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A Study to Determine Methods of Evaluating Achievement of Business Communications Students and Predicting Success of These Students

Susanne Bellaire Philp
Western Michigan University

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A STUDY TO DETERMINE METHODS OF EVALUATING
ACHIEVEMENT OF BUSINESS COMMUNICATIONS STUDENTS
AND PREDICTING SUCCESS OF THESE STUDENTS

by

Susanne Bellaire Philp

A Project Report
Submitted to the
Faculty of The Graduate College
in partial fulfillment
of the
Specialist in Arts Degree

Western Michigan University
Kalamazoo, Michigan
December 1970
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A STUDY TO DETERMINE METHODS OF EVALUATING ACHIEVEMENT OF BUSINESS COMMUNICATIONS STUDENTS AND PREDICTING SUCCESS OF THESE STUDENTS.

Western Michigan University, Sp.A., 1970
Education, theory and practice

University Microfilms, A XEROX Company, Ann Arbor, Michigan
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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

At many collegiate institutions of business, questions are being raised about the direction Business Communications should take. Should the course include speaking and listening as well as letter writing? Should emphasis be placed on "theory" or "how to do" or both? Once the course content and objectives have been determined, how should student learning be evaluated? This study relates to questions of this type by focusing on two forms of evaluation of learning in Business Communications as taught at Western Michigan University.

Business Communications at Western Michigan University

At Western Michigan University, Business Communications is a required course in the School of Business.¹ Other students at the University may take the course as an elective. There were 570 students enrolled in Business Communications during the 1968 Fall semester. These students were divided into 19 sections and taught by six instructors.

The course stressed the basic principles of business writing and emphasized the elements of good business practice, the psychology

of presentation, natural language usage, mechanical correctness, and analysis of business problems.

By departmental agreement, students are evaluated on a minimum of 15 graded written assignments. Because each full-time Business Communications instructor's class load is four classes with an approximate minimum of 30 students each, an approximate minimum of 1,800 graded papers a semester is required. This workload not only forces the instructor to spend many hours checking letters, but it assumes that the checking of demonstrated writing ability is the best method of evaluating student learning in Business Communications. Because of the time required for this kind of evaluation, there is a need to determine whether or not there is a more efficient method of measuring student performance.

I Statement of the Problem

Because a machine scored objective test would be an efficient method of grading large numbers of students in business writing, this method deserved investigation.

The major purpose of this study is to determine whether there is any significant difference between the achievement attained by college students in Business Communications classes as measured by objective testing and grades earned by demonstrated business writing ability.

Because other factors may be relevant to a student's success in Business Communications, a second purpose is to determine the performance of student sub-groups as measured by objective tests and business writing. Three sub-groups are used for analysis.
These are: sophomores and non-sophomores; business majors and non-business majors; transfer and non-transfer students.¹

The third purpose of this study is to determine the relationship between an individual's success in Business Communications (the Final Grade² assigned based on objective testing and business writing) and his performance on the English Expression Section of the Cooperative English Test.³

As a result of studies like this, an efficient method of evaluation may be found which will release Business Communications instructors from much of the time-consuming evaluation generally now in use.

II Significance of the Study

Instructors of Business Communications are attempting to solve the evaluation problem by using objective testing and/or assistant graders.⁴ However, no study has been found comparing the graded demonstrated business writing method with objective testing of the same population. Information from such a study would be useful to instructors in making their decisions as to the use of objective tests which are correlated with Business Communications textbooks

¹See Definition of Terms, p. 10.

²See Definition of Terms, p. 11.


or which could be developed by the instructor.

Information showing how students perform on both graded business writing ability and objective testing in Business Communications would be useful to the instructor in deciding which method or combination of evaluative methods to use.

Menning and Wilkinson believe that the student's ability to write letters under controlled classroom conditions is the only valid test of letter writing ability; however, they admit that this method does not show that the student knows all of the important principles in letter writing.¹

Cox states:

Objective testing, subjective assessment of prose and interlinear editing of continuous context, all have faults. For this reason, a combination of the three or of the first and second offer the best available means of measuring progress.

The grading of inter-linear type tests is very expensive if done properly and unreliable if it is not.

Subjective grading of continuous context or essay type examinations is reliable only if the number of graders is at least five and graders are carefully prepared for the task of grading. Even then grading may be quite unreliable unless at least five papers of each student are considered . . . .

There is justification for basing the grade in part on the results of objective testing.

Even though objective tests may place more emphasis on some items and less on others than is justified, they may measure students' knowledge of some factors

which do not normally occur in their writing patterns.¹

Agreeing with Cox, Harder states:

Intuitively or otherwise, we have a pretty good idea of what constitutes "good" writing; therefore what is needed is a standardized, easily administered instrument which measures writing abilities—the kind of writing abilities our students should have when they graduate from college and enter the business world.²

Using objective testing of business letter writing at the University of Texas, Dawe reports:

Although generally there is a fair degree of correlation between the letter grades and the objective scores, occasionally students who rate only fair as letter writers surprise us by coming up with the top scores on the test. We feel justified in our claim, then, that part of a student's grade should be derived from other sources than through critical evaluation of his writing.³

If objective testing is a valid measurement of learning in Business Communications, it would be possible for the instructor to spend more time in preparing classroom materials, assisting students with difficulties, instructing larger numbers of students, and doing needed research in Business Communications. This study will examine the worth of objective evaluation in Business Communications.


