Objective Evaluation of English Composition.

Marjorie McGowan St. Amant

Louisiana State University and Agricultural & Mechanical College

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OBJECTIVE EVALUATION OF ENGLISH COMPOSITION

A Dissertation

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of
Louisiana State University and
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in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

in

The Department of Education

by

Marjorie McGowan St. Amant
B.S., Louisiana State University, 1965
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ABSTRACT

This study represented an attempt to test the following hypothesis: the degree of objectivity in evaluation of English composition can be increased if overall evaluation criteria are agreed on, accepted, and used by classroom teachers of English. The investigation primarily concerned an analysis of teacher evaluation of English composition as presently practiced and an effort to find a fairer and faster way of accomplishing such evaluation. The author (1) examined selected evaluation criteria used in the past for the grading of English composition; (2) wrote a set of behavioral objectives based on the major points of emphasis in the evaluation criteria examined; and (3) designed a new evaluation instrument, The St. Amant Key for Evaluation of English Composition, based on the behavioral objectives. The key was designed for use by secondary teachers of English IV and college teachers of Freshman English Composition.

Evaluative data were collected from Departments of Freshman English in state colleges and universities within Louisiana and from selected research conducted outside the state. These data provided a variety of opinions and information on evaluation criteria and were subsequently used to compile a set of evaluation checklists from which the behavioral objectives were written and the new evaluation key was created.
The St. Amant Key was designed by the researcher to contribute to a clearer understanding of the intricacies involved in the fair and impartial evaluation of English composition written by secondary seniors and college freshmen. The investigation called attention to serious problems relating to grammar, time, reliability, behavioral objectives, and the psychological effects of traditional composition evaluation; it suggested that the new evaluation instrument could possibly alleviate some of the problems or provide a point of departure from which other researchers might undertake similar studies to bring about further refinement. Classroom teachers of English at secondary and college levels participated in the study.

Due to inadequate testing of the key, definitive answers were not found to all the questions posed at the beginning of the investigation. However, the author concluded, from a careful examination of the data collected, that (1) an objective scoring key for English composition should include criteria such as that set forth on The St. Amant Key; (2) most of the aspects of English composition set forth on the key were amenable to objective measurement; (3) the two aspects which were most resistant to objective measurement were the quality of ideas and the elements which related to style; and (4) while it was not possible to design a scoring key which was totally objective and reliable, The St. Amant Key was a measuring device through which subjectivity in evaluation could be minimized.
Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

Students at both secondary and college levels should receive practical as well as cultural values from their work in school. Business leaders and educators alike have long recognized the value of writing as a practical skill which should be learned early in life. Language, more than anything else, differentiates man from other animals. Language is necessary for almost all intercommunication among human beings. If writing is to become an integral part of students' adult lives, they must learn to write effectively during their school years.

The responsibility for college preparation has weighed heavily on the secondary school ever since the secondary school was first established. Concern over how well or how poorly the secondary school fulfills its responsibility has resulted in numerous investigations and experiments. However, according to Robert L. Ebel (1969), the problems inherent in the evaluation of written English
composition have been as frustrating to the researcher as they have been to the classroom teacher of English.

Information is now emerging on various new methods of composition evaluation. Since English is a complex and changing subject, teachers of English at both the secondary level and the college level must give attention to innovations and maintain an ever-present awareness of change.

Lay readers or paraprofessionals have been used extensively in recent years to speed up the evaluation of English composition. Other recent innovations include peer grading, evaluation by computers, and the placing of evaluative comments on tape. Chapter 2 of this study presents more details on each of these techniques.

In the future much attention will probably continue to be given to ways of reducing correction time and effort without sacrificing individualized teacher-student relationships. However, during the late 1960's and the early 1970's the bulk of composition evaluation is still done by classroom teachers, and it is primarily over such teacher evaluation of English composition that the controversy persists. The absence of objectivity is a constant concern. The assigning of letter grades consti-
tutes only a part of the controversy.

I. THE PROBLEM

Background

Although teachers of English play diverse roles in the schools, the evaluation of composition occupies a central position in the duties performed. The National Council of Teachers of English, Committee on National Interest (1961), indicated that from one-half to two-thirds of the secondary English teacher's responsibility lay in language and composition.

The William B. McColly and Robert B. Remstad study (1963) inferred that secondary English teachers should give a weekly writing assignment approximately three hundred words in length; devote from two to three class periods to analysis of the assignment; offer explanation and discussion of forms, techniques, and materials involved; and allow time to write and edit, evaluate, rewrite, and re-evaluate.

Henry C. Meckel (Gage, Handbook of Research on Teaching, 1963) concluded that many teacher assignments,

. . . while designed to stimulate imaginative powers and certain types of verbal skills, did not appreciably require the thought processes, evaluative skills, or
skills of organization necessary in writing an expository essay dealing with contemporary issues—the kind of writing typically required of college freshmen.

In the 1960's many classroom teachers of English were not adequately prepared to effectively evaluate English composition. The greatest weaknesses in the subject-matter preparation of teachers at the secondary level lay in the lack of college work in the English language and in composition. All major guidelines for English teacher preparation in the 1960's emphasized work in language, composition, and literature, as nearly in balance as possible. Approximately 41 percent of the nation's colleges required courses in advanced composition for English teachers (National Council of Teachers of English, Committee on National Interest, 1961). Courses in creative writing were often not available. However, this situation improved to some extent during the early 1970's. More and more colleges and universities began to require at least two courses in language and one or more courses in advanced composition.

A common complaint about the evaluation of English composition is the lack of reliability. Objective tests seem to offer great reliability in the evaluation of English composition, but most English researchers contend that the
objective tests are useful only for prediction and not for the evaluation of achievement in writing. Chapter 2 of this investigation discusses the problem of reliability in some detail.

In the early part of the twentieth century composition scales were designed in an effort to bring about some standardization in grading. Such scales included carefully selected compositions representing various degrees of excellence at various levels. A given composition was compared to those on the scale and its worth determined in this way. Authorities such as Rollo L. Lyman (1929) and Meckel (1958) have made careful studies of the principles considered important in evaluating composition written by secondary students, and scales designed thus far have not been found helpful to any appreciable degree.

The teaching of English composition in American schools was long influenced by the classical tradition, and any objectives which were developed related mainly to grammar. At the present time there are no clearly stated behavioral objectives which are accepted by all English teachers. As a result, evaluation procedures differ greatly in emphases
from teacher to teacher and at the secondary and college levels.

Educators have, for years, attempted to bring about some standardization in the evaluation of English composition. Many researchers have been interested in the problem; many experimental studies have been done in which composition programs of various schools have been analyzed. However, the development of behavioral objectives and satisfactory evaluation criteria for use in measuring writing ability has not been accomplished to the degree that there are generally accepted standards.

**Statement of the Problem**

The present investigation sought answers to the following questions:

1. Can complex skills and understandings such as those involved in writing be measured objectively?

2. Can a teacher honestly and fairly apply a linear marking scale (ABCDF) to English composition?

3. Is it possible to design a reliable objective scoring key for English composition?

4. Are true differences in students' writing ability now masked by grader unreliability?
5. Do typical secondary seniors and college freshmen write as they wish to write or in accordance with what they perceive as desirable to the teacher?

6. If it is possible to design a reliable objective scoring key for English composition, what criteria should such a key include?

7. Would the effectiveness of such an evaluation instrument be testable in a real classroom situation?

8. Are the traditional written teacher comments as meaningful and helpful to students as they are designed to be? Would it be equally or more effective to underline the portion of the theme in question and then apply an objective evaluation key in lieu of the written comments?

9. Would such a key be effective in a departmental setting?

10. What standards must the evaluator of English composition meet?

11. How does the evaluator meet necessary standards with large student loads?

12. How should goals in the teaching of English composition be specified?

13. What aspects of English composition are most amenable to objective measurement? Which are most resistant?
14. What may be gained if English composition goals are specified in behavioral terms? What may be lost?

15. What method(s) should be used in evaluating the writing of secondary seniors and college freshmen? Are there perceptible differences in the quality of evaluation between the various subjective methods now used by individual teachers and the objective method suggested by this research study?

In an effort to reduce the subjective element in the evaluation of English composition, this study includes (1) an examination of evaluative data used in the past for grading English composition, (2) the writing of a set of behavioral objectives based on the major points of emphasis in the evaluative data examined, and (3) the designing of a new evaluation key for the grading of English composition written by secondary seniors and college freshmen, based on the behavioral objectives.

Delimitations

The study was limited to data collected from Departments of Freshman English in state colleges and universities within Louisiana (see Appendix B) and information drawn
from a review of the related literature. These data were used to compile a set of evaluation checklists from which behavioral objectives were written and a new objective evaluation key was created.

II. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Definition of Terms

The following terms are defined as they are used in this particular research study:

ACT refers to the American College Testing Program.
NCTE refers to National Council of Teachers of English.
USOE refers to the U.S. Office of Education.
NEA refers to the National Education Association.
ETS refers to the Educational Testing Service.
CEEB refers to the College Entrance Examination Board.
SAT refers to the Scholastic Aptitude Test of the CEEB.
RIE refers to Research in Teaching.
RTE refers to Research in the Teaching of English.
CIJE refers to Current Index to Journals in Education.
ERIC/RCS refers to Educational Resources Information Center/Reading and Communication Skills.
NAEP refers to the National Assessment of Educational Progress, the major objective of which is to gather informa-
tion about the educational attainments and attitudes of groups of Americans and to make this information available to all who are concerned about the state of American education.

**STEP** refers to Sequential Tests of Educational Progress.

*Functional grammar* refers to the items of usage which students frequently misuse. Functional grammar usually involves the idea of practicality.

*Formal grammar* refers to grammar which is likely to be considered nonfunctional in nature. Linguists use this term to refer to the syntactic structure of the language as it relates to tense, agreement, or case.

*Behavioral objective* is a teaching objective stated in terms of observable student behavior, specifying the conditions under which the behavior is to be achieved and the minimum level of achievement to be accepted as satisfactory.

*Objective evaluation key* refers to a measuring tool which includes specific criteria designed to reduce the subjective element in the evaluation of written English composition.
Classroom teacher of English is a teacher who teaches English at least four hours per day during the school year. English composition refers to written English presenting an exchange of ideas; the structured type of written discourse which takes place in the English classrooms of secondary seniors and college freshmen; the teacher-directed writing typically required of secondary seniors and college freshmen, as opposed to creative writing or the writing of experts.

Creative writing refers to writing which is uniquely original such as a play, a short story, or a poem. The author recognizes that all writing which is not copied is creative to some degree.

Hypothesis

The degree of objectivity in the evaluation of English composition can be increased if the overall evaluation criteria are agreed on, accepted, and used by classroom teachers of English.

Purposes of the Study

The worth of writing is unquestionably a matter of opinion to some extent. As noted by Walter D. Martin (1970), some subjectivity probably enters into all contacts between
the student and the teacher. Kenneth L. Macrorie (1969) also emphasized the unique qualities in each written composition. However, Howard B. Slotnick and James V. Knopp (1971) have pointed out that "there are regularities in good writing which allow us to distinguish it from the poorer variety." It is on these regularities that the possibility and hope of objective evaluation of English composition are based.

The present investigation was primarily concerned with analyzing classroom teacher evaluation of English composition as presently practiced and finding a fairer and faster way of accomplishing such evaluation. The author has suggested a solution to some of the immediate problems which occur daily in the English classroom in regard to evaluation of students' themes by creating a new rating scale to be used by secondary teachers of Senior English and college teachers of Freshman English.

**Importance of the Study**

The classroom teacher of English must spend a great deal of time evaluating English composition; yet, research has failed to yield effective evaluative techniques which are generally accepted by secondary English teachers and
college English teachers. Martin Steinmann, Jr. (1967) revealed that the main problems involved in evaluating English composition continue to elude researchers and teachers.

Since the evaluation of English composition is such a complex procedure, its diverse nature demands continuing scrutiny. A single technique of measurement is, obviously, very difficult to design. Compromises with the ideal are inevitable. The following statement made by the National Council of Teachers of English, Committee on the State of Knowledge about Composition (1963), indicated the need for research:

Today's research in composition, taken as a whole, may be compared to chemical research as it emerged from the period of alchemy: some terms are being refined, but the field as a whole is laced with dreams, prejudices, and makeshift operations.

English authorities such as Richard Braddock (1969) also emphasized the crucial need for research relating to English composition.

The psychological effects of present evaluative techniques are posing a major problem. As noted by Paul B. Diederich (1963), an overabundance of teacher corrections "not only does no good but positive harm. Its most common effect is to make the majority of students hate and fear writing." Diederich further stated, "The art of the
teacher--at its best--is the reinforcement of good things." William C. Dell (1964) was of the same opinion when he wrote, "Negative criticism and fear that one's feelings and thoughts will be judged, censored, or considered unacceptable or unworthy tend to inhibit creative writing." Grace A. Clarke (1969) suggested that "a mixture of criticism and praise" probably produces the students' best writing. The present investigator concurs that the evaluator of English composition should offer students support and recognize their successes wherever and whenever possible. Constructive criticism is a "must" if students are to learn to write effectively. Whether criticism or praise is offered, fairness is mandatory in evaluation.

Braddock (1969) stated, "A sequential program in the rhetorical aspects of composition cannot be based on sound research until methods are developed to describe the rhetorical aspects in objective terms." Therefore, the author assumes that composition evaluation must be refined to the point that it can deal objectively with at least some of the rhetorical items.

The present study provides a variety of opinions and information on evaluation techniques used within the
State of Louisiana and outside Louisiana. The data collected from the state colleges and universities present a comprehensive report on the evaluation of composition written in Freshman English in Louisiana at this time; the data included in the selected research present a report on some evaluation techniques used outside the state. It is hoped that the investigation will contribute to a clearer understanding of the intricacies involved in the fair and impartial evaluation of English composition written by secondary seniors and college freshmen. The study calls attention to serious problems relating to grammar, time, reliability, behavioral objectives, and the psychological effects of traditional composition evaluation; it suggests that the objective evaluation key designed by the researcher may alleviate some of the problems and provide a point of departure from which others may undertake similar studies to bring about further refinement.

III. METHOD OF INVESTIGATION

Sources or Collection of Data

A roster of the heads of Freshman English Departments in state colleges and universities was requested and received from the Louisiana State Department of Education. (See Appendix A.)
These authorities were contacted and requested to send copies of guidelines presently being used to evaluate Freshman English themes. (See Appendix B.) Included with the letters requesting approval and cooperation were copies of portions of the dissertation proposal. (See Appendix C.) Responses received were used to compile a set of evaluation checklists. In addition, a review of related literature yielded other evaluation checklists.

**Analysis and Treatment of the Data**

The data collected were carefully reviewed and analyzed. Based on that review and analysis, a set of behavioral objectives for the teaching of English composition was written.

The set of behavioral objectives was then submitted to an authority in testing, Dr. Fred M. Smith, Louisiana State University, for his review and criticism. Changes were made in accordance with his recommendations. A new objective evaluation key for the grading of English composition was then designed, based on the behavioral objectives.

Each English authority at the college level and selected teachers of English IV at the secondary level were subsequently requested to serve as members of a panel of
experts and react to the behavioral objectives and to the new evaluation key. They were further requested to assist in the validation of the new key by making use of it in their respective departments for at least a part of a semester. Finally, a survey of the key's effectiveness in grading English composition was made, based on the reactions of the authorities on English and the findings of the researcher. Results are reported in Chapter 5 of this study.

IV. ORGANIZATION OF THE REMAINDER OF THE STUDY

The remainder of the study is organized into four additional chapters.

Chapter 2 consists of a review of literature which (1) calls attention to serious problems in grammar, time, reliability, behavioral objectives, and the psychological effects of traditional composition evaluation; (2) presents information on four alternatives to traditional composition evaluation; and (3) offers an analysis of selected evaluation criteria used outside the State of Louisiana.

Chapter 3 describes the method of investigation as it relates to the collection of evaluative data within the State of Louisiana.
Chapter 4 describes the method of investigation as it relates to the analysis and treatment of the data in writing the behavioral objectives and in designing the new evaluation key. This chapter also presents information on the validation procedure.

Chapter 5 includes the summarizing statements, conclusions, and recommendations of the researcher.
Chapter 2

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Edna Hays (1936) revealed that by 1900 almost all of America's secondary schools had established a regular course in English, although sadly disorganized and lacking in objectives. Soon after the organization of the College Entrance Examination Board (CEEB) in 1900 to assist the institutions of higher learning in evaluating the academic ability of students, Charles T. Copeland and others (1901) from the Department of English, Harvard University, published a book relating to the English composition program at Harvard and included the following statements:

'At one extreme of this class of freshmen are the illiterate and inarticulate who cannot distinguish a sentence from a phrase or spell the simplest words. At the other are fairly mature writers who need only to discard certain crudities and to gain variety and flexibility. Between these two extremes come many sorts and conditions of students.'

In the early part of the twentieth century many adolescents did not go on to college. This fact was of great significance in establishing the National Council...
of Teachers of English (NCTE) in 1911. One of the NCTE's initial founders, James F. Hosic, was chairman of the National Joint Committee on English, representing the National Education Association (NEA) and the NCTE, and faced two important questions:

1. Do the college entrance requirements in English foster the best kind of English work in the high schools?

2. If not, what changes should be made?

The answers to these questions were published in Hosic's report entitled Reorganization of English in Secondary Schools (1917). This 1917 report stated that the college preparatory function of the secondary school was a minor one and that the course in English should be organized with reference to basic personal and social needs rather than with reference to college entrance requirements. Hosic further stated,

. . . the relation of language to the expanding life is so close and intimate that to drop the systematic practice of speaking, writing, and reading at any point in the school program would be like ceasing to exercise or to take food.

Years later, Stanley E. Easton (1970) found that the teaching of English composition at the secondary level was highly significant in determining college achievement.
Today, English teachers at both levels face frustrating problems especially relating to grammar, time, reliability, behavioral objectives, and the psychological effects of traditional composition evaluation.

THE PROBLEM OF GRAMMAR IN COMPOSITION EVALUATION

In the early 1900's teaching objectives for English composition were greatly influenced by grammar. Pragmatic concepts began to affect the teaching of composition only after the evolvement of universal education. As the educational doctrine of formal discipline was displaced and the proportion of noncollege students in secondary schools increased, interest shifted to a determination of the most functional phases of grammar. In its early stages functional grammar was closely associated with linguistic correctness. Linguists argued that there were correct and incorrect ways of speaking and writing and that grammar was the means by which errors could be corrected by reference to certain grammatical rules.

A number of linguistic research studies were done in this century: Edward Sapir (1921); Leonard Bloomfield
In 1926 and 1932 Roy I. Johnson attempted to identify "functional centers" of language activity which could be used as a basis for writing objectives for the teaching of English composition. During this same period Dora V. Smith (1938) showed that more time was being given to the teaching of grammar and usage in American secondary schools than to any other phase of instruction.

Attempts of the NCTE to broaden the curriculum in writing to meet the needs of all students were obvious in such publications as the following: Hatfield's report, *An Experience Curriculum in English* (1935); *The English Language Arts* (1952); *Language Arts for Today's Children* (1954); *The English Language Arts in the Secondary School* (1956). The attention given to grammar and usage in *An Experience Curriculum in English* (1935) undoubtedly reflected the situation as it existed at that time. Both *An Experience*
Curriculum in English (1935) and The English Language Arts (1952) emphasized the need to teach language skills in mechanics, sentence structure, diction, and paragraph construction in a functional way by relating these skills to composition activities requiring their use. The main value of the study of grammar was "to help students to analyze and understand parts of the English sentence so that they can strive continuously for variety, interest, and exactness in sentence structure."

For a considerable length of time some authorities on English have contended that a knowledge of formal grammar does not necessarily result in the ability to write well; they have claimed that a positive but low correlation exists between a knowledge of grammar and composition skill. However, most of the research documenting the usefulness of formal grammar in building composition skill has tested the transfer value of grammar at the junior high level. William J. Macauley (1947) and Robert C. Pooley (1957) noted that grammar is not mastered to any great extent by many students at the junior high level. John M. Stephens (1960) pointed out that the degree of transfer was dependent on a student's intelligence and his ability to generalize.
Meckel (1963) was also concerned about the problem and suggested that grammatical knowledge could probably be better tested in an experiment using intelligent students who had thoroughly mastered grammatical principles. Meckel summarized the research on transfer of grammatical knowledge to composition skill as follows:

1. There is no research evidence that grammar, as traditionally taught, has any appreciable effect on improvement of writing skill; however, there is no conclusive evidence that grammar has no transfer value.

