A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF A CHECKMARK GRADING SYSTEM AND A TRADITIONAL GRADING SYSTEM IN BUSINESS COMMUNICATIONS

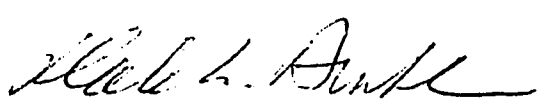
by

Linda Thompson Weavil

A Dissertation Submitted to
the Faculty of the Graduate School at
The University of North Carolina at Greensboro
in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Education

Greensboro
1979

Approved by



Dale L. Brubaker, Adviser

APPROVAL PAGE

This dissertation has been approved by the following committee of the Faculty of the Graduate School at The University of North Carolina at Greensboro.

Dissertation Adviser _____

Committee Members _____

_____

_____

_____
Date of Acceptance by Committee

_____
Date of Final Oral Examination

WEAVIL, LINDA THOMPSON. A Comparative Study of a Checkmark Grading System and a Traditional Grading System in Business Communications. (1979) Directed by: Dr. Dale L. Brubaker. Pp. 131.

This study was designed to investigate whether business communications students whose writing assignments were graded by a checkmark grading system would differ significantly in their performance on a specific writing test and their attitudes toward learning, teaching, the business communications course, and themselves from students whose writing assignments were graded by traditional letter grades of A, B, C, D, F. It was hypothesized that there would be no significant difference (from pretest to posttest) in the change in students' performance scores when comparing checkmark grading and traditional grading groups. Four other hypotheses proposed that there would be no significant difference in the change in students' attitudes when comparing checkmark grading and traditional grading groups.

Seventy-one students in four college classes of business communications participated in the study. In the fall semester of the academic year 1978-79, one class at Elon College and one class at The University of North Carolina at Greensboro were selected as the group to receive checkmark grading. In the spring semester of the same year, one class from each college was designated as the group to receive traditional grading. The same instructors in each college taught the classes both fall and spring.

Student performance was measured through the use of the McGraw-Hill Basic Skills System Writing Test. The test was administered at

the beginning of the semesters as a pretest (Form A) and at the end of the semesters as a posttest (Form B).

The statistical technique employed to analyze the data was analysis of covariance on a three-factor design (Method x Teacher x Time from pretest to posttest), the first two factors having two levels and the third factor being repeated measures. Grade point average (GPA) was used as the covariate.

Student attitude toward the four concepts of learning, teaching, the course, and self was measured by a semantic differential (Osgood, Suci, & Tannenbaum, 1957) developed by the researcher. The same instrument was administered at the beginning of the semesters as a pretest and at the end of the semesters as a posttest. The statistical analysis for the data was a three-factor analysis of covariance (Method x Teacher x Time from pretest to posttest), using grade point average (GPA) as the covariate.

Informal student reaction to both grading methods was obtained through a questionnaire distributed to students in all four classes near the end of each semester. The data obtained from these questionnaires were not analyzed statistically.

Statistical analysis of students' performance scores on the writing test revealed that both groups increased their scores significantly from pretest to posttest; however, there was no significant difference at the .05 criterion level for change in students' performance scores in the checkmark grading group when compared to the traditional grading group.

Analysis of the data for student attitude revealed no significant difference at the .05 level when comparing attitude change in the checkmark

group to the traditional grading group. Student responses on the questionnaire indicated that most students in both groups believed that the grading system was a fair (equitable) one, that their assignments had been evaluated fairly, and that their writing ability had improved.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The writer wishes to express gratitude to the many people who have contributed to making the entire doctoral program and the present study possible. As adviser and chairman of the dissertation committee, Dr. Dale L. Brubaker has provided support, expertise, and encouragement that have been invaluable.

Thanks are also extended to the other members of the committee, Dr. James W. Crews, Dr. William W. Purkey, and Dr. Gwendolyn S. Watson, who were always willing to offer suggestions and guidance. Additionally, the writer appreciates the assistance of Dr. William A. Powers in helping to formulate the design of the study and conducting the analysis of data and of Dr. George P. Grill and Professor Jeanne Williams for acting as unofficial committee members.

Particular appreciation is expressed to Wanda Thies for giving so freely of her time, for cooperating so willingly, and for offering so many helpful suggestions while carrying out her portion of the study.

The writer gratefully acknowledges the assistance of her teaching institution, Elon College, in providing both released time and financial assistance for this study. To Debbie Apple and Carolynn Lentz, who patiently spent many hours on the manuscript, sincere thanks are also extended.

For their love, encouragement, patience, and understanding, the writer extends heartfelt appreciation to her husband, Bob, and children, Andrea and Michael, as well as to her mother, who has always provided loving support.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER

LIST OF TABLES

LIST OF FIGURES

FIGURE Page

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Terms such as "accountability" and "competency-based education" are appearing with increased frequency in the professional literature and the popular press. Accompanying these terms is an emphasis on "quality education" (Jones, 1977; Coleman, Crim, Featherstone, Love, Ravitch, & Warner, 1977; McArdle & Moskovis, 1978) that some authors believe was lacking prior to the public outcry over "Why Johnny Can't Read!" and "Why Johnny Can't Write!"

Pearce (1978), who points out the high correlation between reading ability and writing ability, describes public reaction this way: "The writing problem has become such a national dilemma in our schools that the American public has become more aware and is demanding that something be done" (p. 27). Wagner (1975b) admits that public criticism of English instruction often narrows to the teaching of writing, but she points out that research in this area more often reveals what methods do not work rather than those methods which do.

Research has failed to provide conclusive evidence substantiating specific methods of composition teaching and evaluation that produce improved quantifiable results. This lack of evidence, however, does not eliminate the need for continued investigation into alternative procedures of instruction and evaluation. The concern of this study was narrowed specifically to evaluation and a comparison of the traditional method of assigning letter grades to composition to an alternative method of assigning checkmarks (Freeman & Hatch, 1975).

Wagner further contends: "No single aspect of composition teaching is as controversial as the question of evaluation" (p. 2). However, the issue of evaluation is inherent in both concepts of accountability and competency-based education as teachers and students alike are being asked to show proof of their performance.

Although accountability is broadly interpreted as the "degree to which a teacher (or an entire school system) holds each pupil responsible for the performance of some specified skill or knowledge" (McArdle & Moskovis, p. 27), narrow applications of accountability models often "reduce the role of a teacher to that of a technician, requiring that the majority of a teacher's time be devoted to evaluation"(McArdle & Moskovis, p. 28).

TenBrink (1974) defends the value of evaluation by stating that it is the most important part of what teachers do in their efforts to find better ways to teach and more efficient ways for students to learn. He admits, nevertheless, that evaluation is one of those connotative words that "mean something a little different to each person" (p. 4). In an informal experiment to ascertain personal interpretations associated with evaluation, TenBrink asked groups of pre-service and in-service teachers to respond spontaneously to the question: "What comes to your mind first when you hear the word 'evaluation'?" Pre-service teachers' responses were words such as "tests, grades, achievement, unfair judgment"; in-service teachers used similar words like "tests, measurement, grades, accountability, invasion of privacy" (p. 4). These labels reinforce the contention of Brubaker (1976) that "the term 'evaluation' is a bogey term to many people" (p. 123).

Despite the various connotations attached to the term (Erickson & Wentling, 1976), evaluation is an inescapable factor in the educational process and one that is of vital importance to teachers and students alike. Why, then, does there appear to be so much reluctance among educators to explore alternative approaches to the evaluative process? Saupe and Dressell (1972) believe that the reluctance stems from an "unwillingness to re-examine evaluations which have already been made and enshrined in procedures congenial to those involved in executing them" (p. 151). Freeman (1978) offers the simpler explanation that teacher education methods courses--as well as workshops, professional meetings, and seminars--focus attention on the improvement of teaching while largely ignoring evaluation. He asserts that efforts to improve teaching are surrounded by the myth that if teaching is improved, students will learn and "grading will cease to be a problem" (p. 3).

Need for the Study

Evidence of the reluctance to examine evaluation in the specific area of business communications is provided by Wise (1970). Wise reports that while measurement and evaluation are "two well-established phases of instruction. . .these topics have been ignored to a great extent by business communication researchers and authors" (p. 121). For the ten-year period (1957-1967) covered in her synthesis of research and professional periodical literature relating to business communication instruction, Wise reported on only eleven professional articles dealing with the grading issue.

Perhaps the paucity of research stemmed from the Gordon-Howell report (1959) which questioned the necessity of business writing courses

and suggested that courses in English composition, literature, and speech were of greater value to business students than were writing courses taught in schools or departments of business.

> Schools should not include. . .'adapted' courses such as business English, letter writing, or business report writing. In our view, none of these is a satisfactory substitute for a standard sequence in composition and literature given by the English department. . . .We are convinced that courses in business English and letter writing as such have no place in the university curriculum. Businessmen speak and write the same language as the rest of us (p. 16).

Ironically, just five years later Fielden (1964) stressed the seriousness of good business writing and the importance of effective instruction by drawing this parallel:

> No one can honestly estimate the billions of dollars that are spent in U. S. industry on written communications, but the amount of thinking and effort that goes into improving the effectiveness of business writing is tiny--a mouse invading a continent (p. 156).

Pettit et al. (1972) also emphasized the need for improving business communication through research. He proposed, as one example, the study of feedback of "grades versus no grades. . .and whether grades do have a negative effect on students in that anything less than an 'A' or a 'B' is interpreted by most students as a criticism of their adequacy" (p. 57). Pettit also recommended "research into the effect of various kinds of writing assignments on achievement and attitude. . .of the student toward learning the material and toward the course in general" (pp. 57-58). Since student feelings and attitudes are legitimate variables for research (Hofstedt & Dyckman, 1974), ignoring them is "both callous (in a human sense) and casual (in a methodological sense)" (p. 543).

More recently, Freedman (1978) urged the use of experimental research to learn more about the evaluation process in an attempt "to develop more efficient and fairer means of evaluation" (p. 21), while Lewis (1979) suggested research that might enhance more consistent evaluation.

The present study utilized suggestions similar to Pettit's, Hofstedt and Dyckman's, Freedman's, and Lewis' and sought to determine the effects of the presence or absence of grades on individual writing assignments on students' attitudes, as measured by a semantic differential test, and performance on the McGraw-Hill Basic Skills System Writing Test. In the absence of grades on writing assignments, students were assigned checkmarks, as explained in the following section.

Background and Statement of the Problem

As an alternative to the traditional letter grades of A, B, C, D, F on individual writing assignments in business communication courses, Freeman and Hatch (1975) proposed a "checkmark" grading approach that is discussed in depth in Chapter II. Instead of a letter grade for each writing assignment, students receive a checkmark--indicating that the writing is of B quality or better--or no checkmark--indicating that revision is necessary.

Under the original system, students are encouraged to revise an assignment as many times as necessary in order to receive a checkmark. The final writing grade for the course is based on the total number of checkmarks each student earns in relation to the number of writing assignments made during the course.

The three basic premises for Freeman and Hatch's proposed system of grading are that teachers are allowed more freedom to respond honestly to student writing, that students are allowed more freedom to experiment with good writing, and that students' attitudes improve as a result of being able to earn good grades.

Although the marking or reporting system used in evaluation of writing is not the totality of the challenge in evaluation, it does constitute, nevertheless, a significant aspect of the overall problem. The problem being investigated in this study was to determine whether groups of business communications students whose writing assignments were graded by the checkmark grading approach would differ significantly in their performance on a writing test and their attitude toward (a) learning, (b) teaching, (c) the business communications course, and (d) themselves (self-concept) from the control groups whose writing assignments were graded by traditional letter grades of A, B, C, D, F.

More specifically, this study was designed to answer the following questions:

1. Will students who have received checkmark grading show a change in posttest scores over pretest scores on a specific writing test that is significantly different from the change shown by students who have received traditional letter grades?
2. Will students who have received checkmark grading indicate a more positive attitude toward learning than students who have received traditional letter grades?
3. Will students who have received checkmark grading indicate a more positive attitude toward teaching than students who have received traditional letter grades?

4. Will students who have received checkmark grading indicate a more positive attitude toward the business communications course than students who have received traditional letter grades?
5. Will students who have received checkmark grading indicate a more positive attitude toward themselves (self-concept) than students who have received traditional letter grades?

Statement of the Hypotheses

Estimates of whether there are differences in student response which can be attributed to the checkmark grading system are necessary if the problem is to be studied most efficiently. In comparing those estimates between the checkmark grading approach and the traditional grading approach, changes from pretest to posttest were measured to investigate the following null hypotheses:

1. There will be no significant difference in the change in students' performance scores on a specific writing test when comparing checkmark grading and traditional grading groups.
2. There will be no significant difference in the change in students' attitudes toward learning when comparing checkmark grading and traditional grading groups.
3. There will be no significant difference in the change in students' attitudes toward teaching when comparing checkmark grading and traditional grading groups.
4. There will be no significant difference in the change in students' attitudes toward the business communications course when comparing checkmark grading and traditional grading groups.

5. There will be no significant difference in the change in students' attitudes toward themselves (self-concept) when comparing checkmark grading and traditional grading groups.

Summary of Procedure

Students in two business communications classes at Elon College and in two classes at The University of North Carolina at Greensboro were given pretests of the McGraw-Hill Basic Skills System Writing Test, Form A, and posttests of the same test, Form B. Pretests were administered to all four groups on the second day of class at the beginning of the semester; posttests were administered at the next-to-last class meeting at the end of the semester. This test is designed to yield four scores in the following categories: (1) Language mechanics, (2) Sentence patterns, (3) Paragraph patterns, and (4) Total.

Data concerning attitudes were collected through the administration of pretests and posttests of Osgood's semantic differential (1957). The pretests and posttests were given in class on the same days the McGraw-Hill Basic Skills System Writing tests were given. The semantic differential consisted of scales of bipolar concepts to determine students' attitudes toward learning, teaching, the business communications course, and themselves.

Data on sex, chronological age, college major, grade point average, class load, and reasons for taking the course were also collected. In addition, students were asked to respond anonymously at the end of the semester to a brief questionnaire asking for their reactions to the grading system used, their opinions of whether or not writing assignments

had been evaluated fairly, and their constructive suggestions regarding instructional procedures, testing, and grading.

The data collected on student performance on the writing test and student attitude were analyzed by computer through the analysis of covariance with the grade point average (GPA) as the covariate.

Definition of Terms

To clarify the meanings of the terms used in this study, the characteristics attributed to each term were described as follows:

Business Communications is an elective course, open to all majors, offered in the Business Administration Department at Elon College. At The University of North Carolina at Greensboro, the course is offered in the Business and Distributive Education Department and is a required course for majors in that department. However, many other students take the course as an elective.

The primary purpose of the course is to help students develop and refine their written and oral communications skills through activities which apply the communicative principles relating to business reports and correspondence as well as oral communications.

Checkmark grading refers to the use of a checkmark (✓) on individual assignments indicating that the student's writing was considered by the instructor to be of B quality or better. In the event that students did not receive a checkmark, they were encouraged to revise the assignment (a maximum of three times) until a checkmark was received. Checkmark grading procedures as proposed by Freeman and Hatch (1975) are discussed in Chapter II. Modified procedures used in this study are

discussed in Chapter III; student instructions and grading guidelines are included in Appendix C.

Traditional grading refers to the assignment of the letter grades A, B, C, D, and F. A detailed description of the way student papers were handled is given in Chapter III. Student instructions and grading guidelines are provided in Appendix D.

Course outcome (final grade) was reflected by the traditional letter grade of A, B, C, D, or F--as required by both colleges. In all classes, 70 percent of the course grade resulted from writing grades and 30 percent from chapter test grades. In order to earn letter grades under the checkmark approach, students must have received a specific number of checkmarks corresponding to the scale for each letter grade (see Appendix C). When the traditional grading approach was used on individual assignments, a numerical scale corresponding to each letter grade (see Appendix D) was used to facilitate computation of the writing grade. In both approaches, chapter tests were graded on a 7-point scale; and traditional letter grades were used to reflect the test grades.

Student attitude refers to individual personal reactions as measured by the semantic differential. The semantic differential is described in Chapter III, and the specific instrument developed by the researcher for this study is found in Appendix B.

Student performance refers to student scores as measured by the McGraw-Hill Basic Skills System Writing Test. The test is described in Chapter III.

Behavioral grading is the term used synonymously with checkmark grading in some of the literature. However, in this study this term is intended to reflect the more narrow concept of performance rather than broader interpretations usually found in the literature.

Limitations of the Study

This study was limited by the research design necessitated by the available sections of business communications classes. At Elon College, only one section of the class is offered each semester; therefore, it was necessary to use the entire class in the fall semester as an intact group and the entire class in the spring as a second intact group. The fall section was randomly selected as the experimental group; the spring section, consequently, was designated as the control group. Both sections at Elon were taught by the same professor.

The University of North Carolina at Greensboro offers three classes of business communications each semester; however, each of these is taught by a different professor. For this reason, a section taught on the same days and meeting for approximately the same length of class time as the one at Elon College was selected for comparison. The section taught in the fall functioned as the experimental group (to parallel the random designation at Elon College), and the section in the spring functioned as the control group. Both sections at Greensboro were taught by the same professor.

Self-selection of the sample as a result of availability of classes and registration requirements of both colleges limits the generalizability of the findings. Since self-selection may counter the

possibility of the sample in this study as being "typical" of all business communications students, generalizability to other populations of students should be limited to those students who are similar to the sample described here. Selection of samples from two different colleges was an attempt to help overcome this limitation.

Overview of Remainder of Study

This chapter has presented an introduction and background relative to the need for the study. Background of the problem was discussed prior to stating the problem and formulating the hypotheses to be investigated. A summary of the procedure for the study was followed by definitions of terms and limitations of the study.

The second chapter will present a review of related literature. Bodies of research and literature will be grouped into three categories: effects of teaching philosophies on student performance and attitudes, effects of evaluation philosophies on student performance and attitudes, and an explanation of and rationale for the use of the checkmark grading system.

Chapter III will describe the methods and procedures used to compare the effects on student performance and attitudes when checkmark grading is used to the effects on student performance and attitudes when traditional grading is used. The research instruments used to measure performance and attitude, as well as the methods of analyzing data, will be described.

The fourth chapter will present the results of this study, along with the data analysis for tests of the generated hypotheses.

