THE USE OF THE MODIFIED PRIMARY TRAIT SCORING GUIDE FOR PLACING STUDENTS IN FRESHMAN COMPOSITION

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SCORING GUIDE FOR PLACING STUDENTS

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PREFACE

This dissertation proposes a new method for evaluating students for placement in composition courses. As a measuring device, this method focuses on writing fluency--the ability on the part of students to compose thoughts readily through the use of appropriate language and rhetorical devices to build relationships between ideas. The innate lack of writing fluency is one of the major obstacles preventing basic writers from expressing themselves clearly and coherently on the page (Carlson and others, 1985; Beaugrande, 1984; McCutchen, 1986; Shaughnessy, 1976). Yet, existing placement tests generally do not use fluency as the basis for the line separating those students who possess the ability to succeed in a regular freshman composition course and those who do not. Rather, existing placement tests either look to usage and style (as happens with most multiple-choice writing tests) or to writing as a holistic entity (most existing direct measures of writing) as the dividing line between writing proficiency or non-proficiency. Fluency thus becomes only one of many criteria measured, and in many cases it takes on a subordinate role to other criteria. This dissertation seeks to introduce and measure the effectiveness of a Modified Primary Trait Scoring Guide that isolates basic writing fluency for measuring writing proficiency and for placing students in appropriate writing courses.

I express my thanks to those who have helped me with this dissertation: first to the library staff at Barton County Community College for assisting me in locating

much of the scholarship that serves as its background, and second, to the instructors both at Oklahoma State University and at Barton County Community College who were willing to administer the writing test in their classes and who were willing to help score papers. I especially want to thank Ted Gardner, Paul Biays, Stephannie Goerl, Mary Barrows, Rachel Nulton, and Ruth VanArsdale of Barton County Community College for their encouragement as I sought to handle my heavy responsibilities as Coordinator of Developmental Programs and to find the time and energy to write a dissertation. Third, I thank Mr. William Robinson, math instructor at Barton County Community College, who helped me to master the art of calculating statistics, in itself a gargantuan task. Most of all, I thank my advisor, Dr. Richard P. Batteiger, for all his time and encouragement to me, not only as I wrote my dissertation but also during those difficult times as I prepared to take comprehensive examinations. He will never know how much help he has been to me during these last few years.

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CHAPTER I

THE RATIONALE FOR A NEW TEST

Writing Assessment and Placement

The use of tests for identifying and placing developmental writers in appropriate composition courses has engendered controversy since the middle 1960s. Most faculty agree that placement tests provide departments with valuable data for tracking students; however, faculty have often found that these same tests often misplace students. Thus, numbers of students deemed proficient by these tests often cannot complete the tasks required by the regular composition course while at the same time others deemed nonproficient bypass advisement, enroll in regular composition classes, and pass these classes with grades of C or better. This problem points to the need for constructing a new type of test that will provide English departments with more reliable data for matching students with appropriate courses.

Existing large-scale placement tests have fallen basically into two types. The first is the standardized indirect multiple-choice test that publishers often identify as language skills or language usage tests. This type of measure, originally developed in the late 1920s but perfected in the 1950s, has emerged as the standard format for national tests such as the TSWE, the ASSET, the SAT, and the ACT. This type of test assumes that if students can recognize correct alternatives as printed on the exam,

they will also possess the ability to employ these correct alternatives as they compose their own discourse (Chipman, 1986; P.L. Cooper, 1984; Greenberg, 1981; White, 1989). While these tests may have a degree of validity in measuring general writing skill, the publishers of these tests readily claim that their exams are not designed to match students to particular course curricula (Morante, 1987; Sax, 1974).

The second type large-scale assessment test is the direct essay exam. This type of measure, developed in the 1960s, has been used for system-wide refereed writing assessments, two of the most famous being the California State University and Colleges Freshman English Equivalency Examination described by White (1976, 1977a, 1977b,1979, 1980, 1982, 1984, 1985) and the City University of New York Writing Assessment Test described by Troyka (1984, 1987) and Greenberg (1981, 1982, 1983). Up to now, the three most commonly used methods for evaluating direct writing tests are holistic scoring designed by the Educational Testing Service, analytic scoring designed by Paul Diederich, and primary trait scoring designed by Richard Lloyd-Jones. Holistic scoring is by far the most popular method of direct writing assessment. According to White (1985, 1989), these new means for direct writing assessment have often provided English departments with a more reliable evaluation of writing ability than indirect multiple-choice tests. However, these methods have also frequently produced unsatisfactory results when English departments have tried to use them as the sole means for identifying and placing students in developmental courses (Braungart, 1983; Interpreting Scores, 1983; White, 1989). English departments have often found that scoring guides cannot be constructed specifically enough to allow for effective placement decisions, and readers

cannot evaluate papers quickly and form a general impression by balancing divergent criteria and also match students with appropriate courses (Huot, 1990b).

New Scoring System Needed

To create an effective placement instrument, English departments must reconsider their use of existing methods whose assumptions limit them to unfocused generic writing assessments and construct a new method that employs criteria focused enough to allow them to identify specifically those nonproficient students in need of developmental composition. Because research shows basic writers lack essential writing fluency (the ability to compose ideas readily through the use of appropriate language and rhetorical devices to build relationships between ideas [Carlson and others, 1985; Beaugrande, 1984; McCutchen, 1986; Shaughnessy, 1976]), the new method must ask students to write their own ideas rather than choose from a list of alternatives already written on the page. The placement device must therefore be a direct essay test rather than indirect multiple-choice. The method used to score the essay must be focused enough to allow exam readers to evaluate only those specific writing features that distinguish nonfluent writers who need a developmental composition course from their fluent counterparts who can be mainstreamed in regular entry-level composition courses. In addition, the criteria for each score on the rubric must be precise enough so that scores will provide faculty with consistent diagnostic information even though writing topics may change. The score must therefore reflect the degree of writing fluency that students possess rather than their skill in generating thought-provoking responses.

The Modified Primary Trait Scoring Guide

As a response to the limitations of current scoring systems, this study seeks to present and statistically evaluate a scoring system that will identify those troublesome patterns of discourse frequently generated by nonfluent basic writers as they attempt to compose their ideas on paper. I have named this system Modified Primary Trait Scoring because I wish to establish basic writing fluency as the domain to be measured. The new system shares some of the assumptions of traditional direct writing assessment in that the guide allows exam readers to assess discourse by measuring the way in which all of its various components fit together to create the whole, but the system also departs from traditional forms in that the guide has a refined focus so that exam readers can reliably evaluate and place students according to those features of discourse that signify fluency.

This dissertation therefore seeks to demonstrate that the Modified Primary Trait Scoring Guide holds the potential to address itself only to those errors and other features that are common indicators of nonfluency. Furthermore, this dissertation aspires to demonstrate that the guide has the potential to be a competent standardized test rather than a modest site-specific one. To establish this goal, this dissertation presents studies done at Oklahoma State University, a comprehensive school in the Oklahoma system of higher education, and at Barton County Community College, one of 19 two-year institutions in Kansas. To establish this study within current understanding of basic writers and established testing methodologies, this dissertation will survey scholarship about basic writers in Chapter II and relevant scholarship dealing with placement tests in chapter III. Following the survey of literature,

Chapter IV will introduce the new scoring guide based on the research presented in Chapters II and III. To validate the new guide's potential for use in standardized testing, Chapters V, VI, and VII will present the data and findings from writing tests scored by the new guide at Oklahoma State University and at Barton County Community College. Chapter V will present the test design and hypotheses to test the new guide against the current assessment systems used at both schools; Chapter VI, the statistical tests; and Chapter VII, a discussion of the results of these tests. Chapter VIII, the final section of this study, will summarize the findings of the previous three chapters and suggests topics for further analysis.

CHAPTER II

THE CAUSES OF NONFLUENT WRITING

Problems More Complex than Previously Thought

Researchers have found that the problems of the typical basic writer are far more complex than they once thought. They have discovered, for example, that basic writing as a phenomenon entails much more than a lack of knowledge of the rules and conventions of standard edited English as listed in handbooks (C.R. Cooper, 1977; Weiser, 1981). Rather, researchers have sought to go beyond the obvious problems on the page to identify their probable causes, and in many cases they have identified a number of underlying barriers that impede nonfluent writers as they attempt to compose effective discourse. Hence, research has generally classified these barriers into six major categories, two discernable directly from the page and four others that impede nonproficient writers as they compose. The first two barriers manifest themselves through the dysfunctional sentences and paragraphs found in the discourse of basic writers. The first is the general inability of these writers to compose discourse containing a variety of rhetorical strategies and linguistic structures. Their limited repertoire of rhetorical and linguistic patterns causes these writers to limit their discourse to strings of simple or compound sentences containing no embedded phrases or clauses. The second is the inability of basic writers to develop

cohesiveness as they compose their ideas on the page. Because they misunderstand the nature and uses of cohesive devices, they compose paragraphs containing little more than eddies of seemingly unrelated ideas. These first two barriers to proficient writing directly affect the appearance of sentences and paragraphs on the page, but the last four barriers affect the composing process itself and greatly exacerbate the first two problems. Because basic writers often lack experience in composing, they usually possess limited short-term memory, a third barrier, compounded by a fourth barrier, faulty motor skills, the inability to achieve a degree of eye-hand coordination that enables them to form letters quickly and accurately. As they are often painfully aware that they cannot write, basic writers suffer from a fifth barrier, acute writing anxiety, a fear that often comes from their awareness that they are failures in writing. This anxiety leads to a sixth barrier, a convoluted, monomaniacal writing process centered in error awareness. In an attempt to avoid making mistakes and consequently alleviate writing anxiety, basic writers center their entire writing process on error avoidance, a procedure that serves to compound error rather than alleviate it. Although these errors form distinct categories, each of the categories works in tandem to inhibit basic writers as they try to compose. Thus, these barriers work together to frame a sinister labyrinth that blocks them at their every turn.

Problems Discerned from the Printed Page

Limited Repertoire

Basic writers often have a limited repertoire of linguistic structures and rhetorical devices that hinder their ability to express themselves on paper. Rose

(1990) found that these students operate with planning strategies and rules that actually impede writing rather than enhance it. In working with basic writers, he found that some feel lost because the demands of assignments shift, and strategies that were once effective no longer work. Others lack strategies for putting their ideas together into coherent sentences and paragraphs (Faigley, Daly, and Witte 1981). With the exception of prepositional phrases, basic writers in general experience difficulties in embedding ideas on the phrase and clause level (Neuner, 1987; Shaughnessy, 1977). Instead, they write strings of coordinate sentences rather than embedded subordinate structures (Lunsford, 1978b).

On the other hand, Silber (1979) attributes these failures to embed ideas within sentences to problems in reading. Basic writers do not understand linguistic signals and punctuation marks that cue proficient readers to idea relationships. In listening to students read aloud, Silber discovered that basic writers ignored phrase or clause groups. Therefore, these writers interpret all ideas in sentences as coordinate structures rather than as complex patterns of subordination. Meyer (1982) also found that as basic writers read, they reorder ideas in terms that they can understand, not in terms of the printed page. As a result, basic writers often glean ideas that are not supported by the written text. Because they equate all ideas within sentences as being equal, basic writers cannot distinguish between important and unimportant points as they read (Hull and Rose, 1989). The failure of basic writers to embed ideas effectively within sentences can be partially attributed to their reading difficulties.

While Lunsford (1979), Santmire (1984), and Williams (1985) attribute many of these failures to a general cognitive deficiency or immaturity behind basic writers'

discourse, other researchers have found differently. Martinez and Martinez (1987) found no significant differences in cognitive maturity between developmental and proficient writers. As part of their research, they compared a group of nontraditional basic writers with a group of graduate students. When they gave both groups tasks requiring analysis and synthesis that were isolated from the actual composing process, Martinez and Martinez found no significant differences in cognitive maturity between the nontraditional basic writers and the graduate students. However, when they added a task requiring both groups to compose their ideas in discourse, Martinez and Martinez found some significant differences in language features. The group of basic writers had trouble expressing their ideas on the page.

Other researchers have also credited basic writers' weaknesses to reasons other than cognitive immaturity. Perl (1979) attributed the failure of basic writers to draw connections between their ideas to their inexperience in writing rather than cognitive immaturity. Sommers (1980, 1983) concluded that basic writers cannot communicate meaning in written form because their limited concept of revising hinders their discovery of ideas. Bartholomae (1985) also found that basic writers show no evidence of arrested cognitive development, arrested language development, or unpredictable language use. In Bartholomae's opinion, basic writers do not compose immature sentences even though they may seem to do so. Shaughnessy (1977) saw that some would try to link basic writers and cognitive development and denied the connection quite vehemently. Throughout her book she maintained that basic writers are quite fluent as speakers but nonfluent as writers because, on the page, they are limited to a narrow range of syntactic, semantic, and rhetorical operations. They

cannot handle in writing what they can do with ease when communicating orally. Basic writers are therefore more limited by their unfamiliarity with syntactic structures rather than by an overall cognitive deficiency, a problem that researchers can measure only by comparing the physical ages of subjects (Rose, 1983; Troyka, 1987; Winchell, 1990).

Do Not Understand Cohesion

Closely connected with a limited repertoire of syntactic structures is the general inability of basic writers to connect ideas to form paragraphs of meaningful discourse. Nonfluent basic writers often cannot order their ideas because they do not understand the nature and use of transitional devices. If these writers compose narrative or descriptive discourse, modes that Ong (1981) attributed to the oral tradition, they encounter few problems. These modes allow writers to create texts through the addition or the piling of one idea on another with few syntactic structures to draw relationships between these ideas (Brostoff, 1981; Sloan, 1988). Brostoff (1981) saw this problem as student failure to understand the principles of coherence. Rather than order relationships through textual features, these students write ideas that are "next to" but not "connected to." Furthermore, Brostoff (1981) viewed basic writing as the failure, first, to make or sustain logical relationships; second, to put together a series of relationships in a consistent way; and third, to reveal relationships adequately to the reader.

Because students do not know how to employ cohesive devices for arranging and embedding ideas within paragraphs and sentences, several scholars have come to

the false conclusion that basic writers do not possess skills in abstract reasoning. Martinez and Martinez (1987) and Shaughnessy (1977) have demonstrated that while basic writers are capable of such reasoning orally, they cannot transfer this type of reasoning to paper. In fact, Shaughnessy (1977) observed that the lack of movement between abstract and concrete statements is one of the trademarks of basic writer discourse. She found that basic writers compose generalizations with no details to support them, or assemble details with no organizing generalizations. Furthermore, Beaugrande (1980) observed that basic writers will often create problematic discourse when they attempt to break out of the lean, simple sentences that they write. As basic writers experiment with their writing, they often fail to retain control over their sentences and overload them with unconnected modifiers, a feature that Shaughnessy (1977) refers to as "developmental errors."

Barriers Impeding the Composing Process

While the first two barriers inhibit basic writers in their ability to use a variety of syntactical and rhetorical patterns when composing ideas on the page and to connect them with appropriate transitional and cohesive devices, the following four barriers inhibit basic writers in their efforts to compose their thoughts on paper. In turn, these last four barriers in turn invigorate the first two. The stress that these last barriers cause disengages the facility or the desire of these students to break out of the strings of noncoherent, lean, simple sentences that they leave on the page.

Problems with Short-Term Memory

First of all, many basic writers experience difficulty in accessing ideas and composing them on paper before these ideas distort and decay (Hotoph, 1980). Consequently, failures in short-term memory undermine the cohesiveness that holds paragraphs together (A. Cooper, 1988). As a result, basic writers compose what Daiute (1981) calls overlapping sentences, distant modifier sentences, non-parallel sentences, gaped sentences, and repetitious sequence sentences. These are the same features that Farr and Janda (1985) refer to as "truncated relationships," that Brostoff (1981) refers to as "pathologic" or widely unconnected prose, that Neuner (1987) refers to as "pseudo chains," and that Shaughnessy (1977) refers to as "blurred patterns" and "consolidation errors."

Beaugrande and Dressler (1981) view these problems as centered in the mind's limited capacity to store ideas long enough for students to work on them. Although writers access ideas into short-term memory, these ideas are arranged according to their importance in the writer's mind rather than being arranged in usable form. In addition to reordering these ideas, students must also access appropriate syntactical patterns to compose these ideas on paper. They must accomplish all these tasks before ideas disintegrate in short-term memory (Spiegel and Fitzgerald, 1990). In addition, short-term memory has a limited capacity; students must chunk ideas together in order to work on them (Grunig, Ramsey, and Schneider, 1983). Hence, nonfluent basic writers often find themselves in an unconquerable dilemma: ideas deteriorate when they are mid-sentence and, as a result, they leave trails of features that point to a lack of cohesiveness in their writing.

Faulty Motor Skills

Further compounding the deterioration of ideas in memory is the second problem, a lack of developed eye and hand motor skills that basic writers' more proficient counterparts possess. This basic deficiency often hinders their ability to shape letters and write words effectively at a pace fast enough for them to capture their ideas on paper (Mellon, 1981). As a result, they often write strings of simple sentences, fragments, derailed sentences, and impacted sentences containing irreconcilable ideas (Shaughnessy, 1977).

MacNeilage (1970) found that the act of writing is not the result of stored patterns of motor activity. Rather, it is the product of groups of movements in tandem that he refers to as a "space coordinate system." This system controls all of the hand and eye movements that allow writers to compose words on the page in a recognizable format (p. 188). Beaugrande (1984) terms this system of movements as "principles of linearity." According to Beaugrande, as writers compose ideas on the page, they will look back to what they have written, will look ahead to what they will write, and will pause to plan out what they will say (p. 154). Likewise, Connolly (1982) also found that visual feedback from the page is important. If writers cannot coordinate the actions controlled by these systems, they will have difficulties in composing words on the page. Rummelhart and Norman (1981) believed that malformed letters and illegible handwriting are caused in part by breakdowns in visual feedback. Connolly (1982) concluded that even the slightest delay in visual feedback will cause writers to compose words with idiosyncratic spelling. Beaugrande (1984) deemed that breakdowns in these systems result in writer's block, the inability to

embed ideas within sentences, breakdowns in sentence punctuation, and trails of fragments. Consequently, it seems possible that many of the limitations in syntactic structures and overall coherence on the part of basic writers stem from a lack of control of the various hand and eye movements.

Apprehension and Writer's Block

Basic writers may have such a fear of writing that they suffer acute writing anxiety, writer's block, or both. According to Daly (1985), the apprehensions of basic writers come from, first, their overestimation of their deficiencies as writers; second, inadequate time to complete writing assignments; third, an inability to see a purpose to their writing, which leads them to believe that writing is a waste of time; and fourth, a fear of excessive criticism and failure. Writing anxiety is closely tied to the emotional barriers that basic writers possess and to writer's block. Because basic writers fear negative evaluation of their writing, they produce significantly less discourse than their less fearful proficient counterparts (Daly and Miller, 1975a, 1975b). Apprehension and writer's block thus cause a vicious cycle. These impediments precipitate faulty discourse, which in turn generates criticism and even more apprehension and writer's block (Faigley, Daly, and Witte, 1981; Rose, 1984).

