

A COMPARISON OF JOURNALISM AND  
NON-JOURNALISM STUDENTS' ENGLISH COMPETENCY

by

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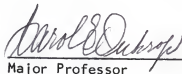
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CHAPTER I  
INTRODUCTION

I became interested in English competency while enrolled in a Reporting I course at Kansas State University. After a number of assignments and various spelling tests, I realized that I did not have a good foundation in the use of English. At one point during the course I considered changing majors so I would not have to face such daily grueling problems of English usage. Instead of taking this route, I started to study basic English handbooks and "bone up" on grammar rules and spelling.

At the same time I began to wonder if the problem was unique to me or occurring with other students. I had not heard other students discussing the problem but it is not easy for a college student to confess that he is not good in basic English skills, and it is made doubly difficult by lack of communication among college students.

I discussed the problem with Dr. Carol Oukrop, associate professor of journalism, Kansas State University. She told me of a spelling test she had given her Reporting I classes over several semesters. The test included 20 commonly misspelled words: embarrassment, inconsistent, chauffeur, permissible, counselor, accommodate, questionnaire, judgment, desperation, liaison, hemorrhage, knowledgeable, skillful, neighbor, privilege, temperament, supersede, affect, census and principal. In 1978 the average number wrong was 10.4 compared to 9.0 in 1977, 8.6 in 1976, and 7.0 in 1972. Ninety-four percent missed five or more in 1978 compared to 100 percent in 1977, 94 percent in 1976, and more than half in 1972.<sup>1</sup>

After discussing the problem not only with journalism faculty members but with a number of English faculty members, I found two trends of thought in

teaching English. The first was that the students should learn the basics and then express their ideas; and, the second, students should express their ideas and eventually the basics will form. I had obviously been taught according to the second method.

Upon further research I found that this problem was not unique to me or to Kansas State University. Article after article detailed a nationwide concern about the writing competencies of today's students.

In the Palo Alto Times it was reported that "Seventy-five percent of California's top high school graduates flunked a nationally-used writing test last year (1975)."<sup>2</sup> The article further stated that "These figures show that, for the majority of students, the problem lies not in a lack of natural ability or intelligence, but simply in the nature of previous instruction."<sup>3</sup>

Concerning journalism students, Editor & Publisher reported Nov. 2, 1974, Over one-third of would-be journalists coming to the University of Wisconsin-Madison discover their spelling, grammar, word-usage, and punctuation are so bad they can't meet minimum standards for admission to pre-journalism courses in the School of Journalism and Mass Communications.<sup>4</sup>

I was still curious whether this was a regional problem or a national problem.

The answer was found in the figures of the Scholastic Aptitude Test.

Between the 1963-64 and 1974-75 academic years, the average nationwide SAT verbal and mathematics scores dropped 39 points and 25 points, respectively . . . The decline can be seen in every region of the country, according to a report by Rex Jackson of the Educational Testing Service which developed the SAT.<sup>5</sup>

I realized that this was a national problem and many schools were concerned about it.

Universities have set up special "writing skills centers." Classes to teach engineers, chemists, business majors and prelaw students to write straightforward declarative sentences are springing up around the country. At Cornell University there even is a "dean of writing."<sup>6</sup>

Although these special classes were arranged, little or no mention of such classes for journalism students was found in the articles reviewed. I began to

believe since we had chosen this profession our concern about the written word would cause us to take that extra step to insure the use of good grammar. I also thought that since we had chosen this profession, the majority of students were already very proficient in the field of English usage and that if they did have a problem with English the journalism training would improve it. I believed that throughout the required writing courses taken as a journalism major the correct use would become automatic. At some point in their college careers, journalism majors, both because of the profession they had selected and because of the course work they completed, would be better in their English proficiency than non-journalism majors.

I had these basic assumptions in mind when designing the study reported, which deals with the English competency of journalism students compared to that of non-journalism students.



CHAPTER II  
LITERATURE REVIEW

In a review of the literature for this study, five areas of interest emerged. They are the definition of writing and competency; the writing skills problem, both local and national; the reasons behind the decline of English proficiency; the general characteristics of the basic writing students; and objective testing vs. subjective testing of English competency.

Definition of Writing

The word "writing" varies in definition depending on whose definition is being used and in what context.

Mina P. Shaughnessy in her book, Errors and Expectations, A Guide for the Teacher of Basic Writing, defines writing as:

. . . A learning tool as well as a way of demonstrating what has been learned. It captures ideas before they are lost in the hubbub or discourse; it encourages precision; it requires, even in the less autonomous work of taking down lecture or reading notes, that the writer make judgments about what is essential, and finally, it lodges information at deeper levels of memory than can be reached by more passive modes of learning. The lecture notes students take, the passages they choose to transcribe from their reading, the jottings they make on their own ideas or observations--these and other in situ formulations are also writing . . .<sup>7</sup>

Everyone will admit that children speak before they write. Speech usually begins by the age of one. Simple words, "mama," "dada," slowly turn into simple sentences, "I love you, mama," and then into complex sentences. Many researchers believe that writing is an extension of this speech process.

Writing is a contrived or artificial dialect of a language that lacks the primary characteristic of speech--sound.<sup>8</sup>

Michael S. Gerrard, in an article entitled "Carefully Crafted Programs," takes this definition a step further.

. . . writing is a thought that by thinking discovers itself and becomes more exact, a feeling that by imaginative testing discovers itself and becomes clearer and stronger, a desire to tell or a delight in telling that fulfills itself by adopting a tone of voice and imagining the person who hears it.<sup>9</sup>

Another fact that no one will dispute is that the mind is the controlling element of what we speak or write. It can be compared to an assembly line. The mind has an idea which goes through a series of processes and in the end is expressed either in writing or in speaking.

Writing is a process, an extension of the mind's action as it experiences, internalizes, feels, recalls, sorts, packages, and refines thought and experience through language. An effective writing program must address itself to this complex formula.<sup>10</sup>

While the definition of writing varies, the definition of competency is less variable. Many sources referred to competency as a habit which is learned and improved through use. The most complete definition I found was expounded by Gerrard in "Carefully Crafted Programs."

Competency, an ability which is flexible enough to be relied on for a variety of purposes, depends on the formation of habits-- thinking a thought through to clarity, protecting it from cliches, reshaping it to give it the right emphasis, keeping it on the same scale as other thoughts-- that, like all habits, are formed slowly and imperceptibly.<sup>11</sup>

#### Writing Skills Problems--Local and National

Because of a personal problem I had with English competency, I became interested in the extent of the problem. The decline of writing competency is not a regional problem, confined to cities or to larger schools; instead, it is a national problem.

There is overwhelming agreement that the degeneration of writing skills in the United States now amounts to a major national crisis. . . . The degeneration is real. Considerable formal testing takes place in the pre-college examination system and in connection with university admissions. It now yields hard statistical evidence of the drop in writing competency that has occurred.<sup>12</sup>

A study done in March, 1975, by the Department of Health, Education and Welfare showed a "steady erosion of reading skills among American students since 1965."<sup>13</sup> A study done by the National Assessment of Educational Progress

further stated that "the majority of Americans of all ages tend to use only the simplest sentence structure and the most elementary vocabulary when they write."<sup>14</sup>

The national trend in the decline of English competency is most widely confirmed by the Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT). In the 1962-63 school year, the scores on the SAT verbal exam averaged 478 out of a possible 800. In 1976-77, the average was 429 out of 800.<sup>15</sup>

A similar program, the American College Test (ACT) also has shown declining test scores in the last 10 years. In a study covering a 10-year period from 1964-65 through 1973-74, ACT Research and Development staff members "studied scores from a number of national and statewide testing programs to determine the extent, dimension, and possible explanation of the national trends in declining test scores."<sup>16</sup> (Table 1, page 7).

ACT researchers are convinced that the decline is "real and significant. The decline is based, for both the ACT Assessment and SAT, on too many student records for it to be due to random yearly fluctuations."<sup>17</sup>

The dimensions of the admissions test score decline may be summarized as follows:

1. Over the last 10 years the decline in test score averages has been experienced by both ACT and SAT. The extent of the decline has been similar for both programs, and in any given year is small. . . .
2. There is variation by subject matter field. The decline in ACT scores has been most marked in social studies: there has been no decline over the last 10 years in natural sciences. English and mathematics have shown some decline.
3. The declining test score averages have been accompanied by an increased variability in the academic achievement of students tested. College-bound students are becoming more heterogeneous in their achievement they bring to their college coursework.  
(See Table 2, page 8)
4. Declining admissions test scores are a national phenomenon, occurring in all regions and in nearly all states.
5. The percentage of ACT-tested high-scoring students has remained about the same over the last five years, while the percentage of low-scoring students has increased.

Table 1. Declining National Admissions Test Scores.

YEAR	SAT SCORE AVERAGES		ACT SCORE AVERAGES
	VERBAL	MATH	COMPOSITE
1962-63 .....	478	502	NA
1963-64 .....	475	498	NA
1964-65 .....	473	496	19.9
1965-66 .....	471	496	20.0
1966-67 .....	467	495	19.4
1967-68 .....	466	494	19.0
1968-69 .....	462	491	19.4
1969-70 .....	460	488	19.5
1970-71 .....	454	487	18.9
1971-72 .....	450	482	18.8
1972-73 .....	443	481	18.9
1973-74 .....	440	478	18.7
1974-75 .....	434	472	NA

SOURCE: This table was adapted for this report with permission from the American College Testing Program, Research and Development Division, P.O. Box 168, Iowa City, Iowa.

NOTE: SAT--Scholastic Aptitude Test. Scale ranges from 200 to 800. ACT--American College Testing Program. Scale ranges from 1 to 36. NA--Not available. In the early years it was felt the number of student records on which the ACT figures were based were changing too rapidly for reliable year-to-year comparisons.

Table 2. Average (Means) and Variability (Standard Deviations) of ACT English Test Scores for Students Enrolling in ACT Participating Colleges in 1970-71, 1972-73, 1973-74 and 1974-75.

Year	N	Men	Women	Total
1970-71	50,122	17.8 (5.2)	19.7 (4.9)	18.7 (5.1)
1972-73	49,297	17.1 (5.6)	19.2 (5.2)	18.1 (5.5)
1973-74	44,942	17.4 (5.4)	19.0 (5.2)	18.2 (5.3)
1974-75	45,272	17.3 (5.4)	19.0 (5.2)	18.2 (5.4)

SOURCE: This table was adapted for this report with permission from the American College Testing Program, Research and Development Division, P.O. Box 168, Iowa City, Iowa 52240.

NOTE: Main entries are means. Entries in parentheses are standard deviations. Data in this table are based on a 10 percent sample of students in colleges which participate in the ACT Class Profile Service for the respective year. Student records were put in alphabetic or optional Social Security number order. Then every tenth student record was selected for this analysis.

6. There are marked sex differences. Over the last 10 years there has been about a 1.0 drop by men and a 1.6 decline by women in the ACT Composite standard score. For men, almost all of this decline occurred between 1964 and 1970, with little change since 1970. For women, the decline has continued more or less steadily from 1964 to date. At the same time there has been an almost steady increase in the percentage of women among ACT-tested students over the last 10 years.<sup>18</sup>

Specific cases of the decline can be found from New York to California. Even schools with top admission standards admit that their students have poor writing skills. The University of California at Berkeley, where students come from the top 12.5 percent of high-school graduates, has established a remedial writing skills course.<sup>19</sup>

Michigan State University officials are considering requiring all their undergraduates to pass a writing exam demonstrating 'minimal literary skills.'<sup>20</sup> Georgia Board of Regents already requires such a test in 32 colleges within the state.<sup>21</sup> At Harvard, where all courses have been optional, expository writing has been made a requirement of freshmen.<sup>22</sup> 'Harvard's freshman course in expository writing--the only class every Harvard student is required to take--has been expanded to such an extent in the past two years that some faculty members now call it a 'pseudo-department.'<sup>23</sup>

Concern in journalism education about declining language skills resulted in the 1975 formation by the president of the Association for Education in Journalism of a national committee on journalism language skills. Results of a 1977 survey conducted by two members of the committee showed that in 1977 26.6 percent of the responding journalism education units required some sort of formalized language skills exam or other testing tool. It appeared that by 1980 more than half (54.3%) of the journalism schools represented in the study will be requiring such an exam. Clearly journalism educators are concerned about language skills.<sup>24</sup>

In Kansas, competency-based education is a concern of the Kansas State Board of Education and the Kansas Senate.