³Dawe, op. cit.
Information gained through the classification of sub-groups will be useful for curriculum and course planning. For example, if sophomores are not so successful as non-sophomores in Business Communications, perhaps they should be counseled to delay taking the course.

The use of the English test will measure the value of this instrument as a valid predictor of success in Business Communications. Such a predictor would be a useful guidance tool for instructors and students. For example, students doing poorly on the English test might be placed in special sections of Business Communications or be required to take a remedial English course before taking Business Communications.

III Operational Hypotheses

The two main research hypotheses and sub-hypotheses pursued in this study are:

1. There is a significant difference in the achievement of individuals in Business Communications classes as measured by objective testing and demonstrated business writing ability. Sub-hypotheses are:

   a. There is a significant difference in the achievement of individuals in Business Communications classes who are sophomores and non-sophomores as measured by objective

---

1 The sub-groups include: sophomores and non-sophomores; business majors and non-business majors; transfer and non-transfer students. See p. 10 for Definition of Terms.

2 See p. 11 for definition of Demonstrated Business Writing Ability.
classes who are sophomores and non-sophomores as measured by objective testing and demonstrated business writing ability.

b. There is a significant difference in the achievement of individuals in Business Communications classes who are business majors and non-business majors as measured by objective testing and demonstrated business writing ability.

c. There is a significant difference in the achievement of individuals in Business Communications classes who transferred from another college, junior college or community college and non-transfers as measured by objective testing and demonstrated business writing ability.

2. There is a significant difference between the Final Grade\(^1\) of individuals in Business Communications classes and the performance predicted on a standardized English test.\(^2\)

Sub-hypotheses are:

a. There is a significant difference between the degree of success or non-success\(^3\) of individuals in Business Communications classes as measured by objective testing and the performance predicted on a standardized English test.

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\(^1\)See p. 11 for definition of Final Grade.

\(^2\)See p. 22 for explanation of manner in which test was categorized for prediction purposes.

\(^3\)See p. 10 for definitions of Very Successful, Successful, and Unsuccessful.
b. There is a significant difference between the degree of success or non-success of individuals in Business Communications classes as measured by demonstrated business writing ability and performance predicted on a standardized English test.

IV Scope of Study

The population includes a total of 117 students enrolled in four sections of Business Communications at Western Michigan University during the 1968 Fall semester.

The population includes: 64 sophomores and 53 non-sophomores; 77 business majors and 40 non-business majors; 37 transfer students and 80 non-transfer students.

For purposes of analysis, students who received a grade of "A" were termed very successful; students who received a "B" or "C" grade were termed successful; students who received a "D" or "E" grade were termed unsuccessful. This population included 29 very successful students, 59 successful students, and 29 unsuccessful students.

V. Delimitations

1. This study is confined to four sections of students enrolled in Business Communications at Western Michigan University during the 1968 Fall semester. The four sections were taught by the same instructor.

2. This study is dependent upon the validity of the scales used to measure demonstrated business writing ability.¹

¹See p. 42, Appendix A, for Frailey Rating Scale utilized by the instructor.
3. This study is dependent upon the subjective business writing grading of the teacher.

4. This study is dependent upon the validity of the objective tests used.

VI Assumptions

This study is based on the following assumptions:

1. That satisfactory instruments are available to properly conduct this study.

2. That learning in Business Communications can be measured by demonstrated business writing ability.

3. That learning in Business Communications can be measured by objective testing.

4. That all participants will do their own business writing.

5. That all participants will answer the objective tests to the best of their abilities.

6. That the evaluative instruments and methods are valid measurements of performance and ability in Business Communications.

7. That performance in Business Communications can be predicted by using a standardized English test.

8. That a sufficient population is available to properly conduct this study.

VII Definition of Terms

Business Communications—a college-level course in the basic principles of written communications applicable to business.

Sophomores—students classified by Western Michigan University
as having 26-55 credit hours.¹

Non-Sophomores—students classified by Western Michigan University as having 56 or more credit hours.² (Any Freshmen—students credit with 0-25 hours—enrolled in this course were not included in this investigation.)

Business Majors—students taking a sequence of a minimum of 24 semester hours (30 hours for Business Education) of related business courses in the School of Business at Western Michigan University.³

Non-Business Majors—students not classified as majoring in a curriculum in the School of Business at Western Michigan University.

Transfer Students (Not Native)—students who attended a college, junior college or community college prior to attending Western Michigan University.

Non-Transfer Students (Native)—students who began their college education at Western Michigan University and have attended no other college, junior college, or community college.

Very Successful—performance in the top 25 percent of the population. These students received an "A" in Business Communications.

Successful—performance between the top 25 percent of the population and the bottom 25 percent. These students received "B" and "C" grades.

Unsuccessful—performance in the bottom 25 percent of the

¹Western Michigan University, op. cit., p. 39.
²ibid.
population. These students received "D" and "E" grades.

**Objective Test Score**—a numerical average of a student's performance on six objective tests in Business Communications administered throughout the semester.