Premature Editing

In addition to their failures to write discourse in a fluent manner, basic writers compound their problems further through a premature editing process. Englert and Raphael (1988), Perl (1980) and Witte and Faigley (1981) found that basic writers

often concentrate on composing individual words rather than composing ideas because they fear making mistakes. Curtis and Stelzner (1987) and Selfe (1985) ascribed many of the difficulties encountered by basic writers to their obsession with mechanical correctness too early in the composing process. In their desire to edit words rather than compose ideas, they fail to concentrate on their message. Witte (1983) and Lunsford (1978b) attributed basic writers' word-level editing strategies to poor reading comprehension. Consequently, in spite of all of their proofreading, basic writers do not catch their mistakes (Perl, 1979).

Conclusion

While it cannot be denied that basic writers make more sentence-level mistakes than their proficient counterparts, research seems to indicate that many of the errors that basic writers create stems from their inability to compose their thoughts on paper in a clear and organized fashion rather than mere ignorance of the conventions of standard edited English (Shaughnessy, 1977). Therefore, testmakers must create tests that place students in developmental courses on the basis of informed judgments about what constitutes serious error. They must assess only those errors and other features that point to a student's difficulties in composing ideas on paper (or fluency-based errors), rather than mechanical errors which may point to carelessness or simple ignorance of the conventions of proper English. Because the major difficulties that basic writers encounter arise from a lack of rudimentary writing fluency, an effective placement test must actually require students to compose their ideas on paper rather

than have them select correct alternatives from discourse already composed on the page for them.

When testmakers design a scoring guide to evaluate discourse produced from these tests, they must construct it in such a way that the guide allows exam readers to discriminate between fluency-related errors from simple mechanical ones. While mechanical errors can often be remediated through a series of carefully constructed lessons in a standard composition course, fluency-related errors generally require more extensive writing practice than a standard course can afford to give. Thus, fluency-related errors within discourse show that its writer is in need of a developmental composition course before he or she can succeed in the standard course.

Those errors pointing to nonfluency, the lack of the ability to compose ideas on the page, can be divided into sentence-level errors and paragraph-level errors. Because not all of these errors can be classified as such by traditional descriptive English grammar, I will use the term feature to identify these deficiencies. On the sentence-level, these features include true fragments (those that cannot be syntactically attached to surrounding sentences), sentence boundary errors (those that logically belong to a parent sentence), impacted sentences (those containing unresolved conflicting ideas), derailed sentences (those that change directions without warning), and the punctuation problems that stem from these errors. These features are the result of the limited repertoire of syntactic structures on the part of basic writers and are compounded by breakdowns in hand-eye motor skills and short-term memory (Beaugrande, 1984; Daiute 1981; Mellon, 1981; Shaughnessy, 1977). On the

paragraph-level, these features can also point to problems in cohesion. Paragraphs may include a string of topic sentences without supporting ideas (Shaughnessy, 1977), and sentences that seem to be piled on each other without connections (Brostoff, 1981), resulting in noncohesive paragraphs (Sloan, 1988). Paragraphs may also be packed with strings of simple sentence in the writer's attempt to create "safe discourse," the attempt to avoid error. While this style of writing may avoid many sentence-level problems, it affects the ways that sentences connect with each other.

Because the types of errors that basic writers create are too complex in nature for traditional tests to identify, a new type of writing test is in order. Indirect multiple-choice tests of writing do not work well because they do not permit students to compose their own ideas. On the other hand, established scoring methods used for direct essay tests also do not work well because the assumptions behind these systems do not allow testmakers to construct guides focused enough to identify nonfluent basic writers. Chapter III will explain why these systems cannot work, and Chapter IV will introduce a new guide that promises to identify nonfluent basic writers based on the research that this chapter has presented.

CHAPTER III

THE LIMITATIONS OF EXISTING TESTS

Established Tests

As already stated in Chapter I, colleges have traditionally used two methods of testing to place students in composition courses. The first is the indirect, multiple-choice format made popular by the major testing companies in the 1950s (Resnick, 1987). The second is direct essay testing made popular in the 1960s. The three most widely-used methods now employed for scoring direct essay assessments are holistic, primary trait, and analytic scoring.

Although these methods have functioned well in assessing general writing proficiency, none of them has been especially designed to function as a placement instrument. The American College Testing Program, which produces both the ACT and ASSET exams, is careful to state that the English portions of their tests are limited to assessing skill levels in language usage and are not designed to be placement instruments as such (American College Testing Programs, 1991; ACT ASSET Research Services, N.D.; White, 1985). On the other hand, proponents of direct writing assessment are also guarded in their claims regarding testing and placement. Edward White, coordinator of the California State University and Colleges Freshman English Equivalency Examination, is clear to stipulate that holistic

methods likewise are not designed to enable exam scorers to assess writing samples for particular course placement. As a whole, many who have used direct essay testing as the sole means for making specific placement decisions have discovered that their tests show some glaring weaknesses in identifying students in need of developmental composition. As a result, they have tried to compensate for these weaknesses by trying to mix direct writing assessment with indirect multiple-choice standardized tests in the hope of finding a workable formula for placing students. Failures in direct essay placement thus are attributable to the general inability of established scoring methods to address those specific features within discourse that point to nonfluency. Rather, these established methods can detect the presence of error, but they cannot always discriminate between those errors pointing to nonfluent writing versus those pointing to mechanical error, to carelessness, or to simple ignorance of those conventions particular to academic writing. Because they lack a clear focus that allows them to measure only fluency, traditional scoring methods have misplaced students in numbers significant enough to warrant a new methodology for scoring essays.

Indirect, Multiple-Choice Tests

The traditional method of assessing writing is the standardized traditional indirect multiple-choice test. The strength of this type of test is that they generate uniform results from test to test (White, 1989) and that they can be designed to correlate well statistically with more direct writing tests (Breland, 1977; Coffman, 1971; Smith, 1979). While the proponents of indirect measures point to the strengths

of multiple-choice tests for measuring general writing proficiency, they cannot claim that these measures work as well when they are used for course placement. The standardized multiple-choice tests created thus far appear to lack the ability to diagnose writing for nonfluent features. Rather, they are tests of usage. To construct valid and reliable questions, testwriters are generally forced into a dualistic position. They must present students with rhetorical situations that allow only one correct answer to exist. They cannot construct questions that contain gray areas nor can these tests assess those problems that are a direct result of the breakdown of memory, as happens with the types of errors mentioned in the preceding chapter. While students may be able to identify fragments when they read the writing of others, they may not be able to recognize the same types of fragments in their own writing (Greenberg, 1982; White, 1985). Moreover, when more proficient writers compose, they often find that they can accomplish a particular rhetorical purpose through a number of syntactic options to achieve their purpose. Rarely do all of these options present themselves in a multiple-choice framework (Greenberg, 1982).

While standardized multiple-choice tests may correlate well with direct essay exams (Breland, 1977), these tests have not worked well for placing students. The ACT and the ASSET, both published by the American College Testing Program, claim that their tests are not specifically designed to place students in a particular course even though English departments routinely use them for such purposes. Rather, American College Testing states that its exams are designed to efficiently and effectively gather information about an individual student's skills, needs, and plans so that students can develop and implement a sound program of study (American College

Testing Program, 1991; ACT ASSET, [N.D.]). The ACT English Test claims to measure the following six elements of effective writing:

Punctuation	(13% of the questions)
Basic Grammar and Usage	(16% of the questions)
Sentence Structure	(24% of the questions)
Strategy (effective introductory, summary, concluding, and transitional sentences)	(16% of the questions)
Organization (evaluates order, coherence, and unity)	(15% of the questions)
Style (the use of precise and appropriate words and images)	(16% of the questions)

The ASSET manual does not precisely stipulate the types and percentages of questions included in the test, but the questions are similar to those on the ACT. For practical purposes both tests are identical.

Research correlating final course grades with scores given on standardized multiple-choice tests also seems to show that tests such as the ACT, ASSET, and TSWE are not the best means for identifying and placing students in developmental composition courses. In correlating computerized placement tests with final course grades at a number of colleges, Ward et al. (1986) found that these tests generated a Pearson Correlative Coefficient from .12 to .47 with a mean score of .30. In analyzing the scores of students who were close to the institutionalized dividing line for placement in basic composition and regular composition at a community college in Florida, Gabe (1989) found that 23% of students who received passing scores withdrew from English Composition. Of the students who received failing grades on

the placement test but still enrolled in English Composition, 44% (as opposed to 45% in the passing group) received final grades of "C" or better. The difference of one percentage point demonstrates that scoring low on the exam did not predict a student's chance of receiving a satisfactory final grade in English Composition. Astroth and Weber (1988) found that of the students who scored low on ASSET yet chose to take a regular composition class, only 26% received failing grades at a midwestern community college. If the test were a good predictor of success in the regular composition class, a distinct majority of this group of students would have to receive failing grades. The significant numbers of students who were misplaced on both sides of the dividing line points to the conclusion that these standardized tests cannot focus on those particular features that separate proficient writers from developmental ones.

White (1985) centered the problem with direct testing on the nature of the tests themselves. To create tests that discriminate proficient from nonproficient writers, professional assessors often resort to test items measuring domains that discriminate among students according to finer points of usage. Epes (1985) and White (1985) also found that multiple-choice tests as the ACT, ASSET, and TSWE often discriminate against otherwise proficient minority students who speak dialects other than standard English. Yet, professional assessors still support the assumption that writing can be measured by reducing it into discrete multiple-choice items (White, 1990). Consequently, the use of these tests often results in unsatisfactory placement decisions because professional assessors feel that writing is the product of a series of precise skills rather than a complex cognitive activity interlocking thought and written code (White, 1990).

Although a multiple-choice test could conceivably be created to measure those particular errors that basic writers create, these tests by nature can only measure editorial skills. Students must work with discourse that is already written on the page. On the other hand, research in basic writing shows that students create these errors because they are nonfluent writers. They compose their ideas with great difficulty because they suffer from breakdowns in short-term memory and faulty motor skills and to a lesser extent writing apprehension. A multiple-choice test cannot measure a student's inability to compose words on the page. An essay test can. Therefore, an essay test promises to be a superior way to measure fluency.

Direct Writing Tests

Direct essay assessment, developed in the 1960s, presents a viable alternative to the traditional multiple-choice test. Up to now, the three most commonly used methods to evaluate discourse are holistic scoring (designed by the Educational Testing Service), analytic scoring (designed by Diederich), and primary trait scoring (designed by Lloyd-Jones).

Holistic scoring allows exam readers to evaluate a piece of writing by general impression (White, 1985). Rather than allowing readers to evaluate discourse by analyzing its constituent parts, holistic scoring allows them to evaluate a piece of writing as a unit. In most holistic scoring procedures, exam readers are given detailed scoring guides that give general characteristics describing writing that fits each numerical score on the scale (White, 1985). These characteristics can include rhetorical specifications, sentence structure, and usage. Holistic scoring has become

popular because the assumptions behind it integrate well with those behind recent developments in linguistic, composition, and critical theory (Huot, 1990a; White, 1985). It is also popular because it is the most economical of all direct writing procedures (Faigley et al., 1985; White, 1985). Training in holistic scoring procedures takes a relatively short time, and raters can read a paper in two to three minutes; whereas, raters using analytic scoring take one to two minutes per trait (Spandel and Stiggins, 1980).

Analytic scoring allows exam readers to focus on several qualities germane to good writing. Raters give scores to individual, identifiable traits, and scores are tallied to provide the overall rating for the paper (Diederich, 1974). Diederich's (1974) original rubric used an interval scale from 1 to 5 to measure the following qualities of writing: the quality of ideas, organization, wording, flavor, usage, punctuation, spelling, and handwriting. Other scales have been developed that allow testmakers to weigh qualities like content or organization more heavily than other traits (Huot, 1990a). Although the rather comprehensive evaluation that analytic scoring provides has led some to believe that analytic scoring is the most reliable of all direct writing assessment procedures (Scherer, 1985), no major testing program has employed analytic scoring because it takes longer for raters to evaluate, it is more costly, and it correlates highly with holistic scoring (Bauer, 1981; Freedman, 1981; White, 1985).

Primary trait scoring allows exam readers to identify one or more traits apropos to a specific writing task. The idea behind primary trait assessment is that the rhetorical situation pertinent to the writing assignment creates the criteria for

evaluation (Lloyd-Jones, 1977). Therefore, as testmakers change essay questions, they must also construct an entirely new scoring guide. With each question, exam readers will evaluate only those traits that generally emanate from the rhetorical situation created by the purpose and intended audience of the question itself (Huot, 1990a). Because primary trait scoring focuses on the rhetorical features only, students who are normally proficient writers will receive low scores on a writing assessment if they do not specifically address those rhetorical features in their answer (Dawe, 1990).

Holistic Scoring. Direct writing tests have not produced placement results that are significantly better than indirect methods. This failure is especially true of holistic scoring. Fishman (1984) found that holistic scoring misplaced a significant number of students at the City University of New York. Barritt, Stock, and Clark (1986) of the University of Michigan found that holistic scoring methods tend to discriminate against those students who depart from the "five-paragraph" essay in favor of more creative alternatives. In surveying exam readers, Barritt, Stock, and Clark found that papers with low scores still had impressive sentences. None of the papers received low scores because they contained fragments, impacted or derailed sentences, or strings of seemingly unconnected simple sentences. Rather, these papers received low scores because their writers either failed to adequately develop ideas or composed responses whose creativity took them beyond the limitations normally expected of traditional academic writing. The administrators of the New Jersey College Placement test supplemented direct essay assessment with a multiple-choice test because they felt that holistic scoring did not focus enough on language

usage ("Interpreting Scores," 1983). They too found that scores correlated more closely with development of ideas rather than on the ways that students used language.

At Oklahoma State University, my colleagues and I discovered that holistic scoring could not successfully identify students who needed English 0123, Basic Composition. As part of a writing test administered during the 1988 summer session to a group of 200 entering freshman, we included the section of basic composition students composed mainly of non-traditional returning students. After scoring the test holistically (with an inter-rater reliability of .89), we found that scores on the basic writers' papers ranged from 3 to 8 (on a range from 2 through 12) even though their papers contained indicators that research points to as symptoms of nonfluency. Even though these papers contained strings of coordinate sentences, fragments, derailed sentences, and few transitional markers, the scoring team assigned these papers "passing" scores. The creative approach that these students employed to answer the test question influenced the scorers to minimalize the effect of these features on their response. The nature of the holistic scoring guide allowed the readers to use creativity to counter language and thus to arrive at middle-range or "passing" scores. (See Appendix A for the scoring guide.) Results like these have led Huot (1990b), Purves (1992), and McKendry (1992) to question the construct validity of holistic scoring for placing students.

Odell and Cooper (1980) attribute the inability of holistic scoring to place students effectively to its key assumptions about proficient writing. First, holistic scoring assumes that all the qualities of a piece of discourse are so closely related to

each other that they cannot be separated from each other. Thus, the content, rhetorical, and linguistic domains work in unison and cannot be divided (McCutchen, 1986). Second, holistic scoring assumes that raters can weigh all of the qualities of a paper together and then make a quick decision about its quality and assign it a score. The problems arise because holistic scoring evaluates writing samples rather than the needs of the writers.

These assumptions prohibit raters from identifying and classifying papers on the basis of groups of specific features that point toward nonfluent writing. Gere (1980), Odell and Cooper (1980), Faigley et al. (1985), and Huot (1990b) have found that the emphasis of holistic scoring on evaluating whole discourse at the expense of its parts has rendered the method unsuitable for accurate decisions concerning composition instruction. Papers that are weak in a given domain will still receive proficient scores because all the other domains will counterbalance the one. Thus, an otherwise highly proficient paper with a significant number of errors may still receive a high score. In fact, Freedman (1979) found that content had the greatest influence on holistic scores, followed by organization, and lastly by mechanics and sentence structure. Thus, exam readers tend to underestimate the significance of fragments, "safe writing," or other nonfluent written features unless these problems are so grave that they disrupt communication. Furthermore, Greenberg (1983) discovered that raters often rewarded students more for their ability to avoid errors than for their ability to handle complex syntactic structures. Thus, students who retreat into safe writing could receive scores denoting proficiency on a placement test that is

holistically scored. Olson and Martin (1980) learned that holistic scoring functions better when it is used to identify top students rather than those at the bottom.

Analytic Scoring. Because it measures many traits that lie outside the domain of fluency, analytic scoring also seems to lack potential as a means for identifying basic writers and placing them in appropriate composition courses. Rather, many of Diederich's original features lend themselves more to general writing proficiency than for placement purposes. For example, Diederich's traits of idea quality, wording, and flavor, while important, do not directly address the issues of writing fluency. On the other hand, the qualities of usage, punctuation, spelling, and handwriting have the potential to address the features that point to nonfluency. Yet, these four traits as originally identified do not lend themselves to diagnosis (White, 1985). Assuming that testmakers could successfully modify the nature of these four traits to allow readers to distinguish fluency-related problems from simple mechanical ones, testmakers would also need to create other traits so that readers could also evaluate other problems as "safe writing," discourse characterized by strings of lean, simple sentences lacking embedded phrases or clauses. A more-focused analytical scoring guide would represent a departure from the holistic assumptions behind traditional analytic scoring.

While an analytic scoring system could be a conceivable alternative to holistic scoring for identifying and placing basic writers, research comparing analytic and holistic scoring suggests that reading papers for a variety of identifiable traits may be unnecessary. Hudson and Veal (1981), Winters (1978), Freedman (1981), and Perkins (1982) found high correlations between holistic and analytic scores.

Therefore, reason dictates that a single score encompassing all traits covered by an analytic scale can evaluate writing, and a scoring system could be devised to examine all features pointing to nonfluency in tandem, thus saving the time and expense of requiring readers to generate several scores.

Primary Trait Scoring. Rather than scoring papers on general features as do holistic and analytical scoring systems, primary trait scoring asks exam readers to look to the characteristics that are important for achieving the assigned rhetorical purpose of a given topic for a specific audience rather than the conventions of language (Gere, 1980; Odell and Cooper, 1980). While primary trait scoring shows promise as a method for placing students because it allows readers to diagnose writing for nonfluent features, its design to evaluate only the rhetorical side of writing limits this diagnostic capacity. Scorers therefore evaluate nonfluent features only if they hinder the rhetorical purposes involved in the writing task. As a result, papers that do not address the primary trait will receive low scores even though they are well organized, creative, and syntactically competent (Dawe, 1990; Gere, 1980). On the other hand, papers containing features pointing to nonfluency could conceivably receive satisfactory scores if the papers addressed the rhetorical demands of the assignment. Because primary trait scoring slights features of language, this method in its present form does not address those specific language features that point to nonfluent writing. However, its assumptions enabling readers to identify and diagnose a select primary trait as it works in tandem with all other features renders primary trait scoring useful if testmakers can establish basic fluency as a primary

trait. To do so would allow readers to identify nonfluent basic writers in need of developmental composition.

Conclusion

None of the established means of writing assessment in their present form is capable of identifying the rhetorical and language features that point to nonfluency and isolating them as the sole criteria for evaluating writing. Rather, these methods look at discourse as a whole, and if they do look at language, they do not differentiate between fluency-related and other types of error. Traditional multiple-choice tests present students with alternatives that must be identified as correct or incorrect. Furthermore, this method assumes that if students can understand proficient writing in others, they will be able to generate their own proficient writing. On the other hand, direct methods only indirectly measure fluency. Holistic scoring, analytic scoring, and primary trait scoring lack the mechanisms to place students by asking raters to identify only those features that point to nonfluency. A new system for evaluating writing is needed that can permit exam readers to isolate these features so that they can identify and place basic writers in appropriate developmental courses. Chapter IV describes such a system.