2. The training periods involved in transfer studies have been short.

3. More research is needed on the kind of grammatical knowledge that may reasonably be expected to transfer.

4. Research does not justify the conclusion that grammar should not be taught systematically. There has been confusion between "formal grammar" as used to imply grammar taught with no application to writing and speaking and "formal grammar" as used to denote systematic study and mastery.

5. There are more efficient ways of securing immediate improvement in students' writing, both in sentence structure and usage, than systematic grammar teaching.

6. Improvement of usage seems to be achieved more through practice of desirable forms than through memorization of grammatical rules.

7. In determining what grammar is functional, teachers cannot rely on texts used in schools but should rely on expert opinions of linguists, based on modern studies of the usage and structure of the language.

Many reviews of educational research have emphasized that grammar instruction has little effect on written com-
sition. Some researchers have contended that (1) formal
grammar has little or no place in the language arts curri-
culum, (2) that much of the early research on the teaching
of grammar must now be regarded as of no great significance,
and (3) that there is now a need for new and differently
conceived studies. For example, Don W. Bailey (1965) felt
that the assumption that the study and knowledge of language
constitute the main facet of the teaching of English compo-
sition has become outdated to a large degree. Bailey stated,
"... the notion that the knowledge of one's language is
certain to make for good writing reflects an attractive
idealism, but a naive one; for some of our most knowledgeable
linguists write abominably. ..." In a recent dissertation,
William D. Memering of the University of Florida (1971) ex-
amined many studies relating to English composition and
concluded that the only concrete result of the numerous
studies examined is the discovery that grammar, as tradition-
ally taught, does not necessarily produce good writing.
Memering urged that further research be done in this area.
On the other hand, classroom teachers of English
continue to believe that teaching grammar is an important
part of teaching composition, as surveys of classroom methods such as that conducted by Pooley (1957) have confirmed. Pooley polled twenty leaders in public school English teaching in different parts of the United States. Most of the teachers polled were of the following opinion:

Grammar is the means to improved speech and writing. Because it explains usage, grammar must be learned to support usage instruction. Grammar skills are best gained by learning the parts of speech, the elements of the sentence, and the kinds of sentences. These skills are usually all taught before the end of the ninth year. Drill and practice from textbooks and workbooks establish grammar, which will then function in composition.

The participants at a seminar on research in the teaching of English held at New York University in 1963 also challenged the conclusion that the study of grammar has little or no transfer value to writing skill. These participants, according to Louise M. Rosenblatt (1963), asserted that many studies do not show the relationship between the study of grammar and improved composition because they do not measure truly relevant aspects of either grammatical knowledge or composition skill. No solution to the controversy was offered, but the question of how relatively independent skills and abilities in English could be identified was raised.
As recently as 1973 Nathan S. Blount conducted an extensive review of research in English education during the decade 1960-70. Included in Blount's review was an investigation by Andrew MacLeish (1967). MacLeish reported that structural and transformational grammar could be taught successfully in the secondary schools to students who were thoroughly indoctrinated in traditional grammar and to those who were not. MacLeish concluded that a knowledge of grammar seemed to make students more sensitive to the structure of language and to their own communication problems and also seemed to motivate students to do further English language study.

A similar study was done at Gladstone High School, Gladstone, California, by Donovan Stoner, Lewis Beall, and Arthur Anderson in 1972. This study revealed that "... daily writing and daily correction and grading based exclusively on mechanics do improve a student's ability to write more correctly by eliminating common errors."

In summary, some critics of total English feel that it is not important to be able to write grammatically correct sentences. Conversely, many grammarians feel that
this mechanical aspect of writing is important, contending that a student can write only if he has the necessary tools at his disposal. As Paul B. Diederich stated in 1966, the controversy over the worth of grammar is in a "healthy state of ferment" at this time.

THE PROBLEM OF TIME IN COMPOSITION EVALUATION

A crucial problem in the present evaluation of English composition is the matter of time. William J. Dusel (1955) tabulated responses from 430 experienced teachers in 150 school districts regarding time spent in correcting students' compositions. He found that it took between eight and twenty-two hours per week to mark the papers of 150 students who wrote one paper of 250 words each. Dusel called attention to the fact that English teachers had only a fraction of this time available during the school day. Correction was so large a burden after school hours that it forced teachers either to decrease the number of writing assignments to too few or it caused them to correct papers less carefully. In order to allow frequent writing and careful evaluation, Dusel suggested that English teachers be assigned only four classes of no
more than twenty-five students each during a normal school day. When the time factor became increasingly acute with rising enrollments following World War II, the NCTE (Committee on National Interest, 1961) officially endorsed a maximum English teacher load of four classes with no more than twenty-five students in each. The Louisiana Council of Teachers of English also concurred in the NCTE's recommendation of only one hundred students per day for English teachers (March, 1961).

The Louisiana Council of Teachers of English (March, 1961), while emphasizing that the overcrowded secondary English class was a recognized handicap to effective instruction in writing, also emphasized that the only successful way to learn to write is through practice. According to the LCTE, students should be required to write with regularity, the themes should be carefully evaluated by the teacher, the students should then be required to correct the errors and return the revised compositions to the teacher.

McColly and Remstad (1963) conducted controlled classroom experiments which attempted to establish a
basis for evaluating the effectiveness of the writing act itself, drill on usage and mechanics, self-instruction, group discussion, theme correction and criticism, and immediate tutorial feedback. Subjects for these experiments were three hundred students in Grades 8 through 12. McColly and Remstad concluded that the act of writing in and of itself is fruitless; that the time factor is important because writing must be carefully taught and carefully evaluated.

Dwight L. Burton and Lois V. Arnold (1963) investigated the effects of frequency of writing and intensity of teacher evaluation upon performance by students of varying abilities. Two teachers followed four different approaches to intensity of teacher evaluation and frequency of writing: (1) one group of students wrote infrequently and had their compositions evaluated moderately; (2) a second group wrote frequently and had their compositions evaluated moderately; (3) a third group wrote infrequently but had their compositions evaluated intensively; and (4) a fourth group wrote frequently and had their compositions evaluated intensively. The study was conducted in two comparable high schools, with a teacher in each school teaching four matched groups
of students. STEP essay and STEP writing tests were administered as pretests and posttests. Burton and Arnold found no significant differences associated with intensity of evaluation or frequency of writing, although McColly and Remstad had shown that careful evaluation was very important.

The research of James R. Squire and Roger K. Applebee (1966; 1968) probably offers the most complete and up-to-date picture of secondary English composition instruction available. Theirs was a national study and the findings related to all levels in all schools emphasizing composition. These researchers stated, "More should be done to teach writing, or better to teach composing, rather than to provide writing activities alone and assume that students will necessarily learn from practice." They found that the time factor was responsible for English teachers in 168 reputable secondary schools reducing the time devoted to teaching composition to 15.7 percent. Most of the instruction included in the 15.7 percent total occurred after the students had written their papers and dealt primarily with teacher corrections. In their investigation of composition teaching practices in superior high schools from 1962 through 1968, Squire and Applebee learned that two-thirds of thousands
of compositions examined had been annotated by teachers only for the errors. While the researchers did not feel that students could learn to write without proper correction, they noted that when theme revision did not take place, students seldom responded to the teachers' corrections. This study implied that traditional theme correction often fails to accomplish what the teachers intend. Squire and Applebee concluded that English teachers "... are not reneging on the task of teaching composition, but they have come to depend on the process of teaching writing by correction--on instruction after the fact and after the act." These investigators emphasized the finding that most theme markings by classroom teachers of English are negative, almost always concern errors in mechanics, and are very time-consuming.

Clyde Barrett, Jr. (1970) investigated the effect of variations in the twelfth year English background on students in their first college English courses and concluded that too few students were getting the amount of practice in writing which was needed and recommended. He also indicated that this inadequate amount of practice in writing was probably attributable to excessive workloads of English teachers. Those teachers who clearly recognized
the value of many and varied writing experiences were giving fewer and fewer writing assignments in an effort to reduce their workloads.

Howard Pierson (1972) noted that American education paid little attention to the call for reduced loads for English teachers for some time. Suddenly there was a national determination to surpass Russian technology by improved science teaching, later extended to demands to upgrade the humanities also by making them more rigorous and more like the European disciplines. Articles appeared in newspapers and magazines calling for the pursuit of excellence. College teachers of English protested that secondary schools were failing to prepare youth adequately for college, particularly in writing. Corporation executives protested that their engineering personnel wrote so badly that all their reports had to be edited. Professors of law and medicine were alarmed at the inability of their graduate students to write. Editors, librarians, publishers, legislators, judges, and educators—all were dismayed at the quality of English. Francis Keppel, U.S. Commissioner of Education, noted in 1963, "The teaching of English is so poor it has reached a desperate point that threatens the nation's
At this time of upheaval, the American Association of School Administrators, the Commission on English of the College Entrance Examination Board, the National Commission on Teacher Education, the NCTE, and the President's Commission on National Goals joined with Harvard's former president, Dr. James B. Conant, and urged that English teachers be given more time to correct students' compositions.

Pierson emphasized the difficulty English teachers encounter in determining a satisfactory frequency of writing assignments. He called attention to the Conant plan of reducing teaching loads and having students write at least one theme each week but suggested that this, too, was impossible. In his view, there was not enough time for prevision, writing, evaluation, and revision. Students came to think of writing as a treadmill and mechanically contrived themes to satisfy a schedule. Pierson felt that, until research provides a more definitive statement regarding frequency, students should be required to write at least once every two or three weeks. This plan allows some measure of time for the teacher and the learner to concentrate upon the quality of the writing experience rather than on its quantity alone. Pierson also discouraged the long compositions
(two thousand to five thousand words in length) in secondary schools, since English teachers have recognized that students can learn to paraphrase, quote, and coordinate ideas just as well with a limited number of sources as with many. When students are not pressed to deliver a large number of words to satisfy a schedule, they have time to reword, to refine, and to amend their compositions. Pierson stated that if the Conant plan to teach writing in the secondary school English class for at least one-half of the year cannot be fulfilled, then no less than one-fifth of the school year should be devoted to the teaching of writing. Otherwise, the English teachers may not be able to motivate, prepare, and habituate writing. Pierson felt that flexible scheduling may soon make the time factor in writing instruction more appropriate to the task at hand.

Daniel J. Dieterich (1973) reported several research projects under way to evaluate students' writing competencies and present methods of teaching writing. A lack of progress since the early 1900's was cited. For example, in the first issue of the English Journal, January, 1912, Edwin M. Hopkins had posed this question: Can good composition teaching be done under present conditions? The
answer to this question, he concluded, was "No." Hopkins stated that the problem of excessive workloads for English teachers persisted, as did the need for individualized instruction. Every student, Hopkins felt, should be given that degree of individual attention necessary to his own individual development. However, the teacher's need for time to come into direct personal touch with each member of his class was not realized because the hours of work in the classroom and at home "have no schedule limit, but may and often do extend from sunrise to midnight, for six and seven days in the week."

THE PROBLEM OF RELIABILITY IN COMPOSITION EVALUATION

A common complaint about the evaluation of English composition is the lack of reliability. This problem has been of great concern to teachers and researchers alike. Objective writing tests offer great reliability but most English authorities feel that they do not accurately measure achievement in writing. Essay tests have been found unreliable because of the difficulty in controlling various variables. During the early 1900's some unsuccessful efforts
were made to develop composition scales. Such scales were evaluated by Earl Hudelson (1923) and Walter Monroe (1923). These researchers questioned the reliability of composition scales. Harry Greene (1950) agreed with the earlier findings of Hudelson and Monroe regarding composition scales. The scales may be of some value, Greene felt, but he called attention to their limitations, especially with regard to reliability.

Edith Huddleston (1954) reviewed research on the reliability of essay tests and stated that essay tests were too unreliable to use in measuring students' composition skill as a basis for determining admission to college. According to Huddleston, an objective test developed by the College Entrance Examination Board and the verbal score on the CEEB's Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) had both been found superior to the essay test, the verbal score being most closely related to writing ability. Huddleston concluded that measurable ability to write is comparable to general verbal ability.

Diederich (1957) revealed the tremendous variation in evaluation of writing by more than one reader. If ten
different readers read twenty papers without agreeing on evaluative standards, papers of average quality received every grade from "A" to "F," and no paper received a range of less than three grade points of five. When two teachers, both members of a mature and stable composition staff but having no special training in evaluation, graded each anonymous essay independently, the average correlation between the grades assigned was approximately .55. The correlation was raised by carefully training the teachers and agreeing on evaluation standards. Diederich found that teachers operating under strict rules of grading and careful supervision raised the correlation to approximately .70.

Diederich also showed that reliability is influenced by the fact that the quality of writing often varies from one form to another: exposition, argument, criticism, fiction, poetry. He concluded that no single composition is an adequate index of writing ability. He also suggested the following procedures to increase reliability in evaluation:

1. All students should write on the same topic, but the topic should not be so easy that levels of excellence cannot be determined.
2. All papers should be based on common materials.

3. Readers should be highly competent teachers who are especially trained in evaluation practices and especially prepared for grading any specific set of papers by discussing standards and selected papers beforehand.

4. Students' names should be removed from the papers.

5. Two sets of readers should be used. Their grades should make possible calculation of a reliability coefficient which can be checked against research results.

6. Any paper that would make a difference in students' grades should be read twice under conditions that do not allow one evaluator to know the evaluation of the other. If there is disagreement, the mean of both marks should be used.

7. At least two samples of writing should be obtained from each student at different times and the grades then averaged.

In summary, Diederich felt that if teachers agree on some kind of evaluation key, the variation in grades is greatly reduced.

Another source of unreliability in the grading of English composition lies in the appearance factor. Remondino (1959) reported a tendency for teachers to develop negative bias toward poor handwriting and a positive bias toward neatness and legibility. Schuyler W. Huck and William G. Bounds (1972) later gave attention to the appearance factor and found that graders with neat handwriting themselves assigned higher grades to neatly written papers; that graders
with messy handwriting did not favor either neatly-written or messily-written essays. The evaluators were college students in an educational measurement course. Unaware of the purpose of the experiment, they were first asked to grade, on a scale of 0-20, one essay written in average handwriting. Then, on the same scale, half the group was asked to grade a neatly-written second essay; the other half, a messily-written version of the same essay. Neat writers and messy writers, already identified, were used in the analysis. An analysis of covariance indicated a significant interaction between essay legibility and grader's own handwriting neatness.

The research of Paul B. Diederich, John W. French, and Sydell F. Carlton (1961) attempted to establish criteria for evaluating English composition objectively by a factor analysis of the judgments of a diverse group of competent readers in an unstructured situation. They hoped that some qualities amenable to objective measurement would emerge and that more precise observation of the remaining qualities would lead to closer agreement in evaluation of essays. Papers were secured from freshmen in three colleges requiring the College Entrance
Examination Board tests and evaluated by readers from various occupations. The major purpose of the study was to reveal the differences in opinion that prevailed in uncontrolled grading. The evaluators used no standards but were told to use "whatever hunches, intuitions, or preferences you normally use in deciding that one paper is better than another." The papers were sorted into nine piles according to general merit and then comments were written on each. Classification of comments resulted in fifty-five categories of comments which, in turn, were reduced to five factors: ideas, form, flavor, mechanics, and wording. Lack of agreement in evaluation practices was obvious. The experiment revealed that no paper received less than five different grades. The authors concluded that mechanics and wording could be measured more reliably and systematically by objective means and that further research was needed to lead to agreement on common evaluation standards.

Roy C. O'Donnell (1963) also confirmed the unreliability of subjective reader evaluation of English composition. In the O'Donnell investigation the readers read all compositions twice. The intra-class correlation
revealed that one out of each three readers disagreed about the grade which a student received on his composition.

Fred Godshalk, Frances Swineford, and William Coffman (1966) reported studies which investigated different approaches to measuring written composition skills with respect to reliability. During a three-week period, 646 students in Grades 11 and 12 wrote essays on five topics, took tests containing six classes of objective items, and completed two interlinear exercises (weak prose which required students to locate and correct faults in running text). The objective tests and interlinear exercises were evaluated following standardized procedures. The written compositions were assigned to twenty-five readers who were asked to make a global or holistic rather than an analytical judgment of each paper, assigning scores of three, two, or one to each. Every reader scored at least one essay written by each student. The total of the scores assigned by the twenty-five readers to each paper became the criterion used for evaluating the objective tests and interlinear exercises for each student. The researchers concluded that (1) the reliability of essay scores was primarily a function of the number of different essays and the number of
different readings included; (2) when objective questions which were specifically designed to measure writing skills were evaluated against a reliable criterion of writing skills, they proved to be highly valid; (3) the most efficient predictor of a reliable direct measure of writing ability was one which included essay questions or interlinear exercises in combination with objective questions. This study was considered a significant breakthrough in the measurement of writing ability, according to the College Entrance Examination Board. However, authorities such as Steinmann (1967) attacked the Godshalk, Swineford, and Coffman research, stating that it was based on an inadequate conception of writing ability.

John C. Follman and others (1967) compared five methods of rating compositions—four formal procedures and the Everyman's Scale which allows the evaluator to use his own judgment. These researchers made the following statement:

It is common knowledge to student and teacher alike that the grading of essay materials can be highly inconsistent. The grade given to an English theme may vary considerably among different raters and even with the same rater at different times.

Five groups of five raters assigned grades to ten
themes in this investigation. The compositions were about 370 words in length and came from students of a wide range of high school and college writing abilities. Each rater graded the same ten themes but used one of five methods: (1) The California Essay Scale which asks twenty-five questions about content, organization, style, and mechanics; (2) The Cleveland Composition Rating Scale which rates content, conventions, and style on ten scales such as "organized" versus "jumbled"; (3) The Diederich Rating Scale which offers points in eight topics ranging from ideas and organization to spelling and handwriting; (4) The Foliman English Mechanics Guide, which is a checklist concerned with punctuation, sentence structure, usage, paragraphing, and diction; and (5) Everyman's Scale. After determining that the rater groups did not differ in English skills, Folman tested the rating methods. The essays received substantially the same scores from all five rating groups. The correlations among four of the rating scales ranged from .93 to .99. Correlations for the Diederich Scale ranged from .51 to .61. A measure of reliability showed four of the scales about .93 and the Cleveland Scale at .81. The investigators concluded
that rating scales measure many common elements; that usual unreliability of theme evaluation probably occurs because of the heterogeneity of the experiential and academic backgrounds of the evaluators; that this type of teacher subjectivity is significant in evaluation even when rating scales were used.

Vernon H. Smith (1969) disagreed with Follman (1967). Smith developed and validated two forms of a composition scale to test teacher evaluation. The Smith investigation concerned basic knowledge about teacher judgment as it exists and operates in the evaluation of writing in ordinary classrooms. As an exploratory effort to measure and examine teacher judgment, this study was designed to produce tentative answers to the following questions:

1. Can judgment in the evaluation of written composition be measured validly, efficiently, and reliably?

2. Is there agreement in judgment among experts?

3. To what extent is there agreement in judgment among teachers of composition at elementary, junior high, and senior high levels? Is academic background in English a factor in judgment?

4. How does the judgment of teachers at these three levels compare with that of experts?

5. Is teaching experience a factor?

6. How does the judgment of a select group of nonteachers compare with that of the experts and with that of secondary English teachers?
7. Are there teachers in any of these groups whose judgments are contrary to the experts and that of the majority of other teachers?

Valid judgment of the quality of students' writing, Smith concluded, does not depend on the experience, academic preparation, and professional training of the teacher, as formerly suggested by Follman and others (1967).

