

The Effects of Guided Writing Activities on Student Achievement and Motivation of
First-Year College Business Writing Students

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to determine if guided writing activities would increase student achievement and motivation in a first-year college business writing course. The researcher used an observational journal throughout the course of the study to record and reflect on students' attitudes, perceptions, and participation during guided writing activities. Students were surveyed at the beginning of the study to determine their attitudes about writing for business and for pleasure. Achievement data was collected at the beginning of the study using an online Grammar Skills Diagnostic Assessment and Grammar, Confusing Words, and Spelling Words Quizzes. Guided writing activities were then put into place. The researcher focused on three categories of instruction: grammar, confusing words, and spelling; sentence and paragraph development; and writing assignments. The survey, assessment, and quiz were administered at the conclusion of the study to determine the effects of guided writing activities that were implemented. The researcher concluded that guided writing activities had a positive effect on student achievement and motivation in writing.

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I. INTRODUCTION

Introduction

Writing is an essential form of communication, particularly in business. “The need to write clearly and quickly has never been more important than in today’s highly competitive, technology-driven global economy,” said Joseph M. Tucci, president and CEO of EMC Corporation and chairman of the Business Roundtable’s Education and the Workforce Task Force (National Commission on Writing, 2009). With the increased demand for effective and efficient writing skills in business, corporations often assess these skills during the hiring process. Students who struggle with writing tend to struggle with getting hired or staying employed. “People who cannot write and communicate clearly will not be hired, and if already working, are unlikely to last long enough to be considered for promotion” (p. 3), according to the report “*Writing: A Ticket to Work . . . Or a Ticket Out: A Survey of Business Leaders*,” published by the National Commission on Writing for America's Families, Schools, and Colleges (National Commission on Writing, 2004). For students to succeed in college, in business, and in life, the quality of their writing must improve.

As a business manager for the last 25 years and a recent business writing instructor at a two-year college in mid-Michigan, the researcher has seen numerous examples of writing skills ranging from effective to deplorable. A conscientious and caring instructor will educate, inspire, and challenge learners to improve their skills and achieve personal and professional excellence. The goal of this researcher is to teach first-year college business students to write clearly, concisely, and quickly, resulting in students who feel confident and can demonstrate their writing skills will meet or exceed the demands and requirements for writing required in the workplace.

In the researcher's first-year business writing course, students learn principles and composition of effective basic business letters and memos, as well as accuracy in grammar, spelling, punctuation, sentence structure, and format. Course outcomes are clearly communicated, ranging from mastering basic writing skills using Standard English and demonstrating an understanding of the composition process to formatting documents and demonstrating professionalism appropriate for the workplace. Students read information in the textbook, answer questions about the content, discuss communication concepts in class, and practice writing exercises to reinforce learning. Students also review rules of grammar and punctuation, study spelling words, practice what they learned by completing textbook and online exercises, and apply the concepts in writing assignments. Some students demonstrate a high level of proficiency in their writing throughout this process. Other students seem to have difficulty transferring their understanding and knowledge of the writing process to their writing assignments.

The goal of the researcher is to bridge the gap between students' understanding of concepts involved in the writing process and application of those concepts in students' writing. To accomplish this, the researcher will develop guided writing activities that could motivate and challenge first-year college students at all levels of learning. In order to increase overall student attitude and achievement in writing, the researcher believes instruction must be modified for the unique needs of all students. Lesson plans should be designed to encourage student choice, interest, and creativity. Through the use of guided writing activities, high-performance students will be challenged and motivated to learn more, and low-performance students will receive interventions they need to write successfully.

This introduction provides an overview of the research project. In the background section, writing and its importance in business is presented. The section concerning theoretical

framework offers support for guided writing activities based on theories of learning, teaching, and education. The next section covers the statement of the research problem, the purpose of the study, and the research question upon which the study is based. Finally, a list of terms is presented with definitions relevant to the research project.

Background

Writing is a “system of human visual communication using signs or symbols associated by convention with units of language – meanings or sounds – and recorded on materials such as paper, stone, or clay,” according to Encyclopædia Britannica (Writing, n.d.). Signs and symbols form a language which, when written, renders the language visible, concrete, and permanent. For a writing system to be used for purposes of communication, the signs and symbols must be defined and followed so the reader understands the meaning.

Not only is writing necessary to convey meaning, “writing today is...an essential skill for the many” (National Commission on Writing, 2004, p. 5). In a survey conducted by the Commission of 120 members of the Business Roundtable, good writing was identified as a necessity in today’s businesses. In fact, the survey confirms “individual opportunity in the United States depends critically on the ability to present one’s thoughts coherently, cogently, and persuasively on paper” (National Commission on Writing, 2004, p. 5). Eighty percent of salaried professionals are expected to be responsible for writing. “...Good writing is a sign of good thinking. Writing that is persuasive, logical, and orderly is impressive,” wrote one survey respondent (National Commission on Writing, 2004, p. 8).

When seeking employment, from 54 percent to 71 percent of the companies surveyed required writing samples when writing was considered a critical element of the job. Eighty-six

percent of the companies surveyed indicated they would consider poorly written application materials against the job candidate.

Businesses have recognized the ever-increasing importance of writing, especially in the age of electronics. E-mail is prevalent in most business communication. Said one survey respondent, “In this electronic age, writing skills are critical. Because of e-mail, more employees have to write more often. Also, a lot more has to be documented” (National Commission on Writing, 2004, p. 12).

Unfortunately, employers are not always finding the writing skills they desire in current or prospective employees, especially from recent college graduates. “People’s writing skills are not where they need to be. Apart from grammar, many employees don’t understand the need for an appropriate level of detail, reasoning, [and] structure” (National Commission on Writing, 2004, p. 14). Respondents considered a number of writing elements as very important in business writing: accuracy (95.2%); clarity (74.6%); spelling, punctuation, and grammar (58.7%); and conciseness (41.3%).

Many teens understand the importance of writing skills. In the National Commission on Writing’s most recent survey, “*Writing, Technology, and Teens*,” 86% of teens surveyed felt good writing was important in life. Teens indicated they tend to be motivated to write when teachers challenge them, introduce them to topics of interest, and provide detailed feedback. Teens even suggested “having [teachers] spend more time writing in class, and [having] teachers using more computer-based tools (such as games, writing help programs or websites, or multimedia) to teach writing” (National Commission on Writing, 2008).

Theoretical Framework

In general, first-year college business writing students should possess at least two elements of Benjamin Bloom's learning theory, Taxonomy Pyramid: knowledge (memorization of information) and comprehension (paraphrasing). This is particularly useful when considering the basics of writing: grammar, punctuation, and spelling. Some students seem to understand these writing concepts naturally, something referred to as linguistic intelligence in Howard Gardner's Theory of Multiple Intelligences. People with linguistic intelligence possess a sensitivity toward spoken and written language. Learning languages is easy for them, and they have the ability to use language to achieve specific goals. "This intelligence includes the ability to effectively use language rhetorically or poetically; and language as a means to remember information" (Smith, 2008). In most cases with first-year college students, however, a review of the basics of writing is essential for providing a foundation for learning and applying subsequent levels of writing.

The next level of writing involves development of ideas in the form of sentences and paragraphs. Bloom would identify this as application and analysis. Application is identification of connections and relationships and how they apply. Analysis is where one determines the arrangement, logic, and wording choices for topic sentence and paragraph development, for example.

When writing letters and memos to various business scenarios, students who use a variety of learning strategies are using, in effect, Robert Gagné's nine conditions of learning from his book, "The Conditions of Learning" (Smith and Ragan, 2005, p. 61). This form of learning outcomes is often used in problem-solving tasks, such as the use of case studies in business.

Statement of Problem

Students' vary in their competence, confidence, and attitudes toward writing which can have a strong impact on the success of writing instruction and students' achievement. Students who struggle with writing often lack the courage, ambition, or abilities to improve or succeed without intervention. Students who possess adequate or better-than-average skills may become bored if not challenged and inspired to meet or exceed expectations. The researcher's goal is to implement guided writing activities and instruction to improve student achievement and motivation.

Purpose of Study

The purpose of this study is to determine the effects of guided writing activities on student achievement and motivation of first-year college business writing students.

Research Question

Will guided writing activities affect student achievement and motivation of first-year college business students?

Definitions of Terms

Benjamin Bloom's Taxonomy Pyramid – in 1956, Bloom headed a group of educational psychologists who developed a classification of levels of intellectual behavior important in learning; the six levels from simple to complex are: knowledge, comprehension, application, analysis, synthesis, and evaluation.

Business Roundtable – an association of chief executive officers leading U.S. companies with more than \$5 trillion in annual revenues and more than 12 million employees; believes the basic interests of business closely parallel the interests of American workers, who are directly linked to companies as consumers, employees, shareholders, and suppliers.

Competent Language Usage Essentials (C.L.U.E.) – a grammar and mechanics guide in the course textbook that contains 50 guidelines covering sentence structure, grammar, usage, punctuation, capitalization, and number style and focuses on the most frequently used – and misused - language elements in business writing; includes a list of 160 frequently misspelled words plus a quick review of selected confusing words, such as *affect* versus *effect*.

Educator – the learning management system used by the college, the researcher, and the students in the researcher’s business writing class.

Grammar – knowledge and use of the rules or principles of the basic elements of writing.

Guided Writing Activities – exercises, with step-by-step instructions, that students will complete in class or as homework assignments; exercises were created as a result of suggestions and ideas learned by the researcher through the literature reviews in the following areas - sentence composition, sentence level-deficiencies, appropriate tone and style, small group discussions, peer review, and self-regulated and instructor-feedback assessment.

Howard Gardner’s Theory of Multiple Intelligences – developed in 1983, Gardner, a professor of education at Harvard University, proposed eight different intelligences to account for a broad range of human potential in children and adults; these intelligences are: linguistic, logical-mathematical, special, bodily-kinesthetic, musical, interpersonal, intrapersonal, and naturalist.

National Commission on Writing in America’s Schools and Colleges – in September 2002, the College Board, a nonprofit membership organization composed of more than 4,300 schools and colleges, established the Commission in an effort to focus national attention on the teaching and learning of writing.

Punctuation – the marks, such as commas and brackets, used in writing to separate sentences and their elements and to clarify meaning.

Robert Gagné’s Conditions of Learning – in 1949, he became the research director for the perceptual and motor skills laboratory of the United States Air Force and studied military training problems; during this time, he developed nine conditions of learning: gain attention, inform learner of objective, recall prior knowledge, present material, provide guided learning, elicit performance, provide feedback, assess performance, and enhance retention and transfer.

Spelling – the writing or naming of the letters in correct sequence that form words.

Standard English - the dialect of English used by most educated English speakers and is spoken with a variety of accents; the form of English used in all formal written contexts.

II. SUMMARY OF RELATED LITERATURE

Introduction

The purpose of the study is to determine the effects of guided writing activities on student achievement and motivation of first-year college students. The literature review provides information about writing strategies, differentiated instruction in a variety of content areas, and previously researched methods for improving students' motivation toward writing. The strategies in this literature review for effectively teaching writing skills include: sentence composition, sentence-level deficiencies, appropriate tone and style, small group discussion, peer review, assessment – self-regulation and instructor feedback, teacher as writer, and writing across the curriculum.

Sentence Composition

Well-organized messages group similar ideas together. Messages should be sequenced in a way that helps readers understand relationships and accept the writer's message. Unorganized messages fail to emphasize important points, leaving readers frustrated and confused. Because the goal is to communicate clearly and concisely, writers should strive for well-constructed sentences containing no more than 18 words and for balance between longer sentences and shorter ones. Separating complex sentences will help readers grasp ideas immediately, saving the reader time.

Pittenger, Miller, and Allison (2006) conducted a study to determine if an instructor can teach college-level business and economics students to write better in a single course. Forty-two students submitted pre- and posttest writing samples anonymously to EssayPrep, an external evaluator, the same evaluators that graded Scholastic Aptitude Tests (SAT) and Advanced Placement (AP) exams.

Pittenger et al. (2006) added deliberate interventions by placing emphasis on certain elements of writing. “Students completed... repetitive activities that involved writing and revising sentences and paragraphs” (p. 261), wrote Pittenger et al. (2006). One intervention involved efficient use of words in sentences. For example, Pittenger et al. (2006) asked students to reduce the following sentence to the minimum number of words possible without changing the meaning: “The process of editing involves removing all those unnecessary words which take large amounts of extra space, but add nothing of any real significance to the meaning of the message” (p. 263). Pittenger et al. (2006) suggested the solution, “Editing involves removing unnecessary words” (p. 263).

As part of the intervention, the instructor also devoted time to explain the criteria used by EssayPrep and reviewed guidelines of effective writing. Additionally, students received five extra credit points for improving their writing and submitting the posttest and five more extra credit points for scoring better on the posttest compared to the pretest.

In the pretest, 82% of the students performed below satisfactory. In the posttest, more than 90% of the students scored satisfactory or higher, suggesting instructor intervention and a small incentive were effective. Pittenger et al. (2006) concluded students can be taught to improve writing skills in a single course.

Sentence-length variety exercises were addressed by Hunley (2003) in a study he conducted with 31 students enrolled in two first-year college-level writing classes. Hunley (2003) wanted to discover (a) how effectively a sentence-length variety exercise engaged students and (b) how well the assignment enabled students to internalize some techniques that would increase their repertoire of stylistic options in future writing endeavors. Students would rewrite a

paragraph “in which no sentence contained more than 18 words and each sentence was at least four words shorter or longer than the previous sentence” (Hunley, 2003, p. 9).

Hunley (2003) introduced the sentence variety exercise by first reviewing 10 different types of sentences: four traditional structures (simple, complex, compound, & compound-complex), four traditional purposes (declarative, interrogatory, imperative, & exclamatory), one periodic sentence, and one cumulative sentence. For each of these 10 sentences, Hunley (2003) created variations of the simple sentence, “I’m visiting your class today. I’m conducting a study” (p. 9). Hunley (2003) discussed with students the differences between style (how you say something) and content (what you are saying). Then Hunley (2003) reviewed how the same story can be told in as many as 99 times in different styles, such as “a dream, ...a mathematical problem, ...a haiku, ...a prediction, ...a formal letter, ...a cross-examination in court, in a precise style, in a philosophical style, hesitantly, excitedly, ...saying ‘you know’ with every pause, and so on” (p. 10). Finally, Hunley (2003) asked students to submit three items: (1) a paragraph from final versions of an essay assignment, (2) a revision of the paragraph using the sentence-length variety exercise, and (3) thoughts about their experiences.

After completing the exercise, Amie, a study participant, reflected, “I never realized how many extra words I throw into my sentences that could be left out normally. It wasn’t nearly as difficult as I thought it would be. It seemed almost as a game to put the words together” (p. 10), reported Hunley (2003). Patrick, a student frustrated with the exercise, complained how the exercise “didn’t allow you to have words flow out of you” (Hunley, 2003, p. 11). Patrick admitted the exercise was difficult because his vocabulary was not the best, yet he cut a 159-word paragraph down to 76 words, retaining the original meaning. Another student felt she was forced to work in a box, hence stifling her creativity. Hunley (2003) asserted, “We are all writing

in a box—the English language. We forget that we are working within a medium, and the better acquainted with that medium we become, the more creatively, precisely, and clearly we can express ourselves” (p. 11).

Sentence-level Deficiencies

The National Commission on Writing for America’s Families, Schools, and Colleges published a report in September 2004 based on data collected from 64 human resource directors from various companies throughout the United States, wrote Quible (2006c). The report contained a number of criticisms regarding the writing deficiencies of college graduates. One survey respondent wrote, Quible (2006c) reported, “The skills of new college graduates are deplorable – across the board; spelling, grammar, sentence structure....I can’t believe people come out of college now not knowing what a sentence is” (Quible, 2006c, p. 9). Businesses require that new employees have good writing skills, starting with basic elements of writing: grammar, punctuation, and spelling. The following studies describe findings related to improving instruction that will help students decrease sentence-level errors.

Quible (2006c) conducted a quasi-experimental research study to determine whether sentence-level error labeling might be a viable instructional technique in written business communications courses. The study involved a control group and a treatment group. The control group consisted of 123 college students who were enrolled in five sections of the researcher’s written business communications course prior to spring semester 2005. The treatment group consisted of 48 college students who were enrolled in two sections of the researcher’s written business communications course during spring semester 2005.

The study was conducted using a bank of remediation exercises, according to Quible (2006c). Students involved in the study corrected 12 to 15 grammar, punctuation, and writing-

style errors in 100-word passages. Students in the control group were asked to only correct the errors. Students in the treatment group were asked to (a) write the error code next to each error (an error code list was provided) and to (b) correct the error.

For nearly 15 years, Quible (2006c) used the error code list when grading students' papers. He encouraged students to decode the errors and study the relevant material in a 17-page handout he provided students that contained additional information about each of the errors identified in the error code list. In the study, rather than coding the errors himself, he asked students to find and code the errors themselves, then correct the errors.

Students "who both labeled and corrected errors in remediation exercises made significantly fewer sentence-level errors...and significantly reduce[d] the number of punctuation and grammar errors" (p. 17), indicated Quible (2006c). In another study, Quible (2006b) had this to say about the results of the spring semester 2005 study:

When comparing students' performance on these two tasks, Quible (2006[c]) found that students who both labeled and corrected flaws reduced the number of punctuation deficiencies in their work by 55%, compared with students who corrected but did not label such deficiencies. Moreover, those who labeled and corrected flaws reduced the number of grammar deficiencies by 57%, compared with those who corrected but did not label such deficiencies. (pp. 295)

English, Manton, and Walker (2007) conducted a study of 41 human resource managers in 200 of the largest companies in Dallas and Ft. Worth, Texas. Respondents completed a questionnaire that identified 44 competencies. Respondents were asked to indicate how essential each competency was for a new business graduate to possess to be employed. Among the top five competencies ranked highest were, "produce neat and well organized documents that use

correct grammar, punctuation, and spelling,” and “the need to proofread documents and understand...the principles of effective communication” (p. 421).

Following studies Quible conducted in 2004 and 2006, Quible (2006b) created five techniques for helping students improve sentence-level deficiencies. Quible (2006b) indicated, “each of the techniques requires that students identify and label deficiencies, especially those that violate the conventions of standard English” (p. 295).

Quible’s (2006b) first technique involved the use of a tracking system – an error code list and a record sheet - for students’ revisions. According to Quible (2006b), “several popular business communications texts present similar schemes, typically using abbreviations for error labels” (p. 295). Quible (2006b) highlighted students’ errors and recorded the error code on a record sheet, which he attached to the students’ papers. Students wrote their revisions on the record sheet, a technique that enabled Quible (2006b) to grade resubmitted work quickly and efficiently.

A variation of the technique above involved students working in small groups on error identification exercises (Quible, 2006b). The researcher provided the students with a business letter that contained errors identified on the error code sheet. Students circled the errors in the letter and wrote the error code next to the deficiency. For sentences with errors, students were asked to rewrite the sentences correctly on the appropriate lines at the bottom of the exercise. To facilitate the technique, Quible (2006b) used a Web-based course management tool where student groups, which were maintained throughout the semester, collaborated when working on their exercises.

Similar to the technique described above, Quible (2006b) had students identify deficiencies and mark them up in class. The difference between the two techniques was that

deficiencies were identified during class discussion. Quible (2006b) generally used exercises the students had just completed in the small groups. For the examples, Quible (2006b) used students' actual work that he "doctored" with additional errors, indicating as such to the students. When deficiencies were found and error codes determined, Quible (2006b) asked students to explain the correlating strategy for making the correction, thus reinforcing students' abilities to find, identify, understand, and correct sentence-level deficiencies.

In addition to working in small groups, Quible (2006b) asked students to share their work with an "editing buddy" at the start of class before writing assignments were handed in. The "buddy," who was a classmate, reviewed the author's work. If the buddy found an error, he or she discussed the error with the author. Ultimately, the author had the option of handwriting the correction on the paper before turning it in or refusing to make the correction.

Quible's (2006b) final technique involved editing exercises using 100-word paragraphs that contained several types of deficiencies. Students were asked to find deficiencies, code them using the error code list, and correct the errors on a record sheet, which was previously discussed in Quible's (2006c) study conducted in 2005.

Some businesses are asking recent college graduates "to prepare a writing sample during the interview process...[and] individuals whose writing is plagued with sentence-level errors may be greatly diminishing their opportunities for employment," (p. 300), indicated Quible (2006b). Exercises using the five techniques identified in Quible's (2006b) study have been effective in helping business writing students "remediate sentence-level deficiencies to which readers in professional settings respond negatively" (p. 301).

Quible (2008) indicated that "with the frustration American employers express about the sentence-level deficiencies of many of today's recent college graduates, new instructional

techniques should be developed so students are able to meet employer expectations” (p. 181). As a result, Quible (2008) conducted another study, the purpose of which was to determine whether [a] strategies-oriented approach, involving grammar and punctuation concepts, was a viable pedagogical technique to help students in a business communication course avoid making sentence-level errors.

Quible’s (2008) study involved one control group comprised of 21 college students enrolled in one section of a business communications course in fall semester 2006 and two treatment groups comprised of 45 college students enrolled in two sections. During the study, Quible (2008) instructed the students identically in all three sections in the following areas: in-class reviews of grammar and punctuation concepts, lectures, class handouts, textbooks, and writing assignments.

Quible (2008) indicated “intervention involved review materials covering grammar and punctuation concepts students studied prior to the administration of five grammar/punctuation quizzes during weeks 7-12” (p. 182). The control group received grammar rules-oriented instruction; the treatment groups received the strategies-oriented approach involving correct grammar and punctuation usage. Three types of instruments were used to collect data regarding students’ performance: five grammar/punctuation quizzes, an in-class writing assignment, and a posttest.

Unlike rules-oriented instruction, the strategies-oriented approach involved strategies for determining the proper form of grammar or punctuation to use in a given sentence. For example, to determine which pronoun (*who/whoever* or *whom/whomever*) to use in a sentence, replace the pronoun *who/whoever* with *he*, *she*, or *they*. If the sentence is correct, *who/whoever* is the proper pronoun. (*Who* is there? *He* is there. “*Who*” is the proper pronoun.) But if the sentence is

incorrect when the pronoun *who/whoever* is replaced with *he, she, or they*, replace the pronoun with *him, her, or them*. Now if the sentence is correct, *whom/whomever* is the proper pronoun to use in the sentence. (For *whom* is this report? This report is for *them*. “*Whom*” is the proper pronoun.)

In the five grammar/punctuation quizzes, Quible (2008) reported that students in the treatment group, who received the strategies-oriented review materials, marked incorrectly 18% of 39 items on the quizzes. Students in the control group, who received grammar rules-oriented instruction, marked incorrectly 25% of the 39 items on the quizzes. Students in the treatment group performed at a higher level than those in the control group on the five grammar/punctuation quizzes.

In the in-class writing assignment, students in the treatment groups, who received strategies-oriented review materials, prepared the in-class writing assignment with fewer grammar and punctuation errors (mean = .0952 percent) compared to those in the control group (mean = .006 percent), according to Quible (2008).

In the posttest, Quible (2008) asked students to identify, label, and correct sentence-level errors in a narrative. Students in the treatment groups performed at 59% when correcting sentence-level errors in the posttest narrative, compared to students in the control group who performed at 51%. In conclusion, when compared with rules-oriented review materials for grammar and punctuation, the strategies-approach yielded more favorable results, stated Quible (2008).

Roach and Anderson (2007) conducted a study that attempted to reveal information regarding the quality in which business messages are encoded on the job. Three hundred seventy-two graduates of three Masters of Business Administration programs accredited by the

Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business completed a 50-question survey. Graduates were employed as managers with a wide variety of business communications responsibilities.

As a result of the findings, Roach and Anderson (2007) recommended that “the importance of a curricular focus on fundamental writing skills such as grammar and spelling continues to be crucial to business” (p. 50). Writing styles and lack of proofreading skills were also found to be important. Roach and Anderson (2007) stressed the importance of continuing to teach and reinforce these skills in business students, “especially in the context of the sheer quantity of messages required today on the job” (p. 50).

Regarding the National Commission on Writing’s report in 2004, where a survey participant stated, “The skills of new college graduates are deplorable...I can’t believe people come out of college now not knowing what a sentence is” (p. 32). Quible and Griffin (2007) commented:

Intangible costs of employees’ deficient writing skills are (a) image degradation for both employees and employers; (b) negative impact on productivity when employees must reread, perhaps several times, poorly written material to decipher the intended meaning; and (c) the outcome when an incorrect decision is made because of poorly or ineffectively written material. (pp. 32)

Unlike the grammar and punctuation rules-based approach, the context-based approach for teaching grammar and punctuation involved instruction based on what students were reading and writing. For example, if subject-verb agreement was a problem in the writing of several students, the instructor offered instruction on subject-verb agreement at that time. Quible and Griffin (2007) added that sentence-level errors should be marked, using a code such as CS for

comma splice, as part of the student's grade. Eventually, the students should be able to identify and code the errors themselves, whether in their own writing or that of their peers. Quible and Griffin (2007) "found a strong correlation between error labeling and error correction, suggesting that the error-labeling technique is an effective approach in helping students eradicate sentence-level errors involving grammar and punctuation" (p. 35).

Remediation exercises, for improving grammar and punctuation deficiencies, focused on specific errors found in students' writing. In addition to labeling errors, students corrected the errors. "By the end of the semester," stated Quible and Griffin (2007), "the students who completed the remediation exercises made significantly fewer sentence-level errors than did their counterparts who did not complete the remediation exercises" (p. 35).

Appropriate Tone and Style

Effective communicators concentrate on receiver benefits by naturally developing a *you*-view through a sincere tone and conversational, yet professional, style. Adapting a message to the receiver's needs requires empathy. Empathic writers think about how a receiver will decode a message. A writer's use of appropriate tone and style often generate understanding, cooperation, and buy-in by the reader.

According to Kenman (2007), "communicators in business...at all levels need to send messages that are understood pleasantly and effortlessly. Many business communication textbooks deal briefly with tone and style...in discussions of the *you*-attitude and positive language, but don't provide extensive explanation and drill" (p. 305). Kenman (2007) referred to tone as "politeness, positivity, friendliness, and the *you*-attitude" and style as "succinctness, active voice, conversational register, and personal constructions" (p. 306).

Kenman (2007) approached tone and style exercises by describing problems in sentences that needed to be corrected, instructed students in effective ways to correct the problems, then followed up by showing correct versions of the sentences. Kenman (2007) asked students to correct only the errors and reminded students to recognize what was correct. If students changed correct forms, this created an error. The exercises used sentences out of context, which sometimes created ambiguity. Kenman (2007) found this to be an opportunity to engage in discussion with students about acceptable variation. Following is an example (Kenman 2007), beginning with the sentence:

The way things usually go, we make an effort to notify most of our customers regarding the status of their accounts, irregardless of their balance. This sentence has the prescriptive violation *irregardless*, which should be changed to *regardless*. The other problems are stylistic: *the way things usually go*, *make an effort*, and *regarding*. The first is wordy, the second wordy and inflated, and the third inflated. Their replacements are *usually*, *try*, and *about*, respectively. It's important that *usually* be the only correct answer to the initial phrase because using synonyms or rephrasing blurs the sharp focus necessary for these exercises to be effective. Moreover, to maintain this discipline, I consider mistakes not only uncorrected strings, but also unnecessarily changed strings, for example, *customers* → *clients*. The corrected sentence is, *Usually, we try to notify (most of) our customers about the status of their accounts, regardless of their balance.*

(pp. 307)

At the beginning of the semester, students' grades varied. By the end of the semester, students were achieving grades between 80% and 100%. Students found the explanation-

discussion approach to tone and style to be “enjoyable and beneficial, even indispensable,” stated Kenman (2007).

Stevens (2005) conducted a study for the purpose of analyzing the satisfaction levels of Silicon Valley employers with the communication skills of newly hired college graduates. Survey responses from 104 Silicon Valley employers were analyzed. Results indicated students needed to receive more training in oral and written communication skills, especially in the use of e-mail. “Research shows that people employed in business require strong...writing skills to manage multifaceted and rapidly changing environments,” (Stevens, 2005, p. 22). Electronic communication calls for a writing style that must be concise and direct. Writing style, according to Hunley (2003), was referred to as how the writer says something.

According to Stevens’ (2005), employers commented, “they [newly hired college graduates] need the ability to take something that is awkwardly written and make it flow smoothly – to express business ideas in writing” (p. 24). Writing styles of some recent hires’ e-mails were criticized for the use of slang and “smiley face” emoticons. One employer wrote (Stevens, 2005), “Many students come to me with poor English skills. I could not hire them because of our clients’ perceptions” (p. 24).

Business professionals, especially with the advent of e-mail and other technological advances in the workplace, “must have excellent communication skills in order to process, analyze, and encode quality messages in such a fastidious setting” (p. 41), offered Roach and Anderson (2007). Of great concern, however, was that college business graduates lacked effective writing skills. Roach and Anderson (2007) indicated that “according to a 2002 survey of business executives,...70% of respondents who indicated less than half of e-mails seen on a daily basis were of ‘good quality’” (p. 41).

Researchers Roach and Anderson (2007) developed a 50-question survey and administered it to 1994-2004 graduates from three Masters of Business Administration (MBA) programs accredited by the Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business. The MBA programs that were selected were from three public universities of various sizes. The population of the study was pared down to 372 graduates with implied managerial responsibilities who were responsible for the creation of various written messages and documents.

Roach and Anderson (2007), as a result of the survey, recommended that because effective writing skills are crucial to conveying clear, concise messages, focus on fundamental writing elements, such as grammar, punctuation, and spelling, were essential. After “core writing skills have been developed, . . . impose time restrictions for business writing exercises to encourage improved productivity” (p. 42), indicated Roach and Anderson (2007). Since e-mails were seen as “holding the ‘worst’ encoding” (p. 50) of all forms of written business communication, Roach and Anderson (2007) recommended business writing trainers and teachers should give increased attention to e-mails, since business “professionals did describe it as a potential opportunity cost problem for firms” (p. 50), stated Roach and Anderson (2007).

Small Group Discussion

When students work in small groups, they not only learn from each other, but they engage in meaningful conversation that often helps them better understand the course material. This technique helps students develop their critical thinking skills, as well as their speaking skills. Discussion also offers students the opportunity to share and receive feedback from the reader’s point of view, a chance to test the degree to which a reader understands the writer’s message, a key objective for business writers.

Launspach (2008) asserted, “since talk is key to the acquisition of academic discourse and the pragmatic strategies necessary for academic writing, modeling the discourse within appropriate situational contexts becomes a primary means by which to assist students’ learning” (p. 56). Launspach (2008) used a case study to explore how students’ participation in small writing groups allowed them to build declarative knowledge and negotiate strategies they can apply to their procedural knowledge of writing.

Writing groups were “led by a teaching assistant once a week in addition to their regular composition class” (Launspach, 2008, p. 57). Each student in the writing group read aloud his or her essay. Peers commented on the student’s writing, and the group leader built discussion, thus validating students’ comments and encouraging participation, indicated Launspach (2008).

Another strategy used in the groups was for students to restate the assignment in his or her own words, especially for students who experienced difficulty with the assignment. By restating the assignment, the leader was better able to ascertain if the student understood the assignment, and made inquiries or offered information accordingly. For example, one student needed to prepare an analysis, not summarize. The leader stated, “You know not to just summarize the article...but to analyze, which means to pull out...specific pieces and look at them...in more detail” (Launspach, 2008, p. 64).

Writing group leaders used “a series of interaction strategies to help students in the discussion groups: restating the assignment [hence repetition], using focus questions, advice giving, and soliciting input from the [writer’s] peers” (Launspach, 2008, p. 76). Peer feedback was offered in a way students could relate to, and language competence was built between the students.

Launspach (2008) closed by indicating, “Studying talk about writing allows for the discovery of unexpected openings situated among people, ideas and discourse. And it allows us to see how these openings permit both the consensus and conflict that rhetorically, make and break the bonds of community” (p. 78).

Students’ reactions to in-class discussion as an instructional technique were explored by Dallimore, Hertenstein, and Platt, (2008). The effect of participation practices on communication-based skill development were determined. Findings indicated active preparation and participation in class discussion were linked to students’ reports of improved oral and written communication skills.

Dallimore et al. (2008), asserted that “class discussion is active and linked to the development of critical thinking and problem solving skills” (p.163). The challenge was to find ways of involving all students in class discussion, not just those students who participated voluntarily and frequently. Advantages of class discussion were higher-level reflection, development of thought processes, and problem solving by the students. Information was usually retained as a result of this process. Dallimore et al. (2008) advocated “encouraging a broader range of student participation through graded participation and even the use of cold-calling (i.e., calling on students whose hands are not raised) to extend the benefits of in-class discussion to all students” (p. 164). An alternative to cold-calling was a technique of asking all students to prepare one or two questions about their reading prior to coming to class, which they were asked to share at the beginning of a class session.

In the study, Dallimore et al. (2008) informed students they should expect to be called on even when their hands were not raised, class participation accounted for 40% of students’ final grade, and class participation was considered a key learning element. Students were graded on

quality and frequency of participation in class discussion. Students were required to provide self-assessments of their participation and the overall letter grade for the course.

Results indicated students were better prepared, participated more frequently, were more comfortable with participation, and the overall number of students who participated was high. “Students indicated that class participation enhanced their learning and that their confidence about participation in future courses had increased” (Dallimore et al., 2008, p. 168). Students felt the participation and course positively affected their written and oral communication skills.