**Demonstrated Business Writing Ability**—a numerical average of a student's performance on nine graded business writing assignments.\(^1\)

**Final Grade**—the numerical average of a student's objective test score and his demonstrated business writing ability score.\(^2\)

### VIII Organization of Study

The organization of this study is as follows:

Chapter II—A review of the literature concerning the problem.

Chapter III—The methods of gathering and procedures of analyzing the data.

Chapter IV—The results and findings will be reported.

Chapter V—A summary of the findings, conclusions, and recommendations.

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\(^1\)See p. 23, Chapter III, "The Sources of Data, Instrumentation and Methodology," for explanation of deviation from usual number of business writing assignments graded.

\(^2\)See p. 10 for definitions of Very Successful, Successful, and Unsuccessful—the categories into which the Final Grade was converted.
CHAPTER II
REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Introduction

The review of literature relating to evaluation and the use of standardized English tests as predictors of success and non-success in Business Communications is divided into four categories:

I Graded Demonstrated Business Writing Ability
II Use of Assistant Graders
III Objective Testing
IV English Usage Tests as Predictors of Writing Ability

Sources of Literature

An examination of the following publications was made:

1. Indexes to American Doctoral Dissertations for the years 1955-1967 were reviewed for possible related studies, and such studies were ordered from the University of Michigan.

2. Silvey's Indexes of Master's Theses in Education for the years 1955-1968 were reviewed for related studies. Copies of related studies were ordered through Inter-Library Loan of Hudson Valley Community College.


4. A listing of studies relating to the Cooperative English Test was requested of the publisher, Cooperative Test Division, Educational Testing Service, Princeton, New Jersey.

I. Graded Demonstrated Business Writing Ability

Because it is generally agreed that students must write many letters to improve their business writing ability,¹ written assignments are numerous and the instructor is faced with the evaluation problem.

Murphy and Peck state that:

The majority of colleges offering Business Communications require that their students write between 20 and 39 letters per semester . . . . The number of letters graded decreases when assignments are over 19 letters and there are 30 or more students per class.²

Brzozowski reports:

The major purpose of business communication courses appears to be the application of communication skills to business, with major emphasis in the area of writing business letters and reports . . . . Class size varies from as few as twelve students per class to as many as forty students, with a mode of from thirty to thirty-

¹See, for example, Menning and Wilkinson, op. cit., p. 13; Smith, Arthur J., "You May Improve Your Grading This Way." The ABWA Bulletin, XXVII (October 1962), 11.

five . . . . The number of sections, number of instructors, and class size of communication courses appear to be related to school enrollment.¹

Lord found that teachers spend an exorbitant amount of time simply marking papers.² He also found that 60 percent of the courses studied required 15 or more outside of class assignments per semester.³

Dave says:

Since the acid test of a course in business correspondence is the ability of the students to write a letter, we must necessarily include the scoring of letters as part of the testing program.⁴

II Use of Assistant Graders

The literature indicates that the use of readers or graders to help the instructor evaluate papers has been tried.

Murphy found that good paper readers are hard to find and keep.⁵ She states:

Good paper readers can be depended upon for checking objective tests and for checking letters for accuracy of grammar, punctuation, spelling; for form and placement; and for completeness of facts. But if the


³Ibid.

⁴Dave, op. cit., p. 6.

⁵Murphy, op. cit., p. 10.
grading standards also include ethics, business practice, style, psychology, tone, logical organization, etc., it is too much to expect readers to determine the fine distinctions and grades. Thus, after the mechanical errors have been marked, the conscientious teacher must reread for the subjective evaluation and assign grades. This double reading—in addition to the instructor's conferences with readers before they check each new type of letter—makes such a grading method very time-consuming.¹

If an instructor is expected to check every paper carefully for all the fine points of good letter writing, he must realize that there is a point of diminishing returns, which Murphy believes is about 100 letters per week.²

Menning and Wilkinson concluded:

Any teacher having to handle four classes averaging 30 students has to rely on some grading assistance . . . or slack off in work . . . or eventually suffer a health breakdown. If your classes average 40 or 50 (or more), you'll have to resign yourself to letting assistants do most of the grading after extensive conferences with them. Also, as a matter of self-preservation, you'll have to limit your conference time with students . . . .

After a combined sixty years of experience teaching in seven different colleges, we're convinced that a teacher of letters can do the best job with an average of 20 students per section in letters . . . .³

It appears the use of assistant graders (if they are available), while being helpful, is, yet, a time-consuming method of evaluating learning in Business Communications for the instructor.

¹ibid.

²loc. cit., pp. 10-11.

III Objective Testing

Dawe found that one could evaluate performance in business writing by using objective testing.\(^1\) She constructed an objective test consisting of three parts: (1) Multiple choice on grammar, form, punctuation, and usage; (2) Multiple choice on theory, writing style, psychology, business analysis, and patterns; (3) True and false on the same items as Part 2. The validity of the test was checked by item analysis. Dawe concluded, "The use of the objective-type test merits wholehearted approval by us at the University of Texas . . . ."\(^2\) She also was pleased that the test could be machine scored and analyzed.

No other investigation on objective testing in Business Communications was found.

IV English Usage Tests as Predictors of Writing Ability

The review of literature shows that standardized English tests have been used as predictors of success or non-success in various college courses including Business Communications.