Robert Shostak (1969) was concerned that reliability in the evaluation of English composition be emphasized. The purpose of his study was to express in procedural terms one approach in the development of a technique to discover the rating strategies of evaluators. Sets of rater scores were obtained from reading 256 high school essays by thirty-two experienced English teachers. These were submitted to a factor analysis which yielded four rater clusters. To determine what characteristics in these raters' teaching experiences and personal backgrounds appeared to be correlates of rating behavior, the clusters were compared and the researcher learned that (1) there was a strong indication that both age and sex do reflect some kind of underlying rating strategy; (2) grade level taught did not necessarily reflect an underlying rating strategy; and (3) education, teaching experience, and the number of hours spent teaching composition seemed to contribute little.
Martin (1970) attempted to test the efficiency, simplicity, and experimental power of Paul Diederich's method for measuring growth in writing ability, a method which allows for the cooperative evaluation of student writing using local criteria, and to use this method to measure both writing ability and grading consistency in a specific situation. Under controlled conditions, 452 students in Grades 9 through 12 in Vinton, Iowa, were ability grouped and asked to write in-class papers on the same topic. The compositions were randomly assigned to seven teachers who, following the Diederich grading procedure, separated the papers into three precisely proportioned categories of general merit—25 percent of the papers in the high category, 50 percent in the middle, and 25 percent in the low. All of the compositions were then packeted in groups of four papers representing the three classifications to be evaluated again by 113 other students. The findings were analyzed and the teachers and students involved in the grading did not agree with each other on what constituted good writing.

Barbara C. Marshall (1971) sampled 198 student themes collected from three schools in an effort to de-
termine the quality and nature of the evaluative markings of the teachers. Marshall found that teachers exhibit very little consistency in the evaluation of English composition and suggested that many teachers apparently fail to emphasize the overall goal of teaching composition.

William E. Coffman (1971) indicated that errors in evaluation of students' compositions occur because of differences among raters; that differences also occur because of variability in the judgments of a rater from one time to another. Accumulated evidence led Coffman to these three conclusions:

1. Different raters tend to assign different grades to the same papers.

2. A single rater tends to assign different grades to the same paper on different occasions.

3. The differences tend to increase as students are given greater freedom of response.

Virginia J. Haas and others (1972) found that college freshmen improved more in informal writing workshop classes than in traditional composition classes. Two traditional classes were taught by the same instructor and followed a conventional plan: they read essays, discussed the essays in class, listened to lectures on rhetoric and writing
problems, wrote essays outside of class, and revised their essays after they were marked by the teacher. Four workshop classes were taught by two instructors and offered the students daily, intensive, supervised writing practice. All writing was done in class. Three raters used a twelve-point analytic scale to evaluate each of four same-topic themes from all 142 students in six classes. Rater reliability was improved by using the analytic scale.

Martin (1972) studied a school-wide writing evaluation program and found that girls were given higher ratings than boys by teachers and peers. Peers favored girls somewhat less than teachers. Girls' ratings were also found to be less variable than boys'. Girls in Grade 9 were given higher ratings on essays than boys in Grade 12. Using adjusted mean scores after covariance on the Composite Standard Score of the Iowa Test of Educational Development to control differences in basic ability, Martin noted a distinct advantage given to girls over boys. He recommended that further research be done on the causes of sex differences in evaluation procedures and suggested that the sex differences were the result of biases not related to the writer's innate ability to write.
The matter of teaching objectives for English composition presents another crucial problem. The teaching of English composition in American schools was long influenced by the classical tradition, and any objectives which were developed related mainly to grammar. At the present time there are no clearly stated behavioral objectives which are accepted by all English teachers. As a result, evaluation procedures differ greatly in emphases from teacher to teacher and at the secondary and college levels.

Mabel Talmage and a workshop committee (1969) stressed the importance of writing behavioral objectives for the teaching of English composition. Every teacher of English composition, Talmage felt, should have behavioral objectives to guide teaching. Talmage contended that by writing behavioral objectives and then structuring the learning activities toward the accomplishment of those specific objectives, the teacher learns exactly what works in the classroom.

Hans P. Guth (1970) pointed out that many English
teachers regard behavioral objectives with open hostility, because they feel that what they teach is not easily measured. Guth concluded that behavioral objectives require English teachers to identify specific behavioral goals, to design steps in logical sequence which will lead toward those goals, and then demonstrate results by measuring observable differences in student performance after teaching has taken place.

Richard O. Ulin (1971) agreed with Guth in regard to the attitude of English teachers toward behavioral objectives. Ulin stated that teachers of English composition view behavioral objectives much as they would a "plague of locusts come to devour them." Many English teachers, Ulin found, are biased or unaware of the fact that the behavioral objectives are needed.

Daniel A. Lindley (1971) also pointed out the need for behavioral objectives in the teaching of English composition. His findings indicated that many English teachers have become satisfied with long range objectives. In Lindley's opinion, more attention should be given to the here-and-now, short term objectives requiring specific
behaviors of students at secondary and college levels.

The Stoner, Beall, and Anderson (1972) investigation interested teachers of composition who had long been seeking a method of reducing the errors students make in the mechanics of writing. One explanation of the success of the two Gladstone studies was that they differed from previous experiments in ways which involved not only daily writing and prompt correction, but also motivation by focusing on a well-defined criterion (one subskill of composition) and systematic scoring which directly affected the student's semester grade. As noted by the following statements, Stoner, Beall, and Anderson viewed written language as a tool which should be properly used:

What is important is to accept that language is a tool, and the prime responsibility of the public educator is to teach students to use that tool in an appropriate form acceptable in the main stream of society. A high school graduate, after twelve years of public schooling, regardless of talent or lack of it, should at the very minimum have had sufficient training to enable him to write what he has to express in plain English, correctly spelled, grammatically written, properly capitalized, and appropriately punctuated, all of which mark a degree of literacy.

Objectives in the teaching of English composition should be clearly stated and understood by the teacher in
terms of student behavior. Only then will it be possible for the teacher to effectively guide growth in writing ability to the point that the overall communication goals are realized. More information on the formation of behavioral objectives for the teaching of English composition is presented in Chapter 4 of this investigation.

THE PSYCHOLOGICAL EFFECTS OF TRADITIONAL COMPOSITION EVALUATION

The teacher's treatment of students' writing plays a vital part in the effectiveness of the evaluation procedures. When a typical English teacher grades a composition, he often ceases to be a teacher and becomes a judge. From the student's point of view he becomes, as described by Edmund J. Farrell (1971), a sadist with a red pencil. Quite often teachers' red markings on student compositions fail because students either ignore or misunderstand them. However, the traditional method of evaluation by use of lengthy marginal-interlinear-terminal comments persists.

Meckel (1963) found that teachers usually use three procedures in evaluating students' writing: they mark errors and write criticisms on individual papers; they
read and discuss individual papers in class; or they hold conferences with individual students. Only a few papers can be read and discussed; only a few conferences can be held; consequently, teachers continue to spend countless hours writing comments on students' compositions.

Early research by Arthur Confrey (1927) investigated the written comments of some forty teachers in first-year college English classes in eleven colleges and universities. Confrey classified the teachers' written comments in five categories: (1) worthless; (2) encouraging but not directive; (3) encouraging and directive; (4) condemnatory and not directive; and (5) condemnatory and directive. This study revealed that at least 36 percent of the teachers' comments were worthless, approximately 45 percent of the comments were not particularly helpful, and less than 20 percent of the comments gave students any direction that would guide them toward improvement in their writing.

Language typically used by English teachers to evaluate composition is not precise and often has a damaging effect on student morale. Dusel (1955) designed a twelve-point evaluation key to discriminate among desirable
and undesirable grading practices of two hundred English teachers. The scale included these criteria: noting clear errors, showing concern for content, making appreciative comments, calling the student's attention to important points on which he needed to work, explaining needed changes in a reasonable manner rather than in an authoritarian manner, and making suggestions about corrections rather than making all corrections. Dusel warned that students often attributed various meanings to the following teacher correction terms: unimaginative, not organized, filled with grammatical errors, awkward, clumsy, poorly written, illogical, weak, confused, and incoherent. Dusel recommended further research studies focusing on students' psychological interpretations of theme corrections by English teachers.

Paul B. Diederich was concerned about the psychological effects of traditional composition evaluation from 1957 to 1974. After examining numerous papers marked by English teachers, Diederich (1957) described the evaluation of English composition as follows:

... the average English teacher, both in high school and in freshman composition courses, is barely literate, capricious in judgment, full of prejudices that have a basis in anyone's system of grammar, rhetoric, or style, hard to decipher, eager to misinterpret, and given to comments that have no connection with anything the student has written.
In 1963 Diederich agreed that teachers were failing to get rid of errors in student themes by "drowning them in red ink." He showed that errors were being eliminated at the rate of about 2 percent each year and he felt that errors would probably have declined at that rate if English teachers had not marked them. Diederich believed that the student should work on learning no more than one new thing per paper. In his view if the teacher marked all the errors in red ink, the student learned nothing and became firmly convinced that he could not write at all.

Later, in 1974, Diederich was still of the same opinion when he noted the dilemma in which many students found themselves when they enrolled in remedial English courses their first year in college. He wrote that many of his students hated and feared writing more than anything else they had to do in school. Apparently they had never written anything that a teacher thought was good, all their teachers had looked only for their many mistakes, and the idea of ever learning how to correct all the mistakes was overwhelming. Diederich learned that he had to work diligently with freshmen to rebuild any measure of confidence in writing.
William B. McColly (1965) conducted a study seeking to analyze the nature and extent of annotative comments of thirty-two English teachers. The question of whether students improved in their writing ability as a result of increasing maturity or instructional factors other than teachers' corrections or annotations was investigated. According to McColly, considering the disproportionate amount of time English teachers spent evaluating compositions, it was tragic that all the time and effort thus expended may have contributed little to the improvement of students' writing skills. He found, rather, that it was quite possible that other factors contributed more to writing improvement than teachers' red markings.

Robert V. Denby (1968) made the following statements regarding annotations on students' themes:

The subjectivity to which our composition evaluation practices are susceptible leads one to suggest that too frequently the grades we assign, the errors we detect and mark, and the marginal annotations we compose and scribble may reveal more about the evaluator than about the composition . . . . attempts to discriminate among content, mechanics, style, and penmanship (like the fractional content/mechanics grades) represent little more than compromises and rather broad approximations.

Clarke (1969) examined student reactions to teachers' comments on themes in an attempt to determine
the effects of various combinations of reinforcement upon three dependent variables: (1) student perception of the comments as positive or negative; (2) student satisfaction with comments; and (3) student confidence in writing ability. Six English classes consisting of 141 eleventh grade students were divided into nine treatment groups. Each student was assigned an argumentative essay, due in four days. Following the evaluation of these essays, the students were allowed to read the teachers' comments and respond to questionnaires regarding the value of the comments. Results showed that (1) the number of teacher comments produced little effect; (2) purely negative comments produced lower scores in reinforcement, satisfaction, and confidence than positive comments produced; and (3) a mixture of criticism and praise produced the most satisfied and confident writers.

Janet A. Emig (1971) described the teaching of writing in the schools as essentially a neurotic activity because, in her view, English teachers wrongly assumed that their futile and unrewarding exercise of pointing out all the students' mistakes led to better writing. Emig stated that this might be true partly because English teachers themselves did not write extensively.
Vernon A. Adams (1971) experimented with a teaching method in which mechanical and structural errors on students' themes were left unmarked and final comments were long and affirmative. Differences in writing skills and attitudes were evaluated and the results revealed a greater positive student attitude toward this method than toward the traditional method of marking all errors in red ink. No significant difference was found in writing skill. The subjects used in this study included 135 randomly assigned students in six classes of an elective pre-college writing course, Grade 12.

Thomas C. Gee (1972) was concerned about students' responses to teachers' comments and suggested that praise might increase motivation more than red marks. Gee stated that remarks such as the following were taken by the student as a personal indictment: awkward, clumsy, poorly written, illogical. Similarly, a student who received a paper with no marks at all interpreted the lack of comments as a subtle way of telling him that his paper was so poorly written that it merited no comment at all. Whatever the teacher's evaluation, the student was influenced in his attitudes toward becoming an effective writer. Gee's study tested the premise
that praise is more effective than criticism or no comment in building attitudes. He used 139 students from junior English classes in secondary schools as his subjects. He concluded (1) that negative criticism or no feedback caused students to write less; (2) that teachers could easily kill whatever it was that allowed a student to believe that he could write; (3) that consistent negative criticism or lack of feedback obviously inhibited verbal performance; (4) that praised students developed more positive attitudes toward writing; (5) that students seemed to have more patience in writing if they felt they would be rewarded or encouraged; (6) that students' improvement apparently came from recognition of what they did well; (7) that students' confidence and pride and enjoyment of writing were enhanced by the teachers' assurances that the students were beginning to learn the skills necessary for good writing.

Pierson (1972) stated that marking students' themes in red ink was tradition. When English teachers were in school themselves, their teachers red-penned their writing. Later, when they did their student teaching they were elated when the supervising teacher allowed them to take home the first set of themes to correct because then they
felt like they were real teachers. Pierson stated that although teachers sometimes agreed to try a new approach, almost invariably they returned to the old tradition because it was only then that they felt that they were doing a real teaching job; that if English teachers agreed on anything, it was that correcting students' papers in red ink was basic to the teaching of writing. Pierson further noted that it was not surprising that when it appeared that writing was in a state of crisis and that students were unable to write, there was an immediate public outcry for more and more correction.

ALTERNATIVES TO TRADITIONAL COMPOSITION EVALUATION

Lay Reader Evaluation

Because of the many problems inherent in evaluation procedures as performed at present, alternatives to traditional composition correction have been suggested. All the alternatives are efforts to overcome the foregoing problems, especially the problem of time. One suggested alternative is the use of lay readers.

Virginia M. Burke (1960) reported on the lay reader program in action in Wisconsin. The Wisconsin Council of Teachers of English conducted an interview and questionnaire survey of participants in two lay reader programs at the secondary level: (1) a program
at Racine in its first full semester in which lay readers corrected and evaluated, but did not grade, approximately half of the themes from selected classes, and (2) a program at Sheboygan in its fourth semester in which lay readers corrected, evaluated, and tentatively graded all themes from selected classes. Both programs required teachers to review the readers' evaluations before the compositions were returned to students and restricted lay readers to courses for college-bound students. In general, teachers, students, and readers favored the programs because they led to more frequent student writing, provided criticism from a second viewpoint, and aided the students in preparing for more rigorous writing assignments in college. Important aspects of success were (1) contact between the lay readers and their classes, especially in the form of conferences, (2) good rapport and understanding among teachers, readers, and students concerning the criteria for grading themes, and (3) the prompt return of papers, enabling students to see corrections on one theme before writing another. Generally, all participants felt that the assigning of final grades to papers should remain the teacher's responsibility.
Edwin H. Sauer (1961) investigated the use of lay readers in the high school composition program in Cambridge, Massachusetts. English composition classes in three high schools were used for an experimental program to show the effectiveness of lay readers in grading student papers. The program was specified as "contract correcting" and represented an attempt to solve the problem of an adequate writing program for high school students without the heavy correcting burden which such a program usually necessitates for the English teachers. The experimental classes were divided into three groups: (1) twelve classes in which contract lay readers graded compositions, working closely with the teachers; (2) twelve classes in which the teachers themselves corrected the compositions; and (3) a control group of classes where a second teacher group worked with the lay readers who corrected the compositions. All students in the experiment were given a series of impromptu theme tests at the beginning of the school year. Lay readers who graded a part of the papers had no knowledge as to when each was written. Classes were compared using covariance analysis. Program results revealed no great
degree of improvement in the quality of student writing, although the amount of writing increased when lay readers were involved. The lay readers also provided some teacher relief in grading and seemed to affect in a positive way the general effectiveness of the English composition courses.

The Richfield, Minnesota, High School Language Arts Department (1968) studied the composition skills of twenty-four classes in Grades 10, 11, and 12, to assess (1) improvement in writing skills from each grade level to the next as an indication of the effectiveness of a composition curriculum which emphasized expository writing, and (2) the effects of lay readers on the composition program. The Sequential Tests of Educational Progress (STEP) Writing Test, Form 2-A, and an impromptu expository composition were used as measures of student achievement. The lay reader program was evaluated through questionnaires and a comparison of the achievements of classes with and without lay readers. Results revealed that lay readers were not a liability and that they received approval from both the students and teachers.

Research conducted by the Hawaii State Department of Education (1969-70) related to the use of lay readers.
This research was a two-year feasibility study of the effectiveness of the lay reader program in helping students improve their writing skills. The investigator, Patsy S. Saiki, concluded that (1) there was no statistically significant difference among students who had lay reader service and those who participated in other treatments; and (2) teachers with lay readers were able to achieve faster correction of papers and more conferences with students, while teachers with educational assistants had greater and more varied curriculum improvements. Saiki recommended that funds be allocated for programs that produce student growth that is statistically significant and that various staffing patterns to use both human and material resources be instituted.

Pierson (1972) felt that the lay reader program did little to alter traditional correction practices. He pointed out that the lay reader program assumed that college educated housewives with writing ability could help to alleviate the English teacher's correction chores at low cost. Its most enthusiastic advocates, at the beginning, hailed it not only as a temporary expedient but as an important innovation in the teaching of writing.
They extolled the merits of making use of dedicated housewives to correct papers, confer with students, visit the classrooms, recheck revised papers, keep files of errors committed by individual students, and provide teachers with tabulations of frequent errors for use in teaching. Although the lay reader program attained a certain vogue, in Pierson's view it did not become a national trend, as evidenced by its lack of consistent mention at the annual meetings of the NCTE or in the Council's annual reports of promising practices. Classroom teachers of English apparently did not see in it as fundamental an answer to their problems as reducing their teaching loads. Also, some students complained that their English teachers were malingering; supervisors murmured that some teachers neglected to use the lay reader's help to advantage; some districts could not find interested and qualified housewives; and some readers found that it was difficult to work with writing of students whom they did not know.

Denby (1968) agreed that research findings have been mixed regarding the utilization of lay readers. He revealed that many of the lay reader studies were conducted in the 1960's and that after that time such studies virtually ceased. Denby referred to Richard
Corbin's findings in 1966 that more schools were abandoning the use of lay readers than adopting their use; however, he noted that the U.S. Office of Education's Bureau of Research has made clear its interest in supporting—through "ES70" (Educational Systems for the '70's)—a network of school systems whose curriculum and staff reorganization are directed toward analyzing the roles of various professional personnel and determining which might properly be assigned to auxiliary personnel.

Daniel J. Dieterich (1972) suggested that the findings of Corbin (1966) may have been accurate in 1966 but would certainly require further investigation in the early 1970's. According to Dieterich, lay readers continued to be used in secondary schools throughout the country. Dieterich referred to a NCTE/ERIC paper on Paraprofessionals in the English Department by Howard G. Getz (1972) which stated that 86 percent of the schools having paraprofessional programs were satisfied with the job their paraprofessionals were doing.

Tape Evaluation

A second alternative to traditional composition correction is tape grading. According to the Hawaii
study by Saiki during 1968-69, "students who listened to taped comments improved more than the other students in the area of mechanics" and also "improved more than students in the other classes in the development of adequate and satisfactory content."

Research on using a dictaphone for evaluation of student papers was conducted to test the technique's thoroughness, effectiveness, and capability for individualized instruction by Jean B. McGrew (1969). Two classes, one an experimental group and one a control group, from Grades 9, 10, 11, and 12 were used, and each student wrote nine papers. The papers from the control groups were evaluated using marginal comments, whereas the papers from the experimental groups were evaluated using the dictating machine. The first and last papers of all groups were evaluated by a three-man team in terms of content, mechanics, diction, and expression. The experimental group was found to have made more improvement than the control group on nineteen of twenty-five comparisons. However, the results were too inconclusive to indicate superiority for the experimental process. McGrew suggested that the experimental procedure
had merit and that further research over a longer period should be undertaken.

Samuel H. Vogler (1971) emphasized the importance of tape grading. In his view, this technique took the burden out of marking themes. In an age of increasing impersonalism, Vogler felt, tape grading was a way of giving totally personal attention to each student.

Virginia B. Coleman (1972) investigated the relative effectiveness of an oral response method of evaluation using cassette tapes and the traditional marginal-interlinear-terminal response method. In two experimental groups cassette tapes were used in theme evaluation, while the traditional method was used with two control groups. In the first school all the subjects were white except one experimental group subject who was black. In the second school, an inner-city school, all the subjects were black. The students wrote seven compositions during nine weeks. Data consisted of three impromptu themes, a pretest, an interim test, and a posttest. Coleman concluded that (1) the audio model was more effective (students achieved a higher mean score on their compositions) in the black school than in the predominantly white school; and (2)
the audio model was more effective with students having lower pretest scores than with those having higher pretest scores.