Fishman, Lunsford, McGregor, and Otuteye, (2005) reported on the first two years of the Stanford Study of Writing, a five-year longitudinal study aimed at describing as accurately as possible all the kinds of writing students perform during their college years. Fishman et al. (2005) argued that student writing is increasingly linked to theories and practices of performance. Fishman et al. (2005) asserted that “we...see a potentially close relationship between performance and current college literacies. Our collaboration has taught us to count performance as one of the many nonacademic knowledges that students possess, and...to think about how teachers of writing can respond” (p. 225). Fishman et al. (2005) suggested “adding oral communication to writing requirements, and in classrooms where presentations are more than convenient ways to end a term” (p. 239).

Peer Review

Students learn not only from their instructors, but from each other as well. Peer review gives students an opportunity to test the effectiveness of their writing on readers. Receiving feedback confirming the extent to which the message was clearly conveyed to the reader is advantageous.

Holst-Larkin (2008) suggested peer feedback in business writing classes was beneficial. Students learned to deliver, as well as receive, feedback from their peers. Since students came from different backgrounds and experiences, the feedback offered different perspectives and raised awareness. The challenge was for students to suggest specific improvements, the courage to criticize their friends, and provide feedback about approach, tone, and strategies the writer used. Holst-Larkin (2008) recommended using the Protocol-Aided Audience Modelling (PAM) method where a reader “speaks thoughts aloud while trying to understand the document in question” (p. 77). Testing documents out loud with readers “should gain acceptance as a valuable tool in business writing” (p. 77), shared Holst-Larkin (2008).

When students practiced writing business letters that delivered bad news, Holst-Larkin (2008) had the students “play the role of the reader who is the recipient of the bad news. The student reads the letter slowly and immediately annotates it with the thoughts that come to mind” (p. 77-78). Holst-Larkin (2008) offered examples of students’ comments:

<i>Student Author Wrote:</i>	<i>Student Role-Playing the Recipient Commented:</i>
Dear Sir	I’m a woman!
We are upgrading our system to make collection of fees more efficient and unproblematic.	Are you admitting to a problem? I’d better look into it more closely.
A small proportion of this fee will also help in enabling us to make these upgrades for your benefit.	The price has been put up 10%, and only a small proportion is going to upgrades? I don’t think much of that!
<i>Student Author Wrote:</i>	<i>Student Role-Playing the Recipient Commented:</i>
Should you wish to discuss this in person...	Are you giving me an opportunity to negotiate another rate? I might get more out of this guy. (pp. 78)

The student authors became more aware of their ambiguous word choices, inappropriate tone, and to see more clearly the effect their writing has from the perspective of the reader. In addition to constructive feedback, Holst-Larkin (2008) encouraged positive feedback.

Responses to surveys conducted after testing documents out loud were very positive. Holst-Larkin (2008) shared students' responses to questions on a survey used in the study:

<i>Survey Questions</i>	<i>Students' Responses</i>
Q: Have you learned more about the importance of understanding your audience?	A: If the document is not received well, we will not get good results. A: My audience always comes to mind when I'm writing now.
Q: Did you find the PAM feedback comments from your peers on your writing helpful?	A: It helped me realize that other people may not think the same as me! A: It definitely makes you read your own work differently.
Q: Did you modify your writing in response to the think-aloud comments of your peers?	A: Yes, particularly regarding excessive use of words which they noticed.
Q: Is the PAM technique likely to help you critique your own writing from an audience perspective in the future?	A: Definitely. And I'm applying this technique now in my part-time workplace. A: Yes, and I'm starting to imagine those responses even before I start writing now. (pp. 79)

Holston-Larkin (2008) summarized indicating their greatest hope was that they brought the reader audience and their reactions to writing to the forefront of the writer's attention.

Assessment: Self-regulated and Instructor Feedback

When students monitor their own work, they tend to stay focused, remain on track, and complete requirements on time. Students also tend to be more critical of themselves and their

accomplishments. When used in the classroom, self-regulation often confirms students' strengths and helps direct the instructor's attention to areas where the student does not understand or needs improvement. When instructors provide feedback, how the feedback is delivered can impact students positively or negatively. Some students appreciate honest, direct feedback about their writing skills. Other students take the instructor's feedback personally, especially if the student is sensitive to constructive or negative criticism, even if the feedback is intended to help the student. Studies have been conducted to examine student self-regulation and instructor feedback and their impact on student achievement and motivation.

Quible (2006a) conducted a study to determine how students in a written business communications course differ from one another in terms of their motivational orientation and in the learning strategies they use. Teaching and learning has shifted to a cognitive perspective where learners tend to be more proactive and self-regulating, compared to a behavioral perspective used since the 1960s where learners generally focused on stimulus-response interaction.

In Fall 2004, a Motivated Strategies for Learning Questionnaire (MSLQ) was administered to 44 students in two sections of a written business communications course during week 14 of a 15-week semester, according to Quible (2006a). MSLQ, purchased from the National Center for Research to Improve Postsecondary Teaching and Learning at the University of Michigan, consisted of two sections. Section one was designed to assess respondents' motivational characteristics based on 31 items in six categories: intrinsic motivation, extrinsic motivation, task value, control beliefs, self-efficacy, and anxiety. Section two was used to assess the nature of learning strategies used by respondents based on 50 items in nine categories: rehearsal, elaboration and organization, critical thinking, self-regulation, time and study

environment, effort regulation, and peer orientation. The results of the questionnaire placed students (n=44) in one of three motivational groups: high-motivation (n=26), medium-motivation (n=12), and low-motivation (n=6); and one of two learning strategies groups: more-dedicated learners (n=27) and less-dedicated learners (n=17), according to Quible (2006a).

Based on the results of the study, Quible (2006a) identified several implications. Intrinsically motivated students perceived course material to be beneficial, unlike students who were extrinsically motivated. For the latter, Quible (2006a) suggested “special effort may need to be expended in helping them realize the value of mastering course content because doing so may have a positive impact on them during their careers” (p. 179). The researcher recommended obtaining testimonials from former students and business people concerning the importance and value of having effective writing skills in the workplace. Quible (2006a) indicated “some former students are often willing to serve as an ‘e-mail buddy’ to current students, and the instructor can facilitate the pairing of a former student with a current student” (p. 179), which would help reinforce relevancy of the course.

Quible (2006a) cited the use of assessments, evaluation, and feedback as practical methods for helping students develop control over their schoolwork. Using a feedback system that permitted students to “self-remediate” errors was suggested. For example, using a line to connect an incorrect pronoun with its antecedent was suggested as a more effective remediation strategy than circling the incorrect pronoun.

Incorporating tasks and activities students perceive as having value was important, stated Quible (2006a), with one exception: “Students with deficiencies in their basic literacy skills need remedial help regardless of whether they see value in it” (p. 179). Incorporating computer-based tutorials and online review materials were recommended as effective remediation strategies for

helping students overcome lack of basic literacy skills. Quible (2006a) also recommended the importance of writing assignments that were realistic and relevant.

Results of the study indicated some students experienced performance anxiety. Quible (2006a) recommended several strategies for reducing students' performance anxiety: "praising students for their improvement, treating them with respect, [and] encouraging their progress rather than criticizing their lack of progress..." (p. 180). Quible (2006a) stated:

Given the correlation between self-regulated learning strategies and writing competence reported by Zimmerman and Risemberg (1997) and given the overall mean rank of 5 (out of 9) found in this study, instructional effort devoted to increasing students' self-regulation would likely be beneficial. (pp. 180)

Quible (2006a) defined self-regulation as those items or actions that impacted positively students' achievement and attainment of personal goals. "Zimmerman and Risemberg (1997) found a correlation between self-regulated learning strategies and writing competence" (p. 180), stated Quible (2006a). Through self-regulation, more students would likely believe they are better writers, increase the importance of writing in their minds, and improve self-esteem concerning their writing abilities.

Quible (2006a) recommended rehearsal in business writing exercises, paralleling as closely as possible writing assignments that were real-world and similar to those found in business. Students who believed the value of the task was relevant would more likely take the task seriously.

Helmbrecht (2007) explored whether the assessment practices struggling writers encounter on their essays effectively ushered them into academic discourse or simply scared them away from that ambition entirely. In assessing students' writing, "[t]he teacher possesses

the institutional power in the [student-teacher] relationship and can use comments to motivate, educate, or chastise her students” (p. 310), wrote Helmbrecht (2007).

Paul, a student in English 101 taught by another professor, felt angry, hurt, and lacking in trust when he received these comments from his professor about an essay Paul had written: “For a thoughtful person your writing exhibits an almost stunning thoughtlessness – hurried, slang-filled, and well-nigh disrespectful to the principles of logic and succinctness. Consider the C- a gift” (p. 308), indicated Helmbrecht (2007). For the student, the assessment of his essay “collapsed the boundaries between him and his writing” (p. 309), leaving the student to believe the professor’s comments were directed at the student as a person (Helmbrecht, 2007). “If Paul couldn’t even understand the critique of his essay, how would he ever improve as a writer?” (p. 310), questioned Helmbrecht (2007). Helmbrecht (2007) asserted:

A primary objective of any first-year writing course should be developing the ‘ability to assess one’s own writing,’ yet we must give students room to learn this skill. We need to determine whether our methods of evaluation encourage students to acquire the self-assessment skills needed to develop the writing ability and literacy preferred by other disciplinary audiences within the academy. In this regard, when Paul looked at the assessment of his writing and felt insulted, angry, and stupid, the instructors’ comments, and perhaps even his good intentions, ceased to be relevant for Paul, whose motivation to learn how to write for his college courses was waning. (pp. 312)

Critical reflection, a key component of evaluation, is one that helped instructors identify and address errors constructively, indicated Helmbrecht (2007). One way this was accomplished was through a technique whereby students were asked to reflect on how assessments helped the

students' writing process. Students were asked to critique, in a memo, their essays, identify their own strengths and areas for improvement, and hand this in with their essays, according to Helmbrecht (2007). When they turned in their revised versions after the professor assessed their work, students were asked to address, again in memo form, the professor's comments, including why the suggestions worked or were disregarded. "It is within these memos that I can see writers like Paul achieve the most," (p. 312) expressed Helmbrecht, 2007. This process helped develop students' self-assessment skills, demonstrated students were engaging with their writing, and offered insights into students' writing problems that the professor could help them with. In summary, Helmbrecht (2007) indicated:

In our pedagogies that increasingly value students' abilities to evaluate their own texts, conversations about their reflective assessments can offer important forums for teachers to validate and encourage the development of the complex self-awareness that is so necessary for good writers. (pp. 315)

Treglia (2008) conducted a study that was used to analyze the critical and positive commentary, mitigated and unmitigated, written by two community-college, first-year composition teachers. Two drafts of two writing assignments were completed by 14 students, for whom English is a primary language for some and a secondary language for others, and addressed the students' reactions to these comments.

Nine out of fourteen students found mitigated comments from their teachers to be helpful. Mitigated responses included either a positive phrase prior to criticism or the use of words such as "perhaps" or "maybe." Four of the students, indicated Treglia (2008), felt "their teachers used this technique to encourage and motivate students to revise, and...they appreciated their teachers' tactfulness and expressed no doubt about the sincerity of the comments" (p. 121-122).

One student appreciated “comments...that told her why something didn’t make sense and suggested how she could revise it” (Treglia, 2008, p. 123). Another student defined this as “being given a sense of intellectual independence” (p. 124), according to Treglia (2008).

Overall, mitigated responses by the teachers made the students “feel they were treated with respect; it provided an intellectual interaction; and it gave them the freedom to make choices about their revisions” (p. 125), asserted Treglia (2008). Some students did not realize “revision isn’t always a clear cut, one-dimensional process, and that often a teacher’s job is to provide responses, suggestions, and guidance on a tentative (‘let’s see if this will work’) basis that involves students in the decision-making process” (p. 127), Treglia (2008) reported. One student, after reading the teacher’s positive comments she had written on his papers, “said they made him ‘feel good’ because they gave him ‘motivation’” (p. 128). Teacher expectation was a significant factor in student achievement. Some teachers’ comments, such as “makes no sense,” “say what you mean,” or “this is off the subject,” made students “feel unmotivated to revise but also diminished their capacity to think” (p. 128).

Teacher as Writer

The more that teachers practice what they preach, the more they will have to offer their students from an educational perspective. Teachers who serve as role models in their area of expertise are more highly regarded and respected than teachers who do not practice their skills. Teachers should consider sharing samples of their own writing with students, show how the writing sample can change over time, and allow the students an opportunity to discuss and offer suggestions for improvement about the writing sample.

Urquhart (2006) explored and busted several myths about learning to teach writing, including the myth that teachers do not have to write, even those who do not teach English.

Urquhart (2006) asserted that “if there is a single action that effectively improves teachers’ abilities to teach writing, it is for teachers themselves to write. Better yet is participating in a writing group” (p. 30). Benefits for teachers involved in writing groups were plentiful: teachers held writing conferences with students; instructional decisions were more refined; their own writing skills improved; and teachers were more interested in writing. Students who wrote more used creativity and analysis skills, both of which were essential for learning in any content area. Furthermore, when teachers modeled specific writing strategies, students recognized them as effective writing tools at their disposal whenever they needed them. Not only did students benefit from participating in writing groups, teachers benefited also. Teachers found opportunities for reflection, study, and collaboration. In addition to focusing on their own writing skills, they could also “explore new concepts about learning, find new energy for teaching, and experiment with new ways of interacting” (p. 32), indicated Urquhart (2006).

Street and Stang (2009) suggested “many classroom teachers do not feel comfortable teaching writing, nor do they feel knowledgeable about how to use writing with students” (p. 75). Teachers tend to be “trapped in their own relationship with the subject [of writing]” (p. 75), stated Street and Stang (2009). In order for teachers to incorporate writing, teachers themselves need to feel comfortable and confident about their own writing skills before they feel ready to teach writing.

Twenty-five graduate students working on master’s degrees in secondary education in a large urban university in southern California participated in a semester-long writing course designed to improve the professional writing skills of educators teaching in all content areas. Teachers were also encouraged to begin thinking how they would integrate writing into their classroom instruction. Street and Stang (2009) indicated that during the course:

Teachers studied research on writing, explored writing resources, and developed their own specific areas of writing expertise. On written assignments, teachers received significant feedback...it is important for teachers to realize that revision is at the heart of writing well. (pp. 77)

Writing self-confidence of teachers was measured at the beginning and end of the course. At the start of the course, 12 of the 25 teachers held negative feelings of self-confidence, indicating “panic, uneasiness, or hatred” (p. 80) about the writing experience, according to Street and Stang (2009). One science teacher said, “I will pretty much do anything to not do it” (p. 80), indicated Street and Stang (2009). Eight teachers held neutral feelings. Five of the 25 participants shared positive feelings, indicating that rather than “fearing writing and focusing on negative aspects of writing, they remarked on how ‘well supported’ they remembered feeling as student writers, how they ‘loved to read and write,’ and how writing was a part of their lives” (Street & Stang, 2009, p. 80).

Following completion of the course, seven teachers felt positive, 15 felt neutral, and 3 felt negative about writing. Teachers reported their self-confidence as writers as a result of the course improved significantly. Street and Stang (2009) reported, “Dana, a teacher who experienced ‘panic’ ...[when writing] before the class, remarked that her perceptions of writing...changed... [from] dread...[to] pleasure that comes from a finished product...there is no...anxiety [now] when I have to write and that’s a great feeling” (p. 82).

In short, “writing matters—to educators, business leaders, and to the general public” (Street & Stang, 2009, p. 85). Street and Stang (2009) further stated:

It is vital that all students be able to write well; yet this will not happen unless the professional development of teachers across the content areas is improved. Unless

teachers feel confident, comfortable, and competent as writers—they will be unlikely to feel equipped to develop their students' writing skills. (pp. 85).

Writing Across the Curriculum

Writing across the curriculum was a movement started in the mid-1970s that identified teaching writing as necessary in all disciplines, not just English classes. “Many psychology faculty have responded to this movement, as well as to their perceptions of students' writing deficiencies, by increasing the writing demands and range of writing assignments in their courses” (Goddard, 2003, p. 25). Goddard (2003) taught a semester-length 3-credit elective course, *Writing in Psychology*, which was designed to teach students how to write according to psychology's writing conventions, technical approach, and the American Psychological Association (APA) style. Acquiring writing skills relevant to the study of psychology was a key element of becoming socialized into the discipline.

The study conducted by Goddard (2003) included 27 (of 29) students enrolled in the *Writing in Psychology* course in Fall 1999 and Spring 2000 at a midsize metropolitan university in the Midwest. Students were psychology majors and represented all classifications (3 freshmen, 13 sophomores, 4 juniors, and 7 seniors). The course included the use of library resources, learning appropriate topic selection, and skill development in grammar, organization, and draft revision. Students completed a case report, a report of an empirical study, a conference abstract, and a literature review, which were presented in a progressive format. “Students accomplished each project in stages, with multiple opportunities to receive feedback on their progress [from peers and the instructor] and revise their writing as needed” (Goddard, 2003, p. 26). Goddard (2003) also offered significant feedback on students' mechanics in writing and often included several review lessons.

As a result of the study, students were more confident when writing empirical reports, conducting literature reviews, using APA style, performing online research, and evaluating journal articles. “Students’ attitudes toward adaptive writing behaviors, such as writing multiple drafts and having others read and critique their drafts, also became significantly more positive” (Goddard, 2003, p. 28). Grammar and APA writing style showed statistically significant improvement.

Nicosia (2005) stated that as a result of the Writing Across the Curriculum initiative, teachers in all disciplines, especially at the community college, are challenged to “improv[e] students’ reading, writing, listening, and speaking skills” (p. 163). Incorporating technology in instructional design has been an increasing expectation. Additionally, employers have recognized the need for good communication skills, “not just written but orally” (Nicosia, 2005, p. 163). Nicosia (2005) accepted the challenge by combining technology to support writing in teaching a public speaking course at a community college.

Incorporating writing in all disciplines helps students learn content. “Writing represents a unique mode of learning – not merely valuable, not merely special, but unique... Writing serves learning uniquely because writing... possess[es]... attributes that correspond uniquely to certain powerful learning strategies” (Nicosia, 2005, p. 164). Writing across the curriculum emphasizes thinking and involves “designing writing assignments that develop and stimulate critical thinking as students explore questions and problems in any discipline” (Nicosia, 2005, p. 164).

Nicosia (2005) incorporated writing and technology in a public speaking course in Fall 2001. The challenge was to incorporate writing and online technology to a course that depended heavily on oral communication in the presence of classmates. In the hybrid course, one advantage was that shy students spoke up more often since they could think about a response

first, which Nicosia (2005) sought as one of the goals for the online course. Nicosia (2005) reported:

Scheduling several class sessions in the computer lab enabled all the students to go online simultaneously. These synchronous rather than asynchronous interactions are uniquely suited for a public speaking class where rapport-building and support among students is essential to forming a community.... It is just this team building that is so necessary for my students to do well in subsequent speeches. They need to feel comfortable speaking to their audience. They need to feel supported and encouraged by the group. (pp. 167)

Nicosia (2005) traditionally asked students to work in pairs. One of their first assignments was to interview their student partner, then introduce him or her to the class in a one- to two-minute speech. "This replaces the speech of self-introduction often used in public speaking classes....[resulting in] more comfortable and less self-conscious [students]" (p. 168).

In the online hybrid version of the course, Nicosia (2005) first asked students to write and post an autobiography, then asked students to comment on each other's work. "This opportunity for peer review is one of the components of a Writing Intensive course" (p. 168), asserted Nicosia (2005). Next, Nicosia (2005) matched students in pairs, "instructing them to read their partner's autobiography and reply with questions to clarify, comment or seek explanation of information" (p. 168). Students were then asked to "prepare to give a short oral presentation about their partners for the next day's class" (p. 168), stated Nicosia (2005). Students submitted to the instructor a hard copy of their autobiography for final comments. "In this way the autobiography became a writing assignment which could be revised and reposted. ...I combined the use of the technology, writing and oral presentation" (p. 168), shared Nicosia (2005).

Students benefited in many ways, including becoming better acquainted with peers and “felt that they had made a friend in class giving them confidence for future speeches” (Nicosia, 2005, p. 168).

Another way Nicosia (2005) incorporated technology and writing in the public speaking course was by introducing stage fright to students, discussing the topic based on information from the textbook, and having students write an essay about stage fright. Students wrote the essay in a computer lab during class. Students had completed two brief speeches before beginning the stage fright assignment. Students posted the essays, then reviewed their peers’ work. Again, students submitted hard copies to the instructor for comments, followed by revising the assignment for a final grade, according to Nicosia (2005).

Nicosia (2005) indicated “a third assignment involved using the discussion board to...critique...a speech that...students downloaded...for historical speeches. In all three assignments students...practice[d] their writing as they engaged with their fellow students thereby providing peer review and revision” (Nicosia, 2005, p. 168).

Students felt that “doing more writing supported the learning of the subject material” (p. 169), stated Nicosia (2005). Students also indicated writing helped them apply the ideas learned in the course. Most felt their writing skills improved as a result of the course.

Ellis, Taylor, and Drury (2005) conducted a study of 232 first-year undergraduate biology students in an Australian metropolitan university. Students were required to write a number of scientific texts and reports as a key part of their assessment. The study investigated the quality of the writing experience using a genre-based literacy pedagogy as the writing instruction method. The expectation was that students would learn both disciplinary knowledge and its appropriate written presentation.

Ellis et al. (2005) affirmed that “the experience of writing...helps students to become familiar with the standards and style of written expression expected in their disciplines...[and] helps them to clarify their understanding of the subject matter about which they are writing” (p. 49-50). Students used writing as a way of engaging with the content in order to better understand the information and make the learning experience more meaningful.

Genre-based literacy pedagogy, according to Ellis et al. (2005), was divided into three stages in the writing cycle. Stage one concentrated on analyzing the content and texts relevant to the writing task. Model texts were provided that students read, reviewed, and analyzed. This provided students with models for standards and types of language expected in their writing tasks.

Stage two involved peer collaboration and joint construction of texts. Students collaborated in "brainstorming, planning, outlining, drafting, checking the scientific language, and exchanging these parts of the writing process together, to engage as much as possible with the task and its scientific concepts” (p. 53), stated Ellis et al. (2005).

In the third stage, students worked independently, drew together all their knowledge from the analyses of the texts and peer work, then wrote their own responses for the task. Students received feedback on both scientific content and written expression. Students wrote several drafts before submitting their final reports, according to Ellis et al. (2005).

Ellis et al. (2005) indicated having more explicit information about what students already knew about writing laboratory reports would provide them with a baseline so that instructors could refine explanations between what students already know and need to know. Providing successful examples of laboratory reports “could be used [by students] as a way of improving, reflecting upon, and clarifying the standards required” (p. 69), stated Ellis et al. (2005).

Rather than teaching or incorporating elements of writing in a psychology class, in winter 2004, Cargill and Kalikoff (2007) linked “‘Writing Effectively,’ an upper-division composition course, with ‘Abnormal Psychology,’ an upper-division clinical psychology course, requiring concurrent enrollment in both” (p. 83). In the writing course, students developed skills in APA style, argument, and research for their research and other papers for the psychology course. The courses were designed to “provide students with an integrative and collaborative learning environment” (Cargill and Kalikoff, 2007, p. 83). The researchers conducted a quasi-experimental field study that involved 34 writing students and 25 psychology students at a small, upper-division campus of a state university in the Pacific Northwest.

Cargill and Kalikoff (2007) used several different approaches when teaching and using writing in the program. Cargill and Kalikoff (2007) explained the teaching methods they used:

‘Writing Effectively’ provided an intellectual, pedagogical, and social link to ‘Abnormal Psychology.’ In the writing class, students wrote a short personal narrative on health, illness, or difference; read interdisciplinary articles on psychology; discussed ways to apply their growing knowledge of the writing process to their work in ‘Abnormal Psychology;’ and analyzed the assigned psychology readings in five one-page treatments and four papers (ranging in length from four-five to six-eight pages). They also discussed the ten-page final paper assigned in ‘Abnormal Psychology.’ Last, they wrote rough drafts of the ‘Abnormal Psychology’ final paper and participated in substantial, in-class, small-group peer review of those drafts a week before the final version of the paper was due. Those are the chief ways in which ‘Writing Effectively’ linked to ‘Abnormal Psychology.’ (pp. 87)

At the end of the semester, students indicated in their evaluations of the coursework that “reading and writing about interdisciplinary psychology scholarship in the writing half of the link[ed classes] supported their learning, giving them more knowledge of abnormal psychology,” (p. 88), wrote Cargill and Kalikoff (2007). Students felt peer-review helped them improve the quality of their work. One student said, “the learning was ‘deeper and richer,’...and provided a ‘stable environment to learn in... [and] to build intimate relationships with classmates” (p. 89), stated Cargill and Kalikoff (2007). In summary, students mastered and retained the psychology course material better and they were more motivated to perform through incorporation of the writing class and relevant assignments. Students “self-reported higher satisfaction, engagement, and feelings of academic belongingness” (p. 90), stated Cargill and Kalikoff (2007).

Though writing across the curriculum has been in existence since the 1970s and 1980s, only now are technology educators embracing incorporating writing in their classes. Worley (2008) grew “very aware of how important writing is in all subject areas” (p. 17) after completing a writing course in the summer of 2007. Worley (2008) agreed that “writing across the curriculum acknowledges the differences in writing conventions across the disciplines, and believes students can best learn to write in their areas by practicing those discipline-specific writing conventions” (p. 17). Worley (2008) felt that “students need to learn how to communicate with many different people in a variety of ways—verbal, written, and demonstration” (p. 17-18).

Worley (2008) feared not knowing how to grade writing assignments, especially because he felt uninformed about proper writing techniques. He surveyed communication arts teachers and learned several effective ways non-communication arts teachers could grade writing assignments:

Pauline Moran best stated the answer: ‘Teachers in all areas need to set the specific expectations for the assignments they design. For something in the technology education area, for example, you might be less concerned with format and the level of polish on something students write. You may be looking more at the content. Don’t feel that you need to have an elaborate rubric for everything they write. Focus on the one or two things that you feel are most important in that assignment. You can even grade on a complete/incomplete basis and leave it at that. Sometimes a simple check, check plus, or check minus on something is a way to give basic feedback without adding to your workload.’ (Worley, 2008, pp. 18)

Worley (2008) took responsibility for incorporating writing in technology education classes he taught:

Writing is an important communication skill that encompasses much more than technology education—it is a life skill. Being able to communicate effectively is as important, if not more important, than understanding content. . . . Being familiar with terminology that is used within a specific industry allows you to read as well as write in a format that others in your field will be able to understand and learn from. (p. 18)

Worley (2008) used a variety of writing assignments in the technology education classes. For technology classes in the automotive area, students researched new technologies, “then [would] write a paragraph or two describing the new technology, and then explain how the new technology improves safety, drivability, or comfort” (p. 18). Students were sometimes asked to prepare writing assignments as a result of their lab work and book assignments. “Other forms of

writing projects...[included] portfolios, job descriptions, ...step-by-step procedures,...career research papers and resume writing,...[and] an accident report” (Worley, 2008, p. 18).

Technology instructors, Worley (2008) asserted, need to form new attitudes “toward writing instruction and prepare our students for the real, contemporary world they are about to face. We can only do this by implementing all forms of learning—writing being one of the most important in a technology-oriented society” (p. 19).

Olwell and Delph (2004), and other members of the faculty in the Department of History and Philosophy at Eastern Michigan University, collaborated to move toward emphasizing research and writing as a process. Eventually, they devoted one entire semester toward “writing as a process” to ensure their graduates would master the basics of critical analysis and research before effectively and successfully writing their research papers. Olwell and Delph (2004) reported “that 100% of the students leaving our department to enter secondary history teaching reported that our department’s efforts to teach research and writing served as a model for their own future teaching” (p. 27).

One problem Olwell and Delph (2004) encountered was that “students do not necessarily believe their papers need a thesis” (p. 23). They discovered students who felt that way approached history in terms of a narrative approach by memorizing names, dates, facts, and events, rather than studying “the past as a series of problems that must be analyzed critically to ascertain the central issues and motives that shaped events, ideas and peoples’ actions” (p. 23), affirmed Olwell and Delph (2004). Taking the analytical approach “forces students to read sources and view evidence with a more critical eye, and engages them in a higher level of thinking as they work through their writing,” (Olwell & Delph, 2004, p. 23).

To help students decide on a thesis, they were required to determine two historical problems from a certain period, write half-page descriptions of each problem, include a bibliography, then discuss with the instructor the feasibility of each topic. After the student and instructor agreed on one topic, the student had to write a thesis statement, opening paragraph, and outline for the rest of the paper, and turn them in for feedback and a grade, shared Olwell and Delph (2004).

Conclusion

Business professionals often view writing skills as a critical qualification for employment and effective communication in the workplace. With the advent of e-mail and other technology, the ability to write clearly, concisely, and quickly is more important now than ever. Business writing teachers are challenged to help college students improve their writing skills that will meet or exceed the needs of future employers.

First-year college-level business writing students possess a diverse background in their writing skills and abilities. Differentiated instruction is one way of meeting the diversity of skills among writing students. Effective strategies in a variety of content areas will be well thought out, deliberately planned, and successfully implemented for students of all writing abilities. Sentence composition, sentence-level deficiencies, and appropriate tone and style are excellent strategies for differentiating writing instruction and enhancing students' achievement and motivation toward writing. The use of small group discussion, peer review, assessment – self-regulation and instructor feedback, and teacher as writer serves to promote positive perceptions among students toward writing, and oral communication as well. Teaching writing across the curriculum helps students improve learning in various disciplines, in addition to reinforcing the importance of writing in all areas of life. Writing is not just a form of communication; writing is a life skill.

III. METHODOLOGY

Introduction

Following is a description of the college, classroom, and classes in which the research was conducted. The procedures used for the study, as well as the data collection instruments, are also identified and explained. The purpose of the study was to determine the effects of guided writing activities on student achievement and motivation of first-year college business writing students.

Sample

College

Delta College is a two-year community college located in a rural area of Bay County, Michigan. The college serves students located primarily in Bay, Midland, and Saginaw Counties.

Delta's mission is to be a responsive, dynamic community college that educates, inspires, challenges, and supports a diverse community of learning to achieve academic, professional, and personal excellence. Their vision is to be the community's college of choice where students go to learn, work, and grow. The college's values consist of eight categories: diversity, integrity, respect, excellence, leadership, innovation, teamwork, and a learning-centered community.

Annual enrollments consist of 16, 500 students from area high schools, with some students who are dual-enrolled, to high school graduates, and older adults returning to college to improve their skills. Of these students, 41% are full-time, 69% attend a combination of day and evening classes, 55% are female and 45% are male, and 66% are in their teens to age 24. The college's main campus has been expanded and renovated. Three off-campus centers are located in nearby towns to better serve the community. Numerous services are offered to assist students with academics, careers, and disabilities.

Faculty and staff counts in 2008 are shown below. Turnover of full-time faculty employees, at 5.19% in 2008, is very low.

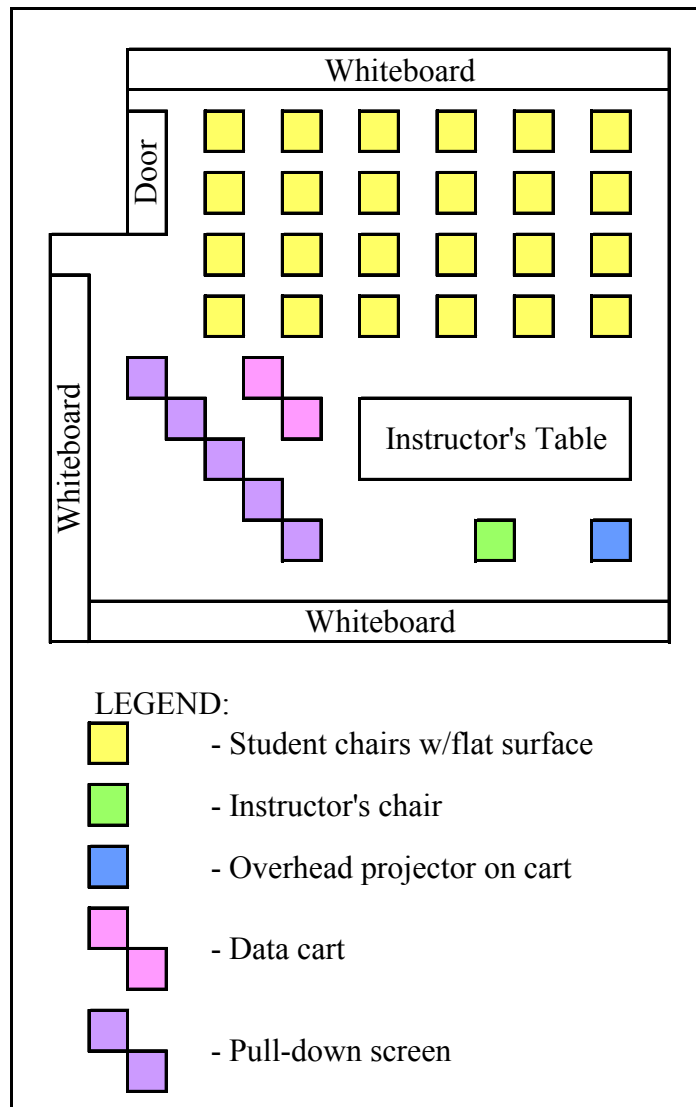
2008	Faculty		Staff		Totals	
	Counts	Percent	Counts	Percent	Counts	Percent
Full-Time	212	40.2%	311	73.9%	523	55.2%
Part-Time	315	59.8%	110	26.1%	425	44.8%
Totals	527	100.0%	421	100.0%	948	100.0%

Courses in eight academic divisions are offered at Delta: business and technology, English, health and wellness, humanities, science, math and computer science, social science, and technical trades. Within these eight divisions, 86 associate degrees and 62 certificates are offered. The college has several transfer options set up for their graduating students to finish their undergraduate degrees at four-year universities.