However, standardized tests do have some recognized limitations. Loree states:

1. No standardized test can cover all the important points in a given field.

2. The norms do not tell how well any particular class of people should perform.

\(^1\) Dawe, op. cit., p. 11.

\(^2\) Dawe, op. cit., p. 12.
3. Test scores are not exact measurements.\(^1\)

Remmers, Gage, and Rummel state that "no test is perfectly reliable and there is also a certain amount of error in even the best test administered under ideal conditions."\(^2\)

Whitmore, in an unpublished study presented in a graduate seminar in Business Education at the University of Tennessee, stated:

Prognostic testing should function at the first stage of the learning and the teaching processes. Accurate, thorough prognosis can be instrumental in preventing considerable economic loss (for instance, in time, effort, and financial outlay), both to the individual student and to society.\(^3\)

Agreeing with Whitmore, Jex states:

In almost every academic area, additional studies are urgently needed to develop sectioning devices which will more efficiently determine which students are ready and able to profit from specific courses of study.\(^4\)

Shallcross used The New Purdue Placement Test in English to predict success in Business Communications at San Diego State


College, and found it to be of doubtful value.¹ She concluded that such determinants as student persistence, motivation, and level of aspiration were more relevant to his success in the course than his performance on the English test.²

Peppard and Votaw found:

The Expression section of the Cooperative English Test is sufficiently valid in revealing weaknesses in writing and can be used profitably as a screening process for locating students who need remedial work in theme writing. The ease of administration and need of securing data make this objective test practicable for use.³

In order to identify writing deficiencies and determine factors related to writing so that a basis for writing improvement could be established, Knapper investigated the writing of 89 insurance businessmen from six companies.⁴ He had three raters evaluate two letters of each of the participants. He also had the Cooperative English Test results and a questionnaire from each participant. The English test scores, writing scores, and responses to the questionnaire were analyzed in terms of relationships and patterns.


²Ibid.


Knapper concluded:

1. The various factors investigated in this study do not correlate significantly to provide worthwhile tools of predicting either English or writing performance.

2. The business-writing courses taken by the writers who participated in this study provided little, if any, benefit to them either in English or Writing.

3. The writer's self-appraisals of writing assets and liabilities provided no relationships with either English competence or writing performance.

4. The writer's self-concepts as writers are not indicative of their writing performance.

5. If teachers are to help students become better writers, their assistance must include many more things than English usage (grammar, and diction, punctuation, capitalization, and sentence structure), spelling, and vocabulary.

The Cooperative English Test received favorable reviews in The Sixth Mental Measurements Yearbook, which states:

No "objective" test measures the ability to write; it tests certain critical powers which are related to the ability to write. In one way the mechanics section of this test comes nearer to the actual writing of themes than some tests, including its own ancestors . . . .

It is not a direct measure of writing ability, but evidence suggests that ability to do well on this kind of test is related to ability to write well in an "essay" situation.

Summary

A review of the literature shows that evaluation is a problem

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1Knapper, loc. cit., p. 166.

for business communications instructors. The use of assistant graders does not seem a feasible solution, since it is not only time-consuming for the instructor, but graders are hard to get.¹

There is much support for the combined use of graded demonstrated business writing ability and objective testing.²

It appears that the use of a standardized English test might be useful in predicting success or non-success in Business Communications.³

The sources of data, instrumentation and methodology are presented in Chapter III.

¹Murphy, op. cit., p. 10; Menning and Wilkinson, op. cit., p. 8; Cox, op. cit., p. 4.
²Cox, op. cit., pp. 4-5; Menning and Wilkinson, op. cit., p. 139; Dawe, op. cit., pp. 11-12.
CHAPTER III

THE SOURCES OF DATA, INSTRUMENTATION AND METHODOLOGY

Sources of Data

The basic data were gathered from 117 Business Communications students at Western Michigan University during the 1968 Fall semester. The data for each student reflect his:

1. English Test Score
2. Graded Demonstrated Business Writing Ability Score
3. Objective Test Score
4. Final Grade

In addition, the data show his sub-group: (a) sophomore or non-sophomore; (b) business major or non-business major; (c) transfer or non-transfer status.

Procedures

The English Expression Section of the Cooperative English Test (1960) Form I, was administered to all Business Communications students during the first week of class to determine basic English ability.

The Cooperative English Test was selected as the instrument to measure English ability because the test sample consisted of freshmen and sophomore students selected from colleges and junior

1Derrick, et al., op. cit.
colleges throughout the country. This test had been used as a valid predictor of success and non-success in various college courses.¹

The English Expression Section of the Cooperative English Test is reported to be a valid indicator of English ability of college students.² A .67 validity was found on the English Expression Section of the Cooperative English Test given to college freshmen at the University of Florida.³ This score was in comparison to a composite of all other English tests given the first semester to 2,449 freshmen.

The English Expression Section measures English usage, spelling, punctuation, and capitalization as well as precise choice of written expression to convey a particular meaning,⁴ all of which are part of effective business writing. This test takes only 40 minutes to administer and was machine scored.