Dieterich (1972) suggested that tape grading had established itself as an evaluation method which merited consideration. In his view the claims of improved student writing ability, reduced correction time and effort, and individualized teacher-student relationships would receive attention from researchers in the years ahead.

**Computer Evaluation**

A third alternative to traditional composition evaluation is grading by computers. Ellis B. Page and Dieter H. Paulus (1968) suggested that a properly programmed computer could process essays as reliably as could human judges. There were varied reactions to their research. Donald H. Coombs (1969) hailed the study as a forward-looking piece of research, while Macrorie (1969) looked upon computer grading as mechanical, unfeeling, and incapable of evaluating either honesty or authenticity. According to Macrorie, a computer could never be programmed to account for "the hard particulars of uniqueness in every person," and computer grading bred
dishonesty. Slotnick and Knopp (1971) were concerned about the regularities which occur in good writing rather than the unique qualities. They contended that it is these regularities that computers will have to perceive. In 1971 Slotnick and Knopp viewed computer evaluation of English themes as "an interesting laboratory phenomenon." Thomas H. Whalen (1971) believed that computer scoring of essays may prove to be an important tool in the individualization of composition teaching. Interested educators are still considering the possibility of computer evaluation.

Peer Evaluation

A fourth alternative to traditional composition correction is peer evaluation. The Pierson investigation (1967) was an answer to misgivings about the effectiveness of teachers' evaluation of student themes. Pierson's comparison of correction of written papers by peers with the traditional correction by teachers in composition courses tested the hypothesis that a statistically significant difference would exist in favor of a peer-graded group. The theoretical basis of study was the influence on adolescents of the opinions of their peers and the motivating effect of writing for an audience of peers. The
students in the experimental group were trained to evaluate each other's writings, both individually and in group discussions. They used prepared guide sheets (analyzed later in the present investigation) to plan the oral and written criticism. Control group writing was corrected by teachers after classes. All students took the STEP essay and writing tests before and after instruction. The essay test scores were discarded as being statistically unreliable, and no significant difference was found between the groups in mean score gains in the writing test. Although the results of this seven-month study were inconclusive, they demonstrated that using the teacher method of correction required eight times as many hours after school as did the peer method of correction. Thus, the peer method seemed to be more efficient if not more effective. The use of the peer method implied the following steps: (1) preliminary training of students in editing; (2) the teaching of a short unit on composition before each new project—including initiatory activities, writing, correcting, and revision—and (3) the production of guide sheets to show students what to seek and to say in correcting the written compositions of their peers. Pierson concluded that since no difference existed
between the two methods of evaluation, teachers should expand peer correction and use the released time on other aspects of composition teaching. Pierson also recommended that the STEP essay test be updated.

Later, in 1972, Pierson learned that students were "surprised, pleased, and intrigued" by the opportunity to read and correct each other's papers. One previously skeptical teacher reported that:

Student's paper was read and discussed by person who rated it. I found myself in close agreement. After paper was discussed by rater, he asked class for opinions on attention-catching beginning and other points. Everyone seemed tremendously interested. It takes about ten minutes a paper, but, since each student is speaking extemporaneously before the group analyzing, judging, listening, etc., so many skills besides writing are involved that the time seems justified, at least so far.

Jean R. Lagana (1972) developed, implemented, and evaluated a method of teaching composition using individualized learning and peer grouping. Students in the control group received traditional instruction. Significantly greater gains were made by the experimental group in organization, critical thinking, and appropriateness. Lagana concluded that peer evaluation of English compositions tended to be at least as effective as the teacher correction, reduced the time spent in evaluation,
and also enabled students to complete more compositions while receiving more feedback on each writing. In the individualized phase of the model, students progressed at their own rate in acquiring composition skills without repeating previous learning.

Bobby W. Ford (1973) reported similar findings in regard to peer evaluation. Ford suggested that the peer system of grading and editing could possibly reduce teachers' workloads and be of help to college freshmen.

Dieterich (1972) reviewed findings on the above alternatives to traditional theme correction. In his view, although each method had its strengths and weaknesses, none of these time-saving methods had been adequately perfected to alleviate the problems existing in the evaluation of English composition.

ANALYSIS OF SELECTED EVALUATION CRITERIA

To emphasize the lack of and the need for standardization of evaluation criteria in English composition, data were analyzed from selected research conducted from 1960 through 1974. This analysis provided information on some evaluation procedures used outside Louisiana.
Many attempts have been made to develop handbooks for the analysis of English compositions. An example is *A Scale for Evaluation of High School Student Essays*, sponsored by The California Association of Teachers of English and published by the NCTE in 1960. Such publications usually present typical compositions scaled according to excellence, with evaluation scales not having been subjected to rigorous statistical treatment. They have been designed to help teachers in the reading of compositions with more adequate perspective and to help in guiding writing skill. The following key points of emphasis were included in this scale:

1. content
2. organization
3. style and mechanics

The key points of emphasis relating to style and mechanics were these:

1. sentence sense
2. sentence structure
3. punctuation
4. spelling
5. vocabulary
The work of Richard Braddock, Richard Lloyd-Jones, and Lowell Schoer (1963) revealed their concern about the lack of reliability in composition evaluation. These researchers reported on variables to be considered in the evaluation of students' writing, using the Diederich, French, and Carlton study of 1961 to substantiate their statements and generalizing that "many similar instances of unreliable grading have been reported by other investigators." The Braddock, Lloyd-Jones, and Schoer research represented their screening of 504 references on the teaching of English composition. Most of the references surveyed left important variables uncontrolled or undeclared, and these authors concluded that composition research was not highly developed. Their investigation may be considered a synthesis of research as of 1963.

In the opinion of Braddock, Lloyd-Jones, and Schoer, evaluators often place different values on the various aspects of a composition whether consciously or unconsciously. Unless evaluators develop a common set
of criteria and unless they practice together in applying the criteria consistently, differences persist. A common set of criteria is essential, according to these authors, because if raters do not evaluate for the same qualities, they cannot be expected to rate with validity or reliability.

Three principal means of achieving such a commonality are composition scales, a general impression method of evaluation, and an analytic method. A composition scale is a set of model compositions, probably ten; however, different scales are needed for different modes of discourse and for different levels of maturity. Using the general impression method of evaluation, a number of raters work independently, quick-read and rate each composition (perhaps fifty per hour), and then the mean of the ratings is used as the final rating. The general impression method is not satisfactory for the evaluation of all types of discourse.

The analytic method has the advantage of making clear the criteria by which rating is done. Braddock-Lloyd-Jones, and Schoer cited the Cast research of 1939-40 which revealed the analytic method to be superior. Cast had concluded that the unreliability of rating "can evi-
dently be greatly reduced by standardized instructions and by the training of examiners." Braddock, Lloyd-Jones, and Schoer cautioned, however, that the criteria used in the analytic method must be clearly defined. They called attention to the following points of emphasis in evaluating English composition:

1. ideas (quantity, quality, and control)
2. vocabulary
3. grammar and punctuation
4. sentence structure
5. spelling
6. handwriting
7. organization
8. expression (diction; style)

A Guide for Evaluating Student Composition
Sister M. Judine, IHM, 1965

Judine (1965) edited the writings of many teachers who had discussed complex factors which must be taken into consideration by theme evaluators. In Judine's view, no consideration of style alone, nor of content alone, nor of grammatical correctness alone sufficed to label a composition a success or failure. Each English authority participating pointed out means for improving the quality of
theme writing but at the same time warned of the psychological effects consequent on overmarking. In considering the evaluator's problems and possible solutions, Judine collected seven essays dealing with evaluation as related to college preparatory demands with emphasis on the positive approach. One essay, Joint Statement on Freshman English in College and High School Preparation, clarified college writing requirements and defined standards necessary for meeting the requirements. The Joint Statement was issued by the following four colleges, after a combined assessment of first-year English classes: Ball State University, Indiana State College, Indiana University, and Purdue University. The authorities found that too many students entered college who were almost totally unequipped to write a paper with any semblance of efficiency. The authorities proposed to clarify college requirements and to recommend policies and practices to help English teachers in guiding students toward a necessary competence in reading and writing. Agreement was reached on the abilities entering college freshmen should have in English and on standards to measure student writing. Grading standards were made
known to secondary English teachers to help in preparing students for college. Each paper written, whether in class or out of class, was evaluated on the basis of the following five criteria:

1. content
2. organization
3. sentence structure
4. diction
5. mechanics

A helpful table, describing the criteria, was prepared.

**Evaluating Student Themes**  
Ednah S. Thomas, 1966

Thomas (1966) presented a compilation of evaluated student themes written by freshmen enrolled at the University of Wisconsin. The impromptu themes were written in fifty minutes on the following assignment: "Suppose that your high school paper has asked you to write an article, giving, on the basis of your semester's experience at the university, the best advice you can to prospective students. Write such an article."

In Freshman English at the university a grade report was given at stated intervals but no grade was
given on individual themes. Experience had shown that students looked only at the grades and not at the comments by the evaluators. Thomas suggested that teachers should return compositions promptly, not only with marginal notations but also with terminal comments. Thomas further noted that it is not the responsibility of the teacher to edit. The teacher's primary concern is the development of writing skills for all written work of students and not a particular paper in itself. Accordingly, the teacher makes the marginal notes, underlining trouble spots, and writes a terminal comment. The teacher's aim is not to do the work himself but to stimulate and guide the student to assume responsibility for doing the work. The teacher must not slight accuracy, precision, or mastery of detail; on the other hand, he must not allow students to believe that these matters are ends in themselves. In Thomas' view, the marginal notations so familiar to all teachers deal with the first problem; the terminal comment which emphasizes, subordinates, and interprets the marginal notations, with the second. Thomas felt that evaluation is not the same as criticism and that each student should receive
specific evaluative comments which encourage him to write better compositions in the future.

In the analytical evaluation of the themes, the following key points of emphasis were noted:

1. sentence sense (fragments; run-on's)
2. spelling
3. punctuation
4. ideas
5. style
6. organization
7. paragraphing (unity; coherence; emphasis)
8. supporting detail
9. sentence structure (agreement; subordinate clauses; verb forms)
10. tone

Total English Equals Writing Competence
Thomas H. Whalen, 1969

Whalen (1969) exposed some of the weaknesses in research relating to grammar and composition and presented some new data for consideration. Whalen questioned the statements that grammar is not important in writing and wondered how students can write without formal grammar
instruction. He concluded that each researcher probably had a different definition of grammar. The Whalen research sought answers to these questions:

1. Which kinds of errors made in student writing occur most frequently?

2. What proportion of the errors made in composition are strictly grammatical in nature?

3. What is the relationship between a knowledge of "total English" (grammar, usage, capitalization, punctuation, and spelling) and the ability to write technically competent English composition?

4. What is the relationship between a knowledge of grammar alone and composition skill?

To Whalen, grammar referred to the syntactic structure of the language, a definition also accepted by the NCTE's Commission on the English Curriculum.

A significant problem associated with determining a correlation between grammar and composition skill is the problem of measurement. Whalen contended that the problem of evaluation of English composition focused on criteria and that criteria differed from one study to another. In his view no criteria used to evaluate English composition should depend solely on the subjective judgment of the evaluator.

In this study students' compositions were graded on technical competence rather than on ideas or opinions.
The compositions were evaluated on technical rather than rhetorical grounds in order to eliminate subjective judgment as much as possible; elements of rhetoric—style, clarity, persuasiveness—were reported to be unreliable and inaccurate. Two tests were administered: a standardized test of English, the California Language Test, and a test of writing competence. Both the standardized test and the writing test were scored objectively. The California Language Test contained 129 questions: thirty questions on capitalization; thirty-nine questions on punctuation; thirty questions on word usage; and thirty questions on spelling. Scores ranged from four errors to eighty-three errors on the language test. Whalen concluded that a knowledge of grammar, as measured by the California Language Test, was an important predictor of composition skill. The writing test was scored by marking all errors in the first two hundred words of the composition. No errors were counted after the two hundredth word. The composition errors were categorized as follows:

* 1. spelling
* 2. punctuation
* 3. capitalization
* 4. run-on
  5. wrong word (know; No)
  6. word omission
  7. quotation
* 8. verb tense (runned)
  9. apostrophe
 10. extra word
 11. fragment
 12. verb ending (Becky felt better and stop crying.)
* 13. agreement (Life were too dull for Tom.)
* 14. pronoun reference (They were looking for dead bodies and dug it up.)
  15. indentation
  16. awkward (Huck wasn't well liked, at all means by the moms.)
  17. hyphen
  18. illegible
* 19. pronoun case (Becky and him had a fight.)
  20. underlining

* Most important in a grammatical sense and in terms of errors committed.

The percentage of errors per words written was computed for each student and ranged from zero (one student
only) to 40.6 percent. Spelling errors accounted for more than one-fourth of all errors, followed by punctuation errors, capitalization errors, and run-on sentences. These four error types accounted for more than two-thirds of all the errors. The median for errors committed was sixteen errors per two hundred words written. The investigation revealed a very strong relationship between total English knowledge and composition ability and has removed some of the questions authorities have had concerning the value of the conventional type of language instruction.

Teaching Writing
Howard Pierson, 1972

Pierson (1972) attempted to provide a convenient and concise statement regarding prevailing tendencies and issues in the teaching of writing for use by English teachers in secondary schools and colleges. In his discussion of correction of students' themes, he appraised conventional correction methods and teaching loads; discussed weaknesses in correction; suggested ways to improve correction; and discussed alternatives to correction.

In Pierson's discussion of peer grading as an alternative to teacher correction, he suggested sample guide sheets to be used by peers to evaluate compositions.
The guide sheets included the following points of emphasis:

1. content
2. grammatical correctness (mechanics)
   a. punctuation
   b. spelling
   c. sentence structure
   d. diction
   e. paragraphing
   f. abbreviations
   g. manuscript conventions
   h. run-on's; fragments; sentence variety
   i. faulty pronoun reference; lack of agreement between pronoun and antecedent
   j. organization

Pierson's record sheet for composition conferences included the following points of emphasis:

1. organization
   a. introduction
   b. transitions
   c. paragraphing
   d. conclusion

2. mechanics
   a. usage
   b. capitalization
   c. punctuation
   d. spelling
e. handwriting
3. style
   a. sentence structure
   b. word choice

According to Pierson, errors such as run-on sentences and punctuation errors can be noted in almost every composition written by students from Grade 7 through Grade 13. Meckel (1963) had earlier noted a similar finding.

Assessing College Students'
Ability to Write Compositions
Arthur M. Cohen, 1973

Cohen (1973) suggested a reliable grading scale for a particular educational context. In Cohen's view, although English composition is a required course in nearly all colleges, teachers assigned to the task have found it impossible to agree on what constitutes good writing, how it should be taught, or even if it should be taught. Cohen questioned whether an instructor, evaluating students' written work, applied the same standards as his colleagues. Cohen pointed out weaknesses in using standardized tests, referring to them as "indirect measures which are often irrelevant and even offensive."

Cohen's investigation, which directly involved junior college English teachers, was based on the assump-
tions that one of the major purposes of composition courses is to enhance the student's ability to write and that this change in ability can be measured by assessing compositions written before and after instruction. The design for the investigation was developed at a workshop sponsored by the League for Innovation in the Community College at UCLA. Twenty-one instructors of English from fourteen junior colleges met for a period of two weeks, designed a scoring key, selected topics on which the students would write, and committed themselves to conducting the investigation. Participants agreed that if students' ability to write compositions was the quality being measured, compositions should be assessed, not some analogous behavior.

Early during the workshop the participants realized that language typically used to evaluate compositions was not precise enough and could not be applied reliably. A scoring key that all participants understood and with which all were satisfied was designed. Categories had been repeatedly refined.

In order to reduce instructor bias, intended or otherwise, the evaluators were not told whose paper was
being graded, whether it was written prior to or subsequent to instruction, which English class, or the level of the student writing the paper. Twenty-four classes were involved in the investigation: five classes were considered pre-college English and the remaining nineteen were typical freshman classes for which students received credit that could be transferred to four-year institutions. Approximately one thousand essays were scored. Each instructor evaluated approximately fifty compositions, using the key designed during the workshop. The key included the following points of emphasis:

1. content (ideas)
2. organization
   a. thesis
   b. paragraphing
   c. supporting details
3. mechanics
   a. spelling
   b. punctuation
   c. verbs
   d. pronouns
   e. modifiers
   f. word usage
   g. awkwardness in sentence structure
Cohen concluded that the design could be used to assess change in students' ability to write compositions and, more important, that it was possible to involve English teachers in the actual conduct of a learning study and still obtain results acceptable to a researcher. Notwithstanding the fact that there were limitations to the design, Cohen noted that the instructors built the key on the basis of their prior experiences and through trial and error on sample compositions. At the conclusion of the workshop the instructors knew what each category (content, organization, mechanics) meant and could apply the key reliably. They found the evaluation procedure feasible for use in departmental settings.

Cohen warned about the need to define terms adequately and stated that this must be done before any key could be used reliably. In similar investigations, Cohen felt, investigators should involve the instructors in the study and point out the limitations of the design. By so doing, the instructors not only participated in the study but implemented the research.
Slotnick and Rogers (1973) attempted to clarify the relationship between the mechanics of writing and other aspects of writing by taking an analytic look at the National Assessment of Educational Progress study of Writing Mechanics, Report Eight. The errors considered in the report were based on the kinds of mechanical problems which occur most often in students' writing. The papers analyzed were the "famous person" essays written by a national probability sample of seventeen-year-olds during the 1969-70 assessment of writing. A total of 2,079 seventeen-year-olds wrote essays and the errors in each paper were counted independently. The following nine types of errors were noted:

1. punctuation
2. spelling
3. capitalization
4. agreement
5. sentence fragments
6. run-on sentences
7. awkward constructions
8. paragraphing
9. word choice
Punctuation and spelling errors occurred most frequently. The Slotnick and Rogers research was a descriptive study and only dealt with some isolated characteristics of teenagers' writing; it did not attempt to determine how those characteristics were related to the actual writing process. National Assessment evaluation of writing has generally focused on the following key points of emphasis:

1. paragraphing
2. punctuation
3. capitalization
4. sentence structure
5. agreement
6. spelling
7. word usage

Measuring Growth in English
Paul B. Diedereich, 1974

Diedereich (1974), a specialist in testing and measurement, agreed that standards for writing were neither well defined nor widely accepted. His writings have emphasized the need for improvement of reliability of grades on essays. During his twenty-five years with Educational Testing Service, he has consulted with many secondary schools on
problems of measurement and grading. In Diederich's view, traditional teacher corrections on themes (primarily, too much evaluation) are more damaging than helpful to students. He encouraged only brief comments, emphasizing what the student has written well and limiting the suggestions for improvement to only one per paper. He felt that fewer and better measures of writing at longer intervals are enough to show students, parents, and teachers how students are progressing. At other times, teachers should be left free to teach and students should be left free to learn, thereby reducing measurement to a subordinate role in education.

Diederich stated that teachers who have never graded a set of papers previously graded by another teacher seldom realize how greatly teachers disagree in judgment of writing ability. He cited his 1961 study with French and Carlton to support this statement. In the 1961 investigation, three hundred papers written by students during the first month at three different colleges were evaluated by sixty distinguished readers in six occupational fields: ten college English teachers; ten social science teachers; ten natural science teachers; ten writers and editors; ten lawyers; and ten business executives. For various
reasons seven of the sixty judges were unable to complete their assignments, but all six occupational fields were adequately represented by the remaining fifty-three judges. All judges were outstanding people, concerned about the writing ability of students. The purpose of the study was to determine what qualities in student writing were noticed and emphasized by educated people who evaluated papers according to their own personal standards. In order to reveal the differences of opinion, the judges were never brought together to agree on evaluation standards. They graded all the compositions at home, writing comments on anything they liked or disliked about the papers. Vast differences in grading standards were evident. Of the three hundred essays graded, 101 received every possible grade from one to nine; 94 percent received either seven, eight, or nine different grades; no essay received less than five different grades. Obviously, evaluators failed to agree on grades because they looked for different qualities in writing or differed in emphasis placed on such qualities. Over eleven thousand evaluator comments were tabulated. Factor analysis was applied. The median
correlation was .31; among the college teachers of English, only .41. Reliability of .80 to .90 is considered adequate in individual measurement, according to Diederich.

