison, 1991; Johnson, et al., 1995; O’Keefe, 1995; Van Manen, 1990; Weimer, 1993). This conflict often creates a barrier to attempts at targeting or fine-tuning curricular reform. In the case of freshman seminars, these difficulties are likely to be exacerbated by the fact that many incoming students have little or no background in the pursuit of active learning (Erickson & Strommer, 1991). This phenomenon places a great deal of the initial responsibility for establishing an interactive learning environment entirely in the hands of the educator. Although it is often assumed that instructional faculty have a foundation of educational skills, it would be naive to conclude that any previous teaching experience would provide the skills necessary for undertaking a successful freshman seminar. Therefore, creating and evaluating a process of instructional development for freshman seminar faculty was a crucial step toward ensuring the effective delivery of the curriculum, both currently and in the future.

A Personal Disclaimer

There are several aspects of my employment and involvement in the mechanics of this study which make me both a uniquely suited and potentially biased interpreter of the information gathered to answer these
questions. I teach Communication Studies at The College of William and
Mary, I regularly facilitate and evaluate faculty instructional development as
part of my responsibilities as Director of the College's recently established
Oral Communication Program, and I was a co-facilitator of the instructional
development program under consideration in this study. I am aware of the
problem of bias in research, particularly with respect to descriptive and
exploratory project designs (Borg & Gall, 1989). However, I feel that
through my use of an exploratory qualitative research approach (particularly
the use of thematic interpretive methodologies), I have been able to apply
my expertise in an appropriate manner. It is also important to note that my
faculty position at the College could not have been altered based on the
outcomes of this study, and I had little to gain by the success or failure of
the faculty instructional development seminar except insight.

Definitions of Terms

Operational definitions of the key terms and concepts employed in this
study are as follows:

Freshmen. Students in their initial semester at The College of William and
Mary, required to take a freshman seminar during their first year of
enrollment. Students exempt from this category are transfer students
who enter the College with at least 24 semester credits earned after high
school which have been accepted at the College. Advanced placement
credits cannot be applied to the total credits required for freshman
seminar exemption (The College of William and Mary Course Selection
Guidebook, 1997). It should be noted that the gender-biased term
"freshman" is often replaced by more inclusive labels such as "first-year
students" or "incoming students." Its use here is a product of its
established connection to the Freshman Seminar Program at The College
of William and Mary, and to freshman seminars nation-wide.

**Freshman Seminar.** A graded academic seminar open only to freshmen,
carrying three or four credit hours, and limited to 15 students per section.
These seminars vary in topic, but are intended to follow a reading-,
writing-, and discussion-intensive format. Freshman seminars are
integrated into the curriculum and, where appropriate, are linked with
freshman advising, and count toward concentration requirements, general
education requirements, or the writing proficiency requirement
(Curriculum Review Steering Committee Final Report on the
Undergraduate Curriculum, April 15, 1993).

**Discussion-Intensive.** Describing a course in which at least one half of the
total weekly class time is devoted to student oral participation. This
participation may take a variety of spontaneous and prepared forms,
including open discussion, group work, individual or panel presentations, debates, and so forth (The College of William and Mary Educational Policy Committee, July 21, 1994).

**Classroom Oral Communication.** Classroom participation through verbal expression by students or faculty. Types of classroom oral communication include interpersonal, small group, open discussion, oral sharing, questioning, lecturing, and other presentational modes (Klopf & Cambra, 1991).

**Communication Apprehension.** An individual's level of fear or anxiety associated with real or anticipated communication with another person or persons (Richmond & McCroskey, 1995).

**Faculty Instructional Development.** Programs in the form of seminars or workshops which provide professional assistance and a forum for discussing teaching strategies to facilitate student learning, prepare pedagogical materials, and redesign courses (Eble & McKeachie, 1985; Erickson & Strommer, 1991).

**Instructional Strategies.** Teaching methods used with the intention of fostering both academic knowledge and skill development in students.
These methods are related to instructional goals and course objectives which dictate the desired outcomes in student growth (Johnson, 1990). The set of activities and practices chosen by the instructor should fit his or her style, the objectives of the course, the learning needs of the students, and the instructional setting (Weimer, 1993). Regarding oral communication, instructional strategies are characterized by the level of student activity promoted, and the level of risk entailed. Lower level risk strategies include structured small group discussion or questionnaires, while higher level risk strategies include role-playing or presentations (Bonwell & Eison, 1991).

**Effective Teacher Behaviors.** In-class behaviors of the teacher that are related directly either to positive student outcomes or positive evaluation of teaching. Selected examples include teacher clarity, questioning, verbal behaviors such as praise and enthusiasm, and teacher immediacy (e.g., eye contact, the use of humor, or appropriate self-disclosure) (Nussbaum, 1992).

**Summary**

The development of oral communication skills in the classroom arena is an essential component of achieving success in the academic learning environment. Many higher education practitioners consider the first
semester of the freshman year to be a critical time for addressing these skills. This sentiment is reflected in the newly implemented Freshman Seminar Program at The College of William and Mary in Virginia, which is intended to address the unique needs of entering college students through a pedagogically interactive reading-, writing-, and discussion-intensive format. The primary goals of the freshman seminars are to nurture intellectual curiosity and to develop oral and written communication skills.

Assessment data of initial freshman seminars indicate some lack of consistency in the application of teaching strategies and student reactions to those strategies. This study was designed to explore the impact of a faculty instructional development program intended to improve the delivery of freshman seminars. It involved questions about the teaching techniques employed by participating faculty, and about the perceptions of both faculty and students regarding oral communication skill development. The resulting analysis should provide insight and direction to individual teachers interested in interactive instruction, as well as to administrators of Freshman Seminar Programs and other oral communication across the curriculum programs.

Chapter two reviews the literature on the three primary conceptual elements of this project: freshmen experience and freshman seminars, classroom oral communication and learning, and faculty instructional development and effective pedagogy. The intersections among the three components of this study are also explored.
CHAPTER 2
Related Literature

Introduction
There are three areas of interest in higher education which converge to form the conceptual framework for this investigation: the unique needs of first-semester freshmen students, the importance of oral communication in the process of learning, and the goals and theories relating to faculty instructional development. In this literature review, I have dealt with these elements independently, providing a body of general background information for each. The three sections are followed by a consideration of how they intersect with respect to this particular research.

Freshmen Experience and Freshman Seminars

Newly-enrolled college freshmen represent a unique sub-population of the student body, typically set apart from other students due to inexperience in a novel academic and social setting. The first semester of college is a highly transitional period, during which expectations and academic reality often come in conflict (Astin, et al., 1991; Upcraft & Gardner, 1989). As a result, approximately one half of all students who leave college will do so during
their freshman year (Boyle, 1989; Noel, 1985; Tinto, 1990, 1993). In fact, the majority of these will drop out within the first six to eight weeks of their first semester (Blanc, Debuhr, & Martin, 1983; Cuseo, 1991; Tinto, 1988). Recent American College Testing Service data indicate that over 30% of entering freshmen in American colleges and universities are failing to return as sophomores, and that these attrition rates are on the rise (Chronicle of Higher Education, July 19, 1996). Historically, this Darwinian "culling" of the new students has been an accepted part of academic tradition in American college culture (Horowitz, 1987). However, in the last two decades, a response to these patterns has been an increase in programs and policies specifically designed to promote retention of freshmen by improving the quality of their initial college experience (Barefoot, 1993; Barefoot & Fidler, 1996; Gardner, 1986).

The bulk of literature available on freshmen students focuses on common factors known to play a recurring part in identity development (Brown & Christiansen, 1990; Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991; Upcraft & Gardner, 1989; Whiteley, 1990). The theoretical underpinnings of these freshman studies include several college impact models, which highlight the complex interactions between a student's previous experience and environmental factors encountered upon entering college. These models generally depict students as active participants in the learning process, in search of opportunities for interaction which promote growth and change (McMillan,
Therefore, the context, frequency, and content of student interactions with the three major socializing agents on campus (faculty, staff, and other students) determine the nature of the college experience and subsequent student development. Some of the most frequently cited college impact models are highlighted below.

1. **Astin’s Theory of Involvement** (1970, 1985) -- Students learn and develop by becoming involved. The institutional environment plays a critical role through providing a variety of encounters with other people. Frequent interaction with faculty members is more strongly related to satisfaction with college than any other type of involvement, or any other student or institutional characteristic.

2. **Tinto’s Model of Institutional Departure** (1975, 1990) -- Students enter college with goals, intentions, and commitments which are modified through interactions with organizational structures and members of the college community (similar to Astin’s theory). The focus of this theory is on student attrition. Satisfying encounters lead to academic and social integration, thus retention, but external commitments may limit this process and increase the probability of departure.

3. **Pascarella’s Model for Assessing Effects of College Environments on Student Learning** (1980, 1985) -- Changes in students are a function of specific types of interactions between background characteristics and the characteristics of the college environment. Student growth is a function of the direct and indirect effects of five major sets of variables: student background, institutional characteristics, environment, frequency and content of interactions, and quality of effort. Students who make special efforts to interact with others show greater learning and cognitive development.

4. **Schlossberg’s Theory of “Mattering and Marginality”** (1989) -- Based on social psychology, this theory asserts that students need to feel like they "matter." Emotional or affective responses to interactions with the major socializing agents of the college (faculty, staff, and other students) control student development by creating perceptions of involvement or non-involvement. Essentially, this theory highlights the importance of engaging in caring interactions with students (Kuh, Schuh, & Whitt, 1991).
5. Banning’s Ecological Perspective (1989) -- This theory focuses on the environment as the key feature which sets up the conditions under which student success may flourish. An environment which fosters interactions among students, strong faculty-student contact, extracurricular activities, and on-campus housing will maximize student development (Upcraft, 1984).

A common element among these ideas is the observation that human interaction promotes subsequent student academic success. In the case of freshmen, who are arguably socially and academically isolated, these issues have particular relevance. Barefoot (1992) identified three interrelated factors which emerged in her analysis as predictors of student success: "a felt sense of community, involvement of students in the total life of the institution, and academic and social integration during the freshman year" (p. 18). The importance of these phenomena has long been recognized by student services and residential life programs, but academic curricula have been slower to reflect it (Erickson & Strommer, 1991; Stodt & Klepper, 1987). Some examples of curricular factors, which have been shown to impact freshman retention, include orientation seminars, advising, student-faculty contact, and peer mentors (Cuseo, 1991; Kramer, Taylor, Rich, & Udarbe, 1993; Martin & Arendale, 1993; Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991). All of these elements serve the common goal of helping new students to construct a realistic model of the academic process through engaging in social and intellectual interaction with others.

Although efforts to examine and improve the freshman experience have steadily increased in the last two decades (Gardner, 1995), these efforts
have seldom been applied in the environment where they could be the most useful—the classroom. Instead, most introductory courses remain marked by high enrollment and delivery of content through non-interactive lectures (Boyer, 1987; J. R. Davis, 1993; Klopf & Cambra, 1991; Travis, 1995). Many argue that these conditions contribute very little to student identity development, and do not prepare freshmen for the independent learning tasks which may be expected of them in subsequent classes (Erickson & Strommer, 1991; Fidler & Hunter, 1989; Terenzini, et al., 1995).

In recognition of the need to address the distinctive requirements of the freshman population, many schools have incorporated courses specifically designed for freshman development into their curricula (Barefoot, 1993). These courses are collectively referred to as "freshman seminars." The use of freshman seminars as a curricular tool to improve the quality of the freshman experience has grown steadily as a practice in higher education in the last 20 years (Gardner, 1995). The success of these efforts has been well documented. Some of the observed impacts include higher grade-point averages (Boudreau & Kromrey, 1994; Maisto & Tammi, 1991; Wilkie & Kuckuck, 1989), higher involvement in extracurricular activities (Fidler, 1991), more contact with faculty members outside of class (Fidler, 1991; Maisto & Tammi, 1991), heavier course loads (Fidler, 1991), and greater retention (Boudreau & Kromrey, 1994; Wilkie & Kuckuck, 1989). In addition to these notable benefits, surveys of faculty and students participating in
freshman seminars have reflected a recognition of the importance of these courses in promoting academic and social adjustment (Colarulli & McDaniel, 1990; Schwitzer, 1991).

Currently over 70% of American campuses now offer some form of freshman seminar for entering students (Barefoot & Fidler, 1996). Freshman seminar programs vary considerably, but they often carry the common objective of providing new students with a small, interactive classroom experience focused on academic tasks such as researching, writing, and note-taking (Barefoot, 1992; Barefoot & Fidler, 1996). A crucial element of this format is the provision of opportunities for students to exercise oral communication skills such as discussion, presenting information and opinions, questioning, and group decision-making. Although the development of these abilities is not always included as a specific part of the course content, the small, participatory classroom environment of the freshman seminar encourages the practice of these tasks, thereby promoting learning while easing academic and social transitions. For new students, struggling with issues of apprehension and social adjustment, the search for meaning through classroom participation is a critical one (Bourhis & Allen, 1992; Brown & Christiansen, 1990). Therefore, in many cases, the freshman seminar may represent a key factor in determining later academic performance (Gordon, 1989; Siegel, 1989).
Classroom Oral Communication and Learning

Somewhere between the sweeping theoretical ideas about student development and the nuts and bolts advice of veteran teachers is an arena of research which tries to connect the two. Much of this work is identified as being focused on the "learning process," a broadly defined construct which is highly context-sensitive (reviewed in Claxton and Murrell, 1987). If developmental theory attempts to answer questions about where the cognitive journey is leading, learning theory addresses the problem of how to get there—including the speed, the route, and the vehicle. Unfortunately, too often the only ones on the educational road who are in a position to report whether or not they are "learning" are the students. As a result, research on learning is based largely on the observation of student behaviors or on student course evaluations. The validity of these sources of data is the subject of much debate (Benz & Blatt, 1996; Marsh, 1995; Williams & Ceci, 1997).

Sometimes assessment of student learning is associated closely with existing developmental theory, but more often, it is traditionally based on standardized levels of demonstrated knowledge or other mechanistic types of measures (Astin, 1991; Watkins, 1992). The problem here, is that the evaluation of learning is dependent on the definition. Accordingly, evidence of learning has commonly been classified along three "domains" which cannot be addressed through one set of criteria (J. R. Davis, 1993; Perry,
Menec, & Struthers, 1996). The cognitive domain is represented by a mastery of information (or a body of knowledge targeted as a learning goal), characterized by individual differences in organizing information and experience (Barrow, 1986; Messick, 1995). The process of understanding or recalling information is, by this definition, a cognitive process. The behavioral domain deals with the acquisition and practice of skills, which may or may not require a cognitive background (Sulzer-Azaroff & Mayer, 1994). Common examples of behavioral learning in college classrooms include the development of writing, speaking, and research skills. The affective domain is the most difficult of the three domains to define and assess. Affect deals with emotional responses to learning which are seen as requirements for development (Boekaerts, 1995). Motivation is a widely studied affective component of learning, related to apprehension and self-esteem or self-worth, and clearly crucial for academic success (Perry, et al., 1996).

Oral communication is the primary mechanism of symbolic interaction by which humans share and create meaning (Littlejohn, 1996). Therefore, it is widely recognized as a central component of the learning process. Macke (1991) argued that speech is the fundamental vehicle of a person's being—the tool with which individuals construct understanding through interplay among themselves, their relationships, and their environments. Vygotsky (1978, 1992) provided a foundation for Macke's assertion by
identifying speech as the basic social component of all thinking structures.

In essence, knowledge is not transmitted; it is socially constructed as individuals create meaning about themselves, their relationships, and their environments through communication (Barnes & Todd, 1995; Danielson, 1996; O'Keefe, 1995; Sprague, 1992). Thus, our language and thinking patterns are bound to, and by, the process of communication, making our words our tools of thought. Consequently, student academic competencies are shaped by the character, frequency, and quality of classroom interactions. A large body of classic and contemporary research examines the relationship between speech and thought, and further demonstrates how communication enhances learning. Representative findings are highlighted below.

Vocalized stimuli are more easily recalled than non-vocalized stimuli.
  Carmean & Weir, 1967
  Weir & Helgoe, 1968
  DeVesta & Rickards, 1971

Vocalization during problem-solving tasks produces better performance.
  Marks, 1951
  Gagne & Smith, 1962
  Davis, 1968

Students who give and receive explanations in the process of learning perform better than those who do not.
  Vygotsky, 1978
  Bargh & Schul, 1980
  Webb, 1982

Students engaged in discussion with others restructure their knowledge in a manner which promotes learning.
  Vygotsky, 1978, 1992
  Schmidt, DeVolder, DeGrave, Joust, & Patel, 1989
Communication patterns which are a product of race, gender, or culture can affect learning outcomes both positively and negatively.

Webb, 1982
Vogt, Jordan, & Tharp, 1987
Rhodes, 1988
Palmerton, 1989

In addition to the studies cited above, some researchers have reported that oral communication has broader motivational (affective) impacts on learning (Barnes & Todd, 1995; O’Keefe, 1995; Rubin, Rubin, & Jordan, 1997). In essence, students who engage in activities such as small group discussion or oral sharing are more likely to increase their confidence through practice, ultimately leading to a willingness to communicate in a broader variety of contexts (McKeachie, 1986; Millar, 1986; Schmidt, et al., 1989). This type of confidence can have strong impacts on performance in the academic environment and beyond. As Palmerton (1996) has pointed out, "Oral communication is an essential component of living in our world today. Our students deserve to understand more about its nature, its power, its limitations, and they deserve to have the chance to develop their own abilities in a context that will help them make ethical choices about its use" (p. 8). Modaff and Hopper (1984) argued that, because speaking is the medium through which teaching and learning are played out, it should be considered as the basic social component of any instructional process. Consequently, they suggested that speech be incorporated as a functional element of education at all levels. These ideas are echoed by educators who are calling for more opportunities for oral communication in college.
classrooms (Bateman, 1990; Civikly, 1992; Halpern, 1994), claiming that this type of learning environment allows students to combine skills such as speaking, listening, and critical thinking across a variety of intellectual applications (Meyers & Jones, 1993).

Delivered instruction is the form of teaching which is most familiar to almost anyone with experience in a college environment. This type of pedagogy is marked by a unidirectional transmission of information from the instructor or instructional medium to the student (J. R. Davis, 1993). Recitations, lectures, demonstrations, and other types of presentations such as speeches or films can all fall under this category. Although delivered instruction represents much of the historical foundation of higher education, a large body of literature reflects increasing criticism of curricula which depend heavily on this methodology (Bonwell & Eison, 1991; Meyers & Jones, 1993; Millar, 1986; Neff & Weimer, 1989; O’Keefe, 1986). One problem commonly associated with delivered instruction is its tendency to target only the cognitive domain of student learning (Svinicki, Hagen, & Meyer, 1996). In this sense, little opportunity for skill development or affective reinforcement in the pursuit of academic success is provided. Some striking research results have illustrated this phenomenon.

While teachers are lecturing, students are not attending to what is being said 40% of the time (Pollio, 1984).

In the first 10 minutes of lecture, students retain 70% of the information; in the last 10 minutes of lecture, students retain 20% of the information (McKeachie, 1986).
Four months after taking a large lecture-based introductory psychology course, students knew only 8% more than a control group who had never taken the course (Rickard, Rogers, Ellis, & Beidleman, 1988).

Ironically, despite the drawbacks, delivered instruction is the method by which most of today's educators were taught (Barr & Tagg, 1995; Boice, 1992; Cranton, 1994). As a result, traditional lecture methods remain the primary mechanism of teaching in college classrooms (Boyer, 1987; Brown, 1989; Ekeler, 1994; Travis, 1995).

In contrast to delivered instruction, interactive instruction is a catch-all category of teaching pedagogies involving various mechanisms by which students are provided with opportunities to speak and express ideas (Erickson & Strommer, 1991; Sutherland & Bonwell, 1995). In the simplest sense, interactive instruction could be a modified lecture or presentation which includes questions addressed to the students. Other more substantially interactive techniques are often referred to as "collaborative" teaching methods. These can include many forms of group discussion or group task completion such as problem-solving or role-playing. In cases where the responsibilities of the students are highly structured, such as in group or individual student presentations or organized discussions (debates or forums), the methodology is even further specified as "cooperative" learning (Bosworth & Hamilton, 1994). It is recognized in the literature on learning that these interactive modes of instruction greatly enhance the abilities of students to apply course material in a cognitive framework.
(O'Keefe, 1995; Palmerton, 1989, 1992). Furthermore, these techniques can play an important role in promoting student motivation and perceptions of involvement because they are founded in the idea that learning is, by its nature, an active process, and that different people learn in different ways (Johnson, et al., 1995; Meyers & Jones, 1993).

Although interactive teaching techniques are gaining popularity, there are numerous aspects of any educational environment which serve to break down the process of communication. Many of these phenomena can be grouped under the rubric of "communication apprehension." Richmond and McCroskey (1995, p. 35) defined communication apprehension in simple terms as "any fear or anxiety associated with either real or anticipated communication with another person or persons." In practice however, the definition can be highly complex. It can be state (contextual) or trait (personality) based, and it can result in both internal and external physiological and psychological effects (Ericson & Gardner, 1992; Stowell & Furlong, 1995; Thomas, Tymon, & Thomas, 1994). Consequently, the process of overcoming communication apprehension often requires experimentation with a variety of techniques and behavioral modification tools (Daly & McCroskey, 1984; Kelly, Phillips, & Keaten, 1995). Unfortunately, most college classes leave very little room for this type of experimentation, particularly for new students who are most in need of it (McCroskey, Booth-Butterfield, & Payne, 1989; Rubin & Graham, 1988).
In a study examining the transition of new freshmen from an ecological perspective, Johnson, et al. (1995) concluded the following:

The social aspects of the freshman year transition may be of more importance to students in their first academic term than the academic aspects....For apprehensive students, particularly those entering very different ecological environments than they have experienced in high school (e.g., size, culture, geographic location), training efforts to reduce communication apprehension might spell out the difference between successful transition and retention, and dropping out (p. 349).

Although the negative impact of communication apprehension on interpersonal and academic success is often noted, the measurement of this phenomenon is difficult (Booth-Butterfield & Rocco Cottone, 1991; Glaser, 1981). One of the more recognized tools for this type of assessment is the Personal Report of Communication Apprehension (PRCA) developed by James McCroskey (1982). The PRCA is a self-assessment survey which allows students to rank responses to 24 questions dealing with various communication contexts. Using the PRCA, some researchers have shown that communication apprehension is correlated with dropout rates, and is inversely related to grade point averages and the communication competence of first- and second-year college students (McCroskey, et al., 1989; Mehrley, 1984; Rubin, Rubin, & Jordan, 1997). These results serve to reinforce the evidence presented by many successful teachers that communicative students learn more effectively and efficiently.
Faculty Instructional Development and Effective Pedagogy

As long as there have been teachers, there have been efforts to improve teaching effectiveness. Throughout most of the history of higher education however, these efforts have been left up to the teachers themselves. For example, in the early part of this century, college teachers widely sought out self-help books such as William James' *Talks to Teachers* for reassurance and guidance (Boice, 1992). In the 1970s, the promotion of effective college teaching became an institutional goal as teacher training programs emerged in reaction to declining and changing enrollment patterns, increased accountability, and reduced financial resources (Eble & McKeachie, 1985). Today, most of the primary mechanisms used by colleges to promote effective teaching techniques are subsumed under the concept of "instructional development." This term refers to a process of andragogy (Brookfield, 1986), and/or training for teachers which is designed to provide the direction and resources necessary for college educators to effectively meet the needs of their students through pedagogy.

Unfortunately, despite the fact that teaching and learning are at the heart of all institutions of higher education, many factors still prevent colleges (particularly comprehensive or research institutions) from regularly engaging in instructional development (Boyer, 1990; Grasha, 1996; Kerr, 1994). Although good faculty members recognize the value in taking initiative to improve their teaching effectiveness, institutional reward systems have
commonly become weighted in favor of publication productivity over teaching excellence (Boyer, 1990; Kerr, 1991; Massy & Wilger, 1995). Similarly, time and resource constraints have shifted the attention of administrators away from the classroom process and toward enrollment statistics (Hansen & Stampen, 1994). Even student attitudes have become driven less by the quality of the educational process, and more by concern regarding the marketability of their degrees in the "real" world (Zusman, 1994). These tensions are particularly relevant in light of evidence which indicates a lack of pedagogical variety in instructional strategies and classroom interaction in contemporary college courses (Barr & Tagg, 1995; Laurillard, 1993; Lynton & Elman, 1987; Massy & Wilger, 1995).