CHAPTER IV

THE MODIFIED PRIMARY TRAIT SCORING GUIDE

Introduction

The Modified Primary Trait Scoring Guide is distinct from existing direct assessment systems. I designed it to identify specifically those features within student papers that indicate that their writers are nonfluent and are in need of a basic composition course. While this guide is unique, its assumptions are close to those of Primary Trait Scoring because I am assuming that basic writing fluency can be treated as a type of primary trait. My guide differs from others because it does not pretend to be a comprehensive measure of student writing; rather, its aim is to identify those writing features that point to a lack of fluency.

In constructing the Modified Primary Trait Scoring Guide, I followed the criteria outlined by Herrington (1979) and Nitko (1974). First, the scoring guide rewards students for creating effective discourse. Second, it incorporates those specific nonfluent writing features that identify discourse written by basic writers. Third, it serves as a source of diagnostic information as well as one that evaluates and ranks students. I also followed the procedures outlined by Lloyd-Jones (1977) in that I designed the scoring guide to address the specific essay topic, but I did so in such a way that the guide can be easily adjusted to handle other topics. I also included

anchor papers representing each score. Because the scoring system departs from the others, I also incorporated paper diagrams using Christensen's (1967) generative rhetoric of the sentence and paragraph to help readers identify those features that point to nonfluent writing. Inasmuch as the exam topic approximates the type of writing that students will compose during the first semester of freshman composition, the guide will help faculty to identify nonfluent basic writers (Lederman, 1980; Chew, 1988).

The Scoring Guide

The original scoring guide is a 6-point scale that was used for the Fall 1988 study at Oklahoma State University and the Spring 1991 study at Barton County Community College. At the end of this chapter I will present a 4-point adaptation of the original scale that was used for the Fall 1990 study at Barton County Community College to accommodate the faculty at Barton County Community College who had no experience in writing assessment of this type and saw the adaptation as less intimidating to work with. Because they found that large-scale writing assessment was not as intimidating as they had originally thought, they offered to use the original 6-point scale for the Spring 1991 study. Both the 4-point and the 6-point scale work equally as well both in training exam readers and in determining course placement. The two guides correspond to the following topic:

> Assume that someone your age has just moved into your city or town. Identify a good place for that person to meet people of your age group, describe it, and tell why that place is good for him or her to meet friends.

Figure 1 shows the 6-point scoring guide.

THE MODIFIED PRIMARY TRAIT SCORING GUIDE: SIX-POINT SCALE

Proficient Scores

6 Give this score to the essay that provides a clear, organized response to both parts of the question. It not only identifies and describes a good place to meet people of the student's age group, but it tells why that place is good for meeting people of that age group. The writer makes clear connections between his/her assertions and the reasons for these assertions by providing good explanations, illustrations, and connections to each of his or her assertions. The writer shows a good command of language and written conventions. **If the essay shows a significant number of features similar to those listed in category 3, assign this paper a 3.**

5 Give this score to the essay that responds to both parts of the question. (It identifies and describes a place to meet people of the student's age group and tells why that place is a good one.) However, the essay fails to adequately develop both parts of the question with sufficient explanations, illustrations, and connections. In spite of this lack of development, the essay is still logically organized. The essay may contain errors in structure and spelling (other than the major problems described in Category 3.) **If the essay contains a significant number of features similar to those listed in Category 3, assign the paper a 3.**

4 Give this score to the essay that seriously slights both parts of the question; however, in spite of its weaknesses, the student who wrote this response still has a chance for success in English Composition I. The essay may contain numerous errors, but none are the serious types described in Category 3. **If the essay contains a significant number of features similar to those in Category 3, assign the paper a 2.**

Nonproficient Scores

3 Give this score to the essay that would meet the criteria of a **5** or **6** essay except that it contains one or more of the following features:

Presence of true fragments in the response
Significant sentence boundary errors (caused by misfired punctuation)
Impacted or derailed sentences
Significant errors in punctuation
Strings of simple sentences (with or without "and") or other symptoms of **safe writing**
Paragraphs that contain
  strings of topic sentences,
  sentences that just seem to be piled on top of each other,
  or sentences which do not logically follow each other
Paragraphs that just seem to fall apart.
Penmanship: Look for signs of struggle such as
  sloppy print, scrawly or loopy writing, misshaped letters
  erratic capitalization
  any other signs that show weaknesses in motor skills.
  Do not confuse signs of struggle with sloppy handwriting.

Figure 1. The Modified Primary Trait Scoring Guide: Six-Point Scale

2	Give this score to the essay that appears to meet the criteria for a **4** paper but it contains one or more of the problems described in Category **3**.
1	Give this score to the essay that is so short (less than a half page of text on standard paper) that any reasonably accurate judgment of the writer's competence is impossible. The brevity of the response indicates that the student is completely non-fluent or suffers from writing anxiety. What is on the page is so poorly written that it almost lacks meaning.

Figure 1. Continued

On the scoring guide, the top-half score descriptors (numbers 4-6 on the scale) direct readers to evaluate papers for idea development. The second sentence in each top-half descriptor (with the exception of number 4) is topic specific and can be modified to correspond to a change in topic. Lloyd-Jones (1977) recommends that the scoring guide be topic-specific to better help exam readers remember the specific demands of the assignment. Otherwise, the scoring guide is topic independent.

The bottom-half score descriptors (1-3 on the scale) list those specific features that identify nonfluent writing. Because these features are holistic in nature, the possible causes for them will work in tandem. The first group of features identifies problems in sentence structure. These features include true fragments (fragments that cannot be logically attached to surrounding sentences), sentence boundary errors (fragments that logically belong to a parent sentence), impacted sentences (sentences containing conflicting ideas), derailed sentences (sentences that change directions without warning), and significant errors in punctuation. These features identify problems in composing due to faulty motor skills and short-term memory. Beaugrande (1984), Shaughnessy (1977), Mellon (1981), and Daiute (1981) found that breakdowns in hand-eye motor skills combined with problems in short-term memory will impede students as they compose. As a result, they will misuse punctuation marks, fail in their attempts to embed ideas on the phrase and clause level, and will leave trails of fragments or convoluted sentences.

In using the term "features," I am attempting to distinguish those errors that result from nonfluent writing from mechanical error. Thus, the term "feature" refers to those errors that students stumble into as their ideas collide with the written code as

they compose. Thus, the guide allows exam readers to ignore such mechanical errors as subject/verb agreement problems, routine spelling mistakes, dangling modifiers, or simple comma errors unless they work in tandem with other errors that point to nonfluency. The guide therefore allows readers to discriminate between the causes of error because not all errors fall exclusively into one of the two categories. On the other hand, I have also used the term "features" to include problems that fall outside the traditional definition of error. A string of simple sentences in itself does not represent error, but these strings can manifest a writer's inability to embed ideas within sentences.

The second group of features identifies problems on the paragraph level. These features include a string of topic sentences without supporting ideas (Shaughnessy, 1977) and sentences that seem to be piled on each other without connections (Brostoff, 1981), resulting in noncohesive paragraphs (Sloan, 1988). These features point to students' problems in understanding and using cohesive devices and reveal their limited repertoire of linguistic structures.

Safe writing is the attempt on the part of basic writers to compose discourse without embedding ideas on the phrase or clause level (Shaughnessy, 1977). They want to avoid the problematic syntax that they will create if they attempt to break out of their lean sentences (Beaugrande, 1980). This style of writing also points to basic writers' difficulties in moving between abstract and concrete ideas. Shaughnessy (1977) found that basic writers cannot establish opinions and support them with examples and illustrations, or if they use details, these writers ramble on without creating generalizations to synthesize their thoughts. Also behind safe writing is

apprehension and writer's block (Rose, 1990). Basic writers want to avoid the criticism they know that they will receive if they break out of safe writing and create errors in sentence structure and punctuation (Daly and Miller, 1975a, 1975b).

Penmanship, the last feature, points to faulty motor skills and student inexperience at writing. Basic writers will often misshape letters (Mellon, 1981), will often print as opposed to writing cursively, or will use capital letters erratically in their discourse (Shaughnessy, 1977).

These features point to problems that cannot be remediated through a series of lessons in proper usage as part of a standard composition class. Rather, these features result from inexperience in writing that a regular composition course cannot quickly remediate. Students who use these features need the extensive practice in writing that they can receive only in a developmental composition course.

Marker Papers

Christensen Diagrams

To help readers to shift their focus away from surface error to those features that point to proficient or nonfluent writing, I have included with each anchor paper a diagram derived from Christensen's (1967) rhetoric of the sentence and of the paragraph, a method further developed by D'Angelo (1975). According to Christensen, paragraphs are formed from four structural principles: addition, direction of modification and movement, abstraction, and texture. The first two principles, addition and direction of modification and movement, define the grammatical structure of the sentence. Addition refers to the action of composing, the

formation of base clauses within sentences. Direction of modification and movement refers to subordinating phrases and clauses that function as modifiers and as focusers of direction within sentences. Abstraction is the principle that creates meaning through the interaction of addition and direction of modification and movement. Texture refers to the relative richness or thinness created in sentences and is determined by the quantity and quality of the direction of modification and movement within sentences. From these principles come meaning within the paragraph, for paragraphs are sequences of structurally related sentences that Christensen sees as a web of subordination and coordination. These two webs can be further subdivided into two functions: grammatical and semantic (D'Angelo, 1975). The grammatical functions connect sentences through precise words, such as pronouns, transitional words, repetitions of words (or their synonyms), and parallel structures. The semantic function establishes relationships within and between paragraphs. Thus, both Christensen and D'Angelo see sentence and paragraph alignment (which I will refer to as Christensen diagrams) as indicating that there is more to paragraphing than conventional grammar texts would have one believe. Furthermore, this kind of analysis suggests that there is a closer connection between parts within a paragraph than many have previously believed (Christensen, 1967; D'Angelo, 1975).

In creating a diagram of the network of connections within a given text, one must view the sentence as an integral unit, locked internally to itself as well as externally to those sentences that surround it. That is, one must look inside the sentence to determine how a given component relates to all the others that make up the sentence, and one looks outside the sentence to determine its relationship with the

other sentences of the paragraph. As phrases and clauses are either subordinated or coordinated to each other on the sentence level, individual sentences will also subordinate or coordinate with each other on the paragraph level. The base clause of each sentence thus becomes analogous to the topic sentence of the paragraph (which Christensen assumes to be the first sentence of the paragraph for the purpose of his diagrams), and the subordinate phrases and clauses that modify the base clause of the sentence become analogous to that group of sentences that support the topic sentence of the paragraph. Therefore, once one finds the base clause (on the sentence level) or the topic sentence (on the paragraph level), one places it at the most prominent level and indents all subordinate materials on subsequent levels on the basis of whether they modify the base unit or a unit subordinating the base unit. Thus, the base sentence (on the paragraph level) or the base clause (on the sentence level) is placed in position one, and all elements that directly support the base element are put on level two. If an element modifies a given level-two subordinate element (instead of the base level-one element), it is then placed on level three. If an element modifies a level-three element, it is placed on level four, and so on. Consequently, on both the sentence and paragraph levels, the diagram takes on a multi-layered effect that graphically shows exam readers the leanness or richness of the text. Moreover, it gives them a sense of how the text has been constructed so that they can better discern the presence of features that could point to a lack of writing fluency.

To illustrate Christensen on the sentence level, I have diagrammed the opening sentence of William Faulkner's A Rose for Emily as follows:

2 When Miss Emily Grierson died,
1 our whole town went to her funeral:
2 the men through a respectful attention for a fallen monument,
2 the women mostly out of curiosity to see the inside of her house,
3 which no one save an old manservant--/--had seen in ten years.
4 /a combined gardner and cook.

With the exception of the level-four appositive, the diagram lists the sentence as it was originally written. The slash mark (/) indicates that an embedded element was removed from the phrase or clause. The independent clause "our whole town went to her funeral" takes the level 1 position because it is the base unit upon which all other phrases and clauses unfold. The initial adverbial clause "When Miss Emily Grierson died" assumes a level 2 position because it is subordinate to the level 1 clause. Following the base clause at the level 1 position are two absolute phrases that also modify the base clause. Both of these phrases assume the level 2 position because they coordinate each other, and as equals, they are both subordinate to the base clause. The clause "which no one save an old manservant--/--had seen in ten years" assumes a level 3 position because it describes the idea of "house," located in the level 2 sentence directly above it. This clause is thus subordinate to the one above it, and its indentation to level 3 pictures this relationship. Embedded in the level 3 clause is the appositive "a combined gardner and cook." Because this phrase falls within another clause, the virgule (/) signifies that the phrase has been removed. Since this appositive serves to clarify the identity of the manservant, it assumes a level 4 position because the appositive is subordinate to the level 3 adverbial clause that precedes it. While the rich layer of embeddings goes beyond the capability of most freshmen, this method for diagramming sentences can point out to readers in graphic form that a student has not embedded anything within sentences.

In diagraming paragraphs, the reader assumes that the opening sentence of any paragraph is the lead sentence, and it is placed at the level-one position. Although the first sentence is not necessarily the topic sentence of the paragraph, it still becomes a level-one sentence so that other sentences can either be coordinate or subordinated to it. The following sentences should start at level two and work down. In diagramming the paragraph, the reader must decide whether each sentence coordinates or subordinates with the one above it. Sentences coordinate with each other if one can logically place a coordinating conjunction (and, or, for, but, nor, yet, or so) between them. Sentences subordinate with each other if the second sentence qualifies the first (the second sentence explains how, why, when, where, who, or which). Therefore, at one extreme, a paragraph may be completely coordinating (levels 1-2-2-2-2-etc.) or completely subordinating (levels 1-2-3-4-5-etc.). The more that a paragraph shows a subordinating pattern, the more it will show complexity and development of ideas (Shaughnessy, 1977). On the other hand, the more that a paragraph shows a coordinating pattern, the more it may indicate ideas that are next to but maybe not connected to other ideas (Brostoff, 1981).

Neither Christensen nor anyone using his method has attempted to combine both the rhetoric of the sentence and that of the paragraph. Thus, I have modified his system to put both rhetorics together by creating a network of boxed-in paragraphs and sentences to clarify relationships.

I have encased each paragraph within the entire essay in its own box, which is further divided into smaller boxes to represent the sentences. As the period is the indicator for a sentence boundary, I have chosen to use the period to determine box

divisions. Although this looks obvious, it is nevertheless important, for nonfluent writers will often compose run-on sentences or fragments, as illustrated on the Christensen diagram showing nonproficient writing on page 45. In the case of run-on sentences, I have created divisions between the natural sentence boundaries by leaving a space between natural sentences within each box. Thus, a box encasing a run-on sentence will have more than one sentence enclosed within it. In the case of fragments, I have perforated the box division between the fragment and its parent sentence. Thus, two or more boxes with perforated lines indicates a natural sentence that has been incorrectly punctuated with a period. In some of the papers that jump back to level 1 sentences in mid-paragraph, I have also incorporated the following codes by the number indicating the sentence level to clarify sentence relationships:

I	Introduction
P	Proposition or Topic Sentence
T	Transitional Sentence
C	Concluding Sentence

I have used these codes in the Anchor 5 paper (see pages 52-54) and the Anchor 3A paper (pages 60-62).

In order to eliminate clutter resulting from competing numbering systems both on the paragraph and sentence levels, I have eliminated number designations in front of phrases or clauses within each box on the diagrams.

Figure 2 provides a Christensen diagram of a paragraph taken from a proficient paper, and Figure 3, a diagram of a paragraph taken from a nonproficient paper.

Proficient Paper

In Midwest City a good place to meet people is on "The Cruise." On Friday and Saturday nights, hundreds of cars full of teenagers drive up and down Air Depot Street, usually yelling out the windows at people going by. You can see many types of people who go to the same school as you do. People in these cars will often ask you to pull over into the Walmart parking lot in order to get more acquainted, but unless you want to meet the local police officers, I suggest not parking for a very long time.

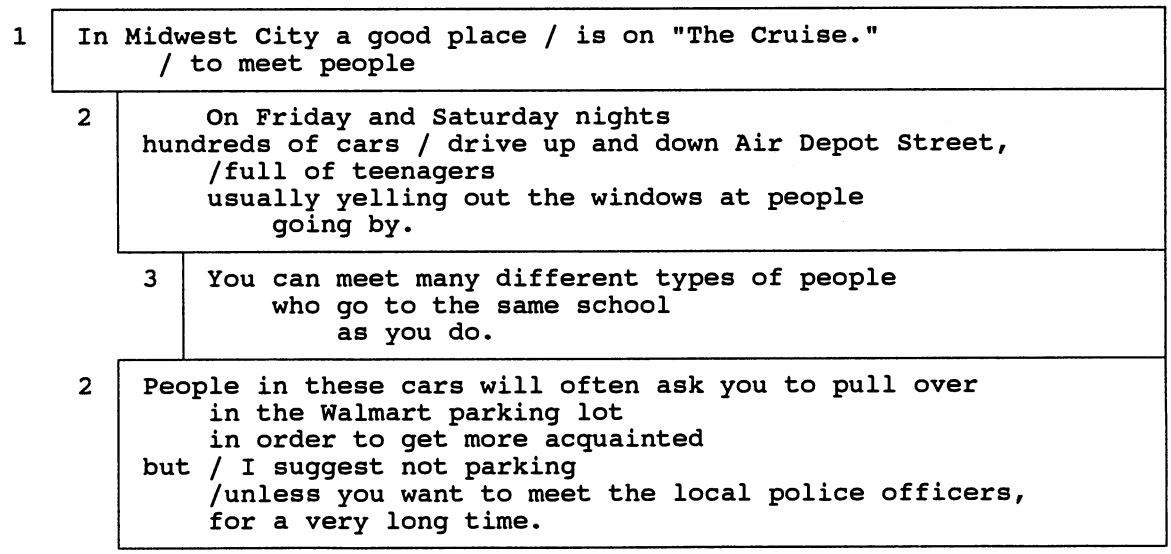

Figure 2. The Christensen Diagram of a Proficient Paper

While the diagram lacks the ability to measure the creativity of ideas, it can measure the development of them. The first sentence forms the topic sentence of the paragraph because it introduces and connects the ideas of the Midwest City cruise and meeting people, and for that reason it receives the level-1 position in the diagram. The second sentence receives a level-2 position because it develops the preceding level-1 sentence by describing <u>when</u> the cruise takes place and <u>what</u> happens there.

The various layers of embedded phrases within this level-2 sentence suggest that the student knows how to draw relationships between his ideas, a clear sign of proficient writing for a beginning freshman student. (I have dropped the numbering scheme within to identify levels to avoid cluttering the diagram with conflicting number patterns.) The main clause containing the basic idea for the sentence is that hundreds of cars drive up and down Air Depot Street, and the other ideas are layered in as they relate to the base idea. The following sentence becomes a level-3 sentence because it describes what can occur when people drive by each other on the cruise. Again, the two layers of embedded clauses show that the student knows how to connect ideas by drawing relationships between them. The last sentence in this paragraph becomes a level-2 sentence because it adds onto the idea of the preceding level-2 sentence by introduce two ideas. The sentence thus has two base clauses to show that it is a compound sentence. These two clauses present the ideas that one can pull into the Walmart parking lot, but one must not park too long. All other ideas are subordinate to these two key ideas and are thus indented. As with the other sentences the student knows how to draw relationships between his ideas by subordinating lesser important ideas to his major ones. The relationships shown by the various layers of boxes and the ideas within these boxes point to a level of proficiency on the part of the writer.

Figure 3 presents a paper written by a nonproficient student.