Five distinct schools of thought among evaluators emerged. One cluster of judges was interested in the students' ideas—their richness, soundness, clarity, development, and relevance to the topic and the writer's purpose; a second cluster of judges (primarily college teachers of English) was interested in grammatical correctness—usage, sentence structure, punctuation, and spelling; a third cluster of judges (primarily business executives) was interested in form (organization and analysis) and spelling; a fourth cluster of judges was interested in wording and phrasing; the other set of judges was interested in writing flavor or style, such as individuality, originality, interest, and sincerity. All readers were aware, to some degree, of all the qualities. The study revealed their differences in emphasis, heightened by the absence of grading standards.

Diederich (1974) stated that many teachers wish to improve the reliability of grades for greater confidence in fairness and accuracy and for an adequate explanation of grades to students. Many teachers apparently wish for a
list of qualities to look for in students' compositions and a scheme of how many points to assess for each. Although Diederich reported no satisfactory scheme of evaluation, he stated that if evaluators agreed upon criteria for measuring the quality of writing, reliability could be greatly improved.

Following the above factor analysis, Diederich completed another study of writing improvement. The investigation involved the Departments of English in seventeen secondary schools in twelve school districts in New York. All students participating in the study wrote one test essay per month on an assigned topic. The rating scale used included the following points of emphasis:

1. General Merit
   a. ideas
   b. organization
   c. wording
   d. flavor (style)

2. Mechanics
   a. usage, sentence structure
   b. punctuation, capitals, abbreviations, numbers
   c. spelling
   d. handwriting, neatness

The scale was given a five-point value. A rating of one
was low on the scale, while a rating of five was high. High, middle, and low ratings were carefully defined for each quality or characteristic on the scale. About 50 percent of the papers received ratings of three in this study.

The findings of the Diederich studies can be generalized to the short expository themes commonly written by secondary seniors and college freshmen. Classroom teachers of English at both levels have been greatly influenced by the Diederich categories, especially the mechanics factor.

SUMMARY

The foregoing review of related literature does not, in any sense, encompass all of the many works published on the evaluation of English composition. The author was, of necessity, selective, focusing attention on those studies which seemed particularly relevant to the present investigation.

Between 1900 and 1960 there was very little research of consequence. Lyman (1929) completed the first major summary and critical analysis of research on composition, and he noted that English objectives were "as yet vague, uncertain, and far from agreed upon."
Considerable research has been done since 1960. Researchers advanced information on such facets as the rater variable, the assignment variable, and objective tests vs. actual compositions as measures of writing. The USOE funded meetings and conferences, sponsored curriculum study centers, and funded research projects at many universities. More research has been done since 1960 partly because of new attitudes toward federal aid to education and a new desire to make learning more scientific. Public officials as well as educators have called for more research in English and particularly in writing. In 1962 Congress allocated funds to the USOE to establish "Project English," which brought scholars together at the Carnegie Institute of Technology, at the University of Illinois, and at New York University to take a closer look at goals and procedures in English. Pierson (1972) tallied over one hundred studies in composition enumerated by Nathan Blount in each issue of Research in the Teaching of English (RTE), Vol. 1, No. 1, through Vol. 3, No. 2, between 1966 and 1969, a period during which "Project English" was at its peak.

Chapter 5 of Gage's Handbook of Research on Teaching
(1963) provided important research data on English composition. The landmark publication, *Research in Written Composition*, (Braddock and others, 1963), synthesized research and represented the second major summary and critical analysis of research findings. Chapter 2 brought together information on controlling the variables in composition evaluation. A documented review of research on the evaluation of English composition was offered in Chapter 3, "The State of Knowledge about Composition." William W. West (1967) also presented a review of twenty-one research studies and noted that valid means of evaluating writing had not been developed.

Braddock (1969) summarized research on composition written by students during the elementary, secondary, and college years. Braddock indicated that only minor updating was necessary from 1963 to 1969. In his opinion, research had failed to give enough attention to this central question: What kinds of writing following what kinds of instruction for what kinds of students? He pointed out much unexplored territory and suggested possible research questions. He discussed the problems of evaluating performance of students in composition, including the troublesome variables of
the writer himself at a given time, of particular writing assignments, and of the evaluator. Of particular interest to the present researcher was Braddock's comment regarding a common failing in much research of doctoral students: the lack of trial runs or pilot studies which could possibly eliminate the "bugs" from instruments for evaluation. The present study included an attempt to test the effectiveness of the evaluative instrument when used by secondary teachers of Senior English and college teachers of Freshman English.

Research in the Teaching of English is probably the best source of information on recent research. An annotated bibliography of research in English Education appears in each issue of this NCTE publication, beginning in 1967. Three issues of RTE per year began in 1973: Fall, Winter, and Spring. The semiannual annotated bibliography usually appears in the Fall or Winter issue. In addition to RTE, the NCTE publishes annual summaries of research in its publications Elementary English and the English Journal.

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Specialized clearing houses throughout the U.S. obtain and screen research reports. *Research in Education* (RIE) is the most important single source for ERIC materials. *Research in Education* is ERIC's monthly catalog of bibliographical information, abstracts, and prices. Ordering information is given in each issue. The publication can be secured from the Superintendent of Documents, U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C. 20402, for $1.00 per issue or $11.00 per year. Most documents listed are available from EDRS (ERIC Document Reproduction Service) for 25¢ for each microfiche or 4¢ per page for hard copies.

A computer search for research materials on composition evaluation was completed and results mailed to the present researcher from ERIC/RCS in the fall of 1974.

Notwithstanding the numerous recent studies, the crucial issues remain unsettled. Reviews of research on the evaluation of English composition have generally emphasized the need for further research and problems in the field rather than accomplishments. As revealed by Pierson (1972), each research study is almost unique in itself; there is so little repetition that it is impossible to draw conclusive inferences from research. Consequently,
the teacher of English cannot be sure that an experimenter's method will work in the classroom. It is difficult to find existing patterns of success. Techniques must be tested repeatedly in a variety of school settings with uniform procedures and consistent results, Pierson believed, if research is to become meaningful and helpful. The classroom teacher of English cannot now go to existing literature of research and find positive answers to questions for the research is only tentative, inconclusive, and limited. Conflicting views and problems regarding objectives and evaluation procedures remain unresolved. Diederich (1974) provided documentation that very little irrefutable information about measuring the quality of written composition is available.
In addition to the evaluative data gleaned from selected research conducted outside Louisiana, the following English authorities at state colleges and universities in Louisiana were contacted and requested to send guidelines being used to evaluate Freshman English themes:

Dr. Dardanella Ennis, Head
English Department
Grambling University
Grambling, Louisiana 71245

Dr. Otis B. Wheeler, Chairman
Department of English
Louisiana State University
Baton Rouge, Louisiana 70803

Dr. Elizabeth F. Penfield, Chairman
Freshman English
University of New Orleans
New Orleans, Louisiana 70122

Dr. Lowell F. Lynde
Director of Freshman English
Louisiana Tech University
Ruston, Louisiana 71270

Miss Elaine Jarmon, Chairman
Freshman-Sophomore English Committee
McNeese State University
Lake Charles, Louisiana 70601

Dr. Marie Fletcher, Chairman
Department of English
Nicholls State University
Thibodaux, Louisiana 70301
Responses received from these authorities on English yielded the following information:

**Grambling University**

At Grambling University there were no overall standards used in the evaluation of compositions written for Freshman English. Evaluation was left entirely to the discretion of the individual English teachers. The authorities on English at Grambling hoped to design an evaluation key but had not done so at the time of the present research.
Louisiana State University
Baton Rouge, Louisiana

An attempt was made to write uniform standards for Freshman English at Louisiana State University in 1957. At that time descriptions of good and poor writing were borrowed from Enochs' doctoral research, *Measuring the Ability to Write* (1948). These descriptions were analyzed by the author. In addition, excerpts from two committee studies were also carefully reviewed. The following points of emphasis were used in evaluating the compositions written for Freshman English at LSU:

1. grammar mechanics (agreement, pronoun reference, verb forms, case)
2. punctuation
3. spelling
4. organization (illustrations--details; emphasis; central idea or theme; introduction--conclusion; transitions)
5. point of view
6. reasoning—logic
7. style
8. diction; vocabulary; idiom
9. ideas
10. fulfillment of the assignment
11. tone
University of New Orleans

Freshman English at the University of New Orleans consisted of three basic courses: English Composition 0150, 1157, and 1158. English Composition 1159 was an Honors course. Initially, a student was placed in one of the three basic courses according to his English score in the American College Testing (ACT) program. Most students, in terms of their ability to write, were enrolled in English Composition 1157. Those who possessed greater aptitude and background were scheduled for English Composition 1158. Students with severe deficiencies in written English were required to take English Composition 0150.

English Composition 0150, a remedial course, did not fulfill degree requirements. At the beginning of this course the student had to demonstrate his ability to write at least one graded paragraph each week and receive a passing grade. As the student progressed, he was expected to demonstrate his ability to write at least one unified, coherent paragraph within a fifty-minute class period. He had to learn to write in proper, standard English
sentences, not using sentence fragments or fused sentences. He had to respond in writing to specific reading assignments; he had to demonstrate his ability to grasp an essay's thesis or organization; he had to be able to establish the writer's purpose. The key points of emphasis used in the evaluation of English Composition 0150 at the University of New Orleans were as follows:

1. spelling
2. subject-verb agreement
3. punctuation (comma, period, question mark)

In English Composition 1157 the student was required to discover the thesis of an essay and outline its development throughout (write precis); he had to recognize examples of good writing from reading assignments. The first and last paper of a semester were judged by the same standards so that, as the student's writing improved, his grades improved. Because it was recognized that writing English composition is an art, the final grade was not a sum of all the grades earned during the semester but a measure of the student's final proficiency. The student in English Composition 1157 was required to write nine themes of substantial length, including expository narrative, description,
definition, and explanation of process. Six of the themes were approximately three hundred words in length and had to be written during six individual class periods. The following key points of emphasis were suggested for evaluation, although much was left to the individual teacher's subjective judgment:

1. sentence sense (fragments; run-on sentences or comma splices)

2. sentence structure (agreement; case; tense; pronoun reference)

3. punctuation (commas; periods)

4. diction

5. spelling

6. paragraphing

7. organization

8. point of view

9. transitions

10. outlining

11. proofreading

12. revising

To satisfactorily complete the course in English Composition 1158, the student was required to write a minimum of nine themes. It was possible to count a research paper for two of the themes. The remaining themes had to
be of substantial length and consistent with standards set forth for the course. The student had to demonstrate his ability to detect logical errors and fallacies in writing. He was required to write three or four in-class themes to demonstrate his ability to write coherently under pressure of time. His out-of-class themes had to be polished to a greater extent than the in-class themes. He was required to use correct documentation in the preparation of a research paper; he had to understand and avoid plagiarism. At the end of this course the student was expected to be able to write on a university level and adequately cope with the writing demanded by upper level courses. He was required to write the following types of prose, since his writing beyond the freshman level fell mainly into these categories: analysis, argument, persuasion. For example, the student had to write a cogent analysis of a piece of non-fiction writing. After satisfactorily completing the writing required in this course, the student was expected to be able to write correctly in his major field of study. The student's first and last papers of the semester were evaluated by the same standards so that, as his writing improved, his grades im-
proved. In order to accomplish these course objectives, the following key evaluation points were emphasized:

1. sentence sense (fragments; comma splices)

2. sentence structure (tense; agreement; variety; modifiers; pronoun reference; case)

3. spelling

4. punctuation

5. organization

6. paragraphing

7. transitions

8. tone

9. style

10. point of view

11. logic

12. diction

13. proofreading

14. revising

Overall, the student's writing in English Composition 1158 could not violate minimum standards in form or fundamentals or be negligible in content.
At Louisiana Tech University, there were no set regulations for the evaluation of compositions written for Freshman English. Evaluation was determined by the individual teachers and procedures differed greatly. However, the teachers were requested to be more lenient in grading toward the beginning of the semester than toward the end; the number of errors had to decrease for the student to maintain the same grade. This tendency appeared to be almost universally practiced at the colleges and universities within Louisiana.

At McNeese State University there were no specific guidelines used by faculty members to evaluate compositions written for Freshman English. The Chairman of Freshman-Sophomore English recognized the need for standardization of evaluation procedures, but each individual teacher of Freshman English prepared and used his own evaluative criteria.

The aims and objectives of Freshman English at Nicholls State University were presented to the members
of the Department of English and adopted in September, 1973. The program for Freshman English consisted of three courses (Remedial English Composition 95; English Composition 101; and English Composition 102) and was conceived of as a continuum. In addition to the three basic courses, there was a fourth course (Honors English Composition 105), but that course was more properly a part of the Honors English Program than of the basic Freshman English Program.

A student entering Nicholls began Freshman English on the level indicated by his ACT score and was recommended for advancement by his instructor during the first week of class on the basis of diagnostic themes, subject to review by the Freshman English Committee. Some specifics in the evaluative criteria used for the three basic courses of Freshman English were evident.

Remedial English Composition 95 was offered to prepare a student for English Composition 101. The student was required to write single-paragraph essays. Reading assignments were studied for organization, paragraph development, sentence structure, and diction. The student had to write precis of the selections read. Grades given were S (Satisfactory) and U (Unsatisfactory). The key points
of emphasis used in evaluation were as follows:

1. sentence sense (comma fault; run-on's; fragments)
2. punctuation
3. sentence structure (mixed constructions; subject-verb agreement; pronoun-antecedent agreement; person; tense; voice; mood)
4. spelling
5. paragraphing

In English Composition 101 the student was required to achieve clarity and exactness in written expression of thought. He had to meet conventional standards of accuracy in grammar and punctuation. In this course the student wrote from eight to twelve themes, mostly in class. Various kinds of expository writing were analyzed in the outside readings and then practiced in the classroom. The student had to demonstrate his ability to outline readings and his own composition. Paragraphs were studied and analyzed as elements of larger units. The following key points of emphasis were used in evaluation:

1. organization
2. paragraph development and transitions
3. sentence structure (agreement; subordination; case)
4. sentence sense (fragments; run-on's; fused)
In English Composition 102 the student was expected to develop greater effectiveness in writing through the following activities: closely observing reading selections and his own writing; revising; and rewriting. His skill in writing was expected to go beyond exactness and clarity to smoothness, variety, and individuality of expression. At the beginning of this course the English teacher assumed that the student had reasonable mechanical competence in writing and the ability to organize his thoughts. The student realized at the outset that these two aspects were crucial in evaluation. The reading approach to writing was stressed in this course; Holt's Parade of Lines was used. Students were asked to analyze characters, settings, imagery, and organization of the reading selections. The course required from six to ten themes, written mainly in class. No formal research paper was required, but the students learned how to outline, paraphrase, document material, and make
footnotes. In studying quoted materials, each student signed a statement agreeing to avoid plagiarism or face disciplinary action. The following key points of emphasis were used in evaluation:

1. sentence structure
2. sentence sense
3. diction
4. organization
5. style

Overall criteria used in the evaluation of themes in all three basic courses in English Composition focused on the following key points of emphasis:

1. mechanics
2. content
3. organization
4. style

For many freshmen the learning process depended on repetition. Therefore, all three basic courses covered about the same material but emphases differed. The same prescribed text was used in all three courses: *The Holt Guide to English*, edited by William F. Irmscher. The program for Freshman English was based on the assumptions that clear thinking is a prerequisite to clear and correct writing and that composition is best taught by studying organization and sentence structure. Given logical, mechanically correct and
stylistic exercises, the student was expected to develop the ability to write clearly and correctly. The individual English teachers impressed upon the students the practical aspects of what was being taught.

**Northeast Louisiana University**

The program in Freshman English at Northeast Louisiana University consisted of English Grammar and Composition 101 and 102. The Northeast Director of Freshman English had written characteristics of "A" themes, "C" themes, and "F" themes. These characteristics were the only standardizing agent being used in evaluation. The following key points of emphasis were noted:

1. sentence structure
2. punctuation
3. spelling
4. organization
5. reasoning
6. diction
7. point of view
8. tone
9. style

**Northwestern State University**

The English authorities at Northwestern State University refused to cooperate in the study.
The program in Freshman English at Southeastern Louisiana University included three basic courses: Remedial English Grammar and Composition 100; Freshman English Composition 101; and Freshman English Composition 102. "An Instructor's Guide" for each of the three courses was written in the fall of 1973. "A Guide to the Evaluation of Freshman Composition" was also designed, which offered overall suggestions for evaluation procedures but which was specifically labeled as an "aid" in evaluation. "Instructions for Written Work" was published in 1975. These data were carefully reviewed and analyzed in terms of evaluative criteria.

The overall objective for Remedial English Grammar and Composition 100 was to prepare weak students for Freshman English Composition 101. The writing activities were short: words, sentences, and paragraphs. Students were offered thorough instruction and practice in reading; basic sentence structure; basic grammar, punctuation, mechanics; paragraph writing. The writing assignments were related directly to the study of sentence construction. The students saw practical application of fundamentals in their own writing. They learned how to adapt language usage to particular situations, how to use the dictionary, and how to make simple
notes. The following key points of emphasis were used in evaluation:

1. sentence sense
2. sentence structure
3. spelling
4. vocabulary
5. punctuation

Freshman English Composition 101 was the first regular English course, for which the overall objective was to prepare students for Freshman English Composition 102. Basic principles of composition were stressed, with emphasis on sentence construction and grammar, punctuation, and mechanics; paragraph development; organization and the principles of outlining; development of the whole composition; diction; vocabulary and spelling. The course material was arranged in an order that guided the student to an understanding of the composition in units of thought: the sentence, the paragraph, and the whole composition. The student was required to demonstrate in his own writing the relationship between the study of mechanics and the act of composition. He was expected to build on each principle of composition learned, making application in all writing thereafter. His writing had to reflect unified, complete,
coherent, correct development of a central idea in a para-
graph or a whole composition from three to five paragraphs
in length. The following key points of emphasis were used
in evaluation:

1. sentence structure
2. punctuation
3. vocabulary
4. spelling
5. paragraph development
6. organization

Freshman Composition 102 was the second regular
course in English at Southeastern. The student was re-
quired to write the kinds of expository papers which would
normally be required in courses above the freshman level,
practicing the basic principles of expository writing
already learned. He wrote expository papers such as the
argument, the critical paper, the research paper, and the
essay examination. The overall objective was that the
student demonstrate his ability to write clearly, correctly,
and effectively; he had to be able to communicate intell-
igibly and succinctly. Full length compositions were
emphasized. Paragraphs were evaluated as parts of the
whole composition. Vocabulary development was considered
an integral part of the course.
In a general sense, "A Guide to the Evaluation of Freshman Composition" and "Instructions for Written Work" were used for all three courses in Freshman English. A student's total performance was evaluated within the framework of a particular course. Instructors evaluated compositions in accordance with the proficiency the student showed in the following areas, rating each area approximately one-third of the grade for the composition:

1. organization of ideas
2. development of subject
3. grammar and mechanics

Southern University

The program in Freshman English at Southern University consisted of Freshman English 110 and 111. The latest objectives were written in September, 1973, and incorporated in the two courses. Guidelines for the evaluation of English composition were also published. The following points of emphasis were observed:

1. mechanics
2. organization
3. content
4. style
University of Southwestern Louisiana

"Standards for Evaluating Freshman Themes" was produced by the Freshman English Committee at the University of Southwestern Louisiana in 1974. The committee recommended the standards as guidelines rather than as rigid rules because of considerable variation in objectives among teachers. However, the standards were distributed to all teachers and student copies were made available. They reflected a general standard for the following three courses: Remedial English 90, English Composition and Literature 101, and English Composition and Literature 102. Their purpose was to encourage uniform grading standards within the department, but they were neither mandatory nor absolute. The following aspects of evaluation were stressed:

1. sentence sense
2. sentence structure
3. spelling
4. paragraph development
5. punctuation
6. organization
7. diction
8. content
9. style
SUMMARY

As these findings show, almost all of the Freshman English Departments at state colleges and universities within Louisiana have been concerned with objectivity in evaluation procedures, but efforts aimed at standardization have not been rigidly imposed because of the high degree of variation in objectives among English teachers. Many of the English authorities noted the disparity of standards in composition courses and indicated a desire for more objective guidelines to reduce the degree of subjective judgment. All of the syllabi reviewed and analyzed revealed a definite need for further refinement of objectives and evaluative criteria.
Chapter 4

METHOD OF INVESTIGATION: TREATMENT OF DATA

BEHAVIORAL OBJECTIVES

Herewith are suggested behavioral objectives for the teaching of English composition to secondary seniors and college freshmen. The objectives were written on the basis of evaluative criteria received from various colleges and universities within Louisiana and found in the selected research. More objectives emerged for some aspects of writing than for others. Certain details are repetitious but the objectives were included for a consideration of wording, by classroom teachers of English, as to completeness and clarity. The objectives do not rigidly adhere to the Mager model; however, they are as explicit as possible.

