CURS PowerPoint Script

Carollynn Judge

“Student Attitudes Towards Writing”

**[Slide One: Title]**

Hello, everybody. I hope you are all doing well on this pleasant Saturday afternoon. My name is Carollynn Judge, and I am a second-year student studying Forensic Science at Bowling Green State University. I would like to present you all with the research project that I have been working on for the duration of this academic year: “Student Attitudes Towards Writing.” This was not something that I completed individually, as I belonged on a team with PhD students Emma Guthrie, Travis Hein, Morgan McDougall, and Brian Urias. The five of us worked with Dr. Neil Baird of the English Department throughout the planning and execution of this project, and I would like to acknowledge each of them for their dedication and diligence throughout our work together.

**[Slide Two: Background]**

Before we began designing our research project, the entire team began researching to see if we could find any information about dispositions, or habits of mind and how they impacted transfer of writing-based knowledge. We observed studies that identified several attitudes that were critical to both learning inside and outside of the classroom. Costa and Kallick identified several disposition frameworks important to learning, including their 16 Habits of Mind (2012), which include listening and understanding with empathy, flexible thinking, and thinking interdependently. Each of the sixteen attitudes serve to aide an individual in gaining a positive outcome through critical thinking and utilization of past experience.

**[Slide Three: Background]**

In addition to Costa and Kallick’s findings, Driscoll and Wells identified four dispositions in their 2012 publication—value, attribution, self-efficacy, and self-regulation. These four values are crucial to writing-based transfer to other areas of life. This article also states that there is a vast amount of further research that can be completed in order to better understand the impact that each disposition has on an individual.

**[Slide Four: Research Question]**

Once we discovered these dispositions existed, every person on the team was curious to understand how students at Bowling Green State University demonstrated these dispositions. Additionally, we were intrigued to see how these dispositions varied across the differing types of students that attend this University. This led us to formulate the following research question: “What dispositions do Bowling Green State University students hold in relation to writing?”

I would also like to clarify that we are using the term “writing” in its most general form possible. For this study, we were observing dispositions about writing that was both inside the classroom (an example of which being a research paper for a writing class) and outside the classroom (with an example being a set of short stories written for personal enjoyment).

**[Slide Five: Project Details]**

Once we formulated our research project, we began to design our project. Our method of data collection was through an online survey that was distributed to students through their BGSU Outlook e-mail account. The survey was expected to take between twenty to thirty minutes to complete. Email address were collected when students submitted their responses for the potential of future research. All personal information was kept confidential, and each question was optional to ensure that we made each student as comfortable with their responses as possible.

**[Slide Six: Section One]**

Our survey had several sections to it. The first section was used to collect demographic information about each student. This included their name, academic status, age, etc. As I stated earlier, all of this information was kept confidential to protect the identities of each participant. We also asked students to select what type of student they were, with three options possible: Dual Credit/College Credit Plus, Undergraduate, and Graduate. This was to monitor the difference in dispositions in relation to the difference between these populations.

**[Slide Seven: Section Two]**

The second section of this survey was designed to determine how students regarded various dispositions. Participants of the survey were presented with various statements that represented these dispositions and used a Likert scale to represent their thoughts towards the statement. The scale ranged from numbers 1 to 6, with 1 representing “strongly disagree” and 6 representing “strongly agree.” Some of the statements that were asked in this survey include “I think deeply about how the words that I write will impact my readers,” and “I try to consider how others might feel before sharing my opinion.”

**[Slide Eight: Dispositions]**

Before we continue with the discussion of the survey, I would like to identify what dispositions this survey included. Ultimately, we focused our research on thirteen dispositions total and divided them into two groups: Habits of Mind and Non-Habits of Mind. There were six Habits of Mind that we tested for, and they are Engagement, Flexibility, Metacognition, Openness, Persistence, and Responsibility.

**[Slide Nine: Dispositions Continued]**

The seven habits of mind that were included in the survey were the following: Application of Past Knowledge, Attitude Towards Emotion, Independent Thinking, Listening and Understanding with Empathy, Managing Impulsivity, Questioning and Posing Problems, and Self-Efficacy.

**[Slide Ten: Final Details]**

Our survey concluded with two open-response questions that both asked about student’s attitudes towards writing. One question asked what made writing successful, while the other question asked if there was anything that made writing challenging. We wanted to make sure that students had the space to provide their personal input in order for us to gain the most insight about the attitudes of each student. These open responses were then sorted into their respective student groups and further analyzed there.