The Cooperative English Test scores of the students were categorized into three sections: very successful, successful, and unsuccessful. Those students performing in the top 25 percent of the population were classified as very successful; those students performing in the middle 50 percent of the population were classified

²loc. cit., p. 18.
³ibid.
⁴Derrick, et al., Cooperative English Test, English Expression Section, op. cit.
as successful; and those students performing in the bottom 25 percent of the population were classified as unsuccessful.

**Graded Demonstrated Business Writing Ability** Graded demonstrated business writing ability for all students was determined as follows:

1. Each student was instructed and graded by the same instructor.

2. Each student was given a code number to use (instead of his name) on all graded business writing assignments to insure anonymous authorship.

3. Each student was graded on nine letters of varying types throughout the semester to determine his demonstrated business writing ability. The types of letters evaluated were:

   1. Application and Data Sheet
   2. Sales
   3. Refusing Adjustment
   4. Refusing Request
   5. Direct Inquiry
   6. Claim (Complaint)
   7. Refusing Credit
   8. Special "Favor" Request
   9. Granting Adjustment

These letters were selected because they are representative of the types of letters students most frequently write.\(^1\) A deviation from the departmental standard of grading 15 business writing assignments per student was made because of the six objective tests taken by each student, which were counted in his Final Grade in Business Communications.

4. All letters were evaluated in accordance with the Frailey

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\(^1\)Murphy and Peck, op. cit., p. 22.
Grading Scale. (See Appendix A, pp. 42-43)

5. At the end of the semester, an average numerical grade was computed for each student based on his demonstrated business writing ability scores.

Objective Test Scores

1. Six Business Communications tests prepared by Jelley and correlated with the class text, *Modern Business Correspondence*, were administered to all of the students throughout the semester. Hunsinger states that the tests do measure knowledge of business communications. An item analysis of each test showed that all six tests were of medium difficulty for Western Michigan University Business Communications students.

2. All objective tests were machine scored by the Western Michigan University Testing Services.

3. At the end of the semester, an average numerical objective test grade was computed for each student on the basis of his six objective test scores.

Methodology

1. The average objective test scores and average business writing ability scores were the basis for determining any significant


differences found in this study.

2. All data were coded, punched, and processed at State University of New York at Albany. The data on each card included: student identification number, sophomore or non-sophomore rank, business or non-business major, transfer or non-transfer status, English test score, objective test score, demonstrated business writing ability score, and final grade score. Ranges were established to denote very successful, successful, and unsuccessful performance in the above score categories.¹

3. Because the data were qualitative and non-parametric,² the statistical method employed for testing the hypotheses in null form was the Chi-square. The null hypothesis will be rejected if the Table of Percentiles of the Chi-square³ shows that the value of Chi-square is significant at the .05 level of confidence. However, when the variability of the distribution under discussion is greater than .05, certain tendencies and relationships which appear important will be discussed.

When the expected frequencies in the Chi-square tests were less than five and the degrees of freedom were one, then adjacent categories were combined to increase the expected frequencies in the cells. The Chi-square test was acceptable if the degrees of freedom

¹See Definition of Terms, p. 10.


were larger than one and fewer than 20 percent of the cells had an expected frequency of less than five, and no cell had an expected frequency of less than one.

Hypotheses

The operational hypotheses will now be stated in null form:

1. There is no significant difference in the achievement of individuals in Business Communications classes as measured by objective testing and demonstrated business writing ability.

Sub-hypotheses are:

a. There is no significant difference in the achievement of individuals in Business Communications classes who are sophomores and non-sophomores as measured by objective testing and demonstrated business writing ability.

b. There is no significant difference in the achievement of individuals in Business Communications classes who are business majors and non-business majors as measured by objective testing and demonstrated business writing ability.

c. There is no significant difference in the achievement of individuals in Business Communications classes who transferred from another college, junior college, or community college and non-transfers as measured by objective

---

testing and demonstrated business writing ability.

2. There is no significant difference between the Final Grade of individuals in Business Communications classes and the performance predicted on a standardized English test.

Sub-hypotheses are:

a. There is no significant difference between the degree of success or non-success of individuals in Business Communications classes as measured by objective testing and the performance predicted on a standardized English test.

b. There is no significant difference between the degree of success or non-success of individuals in Business Communications classes as measured by demonstrated business writing ability and the performance predicted on a standardized English test.

Summary

The data for this study were obtained from four classes of Business Communications students at Western Michigan University during the 1968 Fall semester. One hundred seventeen students participated in this study. All of the students were taught by the same instructor and evaluated on English ability, demonstrated business writing ability, and objective tests on Business Communications. The students were classified as being very successful, successful, or unsuccessful in the above categories. The data were further divided into sub-groups of: sophomores and non-sophomores, business majors and non-business majors, and transfer and non-
transfer students. The statistical analysis employed to test the null hypotheses was the Chi-square test.

An analysis of the data is presented in Chapter IV.
CHAPTER IV

PRESENTATION OF DATA

Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to present an analysis of the similarities and differences that may exist between two forms of evaluation in Business Communications utilized in this study.

The population on which the data are based included:

1. A total sample of 117 Western Michigan University Business Communications students.
2. Of this sample there were:
   a. 64 sophomores and 53 non-sophomores
   b. 77 business majors and 40 non-business majors
   c. 37 transfer students and 80 non-transfer students
3. There were four classes all taught and graded by the same instructor.