Chapter V will discuss the findings and offer conclusions. Implications of this study and recommendations for further research will also be included.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

A careful search of the literature in business communications revealed that the area is replete with studies of organizational or interpersonal communications but scarce in instructional research that deals with teaching and evaluation. Therefore, the following review discusses a combination of business writing and English composition literature. The investigator agrees with Williams (1965), who argues that "good writing is always good writing, whether we call it freshman composition, business writing, creative writing, professional writing, literature, belles lettres, or whatever" (p. 21). Consequently, there are common elements in the teaching, evaluating, and learning of all kinds of writing.

The following sections will review literature related to these three areas: (1) teaching philosophies and procedures in writing: their effects on student performance and attitudes; (2) evaluation philosophies and practices in writing: their effects on student performance and attitudes; (3) the checkmark grading approach: an explanation of and rationale for its use in business communications. Each section will begin with a philosophical background and conclude with a discussion of specific formal studies.

Teaching Philosophies and Procedures in Writing: Their Effects on Student Performance and Attitudes

Newkirk, Cameron, and Selfe (1976) graphically summarize the prevailing concerns and frustrations of those who teach writing and those who try to learn to write:

> Writing is difficult. . . .Too often the writing teacher, both high school and college, is viewed as an academic exorcist whose function is essentially subtractive. He eliminates the error-producing potential of the student so that, properly exorcised and lobotomized, the student can write with "no problems." The sterile debate over who is failing to teach the student to write is evidence of this wrong-headed view. There is no quick fix that can do the trick either at the high school or the college level. The best we can hope for is the mutual recognition of serious problems and the rejection of formulas and dry run exercises that seem to offer a short-cut (p. 13).

Without question, the teacher of writing has always emerged as the central figure in the issue of why students cannot write well; and, indeed, teachers' attitudes, expectations, and classroom approaches do exercise a significant impact on students. Arensman and Maxwell (1959) challenge teachers to use sound teaching procedures and exemplify enthusiasm for teaching. Taylor (1958) believes that teacher attitude directly influences student attitude and that teachers have the responsibility for creating an atmosphere of expectancy and trust.

Blake (1975) supports Taylor's belief about teacher and student attitudes "because how we feel is so closely tied up with what we do" (p. 14). He further cautions teachers not to teach about writing at the expense of students' feelings toward their writing. If feelings are neglected, "we may do the opposite of what we intend: turn them

away from writers and writing, instead of helping them to realize how the process of writing can be at once an act of ordering one's private universe as well as a means for heightening one's awareness of his or her life" (p. 14).

Albeit the fact that feelings are important in writing, the business writing teacher cannot lose sight of the reality that business writers, unlike literary artists, are not entirely free to write as they choose. Janis (1965) illustrates the restrictions placed on the business writer by a reminder that "he must write in conformance to the wishes of his superiors, the force of precedent, the character of the organization, and the pressures of time and circumstance" (p. 4). Because of these considerations, Janis warns that a prescriptive philosophy of teaching is futile.

Prescriptive teaching, or the "formula" approach as it is referred to by Douglas (1968), places restrictions on students' freedom to analyze problems, their ingenuity in solving problems, and their ability to generalize solutions to other situations. As an alternative to the prescriptive or formula pitfalls, Douglas (1972) recommends "hybrid" approaches that blend the "model," the "high rational," and the "clinical" approaches. These hybrids, according to Douglas, will help students and teachers alike overcome the "doldrums," often experienced in advanced writing courses, that are counter-productive to the pursuit of writing expertise.

Sullivan (1978) advocates a similar teaching philosophy of mixture, but uses different educational paradigms. He believes that business

communications pedagogy has been affected by the educational philosophies of idealism, classic realism, scientific realism, pragmatism, and existentialism; therefore, "the business communication curriculum, then, ought to remain a mix of instructional methods, materials, assignments, activities, and evaluation methods" (p. 36).

Evolving from the philosophical "mixes" into the reality of practice, Kremers (1976) and Baker (1975) both suggest classroom approaches that concentrate on the "process" of teaching, as well as the creation of an "ideal" climate for teaching.

Kremers uses the writing-teacher-as-"coach" metaphor to stress that teachers of writing should demonstrate their own writing skills and should help students experience "fun" in writing instead of always viewing it as hard work. Kremers believes that process teaching, which "means showing how by virtue of practicing the skills over and over," (p. 2) helps lead students to personal discovery paralleled by "the same sense of accomplishment that the superior athlete enjoys" (p. 2).

According to Baker, there is no <u>one</u> best way to teach writing; however, the best approach to teaching business writing is to create "the <u>most</u> ideal learning climate possible, a climate in which students have the <u>least</u> possible chance for failure" (p. 3).

To facilitate the creation of an "ideal" climate, Baker recommends teacher attention to eight important factors:

1. Student interest in the subject being studied
2. Specifically understood objectives and criteria
3. Genuineness of the teacher
4. Progression from simple to complex, from known to unknown

5. Demonstration, modeling, or giving examples
6. Meaningful and purposeful practice
7. Reinforcement and immediate knowledge of results
8. Active involvement of the learner (pp. 3-6).

Still another dimension of classroom procedure is suggested by Zoerner (1975) in his article, "Teaching the Vanquished to Write." Zoerner equates the task of the business communications teacher to that of President Andrew Johnson after the Civil War. Business communications teachers encounter numerous students who are "vanquished" as a result of countless years of defeating performance in writing; and the primary problem of the teacher, like Johnson, is one of reconstruction.

According to Zoerner, "there are at least six steps in the reconstruction process of teaching the vanquished to write." These steps include:

1. Letting the students know that we understand how they feel
2. Letting them know that they are not alone in their defeat and pain
3. Admitting that we can't teach them to write
4. Showing them how to take as much pressure as possible off the writing process
5. Providing them with the feedback they need to learn written communication
6. Sparing them from a final disappointment (pp. 34-35).

In defense of statement No. 3, "admitting that we can't teach them to write," Zoerner points out that teachers should "stress that it's questionable that writing can be taught at all. . . .But stress that writing can be learned. Anyone who can write has learned" (p. 35).

Among the formal studies designed to implement and test different teaching procedures in writing is the study conducted by Sears (1970) to test the effects of student-centered teaching on the self-concepts and writing performance of college freshmen. Her study involved 117 students enrolled in eight freshman English classes at the Florida State University. The classes were taught by four instructors, each teaching one section of the control group and one section of the experimental group.

Classes were conducted in the usual manner and followed the prescribed curriculum except for the teaching procedures in the experimental groups. The experimental groups received a form of "cross-teaching" that Sears adapted from James Moffett's book, Teaching the Universe of Discourse (1968). Cross-teaching consists of two kinds of group discussion: teacher-led discussion to demonstrate to students how they can teach each other within smaller groups and small-group discussion during which students exchange papers, read and react to the papers, and discuss the papers.

The study investigated 14 hypotheses. The six primary hypotheses sought answers to three primary questions: (1) Does the cross-teaching procedure of teaching writing produce a change in self-expectations in composition? (2) Does the cross-teaching procedure produce a change in self-concept ability in composition? (3) Does the cross-teaching procedure produce a change in writing performance? The eight secondary hypotheses were concerned with the relationship between student self-expectations in composition and self-concept of ability in evaluations of compositions.

Results revealed that none of the null hypotheses was significant at the .05 level. Even though there was lack of statistical evidence, however, the students in the experimental groups attained median performance ratings superior to those attained by students in the control groups. The teacher appeared to be the most significant variable affecting self-concept related to writing and self-concept related to writing practice.

Another study concerned with the effects of student participation in the teaching process, but utilizing a different research design, was the case study of a Basic Composition Program developed and reported on by Steinacher (1976).

Steinacher describes the Basic Composition Program (BCP) this way:

> In the BCP, primary pedagogical emphasis is placed on the process by which an idea is developed, through a series of steps specified by the instructor, into a written message. The composing activities of prewriting, revising, reformulating and peer-editing are integral features of the program (p. 1).

During the academic quarter in which the investigation took place, students engaged in a seven-phase plan for the major writing assignments:

Production Phases	Editing Phases
1. Prewriting/Planning	
	2. First peer/instructor editing
3. Rough draft	
	4. Second peer/instructor editing
5. First draft	
	6. Third peer/instructor editing
7. Final draft (p. 14)	

The single class of 19 students was divided into peer-editing groups of four or five members each, and these groups were responsible for acting as editors in each of the phases indicated above.

Writing growth of students improved as a result of self-selection of topics, prewriting/planning/revising activities, and peer editing; however, writing growth was inhibited in some students because of the disinclination to write or edit, dependence on peers in rewriting, and the divided editorial assistance of the instructor.

Steinacher states as one of the major findings of the study that "revising and reformulating, as composing activities in which the writer, with editing assistance, seeks to improve the communicative function of his written message, may be taught to and engaged in by student writers" (p. 156).

A second major finding reported by Steinacher is that "teaching writing skills to students based upon problems or errors of all types that are evident in their writings is an effective teaching strategy to the extent that they are shown how to execute, and are then required to execute, corrective suggestions" (p. 157).

Fritts (1976) departed from the procedure of employing student self-instruction in the classroom; instead, she conducted experimental research on the effects of supplementing class instruction with student conferences to determine whether or not the conferences influenced writing achievement and student self-concept.

The experimental group received the same instruction and pursued the same objectives as the control group; however, the experimental group received additional attention outside of class in the form of weekly scheduled conference sessions that lasted approximately 15 minutes.

> During the conference sessions the instructor concentrated upon increasing the students' writing performance by making

> the necessary corrections on the paper and also by using a positive approach whereby the instructor accented as much as possible the strengths of each student. The instructor did not mark all errors on the papers but concentrated on the most serious errors first before she proceeded to less serious problems. At no time did the instructor excessively mark the paper with comments pointing out the students' inadequacies (p. 58).

Data obtained through pretests and posttests of the Tennessee Self-Concept Scale revealed no significant differences in self-concepts of students who participated in the individual teacher-student conferences. Writing achievement, as measured by the McGraw-Hill Basic Skills System Writing Test (MHBBS), was significantly different (at the .01 level) for the experimental group.

Evaluation Philosophies and Practices in Writing: Their Effects on Student Performance and Attitudes

Teaching philosophy is so closely related to grading philosophy that it sometimes is difficult to separate the two. As a matter of fact, Wagner (1975b) cites Squire and Appleby as reporting "that most of the English teachers they interviewed saw the teaching of composition and the evaluation of the 'final product' as one and the same thing" (p. 2). Other teachers may argue that the two are discrete processes.

The debate about grading in general and various grading practices in specific is not a recent issue. Conscientious educators have always been concerned about whether or not grades are a true reflection of ability as well as the impact of grades upon students. Glasser (1969) is one among the many who are concerned, because he sees the major problems of schools as a problem of failure and believes that "probably

the school practice that most produces failure in students is grading" (p. 59). He contends that schools operate under the certainty principle by stressing "right" and "wrong" answers while ignoring the fact that learning is meaningless unless it is accompanied by individual relevance.

Kirschenbaum, Napier, and Simon (1971) further question the practice of grading by indicating that it has become a "game" in American education and asserting that "the history and the research on grading indicate there isn't much substantial educational basis for grading" (p. 203). They add, ironically, that many teachers realize that grading actually complicates and interferes with learning in the classroom.

In spite of this realization, most teachers continue to assign grades under a cloud of uncertainty about their value or usefulness. In their report on the academic side of college life, Becker, Geer, and Hughes (1968) divide college faculties into three categories with respect to attitudes toward grades:

> Some faculty members, no doubt, believe that the grades they give accurately reflect the amount of knowledge the student has acquired and are perfectly content that students should work for grades. . . .Other faculty members despise grades and would like to do away with them and all the associated paraphernalia of grade point averages, cumulative averages, and the like. Still others feel great ambivalence. They find it necessary, whether out of inner conviction or because of bureaucratic rules, to give grades and try to do it in a serious and responsible way (p. 58).

Just as there is diversity among attitudes, there are also disparate opinions about the primary function of grades. A study of Hambleton and Murray (1977) at the University of Massachusetts revealed

that faculty members believed the most important use of grades was "to inform others--advisors, future teachers, employers, etc" (p. 32). Conversely, a study by Lunneborg (1977) at the University of Washington ranked the information function to others as last and ranked "communication between instructor and student" (p. 4) as the primary function.

Notwithstanding the controversy over value and usefulness, grades will probably be around for some time; and the grading practices of those who teach writing will continue to vary. This variation, however, does not prevent writing teachers from scrutinizing existing practices and exploring sound alternative practices that will benefit students while at the same time counteract the accusation that the grading of writing is too subjective.

Probably any teacher of any kind of writing will admit the existence of a certain degree of subjectivity when grading written work. Whether influenced by neatness, accuracy, mechanics, content, organization--or a combination of these elements--personal and circumstantial characteristics will interact to affect the evaluator (Freedman, 1977; Marshall & Powers, 1972; Wilkinson, 1979). Since evaluation cannot be sterile, Dusel (1957) believes that a prime concern should be finding ways that evaluation can facilitate learning while communicating respect for the writer and his or her progress in writing.

Horning (1951) asserts that minor differences in grading business letters are unimportant if instructors will do the following:

1. Explain in detail to the students exactly what the personal system of grading is, and stick to it.

2. Explain that the grading of letters is necessarily subjective to some extent, but normally not enough to change the overall grade picture for the entire semester.

3. Explain that grading in itself is an artificial method of evaluation, which has definite faults but no satisfactory substitute.

4. Invite the student in to discuss his solution or the actual grading at any time there are questions (p. 106).

Numerous writers disagree with Horning's simplistic rationale that grades and grading differences are inconsequential. Dusel's (1955) perceptive observation of the effects of grades refutes simple explanations:

> Regardless of how carefully the teacher attempts to prevent misunderstanding by making clear in advance his meaning of the conventional letter symbols, there will remain one significant difference between the meanings which the teacher ordinarily intends an "A" or a "D" to convey and the meanings which pupils receive. This difference lies in the emotional charge which the symbol carries (p. 393).

Wagner (1975a) agrees with Dusel about the impact of the grade on the student. She contends that "any grade short of an 'A' tends to reinforce the student's 'I'm not okay' attitude toward composition" (p. 77).

Even in view of the fact that teachers are aware that grade interpretations can be detrimental to students' attitudes about themselves and about the writing process, Hoover (1976) points out that teachers still tend to mark every error with "Messianic fervor" and that "students receiving the papers back, deduce a totalistic message--'Your're a failure!' and don't know where to begin" (p. 6).

Donovan (1977) cautions that "evaluation needs to motivate students, not depress them," (p. 4) so that students will feel free to solicit informed criticism rather than trying to avoid it. In order to create

the atmosphere of trust that inspires motivation, teachers must project an image of "Teacher--one who imparts knowledge and induces students to learn" (p. 2). Purkey (1970) also stresses the impact of evaluation in terms of student self-concept. "The ways significant others evaluate the student directly affects the student's conception of his academic ability. . . .The sensitive teacher points out areas of accomplishment rather than focusing on mistakes" (p. 47, 56).

Several formal studies have been conducted for the purpose of exploring alternative grading procedures that would help to reduce anxiety associated with grades while at the same time improve writing performance and attitudes. One such project which has significance for the present study is the research directed by Arnold (1963) in two high schools in Florida.

The purpose of Arnold's study was to test the effects of writing frequency and evaluation intensity upon performance in written composition. The nine null hypotheses associated with this research were divided into these categories: Hypotheses 1-3 postulated that no significant differences would be associated with intensity of teacher evaluation, frequency of writing, or level of pupil ability. Hypotheses 4-7 postulated that there would be no significant interaction between (a) intensity of evaluation and frequency of writing, (b) intensity of evaluation and ability level, (c) frequency of writing and ability level; and among intensity of evaluation, frequency of writing, and ability level. Hypotheses 8-9 postulated that there would be no significant differences associated with the teacher-school covariate and the sex covariate.

One teacher in School A and one teacher in School B each taught four classes of tenth grade English and used the following approaches to intensity of evaluation and frequency of writing:

1. In one group, students wrote infrequently (three 250-500 word themes each semester), with their compositions receiving moderate evaluation (only specific errors marked).

2. In a second group, students wrote frequently (a sentence or a paragraph daily), with their compositions receiving moderate evaluation.

3. In a third group, students wrote infrequently but with compositions receiving intensive evaluation (marking of every error and the writing of detailed comments on each composition; students were required to revise and rewrite).

4. In a fourth group, students wrote frequently (a 250-word theme each week), with their compositions receiving intensive evaluation (p. 28).

Measuring instruments used were the STEP Essay Tests and the STEP Writing Tests. In addition, verbal aptitude scores on the Differential Aptitude Test were used for initial classification of students into low, middle, or high ability levels.

Data were analyzed by a 2 x 2 x 3 design; and the main effects analyzed were evaluation (moderate and intensive), writing frequency (infrequent and frequent), and levels of ability (high, middle, and low). First and second orders of interaction and the two covariates of teacher-school and sex were also included in the analysis.

Tests of significance at the .05 confidence level led the researcher to the following conclusions:

1. There is no assurance that intensive evaluation is any more effective than moderate evaluation in improving the quality of written composition.

2. It must not be assumed that frequent practice is in itself a means of improving writing.

3. There is no evidence that any one combination of frequency of writing and intensity of evaluation is more effective than another.

4. There is no indication that frequent writing and intensive evaluation are any more effective for one ability level than are infrequent writing and moderate evaluation (p. 62).

Although analyses of the covariates did reveal a difference between the two schools, Arnold was unsure whether these were due to general school environment, the extent of school-wide writing instruction, the kinds of writing experiences in all classes, or teacher competency (p. 65).

Page (1958) and Sweet (1966) both studied the effects of comments on test papers in relation to student performance; however, Sweet added the dimension of attitude to his study. Both investigators divided their groups of students into three categories: (1) No Comment (just a numerical score and a letter grade; (2) Free Comment (whatever comments the instructor chose to write; and (3) Specified Comment (each letter grade, A-F, accompanied by a predetermined, designated comment that was considered encouraging).