Any college curriculum which operates without instructional development is founded on the belief that the advanced study of an academic subject area is sufficient preparation for teaching in a college environment. In contrast, proponents of instructional development point out that, without guided teaching experience, faculty have only their own backgrounds as former students with which to gauge their success as teachers. They argue that increasing diversity in students and curricular contexts demand that faculty be able to recognize and meet a wide variety of educational needs, and that preparation for teaching success should include both initial training and continuing guidance through formalized peer coaching and assessment (Chism, 1993; Menges, 1994; Wright, 1995). While these types of
programs do currently exist in some form on most college campuses, they are often marginalized and offered only on a voluntary basis (Weimer & Lenze, 1991). Furthermore, demonstrations of teaching effectiveness and motivation to improve teaching skills continue to play a minor role in faculty evaluation procedures (Gibbs, 1995; Lawrence, 1988).

Even at institutions where instructional development regularly takes place, the delivery of these programs is highly variable and poorly founded in theory (Menges, 1994; Weimer & Lenze, 1991). As a result, instructional development efforts often attempt to apply many different types of interventions within the framework of a single program. The goals which are targeted cover a broad range of applications. Consequently, these programs are rarely focused according to specific types of courses or students. Instead, they are based on a series of educational tasks commonly encountered in many different types of classes.

- designing course syllabi
- delivering lectures
- facilitating discussions
- creating student assignments
- evaluating student performance
- utilizing classroom exercises
- constructing exams
- dealing with disruptive classroom dynamics

Although there is very little research linking specific types of teaching techniques and classroom behaviors to student learning (Sprague, 1992), and even less research examining the impacts of instructional development (Cross & Steadman, 1996), some practitioners in higher education have
developed ideas about effective teaching that may provide useful guidelines for the design of teacher training programs. Since the goal (outcome) of teaching is student learning, the three domains of learning provide a foundation for these ideas. In this simple sense, effective teaching can be seen as a process that promotes cognitive, behavioral, and affective development in students (J. R. Davis, 1993). The cognitive domain is usually characterized according to the body of information which makes up a course's "Content" or subject matter. This concept is largely defined by disciplinary traditions and ultimately, delineated by the instructor and by institutional curricular goals. In contrast, the behavioral and affective domains of learning are commonly associated with the more loosely structured idea of "teaching style," which includes both pedagogical techniques and a set of interpersonal characteristics impacting student perceptions of both classroom climate and classroom experience. These aspects of teaching are commonly addressed in instructional development programs (Grasha, 1996; Nussbaum, 1992; Weimer & Lenze, 1991).

The simplest models of effective teaching generally include four primary components: Teacher, Student, Content, and Context (Dinham, 1996; Good & Brophy, 1997; Morey, 1992). The first two components are self-explanatory. The third, Content, is characterized according to subject matter as described above. The last component, Context, includes any restrictions that are placed on the educational process from external influences, such as...
institutional traditions, mandates, resources, class sizes, student
demographics, and physical facilities (Austin & Sorcinelli, 1992; Donald,

With the four components defined, the goal of the simple educational
"system" model is the maximization or optimization of the transfer of
Content from Teacher to Student within the restrictions of Context
(Figure 4). Unfortunately, this type of educational model is admittedly overly
simplistic. In reality, Teachers and Students bring a set of highly variable
backgrounds into the classroom arena (DeLucia, 1994; Dey & Hurtado,
1994; Moore, 1994; Watkins, 1992). These backgrounds may include
different types of skills, different cultural norms, and different philosophies
or preconceptions of education. Furthermore, these backgrounds may
interact differently with the specific conditions defined as Content and
Context. In practice, these influences of background can create
misperception and interference which prevent learning from occurring
(Palmerton, 1989; Tiberius & Billson, 1991). This, of course, creates
challenges for instructional development designers trying to improve the
application of pedagogy. Specifically, these complicating factors suggest
that successful instructional development should reflect consideration of the
educational context (Gardiner, 1997; Peterson, 1988), of the diverse
backgrounds of students (Good & McCaslin, 1992; Simcock & Lokon,
Figure 4. A simple model of a teaching/learning system.
1992), and of the preconceptions and academic philosophies of instructors (Cranton, 1994; Good & Brophy, 1997; Kember & McKay, 1996).

Even in the most well-intentioned and well-designed instructional development programs, a common assumption made is that the material presented will carry over into classroom practice. Unfortunately, the same host of complicating factors that prevent a mechanistic approach to student learning can confound efforts to improve pedagogy through training (Wilson, 1987). Therefore, although instructional development has become more common on some college campuses, the ambiguities in definitions of learning and the diversity of teaching contexts have complicated measures of success and assessment in these efforts (Schuster & Wheeler, 1990; Theall & Franklin, 1991). As a result, a great deal of research on instructional development techniques has been descriptive (Weimer & Lenze, 1991). In fact, commonly the only indication of success of instructional development programs is in the form of limited feedback from participating faculty members, which is usually collected prior to any attempt at translation of the program contents into classroom practice (Brinko, 1991). This leaves a gap between the intervention (instructional development) and the targeted goal (improved student learning and performance), which is difficult to bridge. In order to rectify this situation, any examination of the outcomes of instructional development should involve demonstrations that instructors apply new teaching techniques (Walker & Quinn, 1996; Wilson,
Reference Room Resources:
Research in Higher Education: A Guide to Source Bibliographies
Higher Education: A Handbook of Theory and Research
Index to Journals in Communication Studies
Communication Yearbook
Encyclopedia of Higher Education
Encyclopedia of Education
Education Index
Education: A Guide to Reference and Information Sources
Higher Education Abstracts

Professional Associations/Web Pages:
NCA (National Communication Association)
NRCFYE (National Resource Center for The Freshman Year Experience and Students in Transition, University of South Carolina)
ASHE (Association for the Study of Higher Education)
AAHE (American Association for Higher Education)
AERA (American Education Research Association)
IATS (The International Alliance of Teacher Scholars)
NCPTLA (National Center for Postsecondary Teaching, Learning, and Assessment)

E-Mail Lists:
FYE (Freshman Year Experience Network)
POD (Professional/Organizational Development Network in Higher Education)
CRTNET (Communication Research and Theory Network)
HEPROC (Higher Education Process Conference Halls Network)

Through my search, I found that issues involving freshmen and oral communication have commonly been linked (Erickson & Strommer, 1991; Johnson, et al., 1995; McCroskey, et al., 1989; Rubin & Graham, 1988), but, as described above, the question of instructional development (arguably the primary focus of this project) has been poorly examined. Furthermore, virtually all of the research dealing with freshman seminars is focused on extended orientation seminars (Barefoot & Fidler, 1996). In contrast, this study deals with a variable-content academic seminar, an approach which
accounts for only 8% of freshman seminar programs nationally (Barefoot & Fidler, 1996). Some institutional reports have indicated that freshman seminars associated with instructional development efforts have resulted in increased student retention and academic performance (Baumgarte, 1987; Harran, 1990; Leggette, 1986; Starke, 1994; Swanson, 1992). However, since these programs have generally been based on standardized curricula and mandatory training, there is no way to separate the impacts of the curriculum from the impacts of the instructional development.

Following my literature search, I decided to conduct an informal telephone survey of practitioners regularly engaged in instructional development. Using the national directory in Lambert and Tice’s (1993) guide to faculty development programs as a starting point, I contacted the director of each teaching center or instructional development program listed. I also contacted several scholars whose ideas I had become familiar with from the available literature. In all, I spoke with 26 individuals by phone or e-mail. First, I explained my study, and then, I asked the following two questions:

1. What theoretical or conceptual framework do you use to guide your faculty and instructional development efforts?

2. Are you aware of any applied studies which examine the impact of instructional development on classroom communication in freshman seminars?

The general consensus among the individuals surveyed was that, since teaching styles and contexts are individualistic, it is impossible to employ...
one conceptual framework or pedagogical philosophy in the design of instructional development. Several individuals described the process of borrowing pieces from different frameworks, including action research, adult learning theory, reflective practice, constructivism, and mentoring. Interestingly, several people responded to the question by simply describing their own methods, rather than invoking any type of theoretical foundation. Nancy Chism, Director of the Center for Teaching Excellence at Ohio State University, best addressed the tension between theory and practice in instructional development when she said, "Because of time (limits), you can either do it, or study it. However, if you don't do it, and just study it, people will be suspicious of your research" (personal communication, October 1, 1997). In this sense, it is clear why most of the people I spoke with have chosen to just do it, and not study it.

In response to the second question I asked, the answer was a unanimous "no." Several individuals did note that there were countless "soft studies" on the effectiveness of various instructional development practices, but they were also quick to point out that the assessment measures involved in these studies were largely based on faculty evaluations, as described in the previous section. Terry Aladjem, Associate Director of the Derek Bok Center for Teaching and Learning at Harvard University, put it best when he said, "We are interested in pursuing research such as yours, but every time we
have discussed it, we have not followed through. There simply is nothing to compare it to" (personal communication, September 30, 1997).

In this study, the instructional development program in question and the desired outcomes were highly constrained. Student characteristics were constrained because they were all freshmen. Faculty characteristics were constrained because the participants demonstrated motivation and initiative in improving their teaching by applying for the opportunity to participate. Context characteristics were constrained because the freshman seminar format was dictated. Content characteristics were constrained because the focus of this research was on the development of student oral communication skills. This very specific set of constraints offered a unique opportunity to address and assess some general (and often untested) ideas about the promotion of effective teaching.

1) Teachers and Students should recognize the influence of Context (Austin & Sorcinelli, 1992; Donald, 1985; Loughlin, 1992; Stark, et al., 1990). Therefore, both should clearly understand the specific objectives of the Freshman Seminar Program.

2) Teachers and Students should recognize the influence of their backgrounds (Gardiner, 1997; Palmerton, 1989; Tiberius & Billson, 1991; Watkins, 1992). Therefore, both should be aware of the unique characteristics of freshmen, and both should be aware of their own personal preconceptions about the educational process.

3) Teachers should apply a variety of pedagogical techniques (Walker & Quinn, 1996; Wilson, 1987). Therefore, new types of interactive classroom communication activities should be regularly practiced and assessed in freshman seminars.
4) Teachers should exhibit appropriate self-assessment and affective responses (Good & Brophy, 1997; Kember & McKay, 1996; Weimer, et al., 1988). Therefore, promotion of a comfortable climate and of classroom community should be an observable goal of freshman seminar instructors.

5) Teachers and Students should recognize and foster continued student learning (Angelo, 1991; Angelo & Cross, 1993; Cross & Steadman, 1996). Therefore, development and enhancement of student oral communication skills should be observable and/or measurable.

Although these questions are not the specific research questions examined in this study, the exploratory nature of the investigation makes the consideration of these issues possible. In their review of instructional development practices, Weimer & Lenze (1991) called for a more "holistic approach" to research on instructional development. It is my hope that this study will provide both applicable assessment results, and a broader description of the process of instructional development which may be useful for researchers in all three of the conceptual arenas described in this review.

Summary

Struggling to manage the pressures created by diverse expectations, and faced with a lack of tangible rewards, many college faculty continue to find themselves unwilling or unable to experiment with interactive instruction or to engage in instructional development. As a result, the traditional delivered instruction model continues to be passed from one generation of educators to the next. Unfortunately, the resulting courses offer little guidance or opportunity for students to develop oral communication skills or to overcome
apprehension. In addition, without effective classroom interaction, faculty
members may remain unaware of tensions, and students may be unwilling to
take responsibility for correcting the situation. This combination of passive
teaching models and reticent students can result in growing communication
barriers, which, in turn, may limit the overall potential of the classroom
participants to create an effective learning environment. In the case of
freshmen, these dynamics can result in an educational foundation that is
dangerously weak or misplaced.

The convergence of these phenomena forms the conceptual framework
for this study. Previously, elements of theory and practice involving
freshmen, classroom oral communication, and instructional development
have been considered only in limited association. However, as the use of
instructional development to promote interactive learning becomes more
widespread, and the role of oral communication in the pedagogical process
becomes better understood, programs which focus on the unique needs of
freshmen may emerge as a logical meeting place for these issues. In this
sense, this study represents both a narrowly defined investigation of a
specific academic context, and a focal point of potential relevance in a range
of conceptual arenas in higher education.

Chapter three reviews the methodology used to investigate the research
questions of the study. Details on the participants, data collection, data
analysis, and the limitations and delimitations of the study are discussed.
CHAPTER 3
Methodology

Introduction

To clarify the impact of instructional development on faculty delivery and student experience of interactive freshman seminar courses, I chose to describe and explore a single faculty instructional development program. My study took place at The College of William and Mary in Virginia, a medium-sized, selective public institution of higher education. This was an ideal location for the study, because freshman seminars are newly established at the College. Furthermore, the William and Mary model for freshman seminars is unique (academic seminars with variable content, and a focus on oral communication), and evaluating this particular context provided valuable assessment information not readily available elsewhere.

The Qualitative Paradigm

Since the goal of this study was largely exploratory and did not involve the experimental control of variables, I have approached this research from a constructivist qualitative viewpoint. According to Denzin and Lincoln (1994), "Qualitative research is multimethod in focus, involving an
interpretive, naturalistic approach to its subject matter" (p. 2). In other words, qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, and attempt to make sense of, or interpret, emergent phenomena by examining the meanings that people bring to them. More specifically, constructivism embraces the ontological assumption that reality is subjective and is ultimately created through a process of making sense of lived experience (Schwandt, 1994). With these ideas in mind, the data I collected were primarily in the form of expressions of personal perceptions produced by individuals acting within the sphere of interest. Furthermore, by identifying with a constructivist viewpoint, I am acknowledging that my background and my involvement within the phenomena I am examining has had an impact on the way that I interpret the data collected. In essence, I have made myself a part of the research beyond the act of observation, and by using appropriate analytical techniques, I have been able to characterize the research outcomes in light of the process itself.

Although qualitative researchers share a commitment to naturally-occurring data and interpretive methodologies, many different traditions of qualitative research exist (Erickson, 1986; Marshall & Rossman, 1989; Silverman, 1993). In fact, one of the defining elements of qualitative inquiry, is that it often involves multiple methods of data collection and analysis. Greene, Caracelli, and Graham (1989) noted that combinations of methods within qualitative studies increased the strength of any inferences
made, as a result of multiple analyses. Similarly, Creswell (1994) argued that the application of multiple methods served to neutralize bias inherent in the researcher, data sources, and methodologies. In fact, some have argued that the qualitative/quantitative distinction is overdrawn (Vogt, 1993), since it is difficult to avoid numeric representations of data in even the most qualitative subject matter. In this sense, it should be noted that the use of numbers in qualitative research does not preclude a study being defined as heuristic inquiry. In this study for example, the collection and analysis of numeric data was intended to allow methodological triangulation (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994), not isolated interpretation. In fact, most of the numeric data considered here are simple ordinal representations of human perceptions, phenomena which are certainly more multidimensional than a single number could accurately represent. Therefore, even though some of the data in this study take numerical form and have been examined statistically, they cannot necessarily be interpreted as evidence of strictly measurable phenomena. Furthermore, even though freshman seminars, teaching, and instructional development are all characterized by established goals, this study did not address or test them in a traditional sense. In other words, while the phenomena examined were clearly purposeful, the research itself remained constructivistic.
Participants

The participants in this study consisted of two groups of William and Mary faculty members and their fall 1996 freshman seminar students (approximately 15 students per section). One group of classes was taught by faculty members taking part in an instructional development program focused on strategies for teaching freshman seminars, and the other group (also teaching freshman seminars, but receiving no training) served as a comparative group.

The faculty members who participated in the instructional development program, selected from approximately 20 volunteer applicants, took part in a workshop series entitled "Freshman Seminars: Making Them Work." This training program, which fell under the purview of the Roy R. Charles Center (the Center for Honors and Interdisciplinary Studies), was advertised campus-wide during the spring 1996 semester. Selection of the participants was guided by an emphasis on tenure-track faculty who had not yet taught a freshman seminar, or who had not been previously involved in instructional development opportunities. In addition, a conscious effort was made to select faculty from a wide range of disciplines. This process resulted in nine participants from departments including Biology, Business, Computer Science, English, Mathematics, Modern Languages, and Theatre and Speech. Two of the seminar participants were not considered for this study, because they were not immediately scheduled to teach a freshman seminar. The
remaining seven faculty members and their fall 1996 freshman seminar students comprised the treatment group.

In an attempt to create a comparative group that was as parallel as possible to the treatment group, paired participants were solicited according to two criteria: level of previous experience teaching freshman seminars, and curricular affiliation (school, department, etc.). This pairing was not intended to create a basis for comparison between individual classes, only to promote similarity between groups. In cases where an exact match could not be made, a faculty participant was selected with the same level of previous experience from a similar discipline (such as Humanities, Social Sciences, or Natural Sciences). Thus, the comparative group included the freshman seminar classes of seven faculty members, matching those in the treatment group as closely as possible. Table 1 contains a demographic profile of the two study groups.

All faculty involved in this study were informed that participation was voluntary and could be discontinued at any time. Faculty were also informed that the results of the study would be reported in collective form (with no mention of individual identities), and would be made available to all interested parties. The student participants were unaware of the study until the last week of the semester, when they completed voluntary exit surveys. At this time, the students were told that their responses would be reviewed
Table 1. Faculty demographic profiles for two study groups. Information is not consistently aligned according to individuals.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Treatment Group</th>
<th>Comparative Group</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Age (yrs.)</td>
<td>38 39 44 45 48 53 59</td>
<td>43 57 57 58 60 61 62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Home Department</td>
<td>2 English 1 Modern Languages 1 Biology 1 Business 1 Theatre and Speech</td>
<td>2 English 1 Modern Languages 1 Physics 1 Sociology 1 Theatre and Speech</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experience (yrs.)</td>
<td>5 6 6 8 20 27 29</td>
<td>13 21 26 29 32 33 35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic Rank</td>
<td>1 Instructor 4 Assistant Professors 1 Associate Professor 1 Full Professor</td>
<td>1 Instructor 0 Assistant Professors 4 Associate Professors 2 Full Professors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Typical Class Size</td>
<td>2 Small (1-15) 4 Medium (16-30) 1 Large (31-45)</td>
<td>2 Small (1-15) 4 Medium (16-30) 1 Large (31-45)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taught a Freshman</td>
<td>4 No 3 Yes</td>
<td>4 No 3 Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seminar Before?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
only by the researcher (not their instructors), and that participation in the study would have no bearing on their final course grades.

**Data Collection**

The major objective of this research project was to determine how the instructional development training carried over into classroom practice by examining the behaviors and the perceptions of the classroom participants. To this end, I utilized multiple sources of data, including historical information, descriptive observations, surveys, interviews, and quantitative measurements of classroom communication. The exploratory nature of the project precluded the formulation of specific hypotheses. However, the sources of information on which this study was based were chosen in order to address a set of general research questions (restated here from Chapter one).

**About faculty**

*Did the instructional development program result in the use of teaching strategies intended to promote development of student oral communication skills in the classrooms of the faculty participants? If so, how were these strategies applied? How did the faculty perceive the impact of these strategies? Did these perceptions change during the semester? Did these strategies differ from those used by faculty not participating in instructional development?*
Three sources of data were compiled to address these questions:

**Instructional Development Evaluation Forms.** At the end of each of the six instructional development sessions that took place prior to the beginning of the semester, all of the faculty participants were asked to produce brief (two or three sentence) written responses to questions about their perceptions of the program's agenda and content. Two standard questions were asked on each form:

1. What was the most useful or meaningful thing that you learned during today's session?

2. What questions remain in your mind as we end this session?

After the first session in May and the last session during the August meeting schedule, an additional question was asked about specific topics that might be helpful during subsequent meetings. In all, 98 responses were collected, with all seven participants contributing at all six sessions.

**Transcripts From Interviews And Discussions.** During the final examination period at the end of the fall 1996 semester, the seven instructional development participants (the treatment group) were interviewed individually for approximately 50 minutes each. The guiding questions asked during these interviews (Appendix B) were open-ended and designed to promote the individual description of lived experience. An additional 90-minute meeting involving open discussion with all of the participants was also held. Both the interviews and the discussion (approximately seven hours of conversation in all) were tape-recorded and
transcribed verbatim and in their entirety. General topics raised in these venues included: faculty perceptions of student oral communication skills in freshman seminars, the impact of planned instructional techniques and subsequent changes over the course of the semester, and the overall utility of the faculty instructional development program.

**Faculty Survey Responses.** All 14 faculty participants completed a survey (Appendix C) at the end of the fall 1996 semester. This survey contained five questions dealing with perceptions about the development of student oral communication skills. Two questions called for categorical numeric responses and three called for loosely structured lists of instructional strategies characterized according to the particular question. Four of the participants, who taught two separate freshman seminar courses during the semester, filled out a survey for each of their classes, for a total of 18 surveys (10 from the treatment group and eight from the comparative group). The survey forms were administered and collected by a third party, and all participants were ensured that their responses would be confidential.

**About students**

*How did students perceive the instructional strategies used by participating faculty to promote the development of their oral communication skills? Did these perceptions differ from those of students in classes taught by faculty not participating in the instructional development program?*

Two sources of data were compiled to address these questions:

**Student Survey Responses.** At the end of the fall 1996 semester,
students enrolled in both treatment and comparative group classes were given a survey (Appendix C) which included five research questions composed in a manner parallel to those on the faculty survey. Two of the questions called for the same numerical responses as the faculty survey. Another two used the same language to call for lists of instructional strategies. The survey forms were administered and collected by a third party, and all of the participants were ensured that their responses would remain confidential. A total of 217 student surveys were collected out of a possible 245, representing an 89% return rate.

The Personal Report Of Communication Apprehension (PRCA). The PRCA (Richmond & McCroskey, 1995) is a short (24 question) numerical self-assessment tool which categorizes students as experiencing low, moderate, or high levels of communication apprehension associated with four specific communication contexts (group discussion, public speaking, interpersonal conversation, and meetings). The PRCA is one of the most heavily used communication assessment tools available (DeWine & Pearson, 1985), and has been found to produce valid and reliable results in several types of applications, including with college students (McCroskey, 1978; McCroskey, Beatty, Kearney, & Plax, 1985; Rubin, Rubin, & Jordan, 1997; Vinson & Roberts, 1993). In this study, the PRCA (Appendix D) was sent to all entering freshmen in the summer of 1996 as part of their freshman questionnaire package, enabling comparisons of pre- and post-scores of
in freshman seminars. The post-scores were collected at the same time as the student survey responses. The overall return rate for students who completed the PRCA during both rounds was 82% (81% in the treatment group and 83% in the comparative group).

**About classroom dynamics and the perceptions of participants**

*How much did students contribute to the oral communication in freshman seminars? Did the level of student contribution vary as a result of faculty participation in instructional development? Were student and/or faculty perceptions of classroom communication consistent with actual levels of student involvement?*

Two sources of data were compiled to address these questions:

**Measurements Of Classroom Communication.** During the fall 1996 semester, two classes led by each of the 14 faculty participants (seven in the treatment group and seven in the comparative group) were tape-recorded, and later analyzed, to determine the extent to which students in these classes were participating in the overall classroom communication. After eliminating problematic times such as the beginning or end of the semester, or the week before or after a break, a taping schedule was determined by random selection (without replacement) for each half of the semester (one replicate per class in each half) (see Appendix E). The voluntary faculty participants were informed of all procedures (see Appendix F), but were unaware of the taping schedule. Twice during the fall 1996 semester, an unannounced independent technician delivered and retrieved a
tape recorder containing a 55-minute audio cassette. The faculty member began the recording at the start of class, and continued taping until the cassette ended. In this way, audio recordings were generated of two classes led by each participating faculty member, for a total of 28 samples of actual classroom communication. In the cases of faculty participants who were teaching two separate freshman seminar courses, one recording was made from each class. Otherwise, the two recordings were both made from the same course, but at two separate class meetings.

**Corresponding Survey Responses.** The faculty and student surveys (described above) each contained a question calling for a numerical characterization of the contribution to classroom communication by students. The intent of this question was to provide a comparison of faculty and student perceptions with recordings of the classroom communication.

**Data Analysis**

**Qualitative Data**

The transcribed faculty interviews and discussions represent qualitative data containing descriptions of lived experience. In order to ensure this quality, each interview and discussion was started with my stressing that any questions were intended to catalyze the conversation, not to structure it. As a result, all participants were encouraged to raise their own issues and freely describe their own perceptions. The intent was to produce a
body of material that could be analyzed thematically. Van Manen (1990) defined thematic analysis as a "process of recovering the theme or themes that are embodied and dramatized in the evolving meanings and imagery of (a) text" (p. 78). Thematic analysis is particularly suited for this study, because it is exploratory, rather than based on a set of leading assumptions.