They were reviewed by Dr. Fred M. Smith, Louisiana State University, before being submitted to classroom teachers of English for validation. Changes were made in accordance with his recommendations. In categories having more
than one objective, teachers were asked to rank the objectives (through the use of numbers in the margins) in ascending order as they would place them in regard to clarity and completeness. In categories having only one objective, the teachers were asked to indicate whether they felt the objective was acceptable or unacceptable, revising as they wished.

**Content: Ideas**

**(Topic)**

Given the necessary instruction and proper directions, the student will select a writing topic for composition which is appropriate to his main thesis, one which is interesting, adequately restricted, definite, and suggestive. The student will successfully limit the topic by stating it precisely.

**Content: Ideas**

**(Quantity and Quality)**

Given the necessary instruction and proper directions, the student

1. will demonstrate his ability to adequately communicate a significant central idea in writing.

2. will write a composition which reveals that he has given careful thought to his topic. Each main point will be adequately explained and supported by arguments, details, or illustrations. All points will clearly relate
to the overall thesis. No necessary points will be omitted. The composition will reveal the student's feelings and independent thinking.

3. will demonstrate, in writing, his ability to develop a stimulating thesis lucidly and logically.

4. will demonstrate his ability to make decisions about his chosen composition topic and convey these decisions clearly in writing.

5. will demonstrate his ability to develop a clearly conceived idea coherently and logically in writing.

6. will demonstrate his ability to communicate in writing a unified idea in a disciplined style.

7. will demonstrate his ability to develop a significant and clearly conceived central idea coherently and logically in writing, without violation of basic fundamentals of good writing.

8. will demonstrate his ability to clearly express insightful, original, and rational ideas in writing.

Organization:

One Central Idea or Thesis (Unity)

Given the necessary instruction and proper directions, the student

1. will demonstrate his ability to organize and
analyze thoughts by formulating a clearly conceived thesis statement or central idea. This thesis statement or central idea will be stated precisely or clearly implied early in the student's written composition.

2. will write a composition, specifically conveying early in his composition one major thesis or main idea. The thesis will be stated directly or implied through the use of irony, sarcasm, obvious exaggeration, or other appropriate literary devices.

Organization: Overall Plan (Order)

Given the necessary instruction regarding methods of organization in writing and the proper directions, the student

1. will demonstrate his ability to organize logically and clearly within each paragraph and within his whole composition. His composition will reveal a thesis idea, clearly stated or implied, which is then followed throughout and adequately developed.

2. will clarify his thesis in writing or by implication early in his composition. After clarification of the thesis, the student will demonstrate his ability to plan, arrange, and present his supporting details in an orderly, logical manner. Since most good theses suggest a definite
plan of development, the pattern or plan of organization selected will be appropriate to the presentation of the thesis and one which is quickly apparent and easily followed by the discerning reader.

3. will demonstrate his ability to write a composition which clearly follows a definite, logical order. The whole composition will follow the order suggested by the thesis; divisions will follow the order suggested by the division topics; paragraphs will follow the order suggested by the topic sentences. The overall order will be appropriate to the writing purpose, the logical requirements of the subject, and the requirements of the reading audience.

4. will demonstrate his ability to effectively organize subject matter by writing a coherent series of paragraphs, making adequate transitions and employing concrete and specific details in order to avoid vague or nebulous generalities.

5. will demonstrate his ability to show logical relationships and relative significance of ideas that support the thesis statement or central idea of a composition by preparation of an outline. The outline will be correct in form and free from such errors as overlapping,
incomplete divisions, improper subordination, and lack of parallel construction. It will be constructed in such a way that the divisions thereof are parallel in relationship, point of view, structure, and style.

Organization:
Writing Purpose

Given the necessary instruction and proper directions, the student will write samples of various types of discourse (exposition, analysis, argument, persuasion, narration, description, definition, explanation of process, criticism, research paper, essay examination, summary—precis) which clearly reveal his ability to define and adhere to an overall writing purpose.

Organization:
Paragraphing

Given the necessary instruction regarding paragraph development and the proper directions, the student

1. will demonstrate his ability to use, within each written paragraph, adequate supporting material that is directly and closely related to the main idea of the paragraph.

2. will demonstrate his ability to write para-
graphs which clearly develop ideas by using appropriate supporting details as evidence.

3. will write a series of coherent paragraphs. Each paragraph will be relevant to the composition thesis; each paragraph will contain a controlling idea; each paragraph will be adequately developed with relevant and concrete details; the details within each paragraph will be well ordered; the paragraphs will be written in logical sequence; each paragraph will reflect unity of thought.

4. will include topic sentences (explicit or implied) which clearly convey the main idea to be presented or defended in each of the body paragraphs of a whole composition, revealing understanding that the topic sentence relates to the paragraph as the thesis idea relates to the whole composition.

5. will demonstrate his ability to develop paragraphs by various methods taught: time order; space order; cause--effect; classification; definition; comparison--contrast; analogy; examples; or enumeration.

6. will demonstrate his ability to write paragraphs which follow the order of development suggested by the topic sentence.
7. will demonstrate his ability to write paragraphs which support the composition thesis idea.

8. will demonstrate his ability to write a series of coherent paragraphs, each of which has a beginning, middle, and end. Each paragraph will be distinct and deal with a clearly separate phase of the composition thesis.

9. will demonstrate his ability to write paragraphs which are unified, every sentence clearly relating to the central idea or topic sentence.

Organization:

Emphasis

Given the necessary instruction and the proper directions, the student will write a composition in which the relative significance of ideas is clear because the ideas are treated in accordance with their importance in the whole composition. The student may use literary devices to aid coherence and to show the relationship between the subordinate ideas and the main thesis.

Organization:

Reasoning

Given the necessary instruction and the proper directions, the student will write a composition which reveals
evidence of critical thinking by definition of terms, recognition of generalizations, and adequate evidence to support and explain the generalizations. Emotional prejudice will be subordinated or avoided in favor of an intellectual approach to the subject. The composition will demonstrate the student's ability to detect and avoid logical fallacies in writing.

**Organization:**

**Coherence (Introduction)**

Given the necessary instruction and the proper directions, the student will write an effective introduction for his composition. The introduction will be effective because it catches the attention of the reader and clearly indicates what is to follow in the remainder of the composition.

**Organization:**

**Coherence (Conclusion)**

Given the necessary instruction and the proper directions, the student will write an effective conclusion for his composition. The conclusion will be effective because it summarizes and ties together in a logical manner what has been communicated in the preceding part of the composition.
Organization: Coherence (Transitions)

Given the necessary instruction, adequate examples, and the proper directions, the student

1. will write a composition which includes effective transitions. The transitions will be effective because they are accomplished by connectives, direct statements of relationship, repetition of key terms, or by close connection in thought.

2. will write a composition which includes effective transitions. The transitions will be effective because they are accomplished by tying ideas together logically and by clarifying relationships. Details which are justifiable in light of the composition thesis and the development of the thesis will be used.

3. will write a composition which includes effective transitions, avoiding unnecessary shifts or changes in subject matter, structure, style, or point of view which make writing disorderly and the parts unrelated.

4. will write a composition which includes effective transitions. The student will demonstrate his ability to smoothly lead into new paragraphs with each new idea or thought relating to the main thesis or with recorded changes of speakers in the writing of conversation.
5. will write a composition which includes effective transitions. The student will demonstrate his ability to progress logically from thought to thought by beginning new paragraphs as thoughts change or as speakers change in recorded conversation.

6. will write a composition in which paragraphs are joined by smooth transitions that reflect the relationship of the paragraphs to the main thesis and to one another.

7. will write a composition which clearly establishes a beginning, middle, and end. The composition will reflect a logical and smooth progression of thought through the use of effective transitions.

8. will write a composition in which he demonstrates his ability to include effective transitions to show relationships among parts of the paper and to give coherence to the overall composition.

9. will write a composition which includes effective transitions to show the smooth, logical flow of ideas.

Style:
Sentence Structure

Given suggestions, recommendations, and stylistic models, the student

1. will write a composition in which he demon-
strates his understanding that style is more than a natural expression of personality; that it is the gradual discovery and adoption of successful ways of achieving certain writing purposes. The composition will be written using sentence structure which is reasonably perfected, varied, and appropriate for the development of the chosen thesis or main idea. For example, the student may choose to write in a serious or humorous style; a straight or satirical style; a formal or informal style; an objective or subjective style; a positive or negative style. He will avoid unnecessary shifts which confuse the reader. In order to achieve the desired stylistic effect, his sentences may include irony, humor, exaggerations, pretentious language, mock seriousness, anticlimax, understatement, inverted word order, or other literary devices if appropriately used.

2. will write a composition in which he uses sentence structure that is correct and clear even in varied and complicated sentence patterns. He will use sentence structure which the reader has little or no difficulty in understanding.

3. will write a composition using sentence patterns which are varied, reasonably perfected, and considered grammatically acceptable by publishers and recorded in
stylebooks, realizing that drastic departures from conventional sentence patterns often confuse the reader.

4. will write a composition in which he demonstrates his general fluency of language by using reasonably perfected and varied sentence patterns.

5. will write a composition in which he carefully constructs sentences relatively free of wordiness and gross deviations from standard form. He will avoid sentence fragments as well as run-on sentences or comma spliced sentences unless intentionally used for special effect or for recorded conversation.

Style:
Diction—Vocabulary—Idiom

Given suggestions, recommendations, and stylistic models, the student

1. will write a composition which reveals a careful choice of words. In the composition the student will avoid words which serve to confuse the reader or which, in any way, convey a meaning contrary to the obvious writing purpose. He will use precise, exact words established as acceptable by publishers and recorded in stylebooks.

2. will write a composition in which he uses words carefully and correctly and also shows enough interest in words to use them imaginatively.
3. will write a composition in which he uses words that are considered appropriate in form, level, and context, as generally used by fairly well educated people in writing and speaking. He will avoid mixing levels of usage for formal and informal writing. He will avoid non-standard or sub-standard diction unless specifically justified for special effect or for recorded conversation.

4. will write a composition in which he uses words which are clear, appropriate to tone and writing purpose, effective, and euphonic.

5. will write a composition in which his choice of words reflects exactness and vividness. The composition may include appropriate and interesting figures of speech, allusions, comparisons, illustrations, or quotations, as needed to clarify an idea, to add interest, and to intensify emotion. Such language will be appropriate to the subject and will convey clear, relevant information to the reader.

**Style:**

**Tone**

Given suggestions, recommendations, and stylistic models, the student will write a composition which demonstrates his ability to recognize and practice a unified and consistent tone which is appropriate to the writing
purpose, avoiding unnecessary shifts which often confuse the reader.

**Style:**

**Terms**

Given necessary instruction and proper directions, the student will write a composition in which all questionable or ambiguous terms are adequately defined for the reader.

**Style:**

**Point of View**

Given suggestions, recommendations, and stylistic models, the student will write a composition which demonstrates his ability to recognize and practice a consistent point of view which is appropriate to the writing purpose, avoiding unnecessary shifts which often confuse the reader.

**Mechanical Correctness:**

**Agreement**

Given the necessary instruction, adequate examples, and proper directions, the student will write a composition in which he avoids grammatical agreement errors in the following categories: subject--verb; pronoun--antecedent; demonstrative pronoun--noun; appositive--word repeated.

**Mechanical Correctness:**

**Case, Person, Tense, Voice, Mood, Number**

Given the necessary instruction, adequate examples,
and proper directions, the student will write a composition in which he demonstrates consistent usage of case, person, tense, voice, mood, and number, avoiding needless shifts which often confuse the reader.

**Mechanical Correctness:**

**Parts of Speech**

Given the necessary instruction and proper directions, the student will write a composition in which he demonstrates his understanding of the parts of speech and the way each functions in the writing of English composition.

**Mechanical Correctness:**

**Modification—Subordination**

Given the necessary instruction, adequate examples, and the proper directions, the student will write a composition in which he uses modifiers and subordinate elements effectively or acceptably.

**Mechanical Correctness:**

**Sentence Sense**

Given the necessary instruction, adequate examples, and the proper directions, the student will write a composition in which he uses standard English sentences. The composition will be free of unintentional sentence fragments or fused sentences.
Mechanical Correctness: Coordination--Parallelism--Balance

Given the necessary instruction, proper directions, and stylistic models, the student will write a composition in which he makes effective use of coordination, parallelism, and balance in his sentence structure.

Mechanical Correctness: Comparisons--Connectives--Negatives

Given the necessary instruction, proper directions, and stylistic models, the student will write a composition in which all comparisons are clear and complete; all connectives and negatives are appropriately used.

Mechanical Correctness: Reference

Given the necessary instruction, adequate examples, and proper directions, the student will write a composition in which all words of reference are entirely clear to the reader.

Mechanical Correctness: Parenthetical Elements

Given the necessary instruction, adequate examples, and proper directions, the student will write a composition in which he uses parenthetical elements appropriately.
Mechanical Correctness:

Punctuation

Given the necessary instruction, adequate examples, and proper directions, the student will write a composition in which he demonstrates his ability to identify or recognize the various types of structural elements in sentences by skillfully punctuating in accordance with the rules of standardized practice. He will show his awareness of conventions and conform in his writing with punctuation styles adopted by major publications and professional writers. He will punctuate accurately, clearly, and unmistakably, showing his awareness that omitted or haphazard punctuation results in faulty sentence sense.

Mechanical Correctness:

Spelling

Given the necessary instruction, adequate examples, sufficient drill, and proper directions, the student will write a composition in which he demonstrates his ability to spell with reasonable accuracy. His spelling will reflect his ability to effectively use a reputable dictionary at the appropriate level to check spelling, syllabification, etc. He will observe basic spelling rules and avoid unorthodox spelling in his composition.
Mechanical Correctness:  
**Capitalization**

Given the necessary instruction, adequate examples, and proper directions, the student will write a composition in which he demonstrates his ability to accurately use capital letters as they are used in major publications and by professional writers.

**Mechanical Correctness:**  
**Manuscript Form**

Given the necessary instruction, adequate examples, and proper directions, the student will write a composition which demonstrates his understanding of manuscript form by consistently using conventional format or format which follows suggestions of the teacher.

**Mechanical Correctness:**  
**Manuscript Form (Handwriting)**

Given the necessary instruction, adequate examples, and proper directions, the student will write a composition in which his handwriting is deliberate and legible and follows as nearly as possible the format of typewritten materials. Letters from one line will not be allowed to touch the letters above or below. Conventional rules of manuscript form will be observed in writing the composition.
Mechanical Correctness:  
**Manuscript Form (Typing; Margins)**

Given the necessary instruction, adequate examples, and proper directions, the student will type a composition which is reasonably free of typographical errors. In spacing the material on each page, the student will leave appropriate margins in accordance with instructions given by the teacher or recorded in stylebooks.

Mechanical Correctness:  
**Manuscript Form (Numbers)**

Given the proper instruction, adequate examples, and proper directions, the student will write a composition in which all numbers are used correctly and consistently in accordance with instructions set forth in stylebooks.

Mechanical Correctness:  
**Manuscript Form (Abbreviations)**

Given the proper instruction, adequate examples, and proper directions, the student will write a composition in which all abbreviations are correctly used as set forth in stylebooks.

Mechanical Correctness:  
**Manuscript Form (Footnotes; Bibliography)**

Given the proper instruction, adequate examples, and proper directions, the student will write a composition
in which he demonstrates his ability to avoid plagiarism by correctly documenting material, whether quoted or paraphrased.

**Fulfillment of Assignment**

Given the proper instruction, the student will demonstrate his ability to follow directions by writing a composition which fulfills a specific writing assignment, as explained by the teacher, text, or stylebook.

**Overall Objectives in English Composition**

Given the necessary instruction and proper directions, the student

1. will write a composition which generally conforms to accepted practices in good writing.

2. will demonstrate his ability to acquire ideas through reading and to express ideas in clear, orderly, and responsible written language.

3. will demonstrate in his writing an understanding of the relationship between the study of composition and the act of composing.

4. will demonstrate his ability to observe, in his writing, standards of accuracy generally accepted by educated writers and outlined in stylebooks.
5. will demonstrate his ability to write objective and subjective prose. His writing will reveal his firm grasp of writing purpose and audience. He will use diction suitable to his writing purpose.

6. will demonstrate his ability to write clear and reasonably perfected English composition which is free of gross mechanical errors.

7. will write a composition which does not violate minimum standards in form or fundamentals and which is not negligible in content.

8. will demonstrate his ability to write coherently and clearly in a form that communicates meaningfully. He will express ideas which are well developed and relevant to his writing purpose. His writing will be well organized and easily read, making use of acceptable diction with few word blunders and few errors in the mechanics of writing.

9. will write a composition emphasizing a single central idea supported by appropriate details and to which every paragraph and every sentence functionally relates. The principles of unity and coherence will be observed at the levels of the sentence, the paragraph, and the whole composition in achieving the clear and logical presentation of significant thought.
10. will demonstrate his ability to achieve clarity and exactness of written expression of thought.

11. will demonstrate his ability to write acceptably in his major field of study.

The above objectives obviously do not apply to special courses. In addition to the content suggested, specific course objectives state the number and length of compositions to be written within a nine weeks' period or a semester, as well as the level of achievement required for letter grades of A, B, C, D, or F.

EVALUATION CRITERIA

The Design of Rating Scales

Research is sparse on objective evaluation instruments designed for use by regular classroom teachers of English who must daily evaluate compositions. A decision must be made whether to use one general rating or a rating dealing with specific qualities. A composition includes many identifiable qualities or characteristics. Ideally, all qualities should be considered in evaluation. Using the holistic or general impression method, the evaluator quickly sums up characteristics which determine whether a composition is good, average, or poor. Such evaluation
is subjective to a great degree. Using an analytical grading method, the evaluator gives individual ratings to the various individual qualities to determine whether a composition is good, average, or poor. The latter evaluation is less subjective than the general impression method.

The review of related literature revealed conflicting views about the number of points which should be included on evaluation instruments and the value which should be assigned to each. One study was done by McColly and Remstad in the Wisconsin High School Experiment at the University of Wisconsin (1962-63). Readers were experienced teaching assistants in the Department of English at the university. McColly and Remstad attempted to determine whether inter-rater agreement was different when evaluators used a four-point rating scale and a six-point scale. They found no differences but noted that judges evaluated more slowly when using a six-point scale. Coffman (1971), however, found that grading time was no factor in using rating scales. Some research suggests that longer scales having nine or more points allow evaluators to make finer discriminations; other research suggests that shorter scales having
three to six points are more conducive to reliability. Further research seems indicated regarding number of points.

