

Cases on Educational Technology Implementation for Facilitating Learning

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Chapter 17

They Can't Fix What They Can't Hear: Improving Pre-Service Teachers' Spoken Grammar

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Grammar Case touches on aspects of instructional design that go beyond scope and sequence of content, including: 1) communicating with a client, 2) representing a learning problem from the perspectives of different learning theories and human performance improvement, 3) working with institutional stake holders, and 4) considering non-instructional as well as instructional interventions. The instructional designers in the case must address a sensitive learning problem with limited financial resources and an institutional culture that may be resistant to change. The case depends, more than anything, on problem finding. A key instructional technology issue in the case is how the designers can ethically and feasibly use video recorded in public school classrooms to assess student teachers' grammar mistakes and also as stimulus material for instruction.

ORGANIZATION BACKGROUND

State University is a medium-sized public university in the Midwest (U.S.). The key organizational units are the Teacher Education Program (TEP) that prepares K-12 teachers and the graduate program in Instructional Design and Technology (IDT). The TEP is a four-semester program that students complete in their junior

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and senior years. More than half of the students enter the TEP after completing two years of coursework at one of the numerous community colleges in the state. The TEP consists of three semesters on campus and a semester of student teaching. At the conclusion of their student teaching experience, TEP students make a capstone presentation to faculty members. They use their electronic portfolio to describe and display standards-based instructional activities and student assessments that they completed during their student teaching. They also reflect upon their emerging vision as professional teachers. Some TEP candidate portfolios include video recordings of their classroom teaching, but classroom video is not required.

Both the TEP program and the IDT program are housed in the College of Education. The TEP program is the major undergraduate focus of the college. The IDT program, in contrast, is strictly graduate level and attracts masters and doctoral students from many countries. The masters degree in IDT includes a semester-long internal internship working in a not-for-profit instructional design firm that is run by the IDT program.

SETTING THE STAGE

Huong Thi Lien came from Vietnam as a Fulbright scholar. She earned an undergraduate degree in English as a Second Language (ESL) and is now completing a masters degree in IDT. Jamil Stevens is an African-American student from Chicago who earned an undergraduate degree in Workforce Education and is now completing a masters degree in IDT. Lien and Jamil serve as instructional designers for Human Performance and Learning Consultants (HPLC), the not-for-profit instructional design firm that is run by the IDT program. The HPLC faculty advisor is Dr. Bill Kuper, who directed the training department of a large corporation for 20 years before becoming a faculty member in IDT. Dr. Kuper has assigned Lien and Jamil to an instructional project for Dr. Marlene Jensen, dean of the College of Education. Dr. Jensen recently took the dean position and came to the university, which is in a rural setting, from a large metropolitan area.

CASE DESCRIPTION

Dr. Kuper meets with Lien and Jamil before they hold an initial meeting with their client. Dr. Kuper emphasizes the *problem finding* goals of the initial client meeting and advises Lien and Jamil to avoid the temptation to start proposing solutions or creating content right away. Rather, they need to listen carefully and “interrogate” the problem. Dr. Kuper suggests that they draw on their personal experiences and

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their undergraduate studies, Lien's ESL background and Jamil's workforce education background that included Human Performance Improvement (Richey et al., 2011). Dr. Kuper also suggests that they draw on learning theories to see how the problem would be framed differently from the perspectives of behavioral, cognitive, and situated learning theories (Driscoll, 2012). He stresses the need for *finding* the problem before trying to solve it (Stepich & Ertmer, 2009). "Understand the client, the learners, and the context. Then find opportunities that fit."

When Lien and Jamil conduct their initial client meeting with Dr. Jensen, she describes her concerns: One of the first things that she did as the new College of Education dean was to attend several of the capstone presentations given by teacher education candidates who were just completing their student teaching experience. The teacher candidates were often nervous during their capstone presentations but were also enthusiastic about their development as classroom teachers. The students presented electronic portfolios of their student teaching activities. The problem was that some of these students, who were just weeks from graduating and taking teaching jobs, made spoken grammar mistakes in their capstone presentations. The dean said that each grammar miscue sounded like "fingernails on a chalkboard." As proud as she and the TEP faculty were of these teacher candidates, she was concerned about sending them into classrooms where they might perpetuate verbal language issues with a new generation of students. Indeed, some of the teacher candidates with noticeable verbal language issues came from rural and inner-city schools and were dedicated to teaching in the types of schools that they came from.