The thematic analysis process began with several readings of the interview and discussion transcripts, in an effort to become thoroughly familiar with the content. Each reading involved taking notes and outlining various observations in order to identify significant concepts and experiences embodied in the texts. For this study, I considered "significant" to include expressions of lived experience marked by both uniqueness and by commonality. In other words, in some cases statements were chosen because they were unusual, while in other cases, repeating patterns of experience were recognizable.

After I had identified a body of these significant statements, I began "cutting" and "pasting" them into clusters which I had developed based on my outlined observations. At this time, all statements were given a numeric code representing the speaker in order to maintain confidentiality. The first clustering resulted in approximately 30 separate groups of statements which were identified as unique and cohesive, although they did not necessarily express the same experience. Following that, I classified these initial themes according to the three guiding topics of the interview sessions: perceptions
of the instructional development seminar, perceptions of the use and utility of instructional strategies, and perceptions of value relating to freshman seminars. This step was not an attempt to impose structure, but to check for redundancy. Then, I re-clustered, within each of the three larger groups with attention given to how the characteristics of the themes related to one another. In some cases, I collapsed themes together, and in others, I broke them into sub-units. Finally, in order to verify the reliability of my interpretation, I asked a colleague to critique my thematization.

Through this process, 13 themes emerged. However, in order to achieve a manageable volume of data, I reviewed and edited the material three more times, until each statement was as reduced as possible (while still retaining its meaning) and each overall theme consisted of no more than 10 representative statements.

In addition to the transcripts of interviews and discussion, the surveys completed by faculty and students included some questions which were designed to produce text of a qualitative nature. However, the responses to these questions were too structured for thematic analysis. Instead, they were simply compiled and tabulated in descriptive form according to reoccurring elements.

**Quantitative Data**

All quantitative data were expressed as simple measures of central tendency and examined statistically for evidence of differences among sub-
groups. Student and faculty responses to categorical questions included in the surveys were analyzed as contingency tables designed to test for differences between treatment and comparative groups. In addition, faculty responses were compared to the averaged student responses within their classes using paired t tests (Vogt, 1993). Student PRCA scores were expressed as pre-post semester score differences and organized into sub-populations. These data were tested for evidence of differences between treatment and comparative groups using simple t tests. The classroom communication data from the audio recordings were compiled and analyzed as follows. The first 10 minutes of all tapes were ignored, and the subsequent 30 minutes were quantified using an "on the dot" point-scan sampling technique (Fagen & Young, 1978; Shavelson, Webb, & Burstein, 1986) at five-second intervals (360 observations per class). Each point of observation was classified as representing one of four possible events: no talking, instructor talking, student(s) talking, or both student(s) and instructor talking. These counts were then used to estimate the percentages of student and faculty participation relative to total class time. Because percentages are not normally distributed, the estimates were angularly (arc-sine square root) transformed in order to better approximate a normal distribution (Neter, Wasserman, & Kutner, 1990), and the two groups were compared using analysis of variance. These data also allowed triangulation of the research results by enabling the examination of self-reported
perceptions of classroom communication (provided by student and faculty participants on the surveys described above) relative to the reality of classroom communication patterns.

**Project Time-Line**

This section contains a time-line of the study as it was implemented.

**Summer 1996**

- Secured necessary permissions from the faculty participants (Appendix F) and the Human Subjects Committee.

- Secured verbal permission from the Assessment Committee to examine the results of the 1995-96 assessment surveys of faculty and student participants in the Freshman Seminar Program.

- Facilitated and observed the week-long faculty instructional development program in late August. Recorded field notes and general descriptions of the process, including important issues raised, and the nature of the interactions and discussions.

- Compiled all materials used during the seminar (agenda, handouts, etc.). Recorded information about planned pedagogical strategies based on seminar discussions and newly-developed syllabi.

**Fall 1996**

- Secured pre-college PRCA results for all students enrolled in the 14 freshman seminars involved in the study.

- Hired an independent technician to collect and compile records of classroom communication. Met regularly to monitor progress.

- Continued to record important issues and discussions and compile materials during the three fall sessions of the faculty instructional development seminar.

- Distributed exit surveys to faculty in both the treatment and comparative groups, and to all associated students.
- Scheduled and conducted 45-60 minute interviews with each of the seven instructional development participants at the end of the semester.

- Secured and compiled classroom communication data.

**Spring 1997**

- Secured post-freshman seminar PRCA results for all students enrolled in the 14 freshman seminars in the study.

- Compiled themes which emerged from open-ended responses of both students and faculty in the exit surveys and faculty interviews.

- Tabulated and analyzed numerical survey data and classroom communication data.

**Limitations of the Study**

This study represented an attempt to bridge the gap between faculty training and the experiences of students. A common assumption in instructional development is that the material presented will carry over into classroom practice. However, a host of complicating factors including course context and content, student and faculty expectations, physical space, and other variables may all impose limitations on the effectiveness of instructional training. The complexity of these variables precludes the use of a cause-and-effect approach to the problem. However, a great deal of insight may still be gained by examining these phenomena in a holistic fashion.

The scope of this study was narrow due to the complexity of the issues involved. The context of this exploration was specific in its freshman
seminar type (academic, with variable-content), institutional type (a selective
public medium-sized institution), and student type (first-semester freshmen).
In the absence of comparative norms, this directed focus limits the
generalizability of the research findings, and makes the study difficult to
replicate. Furthermore, the boundaries of this project were delimited to
focus on one faculty instructional development experience, 14 faculty
participants, and their freshman seminar students during one semester.
Given the duration of the study, the impact of any long-term effects on the
participants as a result of the intervention are difficult to determine.

For the purposes of this study, I chose to narrowly define the
phenomenon of classroom oral communication. In most cases, oral
communication is a much broader concept, inclusive of any process by
which individuals share information, meanings, and feelings through the
exchange of verbal and nonverbal messages (Klopf & Cambra, 1991). Some
key elements of oral communication transactions include sender, receiver,
verbal and nonverbal messages, medium, feedback, interference, and
situation (Grice & Skinner, 1995). Each of these components in turn
contains even more complexity. For example, common nonverbal messages
include kinesics (body movement), proxemics (space), haptics (touch),
paralanguage (vocal quality), and physical appearance (Gouran, et al., 1994).
Clearly, these components of oral communication were beyond the scope of
this project.
Chapter four presents the summary and analysis of the data in the study. Details regarding faculty responses to the instructional development program, impacts on instructional strategies, and faculty perceptions of success and failure are discussed. In addition, student responses regarding the awareness of pedagogy and perceptions of success and failure are explained. Finally, results of the PRCA and the reality and perceptions of the classroom communication are compared.
CHAPTER 4
Summary and Analysis of the Data

Introduction

This chapter contains seven sections based on the three sets of research questions introduced in Chapter one, with sub-elements developed as a result of emergent themes and multiple forms of data. Details regarding the methodological processes for the different forms of data can be found in Chapter three.

Section 1 Faculty Responses to the Instructional Development Program
Section 2 Impacts on Instructional Strategies
Section 3 Faculty Perceptions of Success and Failure
Section 4 Student Awareness of Pedagogy
Section 5 Student Perceptions of Success and Failure
Section 6 Personal Report of Communication Apprehension (PRCA)
Section 7 Reality and Perceptions of Classroom Communication

Section 1 is primarily descriptive, and provides an overview of the opinions and reactions of the faculty members as they became engaged in the process of instructional development. The material used to produce this description was generated by the faculty members themselves. It consists of written responses on instructional development evaluation forms and a set of transcripts from interviews and a group discussion. In the first part of the section, all evaluation form responses dealing with issues involving
classroom oral communication are reported in their entirety. Following this record are the results of a thematic analysis of the interview and discussion transcripts, with the goal of identifying common phenomena which could be interpreted as evidence of important factors impacting the effectiveness of the instructional development.

Section 2 also contains thematic results. In this case however, the transcripts from the discussions and interviews were examined for evidence of the participants' experience as they attempted to apply the content of the instructional development seminar in their respective classrooms. This analysis is augmented by a classification of instructional strategies reported, and a record of the frequency with which some of these strategies were employed. Finally, this section contains a tabulated summary of faculty responses to three questions on surveys completed at the end of the semester. The survey questions deal with faculty perceptions regarding the relative value of instructional strategies that they used to promote student oral communication skills.

Section 3 contains a third and final component of the thematic analysis of the faculty interview and group discussion transcripts. This analysis focused on the opinions expressed by the participants about the overall utility of the instructional development program and the freshman seminar class format. Also reported in Section 3 are the results from another survey question completed by the faculty participants. This question asked for an
ordinal numerical characterization (1 to 5) of the overall value of the freshman seminar in developing student oral communication skills.

Section 4 is based on student responses to two survey questions which dealt with their perceptions of the instructional strategies that were applied in freshman seminar classes. These questions were constructed in parallel fashion with questions that appeared on the faculty surveys ("most helpful" and "least helpful"), and the results are reported in the same tabulated format used in Section 2.

Section 5 also deals with student responses to survey questions. In this case, the questions were based on the students' overall perceptions of the utility of their freshman seminar experience. The first of these questions was once again constructed in parallel fashion to a question on the faculty survey. This question asked for an ordinal numerical characterization (1 to 5) of the overall value of the freshman seminar in developing student's oral communication skills. The second question was unique to the student survey and was the most open-ended question that occurred on either survey. This question asked for a descriptive comparison of class participation between the freshman seminar course and other courses attended during the student's first semester. The results are once again reported in tabulated form, but in this case, representative quotes are used to convey additional information.
Section 6 contains the results from the Personal Report of Communication Apprehension. Patterns in the data are described, and the results of statistical tests are reported.

Section 7 deals with two related sources of data. The first is the set of measurements of classroom communication made throughout the semester. The second includes the corresponding faculty and student perceptions of classroom communication collected from ordinal numerical questions on each of the respective surveys. Patterns in these data are described, and the results of statistical tests are reported.

Following the seven results sections is an overall summary and a consideration of the research questions as they were originally proposed.

Faculty Responses to the Instructional Development Program

Three sources of text produced by the faculty participants in the instructional development seminar were reviewed for material containing reactions to the components of the program which dealt with oral communication.

1) written evaluations from each of the six summer sessions
2) records from individual interviews
3) records from group discussions (including on-line discussion)

From these sources, two different types of data were extracted.

1) a record of immediate reactions of faculty to the instructional development program (based on the evaluation responses)
2) an emergent thematic structure (based on interviews and discussions)
Evaluation Responses

Among the three sources of data examined in this section, the written evaluation responses are unique, both temporally (before and during the semester as opposed to at the end) and qualitatively (brief written responses as opposed to open-ended oral responses). The following section contains a complete record of the faculty seminar evaluation responses as they relate to oral communication, arranged chronologically and by question.

First Session - May 23
What was the most useful or meaningful thing that you learned during today’s session?

The history of the Freshman Seminar Program, and its value for both students and faculty.
The goal that students be producers (vs. consumers) of knowledge.
I had wondered about the balance of content and process and couldn’t imagine adapting a lecture-based course. I understand how these things are integrated now, and feel this will be useful not only for teaching freshmen, but across the board.
The comment not to adapt a lecture course was very helpful. I realize in the past I have tried to pack a full course into my freshman seminars without sufficient attention to the primary goals of the program.
Finally seeing the freshman seminar assessment information.
The importance of "listening comprehension" and how it can be used in class as a basis for developing analytical thinking, speaking, and writing.
Strategies for reducing anxiety; the few points mentioned (introducing themselves, etc.) sound good. I look forward to more suggestions.
Reading and reference materials.
Structure and emphasis for August Sessions.
Students should speak and write for the same reasons that we do.

What questions remain in your mind as we end this session?

What techniques can be applied to teaching literature in a target language?
Mostly specifics, just how do you grade a term paper or presentation?
How do you differentiate between a 150 and 150W—both in the abstract and on the day to day level of classroom communication and assignments?

Will I be able to integrate the presentation of the content in my seminar with preparation in speaking and writing strategies?

Will I be judged at my success at making a "correct" syllabus?

Will I have time to do all the homework with my summer research goals?

What specific topics would you like to have covered in the August sessions?

Homework assignments which will prepare students for discussions.

How to make small group discussions work.

What do typical student products look like (A vs. C presentations and papers)?

Ways of balancing the different elements of teaching—in a class, over a semester, content with oral communication and writing experiences, etc.

Explain the “rules” for freshman seminars, what must we do in the seminar?

The question of sequencing formal and informal assignments.

All appear to be covered in the program outline and agenda.

So far, I like what I see.

What research resources are available to students (Web access, etc.)?

Second Session - August 19

What was the most useful or meaningful thing that you learned during today's session?

Reading, writing, and oral communication pedagogies are connected.

Good demonstration of how writing can be used to develop class discussion.

Discussion of the paradigm shift in teaching, and the balance of process and content.

Syllabus content, criteria for grading class participation and attendance.

Individual feedback on syllabus and planned oral communication techniques.

Reminder that freshmen are constructing an image of themselves, for both themselves and for others.

How to assign groups of students to work on skills together outside of class.

Having never taught a seminar, the discussions about what oral communication techniques have worked in previous classes.
What questions remain in your mind as we end this session?

Am I afraid of using oral communication because of my own communication apprehension?

How do you cover the content, but achieve a content and process balance?

All this talk about "open" teaching, when there is often one "right" analysis.

What resources exist to help people anxious about oral communication?

How is small group activity carried out successfully?

How does one structure a class with mini lectures and group discussion?

How to assign oral presentation topics, and how do you evaluate oral communication?

Techniques to get students to express opinions vs. what they think I want to hear.

Third Session - August 20

What was the most useful or meaningful thing that you learned during today’s session?

Importance of teaching students technical aspects of oral communication.

The connection behind sequencing oral communication and writing assignments.

Sequencing itself on a skill level, and the wonderful models and handouts.

Specific oral techniques such as the "biggest fear" impromptu exercise.

Resources available for students through the Oral Communication Program.

I need some time to process it, so much good stuff today!

Overall, making sure students know the purpose of the exercise or assignment.

What questions remain in your mind as we end this session?

The best way to incorporate formal oral assignments into class.

How to communicate to students what they have achieved orally without drawing their self-awareness to it, before they ride into it unstructurally. Or, do I let them tell me?

How to effectively prepare the students for oral presentations.

How do these ideas apply to presentations done in a foreign language?

How much time does one give to oral presentation in a writing seminar?
Fourth Session - August 21
What was the most useful or meaningful thing that you learned during today’s session?

Very great detail given about preparation for developing oral presentations.
Be very concrete in describing expectations for oral/written assignments.
Helpful to go through different oral communication assignments to see the repetition of ideas, see various criteria emerge.
Information on how journals can be used to enhance oral communication.

What questions remain in your mind as we end this session?
Do you evaluate class discussions? If so, do you make separate deals with the more quiet people?
When giving students so much guidance, how much of the final product is the student’s and how much is the teacher’s? If we intervene, who are we grading? How can one then give a student a C or a D?
Which techniques work best to get audience participation following class presentations?
How can we improve student presentation skills with the limited opportunities we have for formal presentations?

Fifth Session - August 22
What was the most useful or meaningful thing that you learned during today’s session?

Tons of good ideas on how to organize and evaluate class discussions.
The literature on questioning and why students often don’t respond to the professors questions during class discussions.
I’ve learned that good teaching involves a lot of hard work!
Techniques on how to ensure a supportive classroom climate for discussion.
How to conduct small group discussion. I had many questions about the specifics of doing this successfully, and I got really useful answers.
Individual feedback on assignments was very helpful, especially the advice on different rationales and techniques to revise oral communication assignments and related evaluation criteria.
The concrete help with specific assignments was extremely helpful.
What questions remain in your mind as we end this session?

Making discussion work. It is still not clear to me how I can make or encourage everyone to participate. Perhaps I have to just try it.

How am I going to pull all of this together?

Evaluating work done in groups. If I'm not "there" how do I evaluate what the students did in their group?

How will I grade oral presentations appropriately?

Whether we are "overstructuring" the classroom experience. It's so different from what I experienced as a student that it's sometimes hard to adjust. Are we giving students enough sense of responsibility for their own education? I know—these strategies are only designed to make them more aware of expectations, and how to fulfill them, but I sometimes still feel some discomfort here.

Sixth Session - August 23

What was the most useful or meaningful thing that you learned during today's session?

Watching the student presentations was very revealing to me, both in terms of student performances and my own reactions to them.

The variation in grading criteria and approaches among faculty. It taught me how important it is to give students explicit criteria.

Seeing the presentations, and grading with models and expert guidance.

To give students detailed grading criteria along with the assignment. You need to stick with your criteria when grading, and let the students know how you came up with their grade. I've never done that before.

I learned that the more structure you give students, the more likely they are to give you what you want.

The discussion on grading was extremely helpful in emphasizing that you need to have a very good idea of what's important to you for each assignment, and students should know the goals of each activity.

The ideas about creating a learning environment in general, icebreakers in particular.

The model for the first day, especially the specific ideas for establishing the tone of the seminar.

What questions remain in your mind as we end this session?

How will I modify the criteria for oral presentations to my situation?

I still question my ability to teach and grade writing and oral presentations.

Everything is perfectly clear.

I can't even think of them. Saturation!!
What specific topics would you like to talk about in the three meetings during fall semester?

Probably discussion oriented problems.
Student reactions to my new teaching methods, time to discuss actual experiences.
More practice on becoming comfortable with evaluation.
Help with "troubleshooting" and making changes midway.

Thematic Analysis

Transcripts of faculty interviews and group discussions in the instructional development seminar were analyzed thematically for material reflecting immediate responses to the training. Four general themes emerged within this context.

Theme 1a  Concern about crossing intellectual and ideological boundaries
Theme 1b  The importance of peer support
Theme 1c  The novelty of addressing student oral communication skills
Theme 1d  The novelty of examining pedagogy

The following section contains groups of selected quotes illustrating and representing these emergent themes with supporting descriptions. To maintain confidentiality, the speaker is represented by a numerical code preceding each statement.

Theme 1a  Concern about crossing intellectual and ideological boundaries

Although all of the participants had recognized the importance of instructional development by applying to be enrolled in the seminar, individual reactions to some aspects of the training reflected discomfort. These particular participants were, at times, resistant and even resentful about exploring new ideas relating to teaching. One professor went so far as to deny his/her role as an educator.
1: ...It's out of my field, what's going on in education. I prefer to just hear about it, not read about it.

At other times, there were discussions about the history of higher education that were clearly marked by the perception that the content of the instructional development seminar was meant to be a critique of "old school" methods.

1: I was often uncomfortable just with the fact of sort of saying, "This, this kind of, definitely makes for a better teacher." ...You know, the changes that we are talking about are not simply about progress in teaching. While they may be, they are also about a certain culture of education right now.

1: I think that the Freshman Seminar Program as it's designed, seems to imply that the sort of strategies, and the sort of ideas about teaching that we're talking about, come out of a Social Science framework. That is, that we know more about teaching, we know more about students, we know more about learning than we used to, and that's why we should start adapting our teaching. I think that that's true, but for me that's like a partial truth, because this also has a philosophical and an ideological basis, because there are other ways and other strategies that also could be motivating and self-conscious and thoughtful.

4: When I was a student, we didn't have syllabi. When I started teaching I didn't use a syllabus. I would tell them what to do. "Tomorrow we are going to read these, come in and be prepared." But, it doesn't work anymore, and you can't do it anymore, either. The department doesn't allow it, you have to have a syllabus. So, it's a new concept, the idea of spelling things out in great detail as to what your expectations are, and trying to be as clear as possible.

4: ...When new people come in and are doing different things, you have a sort of competition set up, and in some cases, making invalid the techniques you are using even though they are old, tried, and proved techniques. I don't know what effect that has. One thing I don't like is homogenization. I think that people should be free to use whatever kinds of teaching techniques they feel like using. Of course, you can do it, but you pay the price if you are not using the ones students like.
Later, another participant made specific reference to this type of resistance in describing the dangers of compartmentalizing the skill development of students into specific courses.

7: I think we need to do more [faculty development] for faculty teaching freshman seminars. I think that there is an unevenness across courses...people still feel so tied to content and, I remember [one participant] said, "Oh, so you teach this like a real writing course." I thought, these are real writing courses. I didn’t actually say that at the time, but I thought that’s what these are!

I chose to present this theme first because I feel that it illustrates the kind of concern that instructional development is often met with, particularly in its early stages. Thankfully, in this case, these comments were not counterproductive. In fact, all participants agreed at some point that the exploration of new approaches to teaching was a worthy process.

Theme 1b  The importance of peer support

Although participants had varying reactions to the challenges inherent in faculty development, every single participant emphasized the importance of peer support in examining pedagogy in general, and instructional strategies in particular. For some participants, peer support served to build intellectual bridges through the opportunity to share ideas.

1: I’ve known there were these issues for me, but I’ve really never had the opportunity to discuss it with other faculty.

7: Meeting throughout the semester was good, even though it was difficult to generate a lot of enthusiasm, it still was good to touch base throughout the semester. I got good ideas from other people....I learned a lot.
Others described the instructional development experience using language that implied an environment marked by teamwork and mutual trust.

3: It was good to talk over things, and it, it was nice to see that other people were having problems, that were actually, probably, worse than mine!

6: It was so nice too, to me, that other people were grappling with the same issues....They really helped integrate what I was doing, let me know that I was on track, and gave me a window into other people’s experiences. Again, I can’t emphasize that support group aspect enough.

4: Sometimes it is just validating to hear the same kinds of struggles and successes, even if they are a little different, because disciplines are different. It makes you realize you’re not crazy, or that your expectations are not too high or too low.

2: I felt a real sense of trust in that group, and it’s partly because you set it up very clearly that, we were all peers, and that’s why I was so open....Without that kind of seminar, I don’t get to [talk with peers]....I felt very, very encouraged to do that....I think I could even use some more of what the last one [session] was, where we discussed [with peers] what kinds of problems we were having with individual students, and what strategies there were to problem-solve.

One professor noted the link between the emotional and the practical, when discussing the impact of emotional support on the ability to explore new dimensions of teaching.

2: I think that hearing people talk about their students helps me see more in mine. Um, things that I have just taken for granted, or you know, I mean, it just expands my mind in what I can be teaching, what I can be questioning.

These reactions were both strong and consistent across all participants.

Clearly, the impact of peer support made a notable difference in the overall value ultimately placed on the instructional development seminar.
Theme 1c  The novelty of addressing student oral communication skills

For several faculty members, the conceptual framework involved in trying to improve their students' oral communication skills was recognized as having been conspicuously absent from their regular teaching approach.

1: ...I think, I've devoted a lot more attention to writing than to the oral communication, so I think actually, that this aspect of it was the most helpful thing about the seminar.

2: I think [oral communication grading criteria] is probably the biggest thing, and that kind of communication stuff is mainly what I got out of the seminar. Because, I've sort of known that, but I haven't really known how to do it.

While some participants had at least considered issues surrounding student oral communication, one individual admitted that the focus on oral communication was a complete revelation.

6: I used small groups fairly extensively because I was concerned about getting shy people to talk. I wouldn't have done that without the faculty development seminar, because I hadn't really thought of it, to tell you the truth.

6: Your suggestion that the students self-assess made me realize its importance. I would not have thought about self-assessment at all, and it turned out to be THE most valuable thing I did, because I realized that the students' perceptions of what was going on up there were so different from what everybody else was seeing.

A more common reaction was the recognition of the need for specific training relating to the use of formal oral communication assignments such as individual or group presentations.

7: My major concern was how to structure more formal oral communication activities and how to grade them....I felt comfortable using what I would call more informal strategies, because for years I have been reading about and trying out active learning strategies that
involve both oral communication and writing. So, I felt really comfortable with those things, but what I didn’t feel comfortable with was the evaluation of these performances. I still need to work on that.

One interviewee mentioned personal struggles with communication apprehension as the reason for never having addressed oral communication in the classroom.

6: I didn’t get as much out of some of the oral communication readings, I think. Maybe it is just because I’m so inhibited when I even think about it. Partly because it [oral communication] didn’t seem to really fit, but I think going back to the readings after the semester is over will be a really valuable thing to do because I’ll be able to relate some experiences to it. I mean, I just struggle with communication so much myself.