Performance was measured by the scores achieved on the second and fourth tests, under the assumption that the comments accompanying the preceding tests might have influenced subsequent test performance. Page reported significantly higher scores for the Free Comment and Specified Comment groups than for the No Comment group. Sweet was unable to detect significant differences in performance of the three groups; however, there was a significant attitude change in a positive direction in the Free Comment group. Sweet concluded that only free comments significantly affected positive attitude changes and that "the inclusion of specified

comments was no more effective in changing attitudes than were no comments" (p. ix).

Another study utilizing different types of comments to investigate their relationship to performance and attitude was conducted by Marzano and Arthur (1977). The problem of this study was to determine the effects of three different types of teacher comments on students' themes. The commenting styles used were: (1) comments to indicate faults (using codes); (2) comments to correct (editing); and (3) comments to foster thinking (subjective comments).

Subjects for the study were 24 tenth grade students of similar IQ and academic ability who were enrolled in the same writing course and who were randomly assigned to the three groups. All students were given pretests of writing a sample essay and responding to a questionnaire to measure attitude toward writing. During the course, all students were required to write the same number and type of essays; the types of comments were the only differences among the treatment of groups. The posttests consisted of students' writing another sample essay and responding to the attitude questionnaire again.

As an additional step, essays were scored "holistically" and were analyzed for spelling, agreement, capitalization, run-ons, fragments, vocabulary, single word modifiers, phrase modifiers, use of subordinate clauses, and depth of subordination between sentences.

Twelve analyses of covariance were run, using the pretest scores as covariates and the posttest scores as dependent measures. There was only one significant F ratio for the adjusted means between groups for the 12 analyses--the ratio for vocabulary as the dependent measure.

Growth on this measure was greatest for the group receiving comments to foster thinking; the other groups had similar, lower means. As a result of the statistical analyses, the investigators concluded that the different types of teacher comments produce about the same improvement in student writing ability and that this improvement is only slight.

A study by Effros (1973) comes closer to examining issues similar to the ones of concern in the present study. She investigated the effects of required revision and delayed evaluation upon subsequent writing performance as compared to the traditional evaluation method of incidental revision and immediate grades.

Ten sections of Freshman Composition were taught by five instructors, each of whom taught one experimental and one control section. In the control group, papers were assigned a traditional grade, grades were recorded, and papers were returned to students. In an attempt to encourage students' attention to comments and annotations, the instructors told students that their final course grade would be influenced by improvement. Consequently, students were asked to build on their strengths and to avoid errors that had been noted on assignments.

In the experimental group, papers were read, comments and annotations were written, and a tentative grade was recorded in the grade book but not on the paper (in an effort to keep annotations and procedures equivalent except for the experimental revision variable). Summary comments gave specific directions for revising or rewriting. When themes were returned, the classes were given directions and explanations as a group as well as individual assistance in conferences. Students were required to revise and rewrite their papers and return them at the end of the unit.

These papers were given a single grade that reflected quality of revision and writing improvement.

Writing improvement was measured by the English Expression Tests of the Cooperative English Tests and an essay test, "scored by two independent raters using the Buxton scale" (p. 9). Effros' results were somewhat surprising: the control group, which was required to make only incidental revisions and received grades immediately, performed significantly better than the experimental group, which made thorough revisions and had grades withheld until after revisions were complete.

Wagner (1975a, 1975b, 1976) pursued still another approach in her attempt to compare the effects on writing performance and attitude caused by grading or not grading at all. In her opinion, the use of letter grades on writing serves no purpose other than "to regularize and codify a complex chaos of expression and set it down in the tiny spaces provided by gradebooks" (1976, p. 1). She suggests that letter grades say nothing to students about the intrinsic qualities of their work and equates the practice of grading to bookkeeping activities:

> The case of letter grading in composition instruction seems to be a case of the bookkeeping system taking over the business operation, dictating the range of possibilities and limitations rather than simply reflecting how the business is doing (1976, p. 2).

Furthermore, Wagner (1975a, 1975b) contends that one of the greatest problems in grading written work is the problem of justifying the grade assigned. Since grading is a process of justification, it becomes "more a matter of 'taking away points' rather than singling out the positive features that have 'added up to' the grade" (1976, p. 6).

Since justifying grades is time consuming and unpleasant for teachers, they may yield to the temptation of assigning fewer papers; and assigning fewer papers defeats the theory that "growth and mastery in a skill must be accompanied by much practice" (Wagner, 1976, p. 7).

In Wagner's (1975b) formal study, the "treatment" for the control group consisted of grades, accompanied by positive comments, on all written assignments. "Treatment" for the experimental group consisted of only positive comments (no grades) on written assignments. All composition papers were read and commented upon by a "blind grader."

The basic questions Wagner sought to answer concerned the effects of the treatment on students' attitudes, the effects of attitude on performance, and the effects of treatment on performance. These three questions represented three distinct phases of the study.

Phase I, the effects of treatment on attitude, was measured by pre- and posttests of Osgood's Semantic Differential and the investigator's instrument, a Writing on Writing test. Results from neither of those tests revealed a significant difference in attitude between the two groups.

The effects of attitude on performance, Phase II, were analyzed by correlating the scores on the Semantic Differential and the Writing on Writing test with the scores on the STEP Writing Test and the Buxton Scale Writing Sample. Again, differences between the groups were not significant enough to reject the null hypotheses.

Phase III, the relationship between treatment and performance, was analyzed by analysis of covariance and the Stepwise Multiple Regression Analysis. No significant differences were found between graded and

nongraded groups' writing performance, even after isolating and measuring eight external predictive variables such as age, employment, previous English experience, previous writing experience, student classification, educational interest, entering attitude level, and entering performance level.

Wagner (1976) admits that it appears as though these results are inconclusive; however, since the experiment was designed to see if the absence of a grade made a positive difference, it was also designed to see if the presence of a grade made a positive difference.

> While the grade does not appear to have an insidious negative effect on a student's desire to write, neither is the grade any powerful instructional tool without which the teaching process would collapse. The conclusion that the letter grade tells the student author something which will show up either in his attitude toward writing or in his actual writing performance, is simply unfounded. The grade itself does not communicate anything of importance to the student (p. 6).

The present study attempted to answer questions similar to those asked by Wagner; however, the teaching and grading procedure differed somewhat by employing a checkmark grading approach in business communications.

The Checkmark Grading Approach: An Explanation of and Rationale for its Use in Business Communications

Kirschenbaum, Napier, and Simon (1971) believe that grading systems should be based on practices that will be conducive to the following conditions:

1. Eliminate the anxiety which usually goes with grading
2. Create a relaxed learning atmosphere in the class
3. Decrease competition for grades among students

4. Be meaningful. That is, a student's grade should mean something to him, personally.
5. Respect quality of work as well as quantity
6. Allow those students who need a high grade to get one (p. 121).

Those conditions are especially important in a writing class because of preconceived negative opinions held by many students that writing is a painful process and that it is not as important as other skills (Woodward, 1965). A study by Steidle (1977) revealed "a direct linear dependency between student attitudes and composition quality," (p. 21) indicating that positive student attitudes and self-concepts were related to success in writing.

Eulert (1967) agrees that classroom learning is heavily influenced by students' attitudes and emotions, but he disagrees that success is predicated on beginning positive attitudes. A three-year research project conducted at the Wisconsin State University at Platteville and reported on by Eulert "isolated some selected factors which were important to predicting performance" (p. 63) in English composition. Eulert made this somewhat surprising statement: "The simple fact of a good attitude upon entering the course has no relationship to a student's later success; change is the necessary factor" (p. 64).

Eulert's recommendation for facilitating this necessary change was to engage students in "active encounters, 'Happenings' in the classroom dialogue" (p. 64).

The checkmark grading system in business communications originally proposed by Freeman and Hatch (1975) was an attempt to encourage a kind of active student involvement such as Eulert recommended. Freeman and

Hatch view the primary advantage of the system to students this way: "Students finally have all the freedom they need to experiment and really LEARN to write--without fear of being marked down for experimenting" (p. 1).

The explanations and instructions originally proposed by Freeman and Hatch (1975) are described in general terms below. The procedures and adaptations used in the present study are discussed in detail in Chapter III, and specific instructions to students are illustrated in Appendix C. Explanation of the mechanics of the checkmark grading system is followed by the rationale for its use.

According to Freeman and Hatch, students were told that each writing assignment would be rated either "acceptable" (checkmark) or "needs revision" (no checkmark) and were given the verbal definition of a checkmark as work equivalent to a B or better. Only papers receiving checkmarks were entered in the grade book; noncheckmark papers could be revised and resubmitted within a reasonable period. Students were allowed to revise and resubmit their papers as many times as necessary, and checkmarks on revised papers counted the same as checkmarks on the first try (p. 2).

Abbreviated signals such as !, ?, and No! were used by the authors to convey agreement, lack of understanding, or disagreement. Students were encouraged to check with their teachers if there was any difficulty in figuring out what the signals suggested on individual papers.

The final course grade under the originally proposed system was comprised of 60 percent for writing assignments and 40 percent for departmental exams. Writing grades were converted to letter grade

equivalents of A, B, C, D, F by using a scale based on the number of assignments made and the number of checkmarks earned.

Freeman and Hatch summarize their perceived differences between the traditional grading system and the checkmark grading system this way:

Differences between grading system and checkmark system

Item	Grading System	Checkmark System
Student's Goal	Get the assignment in and hope to pass. A 'pass' is pretty indefinite, and the poor student can always console himself that he will do better next time.	Get an acceptable assignment in because otherwise it will have to be done over (and over. . .and over. . .).
Student's Rewards	Only A papers are truly rewarded. The teacher's cheery comment, 'Your first paragraph is fine, but. . .' is lost when the grade is less than A because the good is downgraded along with the bad.	Good work does not need to be written. The student has personal concrete evidence of what is 'acceptable' writing. He is rewarded by not having to rewrite parts of the paper.
Corrections	The teacher (who does NOT need the practice) does all the corrections and writes a small book--partly as corrections and partly to justify the grade.	The student (who DOES need the practice) does the rewriting with minimum suggestions from the teacher. He has a strong incentive to do a good job, for otherwise it will have to be done again (and again. . .and again) (p. 4-5).

Revision is a necessary activity in most all successful student writing, although Voyles (1967) believes that most students resist its importance: "The word 'revise' is almost repulsive to students. They hate to do anything over" (p. 178). She further believes that business communications teachers should require revision, however, because it

develops "learning and working habits" (p. 181). Murray (1976) blames teachers for student resistance to revision because many teachers "teach rewriting--if they teach it at all--as punishment, the price you have to pay if you don't get it right the first time" (p. 1).

Others (Bowman, 1973; Lansky, 1969; Throop & Jameson, 1976; Wagner, 1975a) agree with Voyles that revision is invaluable to students, but perhaps Wagner's (1975a) reasoning more closely parallels Murray's opinion that revision can be a motivating force within students:

> The more opportunity there is to practice various forms of writing, to experiment with new forms and ideas and to revise writing, the greater the opportunity will be for the student to gain insight into himself, his language, and his skill with written communication (p. 79).

While Freeman and Hatch are genuinely interested in the benefits of the checkmark system to students, the report of their informal study also gives five advantages of the checkmark system for teachers (but it may be noted that these also work to the advantage of students):

1. It is fast work to skim through a stack of papers and sort them into only two piles--"Probably acceptable" and "definitely needs more work."

2. When you don't have to assign a grade (or points or whatever) to every paper, you don't have to spend time on each paper justifying why the grade is not an A. . .if the student can look at his returned paper and by saying "How can I make this into a checkmark paper?" (instead of "Why isn't this an A paper?") then our comments can actually be the constructive suggestions we want to write instead of the justifications we usually find ourselves writing.

3. You can stop feeling like such a pious hypocrite, writing, "This is one of the best papers you have written all year. Unfortunately, there are still so many problems (I hope you can read this through the glare of red marks) that I still couldn't grade you higher than a D+. But keep trying. I'm sure you'll do better next time." You might have fooled yourself, but you never fooled the student for a minute. He always hated you for going out of your way to write some nice dumb platitude about his stupid D paper. You don't know what freedom is until you can write in the

middle of the term, "This is AWFUL--you better start over from scratch," and have the student accept that honestly. In the meantime, everyone's emphasis has changed from "avoiding the bad" to "trying for GOOD."

4. Gone, too, are the days of keeping track of who turned what in on time, or how late. You'll never be able to keep track of what's on time and what's not, and of course that's never been the point anyway.

5. Best of all is your own new attitude. Finally, you have a chance to do what you came into teaching for--helping others to improve--instead of spending your time judging exactly how bad your students are and watching them get worse (pp. 7-8).

Throop and Jameson (1976) tried the checkmark grading approach in their business communication classes at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, while Ceccio (1976) adapted the approach to the quarter system at Wright State University; and all three reacted with enthusiasm similar to that reported by Freeman and Hatch. In all reported cases, however, attitude toward the approach was gauged only by informal questionnaires; and no attempt was made to relate the approach to beginning and ending writing performance.

Throop and Jameson divided their report on checkmark grading into three sections: "How to Minimize Anticipated Problems," "How the System Succeeds," and "Why the System Works." The following is a summary of how they believe the system succeeds:

Students learn to revise because they are required to think and plan improvements rather than simply to respond to criticisms and suggestions.

Creativity is encouraged because students realize they won't be penalized for taking chances.

Defensive grading is eliminated because the teacher does not have to distinguish between minus and plus grades and because students realize that teachers are willing to engage in additional reading time in order to help them improve.

Student attitudes improved because they began to realize that they could control the outcome by performing to the best of their individual abilities (pp. 4-5).

Factors isolated by Throop and Jameson which lend credibility to why the system works are these:

> First, we give our students constant and positive reinforcement. . . . Our focus is on success whether it comes today, tomorrow, or on the last day of class. But when success does arrive, it is welcomed without reservation.
>
> Second, we can reduce the students' ego-involvement in writing. No matter how much the teacher may rationalize, criticisms on a paper or grades less than an "A" are negative reinforcements. By eliminating the adversary relationship and inculcating a genuine team effort between student and teacher, we can drastically minimize this effect.
>
> Finally, and most importantly, this system allows us to use basic student instincts to work for and not against our efforts. . . Students recognize that they can do as well as their abilities and efforts warrant. The teacher becomes supportive rather than destructive. The burden is clearly and inescapably upon the students' shoulders (p. 5).

Summary

A foundation was established for the present study by reporting the review of literature in a deductive manner. The general discussion on teaching philosophies and procedures and their effects on student performance and attitude focused on the impact of the teacher, the need for a mixture of teaching approaches and processes, and the importance of classroom atmosphere. Specific studies of various teaching procedures

designed to test the effects of teaching on student performance and attitude were then summarized.

The section on evaluation philosophies and procedures and their effects on student performance and attitude examined the long-standing debate over the value and usefulness of grades. Grading subjectivity was discussed, along with ways to reduce subjectivity. Discussion of the impact of grades on students occupied a major portion of this section of the review, and several studies were cited that had been conducted to investigate the relationship of alternative grading procedures to student performance and attitudes.

The final section of literature review concentrated on an explanation of and rationale for using the checkmark grading approach in business communications. Student attitude and its relation to composition success was followed by details of how the checkmark approach was initially introduced and informal reports from those who had implemented its use in business communications.

CHAPTER III

METHODS AND PROCEDURES

As indicated in Chapter I, the problem of this study was a comparison of two groups of business communications students to determine if there was a significant difference in their performance on a writing test and their attitudes toward learning, teaching, the course, and themselves. The experimental group received checkmark grading on their written assignments; the control group received traditional letter grades of A, B, C, D, F. This chapter will include a description of the subjects, design of the study, preliminary procedures prior to the study, procedures for conducting the study, research instruments used, and analysis of data.

Description of the Subjects

The population for this study consisted of 71 students who were enrolled in the business communications course during the fall and spring semesters of 1978-79 at Elon College and The University of North Carolina at Greensboro. Two sections of the course (one from each institution) comprised the fall group of 30 students who received checkmark grading. In the spring semester, 41 students (one class at each institution) received traditional letter grades. The following sections provide a description of the institutions and subjects participating in this study.

Elon College. Elon College, located in the town of Elon College, North Carolina, is an undergraduate four-year, private liberal arts

college with an approximate enrollment of 2,400 students. The student body is composed primarily of North Carolina residents; however, there are numerous students from many different sections of the United States, as well as a few students from foreign countries.

Only one section of the business communications course is offered each semester; this course is scheduled for the same days and times each term (Tuesday and Thursday 10:10-11:30) and is taught by the same instructor. Those students registering for the business communications course do so voluntarily, because the class is not required for any major field of study. Nevertheless, class enrollment usually averages between 15 and 25 students each semester; and most of these students are pursuing degrees in business administration, accounting, or business education. Although business communications is classified as a junior-level course (BA 302), no prerequisites are required and no attempt is made to restrict enrollment to juniors only.

Various personal and academic characteristics of the two groups of Elon College students enrolled in business communications in the fall and spring semesters are summarized in Table 1. These data are included for the purpose of presenting more specific descriptions of the students who participated in the study.

During the fall semester, the names of 21 students appeared on the computer-printed class roll issued on the first day of class; however, two students did not appear. One of these students dropped the course because of schedule conflict; the other student officially withdrew from school. Of the remaining 19 students, 17 completed the course. One

student withdrew after excessive absences during the hospitalization and subsequent death of an immediate family member, and the other student explained her withdrawal as necessitated by domestic problems. Data on these two students are not included in this study.

Table 1

Personal and Academic Characteristics of Elon College Students

Characteristic	Fall	Spring
Number of Students	17	20
Sex (Females/Males)	6/11	9/11
Mean Age	21	20
Classification (Freshman/ Sophomore/Junior/Senior)	2/5/1/9	4/7/5/4
Mean GPA	2.68	2.60
Major		
Accounting	2	2
Business Administration	13	16
Business Education	2	2

In the spring, 25 students officially enrolled in the course, but two of these did not return after the first day of class. One student immediately dropped the class; the other student unofficially withdrew from school with a resultant penalty in all classes. Three other students later dropped the class, each of them giving the similar reason that reduced class loads were necessary in order to attain higher grades in required courses. Data on these five students are not included in the study.

University of North Carolina at Greensboro. The University of North Carolina at Greensboro (UNC-G) is a four-year, state-supported school that is one of sixteen senior institutions comprising a statewide multi-campus system known as The University of North Carolina. Its student body is approximately 9,855 students, including about 2,773 graduate students.