In addition, an analysis of the use of a standardized English test as a predictor of success or non-success in Business Communications will be discussed.

The findings are presented in the following pages.

Analysis of Data

Hypothesis 1 - not rejected

Table 1 shows that there is no significant difference between the performances of Business Communications students as measured by objective testing and demonstrated business writing ability. This would seem to indicate that objective testing could be utilized by Business Communications teachers as an evaluative tool.
TABLE 1

ACHIEVEMENT OF BUSINESS COMMUNICATIONS STUDENTS AS MEASURED BY OBJECTIVE TESTING AND DEMONSTRATED BUSINESS WRITING ABILITY*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Unsuccessful</th>
<th>Successful</th>
<th>Very Successful</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No.</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>No.</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Objective Testing</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>28.21</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>46.15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business Writing Ability</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>24.79</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>47.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTALS</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>26.50</td>
<td>109</td>
<td>46.58</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Chi-square = .10; not significant at .05 level.

Hypothesis la (Objective Testing) - not rejected

Table 2 shows that there is no significant difference between the achievements of sophomores and non-sophomores in Business Communications as measured by objective testing. Thus, a student's classification by year seemed irrelevant to his chances of success or non-success when he was objectively evaluated.
TABLE 2

ACHIEVEMENT OF SOPHOMORE AND NON-SOPHOMORE BUSINESS
COMMUNICATION STUDENTS AS MEASURED BY OBJECTIVE TESTING*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Unsuccessful No.</th>
<th>Unsuccessful %</th>
<th>Successful No.</th>
<th>Successful %</th>
<th>Very Successful No.</th>
<th>Very Successful %</th>
<th>Total No.</th>
<th>Total %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sophomores</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>32.81</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>46.88</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>10.31</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Sophomores</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>22.64</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>45.28</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>32.8</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTALS</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>28.21</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>46.15</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>25.64</td>
<td>117</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Chi-square = 2.644; not significant at .05 level.

Hypothesis la (Business Writing Ability) – not rejected

The data in Table 3 show that there is no significant difference between the achievements of sophomores and non-sophomores in Business Communications as measured by demonstrated business writing ability. This agrees with the results measured by objective testing.

TABLE 3

ACHIEVEMENT OF SOPHOMORE AND NON-SOPHOMORE BUSINESS
COMMUNICATION STUDENTS AS MEASURED BY DEMONSTRATED
BUSINESS WRITING ABILITY*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Unsuccessful No.</th>
<th>Unsuccessful %</th>
<th>Successful No.</th>
<th>Successful %</th>
<th>Very Successful No.</th>
<th>Very Successful %</th>
<th>Total No.</th>
<th>Total %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sophomores</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>23.44</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>54.68</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>21.88</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Sophomores</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>26.42</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>37.74</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>35.84</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTALS</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>24.79</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>47.00</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>47.00</td>
<td>117</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Chi-square = 3.883; not significant at .05 level.
Tables 2 and 3 seem to indicate that a student's achievement in Business Communications is not dependent upon his classification by year in college. No greater success would be assured to the student if the course were taught only to above-sophomore levels.

Hypothesis 1b (Objective Testing - not rejected)

The data in Table 4 show that the college major does not seem to be relevant to student success in Business Communications as measured by objective testing.

**TABLE 4**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Unsuccessful</th>
<th>Successful</th>
<th>Very Successful</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No.</td>
<td>No.</td>
<td>No.</td>
<td>No.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>%</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>25.98</td>
<td>50.64</td>
<td>23.38</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Business</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>32.50</td>
<td>37.50</td>
<td>30.00</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTALS</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>117</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>28.21</td>
<td>46.15</td>
<td>25.64</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Chi-square = 1.834; not significant at .05 level.

Table 5 confirms that the college major does not seem to be relevant to success in Business Communications as measured by demonstrated business writing ability.
TABLE 5

ACHIEVEMENT OF BUSINESS AND NON-BUSINESS MAJORS IN BUSINESS COMMUNICATIONS AS MEASURED BY DEMONSTRATED BUSINESS WRITING ABILITY*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Unsuccessful</th>
<th>Successful</th>
<th>Very Successful</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No.</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>No.</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>20.78</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>50.64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Business</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>32.50</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>40.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTALS</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>24.79</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>47.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Chi-square = 2.105; not significant at .05 level.

Tables 4 and 5 seem to indicate that students with majors other than Business can be successful in Business Communications as measured by either or both demonstrated business writing ability and objective testing.

Hypothesis 1c (Objective Testing) - not rejected

Table 6 fails to show a significant difference between the achievements of transfer and non-transfer students in Business Communications as measured by objective testing.
### TABLE 6

ACHIEVEMENT OF TRANSFER AND NON-TRANSFER STUDENTS IN BUSINESS COMMUNICATIONS AS MEASURED BY OBJECTIVE TESTING*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>%</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transfer</td>
<td>32.43</td>
<td>40.54</td>
<td>27.03</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Transfer</td>
<td>26.25</td>
<td>48.75</td>
<td>25.00</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTALS</td>
<td>28.21</td>
<td>46.15</td>
<td>25.64</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Chi-square = .753; not significant at .05 level.