It was also noted that students were going through the same process of recognizing the importance of oral communication.

7: All of those [discussion] techniques allowed the class to talk about oral communication in a way. I think before, they sort of took it for granted, whatever they were doing, so it really helped them to think about it.

Finally, one study member expressed a broader concern, relating to oral communication across the curriculum.

5: While the college does a good job promoting writing skills, it needs to do a much better job at promoting the importance of oral communication skills, in general.

From individual awareness, to a shared consciousness within the classroom, to a call for greater institutional commitment, a newfound appreciation for the development of student oral communication skills was clearly evident throughout the seminar experience. For some faculty, it represented a
whole new pedagogical dimension. For others, it was an opportunity to fine-
tune specific teaching strategies.

Theme 1d The novelty of examining pedagogy

The focus on oral communication was not the only topic considered
novel by these participants. For some, the process of examining pedagogy
was equally new. Several participants expressed enthusiasm for the value
of pedagogical self-examination, noting the lack of attention it had received
in their past professional training.

3: The aspect that I felt most useful in the seminar was the fact that
you were teaching us techniques for teaching, which is something I
think that most people at the University level lack.

3: What I found most helpful was that I had never taken any sort of
course in how to teach....So, this was extremely helpful for me, to
got to know what techniques are out there, how to use them and
modify them and integrate them into all of my courses.

6: We’re never taught how to teach in graduate school. You just get
thrown in and you do the best you can, and that is often the worst of
what you were talking about....We should do more faculty
development seminars. I think it’s really important for people to get
together and share their experiences and their strategies, and to really
think about their teaching.

1: ...This is one of the reasons that I really appreciate our seminar,
because I really was clueless as to how successful these sorts of
things can be with our students, and I really believe that now.

For some, the process of examining alternative pedagogical models evoked
autobiographical reflections on the origins of personal pedagogical styles.

2: I don’t know what it was like for you, but I went through school
and got degrees at a time when pedagogy was a matter of being a
professional. Not a matter of knowing how to teach. Not even really
a matter of learning.
1: I mean, if people think about, or if you ask people to think about the courses they had as undergraduates, or the teachers they had, I think our discussion of that is what got me into this whole thing. “Where did I come from? How was I trained?” Not like this. “And why?” Were they just like, mystifying or disorganized, or was I getting something out of that? “And, how did I become what I was?” You know, active vs. passive. That is the big issue....I was thinking, you know, that my training was about modeling and imitation, that is, implicitly. A lot of my professors thought, “What you should do, what you should try to do, is to be like me,” and so they would just be themselves. Our task as students was to imitate, and it is very traditional actually, in a certain way. And I don’t know that that was self-consciously, but, but I think that’s what we all did.

Others reflected further on broad changes in higher education and the necessity to adjust in order to better meet student expectations and needs.

4: ...Having taught for a good long time and coming from a different era when a different model was in place (the authoritarian model), you could lecture without any problem....I often used the Socratic Method of teaching but, what I was finding was that it wasn’t working any more. With competition from other classes, people doing different things, students came into the class with expectations, and they weren’t expecting what I was doing. So, my primary aim was to find out what people were doing in other classes and see how much of it I could adapt to my own teaching methods.

7: We are doing this [faculty development] in order to try and de-mystify teaching and learning. It’s not just a shift from product to process, or from teacher as authority to shared authority, or consumer to producer, or from a more elitist to a more democratic education. I think all of those things are there....But, I also think that the de-mystification is connected to...[a sense of] fair play, of letting students know what the rules are. We use the term "building in success" or helping students succeed by giving them the rules...it is making the students aware, as we make ourselves aware, of why we are doing something.

One participant noted the practical benefits that went along with examining pedagogy, namely, getting things organized.
5: The seminar really helped me, because it forced me to identify assignment objectives, requirements, schedules, and how I was going to grade things.

Once again, the critical role of institutional support was articulated.

7: I think that it's invaluable getting professors together, giving them time, and paying them (to say that it is worth their time) to talk about teaching. I think giving them these tools, in this context so they'll have support and guidance, is very important....I think that more people should be learning and talking about these issues.

As indicated by many of these statements, the novelty of examining pedagogy was frequently linked with self-examination of teaching skills and responsibilities. This phenomenon often made the task of instructional development a struggle, but one that was maintained because the rewards were clearly apparent.

Impacts on Instructional Strategies

Three sources of text produced by the faculty participants in this study were reviewed for material containing descriptions of activities, assignments, and other pedagogical techniques and issues involving classroom oral communication in freshman seminars. The sources included:

1) records from individual interviews with instructional development participants
2) records from group discussions (including on-line discussion) among instructional development participants
3) written responses to selected survey questions completed by faculty in both the treatment and comparative groups at the end of the semester
From these sources, three different types of data were extracted:

1) an emergent thematic structure (based on the interviews and discussions)
2) a classification of instructional strategies used by the instructional development participants (based on the interviews and discussions)
3) a record of important differences between classes taught by instructional development participants and those taught by members of the comparative group (based on the survey responses)

**Thematic Analysis**

The records of interviews and group discussions were analyzed thematically for material relating to the application of teaching techniques as a result of the instructional development training. Four general themes emerged within this context.

- **Theme 2a** Understanding the unique needs of freshmen
- **Theme 2b** Conflicts between process and product
- **Theme 2c** Recognizing the importance of climate
- **Theme 2d** Relationships between oral communication and writing

The following section contains groups of selected material illustrating and representing these emergent themes with supporting descriptions. To maintain confidentiality, the speaker is represented by a numerical code preceding each statement.

**Theme 2a  Understanding the unique needs of freshmen**

An important factor in all of the classes studied here is that they were composed entirely of first-semester college students. For some of the faculty participants, this was a unique experience which involved recognizing the social and emotional turmoil that these students commonly undergo. Even those who had taught classes of all freshmen before, made note of the
unique nature of the freshman seminar relative to most first-semester classes.

7: [quoting a student] "It's like everything is new. New ideas, new people, new living conditions, new library, new everything." In a way, it's a kind of culture shock. I think you can relate it to going to a different country, right?

6: It's been their high school experience too, to a large extent, being passive. Maybe even more so in science classes. Once we teach them to be comfortable with the passive model, it can be even more intimidating for them to experience active learning....The only way [for freshmen] to learn skills is to have to use them.

The recognition of freshmen as a distinct sub-culture was accompanied by an awareness of the critical responsibility involved in teaching an all-freshmen class.

7: [Faculty teaching freshman seminars for the first time] think, "Well, I'm just teaching content at a lower level," rather than seeing the across the curriculum connections, and the freshman entry-level adjustment issues that are so important to what we are doing, and why we are doing it.

There were many stories about assumptions and adjustments that were made in the process of fine-tuning courses to meet the unique needs of these students. One participant admitted to "softening" the curriculum to some extent by providing more structured expectations than in other classes.

5: I discovered that I was treating freshmen too much like graduate students, where you know, you would typically throw things out, and force the students to provide the structure. It is kind of a pejorative term, but to spoon feed them. I don't think that I am spoon feeding them anymore, but I am clarifying for them the parameters....I think all those little pieces built up a framework for their skill development.
5: I realized I really needed to pay more attention to providing structure to a course for freshmen. Or, as you would say, to ensure that I have thought through things enough so that I am empowering my students to succeed. Normally, I would be having them spend all their time floundering to provide their own structure, and deciding, "Well, this is what he really wants and means," when they don't know what the hell I want.

Later, the same individual noted that a more structured class was not necessarily an easier class.

5: I probably gave them more structure than many of their classes in high school, but I also beat them over the head with workload, writing, and participating. I think that I "woke them up to reality" to what works here [at the college level].

Of course, the faculty were not the only ones in the classrooms that perceived the benefits of smaller, more interactive courses for freshmen.

Remarks made by the students themselves were evidence of the phenomenon.

6: My students kept saying, "This is the only class that I'm going to miss," and I know what my students are taking. They're taking chemistry, and they're taking biology, and they're taking physics, and these are all grim lecture classes with hundreds of people. You don't talk, and you write only to take notes, and you don't think a whole lot, either. We are just cramming the baby birds full.

Perhaps one of the most important statements involved the observation that the opportunity to prepare new students to think critically and to exercise writing and communication skills early in their education could make a great deal of difference in the quality of their work in later courses.

6: I think we can help our students [take risks] in the freshman seminars, in a fairly safe environment, early in college, so that they know that it is okay...so they know you really can teach yourself a lot. You've really given them something priceless if you can do that.
From those faculty members who had never dealt largely with freshmen, to others who developed a new awareness of the freshman experience, the reactions were consistently eye-opening. These statements clearly support the need for, and the goals of, the Freshman Seminar Program.

**Theme 2b  Conflicts between process and product**

As mentioned in the previous theme description, many of the faculty participants struggled to find a balance between the demands of delivering academic course content and the challenge of providing skills training and conceptual exploration opportunities for their students. Sometimes, the scale was tipped toward skill development.

7: You know, you have to allow time for both process and content. The content is important, but it is the framework, or avenue, it’s how we are teaching them to write, and how we are teaching them to communicate [that is most important].

But more often, this process left the instructors feeling overwhelmed.

1: Maybe it doesn’t make sense, but while I’m teaching, it’s harder for me to reflect because there is so much to do. I, I, I know that shouldn’t be the case, but it is.

2: It’s all such a blur to me. Everything just goes so fast. I am always behind.

Problems with time budgeting, both in and outside of the classroom (in preparation) was a reoccurring element in many statements. Among these, the time involved in producing productive discussions seemed particularly problematic.

3: The trouble was, I didn’t have enough time....I just didn’t have enough time because, you need time as you’re teaching, to go over the
material, read through it, take notes, and then think about how you are going to put it into practice [through the use of instructional strategies].

3: ...The problem that I had was preparing questions ahead of time. So, I was just barely keeping up with, um, the general topic. And then, I did not have enough time to sit down and prepare, say three or four different discussion questions for directed discussion in small groups.

6: Discussions take TIME! I don’t feel as though we hit all of the “important stuff” in class. I’m having trouble, particularly in my second section, balancing the need to keep the group on track and the need to let them feel as though they have some intellectual control over where the discussion leads.

7: Even though they give an organized presentation, one of the problems that I want to deal with is that we really don’t have time to discuss what they presented. I mean, they all get to present, and it’s interesting, but...it goes back to time. I would like to do it and have them feel comfortable discussing the presentations and each other’s ideas, too.

In some instances, the process of student skill development was abandoned in favor of a delivered curriculum.

3: I think that they wanted me to lecture more....As time went on, that seemed to take up more and more time. So, they would have questions and clarifications, and I would begin to talk about it, then I would ask, "Do you know about this particular thing?" And then, I would begin to do most of the discussion.

2: You know, if they’re not leading it down paths I think it should go, I just butt in and take off. I think until I learn not to do that, they would be very frustrated in getting a grade on their leading of discussion.

Even the students struggled with the added responsibility of critical thinking.

2: [The students] will say that the research was really, really good but the evaluative procedures were hard. Not hard, but were off-putting like, in a way, it split our focus. I have to, I have to pare them down a little bit more.
Although the conflict between process and product was difficult for some, there were no statements by any participants that implied doubts about the value of this struggle. My hope is that in future classes this balancing act will become easier for the participants as they continue to practice these instructional techniques.

Theme 2c Recognizing the importance of climate

In addition to the revelation of freshmen as a unique sub-population of students, there were many statements that reflected awareness of an emergent class-wide character or collective personality. Not only was this phenomenon noted with respect to the experience of the students, but the faculty members themselves had a strong response to this new type of class environment.

6: I think that the freshman seminars are wonderful because you have the opportunity to really know the students and to know who they are, what their personalities are, and to find their strengths and play to those. And you can’t do that in a lecture class.

6: I know these students better than I’ve ever known any other group, and I’ve had the fun of watching them learn....All of the students have been telling me in our conferences how friendly the climate was. Even the shy ones were saying, "I spoke up when I felt like it," which was nice.

Given that most freshmen begin their first semester with a limited social identity, the small interactive nature of the freshman seminar provided an important avenue for developing peer relationships.

7: With a smaller class there is just a built in intimacy, and if it develops, I mean, it really develops.
5: There seemed to be a good bit of camaraderie, and by the middle of the semester I noticed that people were leaving class and going to dinner together, and they were becoming friends.

In some cases, immediate climate changes were produced through specifically designed activities.

6: The ice-breakers were extremely useful, and were another strategy that I would have never thought of....I had the students introduce each other to start with, and we did small group stuff early on, so I realized it was important for me to encourage them to get to know each other....They went from looking like deer in the headlights (the effect my syllabus had on them, I'm afraid) to looking like relaxed, happy people. When they left, they were chattering happily to each other.

In other cases, climate control was a struggle due to the behaviors of resistant students. Some instructors noted that this phenomenon had unfortunate effects on the experience of other students (and of course, on the instructors themselves).

1: I think students were intimidated by negative comments from their peers, because it's kind of a cool thing. I don't know what I could have done about that, except express my own enthusiasm, that was the only way to counter those remarks. I didn't, I didn't see what else I could do. I think again, in a subtle way, that sort of changed the level, lowered the level, of the exchanges because there were some really good people in there who could have brought it [the level] up.

7: I really think it had to do with the fact that there were just a few students in the class who were resistant to doing work....They intimidated the other students....Right from the start, to be blunt, they made some smart ass comments about things like, "I don't understand why we have to do this." I really had to work hard to sort of change the morale of that class. It was just a more difficult class, and that class just had a difficult personality.
In one case, the physical nature of the classroom had a notable effect on the learning climate.

2: [One class] was held in that awful little seminar room with the glaring white walls and the way too long table. It's odd about that table you know, it's curved but you really can't see each other when you're all crammed in there, which we were, there were like 14 of us...and, the [other room] was too big. In order to make an intimate setting to speak to people, you really have to arrange the chairs so that it makes a sort of artificial space. So [the classrooms] had an affect, they were very opposite, in that way.

Although the concept of "climate" may seem rather elusive, the recognition of a distinct collective character in each class was quite common. In some cases, this recognition involved comparisons between freshman seminars and larger classes. In others, it was described as a function of the individual people involved in the classroom interaction. In any case, the described attempts to shape and promote desirable aspects of "climate" are possibly the best evidence of its importance.

**Theme 2d Relationships between oral communication and writing**

Although communication skills and writing skills were both emphasized as components of the instructional development program, the potential for interactions between them came as a surprise to some participants.

7: I think one of the things that surprised me when you came around with the surveys, after they filled out the evaluation about the oral communication, I discussed with them what they'd said. They put down, one of the things which improved oral communication was exchanging papers for critiquing. I didn't put that down because I saw that as a writing thing. And yet, in a couple of the portfolio evaluations the students have said, you know, "I realize how many students' different styles of writing I've read, and how many read mine and critiqued it, and it gave me more confidence just to talk to
each other in class." After they had done these exchanges of their response papers and drafts of their formal papers, their oral communication really improved.

7: I think now that it's sort of obvious, by having students read other student's writing and comment on it, they got to know other people in the class, and it greatly helped classroom climate and comfort.

One connection that was described involved the utility of having students organize their thoughts through writing (as homework or in class) before discussing them.

4: When they came into class, I used [written responses] as a basis for discussing the passages and questions. That was, I think, very successful....In the seminar for the last week, since it was right after vacation, I told them not to bother to write out their answers, just be prepared to talk. They were totally unprepared. I mean, all semester it had gone very well, and they had written out the answers, and they knew they had to write out answers. They were very well prepared, the discussions were good. I say, "Don't write out the answers," and there's no discussion, and they don't know anything.

4: It is true that they have difficulty generating answers, even if they have a pretty good idea of what they want to say. It takes them awhile to put something together. Whereas if they have already written it, they probably have the structures in mind and then can express themselves.

4: It is often the case, as we discussed, that you just can't formulate an answer to a complex question in a short time....So, to give them a chance to put down their thoughts, and organize their thoughts [in writing], so that they can express them; it's effective.

In contrast, some instructors noted the importance of filtering ideas through discussion before asking students to formally express them in writing. One participant suggested alternating these techniques.

2: Of course, [oral communication] makes one know how to write better. I think it might be good in both of my classes maybe, if I worked on the speak-to-write first, and then said, "Look what you did
speaking.” Then do write-to-speak. So, you know, maybe that’s the order.

Unfortunately, not everyone was able to successfully manage the interaction between oral communication and writing.

1: I really didn’t know where they were at in many cases....See, they did so much writing, that in that sense I thought it [oral communication] was built in. They had so much contact with me; they wrote a paper every other week and got comments, and then they would write again. Usually that in itself provides a kind of ongoing contact, but it didn’t, it didn’t, this time.

Others admitted that the development of these skills was not necessarily an interconnected process. In fact, in some cases, the two issues seemed to be inversely related.

6: Sometimes [the best communicators] were the best writers, but not always....My two students who could be counted on to start discussion also turned in the best term papers. In the second hour, I had some excellent term papers from guys who never talked.

7: My absolute best writer (who I think probably writes better than I do)....she was one of the quietest in the class. Probably the best oral communicator was a real personable young man who was sort of a C+ student in the class. He was a solid student throughout, but definitely not one of the best writers or thinkers in the class.

Probably the most important observation made about the relationship between oral communication and writing is that it is a variable one. This means that in order to promote both, a variable strategy will be required. In an immediate sense, it appears that each activity has the potential to improve the product of the other. However, this does not necessarily result in both skills being developed to the same extent.
Identification of Instructional Strategies

Another type of data extracted from records of interviews and group discussions produced by the instructional development participants was a classification of instructional strategies, and a record of how commonly each type of strategy was mentioned. This information was collected in order to illustrate the types of techniques used in freshman seminar classes, and also to serve as a framework for examining perceptions of faculty and students in both the treatment and comparative groups about the utility of the various techniques (located in subsequent sections).

Six general categories of instructional strategies relating to oral communication are commonly identified in literature on oral communication and teaching. Each of these types of strategies were discussed to some extent during the instructional development program.

**Open discussion** is used as a classifier for any technique which allows the entire class to participate (with unstructured expectations) through individual contributions. Open discussion techniques commonly involve a facilitator (usually the instructor) who poses a question or a problem to initiate a class-wide exchange. This type of technique is often used in association with other, more structured communication activities.

**Oral sharing** techniques include activities and exercises which contain structured opportunities for all individuals in the class to provide brief informal oral responses to questions or issues posed to them. Descriptions of oral sharing commonly include references to “going around the circle” or “taking turns.”

**Small group discussion** techniques involve the division of the class into sub-groups, each of which communicate independently, dealing with questions or issues posed to them. Descriptions of small group discussions often include consideration of how the groups are formed and whether or not all groups are given the same or different tasks.
Presentations are frequently used to develop the public speaking skills of students. Techniques classified as presentations are usually described as formal assignments involving outside research on the part of the student presenter and structured expectations (time limits, types of supporting materials, visual aids, etc.). Presentation assignments are also commonly given as group activities.

Lecturing includes techniques that involve more informal (unstructured) unidirectional presentation of material by one member of a class (usually the instructor, but sometimes a student). The content of lectures is usually based on readings or other materials with which all of the class members are required to be familiar.

Questioning techniques involve the directing of inquiry to specific individuals in the class with the expectation that they will provide an immediate oral response. This technique is often associated with lecturing (particularly by the instructor) or with brief periods following individual presentations (questions from the audience). Questioning is a major component of the teaching techniques that fall under the rubric of the "Socratic Method" of teaching.

The following section contains a tabulated record of strategies used by faculty instructional development participants to address issues involving oral communication in their freshman seminars (as reported in interviews and group discussions). The numbers indicate the instructors (out of seven) who reported the use of each type of strategy. In some cases (when the descriptions were detailed enough) techniques have been further divided into sub-contexts (indicated by indentation) to illustrate specific ways in which the techniques were applied.

Name tents or tags to encourage informality 7
Strategic physical arrangement of classroom (e.g., a circle) 7
Open discussion
    based on written evaluations of class 4
    based on questions generated by students in class 7
    about discussion (goals and ground rules) 5
    based on informal writing 5
facilitated by individual students 5
based on questions generated as homework 4
electronic (list-serve) discussion outside of class 3
following guest speaker presentations 2
focused on Freshman Seminar Program goals 4
focused on communication apprehension 3
following individual presentations 3

Oral sharing
exercises designed to produce a class identity 7
following student background questionnaires 7
following open discussion 5
based on informal writing 4
as exercises intended to improve listening skills 2
as exercises focused on communication apprehension 3

Small group discussion
outside of class 6
with different questions in each group 4
with handouts focused on skills, roles, etc. 4
with defined roles (recorder, reporter, etc.) 3
associated with group research projects 2
with privacy (instructor briefly leaves the room) 2
focused on peer evaluation 2

Individual presentations
with handouts focused on evaluative criteria 5
with written peer and self evaluations 4
with viewing and critique of sample presentations (video tape) 3
impromptu individual presentations 1
using computer presentation software (Power Point) 1
in a target language 1

Group presentations
Think-pair-share (writing/oral sharing in dyads/open discussion) 4
Dyad presentations 3
Graded class participation with criteria clearly outlined 3
Meetings with individual students 3
Questioning of reticent students 3
Group performance or role-playing 1
Individual improvisational performance 1
Sequencing of presentation formats (informal-guided-formal) 1
Comparing Survey Responses

The surveys given to faculty in both the treatment and comparative groups at the end of the semester contained three questions relating to their use of instructional strategies.

Question 3 List the instructional strategies you used in this class which were most helpful in promoting development of your students' oral communication skills. Why did you find these activities most helpful?

Question 4 List the instructional strategies you used in this class which were least helpful in promoting development of your students' oral communication skills. Why did you find these activities least helpful?

Question 5 Which of the instructional strategies described above do you think you will use again in teaching future freshman seminars?

Responses to these survey questions were collected in order to distinguish any differences between the two groups which could be attributed to the training. The following section contains summaries of the faculty responses to each of the three questions with the treatment and comparative groups considered separately. The numbers indicate the instructors (out of seven) whose responses included the same pedagogical strategies. In some cases (when the descriptions were detailed enough), strategies have been further divided into sub-contexts to indicate specific ways in which the techniques were applied. After each group, I have listed some representative comments included in the responses which contain additional qualitative information.

Question 3 List the instructional strategies you used in this class which were most helpful in promoting development of your students' oral communication skills. Why did you find these activities most helpful?
Treatment Group
Open discussion
- based on questions generated by students in class 6
- based on questions generated as homework 5
- following small group discussion 5
- focused on discussion skills (goals and ground rules) 3
- based on informal writing 1
Oral sharing
- based on informal writing 5
- exercises designed to produce a class identity 4
- based on peer writing evaluations 1
Small group discussion
Individual presentations
- with subsequent open questioning 4
- with written peer and self evaluation 4
- using computer presentation software (Power Point) 1
- with viewing and critique of sample presentations (video tape) 1
- with lecturing focused on presentation strategies 1
Sequencing of oral presentation formats (informal-guided-formal) 2
Group presentations (followed by individual presentation) 1
Student lecturing based on readings 2
Think-pair-share (writing/oral sharing in dyads/open discussion) 2

Representative comments (paraphrased):
Journaling helped students the most in preparing for discussions
I set up the expectation that there'd be no lecture, so it was discuss or be bored
Sharing written peer evals of papers increased bonding and confidence
Free-writing, followed by oral sharing helped students to formulate ideas

Comparative Group
Open discussion
- based on readings 5
- facilitated by students 4
- encouraged at all times 3
- based on informal writing 2
- following oral sharing 1
- focused on strategies for giving oral criticism 1
Individual presentations based on formal writing 2
Student lecturing based on readings 2
Oral sharing 1
Questioning during lectures 1
Sequencing of presentation formats (individual-group) 1
Small group discussion based on readings 1

Representative comments (paraphrased):
1. let students have the freedom to comment at any time
2. This class is not devoted to oral communication per se, the student's skills are already good
3. I only interfere when students are extremely off base

Question 4 List the instructional strategies you used in this class which were least helpful in promoting development of your students' oral communication skills. Why did you find these activities least helpful?