Typically, three sections of business communications are offered each semester in the Business and Distributive Education Department of the University. Two of these sections meet on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday for one hour each day; the third section meets on Tuesday and Thursday for an hour and a half each day. Each section is usually taught by a different instructor.

The course is classified as junior-level (BDE 309) and is required for majors in business and distributive education and for some concentrations of the major in home economics. Average enrollment for each class is usually between 15-25 students each semester.

The sections of business communications meeting on Tuesday and Thursday were selected for this study because the number of class meetings and hours of instruction were similar to the classes at Elon College. Personal and academic characteristics of the 13 students participating in the study in the fall semester and the 21 students participating in the spring semester at UNC-G are illustrated in Table 2.

Table 2

Personal and Academic Characteristics
of University of North Carolina at Greensboro Students

Characteristic	Fall	Spring
Number of Students	13	21
Sex (Females/Males)	10/3	22/0
Mean Age	21.9	22.9
Classification (Freshman/ Sophomore/Junior/Senior)	0/0/6/7	1/4/10/6
Mean GPA	2.75	2.75
Major		
Accounting	2	1
Business Administration	1	5
Business and Distributive Education	3	7
English	2	2
Home Economics	4	4
Math	1	1
Spanish	0	1

Twelve students officially enrolled prior to the first class meeting during the fall semester. One of these students never attended class, but two students who had registered late came to the first day of class. Total enrollment was 13; all students completed the class.

In the spring semester, 23 students were present for the first day of class; however, the single male student indicated that he planned to drop the course because he felt uncomfortable in a class with all females. Of the remaining 22 students, all completed the semester; but one student missed the final exam because of medical reasons. Since this student's grade for the course was "Incomplete," her data are not included in this study.

Design of the Study

Prior to the beginning of classes in the fall semester, 1978, one class of business communications at Elon College and one class at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro were designated as the groups to receive "treatment," which was randomly chosen as checkmark grading, on their writing assignments. The groups to be used for comparison were two classes of business communications in the spring semester, 1979--one at Elon College and one at UNC-G--taught by the same instructors who taught the fall classes and meeting on the same days and for the same length of time as the sections in the fall. The classes in the spring were designated as the control groups to receive the traditional grades of A, B, C, D, or F on their writing assignments. Campbell and Stanley (1963) and Gay (1976) support the use of natural or intact groups when randomization is not possible because it reduces the "I'm-a-guinea-pig" (Campbell & Stanley, p. 50) attitude and minimizes the possible reactive effects on subjects.

At the beginning of the fall semester, each class was administered pretests; posttests were administered at the end of the semester. As noted, both of these classes had all writing assignments evaluated by the checkmark system. In the spring, classes whose writing assignments had been evaluated by the usual letter grades were administered the same pretests and posttests as the groups in the fall.

The independent variables were method of evaluation and teacher; the dependent variables were student attitude and performance. Other variables for which data were collected were age, sex, grade point average, and course grade.

Informal data were also collected through the use of questionnaires. Information regarding reasons for taking the course and reactions to the grading system used to evaluate writing assignments was solicited from students in order to obtain teacher insight.

Preliminary Procedures Prior to the Study

Since the researcher had access to only one section of business communications each semester in her teaching institution, it appeared preferable to allow the classes to remain intact and randomly designate the sections as experimental and control groups rather than risk the possibility of student awareness to unusual treatment by randomly dividing only one class. In order to study a different population and increase the generalizability of results, it was decided to compare these two classes to two classes at another institution. Consequently, the department chairman at UNC-G agreed to allow classes meeting on the same days and for approximately the same length of time to be used in the study. It was likewise decided that classes in both institutions would be concurrently designated as experimental and control groups. All classes in both institutions were already using the same textbook, Effective Business Communications, by Murphy and Peck (1976).

During July, prior to the academic year 1978-79, the teachers met for the first time to discuss plans for the study. Both teachers had similar educational backgrounds and teaching experience; and both had previously taught courses in business communications. Several meetings ensued in July and August during which were jointly decided the sequence

of chapter assignments, topic coverage, homework requirements, writing assignments, and test schedules. These decisions were reflected in identical course descriptions and requirements distributed to students on the first day of class (Appendix C).

In addition to identical course descriptions and requirements, the teachers developed grading guidelines, as suggested in the Instructor's Manual (Murphy, 1976), for each writing assignment. It was further agreed that both teachers would use the same class handouts for supplementary instructions and activities, that suggestions for formal report topics would be the same, and that tests would be identical. Both teachers agreed to make detailed lesson plans and to maintain a log of class activities in order to enhance uniformity of coverage and activities for both semesters.

Since the fall classes had been randomly designated as the experimental groups to receive the checkmark grading, it was decided that the teachers would meet at least once each week during the fall semester to compare coverage of topics, discuss any unusual and/or unanticipated situations, and compare evaluation of student writing. It was believed that a letter-grade scale to be used during the spring semester for the control groups could be more efficiently developed as a result of these meetings.

Procedures for Conducting the Study

Because this study extended for two full semesters during the academic year 1978-79, discussion of the procedures is divided into sections which correspond to the method of evaluation of writing that was used each semester.

Checkmark Grading. On the first day of class in the fall semester, students were given a handout which explained course purpose and activities, bases for evaluating assignments and tests, comments on message preparation, guidelines for equating writing to letter grading standards, and the tentative course schedule (Appendix C).

Students were told that their final course grade would be determined as follows: 30 percent by test scores and 70 percent by writing assignments. In addition, they were told that their writing assignments would be evaluated by using a checkmark system and were given the following scale for converting checkmarks into grade equivalents:

A = 15 or 16 checks
B = 13 or 14 checks
C = 11 or 12 checks
D = 10 checks

Further discussion in the first class meeting focused on in-depth explanation of the rationale and mechanics of checkmark grading. It was explained that a checkmark on a writing assignment represented writing that was, in the opinion of the teacher, representative of "B" quality or better work. In the event that students did not receive a checkmark, they were allowed to revise and resubmit the assignment at the next class meeting after their papers were returned to them (Ceccio, 1976). With the exception of two writing assignments, students were permitted three revision attempts on all assignments. The purpose of immediate revision was to allow rewriting while the assignment was still fresh in their minds and also to help prevent a large backlog that might result in less likelihood of revision when several papers were due at one time.

Since many students are unfamiliar with the concept of business writing in terms of standards for acceptable composition, they were given grade definitions suggested by Weeks and Hatch (1974) and hypothetical company standards proposed by Hatch (1977). These grading standards were provided for student enlightenment and comparison of concrete standards to apply in their writing.

Two writing assignments were given special attention: the letter of application and resumé could be revised only once (after an opportunity to submit a rough draft for teacher reaction but no penalty); the formal report was worth three checkmarks and could not be revised (but students were invited to come as often as they wished for consultation while preparing the report and were encouraged to submit a rough draft for reaction but no penalty).

Following the explanation of the checkmark grading system on the first day of class, students were invited to ask questions about any points they felt needed clarification. Students were then requested to complete a Student Information sheet (Appendix A) and to write a brief autobiographical description of themselves. This writing, along with two other short writing projects collected at the second and third class meetings, was read closely, marked for mechanical errors, and commented upon by the teachers--but not graded. The object was to acquaint students with the commenting symbols, to highlight good and/or poor writing techniques, and to orient students to teachers' grading styles.

On the second day of class, students were given the McGraw-Hill Basic Skills System Writing Test (MHBSS), Form A, which was closely timed for 45 minutes, as suggested by the authors. In addition, students

completed a semantic differential (Osgood, Suci, & Tannenbaum, 1957) consisting of separate scales for the concepts of teaching, learning, business communications course, and themselves. Both testing instruments are described in more detail in ensuing sections.

Regular instruction began on the third day of class; and for the remainder of the semester, treatment classes at both institutions were conducted in a similar manner, with teachers meeting weekly to discuss instructional activities, correlate evaluation of student papers, and develop a scale to be used when traditional grades were used for the control groups.

The procedure for correlation followed this pattern: The teacher at UNC-G made copies of papers submitted by her students for nine different writing assignments. Copies were made before the teacher made comments and notations on the papers. Each teacher then read the papers individually, commenting upon strengths and weaknesses, and compared the finished product. For the first four assignments, no evaluation in the form of checkmark or grade was used; these papers were used for discussion of similarities and differences in marking techniques. On the final five sets of papers, letter grades were used in order to provide specific units for comparison. Using the Pearson Product Moment technique, it was revealed that the teachers had a correlation coefficient of .90 or higher on the grades that they had assigned on the five sets of papers.

At the next-to-last class meeting, both classes were administered posttests of the MHBSS, Form B, and the semantic differential. Students were also given a short questionnaire (Appendix F) which asked for their anonymous reactions to the grading system used and their suggestions for

grading techniques and instructional procedures. They were asked to complete the questionnaire outside of class and to use any means they so desired to disguise their identity (typewriter, printing, etc.). The class at Elon had a return rate of 11 out of 17 students; the return rate at UNC-G was 11 out of 13. A summary of the reactions of 22 students out of 30 is provided in Chapter IV.

Traditional Grading. On the first day of class in the spring semester, both control classes received a handout which contained explanations of the course purposes and activities, comments on message preparation, discussion of grading procedures, criteria for letter grades on content and mechanics, punctuation and grammar pitfalls to avoid, and a tentative course schedule (Appendix D).

Students were told that all written assignments would be evaluated on the bases of content and mechanics, with an overall grade that resulted from the combination of these two areas (for example, A/C = B). The content grade reflected the writer's application of the appropriate writing principles, with emphasis on use of the proper organizational plan and proper tone. The mechanics grade reflected the writer's ability to use correct grammar, punctuation, sentence structure, and paragraphing.

To facilitate computation of an overall grade for each writing assignment and determination of a final writing grade for the course, a numerical scale (Voyles, 1978) was used so that letter grades would correspond to a number. The scale ranged from 12 points for an A+ to 1 point for a D-.

First-day discussion of grading concluded with explanations that each writing assignment would receive one overall grade, with the exception of the formal report. Because of the depth of research and the amount of time involved in the preparation of the report, the grade awarded to that assignment was equivalent to three grades.* Students were told that during the preparation of the formal report they could come for consultation as often as they wished and were encouraged to submit a rough draft for teacher reaction but no penalty. The 14 graded writing assignments gave the students an opportunity to earn 16 writing grades; these grades represented 70 percent of the final overall course grade--with the remaining 30 percent determined by test scores.

The remainder of the period during the first-day meeting was spent by students' completing a Student Information Sheet (Appendix A) and writing a brief autobiographical description of themselves. This writing, along with two other short writing projects collected at the second and third class meetings, was read closely, marked for mechanical errors, and commented upon by the teachers--but not graded. The purposes of these assignments were to acquaint students with the commenting symbols, to highlight good and/or poor writing techniques, and to orient students to teachers' grading styles.

On the second day of class, students were given the McGraw-Hill Basic Skills System Writing Test (MHBSS), Form A, which was closely timed for

---

* Although it was not discussed with students, making the report grade equivalent to three grades corresponded to giving this grade the same weight in the overall course writing grade as did the three checkmarks when the checkmark grading system was used.

45 minutes. After completion of this test, students indicated their attitudinal responses on the same semantic differential instrument used in the fall semester. There were scales for the four concepts of teaching, learning, business communications course, and themselves.

Regular instruction began on the third day of class; and for the remainder of the semester, control classes at both institutions were conducted in a way designed to approximate as closely as possible the instruction of the treatment classes in the fall. Similarity of instruction was enhanced by closely following the lesson plans and the log of activities that both teachers prepared and followed during the check-mark approach.

The teachers met bi-weekly during the spring to confer on coverage of topics, to discuss unusual and/or unanticipated situations, and to exchange ideas and suggestions. No further grading correlations were determined during this period because of the high correlations revealed on the five assignments in the fall.

At the end of the spring semester, both classes were given posttests of the MHBSS, Form B, and the semantic differential on the next-to-last day of class. Students were also asked to complete a short questionnaire (Appendix F) which asked for their anonymous reactions to the grading system used, as well as their suggestions for grading and instructional procedures. These questionnaires, answered outside the classroom and returned on the last day of class, were completed by 18 students at Elon College and 11 students at UNC-G. The responses of the 29 students are summarized in Chapter IV.

Research Instruments Used

Instruments employed to gather data for this study were the McGraw-Hill Basic Skills System Writing Test (MHBSS) and a semantic differential constructed by the investigator. Both instruments were hand scored; SCOREZE Answer Sheets were used for the MHBSS.

McGraw-Hill Basic Skills System Writing Test. This test, which has two parallel forms of A and B, is designed to measure students' skills in written communication (Raygor, 1970) in three areas: (1) Language Mechanics, (2) Sentence Patterns, and (3) Paragraph Patterns. The Language Mechanics portion of the test consists of 30 items which measure students' ability to recognize errors in capitalization, punctuation, and grammar. The 26 items in the Sentence Patterns portion require identification of sentence types (simple, compound, or complex sentences and sentence fragments), selection of grammatically correct sentences, detection of parallel construction within sentences, and choice of appropriate transitional words and phrases to connect sentences to form effective paragraphs. The third portion, Paragraph Patterns, contains 15 items that involve the choice of appropriate topic sentences, developing sentences, and concluding sentences, as well as recognition of the proper sequence of sentences in a paragraph and appropriate division of sentences into paragraphs. Feldt (1972) says that no validity has been established for the MHBSS Writing Test. He does, however, note that one of the major strengths of the test is the "unique emphasis given to paragraph construction" (p. 501). The reliability of the MHBSS, according to Feldt, is below .70 and was based on a correlation method which combined the following three groups sampled: (1) college bound students,

grades 11 and 12; (2) two-year college students; and (3) freshmen in four-year colleges and universities.

Each section of the test, closely timed for 15 minutes, yields a separate score. There is also a fourth score, a Total, that is intended to reflect the "student's level of ability in those writing skills which are prerequisite to freshman-level English communication courses" (Raygor, 1970, p. 22). Through the use of norm tables provided in the Examiner's Manual for the MHBSS, each of the four raw scores can be converted into standard scores and stanines. The standard scores indicate a mean of 50 and a standard deviation of 10. Since the units in standard scores are equal, they are recommended as most useful in conducting statistical analyses; therefore, data collected from the MHBSS tests were recorded and analyzed on the basis of standard scores.

Although not used for this study, raw test scores can be converted to percentile ranks corresponding to three reference groups sampled: (1) freshmen and a few sophomores in four-year colleges; (2) first-year students in two-year colleges; and (3) high school juniors and seniors identified as "college-bound" students. The MHBSS Writing Test, Form A, was administered as a pretest in all four business communications classes; Form B was used as a posttest.

Semantic Differential. Students' attitudes were measured by using a semantic differential (Appendix B). The semantic differential is a product of research directed by Charles E. Osgood on the measurement of meaning (Osgood, Suci, & Tannenbaum, 1957). Remers (1963) refers to the semantic differential as "a measuring device that is flexible, widely applicable, simple to administer, and in accord with many criteria of an acceptable measuring device" (pp. 361-362).

The instrument, designed by the researcher according to procedures described by Kerlinger (1974), consisted of 15 sets of bipolar adjectives divided by seven spaces. Osgood and Suci (1969), using a factor analysis procedure, designated three broad factors of meaning measured by the semantic differential technique: an evaluative factor, a potency factor, and an activity factor (Shaw & Wright, 1967); however, Kerlinger says that in studies of attitudes only scales from the evaluation factor are necessary.

In this study, four different concepts--learning, teaching, business communications, and self--were used; and students rated each of the same 15 bipolar adjectives for each concept. The adjective pairs, all of which were selected from the list validated by Osgood, were reversed at random. Kerlinger suggests reversal in order to counteract response bias tendencies and prevent subjects from going down the list and checking all scales at the same point.

Students were asked to place a check mark on one of the seven spaces between each adjective pair. Each space represents a number (1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7), depending upon where it is located between the adjectives. The space located next to the positive pole in the adjective pair is designated "7," and the number next to the negative pole is "1." The unit of measurement is "1" through "7," with "7" being the most positive and "1" being the most negative.

The semantic differential was administered to all four classes as a pretest and a posttest.

Analysis of Data

Data for the total sample were coded and transferred to punched cards. The statistical analyses were performed by computer, using the Statistical Analysis System (SAS) Package (Barr, Goodnight, Sall, & Helwig, 1976).

Winer (1971) says that direct control and statistical control are the "two general methods for controlling variability due to experimental error" (p. 752). He suggests attention to "the uniformity of the conditions under which the experiment is run" (p. 753) as an approach to direct control, as well as use of repeated-measure designs.

> Statistical control is achieved by measuring one or more concomitant variates in addition to the variate of primary interest. . . .Measurement on the covariates are made for the purpose of adjusting the measurements on the variate (p. 752).

Data collected on student performance on the McGraw-Hill Basic Skills System Writing test were analyzed through an analysis of covariance with repeated measures on a three-factor design (Method x Teacher x Time from pretest to posttest), each of the first two factors having two levels and the third factor being repeated measures. Grade point average (GPA) was used as the covariate, and the significance level was set at .05.

Analysis of covariance with repeated measures on the same three-factor design (Method x Teacher x Time from pretest to posttest), was performed to test the hypotheses regarding attitude as measured by a semantic differential. The level of significance for these tests was also .05.

Summary

In this chapter, a description of the subjects involved in this study was provided. In addition, the design of the study and preliminary procedures prior to conducting the study were discussed. These sections were followed by detailed explanations of the actual procedures for conducting the study. The research instruments used in the study were carefully described, as were the methods used for analyzing the data collected. Statistical results and their analysis are reported in the next chapter.

CHAPTER IV

ANALYSIS OF THE DATA

This study was undertaken to determine if business communications students whose writing was evaluated by a checkmark grading system (Freeman & Hatch, 1975) would differ significantly in their performance on a specific writing test and their attitudes toward learning, teaching, the course, and themselves when compared to students whose writing was evaluated by traditional letter grades of A, B, C, D, F. This chapter will present in narrative and tabular form an analysis of the data in relation to each hypothesis. Additional relevant information obtained from questionnaires completed by students is summarized for the purpose of presenting unstructured student reaction to both grading methods.