In a statement adopted by the Kansas State Board of Education, January 19, 1978, the following policies were formulated:

1. Minimum competencies to be demonstrated by all students by the time they are graduated from high school should be established by the KSBE. Local educational agencies (LEA) are encouraged to increase competency levels and add to this any other competencies they feel to be appropriate for their students.
2. The LEA should determine the nature of the most effective methods of implementing the instructional programs so as to develop these competencies.
3. Primary responsibility for ensuring that local programs do provide for the attainment of the required competencies will rest with the LEA. The Kansas State Department of Education (KSDE) will serve as a resource to the LEA, upon request for assistance in program development and evaluation.
4. The minimum competencies established by the KSBE shall initially be restricted to reading and mathematics. The LEA is encouraged to go beyond these areas in its local program.
5. At the elementary levels, primary emphasis will be placed on academic competencies. At the secondary level, the "life or living" skills will be emphasized in the areas of reading and mathematics.
6. Remedial programs funded by the state and administered by the LEA shall be implemented if the need is indicated.
7. The results of Competency Based Testing (CBT) program will be used at the discretion of LEA personnel. It is anticipated that the primary use will be for improvement of the student's instructional program.
8. The CBE program is designed for all students, except those specifically excluded by their individual Education Plan (IEP).<sup>25</sup>

The Kansas House Bill No. 3115 states that a system of competency-based education will provide a program to aid students in meeting standards of competency in basic skills.<sup>26</sup>

Pupils at any of the levels of grade nine or above who have not met the standards of competency in basic skills prescribed for pupils at the level of grade eight shall be reassessed in each school year until satisfactorily demonstrating competency . . .<sup>27</sup>

In every state in the country the decline in English competency is a real problem. It is not singled out by demographics or region. Many schools, including grade schools, high schools, and institutes of higher education, have adopted special courses to deal with the problem. But, what has caused this

problem? why can't the youth of America spell or write sentences which are grammatically correct? This problem is not inherent only to youth. A Harris poll released in 1976 revealed that "one of every 10 Americans over the age of 25 is 'functionally illiterate,' which means the inability to read or comprehend at the fifth grade level."<sup>28</sup>

What has been the cause of this problem that is nationwide and is the rule instead of the exception?

### What Caused the English Proficiency Decline?

The answer to "What caused the English proficiency decline?" could be a topic for a thesis in itself. The teachers blame the media, parents, apathy of the students, and teaching material. The parents blame the teachers. The losers in the battle are the students.

Major causes within the school system have been attributed to the highly elective curriculum, declining attendance, the lack of homework, and the lack of teaching basic skills. The curriculum shifting from the teaching of basics to teaching English literature is another problem often cited.

There were some good results--temporarily-increased student motivation in English classes and broadened teaching experience in literature--but the drive to reform the teaching of writing suffered a severe setback. Too much teacher energy was used in trying to find exotic material to attract students to elective courses and in trying to grasp names in the stream of new students coming into English classes. . . .<sup>29</sup>

ACT researchers blame the decline problem on two general factors.

1. We have a "changed pool" of students in college today. Many more students from the lower half of their high school classes are attending college, and these new students have a weaker academic preparation than traditional college students. The pool of college-bound students has changed as colleges, particularly the 2-year college, have recently renewed efforts to serve all students interested in education after high school.
2. High school students are academically weaker today than they were five or ten years ago. For various reasons including greater use of electives, lowering of teacher demand and expectations and schooling directed relatively more by students than by teachers, today's population of students leave high school and enter college or world with less academic preparation than previous years' students.<sup>30</sup>



So far in this discussion, the blame for the decline in English proficiency has fallen on the educational system and the teachers; these two factors are not the opinions of all sources.

Richard W. Hatch in The Teaching of Expository Writing--An Exchange of Views, states that teachers blame five areas for the decline: the communications media; bad or non-existent teaching of writing; little time to teach the skills of writing; difficulties in evaluating the student's writing, and the poor teaching materials provided for teaching writing.<sup>31</sup>

The media were a cause mentioned in most articles, and the most frequently mentioned cultural-based influence is television.

According to a Report of the Advisory Panel of the SAT Score Decline, TV takes up 40 percent of America's leisure time.<sup>32</sup> Peter Almond, who has been studying children and television for the Carnegie Council on Children, states "Kids spend three to four hours watching TV every day."<sup>33</sup> Reed Whittemore in an article in Harper's declares "TV has become the most potent force we have for verbal decorum."<sup>34</sup>

The major complaints about television fall into two categories.

Time spent watching television is time that might otherwise be devoted to reading; and the passiveness of the viewing--"letting the television just sink into one's environment," in the words of Barzun--seems to have a markedly bad effect on a child's active pursuit of written skills. "The TV keeps children entertained," complains Albert Tillman, director of the writing clinic at the University of Illinois. "It does not demand that they take active part in their learning."<sup>35</sup>

Another complaint about TV is abuse of the English language. As Dante Peter Ciocchetto explains, "the exposure to the lack of distinction among word meanings, improper idioms, faulty grammatical constructions, and incomplete rhetorical structures makes its marks upon the language that the child internalizes."<sup>36</sup>

Whittemore further feels that the art of reading is gone forever; "Our language standards are now to be set by Barbara Walters."<sup>37</sup>

Even the every day use of the telephone is not without criticism. The telephone has caused us to abandon personal letter writing and has virtually eliminated the need for many business letters.<sup>38</sup>

Other possible contributing factors cited for the decline but not mentioned as often include "the weakening of the family as a social and educational force . . .";<sup>39</sup> an "increase in teen-age drug abuse, alcoholism, and violence indicating that some social pathology is involved in the present decline";<sup>40</sup> less thoughtful and critical reading . . . ;<sup>41</sup> and "careful writing which is going out of style."<sup>42</sup>

In review, there is not a consensus on any one factor which can be blamed entirely for the decline. Instead, the sources listed many factors, all of which must be considered jointly rather than independently.

After discovering that the problem of English competency was a real and nationwide problem and after considering factors believed to have caused this decline, I reviewed the characteristics of the students with writing problems. Could they be classified as having certain traits which singled them out from students without writing problems?

#### General Characteristics of the Student With Writing Difficulties

In today's society there is a tendency to label everything and everyone. It is not the intention nor was it the accomplishment of this paper to set down characteristics of the students with language skills problems; this would be impossible unless every student was considered individually. As will be explained later in order to fully understand the language skill problem it would be necessary to take these individual student factors into account. The best and most thorough sources I found on the subject were Mina P. Shaughnessy's Errors and Expectations, A Guide for the Teacher of Basic Writing and Mina P. Shaughnessy's "Basic Writing."

Students who through their course work are shown to have a problem with writing are referred to according to Shaughnessy as basic writing (BW) students. BW students are characterized as having "non-academic interest, pragmatic educational goals . . . and fear of failure . . ." <sup>43</sup> Shaughnessy clarifies her study by stating that she "would prefer to say the expectation of failure in academic situations without necessarily implying a lack of confidence and sense of self in other settings." <sup>44</sup>

In producing a simple sentence the BW student is characterized as being plagued with many errors. Because of the fear of these errors, he "produces but a few lines an hour and keeps trying to begin, crossing out one try after another until the sentence is hopelessly tangled." <sup>45</sup>

The most common errors are inappropriate word forms. This may be due to a "concentration on getting all the letters of words down on the page," <sup>46</sup> Shaughnessy explains.

A further emphasis is put on the student who has read very little and who has written only for a teacher and therefore has a difficult time believing in a real audience. <sup>47</sup>

The student's main concern according to Shaughnessy is:

. . . with the syntax of competency, not of style, for they lack a sure sense of what the written code will allow. Much of this uneasiness, for the native speaker at least, can be blamed on the writing process itself, which, because it involves different coordinations from those of speech, creates a code-consciousness that can inhibit the writer from doing what he is in fact able to do in the more spontaneous situation of talk. <sup>48</sup>

In the definition of writing Kirrie compares writing to an artificial dialect that lacks the primary characteristic of speech, that of sound. <sup>49</sup> Shaughnessy sees this comparison also and feels that this is where the basic problem lies.

The student is not in the habit of reviewing what he has written but instead moves headlong, as a speaker might, toward the open line, often forgetting the constraints he has set for himself a few words back. This difficulty with "hearing" what has been written leads to bewildering and grammatically unworkable sentences that belie the writer's skill with the language. <sup>50</sup>

Shaughnessy reiterates throughout her books that the BW student is not an elementary-school writer, but instead a young adult whose "difficulty appears, rather, to grow out of an imbalance between his mature perceptions and his rudimentary skills in writing."<sup>51</sup>

In conclusion the student is characterized with:

. . . many non-grammatical conditions and considerations that enter into such an achievement--the amount of writing (and reading) students do, the preconceptions they have about good and bad writing, their attitudes toward themselves as writers, their composing habits, and the connections they make with ideas and audiences.<sup>52</sup>

Although BW students have many characteristics and are not confined to one area of the country, I began to wonder how they could be tested for English competency. Could English competency be tested by a multiple-choice test or was a written test more adequate?

#### Testing English Competency

The consensus is that there is a decline in writing skills, but a major controversy lies with how this decline can be measured. There are two basic methodologies: objective (multiple-choice) and essay tests. The primary difference between a multiple-choice test and an essay test is that in the first one the candidate simply detects an error . . . while in the essay test the emphasis is on the production of actual writing.<sup>53</sup>

The most serious fault found in the multiple-choice test is the lack of face validity.<sup>54</sup> According to Richard Braddock, Research in Written Composition, multiple-choice tests "do not require the examinee to perform the actual behavior being measured--he does no actual writing; but these tests also make little or no attempt to measure the 'larger elements' or composition, even indirectly."<sup>55</sup>

The defenders of multiple-choice tests note that the test "may insure that the examinee faces problems which he might avoid if he were doing his own writing."<sup>56</sup> It should be pointed out that this defense has not been proven.<sup>57</sup>

Many defenders of the multiple-choice test believe that the test predicts the success of students better than an actual writing test.

A recent study using both a multiple-choice and essay test to determine the student's work was done by Hunter M. Breland, College Entrance Examination Board Research and Development, in June, 1974, October 1974, and November 1974.

. . . four institutions collaborated with Educational Testing Service in a special study of college freshman English placement practices and new placement tests, Test of Standard Written English (TSWE). The small number of institutions made possible analysis that had not been possible in previous large-scale studies. The institutions provided data on student performance during college. The Educational Testing Service matched these data with files of other data obtained at the time the students applied for college. There were four results of the study that are of principal interest. First, student performances on essay tests of writing ability were shown to have a strong relationship to student performances on multiple-choice tests of writing ability as represented by the TSWE. Second, the analyses indicated that the multiple-choice test of writing ability predicted actual writing performance during the freshman year as well as or better than a brief essay test given at the beginning of the freshman year. Third, analyses indicated that both the TSWE and the Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) contribute more to the prediction of freshman writing performance than either high school English grades or high school rank. Fourth, the results suggest that the TSWE is more useful in placing students in English composition courses than the SAT, even though a combination of the two provides a better prediction of writing performance than either used alone.<sup>58</sup>

Although this test concludes that multiple-choice tests are good indicators of a student's success, there are still many institutions that use the written essay for placement. The drawback of the written essay is the time which it takes to read the essay.

Although English professors believe that writing samples are needed before deciding what kind of instruction to provide the students, the task of reading essays for all students entering any sizable institution in a given year is onerous. The freshman entering class at a major institution in any year may exceed 2,000 students or more. The dynamics of administering large numbers of screening essays, getting them read, and then arranging for appropriate instructional programs after students arrive on campus are cumbersome indeed.<sup>59</sup>

Other drawbacks of the written essay include expense and efforts involved in reliable rating of actual compositions.