Nonproficient Paper

"Five dollars please." Says the woman at the window Chances is packed with people every thursday thru saturday. Can you think of a better place to meet people of my age. Than a place full of them? Some say it costs to much. In my opinion it is a small price to pay. You can have fun and meet people.

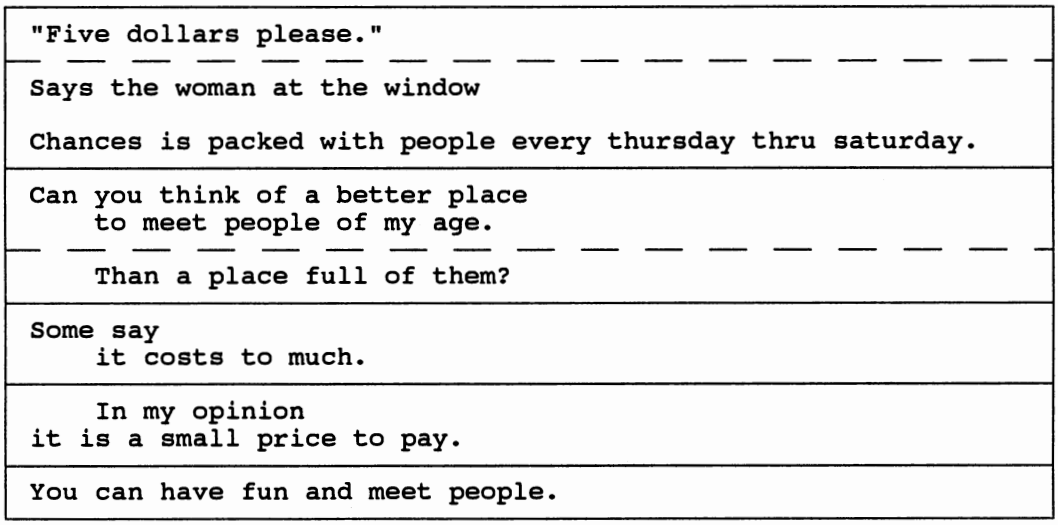

Figure 3. Christensen Diagram of a Nonproficient Paper

The straight sequence of level-1 sentences on the paragraph level suggest that the student cannot express his ideas on paper. Each of the sentences becomes a level-1 sentence because none of the sentences develop any of the ideas in the sentences that preceded them. Rather, each sentence adds an idea of its own, thus forming what Lunsford (1978b) calls an extreme coordinate pattern. The series of level-1 sentences on the diagram shows that each sentence promises a new idea that can be developed into its own paragraph, but the leveling effect also shows that the student

has done nothing more than pile sentences by each other, a phenomenon that Brostoff (1981) would describe as pathologic or widely unconnected prose.

Within each box on the diagram, the arrangement of the sentences also suggests that the student cannot order ideas within sentences. While the sentence in the first box suggests a complete idea in the oral mode, it is nonetheless a fragment. As a result, the diagram places the sentence in a box of its own to signify that the student created this idea as a sentence, but the box perforates the box division to show that this idea logically connects with the one following it. In addition, the diagram places both the first sentence, which is the fragment, and the parent sentence in the level-1 position to show that both ideas are equal. (The first fragment is logically a direct object of the second sentence.) The second sentence is in reality a run-on sentence. Because the writer created this idea as one sentence, the diagram puts both ideas in the same box, but the diagram shows this error by placing both sentences in the same box with a space between the two logical sentences that form the run-on. The following two boxes have a perforation between them. To show the reader that the second idea is in fact subordinate to the first sentence, the idea receives a level-2 position to show that it develops the idea of place in the base clause of the preceding sentence. The use of the perforated line between boxes to indicate fragments and the placing of two separated sentences within boxes to indicate run-ons allows readers to easily see any problems in sentence structure. The relative lack of layers of embedding also allows readers to see that students may not know how to order ideas within sentences.

Both the diagram for the proficient paper and that of the nonproficient paper allow readers to discern problems both on the paragraph and sentence levels. These diagrams also allowed training session leaders to point out more clearly strengths and weaknesses in papers as they attempt to correlate the scoring guide to marker papers.

Proficient Papers

The following anchor papers serve as examples to illustrate the various criteria included in each descriptor of the 6-point scoring guide. The first three anchor papers (Figures 4, 5, and 6) illustrate papers corresponding to scores denoting proficiency on the scoring guide. The second four anchor papers (Figures 7, 8, 9, and 10) illustrate papers corresponding to scores denoting nonproficiency on the scoring guide.

The three figures below are samples of proficient writing. The first figure is an Anchor 6 paper; the next figure, an Anchor 5 paper; and the last figure, an Anchor 4 paper. Following each paper are Christensen diagrams which further exemplify how each paper fits together to form a coherent whole. While the three papers show descending degrees of compliance with the rhetorical demands of the topic, none of the three papers contain features pointing to nonfluent writing similar to those listed in category 3 on the scoring guide.

The following figure is that of an Anchor 6 paper.

Anchor 6 Paper

Stuart Krumm moves to an out-of-the way town with his California view of life. As I am with most new students at Ripley High School, I try to be open and friendly to help him adjust to the Ripley style of living. A new student usually has questions such as where are the best places to hang out, how does one fit in, or what is the best means of escape from Ripley that he would like to have answered but has no one to ask.

Stuart came to Ripley and was a instant interest to all the students. At that time, I gave him a precautionary warning as I do to most new students. The first week or two at Ripley, you will be really popular. Then the next week you won't think you have a friend on the earth. Stuart just laughed me off and I reminded him when it does happen, I'll still be here.

Three weeks pasted for Stuart, before he came to me and said he was going to bring a gun and kill half the people at school.

"Wouldn't work," I stated. "Ripley is a mind game. No one wins--you just play along."

After he calmed down, I told him about some of the place where the teenagers hanged out. It all depends on what group he wanted to be with. Stuart wanted parties and never ending good times. My reply was simple, "Then you want to go to the river." There is parties day and night at the river.

The river is just outside of Ripley. Around the twisting and winding waters are several hide-out areas for people to party. There are some roads that follow the river that just end because the water washed them out. It also has steep bluffs and several cattle trails that lead on forever.

I never enjoy going to the Cimmeron River to party. It was never my idea of fun to wake up face down in the sand without any clothes on. Call me strange, but I like to know what's happening to me at all times. Unlike myself, the greater majority of the High School student go there on a regular basis.

After Stuart found the group he wanted to fit in with, he did just fine. Of course, after he joined the "Triple R's" (Ripley River Rats) I didn't see him much, but when I did he seem to enjoy his new suroundings. I only hoped that he never found an end to what he saw as a good time, because it may be me who he wants to gun down in the halls.

Figure 4. The Anchor 6 Paper

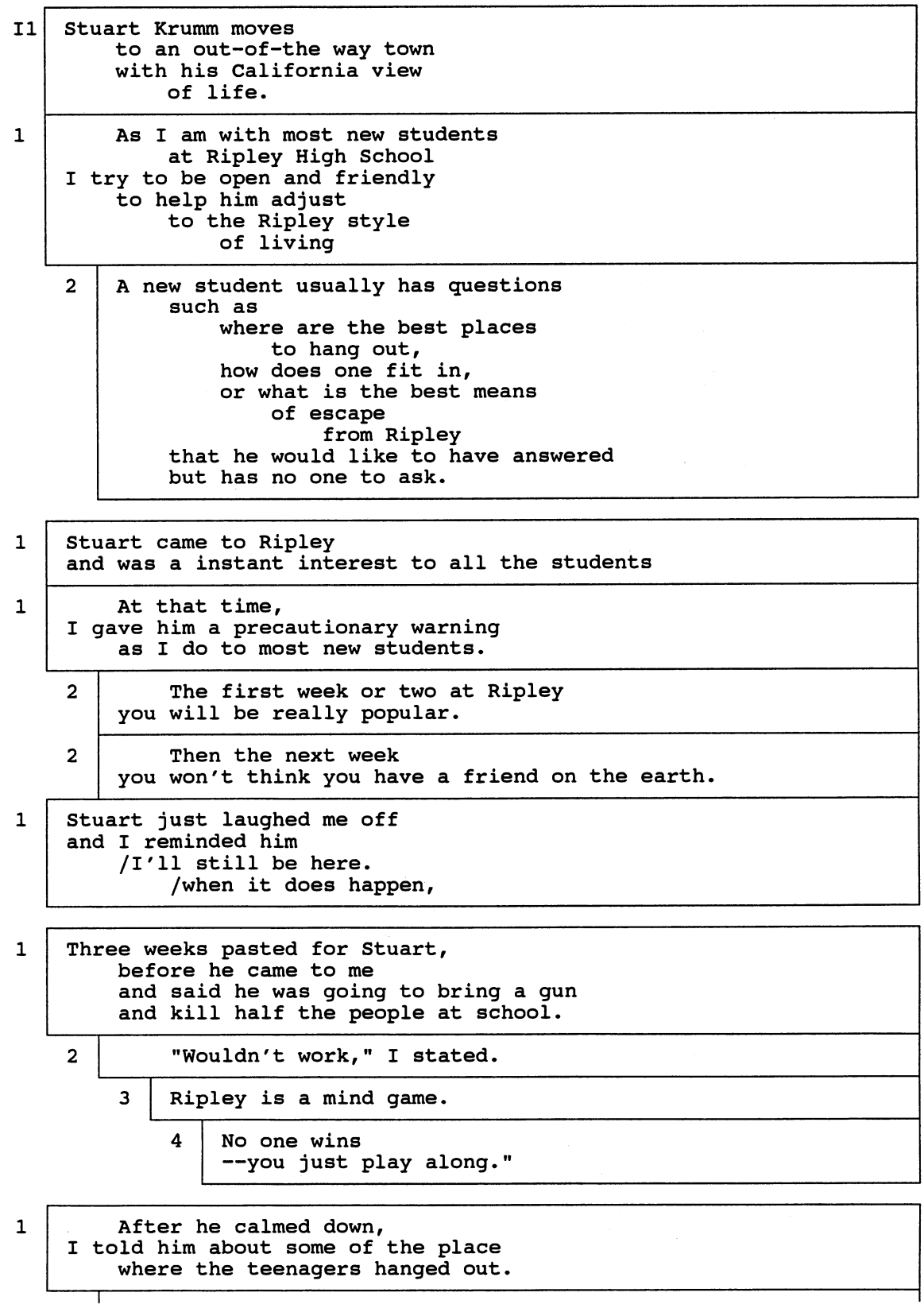

Figure 4. Continued

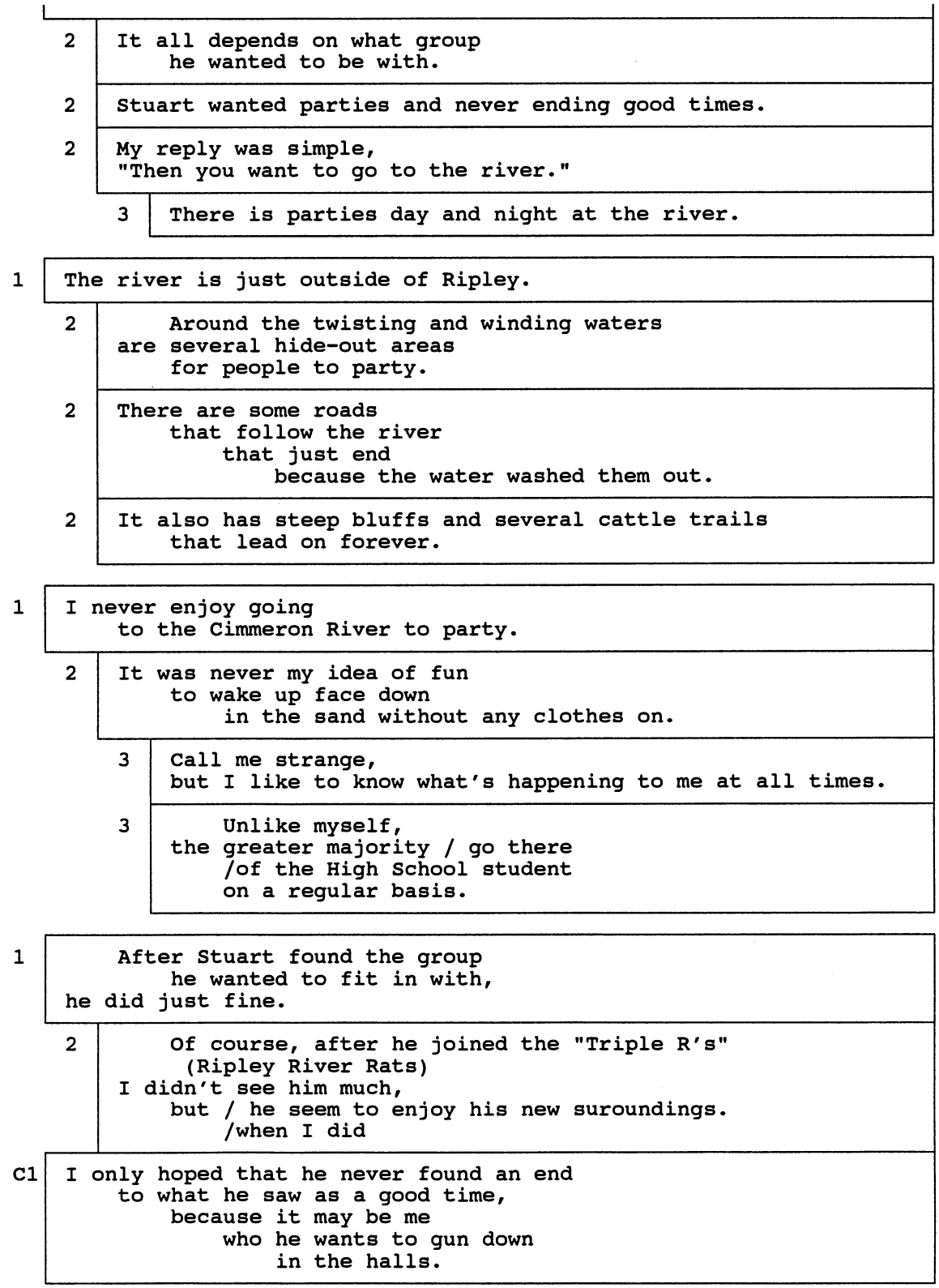

Figure 4. Continued

While this paper lacks polish because it was quickly written, the writer has nonetheless shown that he is able to write a relatively creative paper, and this creativity is the main reason why this paper received a score of 6. The Christensen diagram, while not being able to measure creativity in itself, does show that the student knows how to embed ideas within sentences. On the paragraph level, the student is able to draw relationships between sentences. Although he basically stays on level 2, he does develop ideas as far as level 4. While many of the sentences lack polish due to a time limitation that did not present adequate time for revision, they still show that the student knows how to effectively draw relationships by subordinating lesser-important elements to those of greater importance. This student has shown the ability to achieve five levels of subordination in some sentences (if the one creating the diagram chooses to separate smaller elements as prepositional phrases from their parent clause or phrase). The layered effect of the Christensen diagram, both on the paragraph and sentence levels, shows that the student has a great deal of proficiency for an entering freshman in college.

The following figure is that of an Anchor 5 paper.

Anchor 5 Paper

If a person my age were to move into Amarillo, Texas the best place I would tell him to meet people would be in his high school. The high school he attended would have many ways for the new student to meet people his own age. Depending on the school the student was in there are many different organizations he could become involved in. The best school in Amarillo would be Tascosa High School. I feel this would be the best place for a new student to begin to make friends.

In Amarillo, Tascosa is the friendliest high school. Tascosa is not the largest high school but it seems to have more people willing to accept new students than any other school. If the new student wanted to meet many new people I think the best way would be to get involved in many of the clubs and organizations offered. Tascosa has many different activities a person can become involved in. first of all there are many sports an athletic person could participate in. If the person wants to become active in the sports he would probably have to try out but tryouts aren't too difficult. Some of the sports offered are football, basketball, volleyball, swimming, soccer, wrestling, and golf. These are not all of the sports offered but they are some of the most important ones in my area. If the new student is not the athletic type then there are many other ways for him to get involved. For the student who really wants to further his academic achievement, there are many academically oriented clubs. These include Spanish club, Latin club, Physics club, Number sense, Science club and many others. If the student feels like he would be good at leadership there are many ways to become involved in this too. A person can run for many offices. If the student wanted to be in Student council there are eight different offices he could run for. These offices are President, Vice President, Treasurer, Secretary, Parliamentarian, Boy and Girl Representatives, and Chaplain. The student could run for class offices instead of student council if he would rather help his own class instead of the whole school. Each class has a President, Vice-President, Treasurer, and a Secretary. These are just a few of the activities a new student could participate in - they are by far not all of the clubs one could become involved in. I feel that the high school is the best place to meet people of your own age with your own interest because there are so many other people around you. I think school is a better place to meet people than a social or "hit" spot because in Amarillo everyone has their own group that they go out with and if you don't meet people in school then there isn't anyone for you to go to the "hit" spots with. Tascosa is the best high school to attend because there are more people interested in their fellow students than any of the other high schools in Amarillo.