A total of 30 students enrolled in two business communications classes--one at Elon College and one at The University of North Carolina at Greensboro--during the fall semester, 1978, were chosen as the group to receive treatment in the form of checkmark grading. The control group, receiving traditional letter grades, was comprised of a total of 41 students in two business communications classes at the same institutions during the spring semester, 1979. The same instructor at each college taught the courses both semesters. Figure 1 presents a graphic representation of the combinations of methods of grading and teachers.

Method

Teacher	Checkmark (fall)	Letter Grade (spring)	
1	13	21	34
2	17	20	37
	30	41	n=71

Figure 1. Students by Method and Teacher

Although the primary purpose of this study was to compare measures of student performance and attitudes by using two different methods of grading, it was important to examine whether or not significant differences existed between results for the two teachers. Therefore, the statistical technique employed in analyzing the data was a three-factor analysis of covariance with repeated measures, using grade point average as the covariate.

Powers (1979) says that data collected through pretest-posttest instruments can be analyzed by computing gain scores, by using the adjusted pretest score as a covariate, or by treating pretest and posttest scores separately for each subject as repeated measures. When the pretest and posttest are comparable in form, a repeated measures analysis yields statistical and interpretational information that allows examination of the data for interaction of variables such as teacher and/or treatment during the time from pretest to posttest. In addition, there is a better estimate of the random fluctuation in the data by examining scores separately.

In this study, performance and attitude data were collected through pretests and posttests of a writing test and a semantic differential instrument. Statistical analysis of the data was performed by the Statistical Analysis System (SAS) General Linear Models Procedure (Barr, Goodnight, Sall, & Helwig, 1976) at the Triangle Universities Computation Center.

Student Performance

Student performance was measured through the McGraw-Hill Basic Skills System Writing Test (MHBSS). This test has two parallel forms, A and B, with 71 multiple choice questions in the areas of language mechanics, sentence patterns, and paragraph patterns.

The test was administered to all four classes as a pretest (Form A) at the beginning of the semesters and as a posttest (Form B) at the end of the semesters. Raw test scores for the checkmark grading group (fall) and the traditional grading group (spring) are provided in Appendix G.

The null hypothesis investigated for comparing grading methods on the measure of student performance was: There will be no significant difference in the change (from pretest to posttest) in students' performance scores on a specific writing test when comparing checkmark grading and traditional grading groups. Analysis of covariance on a three-factor design (Method x Teacher x Time from pretest to posttest), each of the first two factors having two levels and the third factor being repeated measures, yielded the results illustrated in Table 3. Grade point average (GPA), which was used as the covariate to adjust the scores on the writing pretest and posttest, showed an F-ratio of 89.72, with a

significance level of .0001. This high F-ratio indicates that GPA is significant in its usefulness in adjusting for the academic levels of the students when making the pretest-posttest comparison.

The F-ratio between methods, shown in the table as 2.71, is not significant. This indicates that the difference between adjusted mean scores for checkmark grading and traditional grading groups occurred by chance. The null hypothesis for between methods was not rejected.

Table 3

Analysis of Covariance for Student Performance on the MHBSS Writing Test

Source	df	MS	F
GPA (covariate)	1	1334.59	89.72*
Method	1	40.36	2.71
Teacher	1	182.29	12.26
Method x Teacher	1	20.61	1.39
Error (subjects within classes)	66	81.15	
Time	1	258.36	17.37*
Method x Time	1	5.85	.39
Teacher x Time	1	9.81	.66
Method x Teacher x Time	1	.80	.05
Error	67	14.87	

*Significant at the .05 level.

The F-ratio of 12.26 between teachers is not significant, indicating the difference between teachers was random. Repeated measures to test whether the time from pretest to posttest made a difference in student performance resulted in an F-ratio of 17.37, which is significant at the .0001 level. This indicates that the students made a significant increase in their performance on the writing over all groups collectively; however, this difference cannot be attributed to one method of grading over the other.

Table 4 presents the adjusted pretest and posttest means for each group and for all students in both groups combined.

Table 4

Adjusted Means of the MHBSS Writing Test for Each Group

Group	No. of Students	Pretest	Posttest	Adjusted Mean Change
Checkmark	30	52.77	55.83	+3.06
Traditional	41	53.88	56.22	+2.34
Both	71	53.41	56.06	+2.65

Student Attitude

Students' attitudes were measured by a semantic differential (Osgood, Suci, & Tannenbaum, 1957) developed by the researcher according to guidelines suggested by Kerlinger (1974). This instrument consisted of 15 adjective pairs, each with a 7-point scale, to measure student reaction to four concepts--learning, teaching, the business communications course, and self. For both groups, the same semantic differential (Appendix B) was given as a pretest at the beginning of the semesters and as a posttest at the end of the semesters.

Data for each of the four concepts were analyzed separately, again using a three-factor analysis of covariance (Method x Teacher x Time from pretest to posttest) with repeated measures on time. Grade point average (GPA) was used as the covariate. The hypothesis and the results of the data analysis for each attitude concept are illustrated and discussed below.

Learning. The following hypothesis for attitude toward learning was investigated: There will be no significant difference in the change in students' attitudes toward learning when comparing checkmark grading and traditional grading groups.

The F-ratio for grade point average (GPA), 2.56, was not significant at the .05 level, an indication that GPA was not correlated with students' attitudes. F-ratios for method and teacher, respectively, were .33 and .05, neither of which was significant. Time from pretest to posttest showed no significant difference in attitude. The null hypothesis for students' attitudes toward learning was not rejected. Table 5 shows the results of the analysis of covariance.

Table 5

Analysis of Covariance for Student Attitude Toward Learning

Source	df	MS	F
GPA (covariate)	1	170.39	2.56
Method	1	22.10	.33
Teacher	1	3.44	.05
Method x Teacher	1	223.38	3.35
Error (subjects within classes)	66	81.96	
Time	1	75.68	1.14
Method x Time	1	9.75	.15
Teacher x Time	1	71.45	1.07
Method x Teacher x Time	1	61.31	.92
Error	67	66.67	

The adjusted pretest and posttest means for each group and for all students in both groups combined are shown in Table 6.

Table 6

Adjusted Means of Attitude Toward Learning for Each Group

Group	No. of Students	Pretest	Posttest	Adjusted Mean Change
Checkmark	30	87.30	86.33	- .97
Traditional	41	88.71	86.76	-1.95
Both	71	88.11	86.58	-1.53

Teaching. The hypothesis for attitude toward teaching was: There will be no significant difference in the change in students' attitudes toward teaching when comparing checkmark grading and traditional grading groups. As shown in Table 7, none of the F-ratios for GPA, method, teacher, or time was significant at the .05 level. The null hypothesis for students' attitudes toward teaching was not rejected.

Table 7

Analysis of Covariance for Student Attitude Toward Teaching

Source	df	MS	F
GPA (covariate)	1	236.65	4.80
Method	1	52.10	1.06
Teacher	1	323.96	6.57
Method x Teacher	1	263.76	5.35
Error (subjects within classes)	66	106.77	
Time	1	.05	.00
Method x Time	1	2.45	.05
Teacher x Time	1	136.59	2.77
Method x Teacher x Time	1	10.00	.20
Error	67	49.31	

The adjusted pretest and posttest means for each group and for all students in both groups combined are summarized in Table 8.

Table 8

Adjusted Means of Attitude Toward Teaching for Each Group

Group	No. of Students	Pretest	Posttest	Adjusted Mean Change
Checkmark	30	86.07	85.50	-.57
Traditional	41	86.98	87.32	+.34
Both	71	86.59	86.55	-.04

Business Communications Course. The third hypothesis concerning attitude was: There will be no significant difference in the change in students' attitudes toward the business communications course when comparing checkmark grading and traditional grading groups.

As indicated in Table 9, the F-ratios for this analysis for GPA (.09), method (.82), teacher (.53), and time (.82) were among the lowest of all four concepts; and none of them came close to approaching the significance level of .05. Consequently, the null hypothesis for students' attitudes toward the business communications course was not rejected.

Table 9

Analysis of Covariance for Student Attitude Toward the Course

Source	df	MS	F
GPA (covariate)	1	6.13	.09
Method	1	54.51	.82
Teacher	1	35.20	.53
Method x Teacher	1	40.90	.62
Error (subjects within classes)	66	122.68	
Time	1	54.40	.82
Method x Time	1	23.14	.35
Teacher x Time	1	162.25	2.44
Method x Teacher x Time	1	1.56	.02
Error	67	66.43	

Table 10 presents the adjusted pretest and posttest means for each group and for all students in both groups combined.

Table 10

Adjusted Means of Attitude Toward Course for Each Group

Group	No. of Students	Pretest	Posttest	Adjusted Mean Change
Checkmark	30	87.27	84.87	-2.40
Traditional	41	87.53	87.15	- .38
Both	71	87.42	86.18	-1.24

Self. The final hypothesis generated to test attitude was the following: There will be no significant difference in the change in students' attitudes toward themselves (self-concept) when comparing checkmark grading and traditional grading groups.

The F-ratios for GPA (3.24), method (.33), teacher (.01), or time (.72) did not reveal significance at the .05 level. Table 11 indicates that the F-ratio for teacher is the lowest of all the F-ratios for teacher on any of the attitude measures. Because no significance appeared, the null hypothesis for students' attitudes toward themselves was not rejected.

Table 11

Analysis Covariance for Student Attitude Toward Self (Self-Concept)

Source	df	MS	F
GPA (Covariate)	1	147.95	2.56
Method	1	15.10	.33
Teacher	1	.30	.01
Method x Teacher	1	237.60	5.20
Error (subjects within classes)	66	85.10	
Time	1	32.76	.72
Method x Time	1	.20	.00
Teacher x Time	1	.14	.00
Method x Teacher x Time	1	.24	.01
Error	67	45.71	

Table 12 summarizes the adjusted pretest and posttest means for each group and for all students in both groups combined.

Table 12

Adjusted Means of Attitude Toward Self for Each Group

Group	No. of Students	Pretest	Posttest	Adjusted Mean Change
Checkmark	30	87.77	86.87	- .90
Traditional	41	88.61	87.56	-1.05
Both	71	88.25	87.27	- .98

Student Reaction to Grading Systems

Near the end of the semesters, all students in both groups were given an informal questionnaire (Appendix F), which asked for their responses to questions concerning grading and their writing improvement as well as constructive suggestions regarding the course and any general comments they wished to make. In an attempt to encourage candid responses, both teachers asked the students to complete the questionnaire outside of class and to use any means they wished (printing, typing, etc.) to conceal their identity. The response rate for the fall checkmark grading group was 22 out of 30 students; the spring traditional group returned 29 out of the 41 questionnaires. The variety of comments and reactions from students in both groups tends to support the lack of

statistical evidence that one grading method over the other significantly affected their attitudes toward the course or their opinions of the fairness of the grading.

Each question is presented separately, with a comparison of the responses from students in both groups. The constructive suggestions and general comments elaborate on some of the details included in the answers to the questions.

1. What is your personal reaction to the system of grading that has been used for writing assignments during the semester?

Checkmark Group

Fair (equitable)	Excellent	Strict	
19	2	1	(n=22)

Traditional Group

Fair (equitable)	OK	Unfair	Strict	
22	4	2	1	(n=29)

2. Do you feel that your writing assignments have been evaluated fairly? If not, please elaborate.

Checkmark Group

Yes	Not Always	Strict	No Response
19	1	1	1

Traditional Group

Yes	No	Not Always	No Response
20	2	4	3

3. What is your opinion of the weights assigned to the various components of this course (writing, 70%; tests, 30%)?

Checkmark Group

Fair (equitable)	Perfect	Lower Emphasis on Writing	Increase Emphasis on Writing
16	1	2	3

Traditional Group

Fair (equitable)	Lower Emphasis on Writing	Exclude Tests	Irrelevant
18	9	1	1

4. Do you feel that your writing ability has improved since the beginning of this course?

Checkmark Group

Definitely	Yes	Some	Not Sure	No
4	14	2	1	1

Traditional Group

Definitely	Yes	Some	Not Sure	No
3	20	3	2	1

5. What constructive suggestions can you make regarding the instructional procedures, testing, and/or grading of assignments in business communications?

Checkmark Group

(Verbatim)

"More group discussions would be a good idea."

"The course is fine as it is." (3 students)

"Working in groups more (not on everything, but some things)."

"I feel the course is very well organized to help the student, but I feel the tests were least effective in learning the material in order to write a paper or report."

"If the schedule could be rearranged accordingly, the formal report assignment should be due earlier in the semester."

"I think more time should be given for the formal report."

"Two instead of three revisions may be enough. Having four times to write a paper makes me a little slack in trying the first time."

"Shorten the length of the tests."

"Resumé and letter of application should be worth more."

"7-point scale on tests is a little hard--10 pt. or curve should be allowed."

"I found it hard trying to write a formal report and trying to keep up with the other assignments as well."

"No constructive suggestions; just a warning not to take the course as an elective because it is very time consuming."

"I feel that the formal report should receive a grade. The tests were very fair."

"No tests--Improvise with more writing assignments."

"Give less writing assignments or no formal report. Make tests writing assignments. Give more than 16 check assignments (with 16 checks an A) so more people will be able to make a better grade."

Traditional Group

(Verbatim)

"Push to have course required for all business majors."

"Get a new book."

"Fine like it is."

"Mechanics grading is the only complaint (too harsh)."

"More activities in class period."

"Maybe the formal report could be due on the last day."

"Some of the T-F items on the test were a little tricky."

"More evenly distribute the work load."

"Procedures are well organized and handled very well."

"Lowering the amount of work to do."

"There should be a group task every class period."

"Grade according to student's progress."

"Change to a 10-point scale."

"We should review orally for test."

"Offer incentive for certain variables like class participation, attendance, on-time graded papers."

"Make tests optional." (2 students)

"There were too many assignments. If there were fewer, I feel that I could write a better letter."

6. General Comments:

Checkmark Group

(Verbatim)

"Fair teacher and I know you are trying very hard to improve every ones writing ability and I appreciate it very much. . . .I have learned a few things in this class but I get nervous every time I have to write, or do a exercise, because I know I will be revising it again and again."

"Overall, I enjoyed the course. Much time and effort must be put into the class, but I would tell anyone that you are rewarded at the end. I find it much easier to write now and don't feel so ashamed of my writing."

"Given the chance to revise the paper three times was very fair and benefited the student."

"I believe the grading is fair, and I could not imagine any alternatives."

"I feel that the course was fair because it gave the students a chance to understand their mistakes and change them. This system helps reinforce the right way to write letters not the wrong way."

"Good class."

"A most helpful course. I found it very demanding, yet I felt that this was information I needed to learn. I appreciated teacher's willingness to help."

"I enjoyed this course, under you, very much. It has helped me to improve greatly an area I was very weak in."

"I have learned a great deal about writing from this class even though it did require a great deal of work."

"I honestly feel that this is one of, if not the most useful courses I have taken during my college career. I have learned techniques and concepts which I will be able to apply once I am out of school. This is not true of the majority of courses which I have taken."

"I do not think that people are quite so sensitive as we are given to understand. Sometimes a little bluntness is necessary."

"I have enjoyed this class."

"Overall I felt the course was very much worth my while. I suppose now the first time someone wants me to write some kind of intellectual letter I won't panic to long. I do feel though, if you had offered some positive feelings toward our letters we all might have gotten a better perspective as to what is good and bad. Thank you and have a Merry Christmas."

"The course is very time consuming, especially the poorer one's writing ability is, but I was given ample time on several occasions in completing the assignments, and it is greatly appreciated."

"I really appreciate you taking all your time in this class. I appreciate also your understanding of our overall workload and giving us 'slack' to work with. Thank you."

Traditional Group

(Verbatim)

"This course is a valuable learning process for later on in life."

"Not being a business major, I was not totally into the class."

"Grades are stressed too much and learning is not first priority. This is difficult subject matter and it's difficult to show expertise in one semester, especially after two years have lapsed between English courses. Other professors should insist that students take this course only if qualified."

"Business Department should put more emphasis on the course. It's an elective that should be treated as a requirement."

"The class was very informative class--Not like all required courses--I did learn and could relate to material."

"I have enjoyed this course very much. It has taught me how to utilize the reader in writing to him."

"Even though I am not a business major, I benefited from the course. It is a good course. You are an excellent instructor."

"Everything seems to work well, except that I feel that there were too many assignments, which caused us to rush to get them completed. If there were fewer, I feel that I could write a better letter, because I had more time to work on it."

"This course should be required for business majors. It really opened up the door to what is going on in the business world. I feel that I learned a lot in this class, and this will aid me in future endeavors."

"I have really appreciated this course. I feel what I've learned will be very beneficial to me."

"This class has benefitted me because of its practicality--I can really use this knowledge!"

"I have learned a lot from the course."

"I enjoyed this class. I was satisfied with most of the procedures and assignments. However, the formal report was a bit too much for this course because this type of report is seldom used in most business procedures."

"Instructor has done a good job--considering the entire class attitude."

"A good course and I learned a lot."

"I thought you were helpful, and I learned a lot of practical ways to apply the material."

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, IMPLICATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary

As stated in Chapter I, the problem of this study was to determine if business communications students whose writing assignments were graded by a checkmark grading approach would differ significantly in their performance on a specific writing test and their attitudes toward (a) learning, (b) teaching, (c) the business communications course, and (d) themselves (self-concept) from students whose writing assignments were graded by traditional letter grades of A, B, C, D, F. Five null hypotheses were generated for this study. Hypothesis one concerned the effect of checkmark grading versus traditional grading on students' performance on a writing test. Hypotheses two through five involved the relationship between the methods of grading and students' attitudes toward learning, teaching, the course, and themselves.

The data-gathering instrument used to measure student performance was the McGraw-Hill Basic Skills System Writing Test (MHBSS), Form A (pretest) and Form B (posttest). The MHBSS is designed to measure students' skills in written communication in three areas: (1) Language mechanics, (2) Sentence patterns, and (3) Paragraph patterns. A total score, which reflects the combination of these three areas, was used for the analysis.

The instrument used to measure student attitude was a semantic differential developed by the researcher. The four attitude concepts

were each accompanied by 15 bipolar adjective pairs on a scale of 1 (negative) to 7 (positive). The same instrument was used at the beginning of the semesters as a pretest and at the end of the semesters as a posttest.