A positive factor of the written essay is for the teacher who is "diagnosing the strengths and weaknesses in the various aspects of the composition of individual students."<sup>60</sup> The multiple-choice test defenders do not claim that their test is useful for this purpose.<sup>61</sup>

## CHAPTER III

### METHODOLOGY

#### The Problem

The main purpose of this study was to determine if there was a significant difference in English competency scores on a multiple-choice test between journalism and non-journalism students.

To provide a proper frame of reference the above differences will be tested against a sample of novice and veteran arts and science majors. These additional groups will allow the analysis to, in addition to testing the primary hypothesis that is that journalism students are more proficient in English competency than non-journalism students, test two additional hypotheses: 1) Do novice and veteran students differ (regardless of major), and 2) Do the journalism majors and arts and science majors show differential rates of change over time (interaction between major and class level)?

The appropriate hypotheses are that 1) a significant difference existed in English competency scores of non-journalism majors compared to journalism majors; 2) a significant difference existed between novice and veteran students' competency scores; and 3) that there was a significant interaction between major and class level.

#### Sample

At Kansas State University, fall 1978, all journalism majors were required to take a sequence of three courses: Reporting I, Reporting II, and Editing I.

For the purposes of this study, students who were just beginning this sequence of courses were called novice (sophomore) journalism students and those completing the sequence of courses veteran students. Both groups and methods for collecting data are described in depth below.

The novice journalism students were sophomores who were just beginning the sequence of required journalism courses (Reporting I, Reporting II, and Editing I). The students were tested during one of the regular Reporting class periods. All Reporting I classes (N=108) were tested during the third class period of fall semester 1978. This time was chosen in hope of allowing students tending to drop or add to stabilize. For the purpose of analysis, 50 of these students met the criteria of the novice journalism group; the remaining 58 students were dropped because they were not sophomores.

Veteran journalism students (N=36) were tested just two weeks away from their completion of the sequence of required journalism courses. That is, they had completed Reporting I, Reporting II, and would complete Editing I within two weeks. The students were tested during a regular class period of Editing I, fall semester, 1978. All 36 students were considered in the subsequent analysis.

Novice non-journalism students (N=72) were sophomores in the College of Arts and Science. The students were tested during one of the regular Oral Communications class periods. For the purpose of analysis, 62 of the students met the criteria of the novice non-journalism group; the remaining 10 students were dropped because they were not sophomore students and, therefore, did not meet the criteria for the purpose of data analysis.

Veteran non-journalism students were juniors and seniors in the College of Arts and Science (N=31). One hundred students were randomly selected from the 1978-79 University Campus Directory and contacted for a testing appointment. Seventy-eight were contacted by telephone; seventeen were sent letters, and five could not be reached by telephone and their letters were returned. Thirty-one students took the test on one of three of the selected nights.



### The Instrument

A number of factors were considered in choosing a multiple-choice test over a written essay. First, as stated in Chapter II, Breland noted that a student's performance on an essay test of writing ability has been shown to have a strong relationship to a student's performance on a multiple-choice test of writing ability as represented by the Test of Standard Written English.

Second, it was felt that the amount of time required on the test could be a crucial factor in student participation. While participation was voluntary for all groups, the veteran non-journalism students were asked to volunteer their time outside a class. It was felt that the chances of getting students to voluntarily take a written test without offering a reward was slim.

A third factor was finding reliable and trained judges. Since no funds were available for training and it was not felt two or three outside people could be asked to judge approximately 200 papers without receiving some monetary reward, it was felt that essay tests could not be used.

The specific skills to be evaluated included six components: punctuation, semantics, spelling, subject-verb agreement, modification, and parallel construction.

Many multiple-choice tests were reviewed. The Grammar, Usage, Spelling, Punctuation test given to beginning journalism students at Pennsylvania State University was selected because, of the tests studied, it was the only one which tested all six components plus sentence fragments and pronoun agreement.

The Pennsylvania State test consists of 100 multiple-choice items. Because the time element involved in completing a 100-item multiple-choice test could not easily be completed in a one hour class, the test was reduced to 50 items before administration in this study.<sup>62</sup> The components tested in the original 100 items were kept in proportion in the 50-item test (Chart A).

The researcher classified each sentence on the original test (Appendix F).

CHART A

Category Classification of Original and Revised Test

	<u>Number of Test Sentences</u>	
	<u>Original</u>	<u>Revised</u>
Punctuation	31	15
Semantics	24	12
Spelling	17	9
Subject-Verb Agreement	14	7
Modification	7	3
Parallel Construction	2	1
Pronoun Agreement	4	2
Sentence Fragment	<u>1</u>	<u>1</u>
TOTAL	100	50

Several aspects of the original test should be noted.<sup>63</sup>

1. Under subject-verb agreement the test also tests pronoun-verb agreement.
2. Under semantics some sentences also may be considered spelling. It tests whether the student knows the difference between the singular and plural of some words. Berner saw it as a semantics problem, not spelling.
3. Modification is usually a case of modifying word or phrase being out of place. That is manifested in the test in dangling participles.<sup>64</sup>

Berner further suggested that when cutting the test in half the same percentage of categories be maintained. He suggested the use of eight spelling sentences, since he did not like testing spelling unless the test taker could use a dictionary. Furthermore, concerning spelling, he suggested only those sentences in which the misspelled word violated a "rule" of spelling be kept. Both of these suggestions were incorporated in the revised test.

According to Berner the reliability of the original test was

	<u>Kuder-Richardson (K-R) 20</u>
Fall Term 1977	.85
Winter, 1978	.84
Spring, 1978	.84
Spring, 1978	.81 <sup>65</sup>

The reliability of the revised test was measured using the K-R 20 formula.

### Rights of Human Subject Statement

Novice journalism majors, veteran journalism majors, and novice non-journalism majors were read a statement concerning the voluntary nature of the test at the beginning of the test. The statement is reproduced below:

I am Nancy Denning, and I am working on a master's thesis here at K-State. I would like to administer a test to you. Before I hand out the test, I would like to explain a couple of things.

First, you are under no obligation to take the test. If you don't want to take the test, you are free to leave.

If after the test is handed out you realize that you have taken it before, you may not take it again. The test will in no way hinder your grade in this course.

As you will see, there is no way I will even know who is returning the cards. Your instructor will not see or handle the cards at all.

Are there any questions?

There were six students in one Reporting I class who preferred not to take the test.

### Instructions for Taking Instrument

Number 2 pencils and IBM cards were furnished to the students. The first page of the test directed those being tested to fill out two blanks on the IBM card. The first blank was where the name would normally be entered. In this space, they were instructed to put their declared major. This was used to weed out any journalism majors in the non-journalism group and vice-versa.

In addition, oral instructions were administered concerning their classification (class level). These instructions were given orally because it was felt that it would be less confusing. For students who were not sure how they were classified under the University system, they were asked how many hours they had accumulated and given the appropriate University's classification.

The second page of the test presented the directions for completing the test. Students were told to read the directions but not to begin the test until they were told. No questions were asked concerning these directions.

### Planned Analysis

A two-way analysis of variance, time (novice/veteran) by major (journalism/non-journalism) was used to analyze the dependent measure of English competency scores. For the purpose of this study, results were considered significant if the probability of receiving such mean differences were .05 or smaller.

## CHAPTER IV

### RESULTS

To analyze the results of this study the reliability of the revised instrument was examined to see how precisely it was measuring the English proficiency. English proficiency categories were then inspected to determine which ones were deemed easy and difficult by each group tested. After the instrument had been analyzed, a two-way analysis of variance was used to determine if differences existed between the journalism and non-journalism groups, between the novice and veteran groups, and if an interaction was evident.

#### Reliability

To make generalizations from the results of the revised instrument, some estimate of reliability was necessary. Reliability is a measure of the precision of the test; it estimates the extent to which measurements of particular traits are repeatable under the same conditions.<sup>66</sup> As an indication of the success of the attempt to shorten the test, it was desirable to compare the reliability of the revised 50-item instrument and that of the original 100-item test. In this study the Kuder-Richardson 20 formula was used to establish the internal consistency reliability of the revised 50-item instrument since it is not possible to guarantee that each item in the test had equal difficulty.<sup>67</sup> The Spearman, Brown prophecy formula was applied to the K-R 20 coefficient for the revised instrument to make the reliability equivalent to that of the original 100-item test.<sup>68</sup>

Table 3 shows the pertinent statistics for the four administrations of the 100-item test and for the revised 50-item test. It can be seen that the

estimated reliability of a 100-item instrument was higher than that of the original 100-item test. The original 100-item instrument reliabilities ranged from .81 to .85 while the estimated reliability of a 100-item revised test was .89. If the means and standard deviations of the 50-item test were adjusted to make it equivalent to a 100-item test, the mean would be 47.72, and the standard deviation would be 13.22. Comparing these statistics with those of the 100-item tests shows that the 50-item test was either harder and/or given to a different population. Considering the fact that the 100-item test was given only to journalism students, while the revised 50-item test was given to both journalism and non-journalism students, one would suspect different populations as the cause for the 50-item test appearing more difficult.

Table 3. Statistics for the Old and Revised Test.

Administration	Items	N	Mean	Std. Dev.	K-R 20
Fall, 1977	100	128	55.59	10.82	.85
Winter, 1978	100	81	55.20	10.56	.84
Spring, 1978	100	30	75.40	9.16	.84
Spring, 1978	100	73	57.85	9.88	.81
Revised, 1978	50	246	23.86	6.97	.80
Estimated 100-item Revised, 1978	100	246	47.72	13.22	.89

#### Question Categories

In an attempt to identify specifically where differences occur in the content of the test, items in the test were classified into the type of content they tested (See Chart A, p. 23).

The specific items tested in the revised test were compared across the four groups (See Table 4). To aid in illustrating different categories of questions items responded to correctly by 75 percent or more of the subjects were labeled "easy," while those responded to correctly by 25 percent or less of the subjects were labeled "difficult."

As can be seen in Table 4, the journalism students found 46 percent of the punctuation items easy while non-journalism students found 20 percent of the items easy. However, the difference between veteran and novice in the number of easy items was very small. This can be seen as the result of a very small number of easy items for the novice non-journalism group and a somewhat higher number of easy items for the novice journalism groups which when added over novice yielded little novice-veteran difference but yields a journalism-non-journalism difference when added over novice-veteran.

Concerning the difficult punctuation questions, there was no difference between journalism and non-journalism groups. The difference between novice and veteran was very small, seven percent. This can be seen to result from the veteran journalism group not finding the questions difficult at all, while the other three groups found an equal percentage of the questions difficult (13 percent).

Sentence fragment was tested using one question and all four groups found it to be easy.

Table 4 shows journalism students finding a higher percentage of the semantics questions easier than the non-journalism groups and the veterans found the category easier than the novice students. The journalism-non-journalism difference seemed to stem from the fact that there were large differences between the journalism and non-journalism groups at both the veteran and novice levels. Likewise, the novice group was much lower than the veteran group for both journalism and non-journalism groups.

There seemed to be no apparent difference in the semantic category for non-journalism and journalism and novice and veteran students. This was caused by none of the groups except the novice non-journalism group finding the questions difficult and only eight percent of that group finding them so.

The difference between journalism and non-journalism in the number of easy modification questions was high, with 33 percent of the journalism students

Table 4. Percent of Items Which Were Easy (75% Correct) and Difficult (25% Correct) for Each Type of Student.