**Treatment Group**
None (all strategies used were helpful) 4
Open discussion 2
- based on informal writing 1
Oral sharing 2
- based on peer writing evaluations 1
Group presentations 1
Small group discussion 1

Representative comments (paraphrased):
1. Whole class discussion was tough for the shyer students
2. All strategies worked initially, but less so later on (due to lack of planning on my part, need more in-process thought time)
3. Journals (students found them repetitive with homework questions)
4. Use of small groups not necessary (very active participation)
5. Individual presentations critiquing a peer paper (dialogue was nil)
6. Going around the circle intimidated some students (some I could use more effectively, am still working on my confidence in teaching oral communication)

**Comparative Group**
Questioning during lectures 2
Open discussion 2
- based on controversial statements 1
Instructor lecturing 1
Student lecturing based on readings 1

Representative comments (paraphrased):
1. Readings don't lend themselves to discussion, so I had to lecture
2. Lecture (but there was some discussion as material was presented)
Calling on students (this didn’t always lead to discussion)
Asking for reactions vs. calling on specific students
Use of controversial statements (students weren’t willing to react)
Whole class discussion (though it did improve slightly)
Oral introduction for papers (not structured enough, so not useful)
They were generally afraid to say anything that others might disagree with

Question 5 Which of the instructional strategies described above do you think you will use again in teaching future freshman seminars?

Treatment Group
Oral sharing 7
   based on informal writing 6
   exercises designed to produce a class identity 4
   based on written peer evaluations of formal writing 1
Small group discussion with subsequent open discussion 7
Open discussion
   focused on discussion skills (goals and ground rules) 5
   based on informal writing 3
   based on questions prepared as homework 3
   based on questions generated by instructor 1
   based on questions generated by students in class 1
Individual presentations
   based on formal writing 5
   followed by open questioning 5
   with written peer and self evaluation 4
   based on readings 2
   with lecturing on presentation strategies 1
   using computer presentation software (Power Point) 1
   with viewing and critique of sample presentations (video taped) 1
Student lecturing based on readings 4
Sequencing of presentation formats (group-individual) 2
Think-pair-share (writing/oral sharing in dyads/open discussion) 2

Representative comments (paraphrased):
Need to plan a greater variety of activities next time
Will pre-plan specific vs. general discussion questions
Set up expectations there’d be no lecture—so, discuss or be bored
Journaling to help students prepare for discussions
Share written peer evals of papers (to increase bonding, confidence, climate)
Comparative Group

Open discussion 5
- with student facilitation 2
- based on readings 1
- during lectures (unplanned) 2
- based on informal writing 1
- following oral sharing 1

Individual presentations based on formal writing 2

Graded class participation with criteria clearly outlined 1

Oral sharing 1

Student lecturing based on readings 1

Small group discussion 1

Representative comments (paraphrased):

Class discussion of written reaction papers (do one in each class)

Small group in-class discussions (but rotate group membership)

Oral presentations (but time constraints a problem, since this is a performance course)

Require daily input at all class meetings

They are generally more willing to write ideas

Faculty Perceptions of Success and Failure

Three sources of information produced by the faculty participants in this study were analyzed with the goal of characterizing perceptions of the utility of instructional strategies designed to address student oral communication skills in freshman seminars:

1) records from individual interviews with instructional development participants
2) records from group discussions (including on-line discussion) among instructional development participants
3) responses to a categorical survey question completed by faculty in both the treatment and comparative groups at the end of the semester

From these sources, two different types of data were extracted:

1) an emergent thematic structure (based on the interviews and discussions)
Thematic Analysis

The faculty interviews and group discussions were analyzed thematically for material describing personal perceptions of success or failure in the goal of developing student oral communication skills. Five general themes emerged from these data.

Theme 3a The novelty of students as critical thinkers
Theme 3b The bitter-sweetness of interactive learning
Theme 3c The success of clear expectations
Theme 3d Overcoming communication apprehension
Theme 3e Struggling with student variation

The following section contains groups of selected material illustrating and representing these emergent themes with supporting descriptions. To maintain confidentiality, the speaker is represented by a numerical code preceding each statement.

Theme 3a The novelty of students as critical thinkers

One of the side effects of a delivered curriculum is it may produce a perception on the part of the instructor that students are primarily passive learners. When faced with an interactive classroom, some of the faculty members were struck by the ability of the students to think for themselves when given the opportunity.

6: You know, analysis and synthesis and evaluation happens in the freshman seminars. I think that students haven’t had much chance to do that, ever.
6: They were constructing it themselves. They were given the opportunity to do that, and I think that’s the major difference between this and the big lecture situation. In the lecture, the professor has the answers and the students take them down and give them back. Here, I was making them bring me the answers.

Along with independent thinking comes a responsibility for directing your own learning process. Some of the instructors reported evidence that their students were embracing that responsibility. The tone of these descriptions indicated that these observations were clearly offered as examples of the best type of success.

4: ...Yesterday I came into my office and found two students sitting on the floor here and they had been discussing the material for the [midterm] synthesis [paper], and [they] had generated some questions they wanted to go over with me....They weren’t told to, but some of them collaborated. It wasn’t part of my strategy....I thought that was just the best kind of learning that you can have: you know what you are doing, you’re asking questions of your friends and colleagues, you’re discussing it intelligently, and you are coming in and asking questions.

6: People would bring articles in that they had found in the newspaper. People would talk about things that they had heard. People would bring in vignettes from their own experience. They put things together in ways that I had never thought about and I found that, the more I backed off, the more this happened.

6: They knew that this was an evolutionary process, and I felt that since they were made to be responsible for how the discussions went, they should be able to say what worked and what didn’t. They were building the class with me, in a sense....They were responsible, too, and I think that helped them talk.

In some cases, the students themselves seemed to be going through a process of discovering that they could be producers as well as consumers of knowledge.
4: [The students] were actively engaged, and were certainly producing knowledge, and I think, my own view anyway, that they made progress in all of the areas, but certainly in oral communication.

6: I think that it’s really important for us to remember that the students that we have have minds, and that they need to use them, as opposed to just filing things away. They really need more of the responsibility if they are going to learn anything....I’m so convinced that students teach themselves better than we teach them.

5: I think [the students] had a feeling that, “Yeah, I really am contributing something to the class. It’s just not all from the professor cramming things down my throat.”...It wasn’t just the professor evaluating them, they were evaluating each other, and they understood the capabilities of their colleagues, as opposed to how well they were doing on a test.

One of the most amazing effects of empowering students to think critically is that they sometimes took opportunities to empower each other even further.

7: We went around the room and [the students] shared what they had written down...one student who was vocal made a point the next class that he wished everyone would speak up because he said that he’d read the response paper of someone who didn’t talk a lot in class, and that person had really good ideas. He wished the person would share them more, since when everyone in class talked everybody had something interesting to say.

2: They all spoke to each other and asked each other questions as well as me. I loved the energy and now look forward to this week’s discussion....After class, I read their responses to what would make a good discussion and I gained some insights.

7: They indicated how important it was, and over and over again in their portfolio evaluations, they said how important that peer response was to them. I honestly felt that they thought it was very exciting, and that they cared more about what their peers were saying, than what I was saying.
This theme contained some of the most positive reflections on the experience of teaching in the Freshman Seminar Program. Although not all of the participants reported these types of success, I believe that these stories had a motivational impact on the whole group. For me, it was refreshing to hear a group of teachers take such pride in their students, and I suspect that the students could feel that pride as well.

Theme 3b  The bitter-sweetness of interactive learning

Along with the successes reported, there were many indications that the instructors also experienced frustration and disappointment as they struggled to maintain a quality classroom environment. One type of observation involved the time required for preparation, which was generally considered to be greater than what was required for a comparable lecture course.

7: I think that it's deceptive then, when you see an active learning classroom, because it looks as if the teacher isn't doing anything. You know, the students are sitting around working in groups talking, and yet to get that to work right you've had to put in a lot of thought, and a lot of time, before that class, and some people don't get that. You know, it would be easier to just write a lecture and to get up and give it, and give them a test later. But, what we're trying to do is to get these students thinking, producing knowledge, taking responsibility for their learning in different ways.

4: This is great education, but it has a downside. To keep this up, I would have to be teaching one course, and I teach three preparations.

A major goal of interactive teaching is to empower the students, so that they will take part in their own learning process. However, as one participant noted, this requires an instructor to relinquish some of the traditional control over classroom behaviors.
5: I had a tough time quieting them down. They kind of, almost, had a sports team banter that would go on in the locker room. You know, sarcastic kinds of remarks which were good, but it got everybody going....Sometimes it just made it tough to manage the classroom.

Another instructor had a difficult time maintaining and adjusting the use of alternative pedagogical strategies.

3: I think that at a certain point, the students were aware that I was kind of like, fiddling around, okay? "Okay, small groups, no, you don't like it? Okay, let's do something else." I was kind of going down the list of things to do, tricks to get them to say something, in addition to the fact that the material in the course was very varied, and there was a lot of it to cover.

3: I basically gave up on the small group discussions....So, at the beginning it was very useful, I thought, but later on it seemed that they weren't getting very much out of it. It probably was because of the questions, the questions weren't directive enough, they weren't focused enough.

As noted in other themes, many of the instructors experienced a new and rewarding awareness of their students through the process of teaching a freshman seminar. Sometimes however, it was clear that this awareness was a double-edged sword in the sense that having insight into the learning process made it easier to see weaknesses in both the students and the instruction.

1: [The freshman seminar] seemed so much more open-ended, and I think I short-changed them, in that it was too open-ended. In hearing about [another participant's] course for example, they clearly had a circumscribed subject, and could really cover it, and I think that in itself gives students a sense of competence, and of development, that my course didn't provide.

3: No, the only thing I felt was, there was a certain point towards the latter half of the semester when I felt really, really disappointed in the class, almost to the point of just being disgusted and angry. It just
didn’t seem like I could get them to be fired up about the material, on any level, and I guess some of the reactions of a few of the students ticked me off.

2: ...I haven’t found [my teaching to be] that balanced, which it ought to be, I think. I teach structure and then I ask them to lead discussions on other aspects. But, I don’t, I haven’t, I’m not sure yet, and I don’t know when I will be sure about what I am doing.

Clearly, the "downside" of this experience was significant in many of the participants’ opinions. A question of considerable importance then, is whether or not the benefits of using these teaching techniques will be perceived as outweighing the costs. This question may loom even closer in the future when the participants teach their courses again without the structured peer support that was built into the instructional development program meetings.

Theme 3c  The success of clear expectations

One of the primary messages conveyed by the instructional development program was that the nature of first-semester students is such that they need course and assignment objectives to be as clearly defined as possible. Although some of the participants were dubious about the necessity or utility of providing this type of structure at first (see Theme 2a), many found it to be a valuable motivator, and even those who were initially resistant recognized its importance.

6: The more structure I gave students for assignments, the happier they were. I’ll probably give them even more structure next semester.

1: Yeah, no, I think our students like the structure, I mean, I think that’s true. I don’t know why that’s true, but I see that they respond
and are more successful when they get the structure....They appreciate knowing exactly what’s required, right now, for this. It’s too hard to have unstructured education. I totally respect and understand that, but it’s still kind of, depressing to me.

One form of course structuring involved the clear identification of expectations and grading criteria associated with specific assignments, particularly formal assignments.

5: I think that giving [students] more structure was key....I think that they found that the kinds of structure that I gave them, paper objectives, dates for outlines, things of that sort, and also evaluation criteria (as we discussed this summer) helped...because it minimized the time that they had to spend outside the class deciding, "What the hell does he really want?" You know, figuring all that out, because I’d given them a pretty good idea. That strategy really seemed to work for the students.

5: So, and it started to make a lot of sense because when I hear my daughter, who recently graduated from college, talk about different courses, she would frequently complain about, "I don’t know what he wants." I’d hear the students sit around and talk for 45 minutes to an hour about you know, what is really expected on an assignment or a project, and I realized that’s because we haven’t defined it very well.

6: I think that you should be structuring the expectations, but not the knowledge. Students should know where they need to be going in terms of what the final product needs to look like. Several [students] have said, "Thanks so much for making us do it in pieces." I think all the support that you can give them is really necessary, and the sooner they know about it, the happier they are.

Another successful form of structure was seen in organized discussions where the expectation of participation was consistently reinforced.

3: Simple things like calling on students who didn’t raise their hands, or, going around in a circle so everyone had to say something. It is just expected, so you go around the circle and they expect to be called on...and I did have, with all these things, I had some success.
On a broader scale, structure was also imposed by previewing learning objectives for individual class sessions or for whole segments of the course.

1: I told [the students] where we were going in the class at the beginning. I have never done that before. I don’t know if this is anything that you, I mean, I really set it up from the start and I did this across all my classes. Whereas, usually I don’t, I just start anywhere, and I know where I’m going. For all my talk of lack of structure, I’m rather controlling in terms of the ideas I want to kind of build towards. This time I said, “This is what we are going to do, we are going to work on this problem today and I’m going to show you, you know, why I think X, Y, and Z.” Again, I think they really liked that, they write it down, and then they know that everything else that we’re doing relates to that one thing.

1: What I’ve learned is that one has to set things up very immediately. Set up the expectations, and even the principle of variety, right from the start because it’s very hard, for me at least. I don’t have it in me, or it is just simply harder for me in terms of group psychology, to institute something later on.

In addition to being a strategy for success in freshman seminars, some of the participants found that increases in structure made improvements in their other courses, as well. So, despite some initial criticism that this approach was a "dumbing down" process, in the final analysis there was wide agreement that it improved student learning and created a more comfortable classroom atmosphere for all.

Theme 3d  Overcoming communication apprehension

Communication apprehension is one of the primary barriers to the type of classroom experience that is called for in the freshman seminar goal statement. Ironically, one of the ways that faculty participants helped students to overcome apprehension was to make them more aware of it.
Through this process, students found that they were all in the same boat, and that their contributions could be valuable to the rest of the class.

2: [Students] were always cognizant that they thought of themselves as shy quiet people when they came in, and they were surprised to find that they were voicing their opinions.

6: What I did was talk about my own experience with communication apprehension. That was something that you suggested that I do, so I did it early on, and I did it often. Particularly with the shy students, and not just telling them verbally, but I also dealt with it in written feedback. I'd address the issue of how nervous they were, and I told them that I was always nervous during presentations, too. It really helped.

In small groups, the playing field for student communication was more level, and willingness to communicate increased.

5: They were very shy and timid at the beginning, very reticent, as you would anticipate freshmen being....I think there was a shift around the group presentations, because they forced them to work together in small groups....By the end of the semester, there was an air of self-confidence in the classroom.

6: They're much more willing to sound stupid with each other and to think on their feet in a small group. I've eavesdropped a lot and heard better discussions [in the small groups] than we've had with [the whole] class.

In preparation for activities that involved communicating in front of the whole class (open discussion or individual presentations), some instructors spent class time defining specific goals and guidelines. In some cases, the students themselves had to speak out in order to identify the barriers that kept them from participating. Once again, this process of increasing self-awareness seemed to have a positive impact on their willingness to communicate.
6: Now, they’d talk about their nervousness, and their inability to answer questions, and what I had seen up there was a fairly poised presentation, and that they were handling questions reasonably well. It was nice to be able to tell them, to give them feedback, on these specific things. So, it greatly helped our communication.

5: At the beginning of the semester, I asked the questions that we had discussed in the [faculty] seminar about what do you like/dislike about oral communication and interaction in classrooms. And, a lot of students said, "You know, making a fool of myself, fear, and that type of thing."

7: I had the students brainstorm about what made a good class discussion. Of course, some of the same items came up about wanting it to be safe, and some people don’t talk because they don’t want to look stupid, and things like that. So, getting their fears out. And then, one student raised her hand and said, "I really think that in order to have good discussion, you have to have at least one obnoxious person." Of course, that broke everybody up. They loved it. So, we had this sort of running joke through the rest of the semester about who was going to be the obnoxious person for that particular class, and it had to rotate so, it was a lot of fun.

One participant observed that the process of overcoming communication apprehension might be best dealt with as a "quick and painful" indoctrination by using an individual presentation early in the class so that other modes of participation would seem easier by comparison.

6: The effect of the journal club was phenomenal. After someone had done their presentation, for the next two or three weeks they were heavily involved in the group discussion, too. Even if they were normally quiet. I think they had been through something fairly traumatic and survived, so they were able to do the more relaxed talking more easily. It was a course changing event for all of them. Hearing your voice, realizing that no one was going to throw tomatoes, and it was going to be okay.

Whether the process involved slow, continuous reinforcement or immediate forced participation, the key to overcoming communication apprehension...
seemed to be putting the students in a situation where they had to recognize and talk about their fears. Since students' descriptions of apprehension often involved aspects of social pressure ("looking dumb," "sounding stupid," etc.), the climate of each classroom probably played a major role in determining how severe the effects of apprehension would be. As a result, activities and strategies which were designed to improve climate probably reduced communication apprehension, as well.

Theme 3e Struggling with student variation

Any form of student variation in a classroom is likely to make the application of pedagogical techniques more challenging to an instructor. In the freshman seminars, many different types of student variation were recognized. Variation in skill levels among students was commonly noted.

3: I have some students who are really good [communicators], and then there are a few who can just barely put a sentence together.

2: ...Some people were more prepared to lead discussions than others, and there was a palpable difference.

3: Some of the students...were just so sharp, good writers and good speakers, so it made it frustrating because there were some there that just couldn’t communicate.

Variation among sub-populations of students was also an issue that concerned many of the participants.

3: I broke them into small groups where they were suppose to meet outside of class. They discussed their own papers outside of class, and then came into class with a critique of them....That was successful for some, and not for others. It just so happened that some of the slackers would get into one group, and I got the
impression that they never really met outside of class. They would kind of discuss right in class, just after class, or before class.

1: There were three students who spoke most, who I characterize as anti-intellectual. They would come in and say, "Why does anyone have to read Milton anymore? Why does anyone have to read the Bible?" or whatever. You know, I took them on their own terms and so forth, but the fact is, the environment was a formal one, but also one in which people who spoke up a lot didn’t think what we were doing was valuable, and I think that had an effect.

For those instructors that taught more than one class, variation between classes created a unique set of problems.

6: I am teaching two sections of my seminar back-to-back....I’m learning how to relax in between so that I don’t let my feelings about how the first class went affect the beginning of my second class....What interests me most is that the two classes are so different. In the first one, there are four or five students who are incredibly bright and carry the discussion beautifully....In the second class, there are NO students at the level of the four or five hotshots in the first class. There are only two shy (but smart) girls who DON’T want to talk, and an assortment of naive students who want to talk without thinking first, and some who are brighter than they look but keep quiet. I’m finding that it’s really hard to have a discussion with this group. To cope, I’m resorting to making two different sets of question lists for the two different sections, as well as planning for things to take longer in the second hour. I’m afraid that students in the second section just won’t have as rich an experience as students in the first section.

Student gender was recognized as a factor involved in variation among individual students, particularly with respect to their oral communication patterns.

5: The women were much more quiet at first, but gradually increased their participation....There were a couple of loud-mouthed young male students, as well. By the end, the women spoke almost as frequently as the men. However, the quality of discussion from the women was much better, overall.
One participant struggled with temporal variation, as the class developed in unexpected ways.

7: The first half they are learning a whole new language. One of the things I realized by looking at oral communication in this course, was that probably the first half of the course I should not expect them to be discussing in the same way. Or, I have to use different techniques to get them to discuss than I have been, because they just don't have the command of the material.

Another instructor admitted that he/she had the potential to make incorrect assumptions about variation among individual students based on previous experience.

6: There was one student in my second hour who I was convinced was a hopeless ditz. She came in, she was blowing bubbles with her bubble gum, she was you know, very tenth-grade puppyish. I just thought, who is this person and what are they doing in my class, and how am I going to be able to cope with this? I got her discussion points and I thought well, well, this person might have a brain. Then she did an oral presentation that just knocked me flat. She was wonderful, to the point and poised, sensible, and I thought, I have really, really missed the boat with this person. I think that that’s something I need to watch, because in lecture classes, we know our students so superficially. We set up expectations for [students] that we don’t even know we have, and when they meet them we say, “Yeah, yeah,” and when they don’t meet them, sometimes we don’t even know it.

In one case, variation among students seemed to become an accepted part of the classroom communication process. This phenomenon even developed to the point that students took on distinct and recognizable identities when it came to involving themselves in classroom interactions.

7: I felt as if their comfort level, and their ability to take risks improved in the course, but, you know, there was still the one student who, if she wasn’t careful, tended to monopolize the discussion. And then, each student had sort of idiosyncrasies about sharing with the
class. You know, one always did it sort of as a joke, and another one enjoyed labeling himself the obnoxious one....So, they developed almost characters...created roles for themselves in the seminar. I hadn’t really thought about that, but that could be what they were doing in their oral communication and their awareness of it.

This final theme about variation raises the important point that no matter how much preparation is taken to develop a comfortable climate and convey clear expectations to students, there are always factors associated with an individual class that cannot be accounted for or controlled. For those who are resistant to changes in pedagogy, this observation may form the basis of an argument against the utility of instructional development. However, as one participant pointed out, in traditional lecture classes student variation is virtually invisible to the instructor. With this in mind, the goal of this type of instructional development is not only to make the process of teaching more accessible to the students, but to make the nature of the students more accessible to the instructor.

Survey Responses About Course Value

The survey completed by all faculty participants at the end of the semester included the following question:

2. Overall, how valuable do you think the freshman seminar was in developing and providing practice for your students’ oral communication skills?  
   (not valuable) 1  2  3  4  5 (very valuable)

Responses to this question provided additional information about faculty perceptions of success and failure. The overall average of the 18 responses (four of the faculty members provided responses for each of two classes)
was 3.67, with a standard deviation of 1.03 (Figure 5). The 10 responses from the instructional development participants produced a mean of 3.63 with a standard deviation of 0.92. The eight responses from the comparative group produced a mean of 3.71 with a standard deviation of 1.25. A chi-square test, treating the responses as categorical variables (eliminating the "1" and "5" levels because they were unrepresented) did not support a conclusion of difference due to instructional development (P = 0.88).

Student Awareness of Pedagogy

The surveys given to students in both the treatment and comparative groups at the end of the semester contained two questions relating to their awareness of the instructional strategies used in their classes.

**Question 5** List the instructional strategies used in this class which were *most helpful* in promoting development of your oral communication skills. Why did you find these activities *most helpful*?

**Question 6** List the instructional strategies used in this class which were *least helpful* in promoting development of your oral communication skills. Why did you find these activities *least helpful*?

Student responses to these questions provided a loosely structured text from which common perceptions could be extracted. The following section contains a summary of those perceptions, using the terminology produced by the faculty members in describing their own instructional techniques (in a previous section). In these summaries, the treatment and comparative
Figure 5. Results from a fall 1996 survey of faculty and students participating in freshman seminars at The College of William and Mary. The bars represent the percent occurrence of each ordinal category (1-5) of response to the question: "Overall, how valuable do you think the freshman seminar was in developing and providing practice for your students' (your) oral communication skills?"
Fall 1996 - Overall Value of the Course

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category of Response</th>
<th>Students (217)</th>
<th>Faculty (18)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 &quot;not valuable&quot;</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 &quot;very valuable&quot;</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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groups are considered separately. The numbers indicate the students whose responses included the same pedagogical strategies. In some cases (when the descriptions were detailed enough) strategies have been further divided into sub-contexts to indicate specific ways in which the techniques were applied (or perceived). After each group, I have listed some representative comments included in the responses which contain additional qualitative information.

Question 5 List the instructional strategies used in this class which were most helpful in promoting development of your oral communication skills. Why did you find these activities most helpful?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Treatment Group (n = 122)</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Open discussion</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- facilitated by students</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- based on questions prepared as homework</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- about discussion (goals and ground rules)</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- based on readings</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- following lectures</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- based on informal writing</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- electronic (list-serve) discussion outside of class</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- about presentation skills</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individual presentations</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- with subsequent open discussion</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- based on readings</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- with viewing and critique of sample presentations (video taped)</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- ungraded practice presentations</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- with subsequent written peer and self evaluations</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oral sharing</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- promoting a &quot;safe&quot; environment for oral communication</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- based on peer evaluation of formal writing</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- exercises designed to produce a class identity</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Small group discussion</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- associated with research projects</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group presentations</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Questioning (emphasizing &quot;safe&quot; questions)</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of direct questioning</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Impromptu performance</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Representative comments (paraphrased):

- Comfortable classroom climate made opinions safe
- Going around the circle and all sharing a point was valuable
- Critiquing peer papers helped me organize and express my thoughts
- Student directed discussion without intervention produced less pressure
- Oral presentations forced me to face it and gave me practice
- Questioning is a successful method of producing discussion
- We set the guidelines for daily discussions
- I had to speak at length in an organized manner
- Students and professor were always interacting
- Everyone was encouraged to participate in every class
- Critiquing each other made me see what not to do in a presentation
- Generating discussion questions helped me prepare by writing
- Talking about talking was helpful

**Comparative Group (n = 95)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Open discussion</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- based on informal writing</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- with student facilitation</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- based on group performance</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- following individual presentations</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- following lectures</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Questioning (emphasizing “safe” questions)</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oral sharing</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- promoting a &quot;safe&quot; environment for oral communication</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- based on readings</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individual presentations</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- based on formal writing</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- based on readings</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- with subsequent open discussion</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Small group discussion</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student lecturing based on readings</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group performance</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group presentations</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading aloud in class</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Representative comments (paraphrased):

- Being a moderator in class gave you the teacher’s perspective
- Being forced to lead a discussion helped dissipate some anxiety
- Discussion was more comfortable because it was on a personal level
Didn’t worry about facts being wrong because it was just my opinion
Probing questions provoked concentrated thought and opinions
Encouragement of classroom participation, to expand on your points
Professor allowed free expression of ideas instead of fixed interpretation
Engaging questions opened my mind
Being forced to talk helps you get over your fear
Taught me to give insightful answers to questions on the spot
Forced to defend my arguments and prove my points

Question 6  List the instructional strategies used in this class which were least helpful in promoting development of your oral communication skills. Why did you find these activities least helpful?