Management and Organizational Concerns

At the client meeting, Dr. Jensen admitted that she could not simply order faculty to "fix" the problem. In talking to TEP faculty, Dr. Jensen sensed that most of them didn't perceive the same level of problematic language that she did. Was she overly sensitive, coming to this midwestern campus from an eastern city? Did grammar problems only appear in the high-pressure capstone presentations, or did they also appear during classroom teaching? Is spoken grammar even a problem worth addressing? The dean realizes that she is stepping into a sensitive area involving race and social class issues. The dean is also concerned that she is an outsider, although one with authority. Institutionally, the TEP cannot add even one more course hour. The program is already over 20 hours per semester and the administration is pressuring the college to cut back course hours. The dean has no particular funds to develop instructional initiatives, although she tells Lien and Jamil that she can pull \$1000 from a discretionary fund for the project.

Dr. Jensen wants Lien and Jamil to "come up with some ideas." She doesn't expect anything to be done about the graduating TEP students. But she wants to

prevent future generations of TEP students from taking verbal language issues into professional settings, such as job interviews, as well as future classroom teaching. Lien and Jamil probe the client to gather as much information as they can about the learning goals and performance gaps, how target behavior can be observed, what domains of learning are involved (cognitive, affective, or psychomotor), what motivational issues are involved, and what barriers there are to changes in the TEP.

Lien tends to view the case through the framework of her undergraduate degree in ESL as well as her own experiences as an English language learner. She learned English grammar formally by memorizing verb conjugations and rules. Jamil has a different viewpoint. He grew up in an urban African-American community, hearing grammar use that is non-traditional but culturally acceptable. He assumes that the situation is similar for students, mostly Caucasian, who grew up in rural parts of the state. Jamil is skeptical of direct instruction as the best solution because, he says, “most people who have grammar problems don’t even know they have a problem – or don’t think it’s important.”

After the client meeting, Lien and Jamil agree that they should conduct a needs assessment to determine: 1) what kinds of spoken grammar problems teacher education students have, 2) if other stakeholders consider spoken grammar to be a problem worth addressing, 3) if and how TEP faculty have attempted to address spoken grammar issues in the past, and 4) what kinds of new approaches are both feasible with their limited resources and also likely to be accepted by TEP faculty and students. Lien suggests conducting a survey of TEP faculty and students; Jamil prefers talking informally to some faculty and students about the problem. With the limited time available to them, they decide to adopt Jamil’s informal approach.

Learning Needs Assessment

Jamil interviews several TEP faculty and students. Of the five TEP students who Jamil talks to, most report that spoken grammar isn’t a problem for them. One student, though, does admit being self-conscious about grammar problems. “It’s kind of embarrassing, really. I just try to avoid talking in class much. But I’m kind of worried about job interviews.” The TEP faculty members who Jamil talks to acknowledge that some students use poor grammar and report that they often correct students’ written grammar mistakes. But they don’t recall any previous attempts to improve pre-service teachers’ spoken grammar and seem skeptical that anything can be done to change years of language use. One of them says something that strikes Jamil: “It’s an ‘ear’ problem. They just don’t hear what they’re saying as being wrong. They can’t fix what they can’t hear.”

Recalling the dean’s question about whether grammar mistakes appear in pre-service teachers’ classroom teaching as well as capstone presentations, Jamil asks

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the director of student teaching placement, Dr. Stacie Hitt, if videos of student teachers' lessons exist and if he can view them. Dr. Hitt says that student teachers are encouraged to borrow video camcorders through a department media center and to record video of their teaching for self-improvement purposes. She adds that her office has boxes of videotapes from past student teachers that Jamil is welcome to view them "for research purposes only." Dr. Hitt notes that relatively few student teachers borrow camcorders or include teaching videos in their capstone portfolios. "But that is about to change, big time."