Hypothesis lc (Business Writing Ability) - not rejected

Table 7 fails to show a significant difference between the achievements of transfer and non-transfer students in Business Communications as measured by demonstrated business writing ability.

### TABLE 7

ACHIEVEMENT OF TRANSFER AND NON-TRANSFER STUDENTS IN BUSINESS COMMUNICATIONS AS MEASURED BY DEMONSTRATED BUSINESS WRITING ABILITY*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>%</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transfer</td>
<td>29.73</td>
<td>40.54</td>
<td>29.73</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Transfer</td>
<td>22.50</td>
<td>50.00</td>
<td>27.50</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTALS</td>
<td>24.79</td>
<td>47.00</td>
<td>28.21</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Chi-square = 1.060; not significant at .05 level.
Both Tables 6 and 7 indicate that the students who transfer from other colleges, junior colleges, or community colleges are as likely to be successful as non-transfer students.

Hypothesis 2 - rejected

Table 8 shows that there is a significant difference in the performance of Business Communications students as measured by success or non-success on the Cooperative English Test and the student's resulting Final Grade for the course. It is interesting to note that 62.5 percent of the students who performed unsuccessfully on the English test proved successful in business writing ability as indicated by the resulting Final Grade. These findings are similar to results Shallcross found in using The New Purdue

TABLE 8
SUCCESS OR NON-SUCCESS ON ENGLISH TEST AND ACHIEVEMENT IN BUSINESS LETTER WRITING AS MEASURED BY FINAL GRADE*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>English</th>
<th>Unsuccessful</th>
<th>Successful</th>
<th>Very Successful</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No.</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>No.</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very Successful and Successful</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>17.65</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>45.88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unsuccessful</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>37.50</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>56.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTALS</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>23.08</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>48.71</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Chi-square = 12.011; significant at .05 level.

1. The very successful and successful English scores were grouped to provide adequate numbers in cells for statistical treatment.
Placement Test in English as a predictor of success or non-success in Business Communications.¹

Hypothesis 2a (Objective Testing) – rejected

The data were tested on each of the two factors which were combined in the Final Grade.

Table 9 indicates that there is a significant difference in the performance of Business Communications students as measured by success or non-success on the Cooperative English Test and the results of objective testing. In this case, 46.87 percent of the students who proved unsuccessful on the English test proved successful in objective testing in Business Communications.

TABLE 9
SUCCESS OR NON-SUCCESS ON ENGLISH TEST AND ACHIEVEMENT IN BUSINESS LETTER WRITING AS MEASURED BY OBJECTIVE TESTING

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>English</th>
<th>Unsuccessful</th>
<th>Successful</th>
<th>Very Successful</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No.</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>No.</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>No.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very Successful</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>18.82</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>49.42</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>and Successful</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unsuccessful</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>53.13</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>37.50</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTALS</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>28.21</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>46.15</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Chi-square = 14.958; significant at .05 level.

¹Shallcross, loc. cit., p. 81.
Hypothesis 2b (Business Writing Ability) - not rejected

Although Table 10 does not show a significant difference at the .05 level of confidence between the performances of Business Communications students as measured by success or non-success on the Cooperative English Test and the results of demonstrated business writing ability, a difference at the .06 level was found. This is certainly worthy of mention. Since objective testing and demonstrated business letter writing ability were the two factors which contributed to the Final Grade and Hypothesis 2 concerning Final Grade was rejected, it is interesting to note how close to rejection was Hypothesis 2b.

**TABLE 10**

SUCCESS OR NON-SUCCESS ON ENGLISH TEST AND ACHIEVEMENT IN BUSINESS LETTER WRITING AS MEASURED BY DEMONSTRATED BUSINESS WRITING ABILITY*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>English Unsuccessful</th>
<th>Successful</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No.</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>No.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very Successful and Successful</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>21.17</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unsuccessful</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>34.37</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTALS</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>24.79</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Chi-square = 5.836; not significant at .05 level.

Since there is a significant difference in the degree of success of students in Business Communications classes and the performance predicted through use of the Cooperative English Test, it seems...
unadvisable to use a standardized English test as the only criteria for predicting success or non-success in Business Communications for counseling purposes at Western Michigan University.

Summary

This chapter contained an analysis and interpretation of the data related to the hypotheses and sub-hypotheses investigated in this study.

A significant difference in achievement in Business Communications was not found as measured by objective testing and demonstrated business writing ability. The results were further investigated by using sub-groups and significant differences were not found when performance was measured by these methods. This would seem to indicate that evaluation by either objective testing or demonstrated business writing ability or a combination of the two, would result in students receiving the same Final Grade in Business Communications.

The results of Hypothesis 2 and its sub-hypotheses show that the Cooperative English Test does not seem to be a valid predictor of success or non-success in Business Communications as measured by Final Grade, objective testing, and demonstrated business writing ability. (Demonstrated business writing ability proved only marginally significant.)

The summary, conclusions, and recommendations are presented in Chapter V.
CHAPTER V

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary

This is a study appraising two methods of evaluating achievement in Business Communications: objective testing and demonstrated business writing ability.

The population included 177 Western Michigan University students enrolled in four classes of Business Communications during the 1968 Fall semester. The population was classified in sub-groups according to sophomore or non-sophomore rank, business or non-business major, and transfer or non-transfer status.