	Non-Journalism		Novice Journalism		Veteran Journalism		Novice Non-Journalism		Veteran Non-Journalism		Veteran Journalism		Total # of Items		
	Easy	Dif- ficult	Easy	Dif- ficult	Easy	Dif- ficult	Easy	Dif- ficult	Easy	Dif- ficult	Easy	Dif- ficult			
														Percent	Percent
Punctuation	20%	13%	46%	13%	20%	13%	33%	6%	13%	33%	27%	13%	27%	0	15
Parallel Construction	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Semantics	8%	0	25%	0	8%	0	33%	8%	8%	17%	0	33%	0	58%	12
Modification	0	0	33%	0	0	0	33%	0	0	33%	33%	0	33%	0	3
Subject/Verb Agreement	0	14%	0	0	0	14%	0	0	14%	0	29%	0	14%	0	7
Spelling	0	33%	0	22%	0	44%	0	11%	56%	0	33%	0	22%	0	9
Pronoun Antecedent	0	100%	0	50%	0	50%	0	100%	0	50%	0	50%	0	50%	2
Sentence Fragment	100%	0	100%	0	100%	0	100%	0	100%	0	100%	0	100%	0	1



finding the questions easy. The case also was true for novice and veteran students. Both of these differences were caused by the novice non-journalism groups finding none of the questions easy, while the other three groups each found 33 percent of the questions easy.

There was no difference between major (journalism, non-journalism), time (novice, veteran) groups on the percentage of difficult modification questions. However, 33 percent of the questions were found difficult by novice journalism and veteran non-journalism groups, but when the groups were combined to form journalism non-journalism or novice veteran groups these differences cancelled each other.

The subject-verb agreement category was not found to be easy by any of the four groups. Small differences were found in the difficulty. Non-journalism students found 14 percent of the questions difficult, while none of the journalism group did so. The novice group found 14 percent of the questions difficult, while the veteran students had no problem. This can be attributed to two factors. First, none of the veteran journalism students found the subject-verb agreement questions difficult. When these two groups were added it became 0. Second, both the novice non-journalism and veteran non-journalism groups found an equal percentage of the questions difficult.

None of the four groups found the spelling questions easy. Only a slight difference was found between the non-journalism and journalism groups. On difficulty, however, the novice group found 44 percent of the questions difficult compared to the veterans with 11 percent. This can be attributed to the fact that the veteran journalism students found only 11 percent of these questions difficult. Furthermore, the veteran journalism and veteran non-journalism groups found only a small percentage of the questions difficult.

Of the two pronoun antecedent questions, neither was found easy by any of the groups. Though there appears to be a difference between journalism and

non-journalism groups the fact that only one more question was found to be easy by the journalism group discounts this finding.

The sentence parallel construction was not found easy or hard by either group. Appendix F gives a detailed breakdown of each question including item difficulty and standard deviation.

#### Analysis of Variance

The two-way analysis of variance allows the researcher to examine the effects of two independent factors on a dependent factor. The analysis provides tests for significant difference between the group means for each level of each independent factor separately (main effect). It also provides a test for separate influences of one level of the independent variable on other levels of another independent variable (interaction).<sup>69</sup>

The first hypothesis stated that students in different majors would be significantly different in English competency scores, with journalism students achieving higher scores than non-journalism students. The resultant statistic,  $F(1,171) = 18.50$ ,  $p < .001$  supported this hypothesis (Table 5). The resultant means are shown in Table 6 and indicate, as predicted, that journalism students do significantly better than non-journalism students.

Table 5. Analysis of Variance of Test Scores.

Source	d.f.	Sums of Squares	Mean Square	F-Ratio	Prob.
TIME (veteran, novice)	1	514.59	514.59	12.81	0.01
MAJOR (non-journalism, journalism)	1	743.69	743.69	18.50	.001
MAJOR X TIME (interaction)	1	4.07	4.07	0.10	0.75
ERROR	171	6991.72	40.18		

Table 6. Table of Means and Standard Errors of Test Scores.

Source	N	Mean	Standard Error
Non-journalism	80	23.4	0.73
Journalism	98	27.0	0.66

Hypothesis two stated that there would be a significant difference in the English competency scores of novices and veterans with veterans scoring higher. The mean effect of time in the analysis of variance (Table 5) was significant  $F(1,171) = 12.81, p < .01$ . Therefore, as shown by the means in Table 7, the analysis supports the view that veterans achieve higher scores than novices.

Table 7. Table of Means and Standard Errors of Test Scores.

Source	N	Mean	Standard Error
Novice	112	23.0	0.60
Veteran	66	27.3	0.78

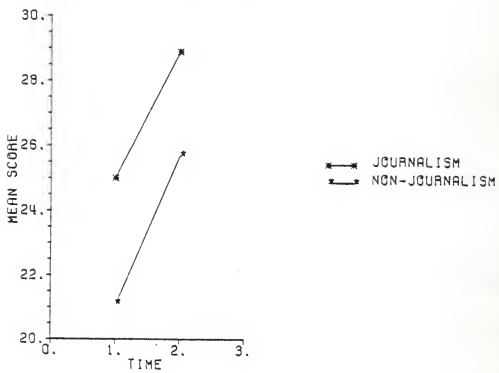
Finally, the third hypothesis stated the ratio of change over time would be significantly greater for journalism vs. non-journalism students (a significant interaction). As is shown in Table 5 the interaction was not significant,  $F(1,171) = 0.10, p > 0.05$ , and therefore this hypothesis was rejected. The resultant means shown in Table 8 indicate that the rate of change for both training groups was similar and can be considered the same. Figure 1 indicates the significant differences between the novice and veteran groups, and between the journalism and non-journalism students, but indicates the similar rate of change over time for both journalism and non-journalism students.

Table 8. Table of Means and Standard Errors of Test Scores.

Source	N	Mean	Standard Error
Non-journalism, novice	50	21.1	0.89
Non-journalism, veteran	30	25.7	1.15
Journalism, novice	62	25.0	0.80
Journalism, veteran	36	28.9	1.05

The analysis of variance showed that journalism students perform significantly better than non-journalism students; veteran students did significantly better than novice students; and no interaction was evident indicating the growth rate was the same for both journalism and non-journalism students.

FIGURE 1.  
INTERACTION BETWEEN MAJORS AND TIME



CHAPTER V  
CONCLUSIONS AND DISCUSSION

The main purpose of this study was to determine if there was a significant difference in English competency scores of journalism and non-journalism students.

To provide a proper frame of reference against which to test for this difference, samples of novice and veteran Arts and Science majors were used as baseline groups. These additional groups allowed the analysis to, in addition to the primary hypothesis, test several additional questions: 1) Did novice and veteran students differ (regardless of major), and 2) Did the journalism majors and Arts and Science majors show differential rates of change over time (interaction between major and class level)?

Therefore, the appropriate hypotheses studied in this report were that 1) a significant difference existed in English competency scores of non-journalism majors compared to journalism majors; 2) a significant difference existed between novice and veteran students' competency scores; and 3) that there was a significant interaction between major and class level.

Conclusions which can be drawn from this study involve the psychometric properties of the revised instrument and the analysis of the scores attained on that instrument by veteran journalism students, veteran non-journalism students, novice journalism students, and novice non-journalism students. First conclusions concerning the instrument will be discussed; then conclusions about the analysis results will be detailed.

### The Instrument

To test English competency, a multiple-choice test was used. The findings of the Breland study cited in Chapter III have demonstrated that there is a strong relationship between a student's performance on essay tests and multiple-choice tests of writing ability. Since essay tests take a good deal of time to grade, are hard to judge in an unbiased and reliable manner, and are expensive to administer, the multiple-choice exam was chosen. An additional factor in rejecting an essay approach was as Braddock states, "the essay exam is useful to the teacher who is looking for particular strengths and weaknesses in individual students' performances."<sup>70</sup> Since this was not the purpose of this study, the multiple-choice test was chosen as a more useful and economical approach to measuring the English competency of the four groups involved in this study.

The original test selected was a 100-item multiple-choice exam developed and used at Pennsylvania State University. To insure completion of the exam in an hour, the test was cut to 50 items, retaining the same proportion of categories of items. The results indicated that the attempts to maintain adequate quality were successful and the revised examination if it were expanded to full length would have a higher reliability than the original. Thus, the revised test proved to be a slightly more precise instrument than the original test. A reasonable explanation for this is that the 50 questions selected contained a higher proportion of the best, that is those questions which best tested English competency, of questions in the 100-item test.

If the revised test were to be increased to full length with the same type of items, the mean of the revised test would be lower than that of the original; plus, the revised test would have a higher variance than the original. Two factors could account for this. First, the revised test was given to a different population, with the original test being given only to beginning journalism students and the revised test being given to novice and veteran journalism students and novice and veteran Arts and Science students. A second

and possibly more important factor is that perhaps the revised test was more difficult than the original test.

In conclusion, the revised 50 multiple-choice test provided a reliable measure of English competency. It should be noted that the reliability of the test was excellent for group differences work but would not be suitable for individual diagnostic purposes.

### Analysis of Variance

The results of the analysis of variance discussed in the previous chapter led to the acceptance of the hypotheses that there was a difference between journalism and non-journalism students and that there was a difference between the novice and veteran students. It prompted the rejection of the hypothesis that there was an interaction. Analysis of the means showed that journalism students did significantly better than non-journalism students; veteran students did better than novice students; and that these results held when considering the influence of each group on the other (interaction).

Since journalism students did better than non-journalism students on the exam, it can be concluded that journalism students have a higher English competency than non-journalism students. This fact seems to be in line with the results shown in the Pennsylvania State University study.<sup>71</sup> At Pennsylvania State University the test was given only to journalism students and yielded a higher mean than the revised test which was given to a mixture of journalism and non-journalism students. This difference could be attributed to the amount of writing journalism students are required to do and the training they are exposed to. The definition of English competency given by Gerard in Carefully Crafted Programs states that competency "depends on the formation of a habit ... (and) like all habits, one formed slowly and imperceptibly."<sup>72</sup> Therefore, it can be concluded that journalism students have formulated the habit of writing well through practice.



According to the findings of ACT,<sup>73</sup> women did better than men on the ACT English test for students enrolling in ACT participating colleges in 1970-71, 1972-73, 1973-74, and 1974-75. Therefore, one possible explanation for the differences found in this study is that more females were in the journalism group, causing that group to score higher. This was not found to be the case since the male-female enrollment rate was very similar (45% male for novice journalism, 43% male for veteran journalism, 47% male for novice non-journalism, and 47% male for veteran non-journalism) in this study. The samples were random, so it is hard to conclude that they were much different even though sex of the subjects was not controlled.

That veteran students performed significantly better than novice students on the test indicated that veteran students are more proficient than novice students. The obvious reason for this finding is the higher amounts of experience and training that veteran students receive. This would be in line with the statement by Gerrard<sup>74</sup> that English proficiency comes with practice. The novice group consisted of first semester sophomores, and the veteran group was composed of juniors and seniors. The extra one to two years of experience gave the veteran students more time to practice and become more proficient. No conclusions can be drawn concerning the kinds of experience the four groups had, however, since no statistics were collected on their writing experience. Since the procedures allowed self-selection on the part of veteran non-journalism students, this somewhat hinders any further conclusion as to why the veteran students did better than the novice students. Perhaps poorer students have been eliminated from the veteran group because of bad grades, making the veteran group better for a reason other than experience.

Since the interaction was not significant, this would strongly support the view that membership in the journalism group or in the non-journalism group had no influence on the fact that veterans did significantly better than novices. It also shows that it made no difference whether a subject was a

novice or veteran student in the fact that the journalism group did significantly better than the non-journalism group.

Another interpretation of this fact is that the rate of improvement in English proficiency was the same for both the journalism group and the non-journalism group even though the journalism group did significantly better than the non-journalism group both at the novice and veteran stages. This is subject to the same restraints as mentioned in the previous paragraph. One could conclude then that the training of both journalism and non-journalism groups was providing similar increases in English proficiency. Although the coursework promoting English proficiency was probably more formal for the journalism group than the non-journalism group the increase was the same. It was assumed that the veteran non-journalism group had only Oral Communication, English Composition I and II while the veteran journalism group had Reporting I and II and Editing I in addition to the three courses the veteran non-journalism group had. Perhaps the increase in the veteran non-journalism group was because of experience gained through written reports and term papers. The fact that the veteran non-journalism group was self-selected, while the other three groups were not, could also result in the appearance of similar growth rates. It is conceivable that the subjects who participated in the veteran non-journalism group were highly motivated and chose to participate because they felt they could do well. This would cause the mean of the veteran non-journalism group to be abnormally high.