When faculty and students are involved in research involving human subjects, Delta College requires oversight over the research due to ethical and legal considerations. An Institutional Review Board (IRB) at the college oversees and approves said research. The researcher prepared a proposal to conduct research involving students in the researcher's first-year college business writing classes (see Appendix A). The proposal was submitted to the IRB on October 1, 2009 and approved by the IRB on November 9, 2009 (see Appendix B).

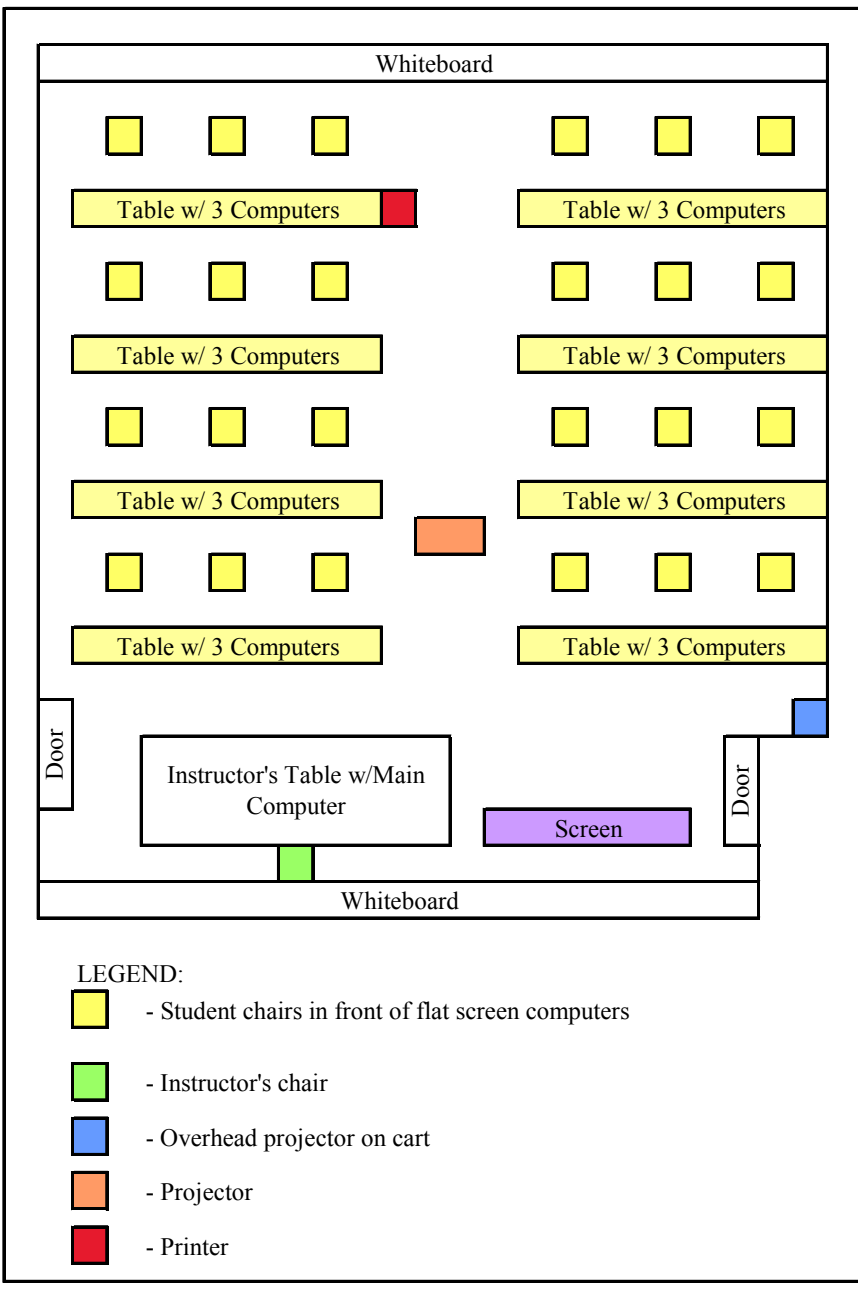
Classroom

The business writing course is offered primarily as a face-to-face course, and one online section of the course is offered most semesters. The course is generally held in a traditional classroom with the option of scheduling a computer lab classroom as needed.



Text Table 1. Face-to-Face Classroom Layout

Traditional classrooms generally seat about 20 students in chairs with attached writing surfaces. Classrooms have blackboards with chalk or whiteboards with dry-erase markers on at least two walls, or one wall and one freestanding unit. A table or two and a swivel chair are usually set up at the front of the class for the instructor. Classrooms are usually equipped with an overhead projector - which is resting on a moveable cart, Internet access, and pull-down screens. Data carts with computers, projectors, speakers, jump drive ports, wiring, and electrical cords are available for use in the classroom, but they need to be reserved in advance.



Text Table 2. Computer Lab Classroom

The college also has computer lab classrooms available, with computers and seating for up to about 20 to 24 students. Generally these classrooms are reserved for computer-intensive courses. Sometimes the computer labs are available for other courses. Reservations are required.

Classes

Students in a first-year business writing course were involved in the study. In the Fall 2009 semester, 19 students were enrolled in the course, four of whom dropped the course between weeks one and five. Of the 15 students who completed the course, 12 were female and three were male. All students were Caucasian. Only eight of the 15 students signed a Student Consent Form to participate in the study. During the semester, the researcher recorded observations in a journal. However, because approval from the college's Institutional Review Board was received during the latter half of the semester, the researcher decided not to collect additional data until the start of the next semester.

In the Winter 2010 semester, class was held on the main campus of Delta College on Wednesday nights from 6:00 p.m. to 8:55 p.m. The 15-week course started on January 13, 2010, and ended on April 28, 2010. Class was cancelled on February 10, 2010, due to a snowstorm.

Twenty students were enrolled in the course. On the first night of class, two students did not show up. The remaining 18 students signed a Student Consent Form (see Appendix A), thus consenting to participate in the study. After the first class, two students dropped. Between February 17 and 24, 2010, one student dropped. These five students were removed from the action research project. Fifteen students participated in the project.

Gender	Number	Percent
Male	3	20.0%
Female	12	80.0%
Total	15	100.0%

Text Table 3. Gender

Of the 15 students remaining in the class, 3 are male and 12 are female.

Age	Number	Percent
Under 24	4	26.7%
24-33	2	13.3%
34-43	3	20.0%
44-53	5	26.7%
Over 53	0	0.0%
Subtotal	13	86.7%
Non-response	2	13.3%
Total	15	100.0%

Text Table 4. Age Groups

Of the 15 students remaining in the class, four are under 24 years of age, two are in the 24 to 33 age group, three are in the 34 to 43 age group, five are in the 44 to 53 age group, none are in the over 53 age group, and two did not respond to the question, which is 26.7%, 13.3%, 20.0%, 26.7%, 0.0%, and 13.3%, respectively.

Procedures

Writing instruction in the researcher's classes followed the same format in both the fall and winter semesters. The researcher focused on three categories of instruction: grammar, confusing words, and spelling; sentence and paragraph development; and writing assignments.

In the first-year college business writing course, grammar, confusing words, and spelling are considered review items for students. Consequently, in the researcher's classes, students reviewed the material and completed homework assignments the week before review of the material in class.

Grammar, Confusing Words, and Spelling Words

For grammar, students read and reviewed grammar rules in the textbook. Students were provided 10 to 20 sentences in the textbook to rewrite and correct, each with at least one fault related to the grammar rules studied. Students corrected their own work using textbook answer

keys. For each error, students restated the grammar rule that applied, rewrote the sentence correctly, and highlighted their correction.

Students completed online grammar exercises related to the grammar unit, using Maimon's (2007) online version of "The Writer's Resource" through McGraw-Hill's Higher Education Catalyst 2.0, a Web-based, collaborative writing environment that helps students improve their skills in writing and research. For each grammar unit, students could choose from a 20-question pre- or post-test, or 10 to 15 practice exercises, most of which were available at the beginning, intermediate, or advanced levels. Upon completion of the exercises, students were provided immediately with results. Correct items were marked as "correct." Incorrect items were marked as "incorrect" and an explanation was provided.

For confusing words, such as *accept* and *except*, students reviewed the words in a study guide (see Appendix I) developed and provided by the researcher at the start of the semester. The study guide was also posted on the learning management system. Students were asked to create a mnemonic device for the word pairs by writing one sentence using and underlining both in a sentence. For example, for the words *accept* and *except*, a student might have written: *We accept your offer, except for the part about having to pay for the storage unit.*

Students were asked to review 20 spelling words a week, focusing on those that gave them the most trouble. Students spelled each word five times and wrote one sentence per word.

Students copied and pasted grammar textbook and online exercises, confusing words sentences, and spelling words assignments in a homework template and posted the results on the learning management system for the researcher's review (see Attachment J).

In class the following week, the researcher reviewed the material for 10 to 20 minutes, depending on the complexity of the topic and students' understanding. Students completed in-

class exercises in small groups for about 5 to 10 minutes; they were permitted to use reference materials as needed. The researcher called on students to provide answers for the exercises, fielded questions, and showed additional examples on the board to clarify misunderstanding and reinforce learning. Before the weekly quiz, the researcher engaged the students in a review of the material for about 10 to 15 minutes.

Sentence and Paragraph Development

The textbook offered numerous sentence and paragraph development strategies. To prepare for class, students read the textbook and answered up to 15 questions at the end of each chapter. In their answers, students were asked to restate the questions, then write the answers in full and complete sentences. The researcher explained to students that answering questions in this way gives them experience at responding to emails on the job. According to Guffey (2008):

Much business correspondence reacts or responds to previous messages. When responding to an email, memo, or other correspondence...analyze your purpose and audience, collect whatever information is necessary, and organize your thoughts....The opening should summarize the main information from your reply. The body provides additional information and details in a readable format. The closing provides a concluding remark, summary, or offer of further assistance. (pp. 187).

Students were asked to write answers using well developed paragraphs. Guffey (2008) indicated, “Well-constructed paragraphs discuss only one topic. They reveal the primary idea in a main sentence that usually, but not always, appears first” (p. 138).

Additionally, students are asked to incorporate in their answers strategies and tips learned from the textbook., techniques that would be helpful in other classes, as well as at work. For example, Guffey (2008) pointed out ways of writing for readability:

To help receivers anticipate and comprehend ideas quickly, a number of graphic highlighting techniques are helpful. You can use (a) parallelism, which involves balanced writing; (b) lists and bullets, which facilitate quick comprehension; (c) headings, which make important points more visible; and (d) other highlighting techniques to improve readability. (pp. 154-155)

During class, the researcher spent about 30 to 40 minutes reviewing the material in each chapter. Students worked on sentence and paragraph development exercises in small groups for 20 to 30 minutes, discussing and using various strategies and suggestions offered in the textbook. The researcher reviewed answers and fielded questions for 10 to 15 minutes.

In March 2010, the researcher changed the format of the sentence and paragraph development exercises, as a result of an interview conducted with Delta College's Associate Professor Beverly Westbrook (see Appendix D). At the end of each chapter were several writing improvement exercises that students were asked to complete at home. The first set of exercises incorporated poorly written documents. Students were asked to read the document, list its weaknesses, then revise the document using techniques learned in the chapter and the course to date and to draw from prior experience.

Students were also asked to complete three to ten additional writing improvement activities found at the end of each chapter. Each activity consisted of several exercises. To share the workload and provide a little variety, students were assigned to one of four teams: Team A, Team B, Team C, or Team D. The researcher attempted to include in each team at least one or

two students with strong writing skills and one or two whose skills needed improvement. Students in Team A were asked to complete all of the “A” exercises, Team B students completed “B” exercises, Team C students completed “C” exercises, and Team D students completed “D” exercises. All students were asked to bring their work to the next class.

In the following class session, the researcher reviewed the chapter material and discussed key elements. Then the poorly written document was reviewed and its weaknesses were discussed. Next students identified possible strategies for improving the document. Then students were asked to meet with their teams, share their revisions, collaborate, and come up with one best revision for the team. Each team was asked to write their best revision on the board. As a class, each team’s revision was critiqued for strengths and ways the writing could be improved. The same approach was followed for each of the writing improvement exercises.

Writing Assignments

At the start of the semester in January 2010, the first writing assignment was to get to know the students better. Students wrote one-page emails about their professional goals, one significant accomplishment, and expectations for the course. Students needed to incorporate proper email format, a descriptive subject line, an introductory paragraph with an appropriate opening, a body which consisted of three paragraphs (one per topic), and a conclusion with a call to action or summary. A grading rubric was provided so students would know how the writing assignments would be graded (see Appendix K). Students wrote a rough draft for homework and brought copies to class to share.

In class, the researcher reviewed the “read aloud” peer review approach (see Appendix D, Attachment D.4) with students so they would understand how to give and receive feedback about each other’s writing. The researcher role modeled the feedback process with a student. First, the

researcher acted as the “reader” and read the student “writer’s” email out loud, one sentence at a time. The writer listened, took notes, and asked clarifying questions. For example, the reader might have read an introduction that started with, “Hi, my name is John Smith. I am gonna talk to u about my carer goals, an acomplishment, and what I wanna get from this class.” The reader may have shared the following thoughts with the writer: “We know your name is John Smith because you are the author, the person who is sending the email, so you don’t have to say who you are. The words *gonna*, *u*, *carer*, *acomplishment*, and *wanna* are spelled incorrectly. You said you were going to ‘talk’ about your career goals, etc., but the email can’t ‘talk.’ You didn’t grab my attention. Maybe we could review frontloading openings on page 205 or gaining attention on page 239 in the textbook for ideas.”

In March 2010, the researcher incorporated in-class, one-page emails, memos, and letter writing assignments as a result of an interview conducted with Delta College’s Associate Professor Beverly Westbrook (see Appendix D). Students were asked to review a poorly written document at the end of the chapter and list its weaknesses. Then they were asked to jot down notes about how they would improve the poorly written document. In the next class, students shared the weaknesses and discussed their ideas for improving the document. The first time this exercise was conducted, students worked in teams in the computer lab to revise the document, which was submitted for a grade. The second time, students worked individually revise the document. Students had about one hour to complete the assignment, and they were required to complete the assignment and turn it in for a grade before the end of class.

Data Collection

The researcher gathered data from seven sources, which included the following: an observational journal; interview with an associate professor; interviews with students;

photographs; student writing attitude survey; pre- and post-grammar skills diagnostic assessments; and pre- and post-grammar, confusing words, and spelling words quizzes. These sources were used by the researcher as instruments for triangulation. Triangulation helps to ensure the validity, credibility, dependability, and reliability.

Observational Journal

The researcher recorded frequent observations of students in an observational journal (see Appendix C). Recording observations provided the researcher with opportunities to examine levels of student engagement and participation in structured homework exercises, in-class small group work, and peer reviews of writing assignments. Through observation, the researcher was able to receive both verbal and nonverbal feedback from students concerning the action research project and obstacles some students needed help with to overcome.

Documented observations helped the researcher more clearly see obstacles some students faced. This information was later used to analyze students' participation, attitudes, and performance during writing instruction. Observations were collected by watching, listening, reading, and assessing students through their actions and words.

Interview with Associate Professor

The researcher interviewed Associate Professor Beverly Westbrook at Delta College on February 8, 2010 (see Appendix D). Professor Westbrook has worked for the college for 35 years. She taught courses, and continues to do so, in the Office Administration & Technology (OAT) Discipline, which is one of several disciplines in the Business & Information Technology Division at the college. The researcher asked seven open-end questions, and the professor provided the researcher with direct feedback concerning teaching philosophy, instructional methods, and the volume of course material related to the business writing course involved in the

research action project. The interview was conducted in approximately one hour. Following the interview, the professor and the researcher shared materials discussed during the interview (see Appendix D, Attachments D.1 through D.5).

Interviews with Students

On March 31, 2010, the last day of the action research project, the researcher conducted one-on-one interviews with five students (see Appendix E). The researcher sought to interview 33.3% of the students in the class. Selection was randomized: every third student listed on the class roster was selected to participate in the interview. One student dropped the class between February 17 and 24, 2010, (see Appendix C) and was omitted. One student was absent, and the count was continued with the next student on the roster. At the end of the roster, one more student was needed to achieve 33.3%, so the count was continued by starting again at the top of the roster.

Photographs

Throughout the semester, when students worked on various guided writing activities in the classroom or the computer lab, the researcher took photographs of the students at work. The purpose of the photographs was to show interaction of students working in teams, collaboration among students working on writing assignments and exercises, and students working individually when completing assignments or taking quizzes.

Student Writing Attitude Survey – Pre and Post

The student writing attitude survey (see Appendix F) allowed the researcher to determine students' attitudes and motivation toward writing in general and toward business writing. The survey was developed and completed online using SurveyMonkey, a web-based survey tool.

The quantitative survey consisted of seven closed-end questions. Students were asked to respond to questions about their attitudes and motivation toward writing. The pre-survey was completed in January; the post-survey was completed in March. Data collected by the online survey tool was available immediately upon collection.

Grammar Skills Diagnostic Assessment – Pre and Post

Students completed an online grammar skills diagnostic assessment (see Appendix G) at the beginning and the end of the research project. The assessment tool used was Maimon's (2007) online diagnostic test 1 as found in "The Writer's Resource" through McGraw-Hill's Higher Education Catalyst 2.0, a Web-based, collaborative writing environment that helps students improve their skills in writing and research. The 50-question diagnostic test 1 assessed students skills in the following 14 areas of grammar: apostrophes, commas, dashes, mixed sentences, modifiers, parallelism, parentheses, pronouns, quotation marks, run-on and comma splice sentences, sentence fragments, subject/verb agreement, shifts, and verbs. Upon completion of the assessment, students were provided with immediate feedback about their overall score in each of the 14 grammar categories, as well as an assessment of weaknesses and areas for improvement. The assessment provided the option of sending the results to the instructor, which the researcher instructed the students to do.

Grammar, Confusing Words, and Spelling Words Quizzes – Pre and Post

Of the nine sections studied for grammar, confusing words, and spelling words, the researcher administered a pre- and post-quiz for two. The first pre- and post-quiz covered sentence structure, confusing words *accede* to *effect*, and spelling words *absence* to *catalog*.

The second pre- and post-quiz covered apostrophes and other punctuation, confusing words *imply* to *minor*, and spelling words *noticeable* to *profited*.

The pre-quizzes were administered before review of the unit took place, and they took about 20 minutes to administer. The post-quizzes were administered after completion of homework assignments, review of material and exercises completed in class, students' studying for the quizzes, and a final review in class before the quiz. The post-quiz took about 20 minutes to administer.

IV. RESULTS AND REFLECTIONS

Introduction

The purpose of this study is to determine the effects of guided writing activities on student achievement and motivation of first-year college business writing students. The results and reflections section contains data and information collected from instruments used and administered throughout the action research project. Observations were made, and the researcher discusses several key themes that appeared throughout the study. Data was analyzed, and graphs and photographs were used to support the findings of the study. The instruments in the study were used to better understand and make connections between guided writing activities and student achievement and motivation in the first-year college business writing class.

Observations

During the study, the researcher used four different means of observation during or concerning students' writing activities: observational journal, interview of an associate professor, interviews with five students, and photographs.

Observational Journal

The researcher's journal entries (see Appendix C) revealed several trends: technology, "read aloud" peer review, cultivating the "you" view, conducting research using library databases, and following directions.

Technology

The first trend the researcher observed during the study was a positive increase in student use and activity toward technology. At the beginning of the study, many of the students had little to no experience with word processing software, such as Microsoft Word, and most students had no prior experience with Educator, the college's learning management system. The researcher

shared with students that most businesses use email, word processing software, and file share. In addition, students with poor typing skills were directed to at least one web site that would help them increase typing speed and accuracy. The researcher suggested that as business students, knowing how to use technology effectively and efficiently was important to students' success in business. Therefore, the researcher set the expectation that students needed to learn to use these tools during the semester.

At first, some students were having difficulties downloading materials, printing handouts, and uploading completed homework assignments. On the first night of class, the researcher showed the students how to access Educator, how to navigate the site, where to find materials, how to download presentations and handouts, tips for printing handouts from Power Point presentations, how to upload homework, where to post homework and other assignments, how to send emails from the learning management system, and how to properly log out. In subsequent weeks, the researcher reviewed any aspects of Educator that students were having problems with. After about four weeks, most students understood how to retrieve and load documents successfully on Educator. After about six weeks, the researcher noticed that students no longer had questions about Educator, and students' assignments were posted in the correct folders every time.

When the semester started, some students had problems using Microsoft Word. The researcher shared tips for using Word, and fielded questions students had about the software.

Some students did not have Word or any other type of word processing software on their home computer, and they felt frustrated that they could not complete the assignments electronically. These students and the researcher discussed options for completing homework: complete the assignments in the college's computer lab and post the work; complete parts of the

assignments in the computer and post the partial work, then complete the rest of the assignment on paper and turn it in at the start of the next class; complete the entire assignment on paper, but only as a last resort, and turn it in during the next class. Students were also encouraged to find, purchase, or borrow Microsoft Word during the semester. One student discovered she had Word on her computer, installed it, and used the software. Another student found a free trial of Word on the Internet, installed the trial version, and used it for her assignments. She discovered the trial version did not have the same functionality as a purchased copy. For example, the student could not copy and paste the online exercises results into the trial version of Word, nor could she underline, highlight, or italicize. She and the researcher discussed options and decided the student could use *ALL CAPITAL LETTERS* or ****asterisks**** around words instead. By the middle of the semester, the researcher observed that students' assignments indicated proper use of Word, and students' questions and frustrations ceased.

“Read Aloud” Peer Review

The second trend involved active participation by students in a “read aloud” peer review approach for writing assignments. With practice and follow-up instruction by the researcher, students grew more comfortable providing feedback to their peers and learned from the experience.

For writing assignments, students wrote first drafts as homework. They were asked to bring several copies to class the following week to share with peers who would review their drafts. The researcher divided the class into small groups. The first student, called the “writer,” shared copies with the other students, the “readers.” The writer took notes while the readers read the letter and provided verbal feedback one sentence at a time. Readers were encouraged to comment on anything that came to mind, such as tone, style, the “you” view, grammar,

punctuation, sentence length, word choice, comprehension, clarity, brevity, conciseness, and more. Each student in the group took turns being the writer and the reader.

One student said about the exercise, “When I heard someone read my writing out loud and comment on it, I realized how my message was unclear. My sentences were too long, and I used a lot of extra words I didn’t need.”

Another student shared the following feedback when she posted her final writing assignment. “I used some of my peers’ suggestions. I changed my heading because of the layout on page 207 [in the textbook]. Another suggestion was giving more detail on clinical. I bulleted the different paragraphs so they would stand out. I deleted several sentences I felt made the reading long.”

A third student had this to say about the “read aloud” peer review exercise. “The peer editing feedback I received was somewhat helpful. There were a couple of minor editing suggestions which I appreciated, but for the most part I did not receive many comments. The most helpful part was the information you [the instructor] went over on the board. This information was prompted from the peer editing, so overall the peer editing activity was a success in my opinion.”

Cultivating the “You” View

The third trend involved incorporating more and more the “you” view by students in their emails, memos, and letters. In business writing, skilled communicators concentrate on developing reader benefits by developing the “you” view. *You* and *your* (second-person pronouns) are emphasized instead of *I*, *we*, *us* or *our* (first-person pronouns). The goal of the business writer is to focus on the reader. In the first several writing assignments, students had a hard time focusing on “you” instead of “I.” Students’ initial writing assignments included

numerous sentences beginning with the word “I.” After revising one of the first writing assignments in the class, one student commented, “I took out 13 of 14 “I’s” at the start of sentences. Writing assignments by about week 11 of 15 weeks of the semester had considerably fewer sentences beginning with the word “I.”

Conducting Research Using Library Databases

The fourth trend concerned learning research skills using library databases. Students grew more comfortable with the process through repetition and overcoming an unforeseen obstacle. Students completed two library projects. The purpose of the assignment is to introduce students to conducting research through access to electronic collections of bibliographic, abstract, and full-text information from books, magazines, journals, newspapers, and the World Wide Web. For both projects, students used computers in a computer lab classroom, and the library portion of the assignment was led by one of the college’s librarians.

For the first assignment, some students had difficulties understanding how to access and search the databases, even after instruction and assistance during class. Students who finished the project at home had difficulties completing the assignment at all, on time, or correctly. Many complained they could not access the library’s databases from home. The students and the researcher later learned that off-campus access was a common problem that could be resolved by obtaining from the library special user names and passwords.

For the second assignment, during instruction, students asked many more questions of the librarian than for the first library project. The examples the librarian used to teach students how to conduct advanced searches were directly relevant to the assignment. Students seemed to understand the assignment and felt much more at ease with the research portion.

Interview Questions and Answers – Associate Professor

A couple of weeks after the start of the semester, an associate professor was interviewed. She was asked questions about her background, philosophy and approach to teaching, how she teaches all of the material outlined in the textbook and course objectives, the types of writing assignments she has the students complete, peer review used in the classroom, how she addresses sentence length variety, and how she handles multiple skill levels in grammar.

A veteran teacher of 35 years at Delta College, the associate professor indicated that the business communications writing course “is a course that is designed to have students apply writing skills in a business context.” She felt the vocabulary in the course is business-appropriate. Writing, grammar, and mechanics were addressed in a more specific way than the average English course. The approach to writing for the business audience was identified as taking the “you” view approach.

With spelling words, students worked on words they had the most problems with. She offered students ways of helping them remember how to spell words correctly. The professor stated, “For example, for the word *principal*, I suggest they remember the end of the word *pal* and think in their minds that the *principal* of the school is my *pal*.”

The professor shared an approach she takes for work on and reinforcement of writing concepts. She assigned students to one of four teams. Each team completed as homework the following: reviewed a poorly written document, listed its weaknesses, and rewrote the document; completed one of four problems for up to five or six different writing improvement exercises. Students brought their work to class the following week.

As a class, the professor led discussion concerning the weaknesses of the poorly written document and ways of rewriting it. Then students met in their teams. They shared their revisions,

discussed the responses, and collaborated as a team to come up with the best team revision. Then each team wrote their best revision on the board. Each team read their work aloud, and the other teams identified strengths and areas for improvement. Though the teams' final revisions may not have been perfect, "it's okay to see some examples that may need some work," shared the professor. Situations like this often resulted in good learning opportunities. She indicated writing responses on the board gave students a way to see examples of most to all principles in the learning unit while dividing the workload. Last, she shared the solution offered by the textbook. She summed up the exercise by stating, "The objective is for students to practice, practice, practice."

Interviews Questions and Answers – Students

Interviews were conducted with five students at the end of the action research project. Students were asked questions about how they felt about their writing skills, how they saw themselves as business writers, their goals for the course, the activities that helped them achieve their goals the most, other activities and strategies they found helpful, what they would have done differently if they had been teaching the class, and any additional comments they wanted to share.

To the first question about how they felt about their writing skills, three felt pretty confident about their skills and two felt their skills were fair and that they were improving. One student indicated, "Sometimes I am at a loss for words."

To the second question about how students saw themselves as a business writer, four students indicated they don't have opportunities to write much at work. One student indicated she uses the skills learned in the course for other class, and she indicated, "I see myself as being very prepared for writing in business. I used to be a little wordy, explain everything in great

detail, and had no idea of what the audience needed. I am more prepared now.” A second student indicated similar responses. She stated, “I learned a lot. I will take the knowledge I’ve learned and apply it to my business writing in the future... now I know the procedures. I feel like I will be more confident when I start writing in business.”

To the third question about goals for the course, the primary goals identified were reviewing grammar, writing in a more direct and concise style, reviewing confusing words, improving one’s spelling, and learning the proper format. One student indicated she used to be good at spelling, “but not so much any more with the Internet and writing using abbreviations.”

To the fourth question about activities students found the most helpful, the most common responses included homework, peer review, team writing, sentence length variety, proper format, and grammar review. Students seemed to get a lot out of team writing. One student felt team writing gave her “new perspectives from different points of view.” Another student state, “I can see how others in my group think and know I’m not the only one thinking like that. I like the teamwork. I also like the diversity.” A third student commented how she liked doing the writing assignments in groups. She shared “it was easier to volunteer in class too knowing you have the support of your group.”

For the remaining three questions, three students commented on the homework. At the beginning of the course, they felt like there was an overwhelming amount of homework. But as they got used to the work and realized how much they were learning, then they said it wasn’t so bad. One student indicated, “all that homework really helped me understand.”

Photographs

During writing activities, digital photographs were taken of the students when they were involved in grammar review in small groups, grammar quiz, “read aloud” peer review, and

writing assignment review in teams. The photographs show students' interaction among peers in class, as well as working independently.



Figure 1: Grammar Review in Small Groups

Figure 1 shows students correcting a sentence requiring an apostrophe. First, students had to determine if a possessive word existed in the sentence. If so, they determined which word was possessive and if the word was singular or plural. Then they needed to figure out where to place the apostrophe. Students in the group needed to collaborate and agree on their final answer. Then they presented their findings and explained their answers to the rest of the class. If the other groups agreed, the next group repeated the process. If the other groups disagreed, the students discussed their objections, corrections, and reasons for their answers until all groups and the researcher agreed.



Figure 2: Grammar Quiz

Figure 2 shows a student independently completing a grammar quiz at the end of a grammar unit. Students were seated in chairs that had writing surfaces attached. All materials, except the quiz and writing instruments, were put away. The researcher tested the students on spelling words first by reading each word aloud one at a time, using each word in a sentence, repeating the word again, and making sure all students finished writing the word before continuing to the next one. Students were asked to spell the words clearly and legibly. When the spelling words section was complete, students finished the grammar and confusing words portions of the quiz on their own. Students remained in their seats and sat quietly until all students completed the quiz and the researcher collected them.



Figure 3: “Read Aloud” Peer Review

Figure 3 shows students working in teams to read aloud each other’s writing assignments one sentence at a time and provide feedback. In this photograph, the student to the right was the writer. She was taking notes on a copy of her writing assignment, a memo. The other two students were taking turns reading the memo out loud to the writer and offering suggestions, thoughts, and feedback about what they read. The readers were encouraged to comment on anything that came to mind, such as tone, style, the “you” view, grammar, punctuation, gender, sentence length, word choice, comprehension, clarity, brevity, conciseness, and more. When students finished providing the writer feedback about her memo, the students chose the next writer and repeated the “read aloud” peer review process.



Figure 4: Team Collaboration for a Writing Assignment

Figure 4 shows the results of a writing assignment ending in team collaboration. Students were asked to read a poorly written document, list its weaknesses, and revise it as a homework assignment. Students brought copies of the assignment to the next class. The researcher reviewed the poorly written document. Students talked about weaknesses they found. Then the class discussed ways of improving the document. The researcher divided the students into 3- and 4-person teams. The students in each team shared their revisions, collaborated on the best approaches, “cut and pasted” a new revision created by the team, and wrote the team’s results on the board. Each team read their results to the rest of the class. The researcher asked students to identify the strengths for each team’s revisions and suggestions for improvement. Upon completion of the exercise, the researcher and students summarized key points discussed.

Analysis of Data

The researcher used a Student Writing Attitude Survey (see Appendix F), the Grammar Skills Diagnostic Assessment (see Appendix G), and Grammar, Confusing Words, and Spelling Words Quizzes (see Appendix H) to collect data. The analysis of data section contains a number of graphs which show student responses for pre-and post surveys, assessments, and quizzes. Mean and standard deviations are presented at the end of the Grammar Skills Diagnostic Assessment and the Grammar, Confusing Words, and Spelling Words Quizzes sections.

Student Writing Attitude Survey

Students were given a seven-question pre- and post-survey concerning writing attitudes. Students were asked questions related to their writing attitudes in an academic setting, as well as in a personal setting.

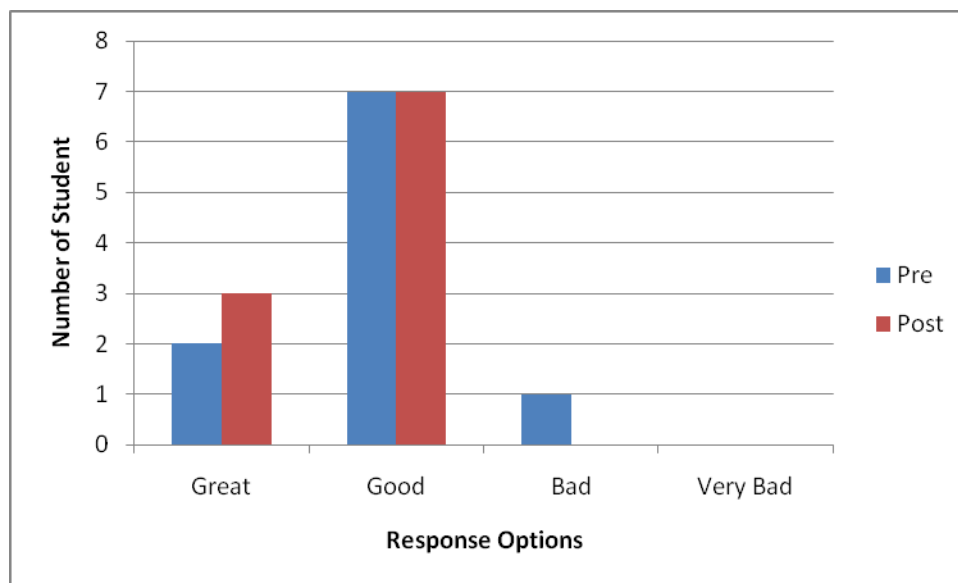


Figure 5: Question 1

Figure 5 shows students' responses to question 1 of the student survey, "How do you feel when you have something you want to write about?" Students selected from one of four response options: great, good, bad, or very bad.