Figure 5. The Anchor 5 Paper

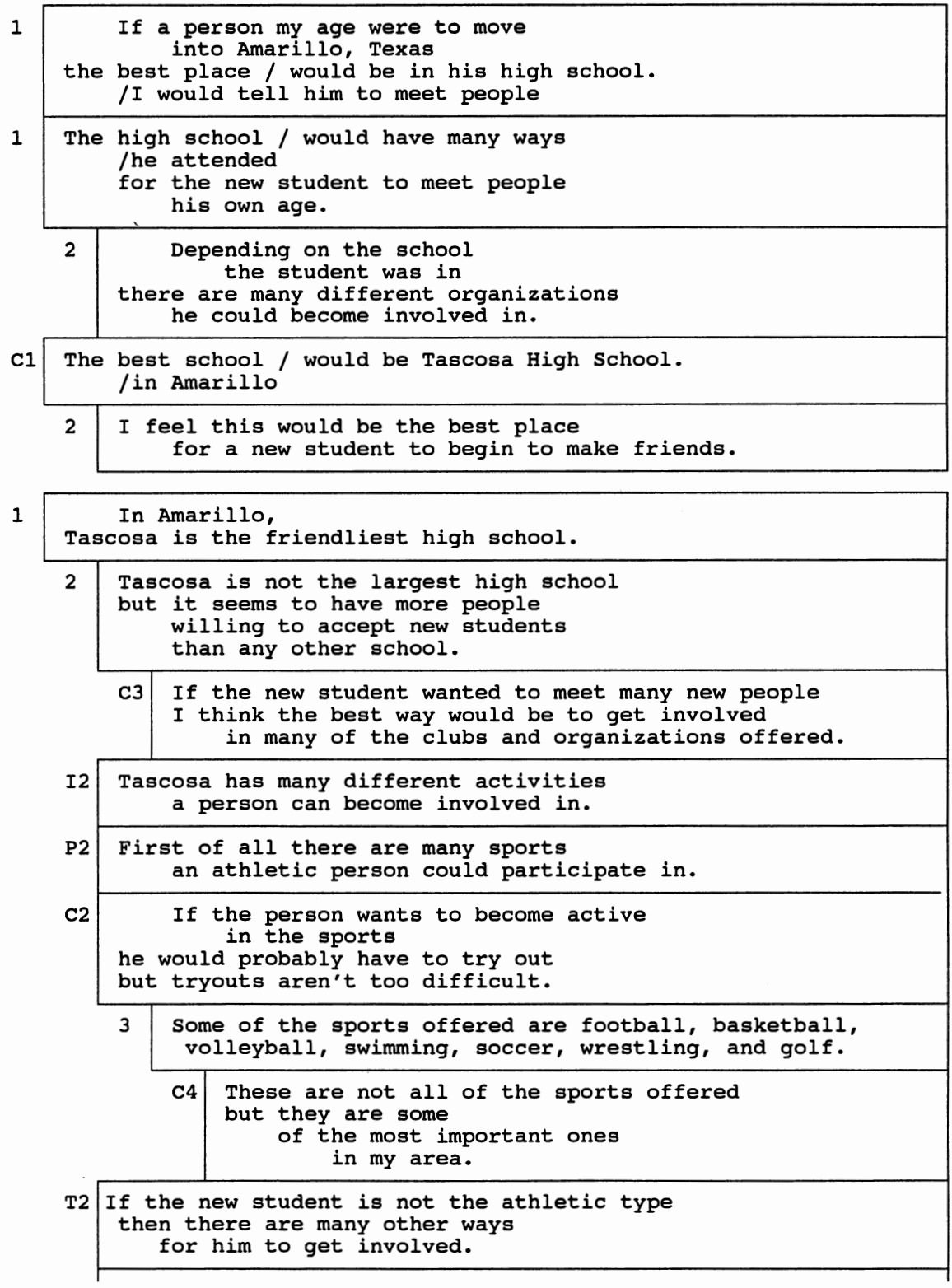

Figure 5. Continued

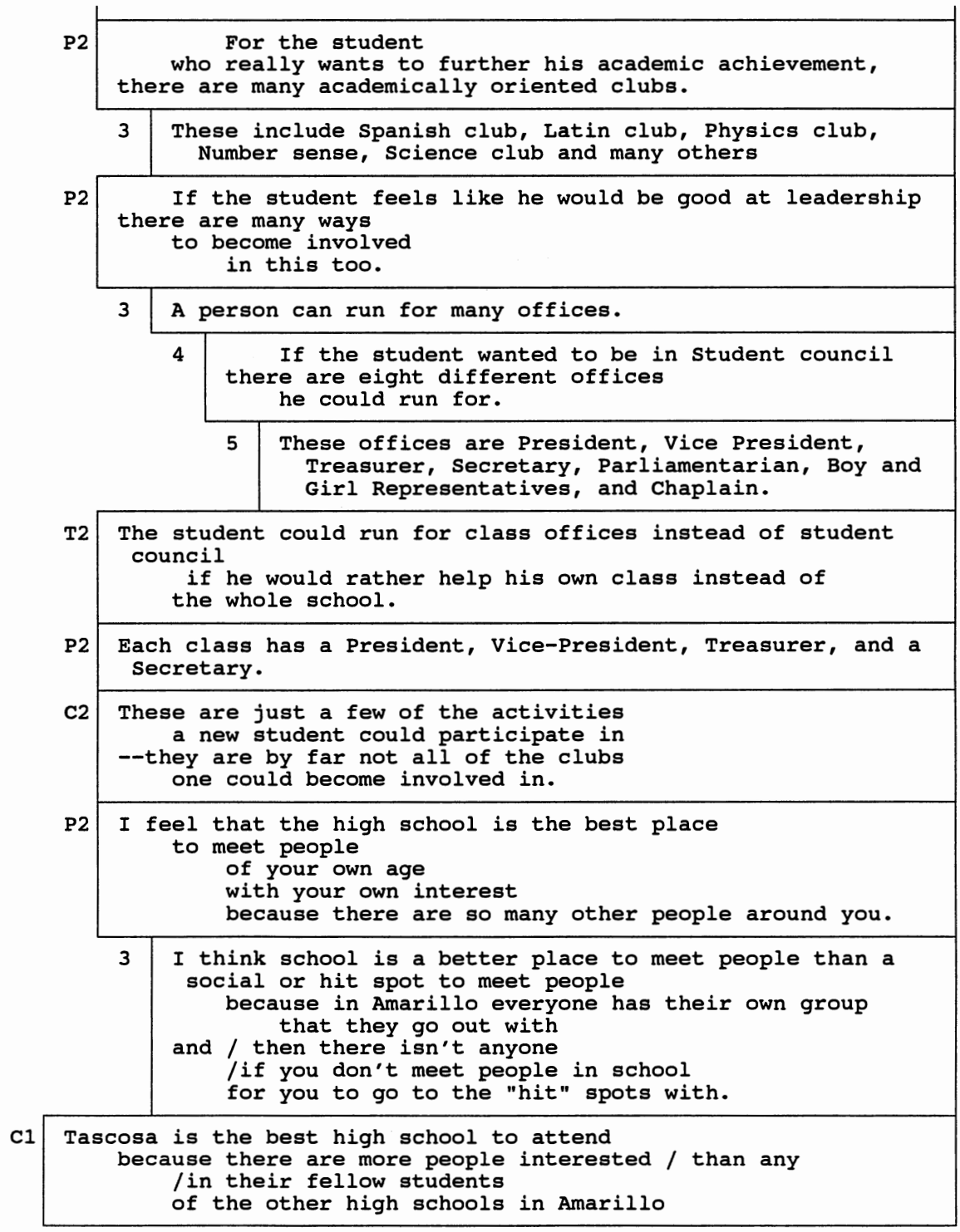

Figure 5. Continued

Because of the large number of level-1 sentences on the paragraph level, I have supplemented the number identifications with the letter identifications I, P, T, and C (described on page 42) before selected sentence boxes. The I indicates a sentence that serves as an introduction; the P, a proposition or topic sentence; the T, a transition; and the C, a conclusion. These identifiers enable the training session leader to show readers that the writer intended to compose a large number of level-1 sentences for a specific reason and to differentiate this diagram from that of a nonproficient paper loaded with level-1 sentences similar to the diagram on page 45. The number of introductions, propositions, transitions and conclusions show that the writer has the ability to create a sophisticated network of connections between her ideas. However, large numbers of specialized sentences and the relative shallow layering on the sentence level shows that the writer has not developed her ideas effectively enough to merit this paper a higher rating. The rich layer of embedded phrases and clauses within each sentence also shows that the student knows how to order her ideas by subordinating lesser-important thoughts to the more important ones. While the writer knows how to effectively connect ideas to each other and to draw effective relationships between them, the paper is not developed enough to give it the highest rating.

The following figure is that of an Anchor 4 paper.

Anchor 4 Paper

Someone who moves into Balko, OK, from anywhere else is in for a bit of a culture shock. Balko is not a town as such, but rather a farming community which is spread apart across 400 square miles of the Oklahoma panhandle. There is basically only one central meeting place for the people in the community, the school. Balko School stands like an oasis in a vast desert of wheat fields along Highway 3. The average size of an entire grade is approximately 12, making for a very high teacher/student ratio. This small class size also provides for closer friendships and the elimination of cliaves and social groups. However, it also causes it to be very hard for new people to come in and feel comfortable, when everyone else has been in class together since kindergarten. But once adjusted, Balko offers more sincere, solid relationships for teenagers than larger schools. Friendships developed within this close-knit association of people tend to last long after high school.

Balko also has no shortage of community activities. The football, basketball, and track teams attract all people from miles around, not just the relatives of the participants. The Future Farmers and Homemakers of America clubs also receive tremendous support from those living in the school district, along with 4-H, Band, Choir, Pep club, and Yearbook staff. Much of this support is generated by the faculty who truly care about their students. This results from the fact that the older members of the faculty usually taught the parents of the students, while the younger teachers generally graduated from Balko themselves. While this system seems somewhat imbred, it is relatively easy for newcomers to accept, and to be accepted by, the friendly people of Balko community. This are some of the reasons why I feel Balko is one of the best places of the world to grow up, and also to raise a family.

Figure 6. The Anchor 4 Paper

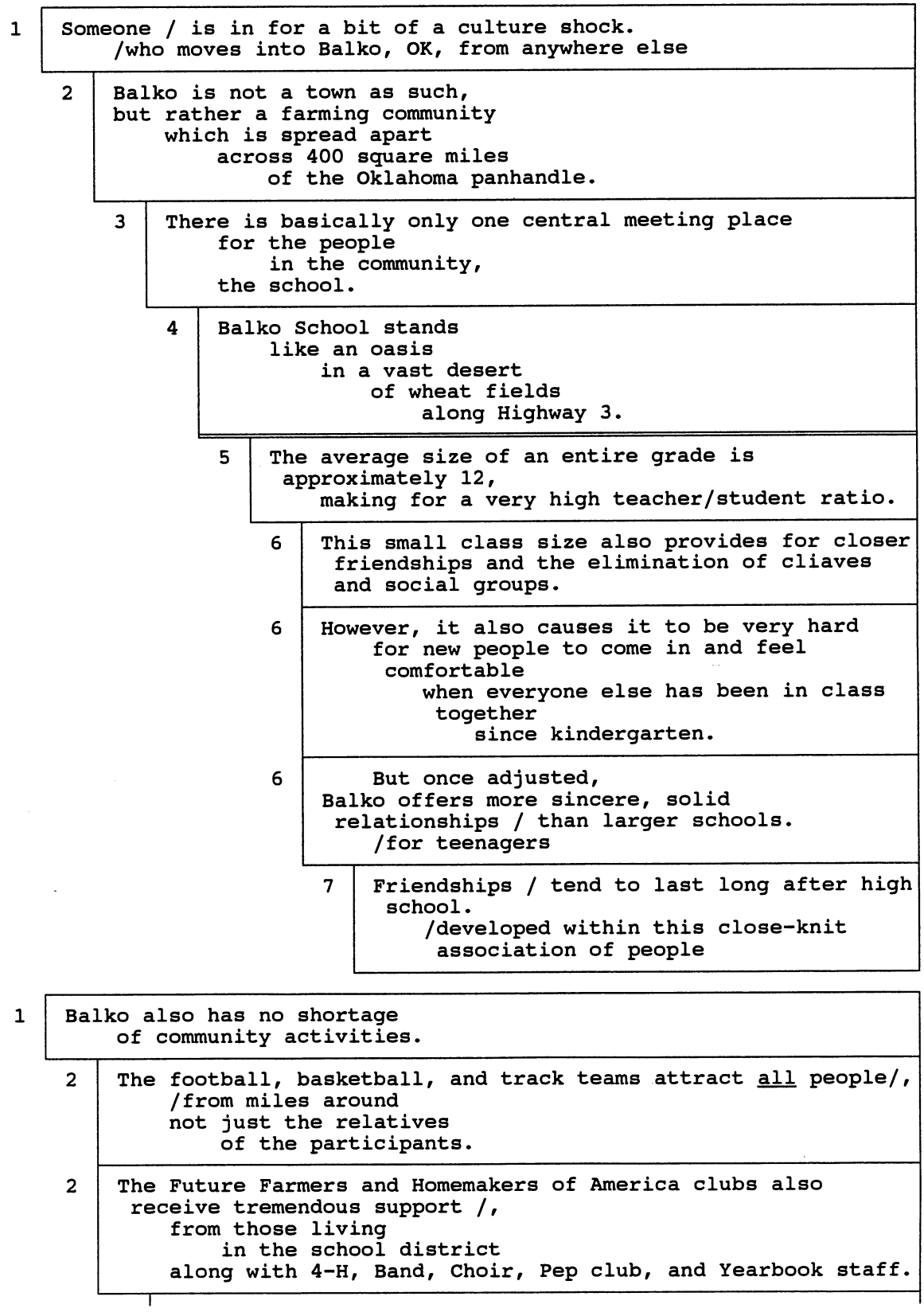

Figure 6. Continued

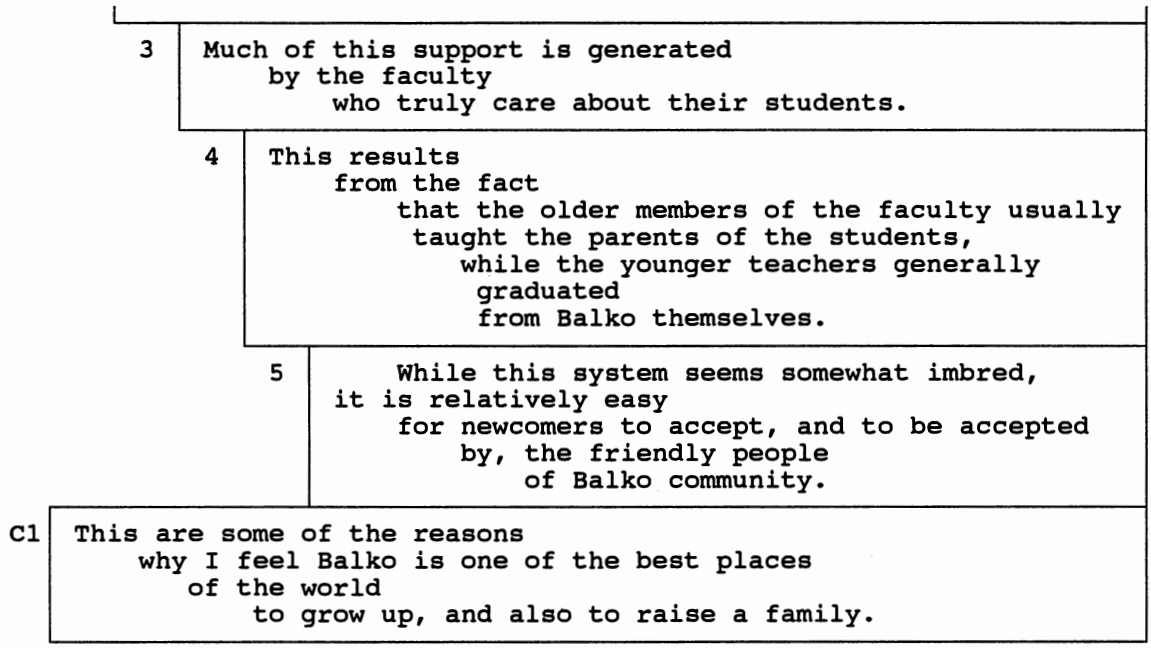

Figure 6. Continued

Although this paper is generally proficient, it contains a number of problems that severely weaken it. The writer initially promises to describe the town of Balko, but he gets sidetracked into describing the school. The double line on the diagram signals a break in development caused by a lack of a transitional element connecting the school in Balko with a discussion of the number of students in a given grade within the school. On the paragraph level, the diagram shows that the student knows how to develop his ideas. In one paragraph the student has seven levels of idea development and in the other he has five levels. Although the rich layer of embedded elements on both the paragraph and sentence levels shows that the student has the ability to develop his ideas, the student fails to stay on topic. Rather, the student makes only indirect reference to the assignment. He aptly describes Balko and its

school, but he does not consistently connect this description to the idea of being a good place to meet people. Moreover, he makes some generalizations without qualifying them. For example, he speaks of the school as an "oasis" containing faculty who "care," but he does not qualify how the school is an oasis or how the faculty care about students. While the student slights the topic in a number of places, the discourse is nonetheless rich. He is able to achieve a rich layer of subordination on both the paragraph and sentence levels.

While all three papers lack polish because they represent first-draft material, they are still competently written. None of the three papers contains features listed for the bottom-half scores on the guide that point to nonfluency. Rather, all three papers demonstrate that their writers possess the ability to move from general assertions to specific examples and illustrations and then back to those assertions. The absence of problems with sentence structure is signified by the layering effect both at the paragraph and sentence level on each diagram.

Nonfluent Papers

The following four figures are examples of nonfluent writing. The first figure is an Anchor 3A paper; the second, an Anchor 3B paper; the third, an Anchor 2 paper; and the last, an Anchor 1 paper. The Christensen diagrams following all of these papers point to some of the problems that make these papers nonproficient.

The following figure shows the Anchor 3A Paper, the first of the two Anchor 3 papers that follow.

Anchor 3A Paper

A great place for a new person to meet people in Grand Junction, Colorado is at the nearest ski resort, Powderhorn. Powderhorn is a small ski resort located on the Grand Mesa about 30 minutes out of town. there are a couple of ways of transportation up to the ski area. Once arrived in Grand Junction a person may either drive themselves or take the shuttle bus for $5 roundtrip. The Shuttle picks up and drops off at eight areas around town. The drive up to Powderhorn is very scenic. Curving in and out of mountains along side of a river. Small, skinny roads against the mountains full of trees and snow. Cars covered with icicles and small log homes. Powderhorn is known as the quiet country and when entering a person can automatically tell. The snow is glistening and looks very peaceful. Most of the time the roads are snowpacked but occasionally icy and very scary. Reaching the parking lot there are people directing skiers where to park. The excitement of the ski day begins when stepping out of the car. Everyone is putting on their ski gear, taking and walking up to the lodge barely having a grip on their ski equipment. Walking up to the lodge can be a pain but the atmosphere of a ski area is a layed back, happy go lucky one. Everyone in the lodge is always so occupied by putting on their gear and buying their tickets. Stepping outside into the fresh sunny day and brisk clean rocky mountain air. The sound of the ski lift and the conversations in the line are so thrilling that any person can enjoy. Up the lift with Strangers or some one you know can always bring a rewarding experience. The fast pace of swooshing down the hill or the slow lazy runs make it worth the time and money. Sking is a great way of meeting people. Not just a certain group of people but some one who you share in common the exciting life of a ski experience. The people are friendly and always willing to take a run maybe even ski the whole day or take a drink in the bar afterwards. I strongly reccomend a day of sking whether able to ski or not. It is one of the best ways to meet the neatest people.