The major purpose was to determine statistically any significant difference in the achievement attained by students in Business Communications as measured by objective testing and demonstrated business writing ability.

A second purpose was to determine whether or not a standardized English test would be a useful predictor of success or non-success in Business Communications. The English test score was compared with the student's Final Grade in the course. The data were further analyzed by comparing each student's degree of success on the English test to his degree of success in Business Communications as measured by the objective testing and by demonstrated business writing ability.

Sub-purposes were to determine differences among the achievements
of the sub-groups in Business Communications as measured by objective testing and demonstrated business writing ability.

The data were gathered from four sources: each student's objective test score average, each student's demonstrated business writing ability average, each student's English test score and administrative records.

The problem was approached by using the null hypothesis. Hypotheses were established that there was no relationship between scores attained by students in Business Communications as measured by objective testing and demonstrated business writing ability. Sub-hypotheses were established that there was no relationship between the scores attained by the sub-groups in Business Communications as measured by objective testing and demonstrated business writing ability. A further hypothesis was established that there was no difference between the degree of success of the student as measured by Final Grade in Business Communications and his degree of success on the English test administered.

The statistical method employed was the Chi-square test. Although the .05 level of confidence was chosen, it seemed consistent with the nature of this study to discuss a relationship existing at the .06 level of confidence.

Conclusions

On the basis of the finding from the two main hypotheses and the sub-hypotheses examined, the following conclusions may be drawn:

1. Students of Business Communications at Western Michigan University do not score significantly differently when evaluated by
objective testing and graded demonstrated business writing ability.

2. A student's classification by rank, major, or transfer-non-transfer status does not seem to be related significantly to his success or non-success in Business Communications as measured by objective testing and demonstrated business writing ability.

3. The use of a standardized English test as a single predictor of success or non-success in Business Communications at Western Michigan University is not supported. This conclusion is consistent with the findings of other studies.¹

Recommendations

The proposed recommendations come from the findings revealed:

1. Instructors should evaluate student learning in Business Communications by using both objective testing and demonstrated business writing ability scores.

2. Business Communications should continue to be offered as a sophomore course at Western Michigan University.

3. Transfer students need not be separated from non-transfer students in Business Communications classes.

4. Non-business majors should continue to take Business Communications as an elective.

5. The use of a standardized English test as a single predictor of success or non-success in Business Communications is not advisable.

6. Further studies to determine valid and efficient measurements of learning in Business Communications are necessary.

¹Shallcross, op. cit., p. 81; Knapper, op. cit., p. 166.
## APPENDIX A

### THE FRAILEY RATING SCALE FOR BUSINESS LETTERS*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Points</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Appearance</td>
<td>How well is the letter groomed? Is the letterhead attractive without being wild? Are the grammar and punctuation correct? Does the letter sit nicely on the page? Is the typing good and free from erasures? Does the letter appeal to the eye as one easy to read?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Language</td>
<td>Are the words short and natural? Would the average person know their meaning? Is the letter free from rubber-stamp expressions? Does it carry the distinction of simplicity? Is the language the same as the writer would use if he were talking to the reader?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Argument</td>
<td>Has the story in the letter been well told? Is all the information presented that the reader needs? Does the letter ring true? Does the writer seem to know what he is talking about? Does the purpose of the letter stand out sharply?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carpentry</td>
<td>What kind of craftsman does the writer prove to be? Between the lines can you see the skeleton that all good letters must have? What about the Star, the Hook, the Chain—are they all there? Do the paragraphs cling together? Does the story move along?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personality</td>
<td>Does the writer succeed in getting himself into the letter? Does he take the reader on an interesting journey? Does he get out of the rut of common place? Does the letter sparkle with originality? Is the interest sustained from beginning to end?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spirit</td>
<td>Will the letter win good will for the company? Is it free from sarcasm, ridicule, anger, and bluster? Does the reader get the impression that he is being well served? Is it a letter the writer would be proud to show to the head of his company?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
And now, beyond all of those six points, what general impression does the letter give. Does the writer seem to have accomplished his purpose? Does the letter do the job?

Result

Total Rating


HOW TO USE THE RATING SCALE*

On each of the first six points, grade the letter 15, 10, 5, or 0.

15 if exceptionally good
10 if above average
5 if doubtful
0 if very poor

On Point 7 (Result), if the answer is "Yes," give 10 points; if "No," give none. Thus, the letter can rate a maximum of 100 points.

*Frailey, loc. cit., p. xii.
BIBLIOGRAPHY

I. BOOKS


I. PERIODICALS


D. Dawe, Jessamon, "An Explanation of the Objectives and Procedures of Business Writing Courses as Taught in the College of Business Administration, University of Texas." The ABWA Bulletin, XXIII (May 1959), 9-13.

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H. Harder, Virgil E., "Teaching Methodology: Is a 'Letter Writing' or 'Basic Communications' Teaching Approach More Effective in Helping Students Improve Their Writing Abilities?" The ABWA Bulletin, XXVII (December 1962), 11-16.


III BULLETINS AND YEARBOOKS


IV THESES, PROJECTS, AND DISSERTATIONS


V OTHER SOURCES