In the pretest, two out of ten students or 20% felt great, seven out of ten students or 70% felt good, one out of ten or 10% felt bad, and none out of ten or 0% felt very bad.

In the posttest, three out of ten students or 30% felt great, seven out of ten students or 70% felt good, none out of ten or 0% felt bad, and none out of ten or 0% very bad.

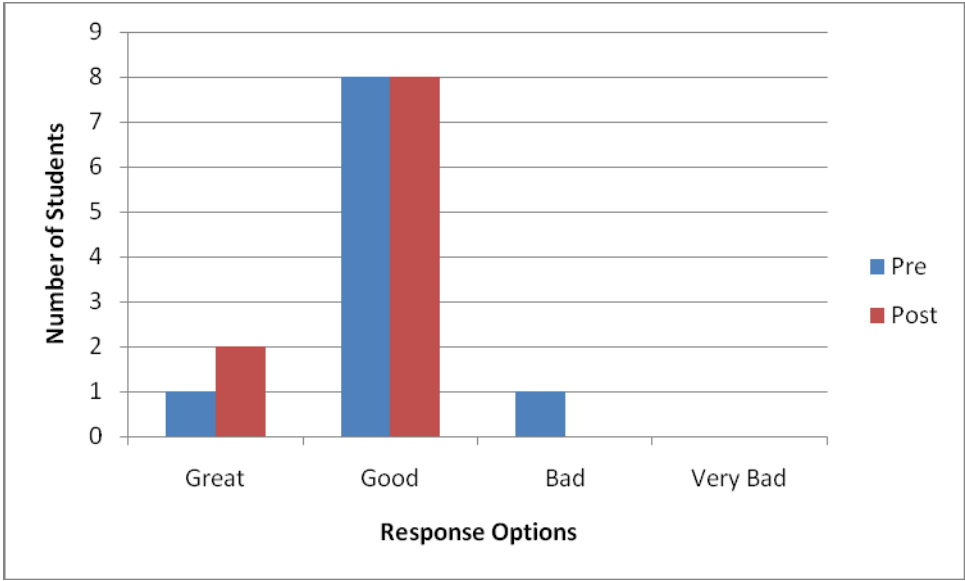


Figure 6: Question 2

Figure 6 shows students’ responses to question 2 of the student survey, “How do you feel when you have free time to write?” Students selected from one of four response options: great, good, bad, or very bad.

In the pretest, one out of ten students or 10% felt great, eight out of ten students or 80% felt good, one out of ten or 10% felt bad, and none out of ten or 0% felt very bad.

In the posttest, two out of ten students or 20% felt great, eight out of ten students or 80% felt good, none out of ten or 0% felt bad, and none out of ten or 0% very bad.

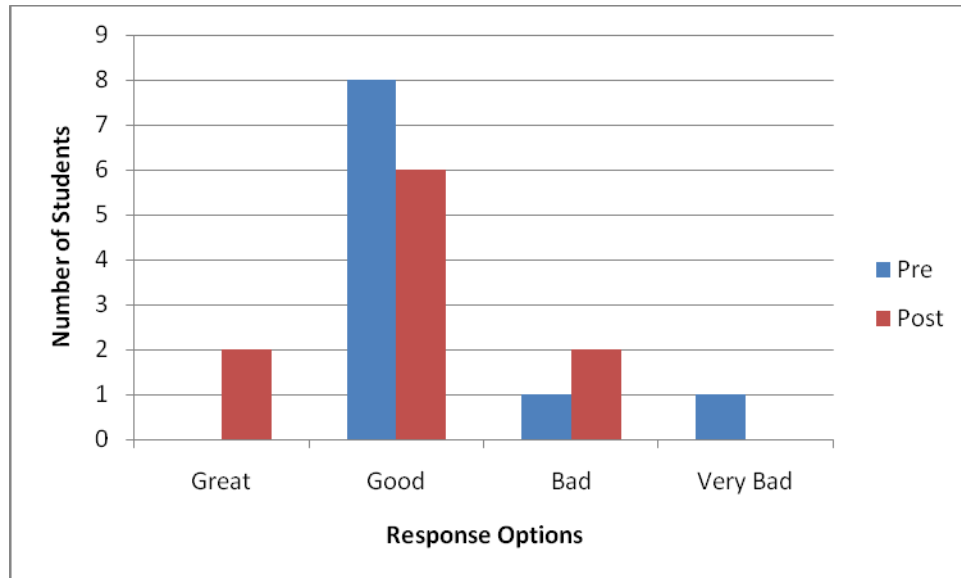


Figure 7: Question 3

Figure 7 shows students' responses to question 3 of the student survey, "How do you feel when you receive writing supplies for a gift?" Students selected from one of four response options: great, good, bad, or very bad.

In the pretest, none out of ten students or 0% felt great, eight out of ten students or 80% felt good, one out of ten or 10% felt bad, and one out of ten or 10% felt very bad.

In the posttest, two out of ten students or 20% felt great, six out of ten students or 60% felt good, two out of ten or 20% felt bad, and none out of ten or 0% very bad.

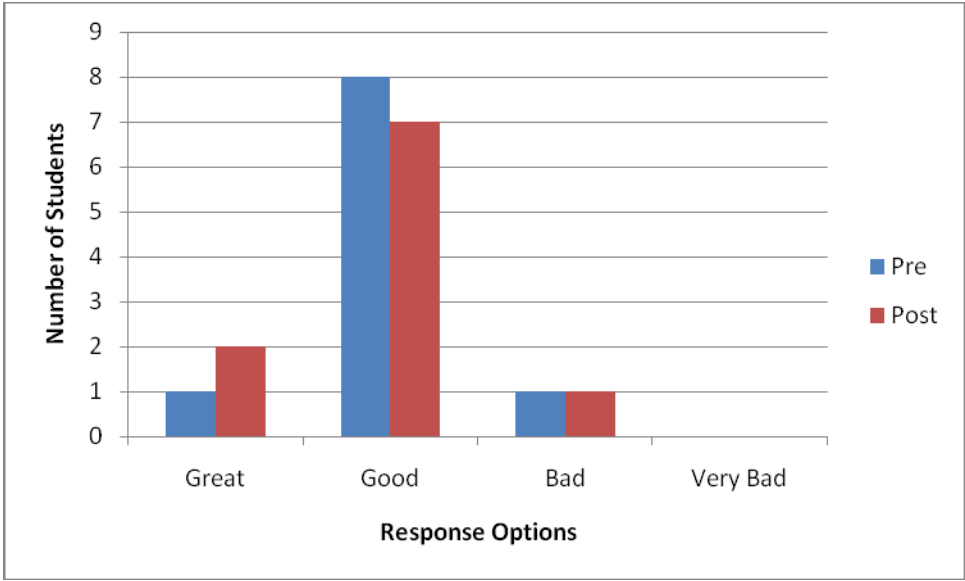


Figure 8: Question 4

Figure 8 shows students’ responses to question 4 of the student survey, “How do you feel when you start writing something new?” Students selected from one of four response options: great, good, bad, or very bad.

In the pretest, one out of ten students or 10% felt great, eight out of ten students or 80% felt good, one out of ten or 10% felt bad, and none out of ten or 0% felt very bad.

In the posttest, two out of ten students or 20% felt great, seven out of ten students or 70% felt good, one out of ten or 10% felt bad, and none out of ten or 0% very bad.

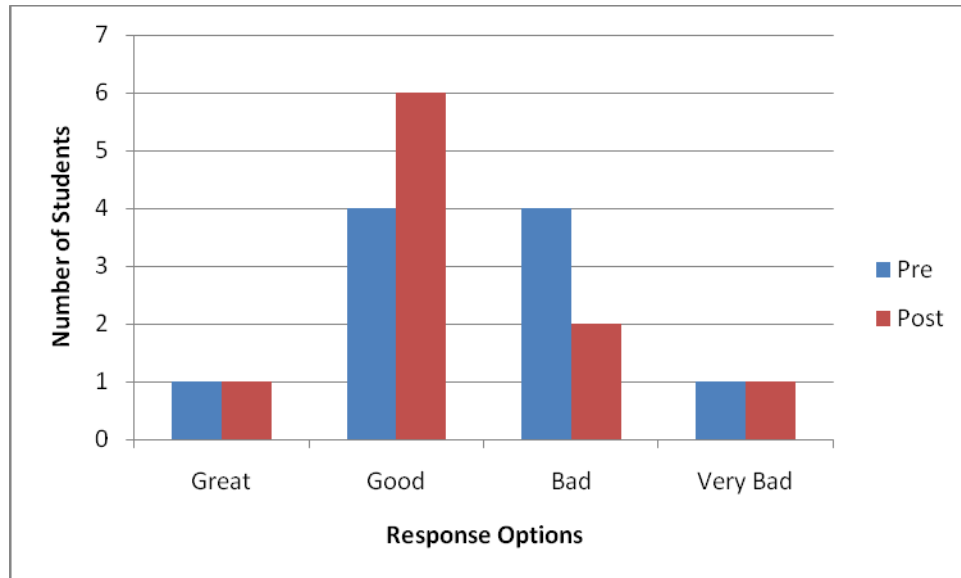


Figure 9: Question 5

Figure 9 shows students' responses to question 5 of the student survey, "How do you feel about writing assignments in school?" Students selected from one of four response options: great, good, bad, or very bad.

In the pretest, one out of ten students or 10% felt great, four out of ten students or 40% felt good, four out of ten or 40% felt bad, and one out of ten or 10% felt very bad.

In the posttest, one out of ten students or 10% felt great, six out of ten students or 60% felt good, two out of ten or 20% felt bad, and one out of ten or 10% very bad.

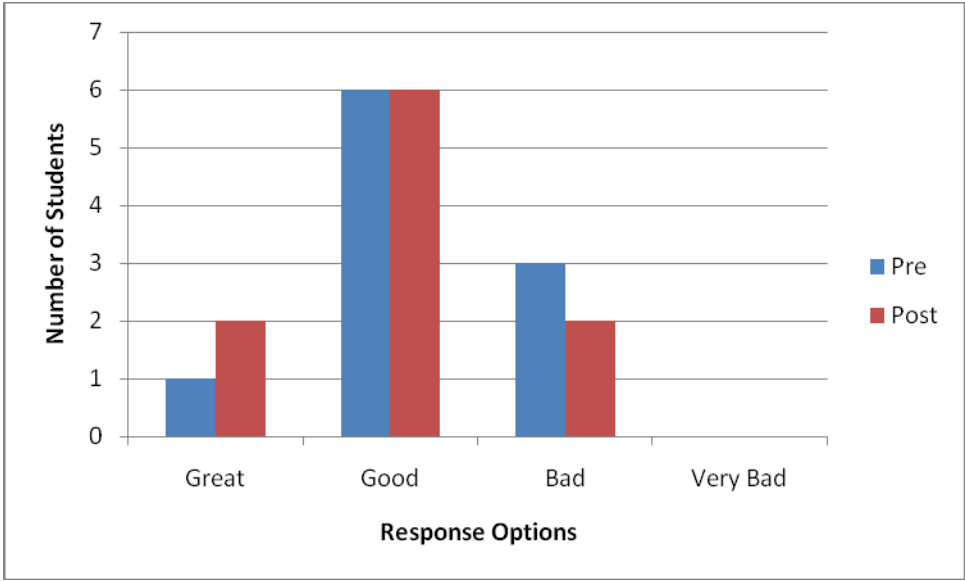


Figure 10: Question 6

Figure 10 shows students’ responses to question 6 of the student survey, “How do you feel when the instructor asks you questions about what you write?” Students selected from one of four response options: great, good, bad, or very bad.

In the pretest, one out of ten students or 10% felt great, six out of ten students or 60% felt good, three out of ten or 30% felt bad, and none out of ten or 0% felt very bad.

In the posttest, two out of ten students or 20% felt great, six out of ten students or 60% felt good, two out of ten or 20% felt bad, and none out of ten or 0% very bad.

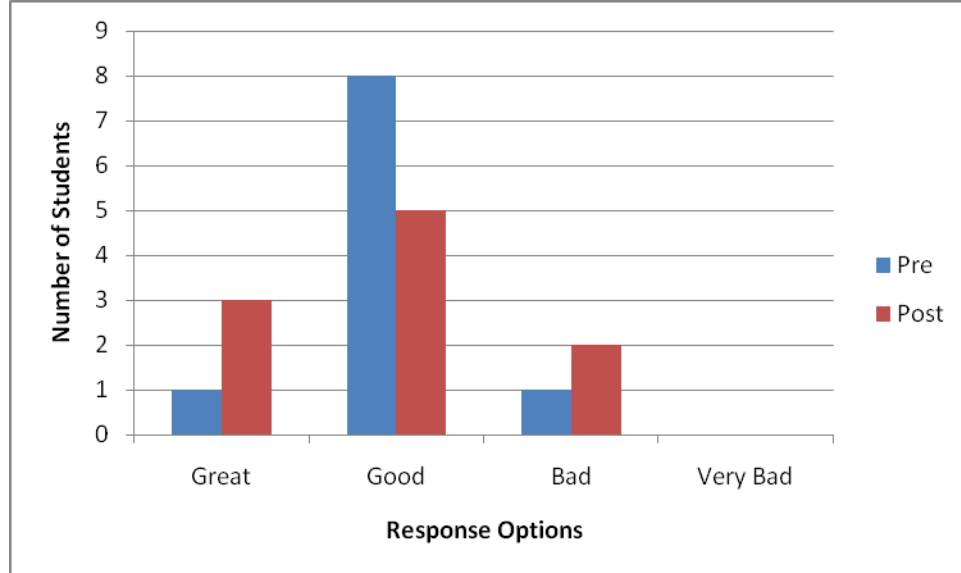


Figure 11: Question 7

Figure 11 shows students' responses to question 7 of the student survey, "How do you feel when you go to a place where you can buy writing supplies?" Students selected from one of four response options: great, good, bad, or very bad.

In the pretest, one out of ten students or 10% felt great, eight out of ten students or 80% felt good, one out of ten or 10% felt bad, and none out of ten or 0% felt very bad.

In the posttest, three out of ten students or 30% felt great, five out of ten students or 50% felt good, two out of ten or 20% felt bad, and none out of ten or 0% very bad.

Grammar Skills Diagnostic Assessment

The Grammar Skills Diagnostic Assessment was administered as an online assessment. The purpose of the assessment was to determine students' grammar skills achievement in the following nine areas: commas, modifiers, parallelism, parentheses, quotation marks, run-on sentences and comma splices, sentence fragments, subject/verb agreement, and verbs. Scores were determined based on correct responses. Scores were presented as percent correct in each of the nine areas.

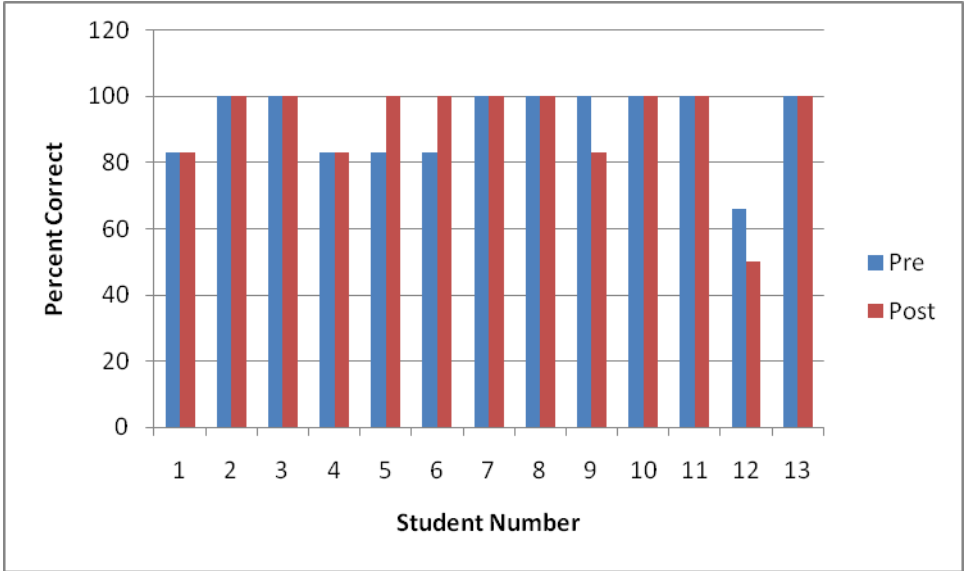


Figure 12: Commas

Figure 12 shows the percent correct that students achieved on commas. Eleven out of 13 students or 85% did not increase their skill of identifying correct uses of commas from January to March. Two out of 13 students or 15% increased their skill of identifying correct uses of commas by 17%.

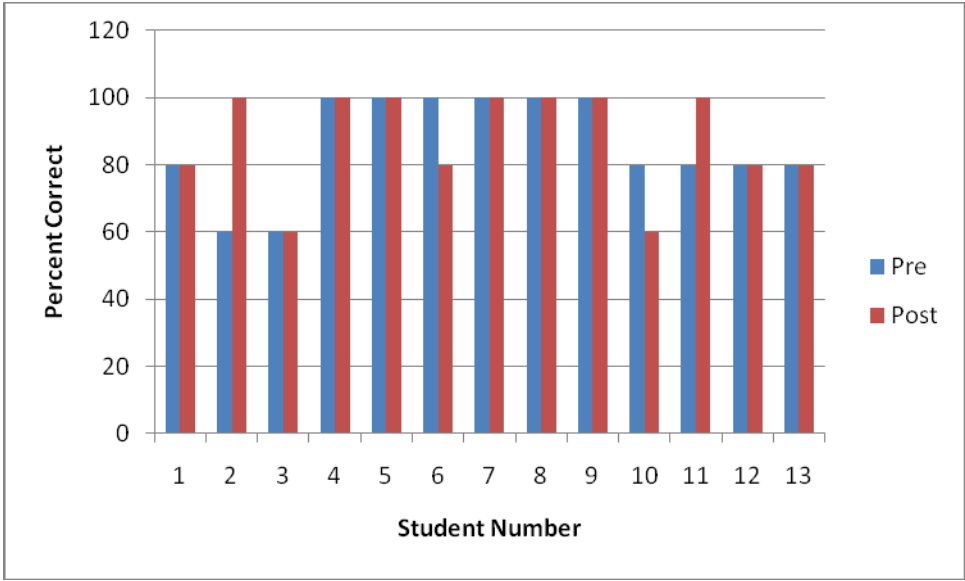


Figure 13: Modifiers

Figure 13 shows the percent correct that students achieved on modifiers. Eleven out of 13 students or 85% did not increase their skill of identifying correct uses of modifiers from January to March. One out of 13 students or 8% increased their skill of identifying correct uses of modifiers by 40%. One out of 13 students or 8% increased their skill of identifying correct uses of modifiers by 20%.

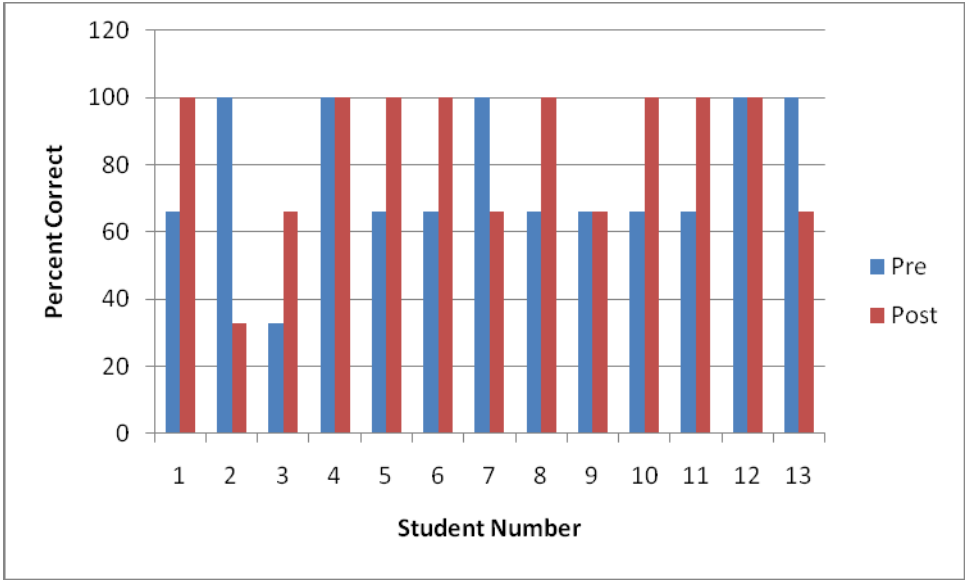


Figure 14: Parallelism

Figure 14 shows the percent correct that students achieved on parallelism. Six out of 13 students or 46% did not increase their skill of identifying correct uses of parallelism from January to March. Seven out of 13 students or 54% increased their skill of identifying correct uses of parallelism by 34%.

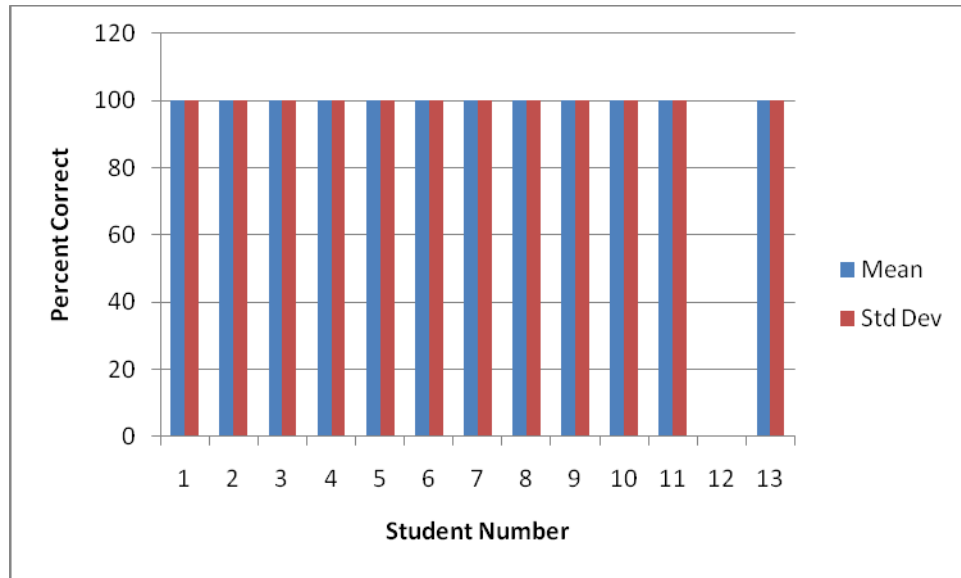


Figure 15: Parentheses

Figure 15 shows the percent correct that students achieved on parentheses. One out of 13 students or 8% remained at 0% achievement in their skill of identifying correct uses of parentheses from January to March. Twelve out of 13 students or 92% remained at 100% achievement in their skill of identifying correct uses of parentheses.

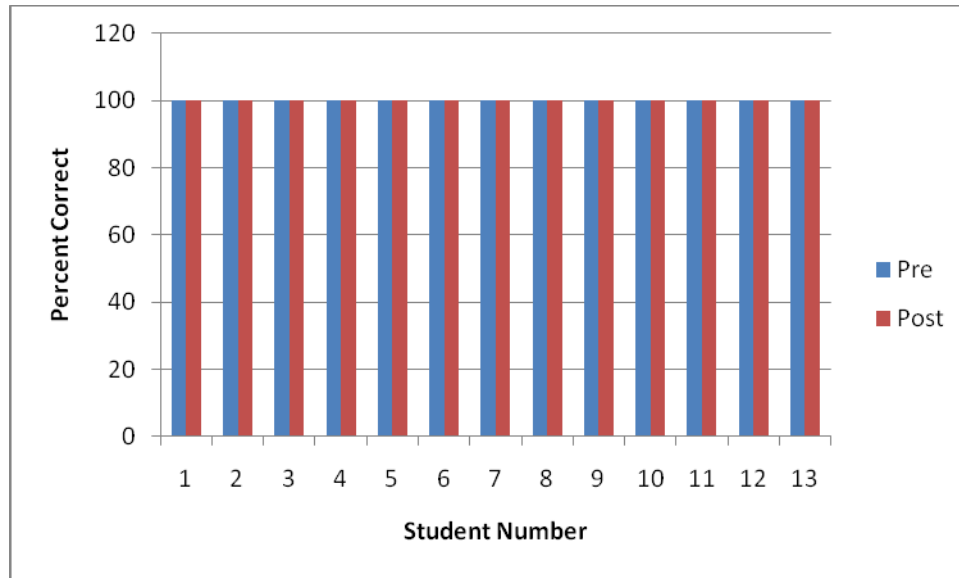


Figure 16: Quotation Marks

Figure 16 shows the percent correct that students achieved on quotation marks. Thirteen out of 13 students or 100% remained at 100% achievement in their skill of identifying correct uses of quotation marks from January to March.

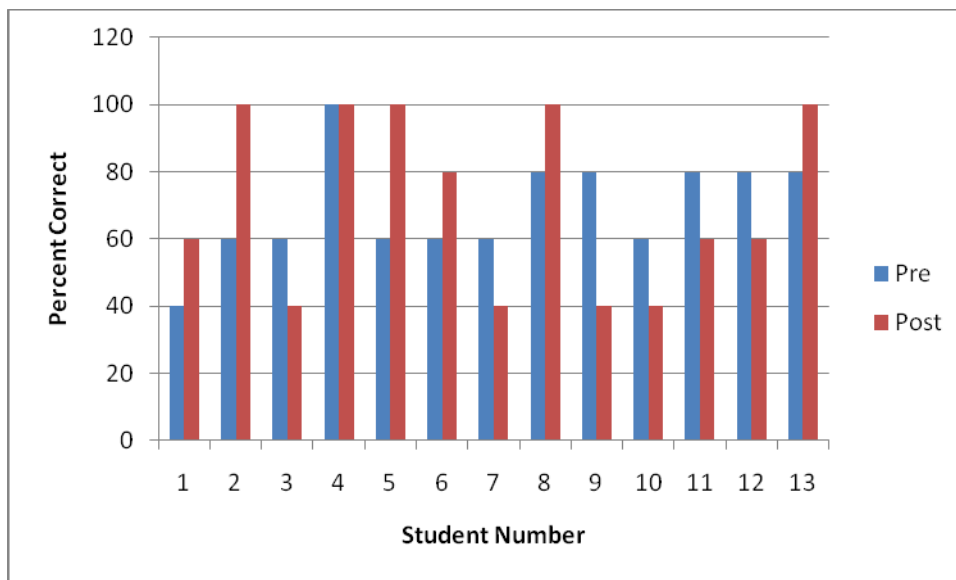


Figure 17: Run-On Sentences and Comma Splices

Figure 17 shows the percent correct that students achieved when identifying sentences containing run-ons and comma splices. Seven out of 13 students or 54% did not increase their skill of identifying sentences containing run-ons and comma splices from January to March. Two out of 13 students or 15% increased their skill of identifying sentences containing run-ons and comma splices by 40%. Four out of 13 students or 31% increased their skill of identifying sentences containing run-ons and comma splices by 20%.

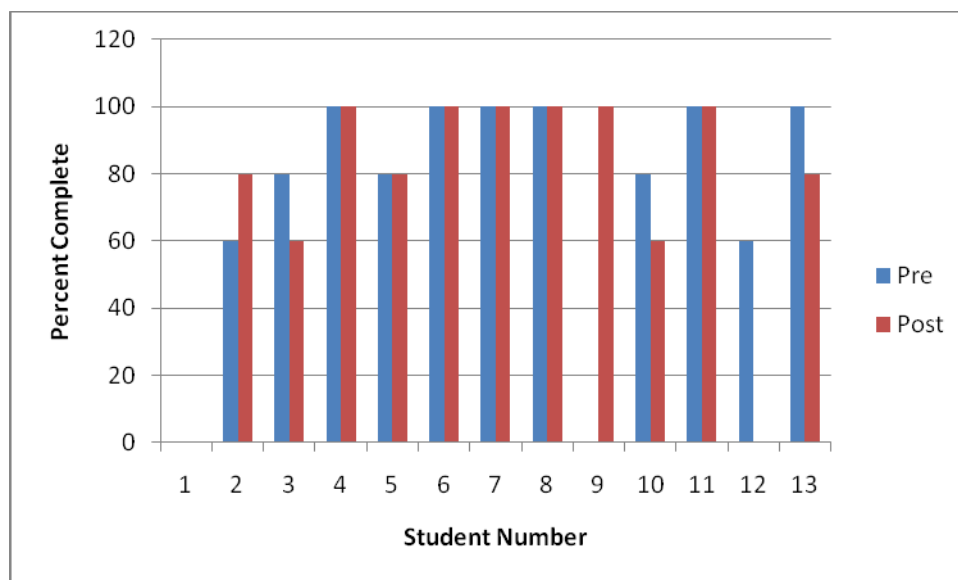


Figure 18: Sentence Fragments

Figure 18 shows the percent correct that students achieved when identifying sentence fragments. Eleven out of 13 students or 85% did not increase their skill of identifying sentence fragments from January to March. One out of 13 students or 8% increased their skill of identifying sentence fragments by 100%. One out of 13 students or 8% increased their skill of identifying sentence fragments by 20%.

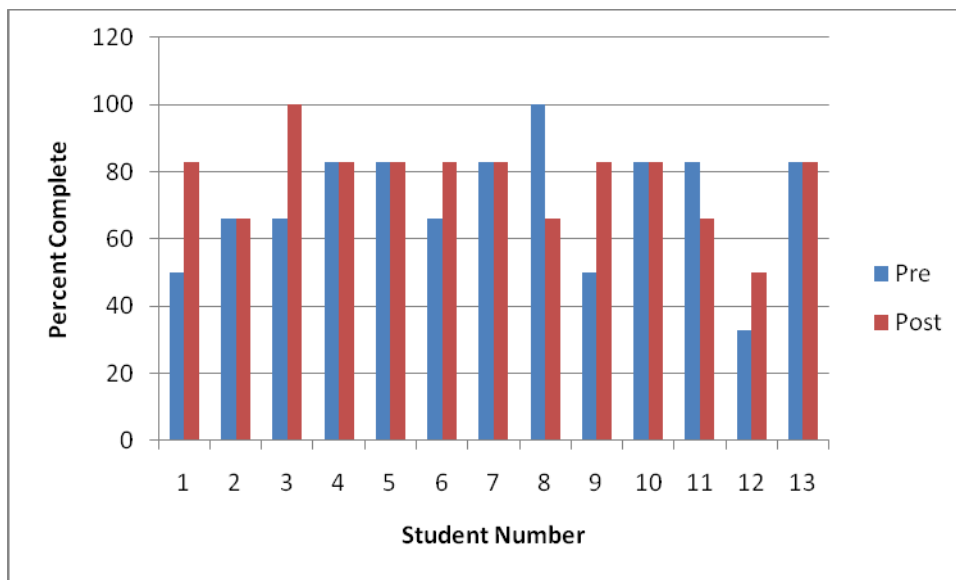


Figure 19: Subject/Verb Agreement

Figure 19 shows the percent correct that students achieved on subject/verb agreement. Eight out of 13 students or 62% did not increase their skill of identifying correct subject/verb agreement from January to March. Three out of 13 students or 23% increased their skill of identifying correct subject/verb agreement by 34%. Two out of 13 students or 15% increased their skill of identifying correct subject/verb agreement by 17%.

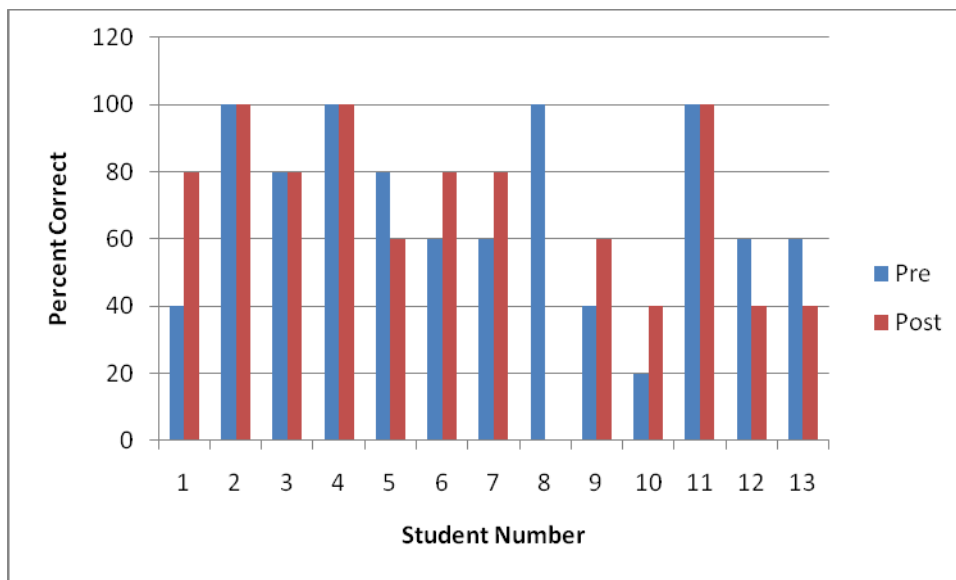


Figure 20: Verbs

Figure 20 shows the percent correct that students achieved when identifying the correct verb form. Eight out of 13 students or 62% did not increase their skill of identifying correct verb forms from January to March. One out of 13 students or 8% increased their skill of identifying correct verb forms by 40%. Four out of 13 students or 31% increased their skill of identifying correct verb forms by 20%.