Dr. Hitt then describes a new initiative that will require teacher candidates to submit evidence of their teaching performance, including video recordings, as part of the state's teacher certification. "All student teachers will need to video their teaching. This will be very high stakes." Jamil asks if spoken grammar will be judged. "We don't know the exact evaluation criteria yet," says Dr. Hitt. "But the assessment could be done by evaluators in New Jersey who may hammer our candidates on bad grammar."

When Jamil comments that video recordings of student teachers' lessons could be used to assess student teachers' spoken grammar or potentially be used as training materials Dr. Hitt expresses concern with using classroom video recordings. "There are legal and ethical considerations whenever you have kids on video. But maybe we can get something into our video permission forms. If it's something Dr. Jensen wants . . ."

Jamil's last interview is by telephone with the principal of the urban high school that he attended, who states that he is concerned with teachers using proper grammar because of the impact that using incorrect spoken grammar can have for students. "The fact is that the world is full of teachers, employers, and other authorities who may penalize you for your nonstandard use of the English language. Feel free to denounce these people if you wish; but if you need their good opinion to get ahead, you'd be wise to learn standard English" (Brians, n.d.).

Instructional and Non-Instructional Solutions

While Jamil conducts interviews, Lien investigates available resources for remedial grammar instruction through on-campus language labs, which she is familiar with from her time in ESL. She reviews the Computer Assisted Language Learning (CALL) tutorials that cover English syntax and grammar. As she remembered, the CALL modules offer comprehensive instruction. But they are clearly intended for students who are learning English rather than for native English speakers. Lien discusses these different types of language learners with an ESL professor who affirms that native English speakers don't want or need comprehensive grammar instruction. "They should be able to catch and correct their own grammar mistakes.

That behavior, rather than knowing grammar rules, represents the natural expertise of competent native-language speakers (McCarthy & Carter, 1994).”

Lien reflects on the learning strategies associated with learning theories that she had studied: Cognitive learning through tutorials, behavioral learning through drills, and situated learning through shared “real world” activities. She searches the web for shared resources and finds numerous sites offering lists of common grammar mistakes, although most are more oriented to written than to spoken grammar (e.g., Brians, n.d.; Darrel, 2011; Flash, n.d.; Gingerich, 2012). She draws from these to produce a checklist of Common Grammar Mistakes (see Appendix A) that includes the appropriate grammar rule along with an example of incorrect use and a corrected version.

Lien shows her Common Grammar Mistakes (CGM) checklist to Jamil, and he shows her the videotapes of student teachers’ classroom teaching that he got from Dr. Hitt. Together Jamil and Lien code several of the videos using the CGM checklist to identify spoken grammar mistakes. Jamil is focused on his learning needs assessment and determining the extent and type of grammar problems in classroom teaching videos. Lien is *use testing* the CGM checklist to see if her categories cover most of the grammar mistakes on the videos.

Both Lien and Jamil code a few of the same videotapes to see if they catch the same grammar mistakes. When they are satisfied that they agree on the mistakes that they hear then they divide the rest of the tapes and each codes around ten tapes, which are between 30 and 60 minutes long. Consistent with Jamil’s interviews with TEP students, at least two-thirds of the classroom teaching videos don’t contain more than one or two of the grammar mistakes on the CGM checklist. However, several of the videotapes show student teachers making more than two grammar mistakes. Figure 1 shows the coding of a video with notable grammar problems.

Although the videotapes that they view and code are not necessarily representative of all student teachers, Jamil feels confident in telling Dr. Jensen that there are indeed student teachers with notable spoken grammar problems.

Figure 1. Coding of grammar problems in a student teacher’s classroom teaching video using CGM checklist

Classroom Video 3a [50 minutes]: Problems noticed (= number of times):	
Category 1:	Used “is” instead of “are” = 1 Used “was” instead of “were” = 6
Category 2:	Used “got” instead of “had gotten” = 1
Category 3:	Used “did” instead of “had done” = 1
Category 4:	
Category 5:	
Category 6:	“Me and my cooperating teacher” instead of “my cooperating teacher and I” = 1
Category 7:	
Other:	Misuse of adverb, “slow” instead of “slowly”: 2 Used “that” instead of “who” or “whom” when referencing a person = 1

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Lien used their coding activity to reduce the CGM checklist from the original ten categories of grammar mistakes to seven. She is confident in presenting the CGM checklist to Dr. Jensen as a tool that TEP faculty could use to evaluate the spoken grammar of pre-service teachers in various contexts, including presentations in their methods courses as well as observed student teaching.