A second measure of student attitude was an informal questionnaire distributed to all subjects near the end of each semester. This questionnaire asked for students' reactions to the grading system and their constructive suggestions concerning the course. The data obtained from this questionnaire were not analyzed statistically.

The sample for this study consisted of 71 college students enrolled in two classes of business communications at Elon College and two classes at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro (UNC-G). During the fall semester of the 1978-79 academic year, one class at each institution functioned as the treatment group (n=30) and received checkmark grading on all writing assignments. The control group used for comparison in the spring semester of 1979 was one class at Elon and one class at UNC-G (n=41). These students had all writing assignments graded by the traditional letter grades of A, B, C, D, F. The same instructor taught each of the two classes at Elon; likewise, the instructor at UNC-G was the same both fall and spring semesters.

The MHBSS and the semantic differential were administered to both groups (fall and spring) on the second day of class. Following the pretest measures, both the experimental and control groups pursued the same course objectives, received the same reading and writing assignments, and took the same tests. Every effort was made to insure consistency between teachers and between semesters. At the next-to-last

class meeting in both semesters, posttests of the MHBSS and the semantic differential were administered to the subjects.

The statistical analysis utilized for all data for all hypotheses was analysis of covariance on a three-factor design (Method x Teacher x Time from pretest to posttest), the first two factors having two levels and the third factor being repeated measures. Grade point average (GPA) was used as the covariate.

Analysis of the data to determine whether checkmark grading or traditional grading made a significant difference in the change (from pretest to posttest) in students' performance scores on the writing test revealed no significant difference at the .05 level. There were no interactions for teacher and method, method and time, teacher and time, or semester and teacher and time. The null hypothesis concerning "no significant difference in the change in students' performance scores" was accepted.

Grade point average as a covariate was highly significant at the criterion level of .05. In other words, grade point average correlated with students' scores and then provided a useful measure for adjusting or removing the effects of the varying academic levels of the students so that the pretest-posttest comparison between students and groups could be more meaningful. Repeated measures to test whether the time from pretest to posttest made a difference in student performance resulted in a difference that was significant at the .05 level. Both groups increased their total posttest scores over the total pretest scores, regardless of the method of grading used.

Data on student attitude toward learning, teaching, the business communications course, and self (self-concept) were analyzed separately for each concept. No significant differences were found on any concept for the variables of grade point average, teacher, method, or time. The adjusted mean changes for both groups on all four concepts were in a negative direction; however, there was not consistency for one method of grading over the other. The largest overall negative change (for both groups combined) was toward the concept of learning (-1.53); the smallest change was toward teaching (-.04). The four null hypotheses regarding "no significant difference in the change in students' attitudes" were accepted.

Informal data collected from students' responses to a questionnaire revealed that most students in both groups felt that the grading system used was a fair (equitable) one, that their writing had been evaluated fairly, and that their writing ability had improved since the beginning of the course. Constructive suggestions and general comments from students in both grading groups were varied but primarily positive.

Conclusions

Based on the statistical analyses of data reported in Chapter IV, the following conclusions were drawn:

1. Grade point average was highly significant in its use as a covariate to adjust academic levels of students in making a pretest-posttest comparison of performance scores on the McGraw-Hill Basic Skills System Writing Test.

2. There was a significant increase in students' performance scores on the MHBSS test from the beginning to the end of the semesters

when considering all students together over teacher and method and adjusting for academic levels of students.

3. Use of the checkmark grading system had no more or less effect on students' performance scores from pretest to posttest than the traditional grading system. The fact that students in both groups showed an increase in scores from pretest to posttest could be interpreted to mean that the students on the average benefited from the course because of their own application of study, the effectiveness of the teaching, or a combination of both these and other factors.

4. Use of the checkmark grading system had no more or less effect on students' attitudes toward learning, teaching, the business communications course, or themselves than the traditional grading system.

5. Although not statistically analyzed, data from the student questionnaire revealed that most students in both groups believed that the grading system was fair and that their writing had been evaluated fairly. Most students also indicated that their writing ability had improved since the beginning of the course, and several commented that they had enjoyed the class. However, these positive comments are not reinforced by statistical analyses performed on the semantic differential for attitude change toward the course from pretest to posttest.

Implications

The results of this investigation indicate that the checkmark grading system, within the conditions of this study, is equally effective to traditional letter grades in producing increases from pretest to posttest in students' performance scores on a specific writing test.

This finding supports Wagner's (1975b) conclusion that the presence or absence of grades has no impact on students' writing performance. Other studies examining the relationship between grading methods and student performance (Arnold, 1963; Page, 1958; Sweet, 1966; Vasta & Sarmiento, 1976) have also produced findings which indicated that grading methods have mixed results on student performance.

Results of the sample of this study do not support the contentions of Freeman and Hatch (1975), Throop and Jameson (1976), and Ceccio (1976) that students' attitudes improve as a result of being able to revise. For this study, measures of attitudes toward all four concepts produced a negative change from pretest to posttest.

Informal student reactions on the questionnaire substantiate Skaggs' (1976) belief that most students expect to learn something in a business communications course that will be beneficial to them in their academic preparation for careers. In addition, examination of individual scores on the attitude measures in comparison to the final course grade for certain students revealed that there was little, if any, relationship between students' course grade and their evaluation of the course (Weinrauch & Matejka, 1973). In short, under conditions similar to this study, it should be a matter of teacher preference in deciding whether to use checkmark grading or traditional grading since both methods are about equally significant in producing increases in students' performance but neither is statistically significant in effecting attitude change.

Recommendations

As a result of this investigation, the following recommendations are made:

1. Use of the checkmark grading system in courses other than business communications and studies to compare checkmark grading and traditional grading for their effects on performance and attitudes.

2. A follow-up of the subjects involved in this study to determine long-range effects such as achievement in other writing or English courses, achievement in other college courses, and application of the knowledge gained in the business communications course.

3. Replication of the present study using different instruments to measure student performance and attitudes and comparing the results with the results of this study.

4. Replication of the present study involving a larger population and utilizing a research design that allows the two groups to be compared concurrently.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Arensman, R. W. & Maxwell, G. W. Twelve motivation vitamins for business correspondence classes. Collegiate News and Views, 1959, 13, 5-8.

Arnold, L. V. Effects of frequency of writing and intensity of teacher evaluation upon performance in written composition of tenth grade students. (Doctoral dissertation, Florida State University, 1963).

Baker, W. H. Teaching business writing by the spiral method. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Business Communication Association, Toronto, Ontario, December, 1975. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 124 989)

Barr, A. J., Goodnight, J. H., Sall, J. P., & Helwig, J. T. A user's guide to SAS 76. Raleigh, N. C.: SAS Institute, Inc., 1976.

Becker, H. S., Geer, B., & Hughes, E. C. Making the grade: The academic side of college life. New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 1968.

Blake, R. W. Assessing English and language arts teachers' attitudes toward writers and writing. Paper presented at the Annual Conference of the New York State English Council, Buffalo, 1975. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 113 718)

Bowman, J. P. Problems of the grading differential. The Journal of Business Communication, 1973, 11, 22-30.

Brubaker, D. L. Creative leadership in elementary schools. Dubuque, Iowa: Kendall/Hunt Publishing Co., 1976.

Campbell, D. T., & Stanley, J. C. Experimental and quasi-experimental designs for research. Chicago: Rand McNally, 1963.

Ceccio, J. F. Checkmark grading and the quarter system. The American Business Communication Association Bulletin, 1976, 39, 7-9.

Coleman, J. S., Crim, A., Featherstone, J., Love, R. B., Ravitch, D., & Warner, C. How to get quality back into schools. U. S. News & World Report, September 12, 1977, p. 31-34.

Donovan, T. R. Creating images: Evaluation and the writing teacher. Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Conference on College Composition and Communication, Kansas City, Missouri, 1977. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 146 613)

Douglas, G. H. Developing a logical approach to the teaching of business writing. The Journal of Business Communication, 1968, 5, 25-33.

Douglas, G. H. The doldrums of the advanced writing course. The American Business Communication Association Journal of Business Communication, 1972, 9, 39-47.

Dusel, W. J. Some semantic implications of theme correction. English Journal, 1955, 44, 390-397.

Dusel, W. J. How should student writing be judged? English Journal, 1957, 46, 263-268; 299.

Effros, C. An experimental study of the effects of guided revision and delayed grades on writing proficiency of college freshmen. Washington, D. C.: National Institute of Education, 1973. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 079 764)

Erickson, R. C., & Wentling, T. L. Measuring student growth: Techniques and procedures for occupational education. Boston: Allyn & Bacon, 1976.

Eulert, D. Relationship of personality factors to learning in college composition. College Composition and Communication, 1967, 58, 62-66.

Feldt, L. S. McGraw-Hill basic skills system. In O. K. Buros (Ed.), The seventh mental measurements yearbook. Highland Park, N. J.: Gryphon Press, 1972.

Fielden, J. What do you mean I can't write? Harvard Business Review, 1964, 42, 144-156.

Freedman, S. W. Models of the evaluation process. Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Conference on College Composition and Communication, Kansas City, Missouri, 1977. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 146 610)

Freedman, S. W. The evaluators of student writing. San Francisco State College, 1978. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 157 079)

Freeman, C. The psychology of grading skill learning. Paper presented at the Midwest Regional Conference of the American Business Communication Association, Dayton, Ohio, 1978. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 153 244)

Freeman, C. P., & Hatch, R. A. A behavioral grading system that works. The American Business Communication Association Bulletin, 1975, 38, 1-9.

Gay, L. R. Educational research. Columbus, Ohio: Charles E. Merrill Publishing Co., 1976.

Glasser, W. Schools without failure. New York: Harper & Row, 1969.

Gordon, R. A., & Howell, J. E. Higher education for business. New York: Columbia University Press, 1959.

Hambleton, R. K., & Murray, J. A comparative study of faculty and student attitudes toward a variety of college grading purposes and practices. Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the National Council on Measurement in Education, New York, 1977. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 141 381)

Hatch, R. Instructor's guide for Communicating in business. Chicago: Science Research Associates, 1977.

Hofstedt, T. R., & Dyckman, T. R. Research on teaching innovations in accounting. In J. D. Edwards, W. J. Albers, T. R. Hofstedt, K. F. Skousen, J. Sorensen, & M. F. Usry (Eds.), Accounting education: Problems and prospects. American Accounting Association Education Series No. 1, 1974.

Hoover, R. M. Towards more painless grammar. Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Conference on College Composition and Communication, Philadelphia, 1976. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 130 319)

Horning, K. B. On grading business letters. The Journal of Business Education, 1951, 27, 106-108.

Janis, J. H. Written communication in an upgraded curriculum. The Journal of Business Communication, 1965, 3, 1-11.

Jones, G. E. On opening day America's schools ponder some sobering lessons. U. S. News & World Report, September 12, 1977, p. 28-30.

Kerlinger, F. N. Foundations of behavioral research (2nd ed.). New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1974.

Kirschenbaum, H., Napier, R., & Simon, S. B. Wad-ja-get? The grading game in american education. New York: Hart Publishing Co., 1971.

Kremers, M. I want my writing students to call me "coach." Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Wyoming Conference on Freshman and Sophomore English, Laramie, Wyoming, 1976. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 137 789)

Lansky, L. M. Changing the classroom. Some psychological assumptions. In P. Runkel, R. Harrison, & M. Runkel (Eds.), The changing college classroom. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, Inc., 1969.

Lewis, P. V. Needed research in business education. Delta Pi Epsilon Research Bulletin (Section G, Communication), 1979, 5, 9-10.

Lunneborg, P. W. College grades: What do professors intend to communicate to whom? Seattle, Washington: Educational Assessment Center, University of Washington, 1977. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 142 591)

McArdle, R., & Moskovis, L. M. Competency-based education: Some problems and concerns. The Balance Sheet, September, 1978, p. 26-28.

Marshall, J. C., & Powers, J. M. Writing neatness, composition errors, and essay grades. In V. H. Noll, D. P. Scannell, & R. P. Noll (Eds.), Introductory readings in educational measurement. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1972.

Marzano, R. J. & Arthur, S. Teacher comments on student essays: It doesn't matter what you say. University of Colorado at Denver, 1977. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 147 864)

Murphy, H. A. Instructor's manual to accompany Effective business communications (2nd ed.). New York: McGraw-Hill Book Co., 1976.

Murphy, H. A., & Peck, C. E. Effective business communications (2nd ed.). New York: McGraw-Hill Book Co., 1976.

Murray, D. M. Teach the motivating force of revision. Paper presented at the Rutgers Invitational Seminars on the Teaching of Composition, "Revision: The Process and Strategies for Intervention," 1976. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 155 714)

Newkirk, T. R., Cameron, T. D., & Selfe, C. L. What Johnny can't write: A university view of freshman writing ability. University of Texas, Austin, 1976. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 140 339)

Osgood, C. E., & Suci, G. J. Factor analysis of meaning. In J. G. Snider & C. E. Osgood (Eds.), Semantic differential technique: A sourcebook. Chicago: Aldine Publishing Co., 1969.

Osgood, C. E., Suci, G. J., & Tannenbaum, P. H. The measurement of meaning. Urbana, Illinois: University of Illinois Press, 1957.

Page, E. B. Teacher comments and student performance: A seventy-four classroom experiment in school motivation. The Journal of Educational Psychology, 1958, 49, 173-181.

Pearce, C. G. Help students produce more understandable writing. Business Education Forum, January, 1978, p. 27; 29.

Pettit, J. D., Lis, A. S., Sager, E., Brock, L., Bruno, S. J., Campbell, P., Rudolph, E., Coonrad, H. A., & Bale, J. T. Guidelines and suggestions for research in business communication. The Journal of Business Communication, 1972, 9, 37-60.

Powers, W. A., Personal communication, June 8, 1979.

Purkey, W. W. Self concept and school achievement. Englewood Cliffs, N. J.: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1970.

Raygor, A. L. Examiner's manual for McGraw-Hill basic skills system writing test. Monterey, California: CTB/McGraw-Hill, 1970.

Remmers, H. H. Rating methods in research on teaching. In N. L. Gage (Ed.), Handbook of research on teaching. Chicago: Rand McNally, 1963.

Saupe, J. L., & Dressel, P. L. Evaluating outcomes of instruction. In P. L. Dressel (Ed.), Institutional research in the university: A handbook. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, Inc., 1972.

Sears, M. O. Effects of a student centered procedure on the self-concept and writing practice of college freshmen. (Doctoral dissertation, Florida State University, 1970).

Shaw, M. E., & Wright, J. M. Scales for the measurement of attitudes. New York: McGraw-Hill Book Co., 1967.

Skaggs, P. Teaching business communications: Journeywork or humanistic endeavor? Paper presented at the 1976 Annual Meeting of the Modern Language Association. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 140 340)

Steidle, E. F. An investigation of writing ability as a function of student attitude: General and specific. Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association, New York, 1977. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 139 023)

Steinacher, R. C. Learning to write by writing in a community college remedial composition course. (Doctoral dissertation, Florida State University, 1976).

Sullivan, J. J. The importance of a philosophical "mix" in teaching business communication. The Journal of Business Communication, 1978, 4, 29-37.

Sweet, R. C. Educational attainment and attitudes toward school as a function of feedback in the form of teachers' written comments. Unpublished thesis, University of Wisconsin, 1966. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 015 163)

Taylor, H. The teacher at his best. In R. M. Cooper (Ed.), The two ends of the log. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1958.

TenBrink, T. D. Evaluation: A practical guide for teachers. New York: McGraw-Hill Book Co., 1974.

Throop, D. P., & Jameson, D. A. Behavioral grading: An approach worth trying. The American Business Communication Association Bulletin, 1976, 39, 3-5.

Vasta, R., & Sarmiento, R. F. Liberal grading improves evaluations but not performance. Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association, San Francisco, 1976. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 127 334)

Voyles, J. Standards for written communications. Selected readings in business and office occupations (Fifth yearbook). Washington, D. C.: National Business Education Association, 1967.

Voyles, J. Evaluating instructional objectives in business communication. In D. J. Tate & R. E. Hoskinson (Eds.), Evaluation and accountability in business education (Yearbook No. 16). Reston, Virginia: National Business Education Association, 1978.

Wagner, E. N. How to avoid grading compositions. English Journal, 1975, 64, 76-79. (a)

Wagner, E. N. The impact of composition grading on the attitudes and writing performance of freshman English students. (Doctoral dissertation, University of Virginia, 1975). (b)

Wagner, E. N. When the bookkeeping system takes over: The effects of grading compositions on student attitudes. Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Conference on College Composition and Communication, Philadelphia, 1976. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 120 802)

Weinrauch, J. D., & Matejka, J. K. Are student ratings of business communication teachers honest feedback? The Journal of Business Communication, 1973, 11, 31-37.

Wilkinson, D. C. Do other teachers and your students agree with your grading of letters? American Business Communication Association Bulletin, 1979, 42, 10-17.

Williams, C. B. Some observations on theory and practice in teaching business writing. The Journal of Business Communications, 1965, 2, 21-27.

Winer, B. J. Statistical principles in experimental design (2nd ed.). New York: McGraw-Hill Book Co., 1971.

Wise, F. L. An analysis, classification, and synthesis of research and professional periodical literature from 1957 through 1967 relative to business communication instruction. (Doctoral dissertation, University of Southern Mississippi, 1970).

Woodward, J. C. Profile of the poor writer--the relationship of selected characteristics to poor writing in college. Coral Gables, Florida: Miami University, 1965. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 018 445)

Zoerner, C. E., Jr. Teaching the vanquished to write. The Journal of Business Communication, 1975, 13, 33-39.

APPENDIX A

STUDENT INFORMATION SHEET

STUDENT INFORMATION

Name_____ ID No_____

Major_____ Classification_____ GPA_____

Total hours completed_____ Class load this semester (hours)_____

Address_____

Telephone_____

Father's Occupation_____

Mother's Occupation_____

Reason for taking business communications:

APPENDIX B

SEMANTIC DIFFERENTIAL TEST

INSTRUCTIONS FOR SEMANTIC DIFFERENTIAL*

The purpose of this questionnaire is to measure the meanings of certain things (concepts) by having you judge these concepts against a series of descriptive scales. In marking the scales, please make your judgments on the basis of what these things mean to you. On each page, you will find a different concept to be judged and beneath it a set of scales. You are to rate the concept on each of these scales in order.