The St. Amant Key for Evaluation of English Composition

Innumerable aspects of writing exist. All facets and subtle variations of writing are not included in this study. The evaluation instrument designed by the present researcher is submitted as a practical tool and is, of necessity, limited. It is suggested as a guide for teachers, identifying major points to consider when evaluating the writing typically required of secondary seniors and college freshmen. Included are five major categories of qualities which distinguish good writing. The St. Amant Key, page 149, implements the major points of emphasis which emerged from an examination of evaluative data received from Louisiana colleges and universities and included in related studies made outside Louisiana. The major emphases in evaluation were approached through a consideration of explicit behavioral objectives. The new evaluation key represents an effort to more closely correlate objectives and evaluation. The key, along with the behavioral objectives, was reviewed by Dr. Fred M. Smith, Louisiana State University, before being sent to classroom teachers of English for validation during the second semester of the 1975-76 school year.
I. MECHANICAL CORRECTNESS (Writing Conventions; Syntax)

A. Grammatical Structure [Usage]:
1. Agreement a. subject-verb b. pronoun-antecedent c. demonstrative pronoun-noun
   d. appositive-word it repeats
2. Case, person, tense, voice, mood, number: a. consistent b. needless shifts
3. Parts of Speech a. nouns (1) correct (2) incorrect
   b. pronouns (1) correct (2) incorrect
   c. adjectives (1) correct (2) incorrect
   d. adverbs (1) correct (2) incorrect
   e. verbs-verbs (1) correct (2) incorrect
   f. prepositions (1) correct (2) incorrect
   g. conjunctions (1) correct (2) incorrect
4. Modification-Subordination a. effective b. acceptable c. misused d. needed
5. Sentence Sense a. unintentional fragments b. run-on's; fused; comma splice; comma fault
6. Coordination-Parallelism-Balance a. effective b. needed
7. Comparisons-Connectives-Negatives a. clear b. vague c. complete d. incomplete e. appropriate f. inappropriate
8. Reference a. clear b. faulty
9. Parenthetical Elements a. appropriate b. inappropriate
B. Punctuation: 1. commas a. skillful b. misplaced c. lacking
   2. periods a. skillful b. misplaced c. lacking
   3. quotation marks a. skillful b. misplaced c. lacking
   4. semi-colons a. skillful b. misplaced c. lacking
   5. quotes a. skillful b. misplaced c. lacking
   6. apostrophes a. skillful b. misplaced c. lacking
   7. brackets a. skillful b. misplaced c. lacking
   8. hyphens a. skillful b. misplaced c. lacking
   9. underlining a. skillful b. misplaced c. lacking
   10. ellipses a. skillful b. misplaced c. lacking
   11. dashes a. skillful b. misplaced c. lacking
   12. parentheses a. skillful b. misplaced c. lacking
C. Spelling [Includes possessives, contractions, word divisions]: 1. acceptable 2. unacceptable
D. Capitalization: 1. correctly used 2. incorrectly used 3. lacking
E. Manuscript Form-Format:
1. handwriting a. legible b. illegible
2. typing a. acceptable b. unacceptable
3. margins a. appropriate b. inappropriate
4. numbers a. correctly used b. incorrectly used
5. abbreviations a. correctly used b. incorrectly used
6. bibliography a. acceptable form b. unacceptable form
7. footnotes a. acceptable form b. unacceptable form
F. Overall: 1. reasonably free of gross mechanical errors
   2. gross mechanical errors interfere with meaning and confuse reader
G. Evaluation: Points possible: ___________ Points allowed: ___________

IV. MECHANICAL CORRECTNESS (Writing Conventions; Syntax)

A. Grammatical Structure [Usage]:
1. Agreement a. subject-verb b. pronoun-antecedent c. demonstrative pronoun-noun
   d. appositive-word it repeats
2. Case, person, tense, voice, mood, number: a. consistent b. needless shifts
3. Parts of Speech a. nouns (1) correct (2) incorrect
   b. pronouns (1) correct (2) incorrect
   c. adjectives (1) correct (2) incorrect
   d. adverbs (1) correct (2) incorrect
   e. verbs-verbs (1) correct (2) incorrect
   f. prepositions (1) correct (2) incorrect
   g. conjunctions (1) correct (2) incorrect
4. Modification-Subordination a. effective b. acceptable c. misused d. needed
5. Sentence Sense a. unintentional fragments b. run-on's; fused; comma splice; comma fault
6. Coordination-Parallelism-Balance a. effective b. needed
7. Comparisons-Connectives-Negatives a. clear b. vague c. complete d. incomplete e. appropriate f. inappropriate
8. Reference a. clear b. faulty
9. Parenthetical Elements a. appropriate b. inappropriate
B. Punctuation: 1. commas a. skillful b. misplaced c. lacking
   2. periods a. skillful b. misplaced c. lacking
   3. quotation marks a. skillful b. misplaced c. lacking
   4. semi-colons a. skillful b. misplaced c. lacking
   5. quotes a. skillful b. misplaced c. lacking
   6. apostrophes a. skillful b. misplaced c. lacking
   7. brackets a. skillful b. misplaced c. lacking
   8. hyphens a. skillful b. misplaced c. lacking
   9. underlining a. skillful b. misplaced c. lacking
   10. ellipses a. skillful b. misplaced c. lacking
   11. dashes a. skillful b. misplaced c. lacking
   12. parentheses a. skillful b. misplaced c. lacking
C. Spelling [Includes possessives, contractions, word divisions]: 1. acceptable 2. unacceptable
D. Capitalization: 1. correctly used 2. incorrectly used 3. lacking
E. Manuscript Form-Format:
1. handwriting a. legible b. illegible
2. typing a. acceptable b. unacceptable
3. margins a. appropriate b. inappropriate
4. numbers a. correctly used b. incorrectly used
5. abbreviations a. correctly used b. incorrectly used
6. bibliography a. acceptable form b. unacceptable form
7. footnotes a. acceptable form b. unacceptable form
F. Overall: 1. reasonably free of gross mechanical errors
   2. gross mechanical errors interfere with meaning and confuse reader
G. Evaluation: Points possible: ___________ Points allowed: ___________

V. ASSIGNMENT (Ability To Follow Directions)
A. fulfilled B. partially fulfilled C. not fulfilled
Evaluation: Points possible: ___________ Points allowed: ___________

TOTAL POINTS POSSIBLE: 100     TOTAL POINTS ALLOWED ___________     LETTER GRADE ___________

Initials of Evaluator: ___________
The following suggested instructions for use of the key were included in the material sent to the English teachers:

Since terminology presented a problem in designing a key for the evaluation of English composition, each of the five major divisions of the key is described in parentheses immediately following the topical heading. The information in parentheses clarifies what the individual topic involves. Each of the items on the key is designated by a letter or number. In evaluating a student's composition with the aid of the key, it is suggested that the construction in question be underlined and then the appropriate numbers and letters placed in the margins. The evaluator may use the right or left margin of the student's composition, whichever is closer to the underlined portion.

Each of the five major categories of qualities may be given a numerical value of twenty points. The data examined for this investigation indicated that all five of the categories are equally important. However, the point values have not been printed on the key as it is presently submitted. Teachers may make adaptations as needed. Further refinement in this area will result from field testing. Uniformity is needed. The total point value of one hundred points should be accepted for ease in determining letter grades.

The following grading scale is suggested to show the relationship of the numerical values to the letter grades: 95--100, A; 88--94, B; 70--87, C; 60--69, D; 59--down, F.

A copy of the evaluation key may be returned to the student with each composition. When the student views his paper, he can readily see its strengths and weaknesses and understand his letter grade. If theme revisions are required, the evaluation key and the original theme may be returned along with the revised copy for the teacher's reference and for the student's folder if folders are maintained.

Teachers were asked to alter these suggested instructions for the use of the key if they felt the key
would work more satisfactorily in other ways. They were also asked to feel free to make revisions on the key itself.

Teachers were requested to consider the following possible advantages of using the key:

**Grammar.** Before writing can be evaluated as composition, it must meet certain standards of mechanical correctness. On the other hand, mechanical correctness does not guarantee a good composition. It is not the purpose of the present research to over-emphasize the mechanics of writing. Because of confusion among grammarians themselves, entering college freshmen often do not have adequate knowledge of grammar from either the traditional or the structural linguistic approach. However, the secondary schools must offer sufficient training to enable students to avoid gross errors in grammar. The St. Amant Key allows teachers to measure mechanical correctness accurately and fairly; however, if the suggested point value is accepted for each of the five major categories of qualities, the mechanical aspect is subordinated to only 20 percent of the student's total grade. Thus, if the student loses all twenty points on mechanics, it is still possible for him to earn at least a "C" on his composition.

**Time.** Teachers can evaluate more rapidly if there are fewer longhand comments or corrections to be written. The regular classroom teacher of English finds it extremely
difficult to grade rapidly when using the traditional methods of evaluation. Writing numbers and letters in the margins of compositions requires far less time than writing correction symbols or the traditional lengthy explanations relating to errors. Use of The St. Amant Key eliminates filling the body of the composition with annotations. With the aid of the key, parts of the composition to be praised or condemned can be quickly identified with numbers and letters in lieu of the traditional teacher comments. The numbers and letters on the key will be quickly memorized by teachers. As teachers become familiar with the various parts of the key, they will be able to grade more rapidly and return compositions to the students sooner. The use of the key may mean that more teachers give more students more opportunities to write because evaluation is faster and less a chore.

Reliability. The use of The St. Amant Key may improve the consistency of grading. Any parts of the key which require a subjective judgment will be less subjective because of explicit criteria. A more reliable measure should be applied routinely in order to spot weaknesses and strengths in students' writing. The key is believed to be sufficiently reliable for individual measurement. Since students who do well on the aspects of writing which can be measured objectively tend to be good writers overall, The St. Amant Key should be a reliable indicator of writing efficiency.
Behavioral Objectives. Evaluation results should be reported in terms which are immediately perceived by those concerned. Teachers must evaluate students' writing carefully, promptly, and in a helpful manner. The St. Amant Key expedites the translation of numbers and letters into evaluation terms which are meaningful to teachers and students; it makes evaluation more objective because the key is based on pre-specified learning goals (behavioral objectives) and allows students to see the evaluation criteria for writing. The use of explicit behavioral objectives as a basis for the design of the key is not likely to bring about any loss of the humanistic objectives in English, nor over-systematize fragmented learning, nor reduce the English composition course to minutia in order to meet evaluation standards. Rather, with the use of the key the evaluation task of the teacher may be eased and the teacher freed, at least to some extent, for a fuller, richer program.

The Psychological Effects of Traditional Composition Evaluation. Teachers must constantly maintain an awareness of students' sensitivity about evaluation. Some of the negativism associated with evaluation of written English composition may be removed by using The St. Amant Key. Student writers should be advised of their errors, but at the same time they should be motivated to try writing again. This evaluation key includes both positive and negative terms. The first descriptive terms following each topical
heading are positive. By placing numbers and letters in the margins of the composition, the teacher avoids over-marking the composition in red ink which often makes revision difficult. The student can glance at the underlined portions of his composition and at the numbers and letters in the margins, noting which parts are commendable or praiseworthy and which parts require additional thought and work. The student's morale is likely to be improved since he is offered visual evidence that his paper was evaluated fairly and receives positive as well as negative feedback from the teacher. If the suggested numerical grading scale is used to determine letter grades, The St. Amant Key could remove some of the anxiety and frustration which result from expectancy of failure. The suggested scale makes it rather difficult for the student to make an "A," but it is also difficult for the student to fail. The range for the grade of "C" has been broadened so that it is quite possible for the student to earn an average rating on his composition.
Chapter 5

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary

The present research represented an attempt to test the following hypothesis: the degree of objectivity in evaluation of English composition can be increased if overall evaluation criteria are agreed on, accepted, and used by classroom teachers of English. The investigation primarily concerned an analysis of teacher evaluation of English composition as presently practiced and an effort to find a fairer and faster way of accomplishing such evaluation. The author (1) examined selected evaluation criteria used in the past for the grading of English composition; (2) wrote a set of behavioral objectives based on the major points of emphasis in the evaluation criteria examined; and (3) designed a new evaluation instrument, The St. Amant Key for Evaluation of English Composition, based on the behavioral objectives. The key was designed for use by secondary teachers of English IV and college teachers of Freshman English Composition.
Evaluative data were collected from Departments of Freshman English in state colleges and universities within Louisiana and from selected research conducted outside the state. These data provided a variety of opinions and information on evaluation criteria and were subsequently used to compile a set of evaluation checklists from which the behavioral objectives were written and the new evaluation key was created.

The St. Amant Key was designed by the researcher to contribute to a clearer understanding of the intricacies involved in the fair and impartial evaluation of English composition written by secondary seniors and college freshmen. The investigation called attention to serious problems relating to grammar, time, reliability, behavioral objectives, and the psychological effects of traditional composition evaluation; it suggested that the new evaluation key could possibly alleviate some of the problems or provide a point of departure from which other researchers might undertake similar studies to bring about further refinement.

Classroom teachers of English at secondary and college levels participated in the study. Teachers' reactions
to the behavioral objectives are summarized in Appendix D, while Appendix E presents some examples of responses received from teachers when they were asked to react to the evaluation key and to try using it in grading some of their compositions.

Conclusions

The major premise of this study was that explicit evaluation criteria would enable teachers of English to be more objective in their grading of composition. Due to inadequate testing of the key, definitive answers were not found to all the questions posed at the beginning of the investigation. However, the author concluded, from a careful examination of the data collected, that (1) an objective scoring key for English composition should include criteria such as that set forth on The St. Amant Key; (2) most of the aspects of English composition set forth on the key were amenable to objective measurement; (3) the two aspects which were most resistant to objective measurement were the quality of ideas and the elements which related to style; and (4) while it was not possible to design a scoring key which was totally objective and reliable, The St. Amant Key was a measuring device through which subjectivity in evaluation could be minimized.
Recommendations

The Problems of Grammar and Time. Although skill in written composition is rightly viewed as an art and students should be encouraged to develop their own writing styles, writing must be fundamentally and grammatically correct in order to be intelligible. To achieve the degree of mechanical correctness needed, the author recommends that teachers offer students more and more experience with the writing process so that the students will be able to master basic skills and produce whatever forms of writing their lives later demand. To accomplish this, teachers must adopt fairer and faster evaluation procedures.

The Problem of Reliability. While absolute uniformity may never be achieved, the author recommends that teachers compare evaluation criteria and make grading techniques conform as much as possible. Better measuring instruments are needed so that researchers will be able to properly assess amounts of improvement in writing which result from various teaching techniques. The author believes that the regular classroom teacher of English can test for basic writing skills using an evaluation instrument such as The St. Amant Key and
recommends the key as a practical tool which may prove to be more reliable than many of the techniques now in use. The key is not purported to be a magic formula which will solve all the evaluation problems which exist in the area of reliability, but it suggests at least a partial solution. The data examined for this investigation reaffirmed that the degree of subjectivity in grading English composition is greater when there are no explicit evaluation criteria. The author recommends that classroom teachers consider the criteria set forth on the key and continually try to be more objective in evaluating their own teaching and their students' learning. As long as compositions are assigned by individual English teachers and the grades for them are recorded in the teachers' gradebooks, evaluation procedures demand close scrutiny and appraisal. Evaluation is probably the teacher's most important contribution in teaching English composition. Success and failure are always partial. Teachers must seriously, courteously, and tactfully indicate the degree of success or failure. Any degree to which instructor bias is mitigated seems desirable.

More adequate testing of The St. Amant Key over
longer periods of time is needed to determine whether the quality of evaluation would be significantly improved through its use or whether desirable elements of style would be lost if greater consistency in grading were brought about in this manner. Further testing is also needed to determine the key's effectiveness in a departmental setting. Some changes may be necessary for lower level students.

The Problem of Behavioral Objectives. The author recommends that objectives, learning activities, and evaluation be more closely related. Writing assignments should be perceived by students as real opportunities to communicate with other human beings, to share experiences and respond to experiences. Classroom teachers of English should plan writing assignments directly related to specific objectives, which are statements of the characteristics the students should possess after instruction. General objectives offer little direction for learning experiences or for evaluation.

The Psychological Effects of Traditional Composition Evaluation. The author recommends that classroom teachers evaluate English composition positively as well as negatively. To keep students writing without causing them to fear writing
is the teacher's responsibility. Students should be helped, in a fairer and more affirmative manner, to reduce their writing errors. Students should be able to feel that teachers are working with them, not working against them by imposing arbitrary personal standards. Evaluation should encourage students to enthusiastically communicate their feelings and accept responsibility for the expression of their ideas.

**Suggestions for Future Research.** Finally, the researcher recommends further research on the evaluation of English composition to provide classroom teachers with more definitive answers to the following questions:

1. Can complex skills and understandings such as those involved in writing be measured objectively?

2. Can a teacher honestly and fairly apply a linear marking scale (ABCDF) to English composition?

3. Are true differences in students' writing ability now masked by grader unreliability?

4. Do typical secondary seniors and college freshmen write as they wish to write or in accordance with what they perceive as desirable to the teacher?

5. Are the traditional written teacher comments as meaningful and helpful to students as they are designed...
to be? Would it be equally or more effective to underline the portion of the theme in question and then apply an objective evaluation key in lieu of the written comments?

6. What standards must the evaluator of English composition meet?

7. How does the evaluator meet necessary standards with large student loads?

8. How should goals in the teaching of English composition be specified? What may be gained if English composition goals are specified in behavioral terms? What may be lost?
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APPENDIX A

HEADS OF ENGLISH DEPARTMENTS IN COLLEGES
AND UNIVERSITIES IN LOUISIANA

This roster is limited to state colleges and universities in Louisiana which are full four-year institutions:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Institution</th>
<th>Head</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Grambling College</td>
<td>Dr. William McIntosh</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Louisiana State University</td>
<td>Dr. Otis B. Wheeler</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Baton Rouge, Louisiana</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>University of New Orleans</td>
<td>Dr. Elizabeth F. Penfield</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Louisiana Tech University</td>
<td>Dr. Lowell F. Lynde</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>McNeese State University</td>
<td>Miss Elaine Jarmon</td>
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<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>Nicholls State University</td>
<td>Dr. Marie Fletcher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>Northeast Louisiana University</td>
<td>Dr. James B. Potts, Jr.</td>
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<td>8.</td>
<td>Northwestern State University of Louisiana</td>
<td>Dr. Walter L. Mosley</td>
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<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>Southeastern Louisiana University</td>
<td>Dr. Robert C. Brown</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.</td>
<td>Southern University</td>
<td>Dr. San-su C. Lin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.</td>
<td>University of Southwestern Louisiana</td>
<td>*Dr. Frank T. Meriwether</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Deceased while research was in progress.
APPENDIX B

WALKER HIGH SCHOOL

2/11/74

Name of English Department Head
Name of College or University
Address

Dear (Name of English Department Head):

Will you participate in a research study which may bring about more precise and objective evaluation of English composition?

As you can see from the attached portion of my dissertation proposal (which has now been approved by my committee), I am doing graduate work at LSU, Baton Rouge, and need your help very much. First, I need a copy of whatever guidelines you are using for evaluation of themes written in Freshman English. Later, I shall need your cooperation in helping to validate a new objective evaluation key which I hope to design from the data collected.

Please take a brief time out of your busy day to read the portion of my proposal which is attached and help me get the study under way by sending me copies of any guidelines or standards you are presently using as criteria for grading Freshman English composition. If the guidelines or standards are out of date, or if they are only being used by a few of your English teachers, please send copies anyway. If you have no specific guidelines at all (that is, if evaluation procedures are left entirely to the individual teacher's discretion), please advise.

I am enclosing a self-addressed, stamped envelope for your convenience in replying. The information requested is urgently needed by me before I can proceed further with the research. I believe the study is needed and may eventually prove to be very beneficial to many teachers of English composition. I sincerely hope that you will become a part of the study by participating in the manner outlined in the excerpt from my proposal.

Sincerely yours,

encls.

Mrs. Marjorie M. St. Amant
Classroom Teacher
English and Speech
APPENDIX C

EXCERPT FROM DISSERTATION PROPOSAL

OBJECTIVE EVALUATION OF ENGLISH COMPOSITION

A Proposed Dissertation Outline

Submitted to

The Graduate Faculty of the

Department of Education

Louisiana State University

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Philosophy

by

Marjorie McGowan St. Amant

September, 1973

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INTRODUCTION

Students at both secondary and college levels should receive practical as well as cultural values from their work in school. Business leaders and educators alike have long recognized the value of writing as a practical skill which should be learned early in life. If writing is to become an integral part of students' adult lives, they should learn to write effectively during their school years.

The teaching of English composition was long influenced by the classical tradition, and any objectives which were developed related almost wholly to grammar. At the present time there are no clearly stated behavioral objectives which are accepted by all English teachers. Consequently, evaluation procedures differ greatly in emphases from teacher to teacher and at the secondary and college levels.

Educators have, for years, attempted to bring about some standardization in the evaluation of English composition. Many researchers have been interested in the problem; many experimental studies have been done in which composition programs of various schools have been analyzed. However, the development of behavioral objectives and satisfactory evaluation criteria for use in measuring writing ability has not been accomplished to the degree that there are generally accepted standards.
THE PROBLEM

In an effort to reduce the subjective element in the evaluation of English composition, this study will include (1) an examination of evaluative data used in the past for grading English composition, (2) the writing of a set of behavioral objectives based on the major points of emphasis in the evaluative data examined, and (3) the designing of a new objective evaluation key for the grading of English composition written by secondary seniors and college freshmen, based on the behavioral objectives.