Earlier, Lien had located a rubric that supervising teachers use to evaluate student teachers' classroom teaching. She shows it to Jamil and points out that the rubric already includes a numbered criterion for evaluating proper use of grammar in written communications. She suggests that another numbered criterion could easily be added to the rubric for spoken grammar (see Appendix B) and that supervising teachers could use the CGM checklist to judge student teachers' spoken grammar during classroom observations.

Recalling his studies of human performance improvement, Jamil suggests that supervising teachers or the student teachers themselves could make a trimmed CGM checklist specific to a student teacher's demonstrated grammar mistakes. The student teachers could then use their personal CGM checklist as a *job aid* to catch and correct their grammar mistakes as they are delivering a lesson.

Jamil realizes that he and Lien were getting much more aware of spoken grammar mistakes as they coded student teacher classroom videos using the CGM checklist. It occurs to him that this research-type activity could be repurposed as a testing activity and as an instructional activity (Fadde, 2009). They could make a video test of pre-service teachers' ability to *hear* grammar problems by editing together segments from student-teacher classroom teaching videos, some containing grammar mistakes and some not. Pre-service teachers would note the time-code on the video when a mistake occurs and write the correction. They could take the video test as a group in a classroom or individually using the TEP's electronic portfolio system.

Pre-service teachers who don't pass the video test would need to do more of the "coding" activity until they mastered the skill of hearing and correcting the spoken grammar mistakes of others. Lien adds that pre-service teachers who struggle with recognizing or correcting particular grammar mistakes could be referred to specific CALL lessons in the ESL language labs.

Jamil and Lien begin to map out a spoken grammar program that would start with a video-based test of grammar mistake recognition and correction, then continue with video-based practice and CALL tutorials for those who need them, and then have supervising teachers use the CGM checklist and Teacher Observation rubric to provide assessment and feedback during student teaching. Ultimately, the CGM checklist could be used by TEP faculty during teacher candidates' capstone presentations to assess teacher candidates' mastery of spoken grammar – and thereby evaluate the success of the spoken grammar program.

Technology Components and Concerns

Although Lien and Jamil are excited by the potential of using authentic classroom videos for testing and training purposes, they also recognize the ethical and logistical baggage associated with using “real” video. The cooperating schools where student teachers are placed may object to videos that show students being used in such ways. Furthermore, appearing in the testing or training videos may be embarrassing for pre-service teachers in the teacher education program.

In addition to ethical and legal considerations, video-based testing and training require computer and video skills along with IT infrastructure to create and manage self-instructional modules. Who will choose and edit video-based instructional materials? Who will grade video-based tests and recommend or require remediation for TEP students who need it?

Despite the problems associated with using classroom video recordings, Lien and Jamil realize that videos provide a treasure of authentic materials that can be repurposed in multiple and flexible ways. It occurs to Jamil that the legal and ethical issues mostly relate to students seen on videos potentially being identified. But what if they could mask students’ identities? Lien volunteers that she has used *Garage Band* to make podcasts. Perhaps they could strip the audio out of the video footage to produce audio-only testing or training materials.

Another technology component of Lien and Jamil’s budding plan is to have video (or audio) testing and training delivered as self-instructional modules using the College of Education’s electronic portfolio system or the university’s content management system. Neither Lien or Jamil has the technical skills to author interactive video modules, nor does the project have funds to commission modules. However, a literature search locates several research articles that describe *video analysis* as an instructional method (Rich & Hannafin, 2009) and describe a variety of free and low-cost web applications that can be used to support video analysis activities (Rich & Trip, 2011). Both Lien and Jamil have had a video production course and are confident that they can put together a low-cost interactive video annotation capability if the project moves forward.