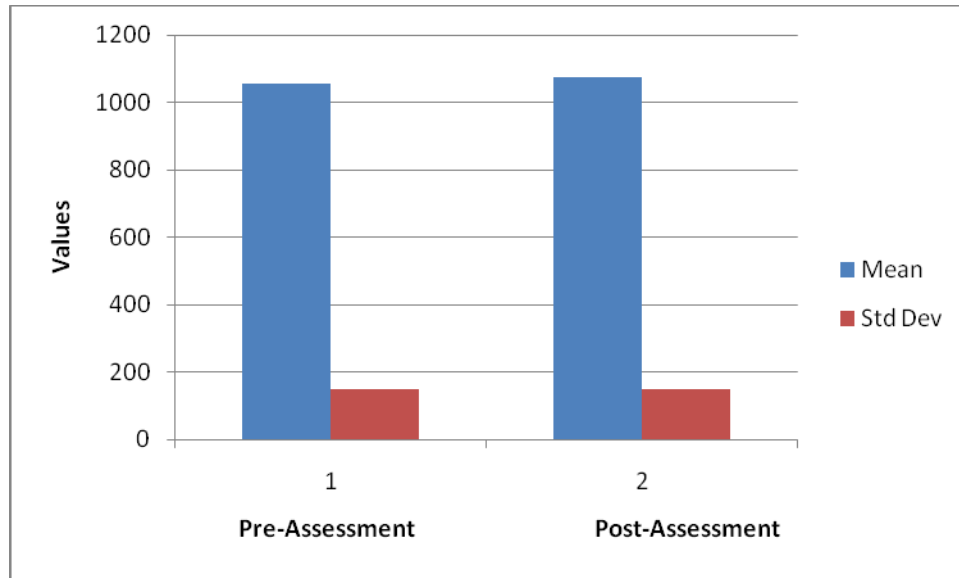


Figure 21: Grammar Assessment Overall – Mean and Standard Deviation

Figure 21 shows the grammar assessment overall mean and standard deviation for January and March. The mean for January was 1,055.8 and the standard deviation was 150.9. The mean for March was 1,076.4 and the standard deviation was 147.4. From January to March, the mean increased by 20.6 and the standard deviation decreased by 3.5.

Grammar, Confusing Word, and Spelling Words Quizzes

The Grammar, Confusing Words, and Spelling Words Quizzes were administered at the end of each unit. Scores were determined based on correct responses.

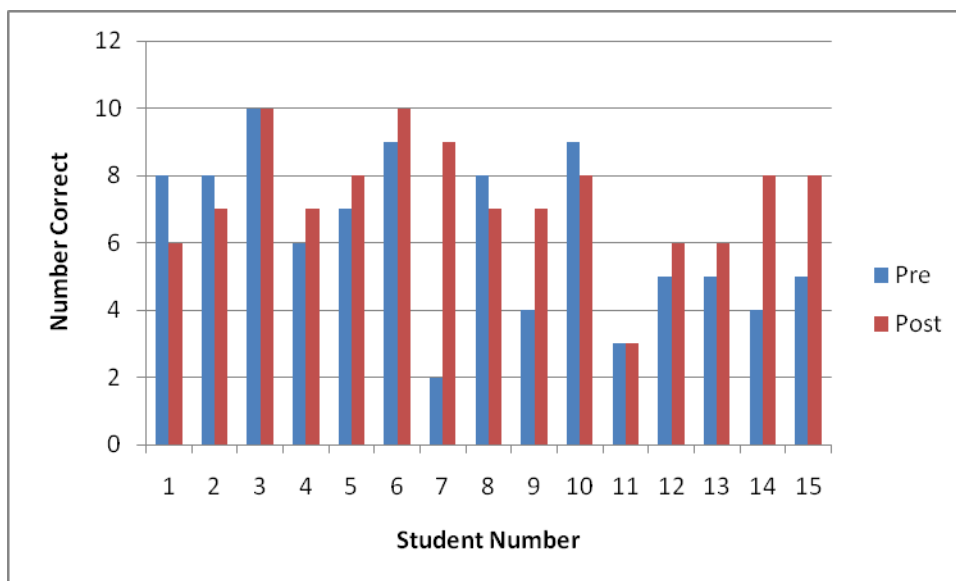


Figure 22: Unit 1 Sentence Structure

Figure 22 shows the number correct that students achieved when correcting sentences. Six out of 15 students or 40% did not increase their skill of correcting sentences from January to March. One out of 15 students or 7% increased their skill of correcting sentences by seven correct responses. One out of 15 students or 7% increased their skill of correcting sentences by four correct responses. Two out of 15 students or 13% increased their skill of correcting sentences by three correct responses. One out of 15 students or 7% increased their skill of correcting sentences by seven correct responses. Five out of 15 students or 33% increased their skill of correcting sentences by one correct response.

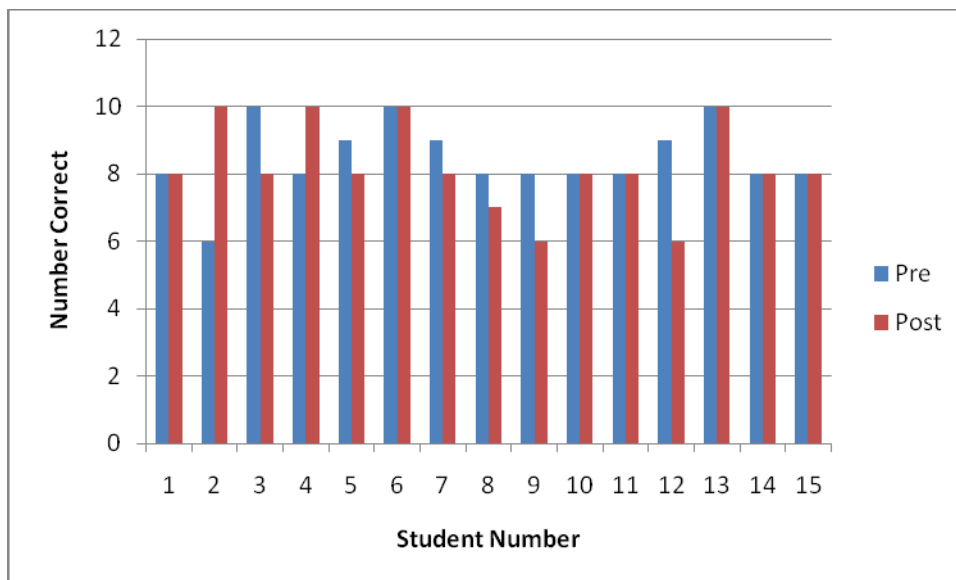


Figure 23: Unit 1 Confusing Words

Figure 23 shows the number correct that students achieved when identifying the correct confusing word that completed the sentence. Thirteen out of 15 students or 87% did not increase their skill of identifying the correct confusing word that completed the sentence from January to March. One out of 15 students or 7% increased their skill of identifying the correct confusing word that completed the sentence by four correct responses. One out of 15 students or 7% increased their skill of identifying the correct confusing word that completed the sentence by two correct responses.

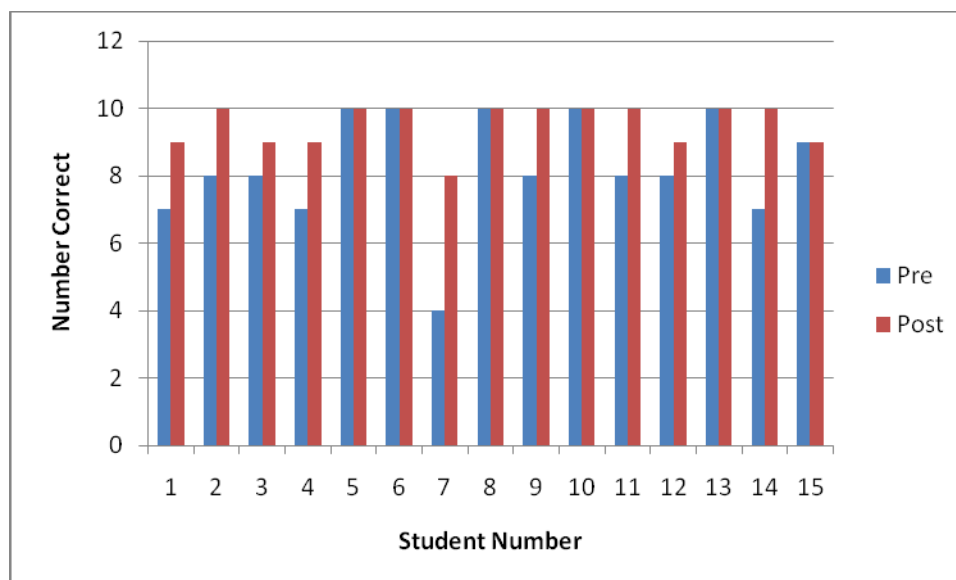


Figure 24: Unit 1 Spelling Words

Figure 24 shows the number correct that students achieved when spelling words correctly. Six out of 15 students or 40% did not increase their skill of spelling words correctly from January to March. One out of 15 students or 7% increased their skill of spelling words correctly by four correct responses. One out of 15 students or 7% increased their skill of spelling words correctly by three correct responses. Five out of 15 students or 33% increased their skill of spelling words correctly by two correct responses. Two out of 15 students or 13% increased their skill of spelling words correctly by one correct response.

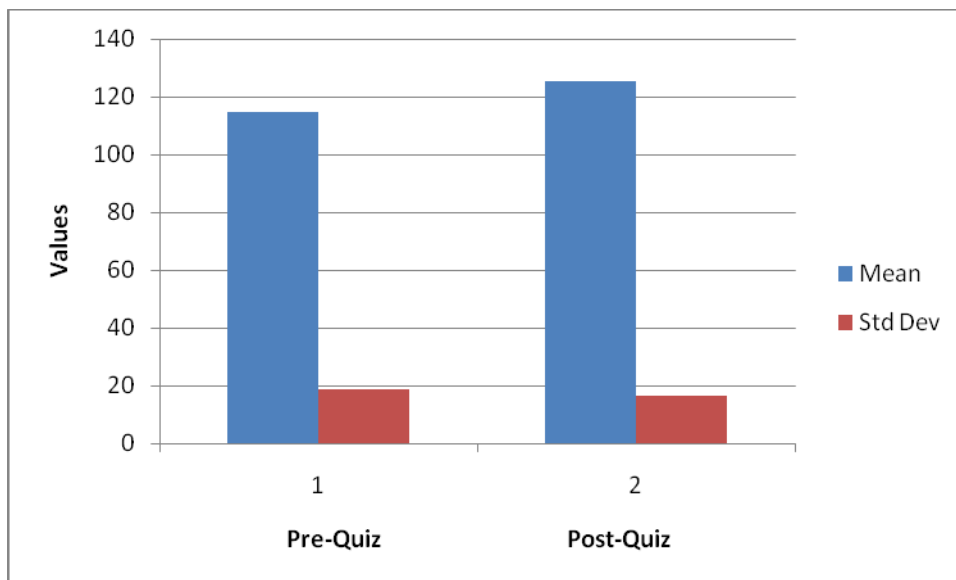


Figure 25: Unit 1 Overall – Mean and Standard Deviation

Figure 25 shows the Unit 1 combined grammar, confusing words, and spelling words mean and standard deviation for January and March. The mean for January was 114.7 and the standard deviation was 18.8. The mean for March was 125.3 and the standard deviation was 16.6. From January to March, the mean increased by 10.6 and the standard deviation decreased by 2.2.

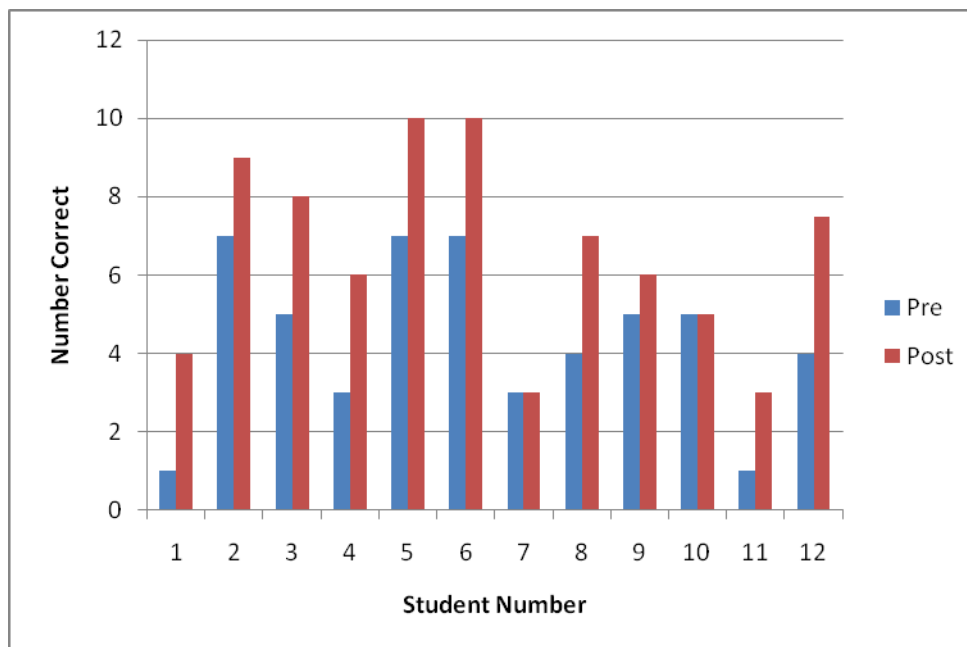


Figure 26: Unit 7 Apostrophes

Figure 26 shows the number correct that students achieved when adding apostrophes to words. Two out of 12 students or 17% did not increase their skill of adding apostrophes to words from January to March. One out of 12 students or 8% increased their skill of adding apostrophes to words by four correct responses. Six out of 12 students or 50% increased their skill of adding apostrophes to words by three correct responses. Two out of 12 students or 17% increased their skill of adding apostrophes to words by two correct responses. One out of 12 students or 8% increased their skill of adding apostrophes to words by one correct response.

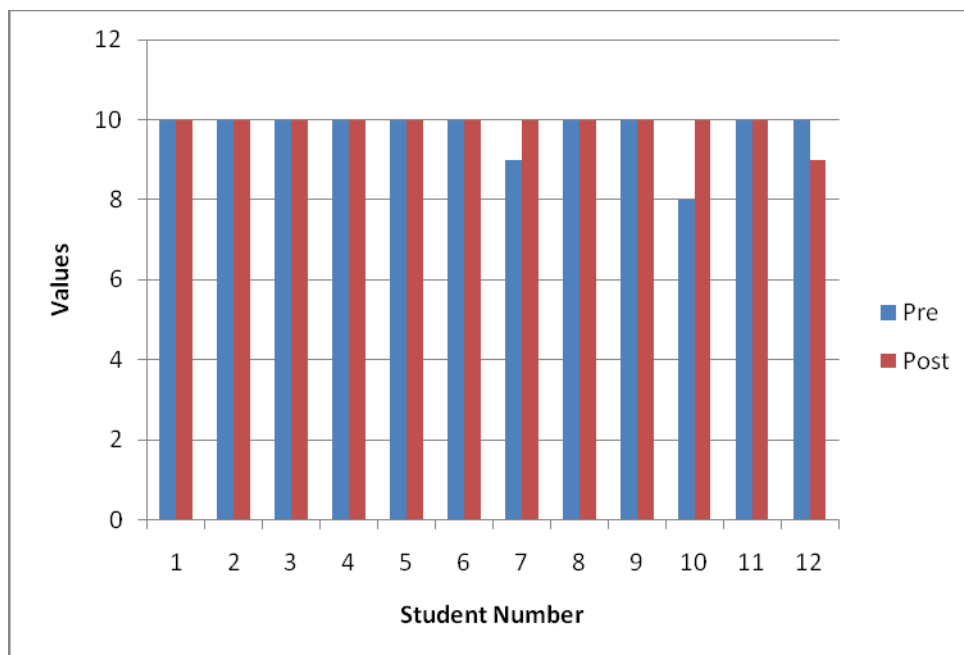


Figure 27: Unit 7 Confusing Words

Figure 27 shows the number correct that students achieved when identifying the correct confusing word that completed the sentence. One out of 12 students or 8% did not increase their skill of identifying the correct confusing word that completed the sentence from January to March. Nine out of 12 students or 75% remained at 100% achievement in their skill of identifying the correct confusing word that completed the sentence. One out of 12 students or 8% increased their skill of identifying the correct confusing word that completed the sentence by two correct responses. One out of 12 students or 8% increased their skill of identifying the correct confusing word that completed the sentence by one correct response.

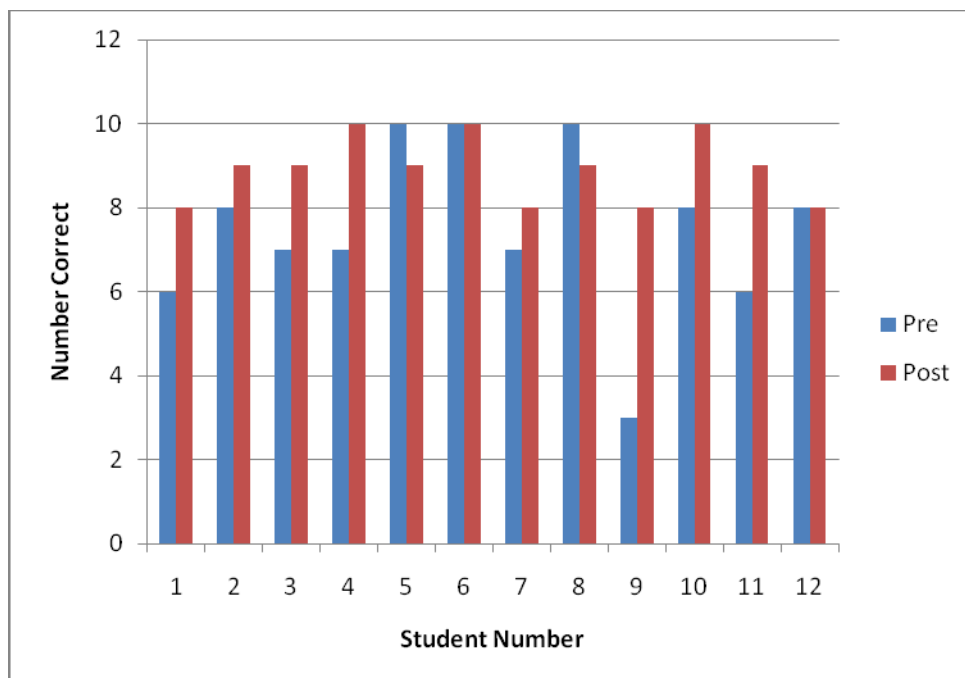


Figure 28: Unit 7 Spelling Words

Figure 28 shows the number correct that students achieved when spelling words correctly. Four out of 12 students or 33% did not increase their skill of spelling words correctly from January to March. One out of 12 students or 8% increased their skill of spelling words correctly by five correct responses. Two out of 12 students or 17% increased their skill of spelling words correctly by three correct responses. Three out of 12 students or 25% increased their skill of spelling words correctly by two correct responses. Two out of 12 students or 17% increased their skill of spelling words correctly by one correct response.

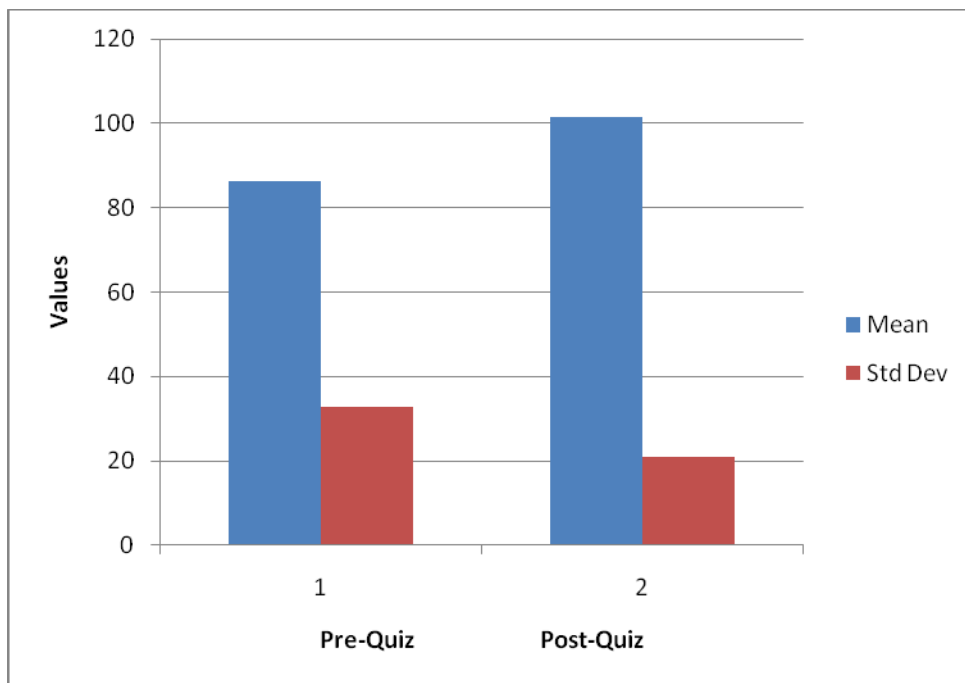


Figure 29: Unit 7 Overall – Mean and Standard Deviation

Figure 29 shows the Unit 7 combined grammar, confusing words, and spelling words mean and standard deviation for January and March. The mean for January was 86.3 and the standard deviation was 32.7. The mean for March was 101.5 and the standard deviation was 20.8. From January to March, the mean increased by 15.2 and the standard deviation decreased by 11.9.

V. CONCLUSIONS

Introduction

The purpose of the study was to determine the effects of guided writing activities on student achievement and motivation of first-year college business writing students. In this section, the researcher will draw conclusions about the data collected through this study. The researcher used an observational journal, an interview with an associate professor currently teaching at the college, interviews with five students, a student writing attitude survey, a grammar skills diagnostic assessment, and grammar, confusing words, and spelling words quizzes. Triangulation will be discussed. Recommendations by the researcher will be made about the use of guided writing activities used with first-year college business writing students.

Summary of Data

Data was collected through the use of six instruments. The researcher used an observational journal, an interview with an associate professor currently teaching at the college, interviews with five students, a pre and post student writing attitude surveys, pre and post grammar skills diagnostic assessments, and pre and post grammar, confusing words, and spelling words quizzes.

Observational Journal

During the study, the researcher maintained an observational journal (see Appendix C) of the students' participation and engagement in writing activities. Through the journal entries, it became apparent that students' participation and engagement of grammar skills was positive during class, but some students had difficulties applying the skills to writing assignments completed at home. This was especially evident with run-on sentences, comma splices, and sentence fragments.

Some students enjoyed sharing ways of helping them remember confusing words. For example, one student wrote one sentence using both confusing words: *The rain affected [verb] my hairdo, but it had no effect [noun] on my hairdo.*

Through the journal observations, the researcher saw that reducing or omitting the words *I, there is, there are, it is, as a result, and for this assignment* was making them feel better about revising their rough drafts. One student mentioned he was proud how he “took out 13 out of 14 *I*’s at the start of sentences,” “removed fillers and unnecessary words,” and “made you have to think about what to write instead of just putting anything down.”

Another observation noted by the researcher in the journal was the fun some students were having writing spelling words on the board before a quiz. While some had a positive attitude about writing the words on the board, others expressed concern if they spelled the word incorrectly. After reviewing the words as a class, and even having to correct one or two words, students felt more confident with their spelling as shown in their quiz scores.

Collaboration and working in teams were noted in the observational journal as activities that helped the students learn and become more confident. In one class, students were split into two groups to work on the same paragraph development exercise. Each group was provided with individual sentences on separate pieces of paper, then organized them into paragraphs in a logical sequence. The groups compared their results. Students indicated surprise at how people interpreted the same sentences differently, yet all interpretations were correct.

An observation from the journal noted by the researcher was the positive response from students involved in read-aloud peer review. Students in small groups took turns reading out loud another student’s writing assignment, offering thoughts and comments after each sentence. Some students expressed appreciation for the feedback from their peers, which helped them to revise

with more confidence. One student indicated, “When I heard someone read my writing out loud and comment on it, I realized how my message was unclear. My sentences were too long, and I used a lot of extra words I didn’t need.”

Through journal entries, the researcher concluded that the guided writing activities that were used in this study led to an increase in student achievement. The researcher also concluded that, through journal entries, that the guided writing activities that were used in this study had an inconsistent impact on students’ writing attitudes. Some students shared appreciation for feedback in the read-aloud peer review exercise and enjoyment from the spelling words board review, while others seemed to feel neutral or expressed concerns.

Interview Questions and Answers – Associate Professor

The researcher interviewed a current associate professor who has taught this first-year business writing course for 35 years at the college. The associate professor indicated the textbook contains much content, and we should do our best to provide students with time to practice, both in and outside of class. She reviews with students all of the grammar rules, confusing words, and spelling words. She indicated since many students “know their spelling can be improved, but it is kind of late in the game,” she blends spelling words in other exercises to give students practice. She recommends to students that they focus on only those words they have the most problems with. The associate professor shares ways to help students remember how to spell words, such as saying that the *principal* is my *pal*.

For writing improvement activities at the end of each chapter, the associate professor has found collaboration and teamwork to be especially effective. Students complete the work at home. In class, students work in teams to discuss their responses, decide on the best elements from each team members’ responses, then write the team’s best solutions on the board. Each

team reads their work out loud, and the associate professor leads discussion about each team's strengths and improvement opportunities. This approach offers students repetition and reinforcement to help them learn. "The objective is for students to practice, practice, practice," indicated the associate professor.

The associate professor gives students about four writing assignments to complete in class in about one hour's time during the semester. She has students read the material in the textbook, review the writing assignment, then follow up with completion of the writing assignment in class, preferably in a computer lab. The associate professor has found this approach to be effective also. She generally has students produce at least one good news, one bad news, and one persuasive letter, and she shares grading rubrics with the students at the start of the exercise.

The researcher concluded that guided writing activities have been used effectively by the associate professor in ways that benefit the students' effectiveness and motivation.

Interview Questions and Answers – Students

Five students were interviewed and asked the same series of questions about their achievement and motivation toward guided writing activities. Most of the students indicated they feel pretty good about their writing skills and that they are improving.

Overall, students found the read-aloud peer review effective. One student indicated, "I might overlook something in my own writing that someone else pointed out to me....Peer review is one of the main things that has helped." Another student shared, "we helped each other with writing and format." A third student said, "When they read the work out loud, I could hear some of the changes I needed to make."

Four of the students found the sentence length variety strategy to be helpful, and one student has not tried it yet on her writing assignments. Those who used the strategy were able to communicate more clearly by reducing the length of sentences and splitting long sentences in two.

Team writing in small groups was of particular interest to all five of the students interviewed. Some students liked see how others approached writing because it offered new perspectives from different points of view. In one team, each person had about the same thing, so the student felt good knowing she was not the only one thinking like that. Another reason for enjoying the team exercises was because for some students, it was easier to volunteer in class knowing they have the support of their team.

One of the students shared feedback about her overall thoughts: “I think everything taught so far has been positive....I feel like I have come a long way since I've been in this class. I feel I know how to approach different situations better than I did a couple of months ago. I learned that business writing is not all about length or quantity, it is about conciseness and quality.”

Photographs

In analyzing the photographs (see Figures 1-4), it was evident that students were engaged in writing activities. The photographs showed students taking grammar quizzes, correcting sentences, and collaborating in teams on writing assignments.

Student Writing Attitude Survey

Students were asked to complete a pre and post writing attitude survey online (see Appendix F) in January and March. The researcher was able to draw conclusions about students' attitudes toward writing in academic, as well as personal, settings.

Question 1 asked students how they felt when they have something you want to write about. In the pretest, 90% of the ten students responded positively stating they felt either great or good when they have something they want to write about. In the posttest, this increased to 100% of the ten students who responded positively stating they felt either great or good when they have something they want to write about. This increase indicates a more positive attitude toward writing about something that interests students.

Question 2 asked students how they felt when they have free time to write. In the pretest, 90% of the ten students responded positively stating they felt great or good when they have free time to write. In the posttest, this increased to 100% of the ten students responded positively stating they felt great or good when they have free time to write. This increase indicates a more positive attitude toward writing when students have free time to do so.

Question 3 asked students how felt when they received writing supplies for a gift. In the pretest, 80% of the ten students felt good about receiving writing supplies for a gift. In the posttest, 80% of the ten students felt great or good about receiving writing supplies for a gift. Two of the students who responded good in the pretest responded great in the posttest. This change from good to great indicates a more positive attitude toward receiving writing supplies for a gift.

Question 4 asked students how they felt when they started writing something new. In the pretest, 90% of the ten students felt great or good when they started writing something new. In the posttest, 90% of the tent students felt great or good when they started writing something new. One of the students who responded good in the pretest responded great in the posttest. This change from good to great indicates a more positive attitude toward starting to write something new.

Question 5 asked students how they felt about writing assignments in school. In the pretest, 50% of the ten students felt great or good about writing assignments in school. In the posttest, 70% of the ten students felt great or good about writing assignments in school. This increase indicates a more positive attitude toward students' writing assignments in school.

Question 6 asked students how they felt when the instructor asked questions about what they wrote. In the pretest, 70% of the ten students felt great or good when the instructor asked questions about what they wrote. In the posttest, 80% of the ten students felt great or good when the instructor asked questions about what they wrote. This increase indicates a more positive attitude by students when the instructor asked questions about what the students wrote.

Question 7 asked students how they felt when they went to a place where they could buy writing supplies. 90% of the ten students felt great or good when they went to a place where they could buy writing supplies. In the posttest, 80% of the ten students felt great or good when they went to a place where they could buy writing supplies. This decrease indicates a less positive attitude toward going to a place where students could buy writing supplies.

The overall results of the pretest and posttest indicate that guided writing activities used in this study positively influenced students' attitudes toward writing. In six of the seven questions, the number of students who answered positively increased. In two of these situations, the increase was by two students in one question, and one student in the other question.

Grammar Skills Diagnostic Assessment

The researcher used an online diagnostic assessment to collect data on students' grammar and punctuation skills. The 50-question assessment covered grammar skills in the following nine categories: commas, modifiers, parallelism, parentheses, quotation marks, run-on sentences and comma splices, sentence fragments, subject/verb agreement, and verbs. The assessments were

administered in January at the start of the study and in March at the end of the study. Figures 12 through 20 in Results and Reflections (see Section IV) show students' pre-assessment and post-assessment scores for each of the nine categories of grammar. Figure 21 shows the mean and standard deviation for the grammar skills diagnostic assessments for January and March. The mean score increased from January to March by 20.6. The standard deviation decreased from January to March by 3.5. The data in Figure 21 indicate that the guided writing activities used in this study were successful in increasing students' achievement in business writing.

Grammar, Confusing Words, and Spelling Words Quizzes

The researcher administered pre- and post-quizzes to collect data on grammar, confusing words, and spelling words units conducted in class. Students completed pre- and post-quizzes for unit 1 on sentence structure and unit 7 on apostrophes and other punctuation. Figures 22 through 24 in Results and Reflections (see Section IV) show students' pre-quiz and post-quiz scores for unit 1 on sentence structure, confusing words, and spelling words. Figures 26 through 28 in Results and Reflections (see Section IV) show students' pre-quiz and post-quiz scores for unit 7 on apostrophes and other punctuation, confusing words, and spelling words. Figure 25 shows the mean and standard deviation for unit 1. The mean score increased by 10.6, and the standard deviation decreased by 2.2. Figure 29 shows the mean and standard deviation for unit 7. The mean score increased by 15.2, and the standard deviation decreased by 11.9. The data in Figures 25 and 29 indicate that the guided writing activities used in this study were successful in increasing students' achievement in business writing.

Triangulation

Triangulation facilitates validation of data through cross verification from more than two sources. For this research study, the sources are incorporated in three categories: experiencing,

enquiring, and examining. Triangulation was achieved using seven instruments for collecting data: an observational journal, an interview with an associate professor, interviews with students, photographs, a student writing attitude survey, a grammar skills diagnostic assessment, and grammar, confusing words, and spelling words quizzes. These seven instruments in the study showed that students' writing achievement and motivation clearly increased through the course of the study.

Experiencing

The observational journal helped achieve triangulation in the study by allowing the researcher to observe the classroom, collect data, and reflect on students' writing experiences in the course. The researcher served as an active participant observer in the classroom through teaching students and making instructional changes and decisions as needed. One of the changes made was to incorporate more opportunities for students to work in teams (small groups), share drafts of their revised writing assignments, and collaborate among themselves to produce the best revision possible. When students worked in teams, they not only learned from each other, but they engaged in meaningful conversation that often helped them better understand the course material. This technique helped students develop their critical thinking skills, as well as their speaking skills. Discussion also offered students the opportunity to share and receive feedback from the reader's point of view, which served as a chance to test the degree to which readers understood the writer's message, a key objective for business writers. Launspach (2008) also found that small group discussion had a positive impact on students' achievement. The study found that students' participation in small writing groups allowed students to build declarative knowledge and negotiate strategies they can apply to their procedural knowledge of writing. In the researcher's study, this fact also became evident. In analyzing the journal, the researcher

observed positive changes in students' achievement and attitudes toward writing activities and lessons.

Through the observational journal, the researcher identified obstacles some students needed to overcome. One obstacle was for students to become more comfortable completing homework assignments using electronic word processing software. A second obstacle for some students was their ability to acquire electronic word processing software in order to complete assignments at home. A third obstacle most students experienced was learning to navigate and use the learning management system for downloading materials, posting homework, discussing assignments with their teams, and checking grades. Once students were used to the routine and felt more comfortable with the technology, their attitudes toward technology improved.