#### Question Categories

Further analysis of the particular content areas revealed that items relating to punctuation, sentence fragmentation, semantics, and modification categories were found to be the easiest for all four groups. In all cases journalism and veteran students showed at least equal or higher percentages of easy questions than did the non-journalism and novice student. Spelling, subject-verb agreement, and pronoun antecedent questions were found to be the

most difficult of the eight categories. Journalism and veteran students showed lower percentages of difficult questions than did non-journalism and novice students. Parallel construction was not found to be either easy or difficult by any of the four groups. It can be concluded from this analysis of question categories that journalism and veteran students perform better in all content areas with the exception of parallel construction where all groups performed equally in the area.

This question analysis supports the previous finding; that is, that journalism students did better than non-journalism students and that veterans did better than novice students. The questions that were found to be the easiest by all four groups include punctuation, sentence fragmentation, semantics, and modification. Spelling, subject-verb agreement, and pronoun antecedent gave the groups the most difficulty. Parallel construction was neither easy nor difficult for the four groups.

### Conclusion

In conclusion, the revised 50-item examination was of adequate quality and if it were expanded to full length would have a higher reliability than the original 100-item exam. Thus, the revised test proved to be a slightly more precise instrument than the original test. A reasonable explanation for this is that the 50 questions selected contained a higher proportion of the best, that is those questions which best tested English competency, of the questions in the 100-item test. If the revised test were to be increased to full length with the same type of items, the mean of the revised test would be lower than that of the original. Two factors could account for this. This could have been caused by giving the test to two different populations or that the revised test was more difficult. The revised test tested only the mean scores of the four groups and cannot be used in discussing individuals' strengths or weaknesses.

In the analysis of variance, a significant difference was found between the English competency of journalism and non-journalism majors. This difference could be attributed to writing experience, and/or training.

It was also found that veteran students did better than novice students in English competency. This could be attributed to experience although no data were collected concerning this factor. Another factor is attrition; perhaps the poorer students dropped out of the veteran groups.

There was no significant interaction, therefore the growth rate was the same for journalism and non-journalism students. This could be attributed to training, experience, and self-selection of the veteran non-journalism students.

In retrospect, future studies should include measures to control composition of groups. Factors such as age, experience, sex, performance on ACT, SAT and/or GRE tests could be considered to make the groups more comparable. Perhaps a longitudinal study using the same subjects measured at different points of their academic careers used in conjunction with the collection of more background information would be most beneficial.

It should be stated that this study can in no way be the basis for generalizations about the journalism or Arts and Science curricula at Kansas State University. It is only intended to show the relationship of scores between sophomores and junior and senior journalism majors and sophomores and junior and senior Arts and Science students at Kansas State University, fall semester, 1978.

While it was not the purpose of this study to pass judgment on either the journalism or Arts and Science curricula, it might be suggested that a back to basics, including spelling course, be offered by both. While the journalism students did do significantly better, I feel that they should have done even better. I feel this way because of the experience I have had with writing stories and the constant application of grammar rules which I use daily in my

work. As an example, the word accommodate was the most missed question on the test. This word is used a lot in newspaper writing and should be rote to journalism majors. I did not learn the proper spelling of it until I gave this test. Perhaps Reporting I teachers should spend more of their class time and assignments reviewing basic grammar and spelling rules. This may sound boring and elementary but the payoff in the end would be high.

I feel a big fault of the university's system is with classes outside the field of journalism and the English department. Papers written for professors outside these two fields are often graded for content alone with little or no attention paid to grammar. Without a negative response from the professor the student continues to write in the same unrefined way.

A further suggestion has to be made for the English department. They presently offer a Modern English Grammar course at the graduate level. I have taken the course and found it most beneficial in the review of all the grammar rules and their uses. What a pity this is offered at a graduate level and not at an introductory level.

In conclusion, I feel that the real fault lies in the lower schools. The lowest score on the test was a four. It is inconceivable to me how a sophomore at a university could get through high school and one year of college and answer only four questions correctly on an English competency exam. I think that junior and senior high schools must crack down on their graduation requirements. How sad it will be if a nation as great as ours continues toward the trend it is setting to turn out students who have difficulty writing a simple sentence.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup>Personal conversation, Dr. Carol Oukrop, associate professor, Journalism and Mass Communications, Kansas State University, 1978.

<sup>2</sup>Palo Alto Times, Friday, Nov. 19, 1976.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.

<sup>4</sup>"Over one-third fail to pass writing exam," Editor and Publisher, Nov. 2, 1974.

<sup>5</sup>"The Test That Shows the Drop," San Francisco Chronicle, Aug. 26, 1976.

<sup>6</sup>Bill Peterson, "Now, colleges have discovered the forgotten 'R,'" Sunday Sun-Times, Sept. 25, 1977.

<sup>7</sup>Mina P. Shaugnessy, Errors and Expectations: A Guide for the Teacher of Basic Writing (New York: Oxford University Press, 1977), p. 88.

<sup>8</sup>Marjorie Kirrie, "Teaching Writing in the World that Writing Built," The College Board Review 107 (Spring 1978):20.

<sup>9</sup>Michael S. Gerrard, "Carefully Crafted Programs," The College Board Review 107 (Spring 1978):30.

<sup>10</sup>Jayne Karsten, "Some Comments from the Field," The Teaching of Expository Writing--An Exchange of Views. An occasional paper from the Alfred P. Sloan Foundation, James D. Koerner, ed., p. 51.

<sup>11</sup>Gerrard, "Carefully Crafted Programs," p. 30.

<sup>12</sup>Norman Macrae, "How to Improve Writing Skills," The Teaching of Expository Writing--An Exchange of Views. An occasional paper from the Alfred P. Sloan Foundation, James D. Koerner, ed., p. 29.

<sup>13</sup>"Why Johnny Can't Write," Newsweek, Nov. 8, 1975, p. 58.

<sup>14</sup>Ibid.

<sup>15</sup>Ibid.

<sup>16</sup>Abstract from Midstate, Model Use of the ACT Assessment Program. ACT Research Report No. 71, Feb. 1976, p. 2.64.

<sup>17</sup>Ibid.

<sup>18</sup>L.A. Munday, "Declining Admission Test Scores," ACT Research Report No. 71, Feb. 1976, pp. 8-9.

- 19 "Why Johnny Can't Write," p. 59.
- 20 Ibid.
- 21 Ibid.
- 22 Ibid.
- 23 Ibid.
- 24 Carol Oukrop and Lee Brown, "A Brief Report on What J Schools Are Doing About Journalism Language Skills," AEJ Convention paper, Madison, Wisconsin, August, 1977.
- 25 Kansas State Board of Education, Kansas State Board of Education Position on Competency Based Education for Kansas Schools, adopted Jan. 19, 1978, pp. 1-2.
- 26 "Kansas House Bill N. 3115 as Amended by House Committee," USA Legislative News, Feb. 22, 1978.
- 27 Ibid.
- 28 "Functionally illiteracy," Editor & Publisher, June 12, 1976.
- 29 Karsten, "Some Comments from the Field," p. 51.
- 30 Muday, "Declining Admission Test Scores," pp. 9-10.
- 31 Richard W. Hatch, "Some Comments from the Field," The Teaching of Expository Writing--An Exchange of Views. An occasional paper from the Alfred P. Sloan Foundation, James D. Koerner, ed., p. 56.
- 32 Kathryn McDonald Nelson, "A New Look at the Teaching of Writing," The College Board Review 107 (Spring 1978):10.
- 33 "Why Johnny Can't Write," p. 62.
- 34 Reed Whittemore, "The Newspeak Generation," Harper's, Feb. 1977, p. 24.
- 35 "Why Johnny Can't Write," p. 58.
- 36 Dante Peter Ciocchetto, "Some Comments from the Field," The Teaching of Expository Writing--An Exchange of Views. An occasional paper from the Alfred P. Sloan Foundation, James D. Koerner, ed., p. 56.
- 37 Whittemore, "The Newspeak Generation," p. 25.
- 38 "Why Johnny Can't Write," p. 58.
- 39 Shaughnessy, Errors and Expectations, p. 51.
- 40 Albert H. Bowker, "Writing Skills and Institutional Articulation," The Teaching of Expository Writing--An Exchange of Views. An occasional paper from the Alfred P. Sloan Foundation, James D. Koerner, ed., p. 2.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid.

<sup>42</sup> Nelson, "A New Look at the Teaching of Writing," p. 10.

<sup>43</sup> Mina P. Shaughnessy, "Basic Writing," Teaching Composition, 10 Bibliographical Essays, ed. Gary Tate (Fort Worth: Texas Christian University Press, 1976), pp. 138-39.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid.

<sup>45</sup> Shaughnessy, Errors and Expectations, p. 7.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid., p. 75.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid., p. 39.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid., pp. 44-45.

<sup>49</sup> Kirrie, "Teaching Writing in the World that Writing Built," p. 20.

<sup>50</sup> Shaughnessy, Errors and Expectations, p. 59.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid., p. 89.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid.

<sup>53</sup> Gerrard, "Carefully Crafted Programs," p. 29.

<sup>54</sup> Richard Braddock, Richard Lloyd-Jones, and Lowell Schoer, Research in Written Composition (n.p.: National Council of Teachers of English, 1963), p. 40.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid., p. 42.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid., p. 43.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid.

<sup>58</sup> The Study of College English Placement & The Test of Standard Written English, Hunter M. Breland, College Entrance Examination Board Research & Development Report, RDR-76-77, No. 4, Project Report, PR-77-1, Jan. 1977, p. i.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid., p. 109.

<sup>60</sup> Braddock et al, Research in Written Composition, p. 44.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid., p. 45.

<sup>62</sup> Don Hoyt, Director of Educational Resources, Kansas State University, personal conversation, 1978.

<sup>63</sup> R. Thomas Berner, professor, Journalism and Mass Communications, Pennsylvania State University, personal conversation, 1978.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid.



65 Ibid.

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67 Ibid., p. 125.

68 "Fundamental Research Statistics for the Behavioral Sciences," John T. Roscoe, New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1969, pp. 105-106.

69 "Psychological Statistics," Quinn McNemar, New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 1969, pp. 325-327.

70 Ibid., p. 43.

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72 Gerrard, "Carefully Crafted Programs," p. 30.

73 Abstract from Midstate, p. 5.

74 Gerrard, "Carefully Crafted Programs," p. 30.

APPENDIX A

ORIGINAL TEST CLASSIFICATION OF QUESTIONS

SUBJECT VERB AGREEMENT - QUESTIONS

1, 4, 7, 10, 19, 22, 23, 40, 53, 57, 71, 87, 94, 99

MODIFICATION

18, 32, 33, 42, 80, 91

PRONOUN ANTECEDENT

60, 73, 82, 93

PARALLEL CONSTRUCTION

66, 89

SENTENCE FRAGMENT

72

SEMANTICS

6, 9, 11, 21, 28, 29, 34, 39, 45, 51, 55, 56, 61, 67, 70, 75, 76, 78, 90,  
92, 97, 100

SPELLING

8, 15, 17, 20, 25, 35, 37, 38, 44, 47, 49, 52, 59, 64, 69, 79, 83

PUNCTUATION

2, 3, 5, 12, 13, 14, 16, 24, 26, 27, 30, 31, 36, 41, 46, 48, 50, 58, 62, 63,  
65, 68, 77, 81, 84, 85, 86, 88, 95, 96, 98

APPENDIX B

REVISED TEST CLASSIFICATION OF QUESTIONS

SUBJECT VERB AGREEMENT

1, 4, 7, 53, 57, 94, 99

MODIFICATION

32, 43, 80

PRONOUN ANTECEDENT

60, 93

PARALLEL CONSTRUCTION

72

SEMANTICS

6, 9, 11, 21, 34, 54, 70, 74, 76, 90, 92, 100

SPELLING

8, 17, 25, 35, 38, 47, 59, 69, 83

PUNCTUATION

24, 26, 27, 36, 41, 50, 58, 62, 65, 68, 77, 85, 86, 95, 98

APPENDIX C

## SCHOOL OF JOURNALISM LANGUAGE TEST

**DIRECTIONS:** The following sentences may have errors in grammar, usage, redundancy, preferred spelling or punctuation. There are no capitalization errors nor are there any errors in proper nouns or foreign words. There is no more than one error to a sentence. Every sentence could be rewritten to make it better. However, that is not the purpose of this test.