**[Slide Eleven: Results]**

This survey was open throughout the end of the Fall 2019 semester and closed in February 2020. At the time of closing, we received 327 responses. These responses were sorted into groups to yield the following distribution: 177 Undergraduates, 47 Graduates, 55 Dual Credit, and the remaining 48 were not specified.

**[Slide Twelve/Thirteen/Fourteen: Visual Results and Interpretations]**

For the Likert portion of the survey, we complied all of our data into this chart. The chart is a compilation of each disposition that we observed in this survey. Each line represents a different student population; the blue line represents dual credit/College Credit Plus students, the orange line represents Undergraduate students, and the gray line represents Graduate students. In order to create the 65-95 scale shown on the graph, we calculated the average number that each disposition had as a response, then multiplied it by a factor of 100% to better represent the numerical data.

As I begin to explain the interesting discoveries on this graph, I would like to make the following known: All of the following information can be found on the next two slides of this presentation (slides 13 and 14, respectively). I will be staying on the chart while I go through this information to allow for better comprehension, but if you would like to re-read a point that was made, then those slides will be available for you.

(Slide 13) The averages for each disposition fell between 70 and 90 for all student groups. Among all three groups, the disposition with the highest average was “self-efficacy,” and the disposition with the lowest average was “managing impulsivity.” Interestingly, Dual-credit/CCP students had disposition averages that were generally higher than undergraduate students, and in some cases these averages surpassed even those of graduate students. This could be explained because Dual Credit students understand their academic excellence and use that fact to hold more generative attitudes towards their writing and work. It is also worth noting that undergraduate students (our largest group of responses) consistently had the lowest dispositional score for every disposition. This greatly piqued our interest, and we began to analyze the undergraduate responses for possible reasons why we were observing this trend.

(Slide 14) In our analysis, we determined that undergraduate students demonstrated high averages in Openness, Responsibility, and Listening with Empathy. The dispositions with the lowest averages included Managing Impulsivity, Flexibility, Persistence, and Attitudes Towards Emotion; however, it is worth noting here that Impulsivity was consistently low across each student group. These lower averages could be due to the lifestyle adjustment that many undergraduate students make when they begin their collegiate career. For many students, this is the first time that they are governing themselves, and several students may still be struggling with that adjustment beyond their classroom abilities.

**[Slide Fifteen: Successful Writing]**

We also analyzed the open responses of the undergraduate students to further understand their attitudes towards writing. When students were discussing successful writing-related attitudes, we noticed that there were several themes developing. Many students referenced the ability to express themselves and their argument through their writing, and that it helped them better organize their thoughts. Several others mentioned the importance of identity in their writing, and that their best writing occurred when there was a significant meaning to it. The mention of transfer, either in an educational or professional sense, was also mentioned many times throughout the responses.

**[Slide Sixteen: Challenging]**

There were also many themes found when discussing writing as a challenging act. Many students demonstrated an issue with self-esteem and believe in their abilities as a writer. Many of these students stated that they did not like working on a project unless it was focusing around an interest of theirs. Because they lacked interest, students stated that they avoided writing more than one draft or taking more time to plan their writing. Many students also indicated a disdain for incorporating feedback into their assignments, especially criticism from professors or peers. This relates to a lack of self-esteem and the resultant lack of motivation to spend more time on an assignment that these students are already avoiding.

**[Slide Seventeen: Future Opportunities]**

This was the first year of distribution for this survey, and while we have already discovered so much important information, we believe that there is the potential to track student attitudes through yearly redistribution. We hope to re-issue this survey in the following academic year to both incoming and current students. If students take the survey multiple times throughout their BGSU career, we also would like to meet with those students to interview them about writing attitudes. We hope to observe how writing-related dispositions change with each incoming class, as well as how those current students are changing their perception of writing. This is something that all of us would like to see for many class cohorts in the future.

**[Slide Eighteen: Thank you!]**

Thank you so much for finding interest in our study. If you have any questions about the material presented in today’s symposium, I can be reached best at [cmjudge@bgsu.edu](mailto:cmjudge@bgsu.edu). It was my distinct pleasure sharing this information with you today, and I hope you have a great rest of your day!