Enquiring

Conducting an interview with a veteran associate professor of 35 years at the college contributed toward triangulation through gathering background information and input on students' achievements and experiences with guided writing activities. The researcher was able to use information gained in the interview to plan appropriate interventions for a diverse group of students. The information gained in the interview was helpful in examining students' attitudes about writing in relation to their prior experiences.

The pre and post student writing surveys helped achieve triangulation by allowing for student responses concerning their attitudes toward writing at school and at home. The pre-survey indicated most students had fairly positive attitudes toward writing at home and some apprehension about writing in college. The post-survey showed that students' attitudes toward writing in college increased by 20%. The National Commission on Writing (2008) conducted a survey, "*Writing, Technology, and Teens.*" They reported that 86 percent of teens surveyed felt

good writing was important in life. Teens indicated they tended to be motivated to write when teachers challenged them, introduced topics of interest, and provided detailed feedback.

A grammar skills diagnostic pre-assessment was used to assess students' strengths and weaknesses in grammar at the beginning of the course. Grammar elements assessed included commas, modifiers, parallelism, parentheses, quotation marks, run-on sentences and comma splices, sentence fragments, subject/verb agreement, and verbs. A post-assessment was used to demonstrate their levels of achievement as a result of the course. In a survey of business leaders, the National Commission on Writing (2004) reported 80 percent of salaried professionals are expected to be responsible for writing. Good writing skills indicate good thinking skills. Survey respondents considered a number of writing elements as very important in business writing: accuracy (95.2%); clarity (74.6%); spelling, punctuation, and grammar (58.7%); and conciseness (41.3%). Students involved in the researcher's study showed improvements in their grammar skill levels with an increased mean score of 20.6 and a decreased standard deviation of 3.5.

Examining

For this third element of triangulation, artifacts provided evidence of students' work in completing grammar homework exercises, as well as writing assignments that were graded using rubrics. For the grammar portion of the homework, students checked their own work using an answer key in the textbook. Incorrect items were highlighted, the grammar rule that applied was added, and the student corrected their work. The completed artifacts provided evidence of students' understanding of the material and achievement. In addition, grading rubrics assisted students with their achievement by establishing criteria for their success. Quible (2006a) cited the use of assessments, evaluation, and feedback as practical methods for helping students develop control over their schoolwork. Using a feedback system that permitted students to "self-

remediate” errors was suggested. For example, using a line to connect an incorrect pronoun with its antecedent was suggested as a more effective remediation strategy than circling the incorrect pronoun. The researcher’s study supports Quible’s work. The use of self-regulated feedback helped students learn, resulting in positive achievement and attitudes.

Traditional and computer lab classrooms are available for use at the college. The researcher created classroom maps for both classroom types, showing equipment available in the classroom, location of desks and chairs within the space, and entry and exit points.

Conclusion

In conclusion, student achievement and motivation increased after using guided writing activities in a first-year college business writing course. Students’ attitudes increased as a result of the activities. Students were enthusiastic when discussing and collaborating on team activities in both grammar and writing exercises. The data instruments revealed that writing achievement showed improvement. Writing survey results indicated that attitudes toward writing increased in most instances.

Recommendations

After analyzing the data, the researcher highly recommends the use of guided writing activities for first-year college business writing students. The teaching strategy starts with improving students’ grammar skills, an essential element in writing. This is followed by instruction, review of writing improvement strategies, and practice, practice, and more practice. Then students apply their skills and knowledge by putting it all together in writing assignments.

As a result of the research study experience, the researcher makes the following recommendations for future use of guided writing activities for first-year college business writing students:

- **Assessments.** Gather data concerning students' grammar skills at the beginning and end of the course. Skill assessment serves two purposes: allows students and the instructor to see improvement and identifies areas to focus on during instruction and review.
- **Technology.** Incorporate technology and use of the learning management system as much as possible. Technology is an integral part of business today. Students who adapt and learn to use technology effectively will become more confident and more attractive to prospective employers.
- **Focus.** Direct students to focus on grammar, confusing words, and spelling words that give them the most trouble. Focusing their efforts will help them improve their weaknesses which will result in greater confidence and improved skills.
- **Feedback.** Encourage, or require, students to use online grammar exercises, which provides immediate feedback to students about what they did correctly, what was wrong, and why, giving students an opportunity of learning from their mistakes.
- **Teamwork.** Assign students to work in teams when reviewing grammar and revising writing assignments. Students gain practical experience in communication and collaboration, skills that will serve them well in school and in business.
- **Textbook.** Conduct a more in-depth review of the tools, exercises, and information available on the Web site hosted by the textbook authors. Look for activities that can be used in support of the guided writing activities, especially online versions.
- **Computer Lab Classroom.** Continue to use computer lab classrooms for assignments that require the use of computers. The more computer experience students gain in school, the better prepared they will be for the workplace.

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VII. APPENDIX

- Appendix A: Proposal and Student Consent Form for Review and Approval by the Institutional Review Board
- Appendix B: Correspondence and Approval from the Institutional Review Board
- Appendix C: Observational Journal
- Appendix D: Interview Questions and Answers – Associate Professor
- Appendix E Interview Questions and Answers – Students
- Appendix F: Student Writing Attitude Survey and Raw Data
- Appendix G: Grammar Skills Diagnostic Assessment and Raw Data
- Appendix H: Grammar, Confusing Words, and Spelling Words Quiz and Raw Data
- Appendix I: Confusing Words Study Guide
- Appendix J: Getting to Know You Writing Assignment Rubric

Appendix A: Proposal and Student Consent Form for Review and Approval by the
Institutional Review Board

STUDENT RESEARCH PROJECT PROPOSAL

OCTOBER 5, 2009

Introduction

As a student working on a Master of Arts in Instructional Technology in the Department of Education at Saginaw Valley State University, University Center, Michigan, I am required to complete a master's capstone teacher-as-researcher study for ETD 624-625, Research Methods in Instructional Technology. For this research study, I seek from the Delta College Human Subjects Institutional Review Board either an expedited procedure or a student research project review and approval, whichever is deemed most appropriate.

Dr. Douglas Hansen, a professor in the Department of Educational Technology and Development at Saginaw Valley State University, serves as my professor and advisor for this research study. Dr. Hansen has given his approval to conduct this study, the purpose of which is to determine the effects of guided writing activities on student achievement and motivation of first-year college students.

As a part-time adjunct instructor in the Office Administration & Technology Discipline, Business & Information Technology Division, Delta College, University Center, Michigan, I would like to involve in the study the 15 students currently enrolled in my class, OAT-151-FA320, Delta College Midland Center, pending your approval and their written consent. Dr. Gail Hoffman-Johnson, Business & Information Technology Division Chair, has been informed of the study and has offered her approval via email for my participation in the research study.

Overview of the Purpose and Design of the Research Project

- I. Area of Focus Statement:
The purpose of this study is to determine the effects of guided writing activities on student achievement and motivation of first-year college students.
- II. Variables:
Researching guided writing activities and their impact on student achievement and motivation of first year college students.
- III. Research Question:
Will guided writing activities affect student achievement and motivation of first-year college students?
- IV. Interventions:
 - A. Pre- and post-assessments
 - B. Guided grammar review, instruction, and exercises
 - C. Small, flexible discussion groups
 - D. Individual writing assignments

- E. Attitude and motivation surveys
- V. Action Research Membership:
 - A. Fifteen students are currently enrolled in OAT-151-FA320 at the Delta College Midland Center with adjunct instructor Kimberly Robins
 - B. Of the 15 students, 3 are male, 13 are female, and age range from late teens to mid-50's
 - C. Students possess a wide variety of writing skill abilities
 - D. On average, students in the class appear to be in a middle class socioeconomic status
- VI. Negotiations Undertaken:
 - A. Undergoing review and approval by the Delta College Human Subjects Institutional Review Board (IRB) of the research topic to be conducted in the classroom
 - B. Upon review and approval of the IRB, will seek written, informed consent by the students
- VII. Data Collection - Qualitative:
 - A. Experiencing:
 - 1. Participant observation – once a week in class and when grading homework and papers
 - 2. Fieldnotes – once a week in class and when grading homework and papers
 - B. Enquiring:
 - 1. Informal interviews
 - 2. Structured formal interviews
 - C. Examining:
 - 1. Map layout of the classroom
 - 2. Photographs during the semester
 - 3. Portfolios of students' work
- VIII. Data Collection – Quantitative:
 - A. Pre/post grammar assessments
 - B. Pre/post attitude surveys
- IX. Resources:
 - A. Guided writing
 - B. Guided grammar review and instruction
 - C. Students' work

X. Timeline:

ASSIGNMENTS	DUE DATES
1. Problem Statement	9/21/09
2. Proposal/Draft	10/5/09
3. References	10/5/09
4. IRB Review/Approval	11/2/09
5. Literature Review Draft and Final	11/2/09 – Draft 12/7/09 – Final
6. Action Research	10/19/09 – Begin Date 2/26/10 – End Date
7. Result Analysis	3/1/10 thru 3/19/10
8. Presentations	11/30/09 – Literature Review 4/5/10 – Final Results
9. Final Project Due	4/5/10

Role of Human Subjects in the Research Project

Students participating in the study will be involved in the following ways:

1. Pre- and posttest on grammar skills.
2. Guided grammar review, instruction, and exercises.
3. Small, flexible discussion groups.
4. Individual writing assignments.
5. Pre/post grammar assessments.
6. Pre/post attitude surveys.
7. Formal and informal interviews.
8. Photographed in class while working on assignments or exercises.
9. Assembling and sharing a portfolio of grammar and writing assignments.

Potential Risks to the Human Subjects

All of these activities should not take more than two hours per student outside of normal class work. There are no foreseeable risks to the students involved.

Potential Benefits of the Project

Current and future students will benefit through improved writing skills, which will be useful in their college coursework, as well as current and future employment.

Methods Used to Protect the Rights and Welfare of the Subjects

Specific information about individual students will be kept *strictly confidential* and will be obtainable from Dr. Hansen if desired. Students have the right to cease participation in the study at any time and with or without just cause.

Description of the Methods Used to Obtain Informed Consent of the Subjects

Students will be asked to read, sign, and date a Student Consent Form indicating their consent to participate in the student. Consent for this research study is strictly voluntary and without undue influence or penalty. The student's signature assumes he or she understands and agrees to participate cooperatively.

Copy of the Proposed Consent Agreement or Statement

For a copy of the Student Consent Form, see Attachment A at the end of Appendix A.

Questionnaires, Interview Schedule(s), and Other Research Instruments to Be Used

Because this study is part of a capstone master's research project, data collection instruments have yet to be designed. Under consideration are the following:

1. Informal interviews
2. Structured formal interviews
3. Photographs of students collaborating on assignments and exercises during class
4. Portfolios of students' work
5. Pre/post grammar assessments
6. Pre/post attitude surveys

Description of the Methods to Be Used to Safeguard the Anonymity or Confidentiality of the Data

Specific information about individual students will be kept *strictly confidential* and will be obtainable from Dr. Hansen if desired. The results that are published publicly will not reference any individual students since the study will only analyze relationships among groups of data.

If complete anonymity is required, students will be provided with a unique identifier that only they will know. Data collection involving the students will be acquired using their unique identifier, which they will record on the items they are submitting.

Signed Agreement of All Researchers (Faculty and Students) Indicating Approved Guidelines for the Study Will Be Followed and Any Proposed Changes Will Be Reported At Once

Upon review and approval of the research project by the Delta College Human Subjects Institutional Review Board, all researchers (faculty and students) will sign the agreement indicating approved guidelines for the study will be followed and any proposed changes will be reported at once.

Respectfully submitted,

Kim Robins
890 W. Nebobish Rd.
Essexville, MI 48732
Home: 989-922-5255
Cell: 989-225-7587
Email: kimberlyrobins@delta.edu

Attachment A**STUDENT CONSENT FORM**

The information provided on this form is presented to you in order to fulfill legal and ethical requirements for Dr. Douglas Hansen, Department of Educational Technology and Development, Saginaw Valley State University, University Center, Michigan, the professor and advisor at the institution sponsoring this capstone teacher-as-researcher study for ETD 624-625, Research Methods in Instructional Technology. Dr. Hansen has given his approval to conduct this study, the purpose of which is to determine the effects of guided writing activities on student achievement and motivation of first-year college students.

You may be involved in this study by way of the following:

1. Pre- and posttest on grammar skills.
2. Guided grammar review, instruction, and exercises.
3. Small, flexible discussion groups.
4. Individual writing assignments.
5. Pre/post grammar assessments.
6. Pre/post attitude surveys.
7. Formal and informal interviews.
8. Photographed in class while working on assignments or exercises.
9. Assembling and sharing a portfolio of grammar and writing assignments.

All of these activities should not take more than two hours per student outside of normal class work. There are no foreseeable risks to the students involved. In addition, you and the researcher reserve the right to remove you from the study at any time with or without just cause. Specific information about individual students will be kept *strictly confidential* and will be obtainable from Dr. Hansen if desired. The results that are published publicly will not reference any individual students since the study will only analyze relationships among groups of data.

The purpose of this form is to allow you to participate in the study, and to allow the researcher to use the information already available at the college or information obtained from the actual study to analyze the outcomes of the study. Consent for this research study is strictly voluntary and without undue influence or penalty. Your signature below also assumes you understand and agree to participate cooperatively.

If you have additional questions regarding the study, the rights of subjects, or potential problems, please call the researcher, Ms. Kim Robins (Adjunct Instructor, Office Administration & Technology Discipline, Business & Information Technology Division, Delta College, University Center, Michigan, 989-225-7587).

Student's Name (Printed)

Student's Signature

Date

Appendix B: Correspondence and Approval from the Institutional Review Board

RE: Research Project - IRB Approval

Hill, Alan - Faculty <aghill@delta.edu>

Sent: Monday, November 09, 2009 7:24 PM

To: Robins, Kimberly - Faculty <kimberlyrobins@delta.edu>

No, once approved, you're approved UNLESS you change your protocols.

Actually, I just heard from Dr. Forsberg. Apparently, he is satisfied with your responses. So, we can go ahead and approve your project.

Do you need a formal approval memo? If not, this e-mail can serve as your record of approval.

Good luck with your project.

-Alan

Alan G. Hill
Associate Professor of Sociology
Office: S-61
Delta College
University Center, Michigan 48710
Phone: 989-662-8034
E-mail: aghill@delta.edu

On Mon, 9 Nov 2009, Robins, Kimberly - Faculty <kimberlyrobins@delta.edu> wrote:

> Hi Alan,

>

> I was wondering if Dr. Forsberg has had a chance to review my answers to his questions, and if he is satisfied with the responses.

>

> With that in mind, assuming the IRB approves my proposal, and the end of Fall 2009 approaches, would I be able to conduct part of my study in Fall 2009 and the other part in Winter 2010? Or will I need additional approvals to conduct the study in Winter 2010?

>

> Thank you very much for your assistance throughout the IRB review and approval process.

>

> Sincerely,

> Kim Robins

>

>

> Kim Robins

> Adjunct Instructor

> Office Administration & Technology Discipline
> Business & Information Technology Division
> Delta College
> University Center, MI 48710
> Home: (989) 922-5255
> kimberlyrobins@delta.edu
>
> _____
> From: Hill, Alan - Faculty <aghill@delta.edu>
> Sent: Monday, November 02, 2009 2:19 PM
> To: Robins, Kimberly - Faculty <kimberlyrobins@delta.edu>
> Subject: RE: Research Project - IRB Review
>
> O.K. I'll forward your response to Dr. Forsberg for his review.
>
> -Alan
>
>
> On Mon, 2 Nov 2009, Robins, Kimberly - Faculty <kimberlyrobins@delta.edu>
wrote:
>
>> Good afternoon Alan,
>>
>> Thank you for sending Ralph Forsten's comments. My replies are highlighted
in green in the attached document. I look forward to your reply.
>>
>> Sincerely,
>> Kim
>>
>>
>> Kim Robins
>> Adjunct Instructor
>> Office Administration & Technology Discipline
>> Business & Information Technology Division
>> Delta College
>> University Center, MI 48710
>> Home: (989) 922-5255
>> kimberlyrobins@delta.edu
>>
>> _____
>> From: Hill, Alan - Faculty <aghill@delta.edu>
>> Sent: Sunday, October 25, 2009 12:37 AM
>> To: Robins, Kimberly - Faculty <kimberlyrobins@delta.edu>
>> Subject: [POSSIBLE SPAM] RE: Research Project - IRB Review
>>
>> I now have gotten enough responses on your project to move forward.
>>
>> One reviewer had the following concerns:
>>
>> I see no real problems and assume there is not a 'control group' of
>> exercises or students that/who will be doing unguided writing
>> assignments, right? If there were I might wonder if they are getting
>> less instruction than other students in the guided portion. But, as I
>> said, this doesn't seem to be the case, so everything else looks OK."
>>
>> He also made some additional comments (see attached).
>>
>> If his concerns can be addressed, we can approve your project.
>>

>> -Alan
>>
>> _____
>>
>> Alan G. Hill, IRB Chair
>> Associate Professor of Sociology
>> Office: S-61
>> Delta College
>> University Center, Michigan 48710
>> Phone: 989-662-8034
>> E-mail: aghill@delta.edu
>> _____

RE: Research Project - IRB Review and Approval Requested

Alan Hill [aghill69@gmail.com] on behalf of Hill, Alan - Faculty <aghill@delta.edu>

Sent: Friday, October 23, 2009 4:35 PM

To: Robins, Kimberly - Faculty <kimberlyrobins@delta.edu>

I'm still waiting but if I don't get a response I'll just go forward without the whole committee.

I'll let you know by Monday.

Alan

-----Original Message-----

From: Robins, Kimberly - Faculty <kimberlyrobins@delta.edu>
<kimberlyrobins@delta.edu>

Sent: Friday, October 23, 2009 1:32 PM

To: Hill, Alan - Faculty <aghill@delta.edu> <aghill@delta.edu>

Subject: RE: Research Project - IRB Review and Approval Requested

Good afternoon Alan,

Any news on the proposal I submitted to the IRB for conducting a research study for my master's program at SVSU that would involve my student? The study is designed to teach business students to write more effectively as a result of interventions in my instruction.

Thank you,
Kim

Kim Robins
Adjunct Instructor
Office Administration & Technology Discipline
Business & Information Technology Division
Delta College
University Center, MI 48710
Home: (989) 922-5255
kimberlyrobins@delta.edu

Re: Research Project - IRB Review and Approval Requested

Hill, Alan - Faculty <aghill@delta.edu>

Sent: Monday, October 12, 2009 4:40 PM

To: Robins, Kimberly - Faculty <kimberlyrobins@delta.edu>

Yep. I got it. Just as soon as I hear back from the committee, I'll let you know. Probably later this week.

-Alan

On Mon, 12 Oct 2009, Robins, Kimberly - Faculty <kimberlyrobins@delta.edu> wrote:

> Hi Alan,
>
> Hopefully you received my research proposal early last week for review and approval by the IRB.
>
> When you have a chance, if you could please let me know when I might hear back from the IRB, I would appreciate it.
>
> Sincerely,
> Kim
>
>
> Kim Robins
> Adjunct Instructor
> Office Administration & Technology Discipline
> Business & Information Technology Division
> Delta College
> University Center, MI 48710
> Home: (989) 922-5255
> kimberlyrobins@delta.edu
>
> _____
> From: Robins, Kimberly - Faculty <kimberlyrobins@delta.edu>
> Sent: Monday, October 05, 2009 7:24 PM
> To: Hill, Alan - Faculty <aghill@delta.edu>
> Subject: RE: [POSSIBLE SPAM] RE: Research Project - IRB Review and Approval Requested
>
> Hi Alan,
>
> Thank you for sending the link for the IRB guidelines for studies involving human subjects.
>
> Please find the proposal attached for my research study for the IRB's review and approval. The study is designed to teach business students to write more effectively as a result of interventions in my instruction. This is the capstone project for a master's degree I am pursuing. Hopefully the proposal will meet with your approval so that I may move forward with the study.

>
> If you have any questions or need additional information, please let me know.
>
> With regards,
> Kim Robins
>
>
> Kim Robins
> Adjunct Instructor
> Office Administration & Technology Discipline
> Business & Information Technology Division
> Delta College
> University Center, MI 48710
> Cell: 989.225.7587
> kimberlyrobins@delta.edu
>
> _____
> From: Hill, Alan - Faculty <aghill@delta.edu>
> Sent: Friday, October 02, 2009 9:44 AM
> To: Wood, William - Staff <williamwood@delta.edu>
> Cc: Robins, Kimberly - Faculty <kimberlyrobins@delta.edu>
> Subject: [POSSIBLE SPAM] RE: Research Project - IRB Review and Approval Requested
>
> Thanks, Mike.
>
> Kim,
>
> Here's the link for the guidelines:
>
>
> <https://deltanet.delta.edu/myintranet/academicsservices/IRB/DELTA%20COLLEGE%20HUMAN%20SUBJECTS.pdf>
>
> -Alan
>
> On Fri, 2 Oct 2009, Wood, William - Staff <williamwood@delta.edu> wrote:
>
>> Kim,
>>
>> Alan Hill heads up the IRB here at Delta, so I am forwarding your email to him.
>>
>> Wm. Michael Wood
>> Director of Institutional Research
>> Delta College
>> 1961 Delta Road
>> University Center MI 48710
>>
>> Phone: 989-686-9216
>> Fax: 989-667-0620
>> williamwood@delta.edu<mailto:williamwood@delta.edu>
>>
>> "The trouble with most folks isn't so much their ignorance. It's know'n so many things that ain't so." -- Josh Billings
>> From: Robins, Kimberly - Faculty <kimberlyrobins@delta.edu>
>> Sent: Thursday, October 01, 2009 11:32 PM

>> To: Wood, William - Staff <williamwood@delta.edu>
>> Subject: Research Project - IRB Review and Approval Requested
>>
>> Hi Michael,
>>
>> Hopefully you are the person I need to contact regarding approval of a
research project for my Master of Arts in Instructional Technology at SVSU
that would potentially involve students in my OAT 151 Business Communications
I course at Delta College. My research project, based on Action Research's
Teacher as Researcher, will be to determine the effects of guided writing
activities on student achievement and motivation of first year college
students.
>>
>> The Delta College Human Subjects Institutional Review Board Guidelines
indicate I need review and approval by the IRB before I may proceed with any
kind of research involving human subjects. I am unclear, however, regarding
the approval process for the project. I anticipate at a minimum the need for
surveys, copies of some of their writing, and possibly interviewing some of
the students, possibly more depending on the need for additional data
collection.
>>
>> Please advise as to next steps to move the approval process forward for
the research project.
>>
>> Regards,
>> Kim
>>
>>
>> Kim Robins
>> Adjunct Instructor
>> Office Administration & Technology Discipline
>> Business & Information Technology Division
>> Delta College
>> University Center, MI 48710
>> Cell: 989.225.7587
>> kimberlyrobins@delta.edu<mailto:kimberlyrobins@delta.edu>
>>

Appendix C: Observational Journal

9/16/09

After attending class for three weeks, one of my students sent me the following email. I wasn't aware of his frustrations until after I read his email:

I have left the first three of your classes frustrated. I feel that you have lots of useful information you offer in your class however I feel there is not enough time for what you try to fit in. For example today 9/16 in class I studied for the quiz and while taking it I had confidence in my answers until I realized that I was only half way through the test but time was up.

Also with the rate that you move through the power points I am unable to keep focus. The ten minutes in class to write a rough draft is not a substantial amount of time. It makes more sense to me if I could have a draft typed up. This would allow my peers to critic my finished ideas.

My biggest concern is the amount of homework. I spent five hours on last week's homework not to mention I did not complete all of it due to my misunderstanding of the entire assignment. I would like to take time to review what I have learned instead of having to rush through just to get it done. I feel like I am not able to learn the information you have to offer. I have talked to other class mates about the homework and they felt the same way.

I am eager to work hard and learn this information because i feel that this is a very important subject. If there is anything you could do to help please let me know.

With all due respect & thankfulness.

At first, I wasn't sure how to respond. I read and re-read his email several times. I tried replying several times, too. I wasn't sure how best to address his frustrations. I was grateful,

however, that he had the courage to share his concerns with me, rather than simply dropping the course. After giving his concerns a great deal of thought, I replied:

First I would like to thank you for your honesty and candor. Your frustration concerns me. It is certainly not my intention for any of my students to feel this way.

Allow me to address each of your concerns, starting with what I think is an excellent idea of yours. I really like the idea of having students come into class with a draft of the writing assignment, then taking time in class for peer review. For homework, you could write your final copy, then start the draft for the next week's assignment. If you don't mind, I think I will borrow your idea and implement it right away.

Regarding the quiz, I apologize for rushing you through it, esp. knowing you had confidence in your answers, but then realized you were only halfway through the quiz when the time was up. I can think of a couple of ways of addressing this. I can offer everyone in class more time. Or I can schedule time outside of class for you and others to take the quiz, giving you more time than you would have in class. I certainly think this is something we can work through.

I'm not sure how to address the Power Points. This is something I have to think about. On the one hand, I can certainly appreciate your desire and need to take time to review and digest what you have learned instead of rushing through it. On the other hand, there is quite a lot of material that needs to be covered during the semester. Really, the Power Points should be reinforcing what you already read about in the chapters, with some embellishment. I do find myself taking more

time in the beginning, and rushing through at the end, something I still need to work out. I am open to suggestions. Like I said tonight, I'm not sure how my peers get through all of the material.

As for the homework, if you misunderstood the assignment, then I am to blame. I did a poor job of communicating to you what needed to be done, and I apologize for that. If you need more time to get caught up, please let me know. I'm not sure what you did not understand, but here's what I'm thinking. For the chapters, I prefer for the students to read the chapters and answer the questions ahead of time. This helps you to be better prepared for the Power Points, discussion, and exercises. As we get into more of the writing skills portion of the class, you'll have more opportunities than we've had so far to work in small groups in class. For Clue [grammar lessons and exercises], the way I have it set up right now is more of a self-study approach. Perhaps it would make more sense for me to introduce the material, work on exercises in class, then have the students complete the exercises in the Clue Study Guide for homework. Do you think this way would work better for you than the way we're doing it now? It may work better for most people. I prefer to teach it in a way that works best for my students. If there's more you can share with me concerning what you misunderstood about the homework, please let me know. I'll do what I can to help.

So in summary:

- 1) I would like to implement right away your idea of coming to class with a draft of the writing assignment, then critiquing papers in class.
- 2) For the next quiz, I'm thinking I'll allocate about 15 minutes for it. I'll ask if

people think they need more time. If so, I'll grant it. If not, I'll give them 15 minutes. If you think you'd like more time, then I can schedule time outside of class for you to come in and take the quiz. I think it's fair if I give you no more than 30 minutes, however.

3) Next week will be a good time to start early on the next Clue lesson, so I will implement that right away. You'll have to let me know if this speeds up homework time or not. As someone once said, if you want to be educated, you have to take the time. To your point, however, we have to spend our time wisely by doing the right things.

4) I'll keep looking at the Power Points, something I'm already doing for each lesson anyway. Eventually I'll narrow it down to the most important elements that still cover the objectives.

Thank you again, Adam, for expressing your concerns and offering suggestions. My goal is for every one of my students to improve and succeed in my class. Let me know how well the changes noted above are working for you. I'm very willing and open to trying out new things in class, as long as they are for the good of all the students. However, if we need to work out other arrangements to accommodate individual learning styles, I'm okay with that too.

Thank you and please keep in touch. Feel free to stay after class so we can talk further. Again I'm very open to suggestions.

My best to you

10/7/09

Students don't know how to develop ideas or topics in their writing, nor do they know how to follow directions.

Students learn grammar well and can complete the exercises successfully; however, they have difficulty applying the skills to their writing assignments. Did they forget? Did they not really learn the grammar skills (they check their own homework exercises)? For example, we just reviewed run-on sentences, comma splices, and sentence fragments, and I am still seeing a lot of these in their writing assignments.

Students write sentences using confusing words learned in class, such as *manger* and *manager*. Most confusing words are in pairs. One student started writing confusing word pairs together in one sentence as a mnemonic device, something I introduced to students to help them remember troublesome grammar rules, etc., to help her remember the differences in the words. I thought this was an excellent idea, I started asking students to begin doing this for the confusing words sentences.

In writing assignments, students are using filler words, *that – there is – there are* too many times, and beginning too many sentences with the word *I*. Students need to omit these words from the majority of their writing because doing so will force them to write more concisely and creatively.

When students write answers to chapter questions 1-15, they should use some form of restatement of the question in their answers. In business, when you reply to someone's email, restating the original message in your reply shows courtesy and respect for others' time. You take into account the "You" view, which is an important element in business writing.

One of the students wrote the following sentences that clearly shows the difference between confusing words pair, *affect* and *effect*: *The rain affected [verb] my hairdo. The rain had no effect [noun] on my hairdo.* This is a good example to share in future classes.

Correctly creating bullet points and lists using parallel construction is important. For example, two of the seven goals of ethical business communicators are (notice how verbs ending in *-ing* start each bullet point):

- Abiding by the law
- Telling the truth

Begin with grammar first. Then apply grammar rules to chapter questions and writing assignments.

Students are having difficulty following directions. Either the directions are poorly written, or students are not taking the time to read, review, and follow directions. For example, for Library Project 1, the instructions and the grading rubric clearly specify the order in which to present the homework: (1) grading rubric, (2) country information, (3) reference book citations, (4) article 1 citation and copy of the article, and (5) article 2 citation and copy of the article. Some students turned in the assignment correctly. Most of the students did not. The purpose of turning in the assignment in the order specified is to show progression of the research process, and it makes it easier for the instructor to grade the homework.

10/14/09

While grading papers, several thoughts came to mind.

For Library Project 1, students include reference material information, but the references are not presented in citation format. As a follow-up, hand out specific examples of citations in APA format.

For Writing Assignment 2 about the Kenya presentation, one student's letter was more than two pages long. The letter should not be more than one page in length. Students' rewrites were much more focused than the first drafts. Students focused on writing about one topic per paragraph, with a maximum of three paragraphs in the body of the letter. The next step will be to teach them how to identify and remove filler words, such as *there is, there are, as a result, for this assignment*, etc. An initial thought was to have students rewrite later in the semester one of the first letters they wrote at the beginning of the semester. With the passing of time, and the instruction on effective writing techniques, students will learn from their mistakes and produce more effective letters.

10/18/09

Spelling words on the commas quiz were much improved. Previously discussed study skills strategies with students for studying spelling words, such as using flashcards for review and testing one's self. We also reviewed all spelling words just before the quiz. Students were given a word to spell on the blackboard in front of the class. Some enjoyed the experience; others expressed concern about spelling the word incorrectly. I assured them we would work on correcting mistakes together as a class. If they had problems spelling the word, they were permitted to ask their neighbor for assistance. Those who misspelled words on the board spelled them correctly on the quiz.

Students are still not following or double-checking directions.

10/21/09

Scores on CLUE grammar quizzes are beginning to improve, which students are liking. Reviewing concepts before the quiz. Continuing to have students write spelling words on the board before the quiz.

Conducted an excellent paragraph development exercise. Students were split into four groups. Two groups worked on one exercise, then compared their results with each other, then with the suggestion from the textbook. The two other groups worked on a second exercise, using the same method just described. Students learned: (1) how to collaborate as a team, (2) how to use a read-aloud peer review technique that can be reinforced at home, at work, or in other classes, (3) everyone writes differently because they have different backgrounds, experiences, education, motivation, and expectations...readers too, (4) some were surprised at how others interpreted some of the sentences, which were very different from their own, but still accurate, and (5) which should one present first in the writing assignment, planners or PDAs, something that was actively discussed in two of the groups.

Students were asked to rewrite one of their first three writing assignments, using skills learned so far in the course. Feedback from the students included comments, such as: “I took out 13 of 14 ‘I’s’ at the start of sentences,” “removed fillers and unnecessary words,” and “made you have to think about what to write instead of just putting anything down.”

10/28/09

While grading writing assignments, several thoughts came to mind about improving instruction about writing skills. (1) Review the “You” view in business writing and the many different approaches that can be used. (2) Discuss the benefits of writing with the “You” view in mind. (3) Discuss reasons for avoiding beginning sentences with “It.” (4) Discuss the importance of putting a positive spin on negative messages and how to do so effectively.

Library Project 1 could be improved for conducting research online, or I need some instruction from the full-time faculty members about how they conduct the assignment. The purpose of the exercise is to introduce students to conducting research, especially using online

databases and three reference books (Statesman's Yearbook, World Factbook, and Worldmark), two of which are available online and one of which is available only in the hard copy. Students must also choose a country, research various elements about the country (location, religion, languages, external trade, and brainstorm keywords), then read, highlight key points, and print two articles about the country from two different databases. In fact, having a worksheet for students' work makes the electronic version of homework easier to read, review, and grade.

12/3/09

Tried the Read Aloud Peer Review approach to providing feedback about each other's drafts of the writing assignments. Students were divided into groups. The writer provided the readers with copies of his or her draft of the writing assignment. The readers took turns reading the letter out loud, one sentence at a time, and sharing out loud their thoughts or reactions to what they read. Readers were asked to comment on items such as style, tone, the "You" view, grammar, punctuation, sentence length, word choice, comprehension, clarity, brevity, conciseness, and more. The writer was asked to take notes and ask questions to clarify. One student said, "When I heard someone read my writing out loud and comment on it, I realized how my message was unclear. My sentences were too long, and I used a lot of extra words I didn't need."