HERE IS HOW YOU ARE TO USE THESE SCALES:

If you feel that the concept at the top of the page is very closely related to one end of the scale, you should place your check mark as follows:

fair __X__:_____:_____:_____:_____:_____:_____ unfair

or

fair _____:_____:_____:_____:_____:_____:__X__ unfair

If you feel that the concept is quite closely related to one or the other end of the scale (but not extremely), you should place your check mark as follows:

strong _____:__X__:_____:_____:_____:_____:_____ weak

or

strong _____:_____:_____:_____:_____:__X__:_____ weak

If the concept seems only slightly related to one side as opposed to the other side (but is not really neutral), then you should check as follows:

active _____:_____:__X__:_____:_____:_____:_____ passive

or

active _____:_____:_____:_____:__X__:_____:_____ passive

The direction toward which you check, of course, depends upon which of the two ends of the scale seem most characteristic of the thing you're judging.

---

* These were the instructions recommended by Osgood, Suci, and Tannenbaum, The Measurement of Meaning, to accompany the semantic differential.

If you consider the concept to be neutral on the scale, both sides of the scale equally associated with the concept, or if the scale is completely irrelevant, unrelated to the concept, then you should place your check mark in the middle space:

safe _____:_____:_____: X :_____:_____:_____ dangerous

IMPORTANT: Place your check marks in the middle of spaces, not on the boundaries:

X (THIS)
_____:_____:_____:_____:_____:_____:_____
X (NOT THIS)

Be sure you check every scale for every concept--do not omit any.

Never put more than one check mark on a single scale.

Make each item a separate and independent judgment. Do not worry or puzzle over individual items. It is your first impressions, the immediate "feelings" about the items, that I want. On the other hand, please do not be careless, because I want your true impressions.

LEARNING

1.	good	_____:_____:_____:_____:_____:_____:_____	bad
2.	incomplete	_____:_____:_____:_____:_____:_____:_____	complete
3.	sociable	_____:_____:_____:_____:_____:_____:_____	unsociable
4.	cruel	_____:_____:_____:_____:_____:_____:_____	kind
5.	ungrateful	_____:_____:_____:_____:_____:_____:_____	grateful
6.	harmonious	_____:_____:_____:_____:_____:_____:_____	dissonant
7.	pleasurable	_____:_____:_____:_____:_____:_____:_____	painful
8.	ugly	_____:_____:_____:_____:_____:_____:_____	beautiful
9.	successful	_____:_____:_____:_____:_____:_____:_____	unsuccessful
10.	meaningless	_____:_____:_____:_____:_____:_____:_____	meaningful
11.	important	_____:_____:_____:_____:_____:_____:_____	unimportant
12.	progressive	_____:_____:_____:_____:_____:_____:_____	regressive
13.	negative	_____:_____:_____:_____:_____:_____:_____	positive
14.	believing	_____:_____:_____:_____:_____:_____:_____	skeptical
15.	foolish	_____:_____:_____:_____:_____:_____:_____	wise

TEACHING

1.	good	_____:_____:_____:_____:_____:_____:_____	bad
2.	incomplete	_____:_____:_____:_____:_____:_____:_____	complete
3.	sociable	_____:_____:_____:_____:_____:_____:_____	unsociable
4.	cruel	_____:_____:_____:_____:_____:_____:_____	kind
5.	ungrateful	_____:_____:_____:_____:_____:_____:_____	grateful
6.	harmonious	_____:_____:_____:_____:_____:_____:_____	dissonant
7.	pleasurable	_____:_____:_____:_____:_____:_____:_____	painful
8.	ugly	_____:_____:_____:_____:_____:_____:_____	beautiful
9.	successful	_____:_____:_____:_____:_____:_____:_____	unsuccessful
10.	meaningless	_____:_____:_____:_____:_____:_____:_____	meaningful
11.	important	_____:_____:_____:_____:_____:_____:_____	unimportant
12.	progressive	_____:_____:_____:_____:_____:_____:_____	regressive
13.	negative	_____:_____:_____:_____:_____:_____:_____	positive
14.	believing	_____:_____:_____:_____:_____:_____:_____	skeptical
15.	foolish	_____:_____:_____:_____:_____:_____:_____	wise

BUSINESS COMMUNICATIONS COURSE

1.	good	_____:_____:_____:_____:_____:_____:_____	bad
2.	incomplete	_____:_____:_____:_____:_____:_____:_____	complete
3.	sociable	_____:_____:_____:_____:_____:_____:_____	unsociable
4.	cruel	_____:_____:_____:_____:_____:_____:_____	kind
5.	ungrateful	_____:_____:_____:_____:_____:_____:_____	grateful
6.	harmonious	_____:_____:_____:_____:_____:_____:_____	dissonant
7.	pleasurable	_____:_____:_____:_____:_____:_____:_____	painful
8.	ugly	_____:_____:_____:_____:_____:_____:_____	beautiful
9.	successful	_____:_____:_____:_____:_____:_____:_____	unsuccessful
10.	meaningless	_____:_____:_____:_____:_____:_____:_____	meaningful
11.	important	_____:_____:_____:_____:_____:_____:_____	unimportant
12.	progressive	_____:_____:_____:_____:_____:_____:_____	regressive
13.	negative	_____:_____:_____:_____:_____:_____:_____	positive
14.	believing	_____:_____:_____:_____:_____:_____:_____	skeptical
15.	foolish	_____:_____:_____:_____:_____:_____:_____	wise

SELF

1.	good	_____:_____:_____:_____:_____:_____:_____	bad
2.	incomplete	_____:_____:_____:_____:_____:_____:_____	complete
3.	sociable	_____:_____:_____:_____:_____:_____:_____	unsociable
4.	cruel	_____:_____:_____:_____:_____:_____:_____	kind
5.	ungrateful	_____:_____:_____:_____:_____:_____:_____	grateful
6.	harmonious	_____:_____:_____:_____:_____:_____:_____	dissonant
7.	pleasurable	_____:_____:_____:_____:_____:_____:_____	painful
8.	ugly	_____:_____:_____:_____:_____:_____:_____	beautiful
9.	successful	_____:_____:_____:_____:_____:_____:_____	unsuccessful
10.	meaningless	_____:_____:_____:_____:_____:_____:_____	meaningful
11.	important	_____:_____:_____:_____:_____:_____:_____	unimportant
12.	progressive	_____:_____:_____:_____:_____:_____:_____	regressive
13.	negative	_____:_____:_____:_____:_____:_____:_____	positive
14.	believing	_____:_____:_____:_____:_____:_____:_____	skeptical
15.	foolish	_____:_____:_____:_____:_____:_____:_____	wise

APPENDIX C

COURSE REQUIREMENTS AND GRADING SCALES FOR CHECKMARK GRADING GROUPS

BA 302--Business Communications Fall Semester, 1978
Tuesday - Thursday 10:10-11:30

Text: Murphy, Herta A. and Charles E. Peck, Effective Business Communications, New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1976.

Purpose and Activities

The primary purpose of business communications is to help students develop and refine their written and oral communications skills. Activities intended to foster this purpose include: (1) Study of the fundamental principles of communication; (2) Study, analysis, and discussion of the qualities and characteristics of reports, letters, and memos; (3) Composition and revision of reports, letters, and memos that demonstrate application of good writing principles; and (4) Oral presentations that follow the guidelines for effective speaking.

Bases for Evaluating Assignments and Tests

The final grade for the course will be determined as follows:

30% - determined by test scores and final exam
70% - determined by work on written assignments

Checkmark Grading*

To determine your overall grade on written assignments, use the following grade equivalents:

A = 15 or 16 checks
B = 13 or 14 checks
C = 11 or 12 checks
D = 10 checks

Each assignment that is evaluated will be rated either "acceptable" (checkmark) or "needs revision" (no checkmark). Only checkmarked papers will be entered in the grade book. A checkmark is considered equivalent to "B" or better work. (Letter grading standards are explained later.)

---

* Adapted from Caryl P. Freeman and Richard A. Hatch, "A Behavioral System that Works," The ABCA Bulletin, Vol. 38, No. 2, June, 1975, p. 2.

Non-checkmarked papers may be revised and resubmitted at the next class meeting after they have been returned to you. A checkmark on a revised paper will count the same as a checkmark on the first try.

You may revise and resubmit a paper a maximum of three times. If the assignment is not acceptable on the fourth try, the checkmark will be forfeited. The original must be resubmitted along with the revised copy.

You are requested to maintain a personal folder that will consist of all writing (graded and ungraded) done for this class during the semester. This folder should not contain class notes, handouts, or solutions to exercises. The folder is to be turned in for overall evaluation at the end of the semester.

You are required to read chapter assignments in advance of class discussion and before preparing the written assignments. Those assignments indicated by an asterisk (*) will be evaluated for checkmarks; other written assignments will be recorded as having been completed.

Reports and Letter of Application/Resume

During the semester, you will be asked to write a formal report on a topic selected from several alternatives. This assignment, which may not be revised, will be worth three checkmarks.

A letter of application and a resume that reflect your career choice and accurate personal data acceptable for future use will also be submitted. This assignment may be revised one time for a checkmark.

Tests

Regularly scheduled tests will be given when deemed necessary. These will consist of objective answers as well as a requirement that you demonstrate competent writing ability. These tests, along with the final exam (which carries equal weight), will make up 30% of your final grade. Tests will be graded on the following scale:

93 - 100 = A
85 - 92 = B
77 - 84 = C
70 - 76 = D

Message Preparation**

Messages Prepared Outside of Class

1. Every to-be-graded paper you prepare outside of class involves a problem requiring careful thinking, analyzing, planning, and revising when desirable. Try to make quality--rather than quantity or speed--your goal.

2. Messages should follow acceptable organizational plans and have the "C" qualities, as discussed in your text and in class. The emphasis is on good organization, content, judgment, tactful human relations, originality, and application of writing principles.

3. Papers are due at the beginning of the class period for which they are assigned. Please write this heading in the upper right-hand corner of papers you hand in (unfolded): (1) your name, (2) date, (3) assignment number and page number.

4. Because promptness is important for message effectiveness in business, late papers will be accepted only when sufficient explanation is made and the instructor approves. Absence from one class meeting does not excuse lateness of work for the next. The assignment should be secured from the instructor or from some member of the class.

Messages Prepared in Class

The purposes of in-class assignments are your realization of the importance of time as well as to assure the instructor that the message reflects your own thinking. Make up for in-class assignments will be allowed only for excused absences. These assignments will be graded on the same scale as outside assignments.

Letter Grading Standards

In evaluating your written assignments, your instructor will use letter-grade guidelines of grade definitions and hypothetical company standards to assess your work.

** These are the suggested instructions in the Instructor's Manual to accompany the text, Effective Business Communications, by Murphy and Peck (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1976), pp. 11-13.

Grade Definitions***

A = In addition to the qualities of a "B" paper, imagination, originality, and persuasiveness

B = Thorough analysis of the problem, a satisfactory solution, judgment and tact in the presentation of the solution, good organization, and an appropriate style of writing

C = Satisfactory analysis of the problem, organization, and writing style; but nothing good or bad about the paper

D = Presence of a glaring defect in a paper otherwise well done; or routine, inadequate treatment

F = Inadequate coverage of essential points, poor organization, offensive tone, careless handling of the mechanics of language

Hypothetical Company Standards****

A = The company would be delighted to send this message. It not only meets the problem goals, but it does so in a particularly ingenious or elegant way. It is substantially better than the ordinary acceptable message.

B = The company would be willing to send this message. It meets the problem goals and communicates adequately in every respect.

C = The company would be unwilling to send this message. Although it is acceptable in many respects, it must be disqualified for one major difficulty or several minor ones. It could probably be turned into an acceptable message with some careful editing; the writer would not have to start over from scratch.

D = The company would be unwilling to send this message and would be inclined to question the competence of the writer. Although it shows some evidence of an attempt to apply principles discussed in the course, the attempt was not generally successful. Rather than attempting to revise, the writer should throw out this message and begin again from scratch.

*** Joseph F. Ceccio, "Checkmark Grading and the Quarter System," The ABCA Bulletin, Vol. 39, No. 3, Sept., 1976, p. 8, citing Francis W. Weeks and Richard A. Hatch, Business Writing Cases and Problems (Illinois: Stipes Publishing Co., 1974), p. iv.

**** Richard Hatch, Instructor's Guide for Communicating in Business (Illinois: Science Research Associates, Inc., 1977), p. 10

F = The company would seriously consider firing this writer. The message shows no evidence of application of the principles discussed in the course and probably would do much more harm than good if it were sent. The writer should study basic principles carefully before beginning this message again from scratch.

TENTATIVE COURSE SCHEDULE

Week	Reading/Analysis/Discussion	Assignment
September 7	Chapters 1, 2 Writing Principles Appendix B	Ch. 2 - Ex. 5, 14 Appendix B Exercises
September 11	Chapters 3, 4 Writing Principles	Ch. 3 - Ex. 1, 2, 7 Ch. 4 - Ex. 4, 11*, 12
September 18	Chapters 5, 6 Writing Principles TEST: Chapters 1-6	Ch. 5 - Ex. 3, 4, 7 Ch. 6 - Ex. 1, 2, 3
September 25	Chapter 15 The What and How of Business Reports	Collect sample reports for class discussion Ch. 15 - Ex. 2 (a-d), p. 537 Ex. 4, p. 538
October 2	Chapter 16 Short Reports	Ch. 16 - Ex. 1, p. 582* Ex. 6, p. 590* Ex. 8, p. 592*
October 9	Chapter 17 Formal Reports	Ch. 17 - Ex. 3, p. 633*** Due November 27
October 16	Chapter 7 Direct Requests	Ch. 7 - Ex. 3, p. 172 Ex. 1, p. 175 Ex. 6, p. 173*
October 23	Chapter 8 Good News and Neutral Messages	Ch. 8 - Ex. 3, p. 223* Ex. 4, p. 226
October 30	Appendix A Chapter 9 Bad News Messages TEST: Chapters 7-9, 15-17	Ch. 9 - Ex. 4, p. 284* Ex. 2, p. 286 Ex. 3, p. 287*

Week	Reading/Analysis/Discussion	Assignment
November 6	Chapter 10 Persuasive Requests	Ch. 10 - Ex. 4, p. 362 Ex. 6, p. 370* Ex. 7, p. 371
November 13	Chapter 11 Written Job Presentation	Ch. 11 - Ex. 2, p. 414* Ex. 4, p. 414
November 20 (Thanksgiving, Nov. 23)	Chapter 12 Other Job Application Messages	Ch. 12 - Ex. 1, p. 443 Ex. 5, p. 446*
November 27 SUBMIT FORMAL REPORTS	Chapter 13 Collection Messages	Ch. 13 - Ex. 4, p. 476 Ex. 10, p. 481*
	Chapter 14 Goodwill Messages	Ch. 14 - Ex. 1, p. 504 Ex. 18, p. 508*
December 4	Chapters 18, 19 Oral Communications	Ch. 18 - Ex. 2, p. 650
FINAL EXAM	Chapters 10-14, 18-19	

APPENDIX D

COURSE REQUIREMENTS AND GRADING SCALES FOR TRADITIONAL GRADING GROUPS

BA 302--Business Communications Spring Semester, 1979
Tuesday - Thursday 10:10-11:30

Text: Murphy, Herta A. and Charles E. Peck, Effective Business Communications, New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1976.

Purpose and Activities

The primary purpose of business communications is to help students develop and refine their written and oral communication skills. Activities intended to foster this purpose include: (1) study of the fundamental principles of communication; (2) study, analysis, and discussion of the qualities and characteristics of reports, letters, and memos; (3) composition and revision of reports, letters, and memos that demonstrate application of good writing principles; and (4) oral presentations that follow the guidelines for effective speaking.

Message Preparation

You are required to read chapter assignments in advance of class discussion and before preparing the written assignments. Those assignments indicated by an asterisk (*) will be evaluated for grades; other written assignments will be recorded as having been completed.

Messages Prepared Outside of Class

1. Every to-be-graded paper you prepare outside of class involves a problem requiring careful thinking, analyzing, planning, and revising when desirable. Try to make quality--rather than quantity or speed--your goal.

2. Messages should follow acceptable organizational plans and have the "C" qualities, as discussed in your text and in class. The emphasis is on good organization, content, judgment, tactful human relations, originality, and application of writing principles.

3. Papers are due at the beginning of the class period for which they are assigned. Please write this heading in the upper right-hand corner of papers you hand in (unfolded): (1) your name, (2) date, (3) assignment number and page number.

4. Because promptness is important for message effectiveness in business, late papers will be accepted only when sufficient explanation is made

and the instructor approves. Absence from one class meeting does not excuse lateness of work for the next. The assignment should be secured from the instructor or from some member of the class.

Messages Prepared in Class

The purposes of in-class assignments are your realization of the importance of time as well as to assure the instructor that the message reflects your own thinking. Make up for in-class assignments will be allowed only for excused absences. These assignments will be graded on the same scale as outside assignments.

Determination of Course Grade

The final grade for the course will be determined as follows:

30% - determined by test scores and final exam
70% - determined by work on written assignments (the formal report will represent approximately 19% of this grade)

Tests

Regularly scheduled tests will be given when deemed necessary. These will consist of objective answers as well as a requirement that you demonstrate competent writing ability. These tests, along with the final exam (which carries equal weight), will be graded on the following scale:

93 - 100 = A
85 - 92 = B
77 - 84 = C
70 - 76 = D

Written Assignments

All written assignments will be evaluated on the bases of content and mechanics, with an overall grade that results from the combination of these areas.

Content Grade. This grade will reflect the writer's application of the appropriate writing principles, with emphasis on use of the proper organizational plan and proper tone. Listed below are general guidelines for qualities that represent content grades of A, B, and C.

A = All the qualities of a "B" paper, plus use of imagination, originality, and persuasiveness

B = All the qualities of a "C" paper, plus these noticeable characteristics:
1. Good "you" attitude
2. Positive and tactful approach, especially in presenting unfavorable information
3. Good organization and logic

C = 1. Correct organizational plan with parts in proper order
2. Adequate organization and logic - fulfilling purpose of the letter
3. Complete and accurate information (according to instructions)

Since students usually express themselves in different ways, individual deductions may vary depending on the manner in which certain facts are handled. Sometimes an exceptionally well handled or original idea will receive bonus points that offset the minus points in content.