If a sentence is correct as written, mark space E on your answer sheet. If it is incorrect, mark on your answer sheet the area of the sentence (A, B, C, D) containing the error. The designated section of the sentence may not be in error by itself but would be if considered in the context of the entire sentence. Here is a sample sentence and answer.

(a) People, who (b) live in glass houses (c) shouldn't throw (d) stones.

The error is in part (a) of the sentence. Your answer sheet for this sentence would look like this: A ● B 0 C 0 D 0 E 0

**STOP.** Wait for further instructions or take time now to ask questions. You may not ask any questions during the test. Do not mark this test. You must return it. You have one hour, 15 minutes.

- (a) According to Mr. Fulmer's letter, (b) the date, time and place (c) of the county committee meeting (d) has yet to be set.
- (a) Police arrested a total of nine terrorists, (b) four Lebanese, (c) two members of the IRA, (d) two Algerians and a Brazilian.
- (a) The new tax law, with its many exceptions and qualifications (b) makes the tax forms difficult (c) to understand, (d) the tax collector said.
- (a) The survey shows that (b) only one of the nine students in the class (c) find college less demanding (d) than high school.

5. (a) He says he does not (b) like basketball, I doubt (c) that he has seen two games (d) in his life.
6. (a) The body of Franco (b) will lay in state until (c) services are held (d) at the chapel.
7. (a) Neither Pittsburgh nor Philadelphia (b) is (c) the kind of city (d) I would like to visit.
8. (a) The accomodations (b) were insufficient (c) to house everyone (d) at the conference.
9. (a) In the American system of justice, (b) judges are (c) trained to be (d) uninterested observers during trials.
10. (a) Not one of (b) the members of the team (c) were able to explain the loss (d) to the satisfaction of the fans.
11. (a) There were less jellybeans (b) in the jar than (c) we had first (d) imagined.
12. (a) When we had finished (b) eating the beer we (c) had brought on the picnic (d) was opened.
13. (a) He has three sisters; (b) his sister Judy (c) is a registered nurse (d) who just received her college degree.
14. (a) Sally another one of his sisters (b) is licensed by the State (c) of Pennsylvania as (d) an x-ray technician.
15. (a) The president of the company (b) puts alot of trust (c) in the old-fashioned common sense (d) of his workers.
16. (a) He found the (b) book a 900-page volume, (c) very difficult to read (d) to himself or to his children.
17. (a) This sentence may be (b) all right with you (c) but its not (d) all right with me.
18. (a) A professor of renowned scholarship, they entrusted (b) him with the chairmanship (c) of the department in an effort to raise (d) the department's standards.



19. (a) All of the animals (b) in the zoo are fed (c) at the same time so that the workers (d) can stay on a regular schedule.
20. (a) The petition (b) alleges (c) that the privately owned road (d) is unfit.
21. (a) The psychiatrist (b) wanted to know (c) the affect the drug had (d) on his patients.
22. (a) Budget limitations (b) of a newspaper this size (c) prevents the hiring (d) of a staff for investigative reporting.
23. (a) Murder is (b) one of those horrors (c) that causes trusting people (d) to lock their doors at night.
24. (a) Maine Attorney General, Joseph Brennan, (b) argued that it doesn't cost (c) the Postal Service 13 cents (d) to deliver a first-class letter.
25. (a) The organization is in need (b) of someone who (c) can provide liason (d) with other community groups.
26. (a) The system did not seem (b) to be working on this day, it (c) kept rejecting (d) the operator's instructions.
27. (a) William K. Steigerwalt, (b) president of the Laurel Valley National Bank has announced (c) the promotion of two officers (d) at the bank's main office.
28. (a) At last night's meeting of the council, (b) a widow woman smoked so much (c) the mayor started coughing (d) and had to leave the room.
29. (a) A magazine without advertising (b) is a phenomena not often seen (c) in a media system (d) so dependent on advertising revenues.
30. (a) The third annual conference which (b) was held after the disaster, (c) left the participants as confused and discouraged (d) as before the disaster.
31. (a) The good old (b) days of (c) free enterprise (d) are over.
32. (a) It is inconceivable to me (b) that a registered nurse would be ashamed (c) to take her child to (d) a doctor with recurring pinworms.

33. (a) Although working full time on a job, my grades (b) remained good, (c) an indication of my commitment (d) to learning.
34. (a) The intelligence unit (b) tried to illicit (c) as much information as possible (d) from the spy.
35. (a) After carefully reviewing the proposal, (b) the municipal (c) manager agreed that it would be (d) all right to try it.
36. (a) The new faculty member (b) proposed the following changes to his colleagues, (c) discontinue two writing courses, add three theory courses (d) and increase the length of class sessions.
37. (a) Timothy R. Klingman, (b) assistant superintendant of instruction, said (c) he is pleased with the (d) committee's work.
38. (a) He took the dead soldier's (b) helmet because (c) he wanted a memento (d) of the war.
39. (a) He is the general whom (b) the reporters in the Pacific Theater (c) agree is the most popular (d) with the troops.
40. (a) Two of every three students (b) scores below the national average (c) whenever standardized achievement (d) tests are administered.
41. (a) "Nixon would have accepted with pleasure", the (b) fur dealer said, (c) commenting on Jimmy Carter's refusal to (d) accept the gift of a mink teddy bear.
42. (a) In their new books, (b) the writing of both authors continue (c) to reflect their contrasting (d) basic economic philosophies.
43. (a) Born in England in 1928, Robert Smith's literary activities (b) began after he came (c) to this country with his uncle (d) and settled in Iowa.
44. (a) Children occasionally will watch (b) a long program on television, (c) but it has to be a program (d) with special appeal.
45. (a) The New York City (b) transit system (c) comprises 35 formerly independent (d) rail and bus lines.

46. (a) They intend to live (b) together arguing that (c) a marriage certificate (d) does not make a marriage.
47. (a) A word commonly misspelled (b) by college students is (c) inoculation, (d) studies indicate.
48. (a) Twain's stories are (b) very interesting, (c) they represent several (d) styles of writing.
49. (a) If you accept (b) the theory of physical life after death, (c) you have no reason to be (d) afraid of dying.
50. (a) James Whitehead of Cambridge was (b) promoted by Harvard, (c) his alma mater, (d) two weeks ago.
51. (a) 72 students (b) who sought his counsel (c) report they were satisfied (d) with the advice he gave.
52. (a) While the likelihood of (b) such an occurrence is small, (c) care must be (d) exercised by everyone.
53. (a) Pressures that result from arguments and mistrust between local conservative and liberal groups--as (b) well as the influence of various local (c) political leaders--brings (d) about this scrutiny.
54. (a) Hopefully the council will pass (b) a human relations ordinance (c) before the students (d) return to the campus in September.
55. (a) Required mandatory (b) conservation measures must be (c) followed if we (d) are going to conserve energy.
56. (a) Charles Madigan, who once (b) worked for a local newspaper, (c) is presently working (d) for one of the wire services.
57. (a) One of every five (b) of the state's residents (c) lives in the sort of poverty (d) that drove Erskine Caldwell to the typewriter.
58. (a) To criticize her however is (b) to hold her accountable to a standard (c) beyond that of most journalists, most scientific researchers (d) and most faculty members.

59. (a) Maybe it's the black (b) jerseys the Oakland Raiders (c) wear that make them appear (d) formidable to their opponents.
60. (a) It's very odd (b) how a person can have (c) so many different feelings about (d) something they plan to do.
61. (a) The senator eluded to the growing gap (b) between what the government receives (c) in taxes and what it (d) provides in services.
62. (a) The following (b) afternoon, October 25 a (c) Royal Indian Air Force DC-3 put down in the abandoned (d) dirt strip of Srinagar Airport.
63. (a) He, in turn, communicated it (b) to two more people, (c) the Governor General, Lord Mountbatten and (d) Field Marshal Auchinleck.
64. (a) The violence has spread downtown, (b) with hit-and-run attacks (c) on buses and stores (d) by several hundred gang members.
65. (a) When he saw the fire damage, (b) he exclaimed: (c) "That must have been (d) some fire!
66. (a) Packard suggested closing (b) the loopholes for the rich (c) and rejection of salary increases (d) for government officials.
67. (a) The true facts (b) of the Watergate scandal (c) will not be learned (d) until every major and minor figure writes his own book.
68. (a) Traditional human espionage, such as penetrating (b) intelligence agencies of other countries and covering up (c) clandestine information is the (d) CIA's function, Marchetti said.
69. (a) Mr. Plimpton noted (b) that the two city's museums and operas (c) are comparable, but that New York has nothing (d) to equal Vienna's sacher torte.
70. (a) Irregardless of what people say, (b) most of them (c) are opposed to restricting (d) industrial pollution.
71. (a) The student and professional chapters (b) of Sigma Delta Chi, national journalism (c) society, is sponsoring the debate (d) between Democrat G.M. McCrossin and Republican J. Doyle Corman.

72. (a) Not only are the elementary and secondary schools not doing what they are supposed to. Higher education is also (b) falling short because it is supposed to be training (c) the teachers who go into the (d) elementary and secondary schools.
73. (a) Sears, the largest department store (b) in the area, is (c) putting their best (d) merchandise on sale.
74. (a) She implied from what he said (b) that he was (c) ill and would not (d) attend the party.
75. (a) She gazed hopefully (b) into his eyes (c) as he placed his hand (d) on her knee.
76. (a) Five persons--Wildavsky, Jones, Phalan, Emerson and me--were (b) chosen to research and write (c) our newspaper's first series of articles (d) on nursing home care.
77. (a) If you want to observe (b) Congress, you (c) must go to Washington, D.C. (d) the capital of the United States.
78. (a) In a divorce case (b) a judge must sometimes decide (c) whether to award custody of the children (d) to their natural father or their natural mother.
79. (a) The concensus was (b) that Reagan stands to gain (c) in the Northeast, (d) where he is weakest.
80. (a) Even as a native of State College who lives in a university residence hall, it is (b) easy to forget that (c) there is more to life than (d) classes, dining halls, concerts, parties and the library.
81. (a) George Washington University, (b) which was named in honor of this country's first president, (c) George Washington, is (d) situated in the nations capital.
82. (a) The committee said (b) their work was (c) finished, although it was not (d) in final form.
83. (a) Although leaving home for the first time (b) can be a difficult ordeal, (c) college students except it (d) as part of growing up.

84. (a) Frances Yates has traced the history of the Loci (b) system in detail from 500 B.C., her book (c) is recommended for anyone (d) who is interested in the history of mnemonics.
85. (a) The reform-minded (b) government's nationalization (c) of some companies has strained (d) relations between the United States and Peru.
86. (a) It wasn't the sub-freezing playing (b) conditions or a matter of being (c) outplayed, the game was decided (d) by puck luck.
87. (a) A combination of aging players, (b) a rash of injuries and a new generation of talent, (c) apparently unwilling or unable to go along with Holzman's coaching principles, (d) is primarily responsible for the disappointing season.
88. (a) The nine bears he has shot (b) represent an unusual hunting record, "that's (c) pretty good for Pennsylvania," (d) the game warden said.
89. (a) Centre County Judge R. Paul Campbell (b) ordered the Joneses to keep their farm reasonably clear (c) of manure and (d) removal of the manure piles near the fence.
90. (a) The further away I walk (b) the better (c) that painting looks (d) to my untrained eye.
91. (a) Last seen in the vicinity of Bowe Street, police (b) say the suspect is dangerous (c) and could assault anyone (d) without provocation.
92. (a) At twelve noon (b) many Penn State employees leave their (c) offices and go downtown (d) to eat lunch.
93. (a) Nobody in a democracy, (b) regardless of race, creed or religion, (c) can be taxed (d) without their consent.
94. (a) Neither John nor Bill have (b) the good sense (c) to come in (d) out of the rain.
95. (a) When Joan and Sally worked (b) for the Youngs a decade ago, (c) they were well-paid (d) by the standards then.