CHALLENGES AND SOLUTIONS

Lien and Jamil present their ideas to Bill Kuper, the HPLC faculty adviser. Dr. Kuper compliments Lien and Jamil on their problem finding process, noting that they thoroughly investigated the perceived performance problem and considered the context and resources before thinking about solutions. He also compliments

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the designers for developing non-instructional (e.g., CGM checklist and Classroom Observation rubric) as well as instructional solutions: “If the dean communicates to the TEP faculty her commitment to improving candidates’ spoken grammar *and* gives them these simple tools to use, it can have a substantial impact.”

“The key stakeholders here are the TEP faculty,” adds Dr. Kuper. “If you have them on board then, then they’ll get the students on board. Both groups need to see that proper grammar is valued by the dean and by the principals of schools that our teacher candidates might teach in. They need to see that they benefit from the grammar initiative, and that they can do so without too much discomfort. The old WIIFM and YCDI.” Jamil and Lien recognize Dr. Kuper’s reference to the Foshay et al. (2003) motivational principles of “What’s in it for me” and “You can do it.”

“Using classroom video will be a harder sell,” says Kuper. “School people are super sensitive about school kids being on video, and the videos being on the Internet in any kind of way. I agree that showing pre-service teachers authentic classroom teaching videos of student teachers very much like them, struggling with some of the same issues, would have great credibility and ethos for your target learners. Perhaps the specter of required, high-stakes classroom videos for state licensure will obviously mean much more videotaping in classrooms. Just the increased amount of videotaping may loosen up people in the public schools. And it’s great to come up with ways to leverage all that classroom video for use in the teacher education program.”

“It may turn out that this small grammar awareness project turns into something much bigger,” says Dr. Kuper. “Video analysis may be a good approach to help pre-service teachers develop skills such as classroom management by first analyzing video of other student teachers and later analyzing videos from their own student teaching. But the same challenge applies. Can we develop ways of leveraging classroom video for more and better learning in the teacher education program while still respecting the student teachers and classroom students?”

Dr. Kuper approves the continuing involvement of HPLC in the *grammar* project and directs Lien and Jamil to produce a full proposal to present to the client. The proposal is to include the learning needs assessment along with plans for testing, instruction, and program evaluation. It should also include costs, in time as well as money, to develop the video-based testing and training solutions that they propose. He suggests that they leave the audio-only option out of the initial proposal but that they create several audio-from-video segments and use test them with some TEP students to see if the students maintain their attention and recognize grammar mistakes as well as they do with the full video segments. “Might even make somebody as nice dissertation,” hints Dr. Kuper.

Although many details of a grammar awareness and remediation program have yet to be worked out, Lien and Jamil have outlined an approach that addresses the dean's goals for improving the spoken grammar of graduating teacher candidates, and does so with little monetary expense and minimal institutional resistance.

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KEY TERMS AND DEFINITIONS

Coding: A research process of identifying and categorizing distinct examples in behavior that is observed or text that is read.

Domains of Learning: Cognitive (mental), psychomotor (physical), and affective (attitudes and beliefs) aspects of learning that call for different instructional strategies.

Electronic Portfolio: A collection of digital artifacts such as text, images, and videos.

Human Performance Improvement: An approach to improving performance by understanding and addressing factors beyond skills and knowledge that can affect performance, such as motivation.

Job Aid: A checklist or other support to help workers perform a task; available at the time and place the task is performed.

Needs Assessment: A process of determining performance goals, identifying discrepancies between goals and actual performance, and analyzing reasons for discrepancies.

Non-Instructional Solutions: Planned activities that are not directly instructional but that lead to improved performance, often through increased attention or motivation.

Problem Finding: An approach that delays initiating a design process while the designer attempts to view a situation from different perspectives in order to gain insights.

Use Testing: A process for improving a product or process by observing a representative user as they attempt to complete typical tasks using the product or process.

Video Analysis: A computer-based activity in which incidents depicted in a video recording are identified by the time at which the incidents occur and categorized according to a provided coding scheme.

APPENDIX A: CHECKLIST OF COMMON GRAMMAR MISTAKES

Figure 2.