Treatment Group (n = 122)
None (all strategies used were helpful) 29
Can’t think of anything 20
Open discussion 10
  based on readings 4
  based on questions generated by students in class 2
  based on informal writing (journal) 1
  electronic (list-serve) discussion outside of class 1
Small group discussion 8
  with same question for all groups 2
Oral sharing 5
  based on peer evaluation of formal writing 3
Structured classroom debate 4
Questioning 3
Lectures 5
Individual presentations 3
Writing assignments 2
Improvisational performance 1

Representative comments (paraphrased):
Generating class questions made me apprehensive
Did more thinking than talking
Professor would start to lecture if he thought we didn’t understand
Activities were good, but some lacked constructive advice
Discussion is very important, but doesn’t help communication skills
Other students’ comments/glances hindered participation
Professor sometimes intervened before student was done
E-mail communication discourages face to face interaction
A few students dominated the discussions
Some classmates held us all back by not preparing for discussion
Students took peer evaluation too personally
Professor needed to foster discussion, not just ask for questions
I took the opportunity to not speak, but I wish I'd been pushed more
Writing does not help oral communication
Too much student-teacher dialogue, not enough student-student
Discussion should be more structured (debates)
Professor scolded us for not talking (fostered resentment)
Professor solicited questions, but not comments
So much emphasis on oral communication overboardish?

Comparative Group (n=95)
Lectures 17
Can't think of anything 11
None (all strategies were helpful) 6
Open discussion 8
  facilitated by students 2
Questioning 5
Small group discussion 2
Writing assignments 1

Representative comments (paraphrased):
  Students were never given guidance, so they read during presentations
  Very few strategies were used, that's the biggest problem
  We were not encouraged to prepare for oral communication
  The relaxed atmosphere didn't make me nervous enough
  My problems arose from my own insecurities, not the instruction
  Class conversations were stagnant
  Teacher dominated large group discussion, so hard to participate
  Professor just talked, and wouldn't listen to students
  Professor talked and rambled a lot, tended to give speeches
  Professor criticized student comments (embarrassing)
  The professor regularly interrupted students to disagree
  The teacher would needle me and make me nervous
  The professor would lecture and lecture and lecture
Student Perceptions of Success and Failure

The survey completed by all student participants at the end of the semester contained two questions which related to their perceptions of the utility of the freshman seminar class format with respect to oral communication instruction.

The first of the two questions asked for an ordinal ranking of the course in a manner parallel to a question completed by the faculty on their survey:

4. Overall, how valuable to you was the freshman seminar in the development of your oral communication skills?
   (not valuable)  1  2  3  4  5  (very valuable)

The overall average of the 217 student responses to this question was 3.35, with a standard deviation of 1.15. The distribution of these responses is shown in Figure 5. The 122 responses from students enrolled in courses taught by instructional development participants produced a mean of 3.71 with a standard deviation of 0.10. The 95 responses from students in the comparative group produced a mean of 2.87 with a standard deviation of 1.17. The distributions of the responses from each of these groups is shown in Figure 6. A chi-square analysis showed that students in the classes taught by instructional development participants perceived significantly more value than those in the comparative group (P < .0005).

In addition, the possibility of differences between student and faculty perceptions was examined by calculating the student response mean for each class and comparing this value to the corresponding faculty member's
Figure 6. Results from a fall 1996 survey of students participating in freshman seminars at The College of William and Mary. The bars represent the percent occurrence of each ordinal category (1-5) of response to the question: "Overall, how valuable do you think the freshman seminar was in developing and providing practice for your oral communication skills?" Two groups are shown: a treatment group, attending classes taught by participants in an instructional development program, and a comparative group, attending classes taught by instructors without training.
Fall 1996 - Overall Value of the Course

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category of Response</th>
<th>Students in treatment group (122)</th>
<th>Students in comparative group (95)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 &quot;not valuable&quot;</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 &quot;very valuable&quot;</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

% of Respondents
response using a paired sample t test. The P value produced in this test was 0.15, indicating that student responses were generally lower than faculty responses, but not enough to make this prediction with less than 5% error.

The second question on the student survey which dealt with perceptions of utility was an open-ended question about variations of classroom participation across courses.

7. Please describe how your classroom participation in this course compared to your typical classroom participation in your other courses.

Responses to this question provided a loosely structured text from which common reactions could be extracted. The following section contains a summary of those responses with treatment and comparative groups considered separately. Within each group, the responses are divided into three sub-groups: students who reported higher participation in their freshman seminars, students who reported lower participation in their freshman seminars, and students who reported no difference in participation. Each of these groups has been further sub-divided by listing representative student statements followed by a number which indicates how many students expressed a similar reaction. In the cases of the more common types of responses occurring in both groups, the same representative statements are used.
Treatment Group (n = 122)

Reasons for higher participation
- Class is smaller - easier to voice opinions: 37
- Larger classes offer no opportunity for participation: 28
- Atmosphere feels highly conducive to oral communication: 27
- Teaching style was encouraging, safe, and comfortable: 18
- My only class that is all freshmen (less intimidating): 17
- Topic/material was more fun vs. other courses: 9
- Ease of participation here carried over into my other courses: 7
- My only class where open discussion takes place: 5
- My only class that involves presentations: 5
- My only class where a professor knew my name: 5
- I spoke more here than in all my other classes combined: 2
- My only course that is student-oriented: 2
- The professor was patient and helpful on an individual basis: 1
- I seldom speak in general, but this course has improved my skills: 1

Reasons for lower participation
- Spoke less than in some of my other classes: 3
- This class was less stimulating than some of my other courses: 2
- Spoke less than in others because of the target language: 1
- I participated in this class relatively little, less than average: 1

Reasons for same participation
- I'm usually active in all my classes: 6
- I spoke when I needed to, and remained quiet otherwise: 1
- I rarely participate in any of my classes, I'm just too nervous: 1
- I participated like crazy, as always: 1

Comparative Group (n = 95)

Reasons for higher participation
- Class is smaller - easier to voice opinions: 29
- Atmosphere feels highly conducive to oral communication: 9
- My only class that involves presentations: 6
- Larger classes offer no opportunity for participation: 5
- I spoke more, but I was less comfortable: 3
- My only course that is student-oriented: 2
- Topic/material was more fun vs. other courses: 1
- My only class where I was called on: 1
- Teaching style was encouraging, safe, and comfortable: 2
- I spoke more, but still spoke little: 1

Reasons for lower participation
- Uncomfortable atmosphere: 5
- Seminar was primarily a small lecture course: 2
- Forced participation was annoying, so the class was not enjoyable: 1
- I spoke slightly less in the seminar: 1
Reasons for same participation

I participated the same as in my other classes 5
I spoke an average amount, no more or less than other classes 2
Most of my classes were small, so no difference in participation 1
Participation the same, except for math and science classes 1

The Personal Report of Communication Apprehension

The PRCA is designed to provide insight into communication apprehension in four separate sub-contexts: group discussion, public speaking, interpersonal conversation, and meetings. However, the relative importance of these sub-scores is highly dependent on the goals of the research and the context or environment in which the tool is applied (Chesebro, et al., 1992; Rosenfeld, Grant, & McCroskey, 1995). In this case, the intent of the freshman seminars has been to develop a broad range of competency in oral communication skills without targeting any one particular context. Therefore, since reporting of sub-scores would be somewhat superfluous, and would weaken statistical comparisons by reducing the number of responses contributing to each score (J. C. McCroskey, personal communication, August 26, 1997), I have chosen to report only the overall PRCA scores.

Previous results from application of the PRCA to entering William and Mary students before the implementation of the required freshman seminar curriculum (1993) showed that communication apprehension among students who were not enrolled in freshman seminars changed very little
over the course of the first semester (Funds For Excellence Final Report to the State Council for Higher Education in Virginia, 1996). A similar result was repeated in this study (Figure 7), with both the treatment and comparative groups exhibiting average pre-post semester score differences that were not significantly different than zero according to t tests (P = 0.74 and 0.72, respectively). Furthermore, a comparison between groups showed no effect of the instructional development seminar (P = 0.82), and a comparison of both groups pooled against the 1993 data showed no effect of freshman seminars overall (P = 0.91).

As part of the scoring process, the PRCA includes a classification scheme in which students are categorized as exhibiting low, moderate, or high apprehension. When students in this study were divided into these categories based on their pre-semester scores, the resulting sub-populations showed different responses in their post-semester scores as a result of their early college experience. The students who began the semester in the low apprehension classification showed the greatest increase in scores, those that reported moderate apprehension exhibited little change, and the few who started off in the high apprehension category improved dramatically (Figure 8). This pattern represents the classic type of "regression toward the mean" observation that would be expected in the absence of any external treatment of first-semester students (J. C. McCroskey, personal communication, August 25, 1997), and can be interpreted as further
Figure 7. Average pre-semester/post-semester score differences produced by three groups of first-semester students completing the Personal Report of Communication Apprehension (PRCA) at The College of William and Mary. The dark dots represent the mean score differences for each group. The error bars represent one standard deviation from each respective mean. The number above each group represents the sample size. The fall 1993 group did not attend freshman seminars. The fall 1996 treatment group attended freshman seminars taught by participants in an instructional development program. The fall 1996 comparative group attended freshman seminars taught by instructors without training.
Figure 8. Average pre-semester and post-semester scores produced by sub-populations of first-semester students completing the Personal Report of Communication Apprehension (PRCA) at The College of William and Mary. The bars represent the mean scores produced by each sub-population. The error bars represent one standard deviation from each respective mean. The number above each pair of bars represents the sample size. The first graph shows the results from students who attended freshman seminars taught by participants in an instructional development program. The second graph shows the results from a comparative group who attended freshman seminars taught by instructors without training. The three pairs of bars in each graph divide the students according to their pre-semester scores (low, moderate, or high apprehension).
evidence of the lack of impact on these scores by the instructional development seminar.

Reality and Perceptions of Classroom Communication

The primary results from the measurements of classroom communication made during this study are shown in Figure 9. In general, the patterns among the means appear to indicate that the instructional development resulted in lower levels of instructor talking and higher levels of student talking. However, analysis of variance performed on these data, angularly transformed to approximate a normal distribution (Neter, Wasserman, & Kutner, 1990), did not support any difference between treatment and comparative groups at a 5% error rate (Instructor $P = 0.69$, Student $P = 0.16$). Furthermore, since standard deviations were very high, it is unlikely that any reasonable increase in sample size would have produced significant results. In fact, when one anomalous class (no talking at all during the viewing of a long film) was removed from the analysis, the $P$ values for instructors and students both increased dramatically ($0.909$ and $0.522$, respectively).

When the treatment and comparative groups were pooled and the “both” category of talking was added to each of the individual levels, the results showed that overall, instructors talked during 50.9% of class time and students talked during 37.1% of class time. The remaining 22.0% of point
Figure 9. Results from measurements of classroom communication in freshman seminars at The College of William and Mary (fall 1996). The bars represent the average percent of class time attributed to four different categories of communication events: no talking, instructor talking, student talking, and both instructor and student talking. The error bars represent one standard deviation from each respective mean. Two groups are shown: a treatment group, in which instructors took part in instructional development, and a comparative group, in which instructors received no training. The sample size for each group was seven, with each individual value being represented by the average of two replicate measurements.
scans contained no talking. One of the stated goals of the Freshman Seminar Program is to provide a classroom forum in which at least 50% of the class time is "devoted to student participation" (The College of William and Mary Educational Policy Committee, July 21, 1994). Therefore, according to the results of this study, the freshman seminars examined here (on average) fell slightly short of that goal.

In my instructional development activities, I have noted a common misconception among faculty regarding the application of the freshman seminar curriculum goals. Many instructors interpret the goal statement as a mandate to produce classes in which students are doing "half of the talking." Although this functional translation is not the same as producing a class in which students participate during half of the class time, it is a more accessible conceptual measure of student oral communication, because it does not require any accounting for the time when no talking is occurring. In this relative sense, then, the data collected here indicate that students were responsible for 42.2% of the talking in their freshman seminars.

The surveys that were completed by the faculty and student participants in this study included a question that was designed to test their perceptions of classroom communication.

What percentage of the classroom oral communication was done by students?
10 20 30 40 50 60 70 80 90 100
The student responses to this question indicated that they felt that they were responsible for 65.3% of the talking in their freshman seminars overall (Figure 10). In contrast, faculty felt that students contributed only 54.4% of the talking. Since the actual measurements of classroom communication produced a value of 42.2% student talking, it appears that the faculty members in this study had a more accurate perception of student talking (even though their average estimate was still quite high). A paired sample $t$ test comparing the faculty response to the mean student response in each class showed that the faculty estimates of student talking were consistently lower than their average students' estimates ($P = .0005$).

All three types of estimates of student communication levels (actual measurements, faculty perceptions, and student perceptions) produced higher means in the treatment group than in the comparative group (Figure 10). However, as described above, this difference was not statistically significant in the case of the actual communication measurements. In contrast, a chi-square test, treating student responses as categorical variables (eliminating the 10% and 100% levels because they were under-represented) showed that students in the classes taught by instructional development participants perceived higher levels of student talking than those in the comparative group (70.3% vs. 58.8%, $P = .002$). A similar test for differences in faculty perception of student talking
Figure 10. A comparison of real measurements of classroom communication in freshman seminars with the perceptions of students and faculty at The College of William and Mary. The bars represent the average percent of classroom communication attributed to students according to three different sources: actual measurements, and student and faculty perceptions according to their responses to a numerical survey question. The error bars represent one standard deviation from each respective mean. Two groups are shown: a treatment group, in which instructors took part in instructional development, and a comparative group, in which instructors received no training. For the actual measurements of classroom communication, the sample size for each group was seven, with each individual class being represented by the average of two replicate measurements. For the survey results, the sample sizes for the two groups were 10 and 8 classes respectively (the student perceptions were expressed as class averages, so that classes of different sizes would not be weighted differently).
% of Talking Attributed to Students

- Treatment Group
- Comparative Group

- Reality
- Student Perception
- Faculty Perception

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produced a significant result at the 10% error level (59.1% vs. 47.1%, 
P = 0.08); however, this test was based on a much smaller sample size.

Since students in the treatment group classes carried perceptions of both higher self-involvement and higher overall course value (see above), these patterns were examined for correlations using class averages. The two sets of values produced a Spearman’s rank correlation coefficient of .477, indicating a high level of correlation. This relationship is especially apparent when examining the classes in the comparative group, four of which were ranked lowest, and in the exact same order according to both types of student perception. Table 2 shows both rankings of the 18 classes.

Table 2. Ordinal rankings of 18 freshman seminar classes according to student perceptions of involvement and overall course value in developing oral communication skills. Comparative group classes are in bold type.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student Perceptions</th>
<th>Lowest Ranked</th>
<th>Highest Ranked</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Student involvement</td>
<td>ABCDEFGHIJ KLMNOPQR</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Course value</td>
<td>ABCDEKHPNGFI JRQOM</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In addition to these patterns, a comparison based on student gender showed that female (n = 146) students perceived a higher level of student talking than did male (n = 71) students (68.4% vs. 58.9%, P = .01).
Summary

The following section contains a summary of the major results of the study, organized according to the research questions as they were originally posed.

Questions about faculty

Did the instructional development program result in the use of teaching strategies intended to promote development of student oral communication skills in the classrooms of the faculty participants? If so, how were these strategies applied?

In short, the answer to this first question is yes; there were clearly identifiable impacts of the instructional development seminar on the types of faculty teaching strategies used in freshman seminars. Evidence for this conclusion can be found throughout the evaluation responses in Section 1, and in the thematically organized statements by participants in Sections 1, 2, and 3.

Section 1  Faculty Responses to the Instructional Development Program
Theme 1a Concern about crossing intellectual and ideological boundaries
Theme 1b The importance of peer support
Theme 1c The novelty of addressing student oral communication skills
Theme 1d The novelty of examining pedagogy

Section 2  Impacts on Instructional Strategies
Theme 2a Understanding the unique needs of freshmen
Theme 2b Conflicts between process and product
Theme 2c Recognizing the importance of climate
Theme 2d Relationships between oral communication and writing

Section 3  Faculty Perceptions of Success and Failure
Theme 3a The novelty of students as critical thinkers
Theme 3b The bitter-sweetness of interactive learning
Theme 3c The success of clear expectations
Theme 3d Overcoming communication apprehension
Theme 3e Struggling with student variation
In the first set of themes, participants talked about the transformative nature of the faculty development seminar, and how it prompted a reconsideration of their philosophical and ideological perspectives on teaching. Although not always comfortable, all participants agreed that the exploration of new instructional approaches was a worthwhile process. This self-examination of pedagogical methods, especially those related to classroom communication, emerged as a central issue in the application of new teaching strategies. Themes 1c and 1d contain statements that reflect the novelty of the pedagogical issues with which the participants found themselves grappling. Some acknowledged never having previously considered the strategies they were using, while others expressed appreciation for the support and guidance they received to hone their teaching skills. The theme which most clearly illustrates the impact of the instructional development on oral communication teaching strategies is probably 1c; The Novelty of Addressing Student Oral Communication Skills. Within this theme, many statements establish a direct connection between the strategies used and participation in the instructional development training program.

In the second and third groups of themes, the participants expressed a newfound awareness of the constraints associated with teaching in the specific context of a freshman seminar, and provided many details about their experiences associated with the application of instructional strategies.
Considered together, the themes in Sections 2 and 3 are a testament to the emergent nature of the interactive classroom environment. While information provided in the instructional development meetings clearly played a role in the activities and assignments used, each individual participant reported unique observations about the challenges they experienced. This phenomenon illustrates the importance of instructional development as a longitudinal process which promotes an instructor's ability to recognize and adjust to potential pitfalls, rather than as a simple set of teaching guidelines.

Further evidence for the carry-over from instructional development into the freshman seminar classrooms can be seen in the tabulated list of strategies compiled in Section 2. The instructional techniques listed were exhaustive in the sense that they indicated a wide range of formats for classroom communication. In fact, not only were all of the basic "types" of strategies included, but a rich variety of combinations and applications were also apparent.

*How did the faculty perceive the impact of these strategies?*

Overall, the reactions of the faculty to the instructional development program and to the impacts of new teaching techniques in their classes were positive. The thematized texts in Sections 2 and 3 are the clearest indicators of this reaction. These themes contain a wealth of statements that not only associate faculty perceptions of student success with specific
teaching techniques, but indicate the intention of continuing to use these techniques in future courses. Even when statements were focused on frustrations (e.g., Theme 3b), they were often presented as "downsides" of the experience, which still implied a generally positive perception. Perhaps the most telling aspect of these statements was that, the participants who described themselves as less successful than others were able to recognize the potential that their classes did not achieve, and planned to implement specific strategies to foster classroom communication in their next freshman seminars.

Did these perceptions change during the semester?

Although participants had few concrete responses when asked in the interviews about longitudinal changes in perception, evidence for these changes can be seen by comparing texts produced at different points in the instructional development process. The simple fact that the participants applied for the opportunity to be involved in the program indicated that from the start, they were motivated to try new techniques in their classrooms. The evaluation responses, which were all collected before the start of the semester, suggested that by the end of the initial series of instructional development meetings, the participants were recognizing the utility in the promotion of classroom oral communication. Although some apprehension was expressed, most of the responses were very positive ("Tons of good ideas..." "...extremely helpful" "...really useful") and most of the questions
about the techniques were in the form of requests for more detail about their application in specific contexts. In contrast, many of the thematized statements collected in interviews at the end of the semester (particularly those in Themes 2b and 3b) reflected frustration with the fact that the teaching techniques used were not consistently reliable and required constant adjustment. Finally, in response to the survey questions about strategies used (also collected at the end of the semester), the participants clearly exhibited a higher awareness of oral communication in their classrooms and a willingness to continue fine-tuning these pedagogical techniques in the future. I interpret this variation in faculty perception as evidence of a learning process in which the participants began the semester with a mechanistic or atomistic approach to classroom oral communication and finished with a more holistic understanding of the dynamics of classroom communication. Interestingly, this evolution mirrors the recent history of ideas about classroom oral communication, student learning, and instructional paradigms, which many have argued followed a path from the deterministic to the dynamic and emergent (Barr & Tagg, 1995; Palmerton, 1992).

Did these strategies differ from those used by faculty not participating in instructional development?

The answer to this question is most certainly yes. The evidence for this conclusion can be found in the tabulated responses of the survey questions (faculty exit survey, questions 3, 4, and 5) about instructional strategies
(Section 2). These data showed that the faculty who participated in the instructional development seminar:

- reported using a larger body of strategy types
- reported more variety within the strategy types used by both groups
- reported more combinations of strategies (sequencing, etc.)
- exhibited more evidence of adjustment (detailed "why" descriptions)
- exhibited more awareness of good and bad aspects of the techniques
- predicted more fine-tuning in their future courses

Even the volume of response material produced by the treatment group was about twice as much as the comparative group. Although these differences are striking, they might still be interpreted as artifactual due to the increased awareness of classroom oral communication developed as a result of the instructional training (that is, the strategies used in the two groups were the same, but the training allowed the treatment group to produce much more detailed descriptions). However, this type of effect seems unlikely in light of the fact that the students in the two groups (see below) produced parallel differences in their survey responses.

No differences were detected between the two groups of faculty in their perceptions of the overall course value with respect to student oral communication skill development (faculty exit survey question 2). In view of the apparent dramatic differences in the teaching approaches, this result was unexpected. Several different interpretations are possible, and I suspect that each of the following factors may have contributed to some extent.
a) The higher consciousness of teaching strategies in the treatment group (higher awareness of failure as well as success), could have dampened their perception of value.

b) The lower consciousness of teaching strategies in the comparative group could have raised their perception of value (ignorance is bliss).

c) Faculty might have been too closely involved in their classes to objectively assess this type of value.

d) The sample sizes may have been too small to indicate differences.

Questions about students

_How did students perceive the instructional strategies used by participating faculty to promote the development of their oral communication skills?_

In their responses to exit survey questions 5 and 6, students in the treatment group recognized many of the same strategy types and much of the same variety in strategies as described by the faculty. One unique aspect of their responses was a distinct awareness of open discussion activities, perhaps because this activity was particularly rare in their other classes. In addition, the students exhibited consciousness of the impact of teaching strategies in their descriptions of why techniques were "most helpful" or "least helpful," and in the language that they used to characterize their experiences (e.g., "fostering," "encouraging," "unique opportunity").

_Did these perceptions differ from those of students in classes taught by faculty not participating in the instructional development program?_

This question probably speaks to the heart of this study more than any other, since it asks for a demonstration that the instructional training given to the faculty participants had a measurable positive impact on their students. This of course, is the ultimate goal of all instructional development, and represents a question that is typically left unanswered. In
this case, the answer to the question came from the student exit surveys.

As in the faculty responses to the parallel questions, the students in the treatment group described more general types of instructional strategies and identified a higher variety of combinations and contexts in which these strategies were applied than did the students in the comparative group.