96. (a) What makes the Russians so (b) interesting, aside from the greatness of their writing is the (c) furious intensity with which they absorb ideas and pursue them (d) to their practical conclusions.

97. (a) Lawyers who are daily exposed to the intricacies of the law (b) have an insider's understanding of the subtle relationships (c) among the rules, institutions and personalities (d) that comprise our legal system.

98. (c) The former CIA officer, a 1955 (b) graduate of Penn State and (c) the moderator were (d) the only two persons on the platform.

99. (a) On a purely practical level, numerous scientists have (b) complained about the time and talent (c) that has been wasted in futile efforts to replicate (d) fraudulent or shoddy experiments.

100. (a) Some social workers prefer (b) to work with young juveniles (c) rather than (d) with adults.

APPENDIX D

REVISED TEST, DIRECTIONS AND ANSWERS



**DIRECTIONS:** The following sentences may have errors in grammar, usage, redundancy, preferred spelling or punctuation. There are no capitalization errors nor are there any errors in proper nouns or foreign words. There is no more than one error to a sentence. In those sentences in which the problem is disagreement in number (plural subject, singular verb, for example) assume the subject is correct. Every sentence could be rewritten to make it better. However, that is not the purpose of this test.

If a sentence is correct as written, mark space E on your answer card. If it is incorrect, mark on your answer card the area of the sentence (A, B, C, D) containing the error. The designated section of the sentence may not be in error by itself but would be if considered in the context of the entire sentence. Here is a sample sentence and answer.

(a) People, who (b) live in glass houses (c) shouldn't throw (d) stones.

The error is in part (a) of the sentence. Your answer card for this sentence would look like this: A ● B 0 C 0 D 0 E 0

**STOP.** Wait for further instructions or take time now to ask questions. You may not ask any questions during the test. Do not mark this test. You must return it.

- (a) According to Mr. Fulmer's letter, (b) the date, time and place (c) of the county committee meeting (d) has yet to be set.
- (a) The survey shows that (b) only one of the nine students in the class (c) find college less demanding (d) than high school.
- (a) The body of Franco (b) will lay in state until (c) services are held (d) at the chapel.
- (a) Neither Pittsburgh nor Philadelphia (b) is (c) the kind of city (d) I would like to visit. (e)
- (a) The accomodations (b) were insufficient (c) to house everyone (d) at the conference.

6. (a) In the American system of justice, (b) judges are (c) trained to be (d) uninterested observers during trials.
7. (a) There were less jellybeans (b) in the jar than (c) we had first (d) imagined.
8. (a) This sentence may be (b) all right with you (c) but its not (d) all right with me.
9. (a) The psychiatrist (b) wanted to know (c) the affect the drug had (d) on his patients.
10. (a) Maine Attorney General, Joseph Brennan, (b) argued that it doesn't cost (c) the Postal Service 13 cents (d) to deliver a first-class letter.
11. (a) The organization is in need (b) of someone who (c) can provide liason (d) with other community groups.
12. (a) The system did not seem (b) to be working on this day, it (c) kept rejecting (d) the operator's instructions.
13. (a) William K. Steigerwalt, (b) president of the Laurel Valley National Bank has announced (c) the promotion of two officers (d) at the bank's main office.
14. (a) It is inconceivable to me (b) that a registered nurse would be ashamed (c) to take her child to (d) a doctor with recurring pinworms.
15. (a) The intelligence unit (b) tried to illicit (c) as much information as possible (d) from the spy.
16. (a) After carefully reviewing the proposal, (b) the municipal (c) manager agreed that it would be (d) all right to try it. (e)
17. (a) The new faculty member (b) proposed the following changes to his colleagues, (c) discontinue two writing courses, add three theory courses, (d) and increase the length of class sessions.
18. (a) He took the dead soldier's (b) helmet because (c) he wanted a momento (d) of the war.

19. (a) "Nixon would have accepted with pleasure", the (b) fur dealer said, (c) commenting on Jimmy Carter's refusal to (d) accept the gift of a mink teddy bear.
20. (a) Born in England in 1928, Robert Smith's literary activities (b) began after he came (c) to this country with his uncle (d) and settled in Iowa.
21. (a) A word commonly misspelled (b) by college students is (c) inoculation, (d) studies indicate.
22. (a) James Whitehead of Cambridge was (b) promoted by Harvard, (c) his alma mater, (d) two weeks ago. (e)
23. (a) Pressures that result from arguments and mistrust between local conservative and liberal groups--as (b) well as the influence of various local (c) political leaders--brings (d) about this scrutiny.
24. (a) Hopefully the council will pass (b) a human relations ordinance (c) before the students (d) return to the campus in September.
25. (a) One of every five (b) of the state's residents (c) lives in the sort of poverty (d) that drove Erskine Caldwell to the typewriter.
26. (a) To criticize her however is (b) to hold her accountable to a standard (c) beyond that of most journalists, most scientific researchers (d) and most faculty members.
27. (a) Maybe it's the black (b) jerseys the Oakland Raiders (c) wear that make them appear (d) formidable to their opponents.
28. (a) It's very odd (b) how a person can have (c) so many different feelings about (d) something they plan to do.
29. (a) The following (b) afternoon, October 25 a (c) Royal Indian Air Force DC-3 put down in the abandoned (d) dirt strip of Srinagar Airport.
30. (a) When he saw the fire damage, (b) he exclaimed: (c) "That must have been some fire!"

31. (a) Packard suggested closing (b) the loopholes for the rich (c) and rejection of salary increases (d) for government officials.
32. (a) Traditional human espionage, such as penetrating (b) intelligence agencies of other countries and covering up (c) clandestine information is the (d) CIA's function, Marchetti said.
33. (a) Mr. Plimpton noted (b) that the two city's museums and operas (c) are comparable, but that New York has nothing (d) to equal Vienna's sacher torte.
34. (a) Irregardless of what people say, (b) most of them (c) are opposed to restricting (d) industrial pollution.
35. (a) Not only are the elementary and secondary schools not doing what they are supposed to. Higher education is also (b) falling short because it is supposed to be training (c) the teachers who go into the (d) elementary and secondary schools.
36. (a) She implied from what he said (b) that he was (c) ill and would not (d) attend the party.
37. (a) Five persons--Wildavsky, Jones, Phalan, Emerson and me--were (b) chosen to research and write (c) our newspaper's first series of articles (d) on nursing home care.
38. (a) If you want to observe (b) Congress, you (c) must go to Washington, D.C. (d) the capital of the United States.
39. (a) Even as a native of State College who lives in a university residence hall, it is (b) easy to forget that (c) there is more to life than (d) classes, dining halls, concerts, parties and the library.
40. (a) Although leaving home for the first time (b) can be a difficult ordeal, (c) college students except it (d) as part of growing up.
41. (a) The reform-minded (b) government's nationalization (c) of some companies has strained (d) relations between the United States and Peru.

42. (a) It wasn't the sub-freezing playing (b) conditions or a matter of being (c) outplayed, the game was decided (d) by puck luck.
43. (a) The further away I walk (b) the better (c) that painting looks (d) to my untrained eye.
44. (a) At twelve noon (b) many Penn State employees leave their (c) offices and go downtown (d) to eat lunch.
45. (a) Nobody in a democracy, (b) regardless of race, creed or religion, (c) can be taxed (d) without their consent.
46. (a) Neither John nor Bill have (b) the good sense (c) to come in (d) out of the rain.
47. (a) When Joan and Sally worked (b) for the Youngs a decade ago, (c) they were well-paid (d) by the standards then.
48. (a) The former CIA officer, a 1955 (b) graduate of Penn State and (c) the moderator were (d) the only two persons on the platform.
49. (a) On a purely practical level, numerous scientists have (b) complained about the time and talent (c) that has been wasted in futile efforts to replicate (d) fraudulent or shoddy experiments.
50. (a) Some social workers prefer (b) to work with young juveniles (c) rather than (d) with adults.

APPENDIX E

LETTER, POSTCARD, AND REMINDER POSTCARD

Kansas State University  
Department of Journalism and  
Mass Communciations  
Kedzie Hall  
Manhattan, Kansas 66506  
913-532-6890

November 14, 1978

Dear :

Your name has been selected randomly to participate in an English exam for my master's thesis. The test will be given Monday, December 4, Tuesday, December 5, and Thursday, December 7. It will be given at 7 p.m. in Kedzie Library, Room 105.

I would be most grateful if you could help me out in this project.

The results of the test will be used in my thesis. In no way will you be singled out as approximately 100 students will be taking the exam.

Enclosed you will find a post card which should be returned to me with the date circled on which you will be able to participate in the test. Please return the post card to me by Monday, November 20. I will send you a return post card to remind you of the date and time.

Thank you in advance for helping me out.

Sincerely,

Nancy Denning

Enclosure

## Postcard accompanying letter

I can participate in an English exam at 7 p.m. in Kedzie Library, Room 105, on the following date.

Monday, December 4, 1978

Tuesday, December 5, 1978

Thursday, December 7, 1978

PLEASE CIRCLE ONE OF THE ABOVE DATES

NAME \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS \_\_\_\_\_

If you have any questions please feel free to contact me at 537-8928. Thank you for your help, I really appreciate it.

Nancy Denning



## Reminder Postcard

Postcard sent 10 days before scheduled test.

Dear :

This is a reminder that you have agreed to participate in an English exam from my thesis on Thursday, Dec. 7.

The exam will begin at 7 p.m. in the Kedzie Library, Room 105.

If you have any questions please feel free to call me at 537-8928. Thanks so much for helping me out on this project.

Nancy Denning

APPENDIX F

ITEM DIFFICULTY INDEX AND STANDARD DEVIATION OF SENTENCE FRAGMENT QUESTION

Question Number	Journalism Journalism	Non-Journalism	Novice	Veteran	Novice Journalism	Novice Non-Journalism	Veteran Journalism	Veteran Non-Journalism
35	.8778 (.33)	.8375 (.37)	.8571 (.35)	.8788 (.33)	.8871 (.32)	.8200 (.38)	.8889 (.31)	.8667 (.34)

ITEM DIFFICULTY INDEX AND STANDARD DEVIATION OF PARALLEL CONSTRUCTION QUESTION

Question Number	Journalism Journalism	Non-Journalism	Novice	Veteran	Novice Journalism	Novice Non-Journalism	Veteran Journalism	Veteran Non-Journalism
31	.4490 (.50)	.3125 (.46)	.3393 (.47)	.4697 (.50)	.3548 (.32)	.3200 (.38)	.6111 (.31)	.3000 (.34)

ITEM DIFFICULTY INDEX AND STANDARD DEVIATION OF MODIFICATION QUESTIONS

Question Number	Journalism	Non-Journalism	Novice	Veteran	Novice Journalism	Novice Non-Journalism	Veteran Journalism	Veteran Non-Journalism
14	.7959 (.40)	.5750 (.49)	.6071 (.49)	.8485 (.36)	.7742 (.42)	.4000 (.49)	.8333 (.37)	.8667 (.34)
20	.2551 (.44)	.3875 (.49)	.3304 (.47)	.2879 (.45)	.2097 (.41)	.4800 (.50)	.3333 (.47)	.2333 (.42)
39	.5000 (.50)	.5500 (.50)	.5089 (.50)	.5455 (.50)	.4839 (.50)	.5400 (.50)	.5278 (.50)	.5667 (.50)