Figure 7. The Anchor 3A Paper

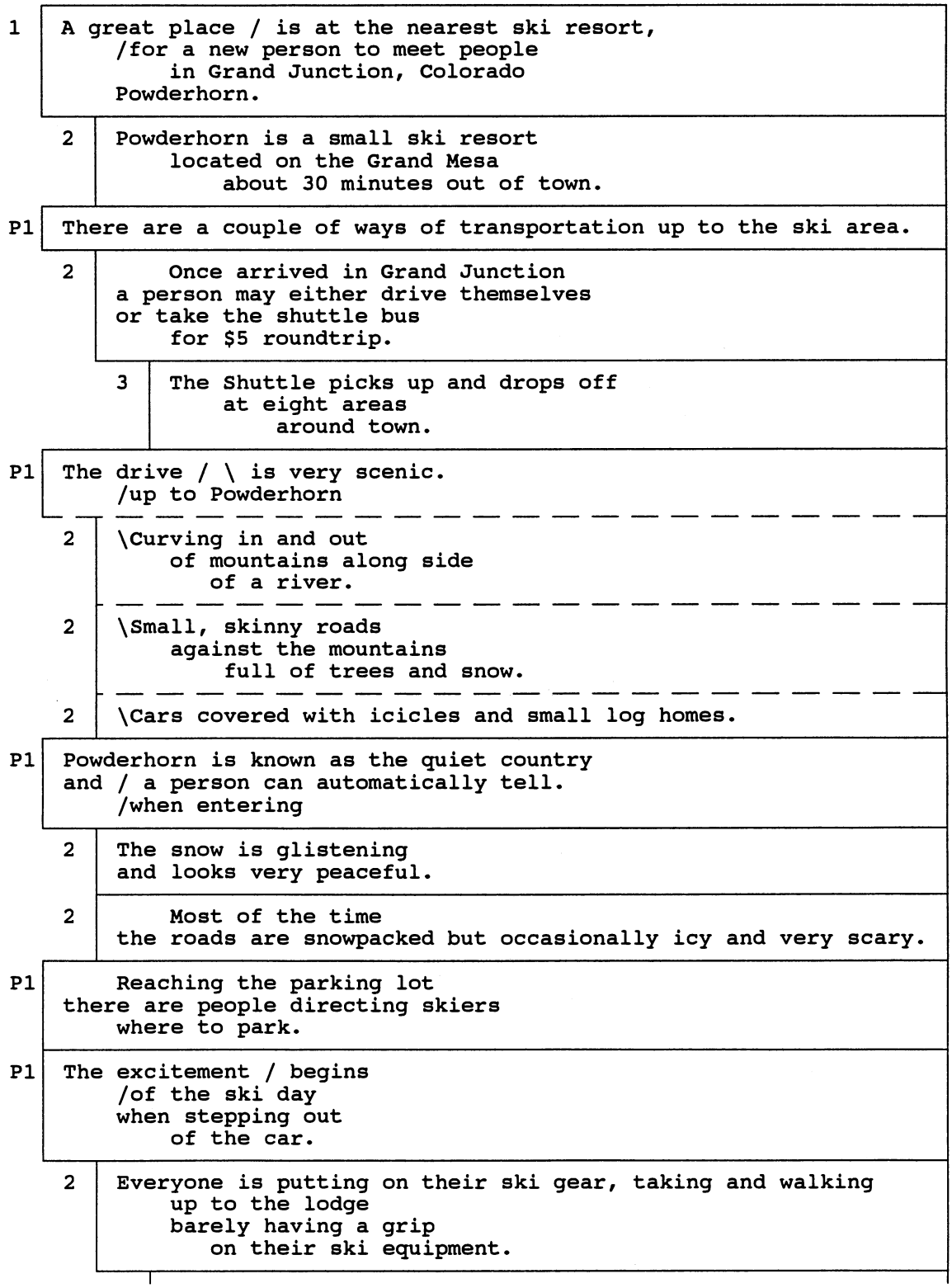

Figure 7. Continued

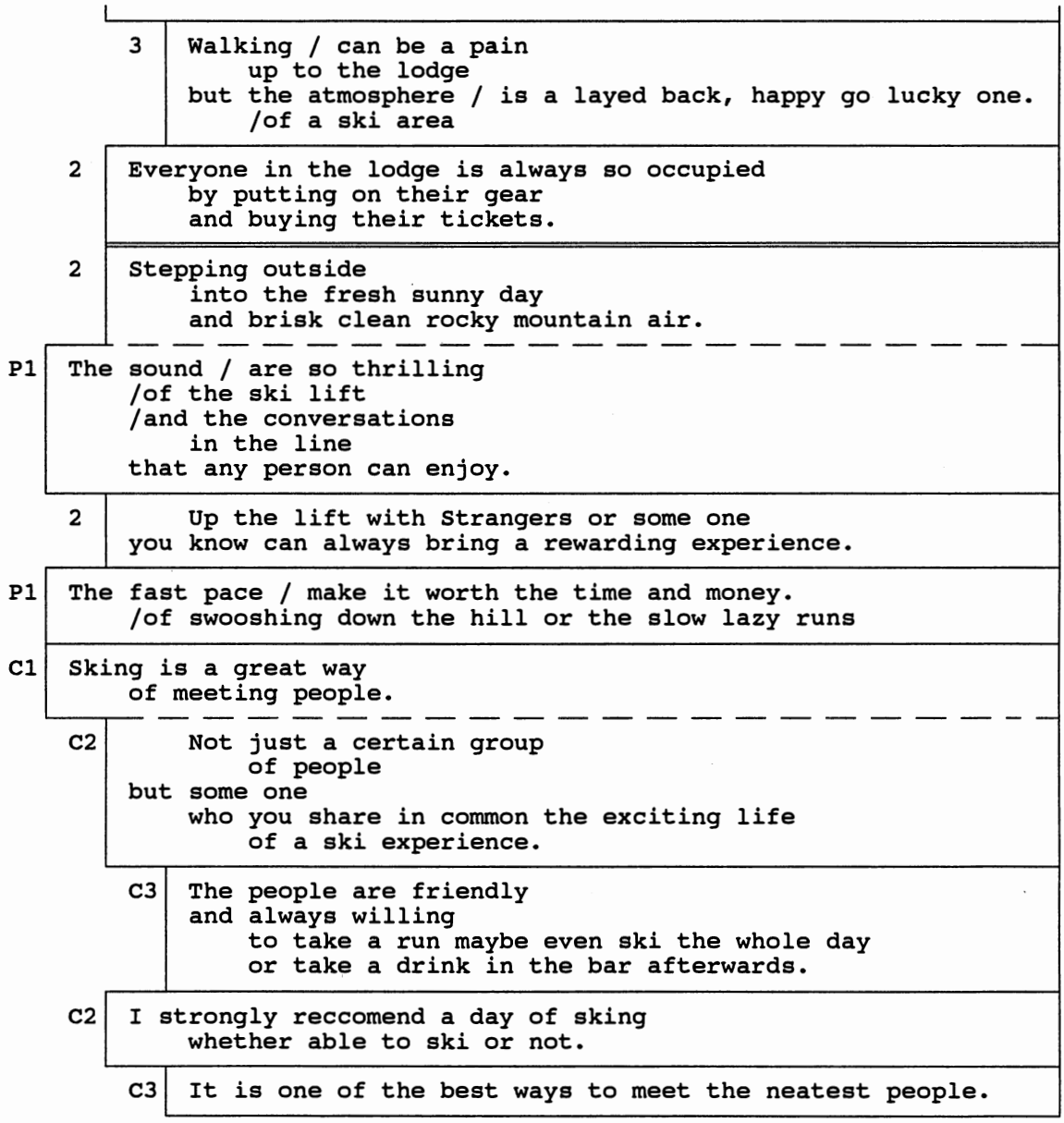

Figure 7. Continued

On the paragraph level, the diagram shows that the student has the ability to order her ideas to a limited extent. As with the writer of the Anchor 5 paper, this student has subordinated ideas to her major points, and she has provided a network of level-1 sentences that serve to introduce new ideas (labeled as P on the diagram) and

to draw conclusions to these ideas (labeled as C on the diagram). While some of these level-1 sentences may serve a constructive purpose, the numbers of these sentences piled together can also indicate that this student may have a problem in moving between abstract and concrete ideas (Shaughnessy, 1977). In key places the student has a series of level-1 sentences that do not connect together well (Brostoff, 1981).

On the sentence level, the student has also encountered a number of problems as she has tried the same ordering of ideas. Although this student has attempted to create a rich description of Powderhorn by composing a number of descriptive phrases, she lacks the ability to incorporate these ideas within sentences in a coherent manner. As a result, she has created a number of sentence fragments, indicated by broken lines on the diagram. Beaugrande (1980) attributes these fragments to the desire on the part of basic writers to break out of the monotony resulting from limiting themselves to lean, simple sentences, but in doing so, they fail to retain the necessary control and overload ideas into modifiers that do not work out. While these fragments are very descriptive, the writer has basically piled one idea on another, creating ideas that are not connected to each other in a coherent manner (Brostoff, 1981).

The following figure shows the Anchor 3B Paper, the second of the two Anchor 3 papers.

Anchor 3B Paper

In my hometown, Hennessey, OK, Pizza Hut Restaurant is an excellent place to meet teenagers. It is the only pizza place in town and one of the better places to eat in Hennessey.

Pizza Hut is located on highway 51. It is a brick building with a red roof like all the other Pizza Huts. It has just undergone remodeling on the inside. It has a short red and gray rug, red booths, wicker chairs and tables. It has a good salad bar with a big fireplace at the end of the bar. There is a juke box and a big television for entertainment. It also has a video game, Pac-Man, to play with while waiting on the food.

There are usually coupons in the town paper for Pizza Hut. Pizza Hut also has refillable cups to bring back on every visit. This is nice so it isn't so expensive. The waitresses are very polite which gives a friendly atmosphere to the place.

There always seems to be high-schoolers or college students in there eating lunch on Saturdays. Many young people go there just to get something to drink and talk to everyone in the restaurant.

Pizza Hut is always packed full of teenagers after a friday night home football game. Everyone goes there to celebrate and talk to the football players. The returning college students usually get together and talk about the game also or even about their classes at college. After basketball games it is just as full also. A new student would begin to feel right at home at Pizza Hut. Many families go there after church on Sunday. It is a great place to meet the families that live in Hennessey also.

Pizza Hut of Hennessey is the "place to be" to meet people. It not only has great food, but is a great place to get to know people and the town they live in. Hennessey would not be the same small town it is without Pizza Hut.

Figure 8. The Anchor 3B Paper

1	In my hometown, /, Pizza Hut Restaurant is an excellent place to meet teenagers. /Hennessey, OK
2	It is the only pizza place in town and one of the better places to eat in Hennessey.
1	Pizza Hut is located on highway 51.
2	It is a brick building with a red roof like all the other Pizza Huts.
2	It has just undergone remodeling on the inside.
2	It has a short red and gray rug, red booths, wicker chairs and tables.
2	It has a good salad bar with a big fireplace at the end of the bar.
2	There is a juke box and a big television for entertainment.
2	It also has a video game, Pac-Man, to play with while waiting on the food.
2	There are usually coupons in the town paper for Pizza Hut.
2	Pizza Hut also has refillable cups to bring back on every visit.
C1	This is nice so it isn't so expensive.
1	The waitresses are very polite which gives a friendly atmosphere to the place.
1	There always seems to be high-schoolers or college students in there eating lunch on Saturdays.
2	Many young people go there just to get something to drink and talk to everyone in the restaurant.

Figure 8. Continued

```
1   Pizza Hut is always packed full
        of teenagers
        after a friday night home football game.
        2   Everyone goes there
                to celebrate and talk
                    to the football players.
                3   The returning college students usually get together and
                     talk
                        about the game also
                        or even about their classes
                            at college.
P1      After basketball games
    it is just as full also.
C1  A new student would begin to feel right at home
        at Pizza Hut.
P1  Many families go there
        after church on Sunday.
C1  It is a great place
         to meet the families
             that live in Hennessey also.

1   Pizza Hut / is the "place to be"
        /of Hennessey
            to meet people.
        2   It not only has great food,
            but is a great place
                to get to know people and the town
                    they live in.
C1  Hennessey would not be the same small town /
        /it is
        without Pizza Hut.
```

Figure 8. Continued

Anchor Paper 3B does not contain the same problematic features as does 3A, but the absence of these problems can be partially attributed to safe writing, indicated by her almost exclusive use of level 1 and 2 sentences. The writer of the paper did not attempt to break out of lean sentences and therefore did not run into problems

involving complex sentence structure. However, both 3A and 3B are similar in that their writers have largely heaped one idea on another without drawing relationships between them. Thus they have avoided the complexity of multiple levels of subordination.

This student has apparently revised the assignment so that she could divide her ideas into two distinct parts in order to avoid subordinating ideas. Her first paragraph, which is pure description, shows an extremely coordinate pattern of development. Instead of connecting her description of Pizza Hut with values, she opts to pile sentences on each other, shown by the excessive number of level 2 sentences on the diagram, each beginning with either "it is" or "it has." After her first two paragraphs, the student runs into difficulties as she attempts to connect the description that she has established with values. She apparently has viewed her third paragraph as transitional, for she attempts to connect the physical description of Pizza Hut with the fact that it is not expensive. However, a paragraph that addresses itself only to coupons and cups fails in this respect. The last sentence of the paragraph speaks about waitresses and is in itself a type of one-sentence paragraph. The following paragraphs--the description of the people who go to Pizza Hut--do not really share values. Instead, these paragraphs are limited to stark description, and the paper deteriorates into several level-P1 propositions or topic sentences immediately followed by level-C1 conclusions with no development of ideas between them.

This paper is representative of writing that on the surface does not contain errors, but these errors may have been avoided because the student has retreated into safe writing. This type of writing requires a minimum of cohesion (Sloan, 1988). It

could also possibly point to writer's block, for Rose (1990) found that apprehension is often the motivation for students to retreat into a lean style of writing at the expense of embedded structures that could cause them to make mistakes.

The following figure presents the Anchor 2 paper. By its length and quality of description, this paper shows considerably less development than the two anchor 3 papers.

Anchor 2 Paper

A friend named Charlotte DeClue has just moved into town she has moved here from Kansas, she was attending Haskell Indian College. She said that she has lived around their for most of her life.

This Charlotte really seems like a nice person and I want her to meet the right people in are age group. So that she will not get missed up in the wrong group of people.

I think I will personally take her out around the town and let her meet some of my good friends. I'm sure she would enjoy going to eat supper at Joes and then maybe we will have a few drinks. But not to many. Because we will go to the Cowboy Mall to see a 99 cent movie. Me and Charlotte and some good friends from O.S.U.. After the movie we was thinking about going out to tumbleweeds I heard it was real nice out there plus it is just 2½ miles from my house.

I heard tumbleweeds had a big dance floor and alot of cowboys and cowgirls from OSU go out their every Saturday they said they had 99¢ pitchers. So I think it would be a nice place to take Charlotte, she said she really enjoys dancing.

Figure 9. The Anchor 2 Paper

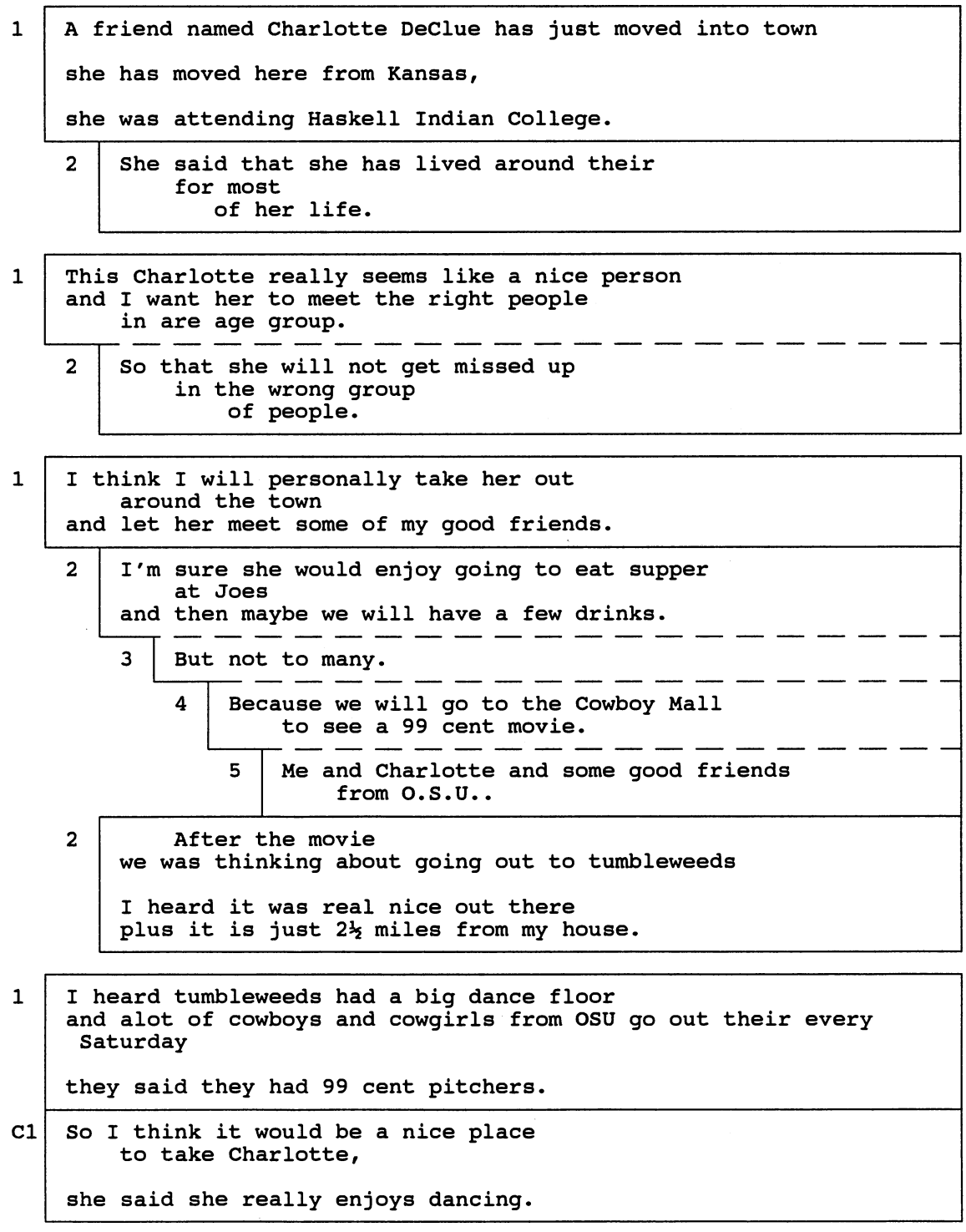

Figure 9. Continued

This paper lacks coherence. Most of the paragraphs are no longer than two or three sentences. The student attempts to impact conflicting ideas into sentences, signified by her derailed fragments and run-on sentences, features that Shaughnessy (1977), Beaugrande (1984), Mellon (1981), and Daiute (1981) attribute to breakdowns in memory before the student can get ideas on the page. These sentences are identified as broken lines on the diagram. Even though she has not been successful in her attempt, the student has been able to achieve a degree of subordination in the third paragraph.

The Anchor Paper 1 in the following figure points to a writer that is almost completely nonfluent. In an hour exam, the student was unable to compose more than the few sentences.

Anchor 1 Paper

If somebody moved into town, I would go over and meet him. Then I would take him to a school function. For example a football or basketball game. There would be a bunch of people there rooting for the home team. The new kid would see and visit with some new faces. After the game, we would go to a nice restaurant with a quiet atmosphere to talk. We would discuss his life before he moved here. How he feels about moving. Why did they decide to move here and his family.