Furthermore, the responses produced by the comparative group students:

- included much less focus on open discussion
- contained many more references to lectures by the instructor as a primary mechanism of classroom communication
- included many more specific criticisms of instructor behaviors
- generally exhibited ideas about communication that were less sophisticated (e.g., many references to the importance of being "forced" to communicate)

In addition to these differences, students in the comparative group produced course value ratings (on a five-point scale) that were dramatically lower than those produced by students in the treatment group. As described above, this type of difference was not detected between the two faculty groups. In fact, averaged student responses in the treatment classes were generally higher than the corresponding faculty responses (3.71 vs. 3.63), while in the comparative classes, the averaged student responses were generally lower than the corresponding faculty responses (2.87 vs. 3.71). This pattern suggests that students perceived an impact of the instructional development training that faculty did not, and raises important questions about how instructional development efforts should be assessed.
The student scores generated from application of the Personal Report of Communication Apprehension provided another source of information about their perceptions of classroom oral communication. Unfortunately, no significant patterns were identified in the PRCA data relating to the instructional development, or even the Freshman Seminar Program as a whole. In view of other notable results observed, apprehension (as measured by the PRCA) is probably a poor indicator of the impact of the freshman seminar curriculum.

**Questions about classroom dynamics and the perceptions of participants**

*How much did students contribute to the oral communication in freshman seminars?*

According to the point-counts of actual classroom communication, students spoke during 37.1% of the overall class time. This level was lower than the percentage of time attributed to faculty participation (50.9%), and lower than the goal associated with the mission of the Freshman Seminar Program (50% of the total weekly class time devoted to student oral participation).

*Did the level of student contribution vary as a result of faculty participation in instructional development?*

The data contained no significant differences between the treatment and comparative groups regarding this question.
Were student and/or faculty perceptions of classroom communication consistent with actual levels of student involvement?

Both student and faculty perceptions of student participation were inflated beyond the levels indicated by the measurements of actual classroom communication (42.2% of the talking attributed to the students). The faculty estimates (54.5%) were slightly more accurate than the students’ estimates (65.3%), but were still 12% higher on average than the actual levels measured. Furthermore, both faculty and students indicated higher student involvement in the treatment group classes than in the comparative group classes, despite the fact that no evidence for this type of effect was found in the point-count data.
CHAPTER 5
Implications for Practice and Future Research

Introduction

This chapter consists of eight sections. The first section contains a brief review of the purpose of this study and the methods that were employed. The second, third, and fourth sections each address a different component of the conceptual framework behind this study (as outlined in Chapter two). Each of these three parts includes an overview of the relevant results with consideration of their implications with respect to related literature, and pedagogical practice in higher education. The fifth section is a summary of implications for policy and practice, and the sixth section describes a model for the promotion of effective college teaching, which emerged from the results of this study. Section seven includes recommendations for future research, and the final section contains a personal reflection on my experience of this project.

The Study

This research was designed as an exploration of the process and outcomes of a faculty instructional development program intended to
improve the delivery of a freshman seminar curriculum at The College of William and Mary. A major goal of this Freshman Seminar Program is to promote an interactive learning environment in which students are able to develop their oral communication skills. As a result, the instructional development in question was largely focused on the promotion of teaching techniques that enhanced oral classroom interaction. The specific research questions addressed in this study involved faculty reactions to the training, the impact of the training on subsequent teaching techniques used, and student and instructor perceptions of the utility of those techniques in the development of student oral communication skills. Two groups of freshman seminar instructors and their students were examined: a treatment group in which the instructors took part in the instructional development training, and a parallel comparative group in which the instructors received no training. The primary data collected included evaluations of the training sessions, transcripts from interviews and group discussions, results from surveys given to both faculty and students, student scores on a self-evaluation assessment tool, and a series of audio recordings of actual classroom communication. These sources of information were analyzed using a variety of thematic and comparative techniques.
Freshmen Experience and Freshman Seminars

One area of theory and application that this study relates to is the growing body of interest in the design of programs to promote retention and skill development in first-semester college students (reviewed in Barefoot & Fidler, 1996). Although the survey data collected from the students in this study were quite narrowly focused, the faculty interviews contained some broader observations which related to their perceptions of the utility of the Freshman Seminar Program.

Faculty instructional participants recognized the unique needs of freshmen.

Among a series of emergent themes that were extracted from the interview data was a body of statements (Theme 2b) that referred specifically to the characteristics of first-semester students which placed them in an intellectually and emotionally isolated sub-population. Along with these observations came the acknowledgment that the curriculum experienced by freshmen at The College of William and Mary probably exacerbates this phenomenon, because of a dominance of large lecture courses. These statements carried a somewhat epiphanic tone, especially for those who had never taught an all-freshman class before. Emphasis was placed on the responsibility involved in introducing these unique students to the academic environment, and observations countered the common belief that the Freshman Seminar Program is simply a watered-down curriculum for novice students.
Faculty participants observed that their students developed identity. Other groups of statements made by faculty participants referred to the importance of classroom climate (Theme 2c) and the variation among students (Theme 3e). These statements reflected an awareness of social dynamics that impacted student participation and motivation. Student behaviors were described in both positive (productive) and negative (disruptive) dimensions that occurred at individual, small group, and class-wide scales. However, it was also recognized that this type of variation ultimately gave students opportunities to position themselves socially and intellectually among their peers—a phenomenon that is unlikely to take place in larger non-interactive classes. This type of identity development is one of the goals commonly associated with freshman seminar curricula.

Students recognized important distinctions between freshman seminars and other courses, and reported practicing oral communication skills in their freshman seminars.

In their responses to a survey question about the differences between the freshman seminar classes and other classes, students had many more positive reactions than negative or neutral reactions regarding the freshman seminars. Some very common observations included the importance of a smaller class size, of a more comfortable climate, and of opportunities to participate actively in multiple contexts. In addition to identifying freshman seminars as unique in these respects, students reported that they engaged in
activities such as discussions and presentations, which were designed to improve their oral communication skills. In fact, many students reported that their freshman seminar was the only class they attended in which these types of activities took place.

Implications of the Results.

The responses of both faculty and students to the freshman seminar curriculum examined in this study were positive. These results lend support to arguments made by both theorists and practitioners about the widespread need for Freshman Seminar Programs (Gardner, 1986; Maisto & Tammi, 1991; Upcraft & Gardner, 1989). In particular, the observations made by faculty participants reinforce the idea that first-semester freshmen (even at a selective institution) represent a group of students who undergo a unique socialization process which can be enhanced through special curricular consideration (Erickson & Strommer, 1991; Jorgensen-Earp & Staton, 1993; Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991). Many researchers have recognized this phenomenon in student outcomes data (Banta, 1991; Barefoot, 1993; Blackhurst, 1995; Davis & Murrell, 1993; Fidler & Moore, 1996; Murphy, 1989; Wilkie & Kuckuck, 1989). However, the qualitative methods used in this case offer an especially striking account of the impact of a small, interactive class on the development of student identity. An additional aspect of these results stems from the fact that the William and Mary freshman seminar curriculum is an academic variable-content model.
(Barefoot, 1992), as opposed to the more common standardized extended orientation course. The academic variable-content approach to freshman seminars is much rarer and has been studied to a lesser degree (Barefoot & Fidler, 1996). Therefore, it is important to note that these results represent a demonstration of potential for success in this specific type of Freshman Seminar Program.

**Classroom Oral Communication and Learning**

Another major area of scholarly activity which is relevant to the goals of the William and Mary Freshman Seminar Program, and to the results of this study, is the widely recognized connection between classroom oral communication and student learning. The broad concept of learning is commonly expressed as a tripartite construct, consisting of cognitive, behavioral, and affective domains (Astin, 1993; Morey, 1992; Weinstein & Mayer, 1986). Since the goals of this research were focused on a specific set of student skills (those involving oral communication), the behavioral domain of learning is a natural reference point from which to consider results. However, the qualitative and exploratory nature of this research allowed for the collection of evidence which speaks to other aspects of learning, as well.
Faculty participants observed that oral communication promotes critical thinking.

Although the variable course content format of William and Mary's Freshman Seminar Program makes the consideration of cognitive student learning difficult, the faculty who were interviewed made note of a number of important connections between oral communication activities and student exhibition of cognitive capabilities. Common among these observations was evidence of enhanced student critical thinking skills (Theme 3a). This aspect of the faculty perceptions of the freshman seminars was powerfully positive and arguably a motivational factor for both faculty and students engaged in the classroom communication process (Barnes, 1992; Stice, 1987).

Faculty participants observed that oral communication controls classroom climate, which ultimately fosters learning.

The maintenance of a "comfortable" and "safe" classroom climate was recognized as an important issue for both faculty (Theme 2c) and students (survey question 7). However, connections of this phenomenon to oral communication activities and to the student learning process were made most clearly by the instructional development participants during their interviews. Two impacts of oral communication activities on the quality of the classroom climate were consistently recognized. The first, that early communication makes the social environment feel safer, resulting in enhanced classroom interaction. The second, that regular communication
provides feedback for environmental adjustment. Both of these effects promote the verbal exchange of ideas, which is crucial for student learning to occur (Barnes & Todd, 1995; O’Keefe, 1995; Palmerton, 1989). **Faculty participants observed that communication and writing are motivationally inter-related.**

Although the development of student writing and speaking skills are commonly compartmentalized in curricular structures (Rafoth & Rubin, 1992; Sperling, 1996), some of the faculty participants in this research recognized elements of success in making connections between these two activities. Both writing to prepare for speaking and the discussion of ideas prior to committing them to text were noted as successful sequences of activity. Furthermore, faculty participants credited these activities with improving student motivation, which they felt positively impacted both the learning process and the quality of final student products. **Faculty participants recognized the importance of communication apprehension as a barrier to learning.**

If oral communication is a conduit for learning, then inability or unwillingness of students to participate in classroom communication represents a major hurdle for any educator interested in interactive teaching techniques. In this study, instructors in the treatment group not only observed the impacts of communication apprehension in their classes; they made note of several factors that they associated with reductions in
apprehension (Themes 1c and 3e). Not surprisingly, these factors generally involved increased experience with oral communication. Specifically, discussions and oral sharing exercises which focused on self-awareness of communication seemed to have a strong impact on the nature of student contributions in later oral communication activities.

Survey responses showed that open discussion can be both rewarding and disastrous.

In response to survey questions about the "most helpful" and "least helpful" instructional strategies, faculty and students in both the treatment and comparative groups made more reference to open discussion activities in both categories than any other type. This apparent contradiction suggests that the value of open discussion is highly variable between classes, and/or dynamic within classes. It is interesting to note that among all of the communication activities examined, open discussion is the least structured. In this sense, it is the most dependent on the establishment of commonly understood guidelines in order to be perceived as successful.

Students exhibited gendered perceptions of classroom communication.

The faculty participants made relatively few observations with respect to student gender. However, the students themselves, in response to survey questions, exhibited a gender difference in their perceptions of the freshman seminar. Specifically, female (n=146) students had higher perceptions of student contributions to classroom talking than did male (n=71) students.
This finding is curious in light of a large body of research that suggests that female students are less participative in most college classrooms (Cooper, 1995; Pearson & West, 1991; Sadker & Sadker, 1994; Stowell & Furlong, 1995). However, information on relative levels of student talking according to gender is not available from this study.

All study participants overestimated levels of student talking in freshman seminars.

Students and faculty in both the treatment and comparative groups produced average estimates of student involvement in class (% of talking) that were notably higher than the actual levels measured. Furthermore, student estimates were consistently higher than their instructors. These results illustrate the types of variation that can occur in human perception based on backgrounds and roles, and raise questions about the use of self-report tools in assessment procedures.

PRCA data indicated that assessment of communication apprehension is problematic.

Although the faculty participants recognized the impact of communication apprehension in their classes, and students indicated on surveys that communication "risk" was a factor that controlled their motivation, the data from the Personal Report of Communication Apprehension did not support any impact of the freshman seminar experience on student self-perception of communication apprehension.
Furthermore, even though students in the treatment group ranked their classes higher with respect to improving their oral communication skills, their PRCA scores showed no greater improvement as compared to students in the comparative group. These contradictions in results complicate interpretation of the impact of freshman seminars on student self-perceptions. There are two possible resolutions to this conflict. First, since the PRCA is a measure of trait-like (personality-type) communication apprehension, it can only predict behavior if a score is extremely high or extremely low (Richmond & McCroskey, 1995). Because the great majority of students in this study reported moderate communication apprehension, it might be argued that the PRCA is an inappropriate tool for detecting variation in communication apprehension among freshmen at The College of William and Mary. In contrast, since the high variation around the PRCA scores makes a Type 2 Error (failing to reject an incorrect null hypothesis) more likely, it might be that the sample sizes in this study were not high enough to detect the effects of the freshman seminar, or of the instructional development. In either case, interpretation of the PRCA data is questionable.

Survey responses indicated that communication quality is more important than quantity.

The recordings of classroom communication indicated that there was no detectable variation in the level of student contributions to classroom
communication associated with the instructional development seminar. However, students in the treatment group did express perceptions of higher involvement and higher success with respect to the development of oral communication skills. Since these perceptions were not associated with detectable variation in actual student participation, they appear to have been related to the qualitative nature of the talking itself. The survey responses that indicate higher diversity and higher awareness of oral communication activities in the treatment classes support this interpretation.

**Implications of the Results.**

In general, these results are consistent with the literature on interactive instruction which has examined the crucial role of oral communication in student learning and motivation (Carrell & Menzel, 1997; Gorham & Millette, 1997; Pintrich, 1994; Zehm & Kottler, 1993). However, although positive aspects of classroom interaction were recognized by both faculty and students, the relationship between communication and learning was found to be multifaceted, and at times, problematic (Fountain, Keenan, & Dulaney, 1986). For instance, the identification of open discussion activities in both good and bad contexts speaks to the volatility of situations that involve this particular teaching approach. Communication apprehension was another complication encountered by instructors. In this case, the goals of the curriculum allowed this issue to be addressed successfully through classroom activities that promoted self-awareness and confidence.
However, in interactive classes that are not specifically designed to deal with communication skills, instructors may need to be able to identify and deal with apprehension problems on an individual basis. Outside support resources such as oral communication centers, peer consultants, and computer-assisted instruction may be helpful in this regard (Burk, 1994; Cronin & Grice, 1993; Morreale, Shockley-Zalabak, & Whitney, 1993). Finally, the finding that perceptions of course value and of student involvement varied independently of actual levels of student talking suggests that simple mandates for increased classroom communication are less effective if instructors are not trained in the use of interactive pedagogical techniques.

Faculty Instructional Development and Effective Pedagogy

A more applied aspect of this study is its relevance with respect to the outcomes of faculty instructional development. Several scholars have noted that the theory behind instructional development research is poorly established (Cross & Steadman, 1996; Eble & McKeachie, 1985; Menges, 1994). In fact, Weimer & Lenze concluded their literature review on instructional development by stating that existing research provides "feeble and inconclusive support at best" (1991, p. 330). The authors note that their conclusion is not an indictment of faculty development practices, but instead, is an acknowledgment that this area is dominated by practitioners
rather than researchers. This explains the lack of studies which have examined the impacts of these programs beyond immediate participant or consultant reactions (Brinko, 1991). Therefore, the establishment of a comparative group and the collection of parallel data in this study has the potential to provide valuable insight to administrators and program developers.

**Faculty participants responded positively to the instructional development.**

Written evaluations and interview transcripts produced by the faculty participants indicated that, despite some trepidation (Theme 1a), they felt that the instructional development experience was worthwhile and beneficial to the quality of their freshman seminar classes. In fact, some participants felt strongly that more opportunities for instructional development should be made available to them, so that they could continue the process of improving their teaching techniques.

**Faculty participants recognized new concepts and ideas relating to pedagogy and applied new techniques in their classes.**

One of the common goals of instructional development is to produce new teaching behaviors and strategies in the classroom repertoire of the participants. Unfortunately, evidence for this type of effect is rarely observed (J. R. Davis, 1993; Dinham, 1996). In this case, the faculty participants reported using a variety of pedagogical ideas and techniques that were relatively new to them (Theme 1d). Furthermore, the responses to
survey questions applied to both the treatment and comparative groups indicated that the instructional development participants used a greater diversity of techniques to foster their students' oral communication skills, and were more aware of the impacts of these techniques.

Students in the treatment classes recognized the new techniques used by their instructors.

Another indication of the desired impact of instructional development came from the student responses to the survey questions about their perceptions of teaching strategies. Once again, these responses indicated a higher diversity of teaching techniques and an increased awareness of classroom oral communication in the treatment group. This observation is exemplary of the kind of evidence that is necessary to demonstrate the impact of instructional development in a manner which does not depend on the perception of the instructors.

Faculty participants observed that interactive classrooms are sometimes difficult to control and adjust.

Not all of the faculty reactions to their new interactive classrooms were positive. In fact, in many instances (Themes 2b, 3b, & 3e), they expressed serious frustrations and described struggles that they faced in attempts to apply teaching techniques intended to promote oral communication. Some of the problems they noted included disruptive students, increased time commitments, difficulties balancing student skill development with
traditional course content, evaluation of formal oral communication activities, and maintenance of variation in teaching techniques.

Faculty participants recognized longitudinal continuity and peer support as crucial elements of instructional development.

Among the observations made by faculty in response to the instructional development, were clear indications of value placed on the format of the program. Specifically, the participants recognized the importance of meeting as a collaborative group over an extended period of time (eight months), including meetings during the fall semester. Although these fall sessions were not evaluated (since they were structured as open discussions), several participants pointed out in their interviews that the continued contact provided them with a valuable source of feedback for re-enforcement and adjustment of their teaching techniques. The general consensus was that the summer sessions were more valuable because they were more informative, but the fall sessions, although more time-constrained, proved to be an important venue for continued peer-support (Theme 1b).

The instructional development program was associated with higher perceptions of student involvement and course value with respect to student oral communication skills.

According to their survey responses, students in the treatment group classes reported higher perceptions of student involvement in classroom communication (% talking) than their counterparts in the comparative group.
They also rated the overall value of their freshman seminars higher with respect to the development of their oral communication skills. These results are probably the clearest indicators that the instructional development training had a measurable impact on student experiences in freshman seminars. Faculty exhibited similar patterns in their responses to parallel survey questions, but the small sample sizes resulted in weaker statistical results.

**Implications of the Results.**

Taken as a whole, this group of results provides evidence that instructional development has the potential to improve teaching. Although this observation may seem trivial, it has rarely been examined beyond the immediate perceptions of the participants (Fife, 1995; Stevens & Aleamoni, 1985; Theall & Franklin, 1991). Often, the only information collected in the assessment of instructional development programs involves evaluations following a training experience or workshop that occurs during a time when classes are not in session (Menges, 1994; Richardson, 1994). As a result, these evaluations are removed from actual classroom application (Nummedal, 1994; Zuber-Skerritt, 1992). In this study, the observations of the faculty participants were collected before, during, and after the semester in which they were applying the products of the instructional development. Furthermore, the data collected on student surveys showed that the impact of the instructional development carried over into the student experience.
Some of the more specific findings suggest that faculty involved in instructional development can benefit greatly if the program in question is designed around a collaborative process, and includes a schedule of meetings to promote self-reflective practice (Boice, 1991; Brookfield, 1995; Cranton, 1994; Schon, 1987). In addition, even when these measures are taken, there is potential for the experience of applying new teaching techniques, especially interactive ones, to be frustrating and time consuming. In order to ensure that faculty will not abandon the process of adjusting their teaching, outside resources such as consulting or mentors may be necessary to help them keep up with new challenges (Brinko, 1991; McKeachie, 1987; Paulsen & Feldman, 1995).

In this study, a specific goal of the instructional development was to promote teaching techniques that would foster student oral communication skills. Although this is not necessarily a broadly applied goal of freshman seminar instructional development programs (Friday, 1989), the positive results presented here, and the considerable body of literature on oral communication and learning, suggest that some emphasis on classroom communication would be productive in almost any type of instructional development program. Since oral communication is a primary mechanism of learning, virtually all targeted goals involving learning could be approached through some aspect of oral communication (Friedrich, 1994; Gardner, 1992; Palmerton, 1992).
A Summary of Implications for Policy and Practice

Support for Freshman Seminar Programs
- observation of unique needs and identity development of freshmen
- improvement of student satisfaction relative to non-seminar classes
- demonstration of a successful variable-content seminar curriculum

Support for Interactive Instruction
- demonstration of positive results in a variety of content areas
- observed interaction between oral communication and writing
- observed need for outside resources to deal with apprehensive students
- observed need for assessment beyond perception-based surveys
- observed need for guidelines beyond contribution level mandates
- identification of open discussion as a problematic teaching technique
- identification of gender influences on classroom dynamics

Support for Instructional Development
- positive faculty reactions
- demonstration of carry-over into classroom practice
- improvement of student satisfaction relative to non-intervention classes
- identification of faculty collaboration as a key issue
- observed need for longitudinal structure and reflective practice
- observed need for administrative support
- observed need for outside support resources to overcome difficulties associated with curricular reform
A Model for the Promotion of Effective College Teaching

As a result of my experience with this research, I propose a conceptual model which integrates some broad ideas about effective college teaching with applied aspects of designing successful instructional development programming. In the tradition of catchy acronyms, I have called this concept the Aligned Instruction Model (A.I.M.) for the Promotion of Effective College Teaching (Figure 11).

A.I.M. is based on a set of simple components involved in the teaching process which have been identified by many researchers. These components include Teacher, Student, Content, and Context (J. R. Davis, 1993; Dinham, 1996; Good & Brophy, 1997; Lederman, 1992; Morey, 1992). The first two components, Teacher and Student, represent the interactants in any situation involving instruction, although it should be noted that in some forms of collaborative instruction, these roles are not necessarily fixed (Bosworth & Hamilton, 1994). The component of Content represents the goal of the instruction. In its simplest form, Content is the body of knowledge (cognitive domain), or the subject matter, that is intended to be transferred from Teacher to Student (J. R. Davis, 1993). More complicated dimensions of Content are involved in the teaching of skills (behavioral domain), or in the promotion of emotional responses (affective domain) (Perry, et al., 1996). The component of Context
Figure 11. The Aligned Instruction Model (A.I.M.) for the Promotion of Effective College Teaching.
Aligned Instruction Model (A.I.M.) for the Promotion of Effective College Teaching

- Personal Experience
- Academic Experience
- Formal Knowledge
- Teaching Philosophy

Alignment of teacher through the impacts of instructional development
Alignment of teacher and student through the process of classroom interaction
Alignment of teacher and student through the impacts of instructional development designed to improve classroom communication

Levels of Improved Alignment
represents a set of restrictions on the process of instruction that are the result of environmental influences such as institutional culture, academic discipline, curricular standards, class size and demographics, and physical environment (Austin & Sorcinelli, 1992; Loughlin, 1992; Mitchell, Carson, & Badarak, 1989; Stark, et al., 1990; Watkins, 1992). In this research, the Context was largely defined by the goals of the Freshmen Seminar Program.

The idea of "alignment" in effective teaching has been developed by several researchers who are concerned with the evaluation of teaching effectiveness (Garko, Kough, Pignata, Kimmel, & Eison, 1994; Good & Brophy, 1997; Shulman, 1990; Wulff, 1988, 1993). In particular, Wulff's (1985) Alignment Model (Appendix G) inspired me to create my own model, based on the outcomes of this study (Figure 11). In a descriptive sense, alignment involves the clear definition of curricular structure and the promotion of opportunities for the exchange of feedback among participants to achieve commonality among the goals embodied in the components of Teacher, Student, and Content. The need for this alignment comes about because variable Teacher and Student backgrounds are unlikely to result in convergent behavioral and philosophical approaches to the teaching/learning process. Some common dimensions of background which have been noted as problematic in this respect include race, class, gender, culture, and previous academic experience (Blackhurst, 1995; Clinchy, 1990; Condon, 1986; Danielson, 1996; Davis, 1992; Fassinger, 1995; Neuliep, 1995;
Obler, Arnold, Sigala, & Umbdenstock, 1991; Watkins, 1992). In this study, the backgrounds of the faculty participants were quite diverse (Table 1). The students, on the other hand, were all first-semester freshmen, a characteristic which gave them some similar dimensions of background. Despite this common ground however, they were also found to be highly variable in their skills and in their behavioral approaches to learning (Theme 3e).

The educational challenges created by variable backgrounds are the subject of much interest and research (Felder & Brent, 1996; Good & McCaslin, 1992; Norman & Norman, 1995; Palmerton, 1989; Regan & Sedlacek, 1989; Simcock & Lokon, 1992; Sprague, 1992; Timpson & Bendel-Simso, 1996). However, the common practice of instructional and student development in higher education implies that approaches to the teaching/learning process can be, and are, regularly adjusted by both students and faculty (Creamer, 1992; Gardiner, 1997; Haswell, 1993; Jewler, 1994; Sandler & Hoffman, 1992; Shulman, 1986). In this sense, interventions and other measures which promote these adjustments may result in more effective learning environments through alignment. In view of the results of this research, my interest in alignment stems from the fact that it may be increased through the application of classroom oral communication activities, and through the appropriate design of instructional development programming. Specifically, I believe that the following
predictions should be carefully considered in curricular reform involving instructional development.