Mechanics Grade. This grade will reflect the writer's ability to use correct grammar, punctuation, and sentence structure. In addition, the message must have an attractive physical appearance and the proper business letter format. Listed below are guidelines for qualities that represent grades of A-F.

A = Correct spelling, punctuation, grammar, sentence structure, paragraphing, and format.

B = (Mailable) Minor errors in punctuation and/or paragraphing.

C = (Not mailable) Minor errors in grammar or usage. Major errors in format, punctuation, capitalization, and/or paragraphing.

D = (Not mailable) Error in spelling (including typographical errors) and/or sentence structure. Major error in grammar and/or usage.

F = (Not mailable) Two or more of the following:
1. Error in spelling
2. Error in sentence structure
3. Major error in format, punctuation, and/or grammar

Some of the common punctuation and grammar pitfalls which will be penalized are enumerated below.

Punctuation Pitfalls

1. Failure to use proper punctuation between independent clauses
2. Commas separating subject and verb and/or between compound verbs
3. Failure to place comma after introductory phrase or clause
4. Failure to put semi-colon and/or comma around conjunctive adverbs (example: however, therefore, consequently, nevertheless, etc.)
5. Incorrect comma usage with restrictive (necessary) and nonrestrictive (unnecessary) clauses

6. Failure to insert hyphens in compound adjectives when adjectives precede nouns
7. Misuse of punctuation marks (in numbers, end of sentences, etc.)
8. Incorrect expression of numbers
9. Capitalization

Grammar Pitfalls

1. Improper paragraphing
2. Spelling
3. Awkward expressions
4. Awkward sentence structure
5. Run-on sentences
6. Dangling modifiers
7. Failure to use proper titles
8. Nonstandard usage (ending sentence with preposition; misplaced adverbs, such as "only"; nonparallel structure)
9. Lack of agreement of subject and verb or pronoun and antecedent
10. Vague pronoun reference (referring to idea instead of specific noun)

Overall Grade. As indicated by asterisks (*) on the tentative course schedule, you will be asked to write 14 graded assignments during the semester. Each of these will represent an individual grade, with the exception of one assignment, the formal report. Because of the depth of research and the preparation time, this report grade will be equivalent to three grades; consequently, there will be a total of 16 possible grades for writing.

Letter grades of A+, A, A-, B+, B, B-, C+, C, C-, D+, D, and D- will be used. Each of these grades has the following numerical value:

A+ = 12 pts.	B+ = 9 pts.	C+ = 6 pts.	D+ = 3 pts.
A = 11 pts.	B = 8 pts.	C = 5 pts.	D = 2 pts.
A- = 10 pts.	B- = 7 pts.	C- = 4 pts.	D- = 1 pt.

Each graded assignment will show two components, representing content and mechanics, expressed similar to a fraction (A-/B) or (A-/B-). Using the numerical value scale illustrated above, these letter grades convert numerically to a single score this way: 10/8 = 18 ÷ 2 = 9 (B+) or 10/7 = 17 ÷ 2 = 8.5. All grades are recorded numerically; therefore, fractions are recorded (even though not represented on the numerical scale) and will be totaled and divided by 16 to arrive at a final writing grade.

Assignment Folder

You are requested to maintain a personal folder that will consist of all writing (graded and ungraded) done for this class during the semester.

This folder should not contain class notes, handouts, or solutions to exercises. The folder is to be turned in for overall evaluation at the end of the semester.

TENTATIVE COURSE SCHEDULE

Week	Reading/Analysis/Discussion	Assignment
January 29	Chapters 1, 2 Writing Principles Appendix B	Ch. 2 - Ex. 5, 14 Appendix B Exercises
February 5	Chapters 3, 4 Writing Principles	Ch. 3 - Ex. 1, 2, 7 Ch. 4 - Ex. 4, 11*, 12
February 12	Chapters 5, 6 Writing Principles TEST: Chapters 1-6	Ch. 5 - Ex. 3, 4, 7 Ch. 6 - Ex. 1, 2, 3
February 19	Chapter 15 The What and How of Business Reports	Collect sample reports for class discussion Ch. 15 - Ex. 2 (a-d) p. 537 Ex. 4, p. 538
February 26	Chapter 16 Short Reports	Ch. 16 - Ex. 1, p. 582* Ex. 6, p. 590* Ex. 8, p. 592*
March 5	Chapter 17 Formal Reports	Ch. 17 - Ex. 3, p. 633*** Due week of April 9
March 12	Chapter 7 Direct Requests	Ch. 7 - Ex. 3, p. 172 Ex. 1, p. 175 Ex. 6, p. 173*
March 19	Chapter 8 Good News and Neutral Messages	Ch. 8 - Ex. 3, p. 223* Ex. 4, p. 226
Spring Break	March 24 - April 1	
April 2	Appendix A Chapter 9 Bad News Messages TEST: Chapters 7-9, 15-17	Ch. 9 - Ex. 4, p. 284* Ex. 2, p. 286 Ex. 3, p. 287*

Week	Reading/Analysis/Discussion	Assignment
April 9 SUBMIT FORMAL REPORTS THIS WEEK!!!	Chapter 10 Persuasive Requests	Ch. 10 - Ex. 4, p. 362 Ex. 6, p. 370* Ex. 7, p. 371
April 16	Chapter 11 Written Job Presentation	Ch. 11 - Ex. 2, p. 414* Ex. 4, p. 414
April 23	Chapter 12 Other Job Application Messages	Ch. 12 - Ex. 1, p. 443 Ex. 5, p. 446*
April 30	Chapter 13 Collection Messages	Ch. 13 - Ex. 4, p. 476 Ex. 10, p. 481*
	Chapter 14 Goodwill Messages	Ch. 14 - Ex. 1, p. 504 Ex. 18, p. 508*
May 7	Chapters 18, 19 Oral Communications	Ch. 18 - Ex. 2, p. 650
FINAL EXAM	Chapters 10-14, 18-19	

APPENDIX E

GUIDELINES FOR GRADING WRITING ASSIGNMENTS

Business Communications

GUIDELINES FOR GRADING WRITING ASSIGNMENTS*

1. Exercise 11, p. 73 (request revision)

   a. Opening paragraph is shortened to state only the purpose.

   b. Explanation omits "mushy" and wordy "sweet talk" but mentions the operator's error.

   c. Last paragraph omits trite "thanking you we are" and instead says something like "We will appreciate your cooperation."

   d. Double complimentary close is omitted; only one is used.

2. Exercise 1, p. 582 (report revision)

   a. Headings inserted--second and third degree or third and fourth degree.

   b. Main headings are "Types of Savings Plans," "Security of Savings," "Withdrawal of Funds," and "Necessary Forms for Opening an Account."

   c. Shows "You" attitude.

   d. Uses active verbs instead of passive verbs.

   e. Tabulates differences between six-month certificates and passbook savings accounts.

   f. Last paragraph is revised to omit "I thank you kindly."

3. Exercise 6, p. 590 (memo report)

PURPOSE: To justify and recommend purchase of 10 Mini-Pack tape recorders for use in dictating and transcribing correspondence.

---

* Adapted from Instructor's Manual to accompany Effective Business Communications

a. Uses logical or psychological arrangement.

b. Contains concise, definitive subject line.

c. Introduction contains clear statement of purpose.

d. Logical, comprehensive presentation of data compares present operations to Mini-Pack estimates.

e. Emphasizes net savings of $2,444.80 (see pp. 176-177 of Manual).

f. Conclusions and major sections of the discussion relate to both quantitative (savings) and qualitative (other benefits) factors.

4. Exercise 8, p. 592 (memo report)

PURPOSE: To report findings after an interview with someone in a business organization similar to the one in which the student would like to work after graduation.

a. Subject line clearly identifies in a few words the subject of the report.

b. Introduction orients the reader by identifying the authorization, purpose, source (interview) used. Includes other necessary elements for proper orientation.

c. Text clearly discusses answers to questions asked in the interview (see p. 592 of text for suggestions).

d. The terminal section is a summary or a conclusion--not recommendations.

5. Exercise 6, p. 173 (direct request letter)

PURPOSE: To get all needed facts about the advertised new film before renting it.

a. Format follows direct request plan (main idea, explanation, courteous close).

b. Opening paragraph mentions name and date of magazine in which the ad appears and states a desire for more information about the specific film for rental purposes.

c. Second paragraph contains sufficient explanation about writer's company needs.

d. At least five questions--maybe more--are asked.

e. Questions are numbered and appear within the body, at the bottom, or on a separate sheet.

6. Exercise 3, p. 223 (good news letter)

PURPOSE: To answer--in psychologically desirable order--all the inquirer's questions about a training film, to build confidence about satisfactory service, and to make ordering easy.

a. Order of answers to questions should first include reader-interest material about the film.

b. Answers to questions should cover:

(1) Length of film
(2) Need for special screen, amplifier, or projector
(3) Age group or educational level for which film is produced
(4) Rental charges for three days, one week, two weeks, and overtime
(5) Transportation time

c. Rates are tabulated in easily readable form, after which transportation time is discussed.

d. Extra charges for keeping film beyond rental time are tactfully discussed.

e. Final paragraph makes action easy (with order blanks) and assures satisfactory service.

7. Exercise 4, p. 284 (bad news letter)

PURPOSE: To turn down tactfully a speaker's request for information and to include constructive suggestions.

a. Opening paragraph expresses sincere desire to do whatever possible to help Miss Mond get the information she needs.

b. Explanation paragraph makes clear that the company specializes in the sale of life insurance and thus its own literature pertains to matters other than attitudes of drivers and accident statistics.

c. Lists names and addresses of two or three insurance firms that specialize in car insurance.

d. Suggests contacting the State Patrol, the National Safety Council, and/or various other state and local enforcement offices.

e. Ending paragraph wishes Miss Mond the best of success with her speech.

8. Exercise 3, p. 287 (bad news letter)

PURPOSE: While refusing to pay $8 for a new belt, make a sincere effort to help the customer and keep her confidence in Bleachex for other uses.

a. Buffer demonstrates (1) appreciation--for her letter or the opportunity to explain and help, or (2) sympathy--for her feelings after the unfortunate experience, or (3) understanding--of her problem and needs.

b. Explanation includes brief resale on how Bleachex is used effectively for removing various named stains from the materials listed on the label.

c. Explanation makes clear why and how the item must be immersed and rinsed and why the company does not advocate using Bleachex on a car seat belt.

d. Explanation includes a list of the three ingredients for the special solution and tells where sodium sulfite may be purchased.

e. Closing paragraph avoids any negative reminder like "Again we are very sorry. . . ." Instead, writer expresses the hope that Mrs. Layton will get good use from her seat belt and assurance that she can depend upon Bleachex in all the ways listed on every bottle of this product.

9. Exercise 6, p. 370 (sales letter)

PURPOSE: To persuade 600 Armo dealers to order book matches--at a special less than 1/2 cent each--as giveaways to their customers for advertising each dealer and Armo products.

Follows AIDA

a. Strongest appeals (to dealers) are recognition, savings, and solution to a problem.

b. Central selling point (CSP): low-cost advertising through new double-size book matches at 1/2 price.

c. Good attention-getting opening (see pp. 339-342). Examples: "A special offer" (No. 9); statement that emphasizes recognition at a low cost.

d. Interest developed by describing how the special-offer plan benefits the dealer and how it ties in with national advertising of Armo products.

e. Desire-creating facts that include specific costs--of 4,800 double-size book matches and of each match.

f. Action stimulated by pointing out how initial orders may exceed the supply. Enclose order blank or show a sketch or picture of the matches. Reminds dealers to specify imprints desired and to return the order to Armo.

10. Exercise 2, p. 414 (letter of application and resumé)

PURPOSE: To prepare an attractive, honest, convincing job presentation based on facts, so that it can actually be mailed (perhaps with a few needed changes) when applying for a job.

Letter of Application

a. Refer to Checklist on p. 404 of text.

b. Letter is well typed, properly placed, well constructed, and free of grammatical errors.

Resumé

a. Refer to Checklist on p. 386 of text.

b. Resumé is well typed, properly placed, well constructed, and free of grammatical errors.

11. Exercise 5, p. 446 (inquiry about application)

PURPOSE: To follow up the first application letter (sent three weeks ago) with an inquiry that shows continued interest in and qualifications for the job.

a. Includes identification of the job sought and date of application letter previously sent.

b. Does not repeat information already sent but expresses sincere interest in the company.

12. Exercise 10, p. 481 (collection message)

PURPOSE: To collect full payment of the $4.26 cash discount wrongly deducted and to ask for an explanation or payment of the $26.53 also deducted from the dealer's July 22 check.

a. First paragraph gets to the main point.

b. Explanation covers details and amounts.

13. Exercise 18, p. 508 (goodwill message)

PURPOSE: To thank customer for purchasing blender and include resale material

a. Opening paragraph expresses appreciation to customer for registering blender purchase and tells benefits from doing so.

b. Explanation describes the free booklet and mentions the national contest from which the recipes came.

c. Closing includes confidence-building resale on the new blender.

14. Exercise 3, p. 633 (formal report)

GUIDELINES FOR PREPARATION OF FORMAL REPORTS

1. In a memo to your instructor, propose the report subject on which you have chosen to write. The memo should consist of the following:

   a. A tentative but precise title for your report

   b. A detailed working outline for the subject

   c. A proposed schedule for completion of the various phases of the project

   (Due date for the memo will be announced in class)

2. Submit a detailed research plan for the report topic you have selected. Indicate the kinds of primary and/or secondary sources you plan to use and include specific descriptions of the method of data collection: observation, interview, experimentation. (Due date will be announced)

3. Complete and submit the report project in acceptable form. (Due date on assignment sheet)

CHECKLIST FOR PREPARING AND EVALUATING REPORTS

1. Report title

   a. Title tells reader what to expect to find in contents
   b. Title is appropriate length

2. Title page

   a. Title parts are properly centered
   b. Information is complete: title, recipient's name, writer's name, and date

3. General layout and mechanics

   a. Layout is properly placed in space available
   b. Typing is neat and free of strikeovers, smudges, and poor erasures
   c. Pages are properly numbered
   d. Captions are comprehensive and consistent

4. Letter of transmittal

   a. Letter begins with direct presentation of the report
   b. Writer refers to authorization immediately
   c. Body includes comments which help the reader understand and appreciate the report
   d. Language is friendly, conversational, and sincere

5. Synopsis

   a. Essential facts are briefly summarized
   b. These questions are answered: for? by whom? when? what about? how solved?

6. Table of contents

   a. Use of type and capitals is consistent
   b. Sections are appropriately spaced
   c. Parts are aligned by use of leader lines
   d. Parts are logically divided and arranged
   e. Grammatical structure is consistent

7. Introduction

   a. The necessary elements from the following list are included:

(1)	Authorization	(7)	Sources
(2)	Problem	(8)	Background
(3)	Purpose	(9)	Definition of terms
(4)	Scope	(10)	Plan of presentation
(5)	Limitations	(11)	Brief statement of results (if applicable)
(6)	Methodology		

   b. Writing style is smooth and natural

8. Writing the report

   a. Writing is adapted to the audience
   b. Writer uses active voice and descriptive words, but with economy of expression
   c. Summary and preview sections are effectively used
   d. Transition between sections and between paragraphs is smooth
   e. Writer avoids dependency on captions and graphic displays; instead, writes so that report reads clearly if these were removed
   f. Writer makes supported, qualified statements and clearly labels opinion

9. Graphic displays

   a. Layouts are properly spaced
   b. Titles are appropriately placed
   c. Displays are discussed thoroughly so that their use and value are clearly understood

APPENDIX F

REACTIONS TO GRADING SYSTEM QUESTIONNAIRE

REACTIONS TO GRADING SYSTEM

Business Communications

1. What is your personal reaction to the system of grading that has been used for writing assignments during the semester?

2. Do you feel that your writing assignments have been evaluated fairly? If not, please elaborate.

3. What is your opinion of the weights assigned to the various components of this course (writing, 70%; tests, 30%)?

4. Do you feel that your writing ability has improved since the beginning of this course?

5. What constructive suggestions can you make regarding the instructional procedures, testing, and/or grading of assignments in business communications?

6. General comments:

APPENDIX G

RAW TEST SCORES (MHBSS) FOR BOTH GROUPS

Raw Test Scores (MHBSS) of Checkmark Group

Student No.	GPA	Pretest	Posttest
001	2.80	59	62
002	2.90	46	45
003	2.00	52	54
004	1.75	49	50
005	2.80	55	61
006	3.65	61	59
007	2.30	53	57
008	2.50	52	65
009	3.20	65	71
010	3.00	55	50
011	3.40	58	63
012	3.00	48	59
013	2.40	54	61
014	3.02	49	50
015	2.01	46	50
016	2.00	50	54
017	3.20	51	54
019	2.80	51	66
020	2.00	52	55
021	3.57	51	61
022	2.78	50	50
023	2.70	65	56
024	2.30	53	46
025	1.90	47	48
026	2.40	40	42
027	3.40	56	54
028	3.20	55	52
029	2.50	43	49
030	3.00	56	68
031	2.80	61	63

Raw Test Scores (MHBSS) of Letter Grade Group

Student No.	GPA	Pretest	Posttest
033	2.60	58	62
034	2.80	57	55
035	2.00	53	51
036	2.08	58	58
037	2.70	47	57
038	2.30	48	45
039	2.70	53	57
041	2.68	62	61
042	2.60	61	58
043	2.50	63	56
044	3.19	59	57
045	3.00	49	56
046	3.50	66	63
047	3.00	29	44
048	3.04	57	58
049	3.22	57	68
050	2.90	54	58
051	2.30	41	50
052	3.40	65	77
053	2.20	55	58
054	3.00	58	58
055	2.85	72	73
056	1.90	44	49
057	2.50	43	45
058	1.65	48	50
059	3.25	56	56
060	2.67	55	47
062	3.63	59	54
063	2.50	37	40
064	2.83	55	55
065	3.21	53	55
067	1.35	36	43
068	3.12	62	63
069	2.00	49	54
070	2.20	61	56
071	2.80	48	56
072	3.09	58	65
074	2.30	63	62
075	3.20	52	55
076	2.93	59	68
077	2.00	49	52