12/5/09

Students are still not always following directions. For the next CLUE quiz, the directions will include bonus points for reading directions fully and completely. Those who don't read the directions completely will not receive bonus points. When the quizzes are turned in, we will discuss what was different with this quiz. Hopefully those who do not read directions completely

will finally understand the importance of doing so. Following through is an essential component for any job in business. Students need to understand the importance of following through.

For CLUE grammar homework, students should be learning from their mistakes. After students correct their own work and find a mistake, perhaps they should rewrite the sentence correctly, highlight the correction, and restate the grammar rule.

We have nine spelling words lessons and ten opportunities. Perhaps the words misspelled most frequently on the quizzes should be used to create the tenth spelling word lesson. Proper spelling in business writing is a direct reflection of the employee, hence the company for whom the employee works.

12/16/09

Today is the last day of Fall 2009 semester. Students shared their final presentations and letters. I was pleasantly surprised with how well some of the students presented their topics, prepared their presentations, and wrote their papers. They made a concerted effort to apply the skills learned in class, such as using eye-to-eye contact when speaking, being well organized, gaining attention, using slides as talking starters, and using visuals to break up each slide.

Next semester, I might try having students do their presentations the second to the last week, offer the final exam online or in the testing center (available one week only), giving them more flexibility and me more time to grade everything.

Some suggestions for next semester. For homework assignments, ask all students to use the electronic homework template and use a naming convention for the homework assignments, such as HW1_KRobins for homework, chapter 1, Kim Robins, or WA2_Draft_KRobins and WA2_Final_KRobins for writing assignment 2, draft and final letters, Kim Robins.

For the correspondence with students at Tracom in Kenya, request from students once or twice during the semester copies of emails sent to/from the Tracom student as evidence that correspondence is taking place.

1/13/10

Winter 2010 semester started this week. It is day one of OAT 151. Focused on this being a life skills class – improve writing, speaking, listening, and collaboration skills; learn the importance of and how to read directions and follow through; learn how to communicate with the “You” view in mind for business, home, church, school, and more; and learn how to use effective study skills and strategies.

I talked way too much. I need to get the students involved in more than just the Getting to Know You exercise. Return to ADDIE: assess, design, develop, implement, and evaluate.

I asked for comments about their goals and expectations for the class, but not many responded, or they repeated answers already listed. Perhaps I should have asked them to write down their answers first, then seek responses.

1/16/10

More and more, all students’ assignments are being completed electronically. This is a business communications course, and most businesses use electronic tools in the workplace, so students should learn how to and get used to using software such as Word, uploading and downloading documents to folders and files, and so on. However, not all students have access to Word or computers. So we explored options that would allow students to do some of their work electronically, complete all of the work required, and turn in the work on time. For example, one student agreed to using the school’s computers for completing some of the work and posting it, then completing the rest of the work on paper and turning in hard copies. Another student

discovered she had access to Word software, which she didn't realize at the time, installed the software, and is now using it.

Though typing is not taught in this course, fast and accurate typing skills are a bonus in the workplace. After conducting some research on the internet, www.typingweb.com was found where students can go to improve typing skills, increase accuracy, view statistics of their results, and all for free.

1/20/10

Some students are having trouble with the homework assignment because they don't have Microsoft Word or word processing software that I can open. We strategized ways of overcoming this obstacle. Students may use Word at school to complete their assignments and post on Educator, the learning management system. Students may download a trial version of Word for free, if they are willing, buy Word at a student discount through the college. Students may also complete the assignments by hand and turn them in at the start of the next class period. Students may also use any combination of the above, as long as all elements of the homework assignments are completed and made available to me.

1/27/10

Students are asked to complete a 50-question grammar assessment quiz this semester. The assessment covers the following content areas: shifts, parallelism, mixed construction, modifiers, sentence fragments, comma splices, run-on sentences, verbs, pronouns, subject and verb agreement, commas, apostrophes, quotation marks, parentheses, and dashes. All of these content areas are covered throughout the semester.

Rather than completing the lessons together, perhaps the student would benefit more by creating and following an individualized performance plan, focusing on those areas where

content and skill are most deficient. Then as time permits, students could be asked to review other areas where they are competent.

2/3/10

I learned tonight that one student is using a trial version of Word, which does not include all of the functionality of a purchased version of Word. As a result, the student cannot copy and paste the online exercises results into the homework template. The student cannot underline, highlight, or italicize incorrect answers, confusing words, or spelling words. So we discussed this and came up with a solution. The student can use ALL CAPITAL LETTERS or ***asterisks*** around words to draw my attention to them.

Another student has been having difficulty with his home computer, so he has not been completing the homework assignments. We discussed this, and I reminded him he was permitted to complete the assignments by hand and turn them in that way. So far, he has done neither. However, he continues to attend class, participate actively in all in-class activities, and complete and turn in the writing assignments.

2/24/10

Some time between February 17 and 24, 2010, one male student dropped the class, leaving 15 students remaining in the class. Three of the remaining students are male; twelve are female.

3/9/10

I read an interesting article today in The New York Times online, "Building a Better Teacher." In the article, the author discusses what is referred to as Lemov's Taxonomy (a 357-page treatise). The official title, available in April 2010, is "Teach Like a Champion: The 49

Techniques That Put Students on the Path to College.” From the, I learned a couple of things that might help students pay attention and participate more actively in the classroom.

In the article, the author states about capturing the audience’s attention, “I first encountered the [taxonomy](#) this winter in Boston at a training workshop, one of the dozens Lemov gives each year to teachers. Central to Lemov’s argument is a belief that students can’t learn unless the teacher succeeds in capturing their attention and getting them to follow instructions. Educators refer to this art, sometimes derisively, as “classroom management.” The romantic objection to emphasizing it is that a class too focused on rules and order will only replicate the power structure; a more common view is that classroom management is essential but somewhat boring and certainly less interesting than creating lesson plans. While some education schools offer courses in classroom management, they often address only abstract ideas, like the importance of writing up systems of rules, rather than the rules themselves. Other education schools do not teach the subject at all. Lemov’s view is that getting students to pay attention is not only crucial but also a skill as specialized, intricate and learnable as playing guitar.”

The author continues, “At the Boston seminar, Lemov played a video of a class taught by one of his teaching virtuosos, a slim man named Bob Zimmerli. Lemov used it to introduce one of the 49 techniques in his [taxonomy](#), one he calls What to Do. The clip opens at the start of class, which Zimmerli was teaching for the first time, with children — fifth graders, all of them black, mostly boys — looking everywhere but at the board. One is playing with a pair of headphones; another is slowly paging through a giant three-ring binder. Zimmerli stands at the front of the class in a neat tie. “O.K., guys, before I get started today, here’s what I need from you,” he says. “I need that piece of paper turned over and a pencil out.” Almost no one is

following his directions, but he is undeterred. “So if there’s anything else on your desk right now, please put that inside your desk.” He mimics what he wants the students to do with a neat underhand pitch. A few students in the front put papers away. “Just like you’re doing, thank you very much,” Zimmerli says, pointing to one of them. Another desk emerges neat; Zimmerli targets it. “Thank you, sir.” “I appreciate it,” he says, pointing to another. By the time he points to one last student — “Nice . . . nice” — the headphones are gone, the binder has clicked shut and everyone is paying attention.

Concerning student participation during discussion, the author discusses an advanced technique that is referred to as No Opt Out: “The concept is deceptively simple: A teacher should never allow her students to avoid answering a question, however tough. ‘If I’m asking my students a question, and I call on somebody, and they get it wrong, I need to work on how to address that. . . . It’s easy to be like, ‘No,’ and move on to the next person. But the hard part is to be like: ‘O.K., well, that’s your thought. Does anybody disagree? . . . I have to work on going from the student who gets it wrong to students who get it right, then back to the student who gets it wrong and ask a follow-up question to make sure they understand why they got it wrong and understood why the right answer is right.’ . . . [You] don’t just have to remember to return to the student who made the mistake; [you have] to figure out some way to correct that mistake in the student’s brain.”

3/17/10

During class tonight, I was noticing students were not participating as much as they have in the past. Perhaps it’s because we just returned from spring break and we’re on the downhill slide now toward the end of the semester. I recalled the article I read in *The New York Times* about ways of encouraging participation. The article said to ask a question, then call on the

student. If the student didn't answer, encourage him or her to do so. If the student's answer was incorrect, ask the class if anyone disagrees. Then circle back to the original student to clarify and confirm they understand the correct answer and why it is correct. So I did this tonight with the grammar unit on apostrophes. After reviewing the material, I put some examples on the board. I asked the students to tell me where the apostrophe should be placed and why in the first example. The first example was, *We are getting our moneys worth out of this* class. I waited a moment, then called a student by name to answer the question. She said the apostrophe should go after the *s* in the word *moneys* because *money* was plural. I asked if anyone disagreed. A couple of students did and explained what it should be, why, and did so correctly. I proceeded in this manner the rest of the night. Students started sitting upright in their chairs, they wrote more notes than they had been previously, and they referred to their textbook and handouts more frequently than in similar situations in the past. I'll have to give this a try again some time.

3/31/10

Tonight, we met in a computer lab. Students took a unit test covering the last two chapters. They also took a grammar quiz. Since students completed the grammar diagnostic assessments and student writing attitude surveys at the beginning of the course on their own time, I scheduled class time for them to take the post-assessment and post-survey.

While we were reviewing for the quiz, I noticed a couple of students were doing something on the computers. Again, I remembered The New York Times article about gaining control of the classroom and the students' attention. So I started noticing and thanking students one-by-one who were sitting at their desks, had their review materials open and ready, and had their eyes focused on me. After a few moments, I noticed one of the students who was on the computer stopped what she was doing, smiled, and gave me her undivided attention. I really like

this positive, non-threatening approach! It worked out very well, something I need to try more often for making sure students are focused, listening, and following directions, something they have had problems with in the past.

Appendix D: Interview Questions and Answers – Associate Professor

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

BEVERLY WESTBROOK, ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR, DELTA COLLEGE

FEBRUARY 8, 2010

Question 1

Q: What is your background at Delta College?

A: For 35 years, I have been teaching in the Business & Information Technology Division and Office Administration & Technology (OAT) Discipline at Delta College. The OAT 151 Business Communications I course is often found in English departments at other colleges. I am pleased to see that at Delta College, the course is in the business division.

Question 2

Q: What is your philosophy about and approach to teaching OAT 151?

A: “This is a course that is designed to have students apply writing skills in a business context.” The vocabulary in the course is business-appropriate. In business communications, we approach writing, grammar, and mechanics in a more specific way than the average English course does. The approach to writing for the business audience is taking the “you” view. This is not just common to Guffey (2008), the author of our textbook, but to most business writing textbook authors. We have been with Guffey the longest. Once we find a textbook that we like, and the textbook serves the students well, we stick with it. We are not quick to make a change. This is only our third or fourth author since I started teaching at the college.

Guffey approaches business writing based on three different organizational patterns – direct, indirect, and persuasive. The objective is to take the student’s writing skills and apply it to the business arena. We do look at writing in teams, as well as individual writing assignments.

We generally do not have students conduct formal presentations, not because we do not value it, but due to a formal sense of following the college's established outcomes and objectives for the course. We shy away from formal presentations if they are evaluated for a grade because this skill set is covered in other courses. But if presentations are covered in an informal way, then incorporating them would be okay.

OAT 151 course description, outcomes, and objectives are clearly specified on the Delta College Web site (see Attachment D.1 at the end of Appendix D).

Question 3

Q: The textbook offers so much valuable information. Each of the nine chapters taught in OAT 151 (chapters 1 and 3-10) includes a minimum of six or seven objectives, grammar rules to review, confusing words (such as affect vs. effect) to study, spelling words to practice, chapter questions to complete, and writing assignments to work on. With so much material, how much homework do you assign students and how do you cover all of the material each week and during the semester? In other words, how do you meet all of the course outcomes and objectives?

A: I have to agree with you, there is much content. Getting through the material is easier to do in the earlier chapters, when we discuss business environments and cultural diversity in the workplace, than in the later chapters, where the students are learning and applying key business writing concepts. Guffey has a lot. We do our best to provide students with time to practice, both in class and outside of class. It is challenging knowing we can spend days or weeks in any one chapter.

I encourage students to read the textbook. I do not make mandatory the work of answering the fifteen questions at the end of each chapter. However, I do review with the students all of the grammar rules and guides, confusing words, and spelling words.

For spelling, students know which words they find challenging. They know their spelling can be improved, but it's kind of late in the game. So we don't place a great deal of emphasis on spelling, but instead spelling is blended in. We focus on a few spelling words at a time. I caution students to zoom in on those words they have the most problems with. I offer ways of helping students remember how to spell words correctly. "For example, for the word *principal*, I suggest they remember the end of the word *pal* and think in their minds that the *princi'pal*' of the school is my *pal*, for example."

Regarding the questions at the end of the chapter, I talk about them in a general way at the beginning of the unit. Then we begin looking at the principles offered in the textbook. Then I take the following approach, especially for work on and reinforcement of writing concepts:

1. Teams. I divide the class in four teams: A, B, C, and D. Each team is responsible for looking at one of four items assigned to them in the practice sections at the end of each chapter. Students are instructed to come to class prepared with their revisions.
2. List Weaknesses. Students are asked to review the rewriting assignment and identify weaknesses about the example and why.
3. Discussion With the Class. In class, I lecture, and we discuss as a class the writing principles identified in the chapter.
4. Discussion in Teams. Then I ask the students to break up into their teams, share their revisions, collaborate, and decide on the best revision, even if they have to "cut and paste" from each team member's work to come up with one best revision.
5. Board Writing. Next, I ask each team to write their best revision on the board.
6. Review. We review each team's best revision. This provides an opportunity to review and apply the principles students will be using when writing for business. Though

their final revisions may not be perfect, that's good. "It's okay to see some examples that may need some work." The board writing gives us a way to see examples of most to all principles in the learning unit while dividing the workload.

7. Textbook's Solution. Then I share a copy from the textbook against which students may compare their work. This helps them see their own strengths and weaknesses, thus learning from the experience.
8. Next Class – Review Sheet. For reinforcement of writing concepts, we spend time reviewing some of the principles discussed in the previous chapter before moving on to the next chapter.

By following this process, students will have been exposed to the material at least seven times: 1) listening to and participating in the instructor's lecture and discussion, 2) reading the chapter, 3) completing the rewriting assignments, 4) reviewing rewrites in their teams, 5) reviewing as a class each team's revisions, 6) reviewing the textbook's recommended solution, and 7) reviewing the material again the following week. "The objective is for students to practice, practice, practice!"

For some of the writing principles, it is necessary to single them out and spend more time on them, such as for active and passive voice, dangling modifiers, and parallel structure.

Question 4

Q: What kind of writing assignments do you give the students? What is your grading criteria?

A: I do make use of writing assignments. There are several at the end of the chapter that I use. For example, I have the students read material in the textbook, review one of the writing assignment exercises at the end of the chapter, then follow up by asking the students to complete

the writing assignment in class. The students do the actual work in class, preferably in a computer lab where students can complete the assignment using word processing software. I give students about one hour to complete the writing assignment. During the course, students produce three in-class letters: good news, bad news, and persuasive. For the good news reply and credit refusal writing assignments, I use grading rubrics to evaluate the students' work (Attachments E.2 and E.3).

Question 5

Q: Do you use any type of peer review in the course? If so, what kind? I ask because I learned through my research about a "read aloud" peer review approach that has worked well with my students so far (see Attachment E.4).

A: We review each other's work in teams and in the class overall as previously described. I do like the idea of this peer review approach and would like to take a closer look at it, if you would please send me a copy of the article.

Question 6

Q: How do you address sentence length variety? Again, I ask because I found, through my research, a simple and effective way of addressing sentence length variety. I call the approach " 18 ± 4 or more, max 22" (see Attachment E.5). In fact, the method is so simple and easy to use, I apply the method to my own writing.

A: We talk about the importance of sentence length variety, and I would be interested in learning more about this approach. Again, if you could please send me the article, I would enjoy learning about it.

Question 7

Q: Students seem to be all over the board with their grammar skills, from those who know and apply the skills very well, to those who really need a lot of work to catch up to the meet the expectations of grammar skills for first-year college business writing students. Would you agree, based on your experience? Have you given any thought to a more individualized approach to grammar so those who do well can move to the next level, and those who need more help can get more one-on-one assistance from the instructor?

A: Students' grammar skills do vary, sometimes greatly. In the online version of OAT 151, currently taught by Dr. Gail Hoffman-Johnson, Chair, Business & Information Technology Division, I believe the course makes use of a built-in online assessment tool through Guffey. It is possible the course is set up in a more individualized manner. You might want to check with Dr. Hoffman-Johnson.

Attachment D.1

OAT 151
BUSINESS COMMUNICATIONS I
3 CREDITS

<p>Course Description: Prerequisite: READING LEVEL 5B and WRITING LEVEL 4B. Includes principles and composition of effective basic business letters and memos as well as accuracy in grammar, spelling, punctuation, sentence structure, and format. Keyboarded assignments are required. (45-0). Upon successful completion of this course, the student will be able to:</p>
<p>Outcome 1: Demonstrative a familiarity with communication foundations.</p>
<p>Objectives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A. Explain communication process including nonverbal and verbal channels B. Demonstrate communication strategies appropriate for business relationships and problem solving C. Understand the significance of intercultural communication D. Examine electronic communication including but not limited to e-mail, teleconferencing, document processing, electronic research, and Internet
<p>Outcome 2: Access, analyze, and utilize information.</p>
<p>Objectives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A. Identify an information need B. Access electronic information utilizing the on-line card catalog, electronic indices and Internet resources such as e-mail and the Web C. Analyze and evaluate the appropriateness of the sources D. Evaluate and utilize the information for letters and memos
<p>Outcome 3: Master basic writing skills using Standard English.</p>
<p>Objectives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A. Apply accepted grammar B. Use correct punctuation C. Develop well-constructed sentences D. Produce logical paragraphs E. Produce documents appropriate for business use
<p>Outcome 4: Demonstrate an understanding of the composition process.</p>
<p>Objectives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A. Define the purpose of the message, analyze the audience, establish the main idea, and choose the appropriate channel and medium B. Organize and formulate an accurate, concise, and coherent message in an appropriate tone C. Edit, rewrite, produce, and proofread the message
<p>Outcome 5: Develop an understanding of the different message plans.</p>
<p>Objectives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A. Write a direct request appropriate for a given situation B. Write a routine, positive message appropriate for a given situation C. Write a bad news message appropriate for a given situation D. Write a persuasive message appropriate for a given situation
<p>Outcome 6: Format documents.</p>
<p>Objectives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A. Format personal and business letters B. Format memos C. Format e-mail messages
<p>Outcome 7: Demonstrate professionalism appropriate for the workplace.</p>
<p>Objectives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A. Attend class promptly and consistently B. Follow written and oral directions C. Complete and submit assignments on time D. Participate constructively in classroom activities E. Display civility toward other class members and the instructor F. Demonstrate academic integrity

Attachment D.2

GOOD NEWS REPLY LETTER**ASSIGNMENT CRITERIA**Gateway Criteria:

Student Checklist	Instructor Checklist	Criteria
		A draft or outline is attached (behind the final copy).

Grading Criteria:

Grading Criteria:	Points Possible	Points Earned
Opening: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The letter presents the good news clearly/promptly The letter avoids sounding grudging/reluctant The letter avoids a wordy, drawn-out opening 	4	_____
Body: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The letter explains the necessary details The letter focuses on efforts to satisfy customer The letter avoids a long, negative apology The letter avoids negative words, accusations, and unrealistic promises The letter includes resale to restore customer confidence 	6	_____
Closing: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The closing offers a concluding thought with reference to any information/action requested The closing includes sales promotional information The closing avoids cliché endings The closing is cordial 	4	_____
Style: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The letter has a positive, courteous tone The letter is coherent, concise, and clear The letter has a good "you" view 	5	_____
Mechanics: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The letter contains correct grammar, capitalization, abbreviations, number expression, and punctuation The letter is presented in a mailable, professional-looking format 	6	_____
SUBTOTAL	25	
Late Penalty: Minus 2 points		
Spelling: Minus 1 point for each misspelling		
TOTAL	25	

Grading Scale:

25	A	21	B	17	D+
24	A	20	B-	16	D
23	A-	19	C	0-15	E
22	B+	18	C-		

Attachment D.3

CREDIT REFUSAL LETTER**ASSIGNMENT CRITERIA**Gateway Criteria:

Student Checklist	Instructor Checklist	Criteria
		Assignment is submitted by the due date.
		Assignment is keyboarded.
		All drafts are attached.
		Most recent revision is on top.
		Papers from most recent to first draft are attached.

Grading Criteria:

Grading Criteria	Points Possible	Points Earned
Buffer: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The letter uses a neutral, relevant topic to start The letter avoids raising false hopes The letter avoids thanking for something refused 	4	_____
Reasons: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The letter avoids lengthy, negative reason for denial The letter avoids relying on unexplained policy The letter avoids preaching, scolding, and other negativity The letter uses resale to restore reader confidence 	3	_____
Bad News: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The letter softens the bad news by implying it The letter suggests an alternative The letter makes the refusal clear 	4	_____
Closing: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The closing eliminates any reference to the refusal The closing offers a positive, friendly, helpful topic 	4	_____
Style: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The letter has a positive, courteous tone The letter is coherent, concise, and clear The letter has a good "you" view 	4	_____
Mechanics: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The letter contains correct grammar, capitalization, abbreviations, number expression, and punctuation The letter is presented in a mailable, professional-looking format 	6	_____
SUBTOTAL	25	
Late Penalty: Minus 2 points		
Spelling: Minus 1 point for each misspelling		
TOTAL	25	

Grading Scale:

25	A	21	B	17	D+
24	A	20	B-	16	D
23	A-	19	C	0-15	E
22	B+	18	C-		

Attachment D.4

“READ ALOUD” PEER REVIEW

Holst-Larkin (2008) uses a peer review approach with a twist, one that students find fun and effective. The approach works especially well in small groups. Here’s how it works:

Each person takes turns being the author and a reader.

1. The author gives each reader in the group a copy of his or her rough draft and keeps a copy.
2. Everyone else in the group becomes readers.
3. The first reader reads the author's draft out loud, one sentence at a time. The reader makes comments to the author about his or her feelings, thoughts, or reactions to what he or she just read. For example, the reader might read, “Dear Sirs,” and may comment to the author that she, the reader, feels discriminated against. The reader continues reading, one sentence at a time, making comments out loud.
4. The writer listens. He or she makes notes about what the reader said and about anything that strikes the author as unclear, etc.
5. The next reader in the group reads the next paragraph, one sentence at a time, making comments out loud. This process continues until the rough draft has been read aloud.
6. Then students change roles. The next person becomes the author, and so on.

Student authors really like this approach because they "hear" problems, inconsistencies, words that are not clear, etc., when readers read the drafts out loud.

Source: Holst-Larkin, J. (2008). Actively learning about readers: Audience modeling in business writing. *Business Communication Quarterly*, 71(1), 75-80.

Attachment D.5

SENTENCE LENGTH VARIETY HANDOUT

18 ± 4 OR MORE, MAX 22

Hunley (2003) says in his abstract, “A sentence variety exercise, used to help student writers consciously consider and control the lengths and types of sentences in their essays, is discussed. Students revised paragraphs according to the method...[and] most students were able to reduce wordiness and make their work more concise.”

Here is how to use the 18 ± 4 or more, max 22 method:

1. Count the words in the first sentence. If more than 22 words, revise the sentence until it is 22 words or less.
2. Count the words in the next sentence. The count should be 4 or more words longer or shorter than the previous sentence. If not, the sentence will need to be revised.
3. Count the words in the next sentence. Again, the count should be 4 or more words longer or shorter than the previous sentence. If not, the sentence will need to be revised.
4. Continue this until the words in all sentences are counted. Revise sentences to make them 4 or more words shorter or longer than the sentences before and after them. The maximum number of words in a sentence should not exceed 22. Often, sentences will need to be shortened or divided into two sentences.

Source: Hunley, T. C. (2003). Almost a game: Enabling restrictions in sentence variety exercises.

College Teaching, 51(1), 9-12.

Appendix E. Interview Questions and Answers – Students

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS
STUDENTS, OAT 151, WINTER 2010, DELTA COLLEGE

MARCH 31, 2010

Kelsey

1. How do you feel about your writing skills? I have always been confident in my writing skills. I have always enjoyed writing and my English classes. I always find it fun to learn something new that will help me do better.
2. How do you see yourself as a business writer? I do use in some other classes my writing skills and what we are learning in this class. I see myself as being very prepared for writing in business. I used to be a little wordy, explain everything in great detail, and had no idea of what the audience needed. I am more prepared now.
3. What are your writing goals for this course? Sometimes I misplace a comma or use a semi-colon where I shouldn't. Sometimes I could be less wordy. Those are my two main points. Then I think, "Oh, I should have done this or that."
4. Of the activities, exercises, strategies, and other suggestions offered in the course, which ones have you found most helpful and why?
 - a. Peer Review. The peer review is easy for me because I might overlook something in my own writing that someone else pointed out to me. I know how I want it to sound, but they don't always see it the way I had hoped. Sometimes they'll say I'm too wordy, or I don't provide enough information. Peer review is one of the main things that has helped.
 - b. Sentence Length Variety. The sentence length variety 18 ± thing is something I used. In one paper, I had a really long sentence that needed to be shortened. I split it up into

- two sentences. My mom is a supervisor of accounting, and she asked me to help her one time by looking at something she wrote for work. One of her sentences was a really long one. I told her about the 18 ± rule. She asked, “What? What’s that?” I told her it was something I learned in class. It helped her. Her friends at work thought it was funny, in a good way, that “your daughter’s teaching you!”
- c. Team/Board Exercises. I like those team/board exercises. They help me see how other people write, view the lesson, and structure their papers in different ways. That really helps. Instead of sticking to old ways or ways you usually do something, it helps you to see other ways of looking at it or approaching writing.
5. What other activities and strategies have you found helpful? I may regret saying this, but at first, when I heard how much homework there was, my initial reaction was, “Seriously?” But that’s what we had to do, so I did it. All that homework really helped me understand. When we go online to do the practice quizzes, it helps because it tells me what I did wrong and why. All of this really helps you so much.
6. What would you have done differently if you were teaching the class? I had Business English before with Mrs. Beverly Westbrook. She had us work on a lot of the exercises at the end of each chapter. I always liked those. It gave me an opportunity to really use what I was learning and to do it right. We had the potential to use it and expand on it. It’s kind of like what we’ve been doing in this class recently.
7. What additional comments or thoughts do you have that you would like to add? “I know that business writing should be ‘short, sweet, and to the point’ but also have some personal touch to it. I learned that all writing should be in ‘you’ view and that the writing should always be put so that it is showing the reader how they will benefit.”

Deana

1. How do you feel about your writing skills? I think they're about fair. I'd say I'm a babbling. When I was in high school, I was taught to put all my thoughts down on paper. Then when I was done, I had to go in and edit it.
2. How do you see yourself as a business writer? At work, I usually do customer service work, but I don't do much writing. Occasionally I have to write emails. In my past job, I had to write several emails to different supervisors. I would usually write them so they are short and sweet, very straightforward, and very formal.
3. What are your writing goals for this course? My goals were to make sure my form is correct and make sure my sentences are short, yet understandable. I try not to overthink my writing, because then I mess it up. I follow my first thoughts and try not to second guess myself. I am usually right the first time.
4. Of the activities, exercises, strategies, and other suggestions offered in the course, which ones have you found most helpful and why?
 - a. Homework. You have to explain. You can't just write an answer, but you have to explain why. It makes you put more thought into it. The homework also taught me how to meet deadlines. It used to take me two hours to get all of the homework done. But now I can get it done in one hour with a lot of concentration.
 - b. Peer Review. I liked that because sometimes you don't see it and someone else can. Four or six eyes are sometimes better than two. You might think someone can give you an idea. We helped each other with writing and with format.

- c. Team Writing. In my group, all four of us had about the same thing. I can see how others in my group think and know I'm not the only one thinking like that. I like the teamwork. I also like the diversity.
 - d. Sentence Length Variety. Yeah, I need that. I can just go and go when I write and read it later. Sometimes I don't know what to write, so my high school teacher told me to write all my thoughts down. I might have a full paper. I time myself for everything. If I give myself two hours to write, then that's how much time I spend at it.
5. What other activities and strategies have you found helpful? I like the group work, homework, class participation, spelling words, and I even like the library assignment, which showed me how to surf the Internet and find information.
 6. What would you have done differently if you were teaching the class? We did everything so far.
 7. What additional comments or thoughts do you have that you would like to add? Just that I like the class. This is the second time I am taking the class. The first time, we didn't have nearly so much work and homework to do, and I got a D in class. This time, I am doing a lot more work, about four times more work, and I'm getting an A so far.

Brandi

1. How do you feel about your writing skills? I feel like I'm improving. My writing seems to be lengthy. I sort of learned how to shorten it. I feel my writing skills are improving.
2. How do you see yourself as a business writer? I work in retail, so I don't have much of a chance to be a business writer. I'm not too confident. In this class, I learned a lot. I will take the knowledge I've learned and apply it to my business writing in the future. Before, I was

not too confident. But now I know the procedures. I feel like I will be more confident when I start writing in business. I can apply what I have learned to my personal life letters. I have to write a lot to my boss in a log book. I am applying some of the skills to this. In fact, I wish my boss would take this course. I feel like I want to go back and correct everything my boss writes.

3. What are your writing goals for this course? My goals are to improve grammar, confusing words, and spelling words. I used to be good at spelling, but not so much any more with the Internet and writing using abbreviations. Studying the confusing words and spelling words in class really helped me out a lot.
4. Of the activities, exercises, strategies, and other suggestions offered in the course, which ones have you found most helpful and why?
 - a. Spelling and Confusing Words. Reviewing spelling words and confusing words were helpful.
 - b. Letters, Emails, and Memos. Going step by step when writing and formatting business ;letters, emails, and memos was helpful, especially since we learned each of them separately and the procedures for each one are somewhat different. This has helped a lot.
 - c. Peer Review. When the others read my pieces, they commented how I needed a comma here or there. When they read the work out loud, I could hear some of the changes I needed to make. It would be better if they gave me more specific feedback. It helped me to read their pieces because it gave me different ideas about how to write.
 - d. Team Writing. I liked it that way instead of writing individually. You may think you're writing is right, but that's not always the case. I like doing the same, but

- different questions. For example, if each team has to work on something, but there are four teams and four problems. Each team will work on a different problem related to the main thing we are working on. This gives me new perspectives from different points of view.
- e. Sentence Length Variety. Actually, I keep forgetting about this until the instructor brings it up, like she's doing now in the interview. My sentences aren't usually too long. My paragraphs tend to be a little long. The instructor brought this up several times in class. I should probably give it a try.
5. What other activities and strategies have you found helpful? Clue (grammar) sentences are helpful. I like how the book shows it the wrong way, then the right way. I am trying really hard to apply this, not just in this class, but in other classes I am taking. I can use this in several other places.
6. What would you have done differently if you were teaching the class? I don't know why, but I always had trouble with nouns and subjects and identifying them. It would be nice if we could take extra time to re-learn them. I get it when I'm in class, but then I forget it once I'm out of class.
7. What additional comments or thoughts do you have that you would like to add? I think everything taught so far has been positive. I think each and every piece has helped me in some way. Each day, I learned a little more. "I feel like I have come a long way since I've been in this class. I feel I know how to approach different situations better than I did a couple of months ago. I learned that business writing is not all about length or quantity, it is about conciseness and quality."

Jessie

1. How do you feel about your writing skills? I think my writing skills are adequate. I feel pretty confident about my writing skills. I have a few weak areas, but think they are good overall.
2. How do you see yourself as a business writer? I don't have a lot of experience writing in business. I write emails, primarily. I work as a co-op student and correspond via email. I have been able to hone my skills and make my emails sound more professional. I don't really get any feedback from anyone at work. Someone did ask me to proofread one of their documents one time, which I thought was nice that they asked me.
3. What are your writing goals for this course? Mostly I wanted to brush up on grammar skills. I also needed to get back to the basics of writing – sentence structure, clauses, etc.
4. Of the activities, exercises, strategies, and other suggestions offered in the course, which ones have you found most helpful and why?
 - a. Clue (Grammar). I liked the grammar review and checkpoint exercises. You read the rules, apply them, and check your answers. I think those have been really helpful.
 - b. Peer Review. For me, it has been beneficial reading other people's work to see how they write. It's similar to reading books, which helps you write better.
 - c. Sentence Length Variety. This hit home. My sentences were too long. I am definitely watching myself on that one.
 - d. Team Writing. I am definitely glad we did writing assignments in groups. Some of the letters in the textbook that we had to rewrite were so poorly written, it was overwhelming to even try to figure them out on our own. It was good working on them

in groups. It is easier to volunteer in class too knowing you have the support of your group.

- e. Power Point Presentations. I am a big fan of Power Point presentations. I'm a visual learning. I like having the good, old-fashioned basic, sturdy Power Points.
5. What other activities and strategies have you found helpful? I am probably going to kick myself for saying this, but I am surprised we didn't do more oral presentations. Though I know we took turns sharing with the rest of the class each team's results. And I know we'll be writing our own letters and presenting the results to the rest of the class at the end of the semester.
 6. What would you have done differently if you were teaching the class? As far as all of the homework, it did seem overwhelming at first, but I got used to it. Now it flows, and it's natural. Tell people to suck it up and get used to it.
 7. What additional comments or thoughts do you have that you would like to add? We do cover a lot of the hard core basics – the essentials. "I definitely brushed up on my grammar and spelling skills. I've already noticed changes in my sentence length and my tendency to proofread before sending."