<p>Category 1: Lack of Subject/Verb Agreement In the present tense, subjects and verbs must agree in number. That is, a singular subject requires a singular form of the verb, and a plural subject requires a plural form of the verb. Example: Incorrect: The instructions is confusing. Correct: The instructions are confusing.</p>
<p>Category 2: Past Tense Errors Regular past tense verbs end in <i>-ed</i> (<i>smiled, developed</i>), while irregular past tense verbs change form (<i>froze/froze, catch/caught</i>). Be especially careful not to omit the <i>-ed</i> ending on a regular verb. Example: Incorrect: During the lecture, she ask many questions. Correct: During the lecture, she asked many questions.</p>
<p>Category 3: Past Participle Errors The past participle form of a verb combines with helping verbs like <i>has</i> or <i>have</i>; it can also be used as an adjective. The past participles of regular verbs end in <i>-ed</i>, just like the past tense (<i>smiled/has smiled, developed/has developed</i>). The past participles of irregular verbs-like the past tense-often change form (<i>froze/has frozen, ran/has run</i>). Example: Incorrect: Ivan has ran a repair shop. Correct: Ivan has run a repair shop.</p>
<p>Category 4: Dangling Participles A participle is a verb-form that ends in <i>-ing</i>. It is called “dangling” when it doesn’t agree with its subject. Example: Incorrect: While walking down the road, a tree caught Xena’s attention. Correct: While walking down the road, Xena noticed a tree.</p>
<p>Category 5: Ending a sentence with a Preposition Do not end a sentence with a preposition. Prepositions are little words that indicate position and such: with, at, by, from, etc. In general a prepositions should come before (“pre”-position) the noun it modifies. Example: Incorrect: That’s the warrior I must talk to. Correct: That’s the warrior to whom I must talk.</p>
<p>Category 6: I vs. Me “I” is a pronoun that must be the subject, never the object, of a verb. “Me” is a pronoun that must be object, never the subject. (The same is true for he/him, she/her, we/us, etc.) Examples: Incorrect: John and me are going to Athens. Correct: John and I are going to Athens. Incorrect: The horse belongs to John and I. Correct: The horse belongs to John and me.</p>
<p>Category 7: Split Infinitives An infinitive is the form a verb that begins with “to”. Splitting an infinitive means placing another word or words between the “to” and the infinitive. Example: Incorrect: Bob seems to always win a fight. Correct: Bob always seems to win a fight.</p>

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APPENDIX B: PROPOSED CHANGE TO CLASSROOM OBSERVATION RUBRIC (#9 ADDED)

Figure 3.

Field Experience Evaluation					
Name: _____			Grade level and/or Subject Matter: _____		
School: _____					
Semester: _____		Year: _____		No. of Weeks: _____	
City: _____					
DIRECTIONS: Mark the rating scale at the point which indicates the level of performance the participant demonstrated during his/her field experience. On the back, add any comments that will help clarify the participant's strengths or weaknesses as a prospective teacher.					
Performance Categories			Levels of Performance		
	Unacceptable	Poor	Fair	Good	Excellent
1. Planned and implemented instruction appropriate to the children's level of development, considering the age, individual needs, interests, and abilities of the children.					
2. Planned and implemented lessons which were relevant, purposeful and engaging in children, showing respect for individual, cultural, and linguistic diversity.					
3. Planned and implemented activities that integrated more than one content area.					
4. Used assessment information to plan lessons and guide instruction.					
5. Used a variety of instructional strategies that promoted the development of thinking, reasoning, decision-making, and problem-solving.					
6. Recognized and applied logical consequences to inappropriate behavior in order to promote the development of each child's conscience and self-control.					
7. Used indirect guidance by foreseeing possible problems and working to prevent them (i.e. stated expectations for behavior ahead of time, set limits on use of materials, took safety precautions, removed distracting influences when possible). Set clear, firm limits and expectations for children's behavior when leading activities.					
8. Helped children expand their ability to communicate through listening, speaking, reading, and writing.					
9. Modeled the rules of English grammar and syntax for oral communications.					
10. Modeled the rules of English grammar, spelling, punctuation, capitalization, and syntax for written communication.					
11. Demonstrated dependability, collaboration, and initiative in working with the cooperating teacher.					
12. Maintained standards of professional conduct, including punctuality, notification of lateness or absence, being well-groomed and appropriately dressed, and maintaining confidentiality.					