ITEM DIFFICULTY INDEX AND STANDARD DEVIATION OF PRONOUN ANTECEDENT QUESTIONS

Question Number	Journalism	Non-Journalism	Novice	Veteran	Novice Journalism	Novice Non-Journalism	Veteran Journalism	Veteran Non-Journalism
28	.3163 (.47)	.2375 (.43)	.2679 (.44)	.3030 (.46)	.3387 (.47)	.1800 (.39)	.2778 (.43)	.3333 (.37)
45	.2449 (.43)	.1875 (.39)	.2232 (.42)	.2121 (.41)	.2419 (.43)	.2000	.2500 (.43)	.1667 (.37)

ITEM DIFFICULTY INDEX AND STANDARD DEVIATION OF SPELLING QUESTIONS

Question Number	Journalism	Non-Journalism	Novice	Veteran	Novice Journalism	Veteran Journalism	Novice Non-Journalism	Veteran Non-Journalism
5	.1633 (.37)	-.0750 (.26)	.1071 (.31)	.1515 (.36)	.1129 (.32)	.2500 (.43)	.1000 (.30)	-.0333 (.17)
8	.6122 (.49)	.6375 (.48)	.5804 (.49)	.6970 (.46)	.5484 (.50)	.7222 (.47)	.6200 (.49)	.6667 (.45)
11	.5510 (.50)	-.2875 (.45)	-.3304 (.47)	.6061 (.49)	.4516 (.50)	.7222 (.45)	.1800 (.38)	.4667 (.50)
16	.4184 (.49)	.5125 (.50)	.4911 (.50)	.4091 (.49)	.4677 (.50)	.3333 (.47)	.5200 (.50)	.5000 (.50)
18	.2347 (.42)	-.1250 (.33)	.1429 (.35)	.2576 (.44)	.1613 (.37)	.3611 (.48)	.1200 (.32)	.1333 (.34)
21	.2653 (.44)	.2625 (.44)	.1964 (.49)	.3788 (.40)	.1935 (.40)	.3889 (.49)	.2000 (.40)	.3667 (.48)
27	.3367 (.47)	-.2375 (.43)	.2321 (.49)	.3939 (.42)	.2903 (.45)	.4167 (.49)	.1600 (.37)	.3667 (.48)
33	.4898 (.50)	.5000 (.50)	.5089 (.50)	.4697 (.50)	.5161 (.50)	.4444 (.50)	.5000 (.50)	.5000 (.50)
40	.5510 (.50)	-.4000 (.49)	.4286 (.49)	.5758 (.49)	.5000 (.50)	.6389 (.48)	.3400 (.47)	.5000 (.50)

ITEM DIFFICULTY INDEX AND STANDARD DEVIATION OF SEMANTIC QUESTIONS

Question Number	Non-Journalism		Novice		Veteran		Novice Journalism		Veteran Journalism		Veteran Non-Journalism	
	Journalism	Journalism	Novice	Novice	Veteran	Veteran	Journalism	Journalism	Journalism	Journalism	Journalism	Journalism
3	.6531 (.48)	.6000 (.49)	.5804 (.49)	.6129 (.49)	.7121 (.45)	.7222 (.45)	.5400 (.50)	.7000 (.46)	.7222 (.45)	.7000 (.46)	.7000 (.46)	.7000 (.46)
6	.2959 (.46)	.2875 (.45)	.2768 (.45)	.2581 (.44)	.3182 (.47)	.3611 (.48)	.3000 (.46)	.2667 (.44)	.3611 (.48)	.2667 (.44)	.2667 (.44)	.2667 (.44)
7	.5612 (.50)	.4000 (.49)	.4018 (.49)	.5000 (.50)	.6364 (.48)	.6667 (.47)	.2800 (.45)	.6000 (.49)	.6667 (.47)	.6000 (.49)	.6000 (.49)	.6000 (.49)
9	.7653 (.42)	.7000 (.46)	.6607 (.47)	.7097 (.45)	.8636 (.34)	.8611 (.35)	.6000 (.49)	.8667 (.34)	.8611 (.35)	.8667 (.34)	.8667 (.34)	.8667 (.34)
15	.5612 (.50)	.4875 (.50)	.3750 (.48)	.4355 (.50)	.7879 (.41)	.7778 (.42)	.3000 (.46)	.8000 (.40)	.7778 (.42)	.8000 (.40)	.8000 (.40)	.8000 (.40)
24	.6122 (.49)	.4250 (.49)	.4554 (.50)	.5000 (.50)	.6515 (.48)	.8056 (.40)	.4000 (.49)	.4667 (.50)	.8056 (.40)	.4667 (.50)	.4667 (.50)	.4667 (.50)
34	.5714 (.49)	.4125 (.49)	.4196 (.49)	.4516 (.50)	.6364 (.48)	.7778 (.42)	.3800 (.49)	.4667 (.50)	.7778 (.42)	.4667 (.50)	.4667 (.50)	.4667 (.50)
36	.6837 (.47)	.6250 (.48)	.6518 (.48)	.6935 (.46)	.6667 (.47)	.6667 (.47)	.6000 (.49)	.6667 (.47)	.6667 (.47)	.6667 (.47)	.6667 (.47)	.6667 (.47)
37	.8776 (.33)	.8625 (.34)	.8393 (.27)	.8871 (.32)	.9242 (.26)	.8611 (.35)	.7800 (.42)	1.0000 (0)	.8611 (.35)	1.0000 (0)	1.0000 (0)	1.0000 (0)
43	.8265 (.38)	.7125 (.45)	.7321 (.44)	.9703 (.41)	.8485 (.36)	.8889 (.31)	.6600 (.47)	.8000 (.40)	.8889 (.31)	.8000 (.40)	.8000 (.40)	.8000 (.40)
44	.6224 (.48)	.5000 (.50)	.5268 (.50)	.5484 (.50)	.6364 (.48)	.7500 (.43)	.5000 (.50)	.5000 (.50)	.7500 (.43)	.5000 (.50)	.5000 (.50)	.5000 (.50)
50	.5306 (.50)	.2750 (.45)	.3571 (.48)	.4839 (.50)	.5152 (.50)	.6111 (.49)	.2000 (.40)	.4000 (.40)	.6111 (.49)	.4000 (.40)	.4000 (.40)	.4000 (.40)

ITEM DIFFICULTY INDEX AND STANDARD DEVIATION OF SUBJECT/VERB AGREEMENT QUESTIONS

Question Number	Journalism	Non-Journalism	Novice	Veteran	Novice Journalism	Veteran Journalism	Novice Non-Journalism	Veteran Non-Journalism
1	.2959 (.46)	.1750 (.38)	.1786 (.38)	.3485 (.48)	.1613 (.37)	.2000 (.40)	.5278 (.50)	.1333 (.34)
2	.5102 (.50)	.4750 (.50)	.4732 (.50)	.5303 (.50)	.5000 (.50)	.4400 (.50)	.5278 (.50)	.5333 (.50)
4	.3163 (.47)	.2875 (.45)	.3036 (.46)	.3030 (.46)	.3226 (.47)	.2800 (.45)	.3056 (.46)	.3000 (.46)
23	.3980 (.49)	.3500 (.48)	.4018 (.49)	.3333 (.47)	.4355 (.50)	.3600 (.48)	.3333 (.47)	.3333 (.47)
25	.4082 (.49)	.3375 (.47)	.3571 (.48)	.4091 (.49)	.4194 (.49)	.2800 (.45)	.3889 (.49)	.4333 (.50)
46	.5510 (.50)	.4375 (.50)	.5089 (.50)	.4848 (.50)	.6129 (.49)	.3800 (.49)	.4444 (.50)	.5333 (.50)
49	.2959 (.46)	.3000 (.46)	.2679 (.44)	.3485 (.48)	.2419 (.43)	.3000 (.46)	.3889 (.49)	.3000 (.46)

ITEM DIFFICULTY INDEX AND STANDARD DEVIATION OF PUNCTUATION QUESTIONS

Question Number	Journalism	Non-Journalism	Novice	Veteran	Novice Journalism	Novice Non-Journalism	Veteran Journalism	Veteran Non-Journalism
10	.4592 (.50)	.4125 (.49)	.4375 (.50)	.4394 (.50)	.4516 (.50)	.4200 (.49)	.4722 (.50)	.4000 (.49)
12	.8571 (.35)	.6125 (.49)	.7321 (.44)	.7727 (.42)	.8226 (.38)	.6200 (.49)	.9167 (.28)	.6000 (.49)
13	.7653 (.42)	.8000 (.40)	.7857 (.41)	.7727 (.42)	.8226 (.38)	.7400 (.44)	.6667 (.47)	.9000 (.30)
17	.8163 (.39)	.6000 (.49)	.6518 (.48)	.8333 (.37)	.7419 (.44)	.5400 (.50)	.9444 (.23)	.7000 (.46)
19	.5714 (.49)	.3625 (.48)	.4643 (.50)	.5000 (.50)	.5806 (.44)	.3200 (.47)	.5556 (.50)	.4333 (.50)
22	.3571 (.48)	.3875 (.49)	.3750 (.48)	.3636 (.48)	.3871 (.49)	.3600 (.48)	.3056 (.50)	.4333 (.46)
26	.8878 (.32)	.7375 (.44)	.7857 (.41)	.8788 (.33)	.8548 (.35)	.7000 (.46)	.9444 (.23)	.8000 (.40)
29	.7551 (.43)	.7750 (.42)	.7679 (.42)	.7576 (.43)	.8065 (.40)	.7200 (.45)	.6667 (.47)	.8667 (.34)
30	.7347	.5875	.6250	.7424	.7258 (.47)	.5000 (.50)	.7500 (.44)	.7333 (.43)
32	.5510 (.50)	.5750 (.49)	.5446 (.50)	.5909 (.49)	.5161 (.50)	.5800 (.49)	.6111 (.49)	.5667 (.50)
38	.7551 (.43)	.7875 (.41)	.8304 (.38)	.6667 (.47)	.8226 (.38)	.8400 (.37)	.6389 (.48)	.7000 (.46)
41	.2959 (.46)	.2875 (.45)	.2875 (.45)	.3030 (.46)	.2581 (.44)	.3200 (.47)	.3611 (.42)	.2333 (.48)



ITEM DIFFICULTY INDEX AND STANDARD DEVIATION OF PUNCTUATION QUESTIONS

Question Number	Journalism	Non-Journalism	Novice	Veteran	Novice Journalism	Novice Non-Journalism	Veteran Journalism	Veteran Non-Journalism
42	.2449 (.43)	.2000 (.40)	.2054 (.40)	.2576 (.44)	.1935 (.40)	.2200 (.41)	.3333 (.48)	.1667 (.37)
47	.2449 (.43)	.2500 (.43)	.2696 (.49)	.3788 (.38)	.1613 (.37)	.1800 (.38)	.3889 (.49)	.3667 (.48)
48	.6939 (.46)	.6625 (.47)	.6518 (.48)	.7273 (.45)	.7097 (.45)	.5800 (.49)	.6667 (.47)	.8000 (.40)

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A COMPARISON OF JOURNALISM AND  
NON-JOURNALISM STUDENTS' ENGLISH COMPETENCY

by

NANCY R. DENNING

B.S., Kansas State University, 1978

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AN ABSTRACT OF A MASTER'S THESIS

submitted in partial fulfillment of the

requirements for the degree

MASTER OF SCIENCE

Department of Journalism and Mass Communications

KANSAS STATE UNIVERSITY  
Manhattan, Kansas

1979

## ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to determine if there was a difference in English competency between journalism and non-journalism students. As a sidelight the difference between novice and veteran students and an interaction were studied.

A review of the current literature concerning English proficiency was included. Specific areas reviewed were definition of writing; writing skills problems-- local and national; what caused the English proficiency decline; general characteristics of the students with writing difficulties; and, testing English competency.

The instrument used to test English competency was a 50 point multiple-choice test which was revised from a 100 point test given at Pennsylvania State University. Reliability and individual question analysis were performed on the 50 point test.

A two-way analysis of variance was used on the data. It was found that journalism students did significantly better in English competency than non-journalism students; veteran students achieved a higher score than novice students; and there was no significant difference in the interaction among the groups.