Kim

1. How do you feel about your writing skills? I feel pretty confident about my writing skills. Sometimes I am at a loss for words. I usually write something once, then proofread it. That seems to work well for me.
2. How do you see yourself as a business writer? I work in retail, so I don't really write much, if at all. When I am training new people, I do tend to critique Web sites. I notice incorrect punctuation or wording.

3. What are your writing goals for this course? My primary goal is to be more direct. I tend to ramble sometimes, usually when I can't seem to find the right words. The spelling and confusing words have helped. It goes back to losing it if you don't use it. I do use the dictionary quite often.
4. Of the activities, exercises, strategies, and other suggestions offered in the course, which ones have you found most helpful and why?
 - a. Format. Learning how to properly format various types of business writing has been really helpful. I was never really sure how to do this. I didn't realize there are so many ways to communicate.
 - b. Peer Review. This works really well. It's good to have another set of eyes, another point of view, look at my work. I am told I either have a lack of or too much information, spelling error, or punctuation errors in my writing.
 - c. Team Writing. It's fun to see who wrote what, combine them, or use one or another's work to write on the board. Sometimes it's hard to choose. Sometimes everyone's work is good, and sometimes it is not.
5. What other activities and strategies have you found helpful? Nothing really.
6. What would you have done differently if you were teaching the class? I would like to see us write emails to each other in a mock business format, then critique each other's work. Email is widely used in business. This would teach us better, help us apply netiquette, and so on.
7. What additional comments or thoughts do you have that you would like to add? In generally, everything has been good.

Appendix F: Student Writing Attitude Survey and Raw Data

Quantitative Survey

1. How do you feel when you have something you want to write about?

- Great
- Good
- Bad
- Very Bad

2. How do you feel when you have free time to write?

- Great
- Good
- Bad
- Very Bad

3. How do you feel when you receive writing supplies for a gift?

- Great
- Good
- Bad
- Very Bad

4. How do you feel when you start writing something new?

- Great
- Good
- Bad
- Very Bad

5. How do you feel about writing assignments in school?

- Great
- Good
- Bad
- Very Bad

6. How do you feel when the instructor asks you questions about what you write?

- Great
- Good
- Bad
- Very Bad

7. How do you feel when you go to a place where you can buy writing supplies?

- Great
- Good
- Bad
- Very Bad

STUDENT WRITING ATTITUDE SURVEY

RAW DATA

STUDENT WRITING ATTITUDE SURVEY

PRE-Survey	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1-How do you feel when you have something you want to write about?	Good	Great	Good	Good	Good	Good	Great	Good	Bad	Good
2-How do you feel when you have free time to write?	Good	Great	Good	Good	Good	Good	Good	Good	Bad	Good
3-How do you feel when you receive writing supplies for a gift?	Very Bad	Good	Good	Bad	Good	Good	Good	Good	Good	Good
4-How do you feel when you start writing something new?	Good	Great	Good	Good	Good	Good	Good	Good	Bad	Good
5-How do you feel about writing assignments in school?	Good	Very Bad	Good	Good	Bad	Bad	Great	Good	Bad	Bad
6-How do you feel when the instructor asks you questions about what you write?	Bad	Good	Good	Good	Bad	Bad	Great	Good	Good	Good
7-How do you feel when you go to a place where you can buy writing supplies?	Bad	Good	Great	Good	Good	Good	Good	Good	Good	Good

POST-Survey	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1-How do you feel when you have something you want to write about?	Good	Great	Great	Good	Good	Good	Great	Good	Good	Good
2-How do you feel when you have free time to write?	Good	Great	Great	Good	Good	Good	Good	Good	Good	Good
3-How do you feel when you receive writing supplies for a gift?	Bad	Great	Great	Bad	Good	Good	Good	Good	Good	Good
4-How do you feel when you start writing something new?	Good	Great	Great	Good	Bad	Good	Good	Good	Good	Good
5-How do you feel about writing assignments in school?	Good	Very Bad	Great	Good	Bad	Good	Good	Good	Bad	Good
6-How do you feel when the instructor asks you questions about what you write?	Great	Bad	Great	Good	Bad	Good	Good	Good	Good	Good
7-How do you feel when you go to a place where you can buy writing supplies?	Bad	Great	Great	Bad	Good	Good	Good	Good	Great	Good

Appendix G: Grammar Skills Diagnostic Assessment and Raw Data

GRAMMAR SKILLS DIAGNOSTIC ASSESSMENT

SAMPLE QUESTIONS

This McGraw Hill (2004) [online] diagnostic test will help you assess your skills in an array of grammatical areas. To begin, simply answer the first question above, then click the NEXT QUESTION button. When you complete the test, you will receive a SCORE REPORT (Attachment A) illustrating your test performance and recommending McGraw-Hill resources for further study.

Instructions: Read the following sentences. Select the correct form of the word or words from the choices offered.

Commas

Instructions: Select the sentence that best corrects each sentence provided. Select the correct answer.

1. No matter how hard he banged the door would not open.
 - a. No matter, how hard he banged the door would not open.
 - b. No, matter how hard he banged the door would not open.
 - c. No matter how hard he banged the door, would not open.
 - d. No matter how hard he banged, the door would not open.

Modifiers

Instructions: The following items contain three versions of the same sentence. Click the button next to the letter of the correct version.

2. Click the button next to the letter of the correct version.
 - a. Blazing across the sky, the astronomer watched the comet.
 - b. The astronomer watched the comet blazing across the sky.
 - c. Watching the comet, the astronomer blazed across the sky.

Parallelism

3. Click the button next to the letter of the correct version.
 - a. New York City is famous for its Broadway plays, its great restaurants, and it has the Statue of Liberty.
 - b. New York City is famous for its Broadway plays, its great restaurants, and the Statue of Liberty.
 - c. New York City is famous for its Broadway plays, having great restaurants, and the Statue of Liberty.

Parentheses

Instructions: Select the sentence that best corrects the sentence provided. Select the correct answer.

4. Walt Whitman he once worked for the Brooklyn Eagle was honored at the Journalism Hall of Fame.
 - a. Walt Whitman (he once worked for the Brooklyn Eagle was honored) at the Journalism Hall of Fame.

- b. (Walt Whitman) he once worked for the Brooklyn Eagle was honored at the Journalism Hall of Fame.
- c. Walt Whitman (he once worked for the Brooklyn Eagle) was honored at the Journalism Hall of Fame.
- d. (Walt Whitman he once worked for the Brooklyn Eagle was honored at the) Journalism Hall of Fame.

Quotation Marks

Instructions: Select the sentence that best corrects the sentence provided. Select the correct answer.

- 5. My dentist was briefly mentioned in an article called License to “Steal.”
 - a. My dentist was briefly mentioned in an “article called License to Steal.”
 - b. My dentist was briefly mentioned in an article called License to Steal.
 - c. My “dentist” was briefly mentioned in an article called License to Steal.
 - d. My dentist was briefly mentioned in an article called “License to Steal.”

Run-On Sentences and Comma Splices

Instructions: Read the numbered sentences in each item and identify any comma splices. Select the answer that includes the sentence(s) with comma splices. An item may contain more than one error. Select the correct answer.

- 6. Select the correct answer.
 - (1) The entire house is filled with stacks of books and newspapers. (2) It’s impossible to find anything, the place is a real mess.
 - a. sentence 1
 - b. sentence 2
 - c. sentences 1 and 2
 - d. no errors

Sentence Fragments

Instructions: Read the numbered sentences in each item, and identify any sentence fragments. Select the answer that includes all of the sentence fragments. Each item may contain more than one fragment.

- 7. Select the correct answer.
 - (1) The smoothest and most efficient highways of the early nineteenth century. (2) Canals are artificial water routes used to transport people and cargo. (3) Canal barges were powered by teams of mules, which would tow them from shore. (4) Later, with the invention of the steam engine. (5) Railroads quickly replaced canals as the fastest and cheapest means of transportation.
 - a. sentences 2 and 4
 - b. sentence 4
 - c. sentences 1 and 4
 - d. sentences 2, 3, and 5

Subject/Verb Agreement

Instructions: Choose the correct form of the verb. Keep verbs in the tense they appear in. Select the correct answer.

8. The Italians has developed a fine cuisine.

Verbs

Instructions: Change the verbs to the present tense. Select the present tense form of the verb from the answers provided.

9. The child awoke at the sound of her father's singing.
- awakes
 - woke up
 - will wake
 - no change
 - e.

Congratulations, you've completed the diagnostic. Now you can send the results to your professor and yourself.

Your name: _____

Your email address: _____

Instructor's email address: _____

Course name: _____

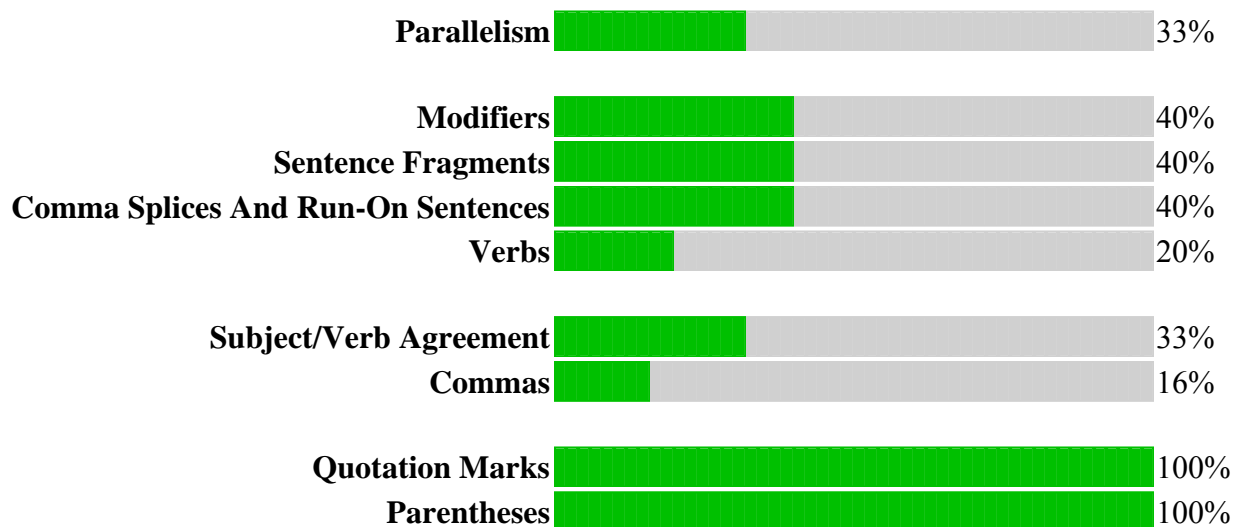
Send Scores

Attachment A

GRAMMAR SKILLS DIAGNOSTIC ASSESSMENT

SCORE REPORT

Percent Correct by Concept:



You would benefit from review of the following skills:

Parallelism.**Modifiers.****Sentence Fragments.****Comma Splices And Run-On Sentences.****Verbs.****Subject/Verb Agreement.****Commas.**

GRAMMAR SKILLS DIAGNOSTIC ASSESSMENT

RAW DATA

GRAMMAR SKILLS DIAGNOSTIC ASSESSMENT

PRE-Assessment	SUM	S.D.	MEAN	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
Commas	1198	11.2	92.2	83	100	100	83	83	83	100	100	100	100	100	66	100
Modifiers	1120	15.0	86.2	80	60	60	100	100	100	100	100	100	80	80	80	80
Parallelism	995	21.3	76.5	66	100	33	100	66	66	100	66	66	66	66	100	100
Parentheses	1200	27.7	92.3	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	0	100
Quote Marks	1300	0.0	100.0	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
Run Ons & Splices	900	15.5	69.2	40	60	60	100	60	60	60	80	80	60	80	80	80
S.Fragments	960	35.9	73.8	0	60	80	100	80	100	100	100	0	80	100	60	100
S/V Agreement	929	18.5	71.5	50	66	66	83	83	66	83	100	50	83	83	33	83
Verbs	900	26.6	69.2	40	100	80	100	80	60	60	100	40	20	100	60	60
SUM				559	746	679	866	752	735	803	846	636	689	809	579	803
S.D.				32.8	20.4	23.0	7.5	14.6	18.6	17.5	12.4	35.2	25.7	12.9	32.0	14.3
MEAN				62.1	82.9	75.4	96.2	83.6	81.7	89.2	94.0	70.7	76.6	89.9	64.3	89.2

POST-Assessment	SUM	S.D.	MEAN													
Commas	1199	14.7	92.2	83	100	100	83	100	100	100	100	83	100	100	50	100
Modifiers	1140	15.4	87.7	80	100	60	100	100	80	100	100	100	60	100	80	80
Parallelism	1097	22.3	84.4	100	33	66	100	100	100	66	100	66	100	100	100	66
Parentheses	1200	27.7	92.3	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	0	100
Quote Marks	1300	0.0	100.0	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
Run Ons & Splices	920	26.6	70.8	60	100	40	100	100	80	40	100	40	40	60	60	100
S.Fragments	960	35.9	73.8	0	80	60	100	80	100	100	100	100	60	100	0	80
S/V Agreement	1012	12.6	77.8	83	66	100	83	83	83	83	66	83	83	66	50	83
Verbs	860	29.9	66.2	80	100	80	100	60	80	80	0	60	40	100	40	40
SUM				686	779	706	866	823	823	769	766	732	683	826	480	749
S.D.				31.4	23.5	22.8	7.5	14.3	10.2	21.0	33.8	21.8	26.1	16.4	37.1	20.3
MEAN				76.2	86.6	78.4	96.2	91.4	91.4	85.4	85.1	81.3	75.9	91.8	53.3	83.2

Appendix H: Grammar, Confusing Words, and Spelling Words Quiz and Raw Data

UNIT 7 GRAMMAR QUIZ

APOSTROPHES, PERIODS, QUESTIONS MARKS, DASHES, AND PARENTHESES

Directions: For each sentence below, write the correct form of the possessive in the space provided. Write "Correct" if the sentence is correct. Each sentence is worth 1 point.

1. Is Tylers report ready to be submitted? _____
2. Some customers felt they didn't get their moneys worth. _____
3. All new depositors qualify for free checking accounts. _____
4. The goal of the IRS is to simplify all taxpayers returns. _____
5. Passengers concerns about cell phone use on planes is valid. _____
6. Every passengers luggage must be X-rayed, and some
bags will be opened. _____

PERIODS, QUESTION MARKS, DASHES, AND PARENTHESES

Directions: Edit each sentence below, adding the appropriate punctuation. Each sentence is worth 1 point.

7. Where did you find that stationery
8. Will you please add this record to the database
9. The dogwood grows well in many states for instance New York, Maryland, and Virginia.
10. A provision in author Willa Cather's will she died in 1947 prohibited publication of her letters.

CONFUSING WORDS (see Attachment H.2 for list of all confusing words for this unit)

Directions: In the space provided, please write the word that correctly completes the sentence. Write legibly, please. Each correct answer is worth 1/2 point.

- _____ 1. The homeowner was (liable, libel) for the carpenter's wages.
- _____ 2. They complained of dogs running (loose, lose) through the neighborhood.
- _____ 3. The tone of his voice (implied, inferred) disgust at what was proposed.
- _____ 4. Weight-lifting exercise helps build (lean, lien) body mass.
- _____ 5. Our congressman's wife sued the tabloid for (liable, libel).
- _____ 6. Why pay attention to such a (minor, miner) matter?
- _____ 7. May I (imply, infer) from what you said that you agree with my proposal?
- _____ 8. Declining profits caused brokers to (loose, lose) confidence in the firm.
- _____ 9. Many (minors, miners) emerged dark and sooty from the mouth of the tunnel.
- _____ 10. The bank placed a (lean, lien) on my parent's business for unpaid taxes.

SPELLING (see Attachment H.2 for list of all spelling words for this unit)

Directions: As the instructor says each word, spell the word correctly below. Write legibly, please. Each correct answer is worth 1/2 point.

- 1. _____
- 2. _____
- 3. _____
- 4. _____
- 5. _____
- 6. _____
- 7. _____
- 8. _____
- 9. _____
- 10. _____

GRAMMAR QUIZZES

RAW DATA

UNIT 1 – Sentence Structure, Confusing Words, and Spelling Words

UNIT 1 - SENTENCE STRUCTURE																		
PRE-Test	SUM	S.D.	MEAN	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15
Sentence Structure	93	2.4	6.2	8	8	10	6	7	9	2	8	4	9	3	5	5	4	5
Confusing Words	127	1.1	8.5	8	6	10	8	9	10	9	8	8	8	8	9	10	8	8
Spelling Words	124	1.7	8.3	7	8	8	7	10	10	4	10	8	10	8	8	10	7	9
SUM	344			23	22	28	21	26	29	15	26	20	27	19	22	25	19	22
S.D.	18.8			0.6	1.2	1.2	1.0	1.5	0.6	3.6	1.2	2.3	1.0	2.9	2.1	2.9	2.1	2.1
MEAN	114.7			7.7	7.3	9.3	7.0	8.7	9.7	5.0	8.7	6.7	9.0	6.3	7.3	8.3	6.3	7.3
POST-Test	SUM	S.D.	MEAN															
Sentence Structure	110	1.8	7.3	6	7	10	7	8	10	9	7	7	8	3	6	6	8	8
Confusing Words	123	1.3	8.2	8	10	8	10	8	10	8	7	6	8	8	6	10	8	8
Spelling Words	143	0.6	9.5	9	10	9	9	10	10	8	10	10	10	10	9	10	10	9
SUM	376			23	27	27	26	26	30	25	24	23	26	21	21	26	26	25
S.D.	16.6			1.5	1.7	1.0	1.5	1.2	0.0	0.6	1.7	2.1	1.2	3.6	1.7	2.3	1.2	0.6
MEAN	125.3			7.7	9.0	9.0	8.7	8.7	10.0	8.3	8.0	7.7	8.7	7.0	7.0	8.7	8.7	8.3

UNIT 7 – Apostrophes and Other Punctuation, Confusing Words, and Spelling Words

UNIT 7 - APOSTROPHES																	
PRE-Test	SUM	S.D.	MEAN	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12		
Apostrophes	52	2.1	4.3	1	7	5	3	7	7	3	4	5	5	1	4		
Confusing Words	117	0.6	9.8	10	10	10	10	10	10	9	10	10	8	10	10		
Spelling Words	90	2.0	7.5	6	8	7	7	10	10	7	10	3	8	6	8		
SUM	259			17	25	22	20	27	27	19	24	18	21	17	22		
S.D.	32.7			4.5	1.5	2.5	3.5	1.7	1.7	3.1	3.5	3.6	1.7	4.5	3.1		
MEAN	86.3			5.7	8.3	7.3	6.7	9.0	9.0	6.3	8.0	6.0	7.0	5.7	7.3		
POST-Test	SUM	S.D.	MEAN														
Apostrophes	78.5	2.5	6.5	4	9	8	6	10	10	3	7	6	5	3	7.5		
Confusing Words	119	0.3	9.9	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	9		
Spelling Words	107	0.8	8.9	8	9	9	10	9	10	8	9	8	10	9	8		
SUM	304.5			22	28	27	26	29	30	21	26	24	25	22	24.5		
S.D.	20.8			3.1	0.6	1.0	2.3	0.6	0.0	3.6	1.5	2.0	2.9	3.8	0.8		
MEAN	101.5			7.3	9.3	9.0	8.7	9.7	10.0	7.0	8.7	8.0	8.3	7.3	8.2		

Appendix I: Confusing Words Study Guide

CONFUSING WORDS STUDY GUIDE SAMPLE PAGES

UNIT 7: IMPLY to MINOR

imply: im-ply - Pronunciation: \im-'plɪ\

- Function: *transitive verb*
- Inflected Form(s): **im-plied; im-ply-ing**
- Etymology: Middle English *emplier*, from Anglo-French *emplier* to entangle — more at [EMPLOY](#)
- Date: 14th century - **1 obsolete** : [ENFOLD](#), [ENTWINE](#)
2 : to involve or indicate by inference, association, or necessary consequence rather than by direct statement <rights *imply* obligations>
3 : to contain potentially
4 : to express indirectly <his silence *implied* consent>
synonyms see [SUGGEST](#)
usage see [INFER](#)

infer: in-fer - Pronunciation: \in-'fɛr\

- Function: *verb*
- Inflected Form(s): **in-ferred; in-fer-ring**
- Etymology: Middle French or Latin; Middle French *inferer*, from Latin *inferre*, literally, to carry or bring into, from *in-* + *ferre* to carry — more at [BEAR](#)
- Date: 1528 - *transitive verb* **1** : to derive as a conclusion from facts or premises <we see smoke and *infer* fire — L. A. White> — compare [IMPLY](#)
2 : [GUESS](#), [SURMISE](#) <your letter...allows me to *infer* that you are as well as ever — O. W. Holmes †1935>
3 a : to involve as a normal outcome of thought **b** : to point out : [INDICATE](#) <this doth *infer* the zeal I had to see him — Shakespeare> <another survey...*infers* that two-thirds of all present computer installations are not paying for themselves — H. R. Chellman>
4 : [SUGGEST](#), [HINT](#) <are you *inferring* I'm incompetent?> *intransitive verb* : to draw [inferences](#) <men...have observed, *inferred*, and reasoned...to all kinds of results — John Dewey>
— **in-fer-able** also **in-fer-ri-ble** \in-'fɛr-ə-bəl\ *adjective*
— **in-fer-rer** \-'fɛr-ər\ *noun*
synonyms [INFER](#), [DEDUCE](#), [CONCLUDE](#), [JUDGE](#), [GATHER](#) mean to arrive at a mental conclusion. [INFER](#) implies arriving at a conclusion by reasoning from evidence; if the evidence is slight, the term comes close to *surmise* <from that remark, I *inferred* that they knew each other>. [DEDUCE](#) often adds to [INFER](#) the special implication of drawing a particular inference from a generalization <denied we could *deduce* anything important from human mortality>. [CONCLUDE](#) implies arriving at a necessary inference at the end of a chain of reasoning <*concluded* that only the accused could be guilty>. [JUDGE](#) stresses a weighing of the evidence on which a conclusion is based <*judge* people by their actions>. [GATHER](#) suggests an intuitive forming of a conclusion from implications <*gathered* their desire to be alone without a word>.

lean - Pronunciation: \lɛn\

- Function: *verb*
- Inflected Form(s): **leaned** \lɛnd, chiefly British 'lent\; **lean-ing** \lɛ-nɪŋ\
- Etymology: Middle English *lenen*, from Old English *hleonian*; akin to Old High German *hlinēn* to lean, Greek *klinein*, Latin *clinare*
- Date: before 12th century - *intransitive verb* **1 a** : to incline, deviate, or bend from a vertical position **b** : to cast one's weight to one side for support
2 : to rely for support or inspiration
3 : to incline in opinion, taste, or desire <*leaning* toward a career in chemistry> *transitive verb* : to cause to lean : [INCLINE](#)
— **lean on** : to apply pressure to

lien - Pronunciation: \ˈlēn, ˈlē-ən\ (spelling tip: i before e except after c)

- Function: *noun*
- Etymology: Anglo-French *lien*, *loven* bond, restraint, from Latin *ligamen*, from *ligare* to bind — more at [LIGATURE](#)
- Date: 1531 - **1** : a charge upon real or personal property for the satisfaction of some debt or duty ordinarily arising by operation of law
2 : the security interest created by a mortgage

liable: li-a-ble - Pronunciation: \ˈlī-ə-bəl, especially in sense 2 often ˈlī-bəl\

- Function: *adjective*
- Etymology: Middle English *lyable*, from Anglo-French **liable*, from *lier* to bind, from Latin *ligare* — more at [LIGATURE](#)
- Date: 15th century
1 a : obligated according to law or equity : [RESPONSIBLE](#) **b** : subject to appropriation or attachment
2 a : being in a position to incur —used with *to*<*liable* to a fine> **b** : exposed or subject to some usually adverse contingency or action <watch out or you're *liable* to fall>
synonyms [LIABLE](#), [OPEN](#), [EXPOSED](#), [SUBJECT](#), [PRONE](#), [SUSCEPTIBLE](#), [SENSITIVE](#) mean being by nature or through circumstances likely to experience something adverse. [LIABLE](#) implies a possibility or probability of incurring something because of position, nature, or particular situation <*liable* to get lost>. [OPEN](#) stresses a lack of barriers preventing incurrence <a claim *open* to question>. [EXPOSED](#) suggests lack of protection or powers of resistance against something actually present or threatening <*exposed* to infection>. [SUBJECT](#) implies an openness for any reason to something that must be suffered or undergone <all reports are *subject* to review>. [PRONE](#) stresses natural tendency or propensity to incur something <*prone* to delay>. [SUSCEPTIBLE](#) implies conditions existing in one's nature or individual constitution that make incurrence probable <very *susceptible* to flattery>. [SENSITIVE](#) implies a readiness to respond to or be influenced by forces or stimuli <unduly *sensitive* to criticism>. **synonyms** see in addition [RESPONSIBLE](#)

libel: li-bel - Pronunciation: \ˈlī-bəl\

- Function: *noun*
- Etymology: Middle English, written declaration, from Anglo-French, from Latin *libellus*, diminutive of *liber* book
- Date: 14th century
1 a : a written statement in which a plaintiff in certain courts sets forth the cause of action or the relief sought **b** *archaic* : a handbill especially attacking or defaming someone
2 a : a written or oral defamatory statement or representation that conveys an unjustly unfavorable impression **b** (1) : a statement or representation published without just cause and tending to expose another to public contempt (2) : defamation of a person by written or representational means (3) : the publication of blasphemous, treasonable, seditious, or obscene writings or pictures (4) : the act, tort, or crime of publishing such a libel

slander: slan-der - Pronunciation: \ˈslan-dər\

- Function: *transitive verb*
- Inflected Form(s): **slan-dered**; **slan-der-ing** \-d(ə-)rɪŋ\
- Date: 13th century
: to utter slander against : [DEFAME](#)
synonyms see [MALIGN](#)
— **slan-der-er** \-dər-ər\ *noun*

loose - Pronunciation: \ˈlūs\

- Function: *adjective*
- Inflected Form(s): **loos-er**; **loos-est**

- Etymology: Middle English *lous*, from Old Norse *lauss*; akin to Old High German *lōs* loose — more at [LESS](#)
- Date: 13th century
 - 1 a** : not rigidly fastened or securely attached **b** (1) : having worked partly free from attachments <a loose tooth> (2) : having relative freedom of movement **c** : produced freely and accompanied by raising of mucus <a loose cough> **d** : not tight-fitting
 - 2 a** : free from a state of confinement, restraint, or obligation <a lion loose in the streets> <spend loose funds wisely> **b** : not brought together in a bundle, container, or binding **c** *archaic* : [DISCONNECTED](#), [DETACHED](#)
 - 3 a** : not dense, close, or compact in structure or arrangement **b** : not solid : [WATERY](#) <loose stools>
 - 4 a** : lacking in restraint or power of restraint <a loose tongue> **b** : lacking moral restraint : [UNCHASTE](#)
 - c** : [OVERACTIVE](#); *specifically* : marked by frequent voiding especially of watery stools <loose bowels>
 - 5 a** : not tightly drawn or stretched : [SLACK](#) **b** : being flexible or relaxed <stay loose>
 - 6 a** : lacking in precision, exactness, or care <loose brushwork> <loose usage> **b** : permitting freedom of interpretation
 - 7** : not in the possession of either of two competing teams <a loose ball> <a loose puck>
 - **loose-ly** *adverb*
 - **loose-ness** *noun*

lose - Pronunciation: \ˈlüz\

- Function: *verb*
- Inflected Form(s): **lost** \ˈlɒst\; **los-ing** \ˈlū-zɪŋ\
- Etymology: Middle English, from Old English *losian* to perish, lose, from *los* destruction; akin to Old English *lēosan* to lose; akin to Old Norse *losa* to loosen, Latin *luere* to atone for, Greek *lyein* to loosen, dissolve, destroy
- Date: before 12th century
 - transitive verb* **1 a** : to bring to destruction —used chiefly in passive construction <the ship was lost on the reef> **b** : [DAMN](#) <if he shall gain the whole world and lose his own soul — Matthew 16:26(Authorized Version)>
 - 2** : to miss from one's possession or from a customary or supposed place
 - 3** : to suffer deprivation of : part with especially in an unforeseen or accidental manner
 - 4 a** : to suffer loss through the death or removal of or final separation from (a person) **b** : to fail to keep control of or allegiance of <lose votes> <lost his temper>
 - 5 a** : to fail to use : let slip by : [WASTE](#) <no time to lose> **b** (1) : to fail to win, gain, or obtain <lose a prize> <lose a contest> (2) : to undergo defeat in <lost every battle> **c** : to fail to catch with the senses or the mind <lost what she said>
 - 6** : to cause the loss of
 - 7** : to fail to keep, sustain, or maintain <lost my balance>
 - 8 a** : to cause to miss one's way or bearings <lost himself in the maze of streets> **b** : to make (oneself) withdrawn from immediate reality <lost herself in daydreaming>
 - 9 a** : to wander or go astray from <lost his way> **b** : to draw away from : [OUTSTRIP](#) <lost his pursuers>
 - 10** : to fail to keep in sight or in mind **11** : to free oneself from : get rid of <dieting to lose weight> **12** *slang* : [REGURGITATE](#), [VOMIT](#) —often used in such phrases as *lose one's lunch*
 - intransitive verb* **1** : to undergo deprivation of something of value
 - 2** : to undergo defeat <lose with good grace>
 - 3 of a timepiece** : to run slow
 - **los-able** \ˈlū-zə-bəl\ *adjective*
 - **los-able-ness** *noun*
 - **lose ground** : to suffer loss or disadvantage : fail to advance or improve
 - **lose it 1** : to lose touch with reality; *also* : to go crazy
 - 2** : to become overwhelmed with strong emotion : lose one's composure <so angry I almost lost it>
 - **lose one's heart** : to fall in love

manager: man-ag-er - Pronunciation: \ˈma-ni-jər\

- Function: *noun*
- Date: 1588
: one that manages: as **a** : a person who conducts business or household affairs **b** : a person whose work or profession is **management** **c** (1) : a person who directs a team or athlete (2) : a student who in scholastic or collegiate sports supervises equipment and records under the direction of a coach
— **man-a-ge-ri-al** \,ma-nə-ˈjir-ē-əl\ *adjective*
— **man-a-ge-ri-al-ly** \-ē-ə-lē\ *adverb*

manger: man-ger - Pronunciation: \ˈmān-jər\

- Function: *noun*
- Etymology: Middle English *mangeour*, *manger*, from Anglo-French *mangure*, from *manger* to eat, from Latin *manducare* to chew, devour, from *manducus* glutton, from *mandere* to chew — more at **MANDIBLE**
- Date: 14th century
: a trough or open box in a stable designed to hold feed or fodder for livestock

mine - Function: *verb*

- Inflected Form(s): **mined**; **min-ing**
- Date: 14th century
transitive verb **1 a** : to dig under to gain access or cause the collapse of (an enemy position) **b** : **UNDERMINE**
2 a : to get (as ore) from the earth **b** : to extract from a source <information *mined* from the files>
3 : to burrow beneath the surface of <larva that *mines* leaves>
4 : to place military mines in, on, or under <*mine* a harbor>
5 a : to dig into for ore or metal **b** : to process for obtaining a natural constituent <*mine* the air for nitrogen> **c** : to seek valuable material *intransitive verb* : to dig a mine
— **miner: min-er** *noun* – person working in a mine

minor: mi-nor - Pronunciation: \ˌmɪ-nər\

- Function: *adjective*
- Etymology: Latin, smaller, inferior; akin to Old High German *minniro* smaller, Latin *minuere* to lessen
- Date: 1526
1 : inferior in importance, size, or degree : comparatively unimportant
2 : not having reached majority
3 a : having half steps between the second and third, the fifth and sixth, and sometimes the seventh and eighth degrees <*minor* scale> **b** : based on a minor scale <*minor* key> **c** : less by a semitone than the corresponding major interval <*minor* third> **d** : having a minor third above the root <*minor* triad>
4 : not serious or involving risk to life <*minor* illness>
5 : of or relating to an academic subject requiring fewer courses than a major

Appendix J: Getting to Know You Writing Assignment Rubric

WRITING ASSIGNMENT 1

“Getting to Know You”

Grading Rubric:

Highest possible score: 20 (4 points * 5 categories = 20 points)

Category	4	3	2	1
Ideas	Ideas were expressed in a clear and organized fashion. It was easy to figure out what the letter was about.	Ideas were expressed in a pretty clear manner, but the organization could have been better.	Ideas were somewhat organized, but were not very clear. It took more than one reading to figure out what the letter was about.	The letter seemed to be a collection of unrelated sentences. It was very difficult to figure out what the letter was about.
Sentences & Paragraphs	Sentences and paragraphs are complete, well-constructed, and of varied structure.	All sentences are complete and well-constructed (no fragments, run-ons). Paragraphing is generally well done.	Most sentences are complete and well-constructed. Paragraphing needs some work.	Many sentence fragments or run-on sentences OR paragraphing needs lots of work.
Grammar & Spelling	Writer makes no errors in grammar or spelling.	Writer makes 1-2 errors in grammar and/or spelling.	Writer makes 3-4 errors in grammar and/or spelling.	Writer makes more than 4 errors in grammar and/or spelling.
Capitalization & Punctuation	Writer makes no errors in capitalization and punctuation.	Writer makes 1-2 errors in capitalization and punctuation.	Writer makes 3-4 errors in capitalization and punctuation.	Writer makes more than 4 errors in capitalization and punctuation.
Format	Complies with all the requirements for a business letter.	Complies with almost all the requirements for a business letter.	Complies with several of the requirements for a business letter.	Complies with less than 75% of the requirements for a business letter.