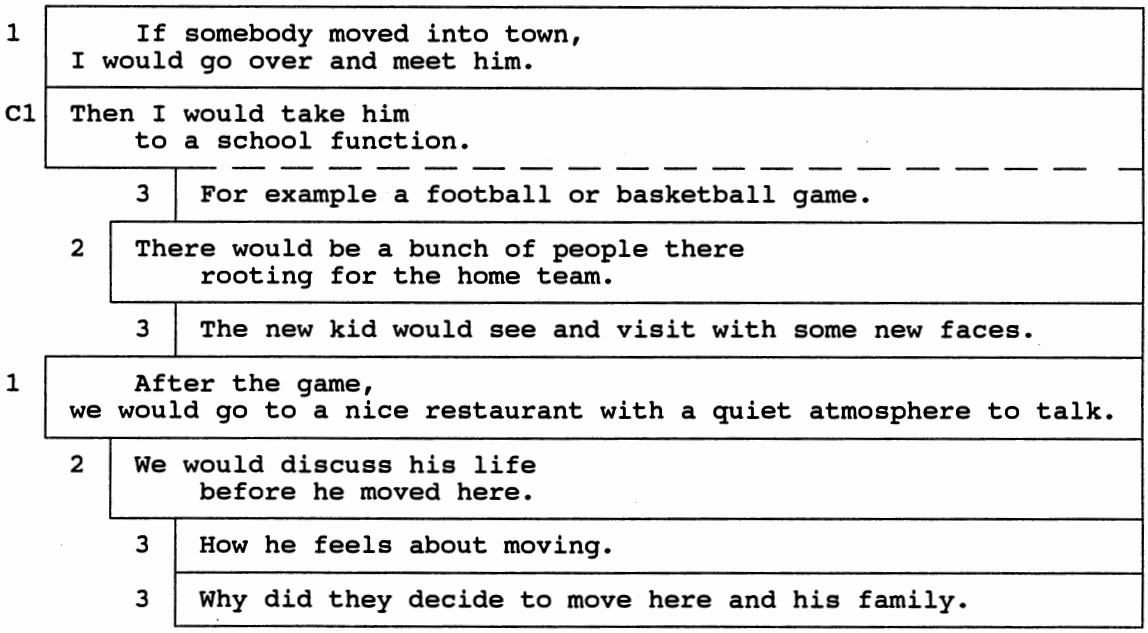

Figure 10. The Anchor 1 Paper

The shortness of the response points to a number of problems. In the hour allotted for the test, the student was only able to generate nine sentences, none of which really address the idea of why the place is a good one for meeting people. In the first five sentences, the student talks in terms of an event (the school function) rather than a place, and in the last four sentences, he introduces a second place, the restaurant. Thus, the student has composed only a rudimentary narrative composed of

ideas loosely put together to describe two "places." Although narration does not require as many cohesive devices as other types of writing (Ong, 1981; Brostoff; 1981), the narrative that this writer attempted to compose does not cohere well because he makes no connections between his "places" and the idea of meeting people. Rather, the writer composes a lean series of sentences, each of which becomes a topic sentence for a new paragraph. Thus, he presents only a stark description of what the new person should expect to see and do at both places. The shortness of the response points to nonfluency on the part of the writer, and the rudimentary narrative shows that the student cannot accomplish what Shaughnessy (1977) terms as movement between abstract and concrete statements. He can only compose generalizations with no supporting ideas.

The bottom four papers (3A, 3B, 2, and 1) all contain features that point to nonfluent writing. The various problems in sentence and paragraph structure point to apprehension and writer's block. Moreover, the inability of basic writers to compose ideas quickly enough before they erode in memory causes them to generate incomplete ideas that often manifest themselves as fragments, impacted and derailed sentences, and other forms of widely unconnected prose (Neuner, 1987). On the other hand, students that retreat into safe writing will often produce piles of lean sentences with a minimum of embedded phrases and clauses. The Christensen diagrams prove useful in helping exam readers to see these faulty relationships between ideas.

The Modified 4-Point Scale

Although the faculty at Barton County Community College were eager to use direct essay testing for placing students for the Fall 1990 semester, the idea of having to score papers within one point of each other initially intimidated them. As a response I developed a more streamlined 4-point. When faculty saw the high success that the 4-point scale had in identifying and placing students, they desired to return to the original 6-point scale for the Spring 1991 semester. On the next page is the 4-point modification of the original scale.

THE MODIFIED PRIMARY TRAIT SCORING GUIDE: FOUR-POINT SCALE

Proficient Scores

4 Give this score to the essay that provides a clear, organized response to both parts of the question. It not only identifies and describes a good place to meet people of the student's age group, but it tells why that place is good for meeting people of that age group. The writer makes clear connections between his or her assertions and the reasons for these assertions by providing good explanations, illustrations, and connections to each of his or her assertions. The writer shows a good command of language and written conventions. **If the essay shows a significant number of features similar to those listed in category 3, assign this paper a 2.**

3 Give this score to the essay that responds to both parts of the question. (It identifies and describes a place to meet people of the student's age group and tells why that place is a good one.) However, the essay fails to adequately develop both parts of the question with sufficient explanations, illustrations, and connections. In spite of this lack of development, the essay is still logically organized. The essay may contain errors in structure and spelling (other than the major problems described in Category 3.) **If the essay contains a significant number of features similar to those listed in Category 3, assign the paper a 2.**

Nonproficient Scores

2 Give this score to the essay that would meet the criteria of a 3 or 4 essay except that it contains one or more of the following features:

Presence of true fragments in the response
Significant sentence boundary errors (caused by misfired punctuation)
Impacted or derailed sentences
Significant errors in punctuation
Strings of simple sentences (with or without "and") or other symptoms of **safe writing**
Paragraphs that contain
  strings of topic sentences,
  sentences that just seem to be piled on top of each other,
  or sentences which do not logically follow each other
Paragraphs that just seem to fall apart.
Penmanship: Look for signs of struggle such as
  sloppy print, scrawly or loopy writing, misshaped letters
  erratic capitalization
  any other signs that show weaknesses in motor skills.
  Do not confuse signs of struggle with sloppy handwriting.

1 Give this score to the essay that is so short (less than a half page of text on standard paper) that any reasonably accurate judgment of the writer's competence is impossible. The brevity of the response indicates that the student is completely non-fluent or suffers from writing anxiety. What is on the page is so poorly written that it almost lacks meaning.

Figure 2. The Modified Primary Trait Scoring Guide: Four-Point Scale

The 4-point guide is identical to the original 6-point scale in its scope. Both guides have a set of top-half scores outlining proficient writing and a set of lower-half scores outlining nonfluent writing. The 4-point scale differs from the original scale in that it reduces the scale by one point on each half of the scale. On the upper-level proficient portion of the guide, the new 4-point scale collapses the 4 and 5 score descriptors of the original scale into one. This combined category becomes Score 3 on the new scale. On the lower-half nonproficient portion of the guide, the new 4-point scale collapses the 2 and 3 score descriptors of the original scale into one. This other combined category becomes Score 2 on the new scale. This new 4-point scale worked equally as well as the original 6-point scale.

The marker papers for the original scale correspond to the new scale except that the numbering is realigned to meet the requirements of the new scale. On the proficient upper-half level of the scale, the Anchor 6 paper on the original scale becomes an Anchor 4 paper on the new scale. Likewise, the Anchor 4 and 5 papers on the original scale become Anchor 3 papers on the new scale. On the nonproficient lower-half level of the scale, the Anchor 3A, 3B, and 2 papers on the original scale become Anchor 2 papers on the new scale. The Anchor 1 paper remains the same.

Conclusion

Both the 6-point and the 4-point scoring guides have reflected current research about basic writing, and have both worked equally well in training exam scorers and in identifying nonproficient developmental writers. Chapter V presents the research design used to prove the efficacy of both the 6-point and the 4-point versions of the

guide. I will use statistical analyses to compare students' performance on the writing placement test with final course grades in the standard entry-level English Composition class at Oklahoma State University (English 1113, Freshman Composition I) and at Barton County Community College (English 1204, English Composition I).

CHAPTER V

THE RESEARCH DESIGN

Presentation of Hypotheses

The strength of any scoring guide used to place students in appropriate classes lies in its ability to predict the future. If students are to take the test seriously, it must clearly demonstrate to them that they have a good chance for success in a given course if they receive high scores and a poor chance for success if they receive low scores. Students will challenge the test if they can demonstrate that large percentages of people disregard low scores, bypass remediation, enroll in standard courses, and pass these courses with satisfactory grades. On the other hand, instructors will also challenge the test if they perceive that a large percentage of students who enter courses on the recommendation of these tests encounter difficulty and either drop or continue on only to receive a D or an F in these courses. If both students and instructors can successfully challenge a test on these grounds, administrators will be hard pressed to justify test scores as course prerequisites. On the other hand, administrators can clearly justify the test as a barometer measuring potential success, if they can clearly demonstrate that high percentages of students who ignore test results either withdraw from courses or receive final grades of D or F, and if they can also guarantee that high scores clearly demonstrate that high students possess the

necessary skills to succeed in advanced courses. Thus, low test scores must correlate with unsatisfactory or failing grades in a given course and high test scores with satisfactory or superior grades. This type of predictive validity is essential for any testing instrument if administrators and faculty can claim to parents and students that it is a good measure for determining admission to given courses.

To test the validity of the Modified Primary Trait Scoring Guide as means for measuring proficiency through the direct assessment of writing for determining success in the standard entry-level English composition class both at Oklahoma State University and Barton County Community College, I have developed a series of research hypotheses that I will test with Spearman Correlation Coefficient and the Chi Square Test of Independence. I will present these hypothesis in the alternative or positive form rather than the null form.

The Fall 1988 Oklahoma State University Study

The Spearman Correlation Coefficient. I will use the Spearman Correlation Coefficient to test the following two hypotheses:

Hypothesis 1A:

> There is a positive association between the ACT English subscores and final grades in English 1113, Freshman Composition I.

Hypothesis 2A:

> There is a positive association between the Writing Placement Test scored by the Modified Primary Trait Scoring Guide and final grades in English 1113, Freshman Composition I.

The Chi Square Test of Independence. I will use the Chi Square Test of Independence to test the following two hypotheses:

Hypothesis 3A:

> Final grades in English 1113, Freshman Composition I, are dependent on the English subscores received on the ACT.

Hypothesis 4A:

> Final grades in English 1113, Freshman Composition I, are dependent on the scores received on the Writing Placement Test scored by the Modified Primary Trait Scoring Guide.

The Fall 1990 and Spring 1991 Studies at

Barton County Community College

The Spearman Correlation Coefficient. I will use the Spearman Correlation Coefficient to test the following two hypotheses:

Hypothesis 1B:

> There is a positive association between the ASSET Language Skills Test and final grades in English 1204, English Composition I.

Hypothesis 2B:

> There is a positive association between the Writing Placement Test scored by the Modified Primary Trait Scoring Guide and final grades in English 1204, English Composition I.

The Chi Square Test of Independence. I will use the Chi Square Test of Independence to test the following two hypotheses:

Hypothesis 3B:

> Final grades in English 1204, English Composition I, are dependent on the English subscores received on the ASSET Language Skills Test.

Hypothesis 4B:

> Final grades in English 1204, English Composition I, are dependent on the scores received on the Writing Placement Test scored by the Modified Primary Trait Scoring Guide.

With each test, a .05 level of significance will be used.

I am limiting my study only to those students enrolled in the standard entry-level composition class of each school because the remedial composition courses at both schools are radically different than the standard course. At both schools, the developmental composition classes assume that students lack the necessary writing fluency to succeed in a regular course. As a result, students are not evaluated in the same manner as they would be in the regular composition class. Furthermore, the standards for receiving outstanding grades differ. As students in the remedial courses develop their ability to write proficient discourse, they have a good chance of leaving the course with significantly high grades, leaving little difference in final grades between students who entered the course as nonfluent writers and those who might have been misplaced by existing testing methods. Furthermore, because of the nature of the experiment, remedial students who scored high on the Writing Placement Test were not informed of their scores. Therefore, no opportunity was offered to allow these students to switch classes to determine whether or not they could succeed in the standard entry-level course at each school.

The Test Administration

To test the effectiveness of Modified Primary Trait Scoring Guide as a type of standardized test rather than a site-specific one, I administered a writing placement

test both at Oklahoma State University and at Barton County Community College. At Oklahoma State University, I administered the test to 250 students in ten sections of English 1113, Freshman Composition I, the regular first-semester course. The sections were selected by having a computer produce a list of ten sections at random. At Barton County Community College, I administered the test to 261 students in the Fall 1990 study and 138 in the Spring 1991 study, the entire population of students enrolled in English 1204, English Composition I, the regular first-semester course. All but two of the sections were taught by full-time faculty members. At both schools, the test was administered on the second day that the students met for class. Neither faculty nor students were informed of test results until after the semester was over and final grades were submitted to the Registrar.

For each test, I created a topic that asked students to draw from their personal experience. I designed the prompt according to the suggestions outlined by Ruth and Murphy (1988), Hoetker and Brossell (1989), Redd-Boyd and Slater (1989), and Elliot, Plata, and Zelhart (1990). I used the writing prompt that I described in the preceding chapter (See page 30). The question itself provided an organizing principle in that it asked students to identify a place (a thesis), to describe the place, and to give reasons why that place is a good one to meet people of the student's age group. Under normal circumstances, students should have no trouble in having something to write about; consequently, the topic should allow proficient students to do a good job in responding to the topic. Furthermore, as the topic was basically noncontroversial, it should not bias exam readers who might not agree with opinions stated in a student's answer.

Although research by Brossell (1983) and Woodworth and Keech (1980) suggested that specifying audiences--real or imaginary--does not affect students' attitudes or writing, Redd-Boyd and Slater (1989) and Flower (1979) suggested that assigning an audience increases motivation, helps students to revise their ideas, and encourages some students to write more persuasive essays. I thus constructed a topic with a built-in audience; students must address their ideas to someone of their age group as they discuss good places to meet people.

The Scoring Sessions

At both schools, much care was taken that no exam reader could determine the identity of the student who wrote each paper. Students received a 3x5 card, a xeroxed page containing instructions, and lined paper if they needed it. Students were told not to put their name on the paper. Rather, they put their names and section numbers on a 3x5 card that was attached to each test. At the end of the hour, instructors submitted the exams to the secretary. After papers were collected, a secretary shuffled the papers, numerically coded both papers and cards and then removed the cards so that the anonymity of student and section would be preserved. When exam readers scored papers, they could not tell what student or what section they were reading at any given time.

In training exam readers, I followed the recommendations of White (1985) and Elliot, Plata, and Zelhart (1990). Following the exam, I read through papers to find examples of each point on the scoring guide. On the day of the scoring session, I provided each exam reader with a packet including the scoring guide and marker

papers representing each score. The scoring session was divided into morning and afternoon sessions. During the first hour of the morning session, I acquainted the exam readers with the scoring system and trained them by having them read papers illustrating each of the six scores on the guide. Inasmuch as all of the readers had experience with teaching basic and ESL composition students, they did not experience many problems in understanding the guide. The idea of using handwriting as a criterion provided a problem for some readers until they realized that handwriting alone should not be a criterion for making a scoring decision. Because each of the readers had prior experience in scoring essays holistically, the group was able to discuss the six points and to understand the philosophy of the new guide.

At Oklahoma State University, the papers were scored by a group of seven teaching assistants who had experience in teaching basic composition, teaching ESL composition, working in the Writing Lab or working with the Proficiency Exam required by the University. None of the exam readers were course instructors. Papers were scored at the Writing Center with groups of readers sitting around circular tables to form teams. The teams took precautions to be sure that no reader would score any paper twice. After papers were initially read by readers at a given table, a secretary gave them to a different table to do the second reading. Each reader recorded scores on small slips of paper that were collected by the secretary and recorded. In order to keep accurate records, readers initialed both the exam paper and the small slip of paper that they submitted to the secretary. Papers receiving both top-half and bottom-half scores (i.e., scores of 3 and 4) or papers scored more than one point apart were given to a third reader whose function was to reconcile scores.

At Barton County Community College, papers were scored by the ten readers, the entire English department and the Associate Dean of Instruction during the Fall 1990 and Spring 1991 experiments. Those present formed teams to score papers in the Presidential Dining Room of the college and used procedures similar to those used at Oklahoma State.

I trained readers in a manner similar to the one that I had used at Oklahoma State University with the exception that the training session took the first two hours of the morning session. Since the faculty were largely unfamiliar with scoring procedures used for major writing assessments, I used more anchor papers and supplemented them with the Christensen diagrams discussed in the previous chapter. Inasmuch as the faculty use a modified form of Christensen's rhetoric of the paragraph in composition classes, they needed little instruction in interpreting the diagrams. While faculty seemed to have little problem understanding the scoring guide, some had initial problems during the scoring sessions because they tended to give papers lower-half scores based on features not listed on the scoring guide. Some of these features included misspelling of common words (i.e., they're, their, there), common subject/verb or pronoun/antecedent agreement problems (i.e., "Everybody has their book."), erratic punctuation (i.e., no commas between items in a series; a comma splitting a subject from its verb following a relative clause), or the lack of a definite topic sentence at the beginning of each paragraph. These features represent problems that particularly bothered some of the readers. However, after discussing these problems as they relate to fluency, faculty were able to overlook these particular problems as they evaluated the papers.

Third Reading of Papers

Computing a traditional inter-rater reliability on the results of each scoring session is impossible because the Modified Primary Trait Scoring Guide differs from traditional guides in the arrangement of categories. While traditional scoring guides assume that their scores run in linear fashion, the Modified Primary Trait Scoring Guide is really a composite of two scales that parallel each other as illustrated in Figure 12 below.

Level of Fluency

Development	Proficient writing	Nonfluent writing
	6 Content highly developed	**3** Content either highly or moderately developed
	5 Content moderately developed	
	4 Content weakly developed	**2** Content weakly developed
		1 Almost no content

Figure 12. Arrangement of Categories of the Scoring Guide

Because the Modified Primary Trait Scoring Guide is not linear in nature, calculating inter-rater reliability through a correlation coefficient presents a distorted picture concerning rater agreements and disagreements in assigning scores. As the upper-half and lower-half scores represent opposing criteria (one representing proficient writing while the other representing nonfluent writing), papers receiving both top and bottom-half scores required a third reading. Thus, for example, a split between a score of 3 and 4, which is normally allowed in other scoring systems, cannot be permitted with the Modified Primary Trait Scoring Guide because both scores, while only one point apart, are actually diametrically opposed to each other in both idea development and rate of fluency, and a paper with this type of scoring discrepancy would thereby need a third reading to place the paper either clearly on the top half or the bottom half of the scale. Consequently, a traditional correlation coefficient could not discriminate between allowable and nonallowable differences in scores. Therefore, I have calculated a type of inter-rater reliability based on the percentage of papers that needed a third reading.

As mentioned in the previous chapter, papers that needed a third reading were those that received scores more than one point apart and those receiving an upper-half score and a lower-half score. Table 1 lists the number and percentage of papers that needed a third reading for each study.

TABLE 1

PAPERS NEEDING A THIRD READING

Date	Study	Total Papers	Number Needing Third Reading	Percent
Fall 1988	Oklahoma State University	232	21	9%
Fall 1990	Barton County Community College	196	12	6%
Spring 1991	Barton County Community College	69	6	8%

At Oklahoma State University, 9% of a total of 232 papers needed a third reading. At Barton County Community College, 6% of a total of 196 papers needed a third reading during the Fall 1990 Semester, and 8% of a total of 69 papers needed a third reading during the Spring 1991 Semester. None of the papers needing a third reading had received scores more than one point apart on either the upper or lower half of the scale. The only papers that needed reconciling were those that received both top-half and lower-half scores. Therefore, scoring papers on the development of ideas did not present readers with any problems; however, discerning whether papers were proficient or nonfluent did present a marginal problem for exam readers because some papers contained traits showing both proficiency and nonfluency.

The Data Collected

I collected the following data:

1. Scores from the Writing Proficiency Test as generated from the Modified Primary Trait Scoring Guide
2. ACT English scores (Oklahoma State University)
3. ASSET Language Usage scores (Barton County Community College)
4. Final course grades in English 1113, Freshman Composition I, at Oklahoma State University.
5. Final course grades in English 1204, English Composition I, at Barton County Community College.

Both English 1113 at Oklahoma State University and English 1204 at Barton County Community College are the standard entry-level writing courses. Scores were not gathered from the developmental courses at both schools for the reasons mentioned at the beginning of this chapter. The scores generated from the Writing Proficiency Test and the ACT/ASSET scores are independent variables, and the final grades are the dependent variable.

