

Speaking in the Disciplines: A Precedents Archive for Scholarly Speaking

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Project Overview

With TLEF funding, we created the PASS: the Precedents Archive for Scholarly Speaking (speaking.arts.ubc.ca). At the heart of the site are speaking precedents—video recordings of student presentations—aimed to familiarize students with what it looks like to speak in university settings.

Context

→ Many Arts courses take a “Writing in the Disciplines” approach to teaching academic communication, inviting students to see the specific moves scholars make in sharing their research. Yet while students have access to precedents for scholarly writing, speaking precedents are harder to find. In fact, speaking is more often taught for professionalization than as part of disciplinary academic inquiry.

→ Typical pedagogies offer a “skills-based” approach: speak loudly and clearly, dress for success, etc. This advice not only fails to prepare students to meet academic expectations, but it can also reinscribe harmful norms about who qualifies as an effective speaker.

Objectives

Align the teaching of scholarly speaking with the teaching of scholarly writing at UBC by introducing students to the different genres of academic oral discourse and familiarizing them with genre norms and expectations.

Shift student thinking about oral presentation away from a “performance orientation” that emphasizes “flawless delivery” and toward a “communication orientation” that “views the primary objective as sharing information with the audience” (Motley & Malloy 1994).

Evaluation

We have undertaken several rounds of surveys to assess the site and our data analysis is ongoing:

- **20W:** ASTU 100 (2 sections); ENGL 110 (1); WRDS 150 (4)
- **21W:** ASTU 100 (1); WRDS 150 (3)
- **22W:** ASTU 100 (1); ENGL 110 (1); PHAR 280 (1) + several sections of a writing course at KPU



In initial surveys of 2 first-year classes, 81% of students reported that watching precedent videos helped them feel less nervous about oral presentations

92% of students responded that seeing additional examples of academic presentations would help them feel more confident about scholarly speaking



Student Presentations at CAP's Annual Conference

Student Survey Responses:

“I have come to understand academic presentations as a genre that is for sharing research, not [just] for captivating your audience”

“...now I know that presentations are an important part of the research process.”

The PASS

www.speaking.arts.ubc.ca



Screenshot from our “Browse the Archive” page

The site has 4 main sections:

- Precedents Archive
- Student Guides (lessons with video compilations on specific elements of giving presentations)
- Student Interviews (students speaking about their experiences giving presentations)
- Instructor Resources

An Equitable Pedagogy for Scholarly Speaking

→ The PASS puts into practice an alternate speaking pedagogy that positions scholarly speaking as an integral part of the research and writing process.

→ This approach addresses inequities by familiarizing *all* students with the norms of academic discourse, which are unequally available to students entering the university from various academic backgrounds, and by focusing on communication over performance skills.

Beyond the PASS

The PASS is at the heart of a broad intervention we aim to make in speaking pedagogy SoTL. In the past two years, we have also:

- Published a peer-reviewed article in the journal *Discourse and Writing*
- Presented 10 interactive workshops (3 faculty, 2 grad, 5 undergrad) and 6 conference papers.
- Collaborated with the CSWC and other writing centres in Canada.

This spring/summer, we will be giving a workshop at the CTLT Spring Institute, presenting a paper at the CASDW conference, and evaluating our data to write up a second article. We are also collaborating with a Pharmacy class to consider how the site supports science communication.

Get in Touch!

We hope you will try the site in your teaching. Contact us: speaking.disciplines@ubc.ca



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Acknowledgements

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