DEFINITION OF TERMS

Behavioral objective is a term which will be used to refer to a teaching objective stated in terms of observable student behavior, specifying the conditions under which the behavior is to be achieved and the minimum level of achievement to be accepted as satisfactory.

Objective evaluation key is a term which will be used to refer to a measuring device which includes specific criteria designed to reduce the subjective element in the evaluation of written English composition.

SOURCES OF DATA

The set of behavioral objectives and the new objective evaluation key will be developed from the sources listed in Procedure of this outline.
HYPOTHESIS

The degree of objectivity in the evaluation of English composition can be increased if the overall evaluation criteria are agreed on, accepted, and used by classroom teachers of English.

PROCEDURE

Public colleges and universities within the State of Louisiana will be contacted and requested to send copies of whatever guidelines they are presently using to evaluate themes written in Freshman English. Their responses will be used to compile a set of evaluation checklists.

The review of related literature will yield other evaluation criteria used for the grading of English composition.

These data will be carefully reviewed and analyzed. Based on that review and analysis, a set of behavioral objectives for the teaching of English composition will be written.

The set of behavioral objectives will then be submitted to an authority in testing, Dr. Fred M. Smith, Louisiana State University, for his review and criticism. Changes will be made according to his recommendations. A new objective evaluation key for the grading of English composition will then be designed, based on the behavioral objectives.
The set of behavioral objectives and the new evaluation key will then be submitted to a panel of experts in the field of English composition. The panel will consist of eleven authorities, each of whom is an English Department head in one of the state colleges and universities within Louisiana. The following persons will be asked to participate as members of the panel: (1) Dr. William McIntosh, Grambling State College; (2) Dr. Otis B. Wheeler, Louisiana State University, Baton Rouge; (3) Dr. Elizabeth F. Penfield, University of New Orleans; (4) Dr. Lowell F. Lynde, Louisiana Tech University; (5) Miss Elaine Jarmon, McNeese State University; (6) Dr. Marie Fletcher, Nicholls State University; (7) Dr. James B. Potts, Jr., Northeast Louisiana University; (8) Dr. Walter L. Mosley, Northwestern State University of Louisiana; (9) Dr. Robert C. Brown, Southeastern Louisiana University; (10) Dr. San-su C. Lin, Southern University; and (11) Dr. Frank T. Meriwether, University of Southwestern Louisiana.

Each of these authorities will be requested to react to each behavioral objective and to the new evaluation key. They will be further requested to assist in the validation of the new key by making use of it in their respective departments for at least a part of a semester. A survey of the key's effectiveness will be made at the end of the trial period.
APPENDIX D

Of all the behavioral objectives reviewed by the English teachers, the following objectives were considered best in terms of clarity and completeness:

Content: Ideas
(Topic)

Given the necessary instruction and proper directions, the student will select a writing topic for composition which is adequately restricted, definite, interesting, and suggestive. The student will successfully limit the topic by stating it precisely.

Content: Ideas
(Quantity and Quality)

Given the necessary instruction and proper directions, the student will demonstrate his ability to develop a significant and clearly conceived central idea coherently and logically in writing without violation of the basic fundamentals of good writing.

Organization:
One Central Idea or Thesis (Unity)

Given the necessary instruction and proper directions, the student will demonstrate his ability to organize and analyze thoughts by formulating a clearly conceived thesis statement or central idea. This thesis statement or central idea will be stated precisely or clearly implied early in the student's written composition.
Organization: Overall Plan (Order)

Given the necessary instruction regarding methods of organization in writing and the proper directions, the student will demonstrate his ability to organize logically and clearly within each paragraph and within his whole composition. His composition will reveal a thesis idea, clearly stated or implied, which is then followed throughout and adequately developed.

Organization: Writing Purpose

Given the necessary instruction and proper directions, the student will write samples of expository discourse which clearly reveal his ability to define and adhere to an overall writing purpose.

Organization: Paragraphing

Given the necessary instruction regarding paragraph development and the proper directions, the student will demonstrate his ability to use, within each written paragraph, adequate supporting material that is directly and closely related to the main idea of the paragraph.

Organization: Emphasis

Given the necessary instruction and the proper directions, the student will write a composition in which the relative significance of ideas is clear because the ideas are treated in accordance with their importance in the whole composition.
Organization: Reasoning

Given the necessary instruction and the proper directions, the student will write a composition which reveals evidence of critical thinking by definition of terms, recognition of generalizations, and adequate evidence to support and explain the generalizations. Emotional prejudice will be subordinated or avoided in favor of an intellectual approach to the subject. The composition will demonstrate the student's ability to detect and avoid logical fallacies in writing.

Organization: Coherence (Introduction)

Given the necessary instruction and the proper directions, the student will write an effective introduction for his composition. The introduction will be effective because it catches the attention of the reader and clearly indicates what is to follow in the remainder of the composition.

Organization: Coherence (Conclusion)

Given the necessary instruction and the proper directions, the student will write an effective conclusion for his composition. The conclusion will be effective because it summarizes and ties together in a logical manner what has been communicated in the preceding part of the composition.
**Organization:**
*Coherence (Transitions)*

Given the necessary instruction, adequate examples, and the proper directions, the student will write a composition in which paragraphs are joined by smooth transitions that reflect the relationship of the paragraphs to the main thesis and to one another.

**Style:**
*Sentence Structure*

Given suggestions, recommendations, and stylistic models, the student will write a composition in which he demonstrates his general fluency of language by using reasonably perfected and varied sentence patterns.

**Style:**
*Diction--Vocabulary--Idiom*

Given suggestions, recommendations, and stylistic models, the student will write a composition in which he uses words carefully and correctly and also shows enough interest to use words imaginatively.

**Style:**
*Tone*

The objective written in this category was believed to be unacceptable by some teachers; however, it was not revised.

**Style:**
*Terms*

Given necessary instruction and proper directions,
the student will write a composition in which all technical or special terms are adequately defined for the reader.

**Style:**

**Point of View**

Given suggestions, recommendations, and stylistic models, the student will write a composition which demonstrates his ability to recognize and practice a consistent point of view which is appropriate to the writing purpose, avoiding unnecessary shifts which often confuse the reader.

**Mechanical Correctness:**

**Agreement**

Given the necessary instruction, adequate examples, and proper directions, the student will write a composition in which he avoids grammatical agreement errors in the following categories: subject—verb; pronoun—antecedent; demonstrative pronoun—noun; appositive—word repeated.

**Mechanical Correctness:**

**Case, Person, Tense, Voice, Mood, Number**

Given the necessary instruction, adequate examples, and proper directions, the student will write a composition in which he demonstrates consistent usage of case, person, tense, voice, mood, and number, avoiding needless shifts which often confuse the reader.

**Mechanical Correctness:**

**Parts of Speech**

Given the necessary instruction and proper directions, the student will write a composition in which he
demonstrates his understanding of the parts of speech and the way each functions in the writing of English composition.

**Mechanical Correctness:**

**Modification—Subordination**

Given the necessary instruction, adequate examples, and the proper directions, the student will write a composition in which he uses modifiers and subordinate elements effectively or acceptably.

**Mechanical Correctness:**

**Sentence Sense**

Given the necessary instruction, adequate examples, and the proper directions, the student will write a composition in which he uses standard English sentences. The composition will be free of unintentional sentence fragments or fused sentences.

**Mechanical Correctness:**

**Coordination—Parallelism—Balance**

Given the necessary instruction, proper directions, and stylistic models, the student will write a composition in which he makes effective use of coordination, parallelism, and balance in his sentence structure.

**Mechanical Correctness:**

**Comparisons—Connectives—Negatives**

Given the necessary instruction, proper directions, and stylistic models, the student will write a composition in which all comparisons are clear and complete; all connectives and negatives are appropriately used.
Mechanical Correctness: Reference

Given the necessary instruction, adequate examples, and proper directions, the student will write a composition in which all words of reference are entirely clear to the reader.

Mechanical Correctness: Parenthetical Elements

Given the necessary instruction, adequate examples, and proper directions, the student will write a composition in which he uses parenthetical elements appropriately.

Mechanical Correctness: Punctuation

Given the necessary instruction, adequate examples, and proper directions, the student will write a composition in which he demonstrates his ability to identify or recognize the various types of structural elements in sentences by skillfully punctuating in accordance with the rules of standardized practice. He will show his awareness of conventions and conform in his writing with punctuation styles adopted by major publications and professional writers. He will punctuate accurately, clearly, and unmistakably, showing his awareness that omitted or haphazard punctuation results in faulty sentence sense.

Mechanical Correctness: Spelling

Given the necessary instruction, adequate examples, sufficient drill, and proper directions, the student will
write a composition in which he demonstrates his ability to spell with reasonable accuracy. His spelling will reflect his ability to effectively use a reputable dictionary at the appropriate level to check spelling, syllabification, etc. He will observe basic spelling rules and avoid unorthodox spelling in his composition.

**Mechanical Correctness:**

*Capitalization*

The objective written in this category was not altogether acceptable in the opinion of the English teachers; however, the objective was not revised.

**Mechanical Correctness:**

*Manuscript Form*

The objective written in this category was not altogether acceptable in the opinion of the English teachers; however, the objective was not revised.

**Mechanical Correctness:**

*Manuscript Form (Handwriting)*

The objective written in this category was not altogether acceptable in the opinion of the English teachers; however, the objective was not revised.

**Mechanical Correctness:**

*Manuscript Form (Typing; Margins)*

The objective suggested for this aspect of writing was not altogether acceptable to all the English teachers. The objective was criticized on the grounds that some students cannot type and that many compositions are written in class.
Mechanical Correctness: Manuscript Form (Numbers)

Given the proper instruction, adequate examples, and proper directions, the student will write a composition in which all numbers are used correctly and consistently in accordance with instructions set forth in stylebooks.

Mechanical Correctness: Manuscript Form (Abbreviations)

Given the proper instruction, adequate examples, and proper directions, the student will write a composition in which necessary abbreviations are correctly used as set forth in stylebooks.

Mechanical Correctness: Manuscript Form (Footnotes; Bibliography)

Given the proper instruction, adequate examples, and proper directions, the student will write a composition in which he demonstrates his ability to avoid plagiarism by correctly documenting material, whether quoted or paraphrased.

Fulfillment of Assignment

Given the proper instruction, the student will demonstrate his ability to follow directions by writing a composition which fulfills a specific writing assignment, as explained by the teacher, text, or stylebook.
Overall Objective in English Composition

Given the necessary instruction and proper directions, the student will demonstrate his ability to write coherently and clearly in a form that communicates meaningfully. He will express ideas which are well developed and relevant to his writing purpose. His writing will be well organized and easily read, making use of acceptable diction with few word blunders and few errors in the mechanics of writing.
APPENDIX E

Following are some examples of English teachers' reactions to *The St. Amant Key for Evaluation of English Composition*:

I have used your key to evaluate two sets of papers. I allowed 20 points for each item, as you suggested. Overall, I find the key effective. I had to add "outline" because my students were required to hand in outlines with the papers. Also, I would not give equal weight to "Ability to Follow Directions." I would require following directions for the papers to be acceptable. However, you may judge this category to be necessary for high school students. I asked some of the students to write their responses to the use of the evaluation key. I am enclosing what they wrote in case that can be of use to you.

The key is complete in detail but I would suggest a reduction in length although I do not know which items I would omit. Is it necessary to mark mechanical errors on this key as well as on the paper itself? I think the key could be used a few times each semester to help each student see an analysis of his work, but it is too lengthy to be used for every set of essays.

I feel that your study of evaluation of English composition is a very worthwhile one because I am so aware of the need for effective evaluation of Freshman English themes and the need for standardization of evaluation procedures within departments. However, I cannot help you test the effectiveness of the key at this time.

I am returning the material you sent to me. I'm sorry to say that at this time I cannot do what you ask. There is no way I can use your evaluation key in any extensive grading of student themes this semester. In order to make everything clear, you need to meet with the instructors and the students would need considerable explanation I think.
I have reviewed your new evaluation key for English composition and am favorably impressed with your method. I find the key detailed enough to be thorough but not so detailed to be baffling. Please send me enough copies to be used in my English classes. Since you are probably pressed for time, why not just mail them to me? Is it possible that I could get a hundred copies?

I want to thank you for expressing your confidence in my judgment by asking that I take a part in your research project. However, in all fairness, I don't feel that I have the time to do the work justice. I had thought in the beginning that I could find the time to give the work the consideration it deserves, but please accept my apologies. I wish you the very best of luck in your project, which I know will be highly successful.

I have looked over your evaluation key and would just modify the point system a bit. For example, a fragment or run-on sentence is a major error, but I take off 10 points whereas LSU instructors take off about 25 points.

Thank you for asking for my opinion regarding your new evaluation key. I think all terms will have to be explained. A student coming into 12th grade would not necessarily understand all the terms on the key. As the teacher covers one area of the key, i.e., II, D, let that section count more than any other in the point grading, perhaps 50%.

In my opinion all elements of composition are considered in your key. It is a checking list, brief and exact. A student would have adequate knowledge of "writing as writing" and mechanical correctness to meet the standards set forth in your key. It could serve also as a review sheet. It would make the student do reference on the terms he failed to recognize. The key points the way in which the student is going. It helps the student avoid future mistakes by seeing present ones. It allows the student to feel achievement and gives the teacher something definite to grade by. It does reduce time in grading and allows the teacher to accomplish more in the same time. The key will, I think, allow the student more insight and provide uniformity in grading, reducing work for both writer and grader. I believe it will reduce the "dread" of writing for everyone. Surely it reduces the work in composition grading. The only weakness I can see is that unless instructed differently, some students may strive for correctness and forget originality.
I am returning the material you sent to me. Your key shows you have given much time and thought to your work. However, I feel that it is not entirely practical. I am very much interested in the results of your study and hope that you will let me know when you have completed the work.

Your evaluation method tended to work best with my more capable students. The better students responded very well. The poorer students responded better to the more subjective method but may have adapted eventually. I found that with over 140 students I had to give fewer graded assignments or shorten the assignments. Either way is less than satisfactory for students. One major problem I encountered was that the students know so little about grammar that it's almost impossible to critique their work. Many of my 12th graders cannot determine the verb in a given sentence. We need to start evaluating, meaningfully, writing skills in the 1st grade.

I have taken the time to look over your key for evaluation of freshman composition and find it most interesting. Many in the field have sought for some time to construct or locate some means of arriving at a numerical grade for a composition. Such a device would certainly give students and teachers more security, yet, I hesitate to give whole-hearted encouragement to such an undertaking, knowing that many will not desire a change in what they have been using. Granted, the incoming student is poorer today than ever before, but would a change in assessing his work make up for a deficiency? I shall be happy to see if there are teachers this summer who are willing to use your key. I may be able to myself. Please write and remind me of my good intentions this summer. I wish you well with this project.

I frankly do not see any great difference between what you call "subjective method" and your method. That is, the majority of English teachers I have known evaluate written compositions on the basis of the criteria you included on your key and almost all assign grade "weights" to each area. What does not exist is a standard or "required" weight assigned to each area (content, organization, style, etc.). I doubt that such a requirement is desirable.

Because of the end of the semester chaos, I did not have an opportunity to try out your evaluation key. I did, however, read through the material. Good luck with your study. The problem you are addressing is certainly a difficult one.
I used your key to grade about one hundred papers. I think "paragraphing" should be broken down further because some sentences are misplaced in the wrong paragraph and some paragraphs do not have clear topic sentences. I think "footnotes" should be broken down further also. Sometimes a footnote is missing when it is needed. I found that your key enabled me to say something good about the students' compositions. I think it made my grading more objective because I had to consider all the aspects of a paper. It provided an approach to grading a set of papers. I think the key could be used for a teaching tool as well as a grading tool if used over a whole composition course because it forces the teacher and the students to look at all aspects of composition. It could definitely be used as part of the teaching program. The key should be explained to students at the beginning of a unit on composition or at the beginning of the year before they write their compositions. I found that when I explained the key before assigning the paper the students had fewer questions on their grades when I returned their papers. I think "Ability to Follow Directions" is very important and should be assigned more than 20 points.

We are indeed interested in new trends and research in all areas of student writing and the evaluation of this writing. However, at this time, our semester is rapidly drawing to a close and we are faced with everything from last minute committee duties to preparing for final examinations. As I am sure you will understand, we have no time for anything additional, and we regret that we will not be able to help you. Our major problem is the poor student (definitely in the majority now) who does not know how to communicate and cannot or will not learn. It's hard to see how even an objective key can be used objectively. Terms like "proper--improper," "adequate--inadequate," "acceptable--unacceptable," "legible--illegible," even "correct--incorrect," are going to be subjectively interpreted by teachers using them.

In regard to your new evaluation key, I think that teachers would have to tell students that they would be expected to improve in their writing skill as they go along. Your point values would have to be adjusted accordingly. For example, many students continue to misspell or mispunctuate if they think that these errors are always going to be worth the same number of points. Maybe it would be best to
start off with the key as you suggest and then change the point values for different areas if the students do not improve. The key shows a tremendous amount of work and thinking on your part and I think it could be of great value to teachers and students alike, but the point values would have to be changed if the students did not try to make definite improvement in the areas where they are weak. I would include "Ability to Follow Directions" as a part of "Mechanical Correctness" and adjust the point value here also.

Your letter, together with the enclosed material, was duly received. The enclosed material is hereby returned with this letter, and I am sorry for the delay in my reply. What you requested in your letter, trying out your evaluation key in our classes, requires more time and thought than I can manage. Furthermore, we have our own established procedure for evaluating student writing. I did take time to read your material and must congratulate you on the good writing you have done. I wish you success in the pursuit of your doctorate.
VITA

Marjorie McGowan St. Amant was born in Walker, Louisiana, on October 2, 1925, the first of four daughters of Mr. and Mrs. Julius McGowan. She received her elementary and secondary education in Walker and was graduated from Walker High School in the spring of 1943. For being valedictorian of her graduating class, she was awarded a scholarship to attend Louisiana State University and enrolled as a freshman immediately following graduation. However, she did not complete her Bachelor of Science degree, resigning from the university due to her marriage to a serviceman during World War II. She remained away from the Baton Rouge area until after the war was over.

When she returned in 1947, she became employed full time by the Louisiana State Department of Public Welfare as a clerical supervisor (Clerk IV). She continued to work for this state agency until 1963-64 when she was offered a position by the Livingston Parish School Board as a classroom teacher of English and Speech at Walker. She accepted the position, returned to LSU, and finished the Bachelor of Science degree, doing student teaching in English IV at the University Laboratory School and graduating in August, 1965.

The author then entered the Graduate School of
Louisiana State University and continued her education irregularly, attending classes at night and during the summers while working full time as a classroom teacher in Walker. She was awarded the Master of Education degree in Secondary Education, with a minor in English, in August, 1971.

In 1972 she began the doctoral program of the Graduate School in the area of College Teaching, taking a year's sabbatical leave from Walker High School to fulfill the residency requirement and doing the other required work by attending LSU at night and during the summers. She was granted sabbatical leave the last semester of 1975-76 to finalize her research.

While at LSU the author has been elected to membership in Phi Kappa Phi and Phi Lambda Pi, as well as the Grad 7 organization for doctoral students.

Since being employed by the Livingston Parish School Board in 1963-64, the author has taught English and Speech in Grades 7, 8, 9, 11, and 12. She has served as class sponsor, Beta Club sponsor, and Future Teachers of America (FTA) sponsor. She has been affiliated with the Council of Teachers of English at the local, state, and national level, as well as other professional teacher organizations. She has actively participated in the work of these organizations at the local level.

The author is presently a candidate for the PhD degree in Education, with a minor in English.
EXAMINATION AND THESIS REPORT

Candidate: Marjorie McGowan St. Amant

Major Field: Education

Title of Thesis: OBJECTIVE EVALUATION OF ENGLISH COMPOSITION

Date of Examination: July 14, 1976

Approved:

[Signatures]

Major Professor and Chairman

Dean of the Graduate School

EXAMINING COMMITTEE:

[Signatures]