1) Context-specific instructional development will promote teacher alignment more so than programs which attempt to address pedagogical issues across multiple contexts.
2) Student-specific instructional development will promote teacher alignment more so than programs that do not consider student characteristics.
3) Peer support among collaborative participants in instructional development will reinforce teacher alignment.
4) Longitudinal contact among instructional development participants will reinforce teacher alignment.
5) Classroom oral communication will promote both teacher and student alignment through opportunity for feedback and enhancement of classroom climate across contexts.
6) Instructional development focused on classroom oral communication activities will produce the highest levels of alignment, because it will promote both increased curricular organization and increased opportunities for effective classroom interaction.

Although these ideas are consistent with the findings reported here, this study was exploratory and not designed to test any specific predictions. Therefore, I present A.I.M. here as a set of acquired insights rather than as a set of research results. In the future, a survey of outcomes data from different types of instructional development efforts (not readily available in the literature), especially those associated with oral communication across the curriculum programs, could be used to critically test these predictions.
Recommendations For Future Research

By virtue of the exploratory nature of this study, the results reported raise a great diversity of new questions about freshmen, classroom oral communication, and faculty instructional development.

1) Longitudinal impacts of freshman seminars on students.

Some of the more immediate possibilities for further study include questions about longitudinal phenomena relating to the specific educational context examined here. It should be of great interest to administrators at The College of William and Mary to explore evidence which might indicate whether or not the Freshman Seminar Program has impacts on student learning and skill development in later courses, as has been demonstrated elsewhere (Barefoot, 1993; Upcraft & Gardner, 1989; Wilkie & Kuckuck, 1989). One way of addressing this question would be to hold interviews with juniors and seniors in current classes.

2) Longitudinal impacts of instructional development on faculty participants.

Another opportunity for applied research involves the question of whether or not the instructional development program studied here will continue to impact the teaching strategies of the faculty participants. This phenomenon could be examined through follow-up interviews in coming semesters. Since longitudinal assessment of instructional development is practically unheard of (Weimer & Lenze, 1991), this type of research would be valuable in a broad sense, as well as in an immediate applied sense.
3) **More details from non-intervention classes.**

Another question raised by this study involves the utility of continued instructional development. Since some of the data gathered here indicate that freshman seminars taught without training were less rewarding to students, and perceived as less effective in developing their oral communication skills, these results may be used to argue that training should be required in order to meet the stated goals of the Freshman Seminar Program. Additional insight into this question could be gathered by holding focus groups or group interviews with students and faculty currently involved in freshman seminars without the benefit of instructional development.

4) **Connections between perceptions and outcomes.**

A less context-specific area of future research involves the clarification of relationships between human perceptions and measurable changes in actual skill development. Some of the results reported here indicated that student and faculty perceptions were inaccurate or biased. Although the patterns in these perceptions are likely to reflect real impacts of the phenomena studied, more reliable measures of skill development could illuminate the extent or significance of any misperception. Today, a number of externally rated communication competency assessment tools are available, and being used widely to examine student skill levels (Morreale, Brooks, Berko, & Cooke, 1994). The use of these tools is time-consuming and the results are heavily

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dependent on inter-rater reliability (Naylor & Morley, 1994). However, they could be used in parallel with the type of self-reporting employed in this study to identify important connections.

5) More details on student experiences.

One of the logistical constraints on this research was that the experience of faculty was examined much more closely than the experience of students. This aspect of the study leaves many unanswered questions about student perceptions. Do freshmen recognize their own identity development, as observed by the faculty? If so, what factors do they associate with it? Do they recognize their own strengths and weaknesses with respect to oral communication? Does their increased interaction within the classroom impact their extra-curricular social behaviors? These types of questions could be addressed through interviews with students.

6) Impacts of gender in interactive classrooms.

Although the goals of this research did not include specific questions about the impacts of gender in the classes examined, some of the results suggest that an interactive classroom may represent an environment where gender dynamics are amplified. This would be consistent with a large body of research demonstrating that girls and women are generally less participative in the classroom than are boys and men (Clinchy, 1990; Cooper, 1995; Sadker & Sadker, 1994). If this was the case in the classes studied, then it raises the question of how differential levels of
communication due to gender might have intersected with observed changes in critical thinking and identity development. Furthermore, the gender of the instructor may be found to influence classroom interactions, as well (Blackhurst, 1995). These issues might be clarified by observing freshman seminars with an eye for intersections between gender dynamics and oral communication.

7) More details on faculty peer support.

On a final note, I have been particularly intrigued by the strong positive reaction among the instructional development participants with respect to the peer support that they received as part of the program. Although some have recognized the crucial importance of faculty collaboration in academic life (Austin & Baldwin, 1991), my experience at William and Mary has been that faculty members are sometimes reticent when discussing their teaching techniques and approaches. Civikly (1986) noted that reluctance to discuss teaching and to attend to one's own abilities and skills as an instructional communicator can be the result of several things: habit, lack of institutional support, embarrassment, unwillingness to commit the time and energy to develop new skills, territoriality, and fear of harming promotion and tenure, among others. With this in mind, I think an interesting study would be to identify what factors are important in overcoming these barriers, in hopes of making instructional development a more interactive and reflective process.
A Personal Reflection

I began teaching college courses in the Department of Speech Communication at the University of Maine three months after receiving my undergraduate degree there. The students in my first course included a former dormitory hall-mate, two sorority sisters, and my boyfriend's scuba partner. I was terrified and green, but I really wanted to make an impression on my students the way that my professors had done for me. So, I did the only thing that I knew I was really good at— I hammed it up. Amazingly, it worked!! In fact, it worked so well, that I've been doing it ever since. Little did I know that someday, I would be examining this behavior from an applied research perspective.

In my dictionary, the first definition of the word "teach" is as follows: "to give instruction, training, knowledge or skill which one has oneself." A second definition that is offered is more to my liking: "to cause to understand." My reasoning for embracing the latter definition is that it does not imply a transference, only an interaction. In fact, it could even be interpreted to include self-instruction, which I believe is the essence of higher education. When I walked into the first day of my teaching career over 10 years ago, all I had to guide my way was the beginnings of graduate teaching training and the desire to succeed. Looking back, I think that one of the reasons that I took to teaching so quickly was that I was not very far removed from being an undergraduate student myself. In fact, I think it
must have been very clear to my students that our class was a learning process for all of us, and that we were "teaching" one another. With this beginning in mind, it is perhaps not surprising that I have undertaken the task of describing what happens when a group of teachers and students meet in an unfamiliar setting to test new ideas, develop new skills, and meet new challenges,...in my view, higher education at its finest. The irony is that from this perspective, what began as a study about teaching clearly evolved into a story about learning: first-semester students learning from their instructors in a traditional sense and from each other through classroom interactions; instructors learning from their students about what works and what doesn’t, and learning from each other by sharing experiences; and, of course, the novice researcher, learning by observing the whole process.

My own motivation and love of teaching has led me to countless books on the subject. I have studied learning theory, teaching techniques, and instructional development methods. Through this process, I have come to the conclusion that a classroom is a community of scholars with the power to impact the lives of all participants. In this sense, anyone who takes on the role of teaching must acknowledge that they are dependent on the cooperation and motivation of their students. Therefore, when I teach, I try to keep in mind that my primary goal is to empower my students to the point that they feel comfortable questioning me and critically examining the
material that I am exploring with them. To do this while maintaining some level of credibility and control in the classroom requires a delicate dance of giving and taking, which I believe is the key to successful interactive instruction. As an instructional developer, I have found that the same principles apply to the process of motivating faculty members to attempt new pedagogical techniques. In essence, I see education as more of a process than a product. This is why I feel that the idea of "alignment" is a very useful metaphor for higher education--because it acknowledges the need for motivation on the part of both teacher and student, it requires interaction, and it illustrates the necessity for continuous adjustment.

With respect to my role as a researcher in higher education, I believe that the approach I have taken in this study represents an extension of my teaching philosophy. My intention in embracing a constructivist viewpoint has been to search for meaning through an exploration of process, rather than an examination of outcomes. Furthermore, like my teaching, my research has involved an acknowledgement of the impact of my background, and of my interdependence with the participants in my study. It is my hope that this additional form of "alignment" will be extended to include those who read this material in an effort to clarify their own goals and approaches within the realm of higher education.
APPENDIX A

Instructional Development Program Agenda and Related Materials
College of William and Mary
Charles Center
1996 Faculty Development Seminar
Freshman Seminars: Making Them Work

When & Where: Thursday, May 23rd, 9:00-12:00
Charles Center, Tucker B-2 (basement)

Monday-Friday, August 19-23, 9:00-12:00
The Writing Resources Center, Tucker 115A

Fall Semester 1996, TBA

Freshman Seminar Goal Statement: "The primary goal of the freshman seminar program is to help the student develop his or her ability to engage in critical thinking and independent learning. To accomplish this, the seminars provide the student with an active small-class experience that includes opportunities for discussion, writing, and other modes of expression appropriate to the subject matter of the course."

Freshman Seminars introduce students to academic discourse, a discourse in which they are expected to assume more responsibility for their learning and to learn how to produce, not just consume, knowledge. Research in pedagogy verifies that writing and speaking improve learning; students synthesize and internalize course material through the processes of talking, listening, and writing. For example, in Teaching with Writing, a text for this faculty seminar, Toby Fulwiler argued for the use of writing across disciplines in order to promote critical thinking. In this seminar, we will study the connections among writing, speaking, listening, and thinking and discuss ways to incorporate these skills in Freshman Seminars across disciplines.

Objectives:
1. To complete a substantial draft or revision of your 150W syllabus, including both formal and informal writing and oral communication assignments.
2. To learn how to integrate meaningful writing and oral communication activities into your courses, regardless of discipline.
3. To review specific techniques and sample handouts to help prepare students for writing and oral communication activities, such as reaction papers, class discussions, and individual or group presentations.
4. To review models for and practice evaluating writing and oral communication assignments.
Freshman Seminars: Making Them Work

Syllabus

We will provide additional articles and handouts throughout the seminar, and we invite you to bring in any relevant materials to share with the group.

Introduction (May 23)
- Discussion: The Role of Freshman Seminars in the Curriculum
- Introductory Course Materials
- Building a Successful Course: Designing Syllabi

Session I--Introduction/Constructing a Syllabus (August 19)
- Review of Seminar Goals
- Written and Oral Communication: Their Relationship to Learning
- The Freshman Seminar Experience
- Syllabus Workshop

Session II--Making Assignments (August 20)
- Models for Writing and Oral Communication Assignments
- Sequencing Assignments
- Formal and Informal Assignments
- Library Component
- Resources and Equipment to Support Writing and Oral Communication
- Assignment Workshop

Session III--Integrating Written and Oral Communication (August 21)
- Individual and Group Presentations
- Journals
- Exams
- Syllabus Workshop

Session IV--Integrating Written and Oral Communication (August 22)
- Strategies for Class Discussion
- Critical Thinking
- Listening
- On-Line Discussion (teachwrite-l@listserv.cc.wm.edu)
- Assignment Workshop

Session V--Evaluating Written and Oral Communication (August 23)
- Grading Workshop (Formal/Informal Written and Oral Communication)
- Setting Students Up for Success: The First Day

Fall Meetings (TBA):
- Session I--The Process, A Reality Check
- Session II--Assignments And Evaluation
- Session III--What Worked, What Didn’t, Goals For Next Time
Books


Articles

Developing Syllabi

Oral Communication Apprehension
"Instructor Communication Habits: Confrontation and Challenge"
"Communication Apprehension in the College Classroom"

Discussion and Questioning
"Research Summary: Are Professors Part of the Problem?"
"Teaching Using Discussion"
"Improving Discussions"
"Designing Discussions as Group Inquiry"
"Questioning in the College Classroom"

Critical Thinking
Freshman Seminars: Making Them Work
Preparation

1. Over the summer, read the texts and packet materials.
2. In a journal, record your reactions to the readings and your thoughts as you develop your course objectives and syllabus.
3. Bring six copies of your 150W syllabus to our first session. We will spend time reviewing the course objectives and how, as specified in your course requirements, you plan to integrate writing and oral communication assignments.

We will have coffee, tea, juice, and bagels ready when you arrive on Monday, August 19th at 9:00 am. Below is a breakdown of the daily readings for the week. We hope you will find the sample syllabi and the articles about developing syllabi useful as you work on your draft.

Session I
Fulwiler, chapters 1, 3, 9, 10
Bullock, chapters 1, 2, 3
"Instructor Communication Habits: Confrontation and Challenge"
"Communication Apprehension in the College Classroom"
Pages 1 and 2 in purple packet of OC handouts

Session II
Fulwiler, chapters 4, 7
Bullock, chapters 4, 5, 7, 11
Pages 3-22 in purple packet of OC handouts
"Research Summary: Are Professors Part of the Problem?"

Session III
Fulwiler, chapters 2, 5, 6
Bullock, chapter 6
"Teaching Using Discussion"
"Improving Discussions"
"Designing Discussions as Group Inquiry"
Pages 23-26 in purple packet of OC handouts

Session IV
"Questioning in the College Classroom"
"The Reasons for Writing: A Reanalysis"
All pages in the yellow packet of OC handouts
Pages 27-32 in purple packet of OC handouts

Session V
Bullock, chapters 8, 9
Pages 33 and 34 in purple packet of OC handouts
1. What was the most useful or meaningful thing that you learned during today’s session?

2. What questions remain in your mind as we end this session?

3. What specific topics would you like to have covered in the August sessions?
Freshman Seminars: Making Them Work
Daily Seminar Evaluation - Session I

1. What was the most useful or meaningful thing that you learned during today's session?

2. What questions remain in your mind as we end this session?

3. Please rank the readings from "5" = Very Useful to "1" = Waste of Time.

   _______ Fulwiler, chapters 1, 3, 9, 10
   _______ Bullock, chapters 1, 2, 3
   _______ "Instructor Communication Habits: Confrontation and Challenge"
   _______ "Communication Apprehension in the College Classroom"
   _______ Handouts
Freshman Seminars: Making Them Work
Daily Seminar Evaluation - Session V

1. What was the most useful or meaningful thing that you learned during today’s session?

2. What specific topics would you like to talk about in the three meetings during the Fall semester?

3. Please rank the readings from "5" = Very Useful to "1" = Waste of Time.

_____ Bullock, chapters 8, 9
_____ Handouts
Name____________________________________

1. What kind of courses do you normally teach?
   A. Level of Students:   undergraduate   graduate
   B. Level of Courses:   100 200 300 400 500+
   C. Size of Classes:    Seminar (15 or fewer)
                          Lecture/discussion (45 or fewer)
                          Large lecture (45+)

2. In the courses you most frequently teach, what are your preferred instructional strategies?
   Check any that apply:
   ____ Lecture
   ____ Whole class discussion
   ____ Small group work
   ____ Active learning (role-playing, free-writing, oral presentations, etc.)
   ____ Individual conferences
   Others____________________________________________________________

3. What concerns/questions/issues do you have about adapting your teaching strategies to a freshman seminar?
Syllabus Checklist

1. Personal Information
   (Name, course code number, credits, meeting days and times, location, office location and hours, office telephone number, e-mail address, etc.)

2. Prerequisites

3. Texts and Other Materials (Course packs, computer disks, specific calculator, etc.)

4. Course Description

5. Course Objectives

6. Instructional Methods

7. Course Assignments

8. Course Grading

9. Course Policies (Attendance, participation, make-up exams, paper revisions, etc.)

10. Course Calendar (List major assignments and due dates.)

11. Supplemental materials
Freshman Seminars: Making Them Work
Summary of Fall Meetings

Session I (September)—The Process, A Reality Check
Discussion topics included:
- Strategies for dealing with dominating and passive students in discussions.
- Techniques to foster interactive learning environments.
- Successful journal strategies which link to classroom communication.
- The difficulty of teaching back to back sections of the same course, when the classes have very different personalities.
- Dealing with communication apprehension (some participants finding more than expected, and others finding less than expected).
- Successes resulting from providing students with more structured assignments and feedback.
- The experience of consciously thinking about pedagogy.

Session II (October)—Assignments And Evaluation
Discussion topics included:
- Experiences of assigning and grading informal and formal oral communication and writing assignments.
- Anxiety associated with grading.
- The importance of repeated opportunities and multiple evaluators (such as self, peer, and instructor).
- A review of grading models, and strategies for mid-semester evaluation.

Session III (December)—What Worked, What Didn’t, Goals For Next Time
Discussion topics included:
- All participants experienced some success with their new instructional efforts. Common successes included setting up the classroom climate for discussion, dealing with problem students, applying various new techniques and assignments, and recognizing and alleviating communication apprehension.
- Common frustrations included a lack of time to reflect on new pedagogical techniques in situ, and a feeling of fragmentation while trying to balance content and process goals along with the usual semester stresses.
- While a few participants questioned the ideology of this "new" structured pedagogical approach, they simultaneously expressed regrets at not being more structured, acknowledging that this lack of clarity negatively impacted their classes.

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Summary of List-serve Communication

Discussion topics included:
Teaching the processes of oral communication and writing as a way to enhance content.
Strategies for using journals to develop oral communication skills.
Instructional strategies success stories.
Struggles connected to teaching two sections back to back.
The struggle to balance discussion and content.
Helpful on-line resources.
Ground rules for class discussion.
Benefits of in-class presentations.
Dealing with student stress and grade obsession.
Mid-semester evaluation strategies.
The lack of time to reflect on implementation strategies.
Strategies to motivate students.
How ideology informs pedagogical practice.
Students as colleagues in a common quest.
APPENDIX B

Guiding Questions for the Faculty Interviews

About Instructional Strategies
Describe the instructional strategies you adopted in an effort to promote the oral communication skill development of your students.
   How were these strategies applied?
   How did they impact classroom dynamics?
   How did they impact student oral communication skills?
Describe any differences among students which you observed.
Describe how your perceptions changed during the semester.
Describe how the student’s oral communication skills changed over the course of the semester.

About Freshman Seminars
Describe how your students embraced the (discussion-intensive) freshman seminar goals, with respect to oral communication.
Describe how your strategies for teaching freshman seminars differed as compared to your other classes, with respect to oral communication.

About Instructional Development
How would you define your primary interests and concerns throughout the faculty development seminar?
   Describe how they changed during the experience.
Describe how you perceived the utility of the faculty development seminar, providing specific examples.
Describe your goals for the next time you teach a freshman seminar, with respect to developing student oral communication skills.
APPENDIX C

Fall 1996 Student and Faculty Exit Surveys
FRESHMAN SEMINAR STUDENT SURVEY

Please circle the correct response to the following questions:

1. Are you a first-semester freshman? Yes or No

2. What is your sex? Male or Female

Please answer the following questions as completely as possible:

3. What percentage of the classroom oral communication was done by students?
   
   10 20 30 40 50 60 70 80 90 100

4. Overall, how valuable to you was the freshman seminar in the development of your oral communication skills?
   
   (not valuable) 1 2 3 4 5 (very valuable)

5. List the instructional strategies used in this class which were **most helpful** in promoting development of your oral communication skills. Why did you find these activities **most** helpful?

6. List the instructional strategies used in this class which were **least helpful** in promoting development of your oral communication skills. Why did you find these activities **least** helpful?

7. Please describe how your classroom participation in this course compared to your typical classroom participation in your other courses.
FRESHMAN SEMINAR FACULTY SURVEY

Please answer the following questions as completely as possible:

1. What percentage of the classroom oral communication was done by students?

   10  20  30  40  50  60  70  80  90  100

2. Overall, how valuable do you think the freshman seminar was in developing and providing practice for your students' oral communication skills?

   (not valuable)  1  2  3  4  5  (very valuable)

3. List the instructional strategies you used in this class which were most helpful in promoting development of your students' oral communication skills. Why did you find these activities most helpful?

4. List the instructional strategies you used in this class which were least helpful in promoting development of your students' oral communication skills. Why did you find these activities least helpful?

5. Which of the instructional strategies described above do you think you will use again in teaching future freshman seminars?
APPENDIX D

Personal Report of Communication Apprehension (PRCA)
**DEPARTMENT OF THEATRE AND SPEECH**

**DATE**

**I.B. NUMBER**

**PLEASE USE A 2B PENCIL.**

**PECA-24**

**DIRECTIONS:** This instrument is composed of 26 statements expressing your feelings about communication with others. Please indicate by filling in the appropriate space the degree to which each statement applies to you by marking whether you (1) STRONGLY AGREE, (2) AGREE, (3) NEUTRAL, (4) DISAGREE, or (5) STRONGLY DISAGREE with each statement. There are no right or wrong answers. Many of the statements are similar to other statements. Do not be concerned about this. Work quickly, just record your first impression.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>STRONGLY</th>
<th>AGREE</th>
<th>NEUTRAL</th>
<th>DISAGREE</th>
<th>STRONGLY</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>I dislike participating in group discussions.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Generally, I am comfortable while participating in a group discussion.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>I am tense and nervous while participating in group discussions.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>I enjoy getting involved in group discussions.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Engaging in a group discussion with new people makes me tense and nervous.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>I am calm and relaxed while participating in meetings.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>Generally, I am nervous when I have to participate in a meeting.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>Usually I am calm and relaxed while participating in meetings.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>I am very calm and relaxed when I am asked to express an opinion at a meeting.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.</td>
<td>I am afraid to express myself at meetings.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.</td>
<td>During meetings usually when uncommunicative.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.</td>
<td>I am very relaxed when answering questions at a meeting.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13.</td>
<td>While participating in a conversational relationship, I feel nervous.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14.</td>
<td>I tend to avoid speaking up in conversations.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15.</td>
<td>Occasionally I find myself tense and nervous in conversations.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16.</td>
<td>Ordinarily I am very calm and relaxed in conversations.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17.</td>
<td>While conversing with a new acquaintance, I feel very relaxed.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18.</td>
<td>I prefer to speak up in conversations.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19.</td>
<td>I am afraid of giving a speech.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20.</td>
<td>I am tense and rigid while giving a speech.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21.</td>
<td>I feel relaxed while giving a speech.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22.</td>
<td>I am afraid of speaking in front of others.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23.</td>
<td>I am nervous when I have to give a speech.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24.</td>
<td>Sometimes certain parts of my body feel very tense and rigid while giving a speech.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25.</td>
<td>I feel relaxed while giving a speech.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26.</td>
<td>While giving a speech I feel no nervousness. I forget facts I really know.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**For question 25 use this scale:**

- **AREA 1:** No nervousness
- **AREA 2:** Some nervousness
- **AREA 3:** Moderate nervousness
- **AREA 4:** Severe nervousness
- **AREA 5:** Intense nervousness


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APPENDIX E

Point Scan Data Sheet for Recording and Analyzing Classroom Communication
| Tape # | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 | 16 | 17 | 18 | 19 | 20 | 21 | 22 | 23 | 24 | 25 | 26 | 27 | 28 | 29 | 30 |
|-------|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|

Tape # _____ Date ________________

Class name / time / place ________________________________________________________

Description of tape content:
APPENDIX F

Permission Form Signed by Faculty Participants

Permission Form

The general nature of this study on classroom communication conducted by Tamara L. Burk has been explained to me. I understand that I will be audio recording two separate sessions of my freshman seminar course. I am also aware that the recording will be analyzed by an independent technician to generate numerical data in the form of frequency counts. Furthermore, I realize that my students and I will be asked to complete a brief exit survey at the end of the semester. I have been informed that individual identities will not be associated with the results of this study, and that I may discontinue participation at any time. My signature below signifies my voluntary participation in this project.

Date ________________________________

Name ________________________________

Dept. ________________________________
APPENDIX G

Wuiff's Alignment Model
Frameworks for Thinking about Teaching and Learning

I. Process-Product
Which method is best?

Process
(Teaching behaviors, instructional methods)

Product
(Learning)

II. Mediating Process
Which process is better for whom?

Process
(Teaching behaviors, instructional methods)

Product
(Learning)

Mediating Variables
(Including Student Characteristics)

III. Alignment Model
How do I align myself, the content, and the students?

Context

To Achieve Alignment:
- Rapport
- Organization
- Stimulation/Engagement
- 2-way Interaction

Professor
Content
Student

Learning


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Vita

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Birthplace: San Leandro, California

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