The Oklahoma State University study included 232 students. Because freshmen normally take placement exams before they enroll for their first semester courses, I included only those students who were first-semester freshmen. Eliminated from the study were those who were not first-semester students, those who were not present on the day of the exam, and those who withdrew from the course before the end of the semester. Included in the study were 22 nontraditional students who did not have ACT English scores, since the University does not require students who have been out of school for more than two years to take the ACT as part of the

application process. Because Martinez and Martinez (1987) found that nontraditional basic writers are more cognitively mature than the traditional college-aged students and are more apt to write responses paralleling the 3A anchor paper described in the previous chapter, the exclusion of nontraditional students without ACT scores would have eliminated an important group. Therefore, the non-traditional students were retained in the study.

At Barton County Community College, the Fall 1990 study included 196 students and the Spring 1991 study included 69 students. Again, I restricted the study to those students who were first-semester freshmen. Eliminated from the study were the three groups mentioned in the previous paragraph. Seventy-five percent of the total English Composition I population was included in the Fall 1990 study, and 65% of the total English Composition I population was included in the Spring 1991 study.

Conclusion

The statistical measures that I have performed on the data gathered from the ACT Test, the ASSET Test, and the Writing Test are the Spearman Correlation Coefficient and the Chi Square Test of Independence. Both statistical techniques are used to analyze data that form frequency distributions. I have used the Spearman Correlation Coefficient to determine the association between ACT scores and final course grades at Oklahoma State University, ASSET scores and final grades at Barton County Community College, and Writing Placement Test scores and final grades at both schools. I have used the Chi Square Test of Independence to determine the dependence of final grades on ACT scores at Oklahoma State University, final grades

on ASSET scores at Barton County Community College, and final grades on Writing Placement Test scores at both schools. At both schools I expect that the Spearman Correlation Coefficient will show a better association between the Writing Placement Test and final course grades than the ACT Test and final course grades or the ASSET Test and final course grades. Likewise, I expect that the Chi Square Test of Independence will show dependence between the Writing Placement Test and final course grades and will disprove dependency between the ACT Test and final course grades and the ASSET Test and final course grades.

Chapter VI will present an analysis of the data and will demonstrate that the Writing Placement Test shows more promise for predicting success in regular composition courses than does the ACT English Test at Oklahoma State University and the ASSET Language Usage Test at Barton County Community College.

CHAPTER VI

ANALYSIS OF DATA

The analysis presented in this chapter is the statistical computation of scores from the ACT/ASSET Test, the Writing Placement Test, and final grades through the use of the Spearman Correlation Coefficient and the Chi Square Test of Independence. In addition to these statistical measures, this chapter also reports the scoring agreements and discrepancies between exam readers who used the Modified Primary Trait Scoring Guide to make placement decisions.

To evaluate the data gathered from the Fall 1988 study at Oklahoma State University and the Fall 1990 and Spring 1991 studies at Barton County Community College, I have used the Spearman Correlation Coefficient and the Chi Square Test of Independence to determine relationships between the final course grades in the standard composition class and the ACT/ASSET and the Writing Placement Test as scored by the Modified Primary Trait Scoring Guide. I will restate each hypothesis along with the presentation of relevant statistical data within this chapter.

Oklahoma State University Fall 1988 Study

Presentation of Data

At Oklahoma State University, 232 students participated in the study. Figure 4 lists the ACT scores received by the student population. As mentioned in the previous chapter, ACT scores were recorded for only 210 of 232. Twenty-two students did not have ACT scores because they were nontraditional students for whom the University did not require such testing. This group was still included because, as nontraditional students, they represent an important subpopulation in this study. Below is the histograph of ACT English subscores. At the base of the histograph are the ACT scores, and the figures at the top of each bar represent the number of students that received each score.

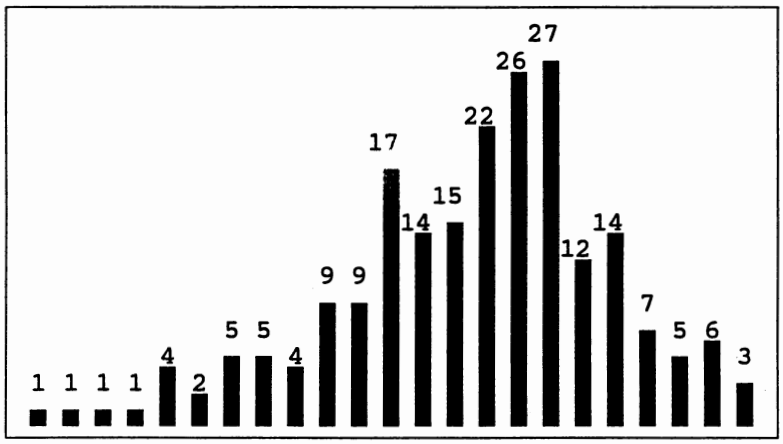

Figure 13. Fall 1988 ACT English Subscores

The distribution of ACT scores is roughly symmetric with the peak at the score of 22. The mean score is 19.62, and the median score is 20. The standard deviation is 4.23.

The graph on the next page indicates the scores that the students received on the Writing Placement Test. At the base line of the histograph are the scores that papers received when the ratings given by both readers were totaled, and the figures at the top of each bar represents the number of students who received that particular score.

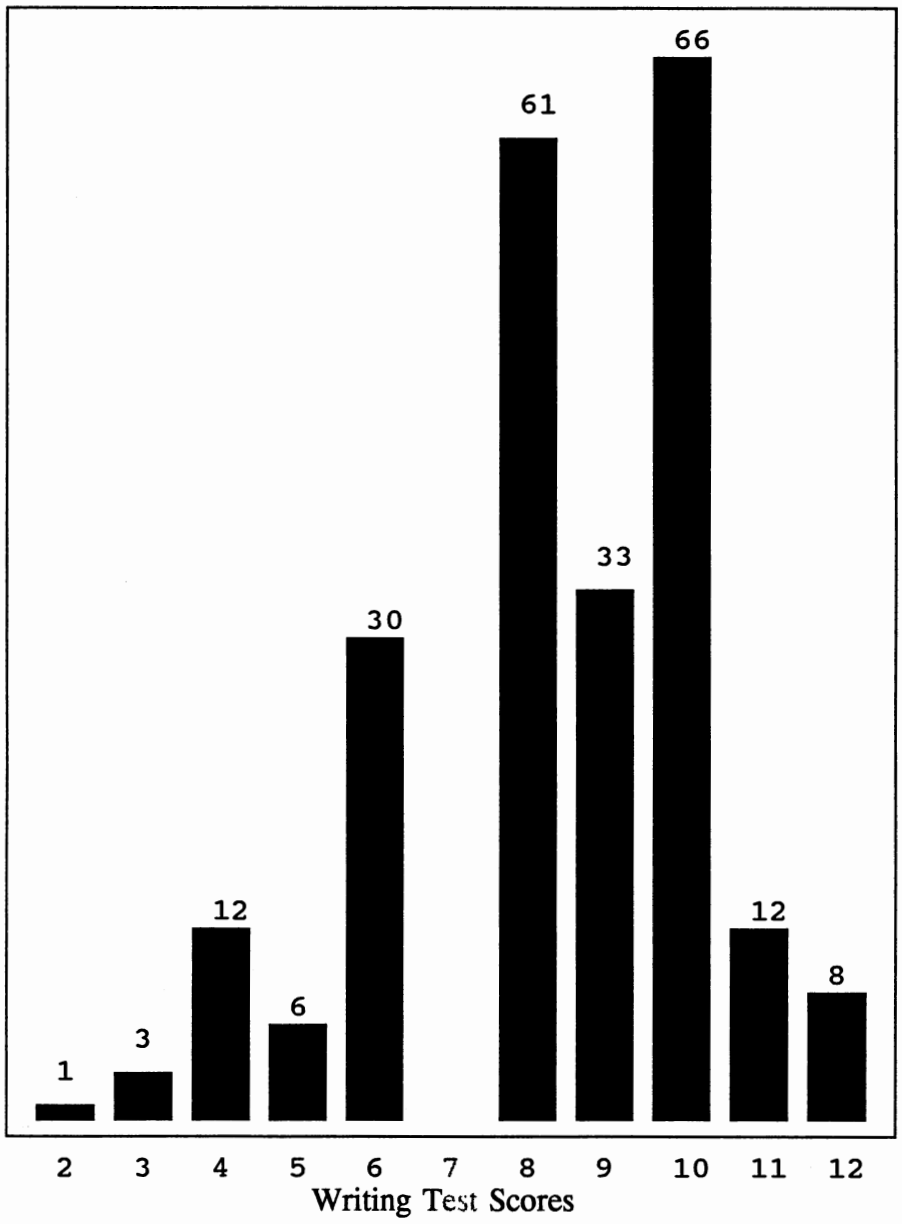

Figure 14. Fall 1988 Scores on the Writing Placement Test

No student received a score of 7 because papers that received both an upper-half score (4 to 6) and a lower-half score (1 to 3) were given to a third reader. On the side of the scale representing nonfluent writing, less than 1% of the 232 students received a score of 2 on the Writing Placement Test; and approximately 1% received a score of 3. When percentages were rounded to the nearest whole number, 5% of the population received a score of 4; 3% a score of 5; and 13% a score of 6. On the side of the scale representing proficient writing, 26% of the 232 students received a score of 8; 14%, a score of 9; 28%, a score of 10; 5%, a score of 11; and 3%, a score of 12. The median score was 9. With the exception of the 9 score, the curve is roughly symmetric, with peaks at the 8 and 10 scores.

The graph on the next page indicates the final course grades that students received in English 1113, Freshman Composition I. The letters on the bottom axis represent the final grade that students received, and the figure at the top of each bar represents the number of students that received each grade.

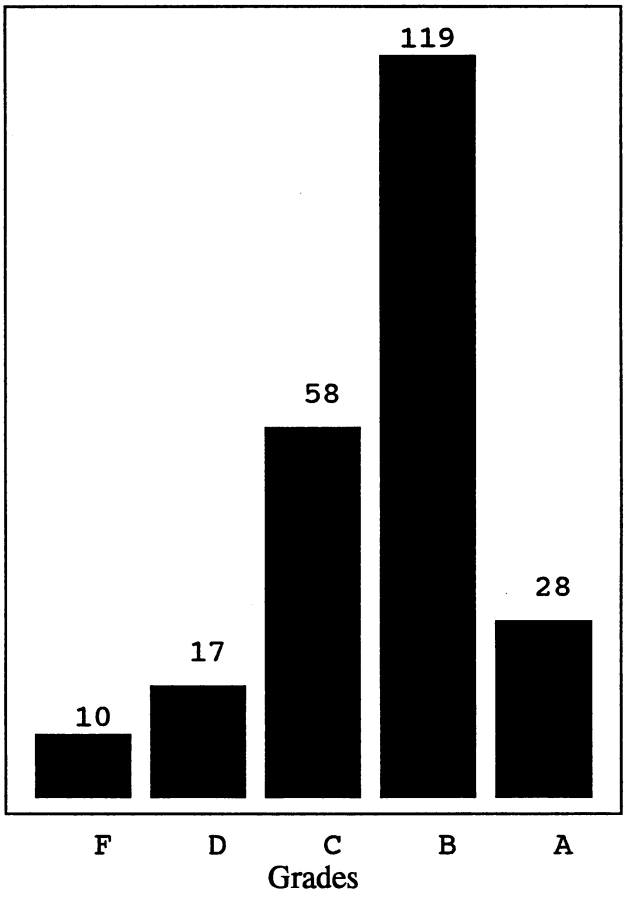

Figure 15. Fall 1988 Final Course Grades in English 1113

The final grades represent a skewed distribution with the peak at B. When percentages were rounded to the nearest whole number, 4% of the population of 232 students received a grade of F; 7%, a grade of D; 25%, a grade of C; 51%, a grade of B; and 12%, a grade of A. The mean grade was 2.59 (calculated through the following formula: A=4, B=3, C=2, D=1, F=0). The median grade was 3.0 or a B.

The Spearman Correlation Coefficient

I have used the Spearman Correlation Coefficient to evaluate the following two hypotheses:

Hypothesis 1A:

> There is a positive association between the ACT English subscores and final grades in English 1113, Freshman Composition I.

Hypothesis 2A:

> There is a positive association between the Writing Placement Test scored by the Modified Primary Trait Scoring Guide and final grades in English 1113, Freshman Composition I.

Table 2 depicts the Spearman Correlation Coefficient of the ACT English subscores and final course grades in English 1113, Freshman Composition I.

TABLE 2

SPEARMAN CORRELATION COEFFICIENT BETWEEN
ACT TEST SCORES AND FINAL GRADES
IN ENGLISH 1113

ACT and **FINAL GRADES**
r = -.06
P > .05
N = 210

The correlation coefficient of -.06 indicates an extremely weak, negative relationship between ACT English subscores and final grades in English 1113, Freshman Composition I, at Oklahoma State University. The P value is also greater than the .05 allowed to determine significance. Therefore, the Spearman Correlation Coefficient allows us to reject Hypothesis 1A. No positive association exists between the ACT English Subsection and final course grades in English 1113 at Oklahoma State University.

The following table depicts the correlation coefficient of the Writing Placement Test (WPT) as scored by the Modified Primary Trait Scoring Guide and final course grades in English 1113, Freshman Composition I.

TABLE 3

SPEARMAN CORRELATION COEFFICIENT BETWEEN
WRITING PLACEMENT TEST SCORES AND
FINAL GRADES IN ENGLISH 1113

WPT and FINAL GRADES
r = +.30
P < .001
N = 232

A positive association of +.30 exists between the Writing Placement Test (WPT) and final grades. Therefore, the Spearman Correlation Coefficient supports Hypothesis 2. Even though the hypothesis is supported, the correlation is not strong. A score of +.30 represents a rather weak correlation.

The Chi Square Test of Independence for Hypothesis 3A

I have used the Chi Square Test of Independence to evaluate the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 3A:

> Final grades in English 1113, Freshman Composition I, are dependent on the English subscores received on the ACT.

Figure 16 pictures the complete breakdown of frequencies of scores of the subjects on the ACT English Test and their final grades in English 1113, Freshman Composition I.

ACT SCORES	Grades F	D	C	B	A
28			1	1	1
27				5	1
26			1	4	
25				6	1
24			4	8	2
23			2	7	3
22	2	2	6	13	4
21	1	2	6	12	5
20	1	2	6	10	3
19	1	1	5	6	2
18	1		3	8	2
17		1	6	10	

ACT SCORES	Grades F	D	C	B	A
16		1	5	3	
15	1		1	6	1
14		1	1	2	
13		1	3	1	
12			1	4	
11	2				
10			2	2	
9				1	
8				1	
7		1			
6		1			

N= 210

Figure 16. Fall 1988 Cell Frequencies Between ACT Scores and Final Grades in English 1113

In order to perform a better Chi Square test, I pooled scores together so that as many cells as possible have a frequency of at least five cases. On the axis representing grades, I have pooled the A, B, and C cells into one cell to represent satisfactory final grades in English 1113, Freshman Composition I, and the D and F cells into another to represent unsatisfactory grades. On the axis representing the ACT scores, I pooled scores from 6 to 17 into one cell, scores from 18 to 24 into a second cell, and scores from 25 to 28 into a third cell. These score divisions correspond to the recommended scores for placement into English 0123, Basic Composition; English 1113, Freshman

Composition I; and English 1413, Honors Composition I. Below is Figure 17, which pools the scores from Figure 16 into fewer cells. The percentage in each cell shows the proportion of students receiving a D-F grade as opposed to an A-B-C grade for each horizontal category. For example, of those students who received an ACT score of 6 to 17, nine students or 15% of the group received a final grade of D or F in English 1113, Freshman Composition I, while 50 students or 85% of the group received a final grade of C, B, or A in the same course.

English 1113 Grades

ACT SCORES		D-F	A-B-C
	25-28 Honors Comp.		21 100%
	18-24 Fresh. Comp	13 10%	117 90%
	6-17 Basic Comp	9 15%	50 85%

N = 210

X^2 = 3.93

P = .14

Figure 17. Fall 1988 Chi Square Test of Independence: ACT Scores and Final Grades

The P value is significantly above the .05 level allowed for the hypothesis to be accepted. Therefore, the Chi Square Test of Independence allows us to reject Hypothesis 3A. Final grades in English 1113, Freshman Composition I, are not dependent on the scores received on the ACT English section at Oklahoma State University.

The Chi Square Test of Independence for Hypothesis 4A

I have also used the Chi Square Test of Independence to evaluate the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 4A:

> Final grades in English 1113, Freshman Composition I, are dependent on the scores received on the Writing Placement Test scored by the Modified Primary Trait Scoring Guide.

Figure 18 depicts the complete breakdown of frequencies of scores of the subjects on the Writing Placement Test as scored by the Modified Primary Trait Scoring Guide and their final grades in English 1113, Freshman Composition I. As stated earlier, the scores represent the composite ratings of both exam readers. No paper received a score of 7 because no upper- and lower-half score discrepancies were allowed.

Grades

WRITNG TEST	F	D	C	B	A
12			1	3	4
11				5	7
10		5	8	45	8
9		3	5	21	4
8	4	3	22	27	5
7					
6	3	3	13	11	
5			3	3	
4	2	2	4	4	
3	1	1	1		
2			1		

N= 232

Figure 18. Fall 1988 Cell Frequencies Between the Writing Placement Test and Final Grades in English 1113.

In order to perform a better Chi Square test, I pooled scores together so that as many cells as possible have a frequency of at least five cases. On the axis representing grades, I pooled the A, B, and C cells into one cell to represent satisfactory final grades in English 1113, Freshman Composition I, and the D and F cells into another to represent unsatisfactory grades. On the axis representing the Writing Placement Test, I pooled scores from 8 to 12 into one cell and scores from 2 to 6 into a second

cell. These score divisions correspond to the recommended scores for placement into English 1113, Freshman Composition I, and English 0123, Basic Composition. Below is Figure 19, which pools the scores from Figure 18 into fewer cells. The percentage in each cell shows the proportion of students receiving a D-F grade as opposed to an A-B-C grade for each horizontal category. For example, of those students who received a Writing Placement Test score of 8 to 12, 15 students or 8% of the group received a final grade of D or F in English 1113 and 165 students or 92% of the group received a final grade of C, B, or A in the same course.

English 1113 Grades

WRITING TEST		D-F	A-B-C
	8-12 Reg. Comp.	15 8%	165 92%
	2-6 Basic Comp	12 23%	40 77%

N= 232

X^2 = 8.53

P = .001

Figure 19. Fall 1988 Chi Square Test of Independence: Writing Writing Placement Test Scores and Final Grades

The P value is significantly below the .05 level allowed for the hypothesis to be accepted. Therefore, the Chi Square Test of Independence accepts Hypothesis 4, which claims that final grades are dependent on the passing or failing scores on the Writing Placement Test.

Conclusion

Both the Spearman Correlation Coefficient and the Chi Square Test of Independence reject Hypotheses 1 and 3 claiming a positive relationship between the English section of the ACT and final course grades in English 1113, Freshman Composition I, at Oklahoma State University. On the other hand, both the Spearman Correlation Coefficient and the Chi Square Test of Independence accept Hypotheses 2 and 4 claiming a positive relationship between the Writing Placement Test as scored by the Modified Primary Trait Scoring Guide and final course grades in English 1113, Freshman Composition I.

Barton County Community College Fall 1990 Study

Presentation of Data

At Barton County Community College, 196 students participated in the Fall 1990 study. Because all entering students are required to take the ASSET test battery prior to registration, all participants had both ASSET Language Usage and Writing Placement Test scores. Figure 20 presents the ASSET scores received by the student population. At the base of the histograph are the ASSET scores, and the figures at

the top of each bar represent the number of students who received that particular score.

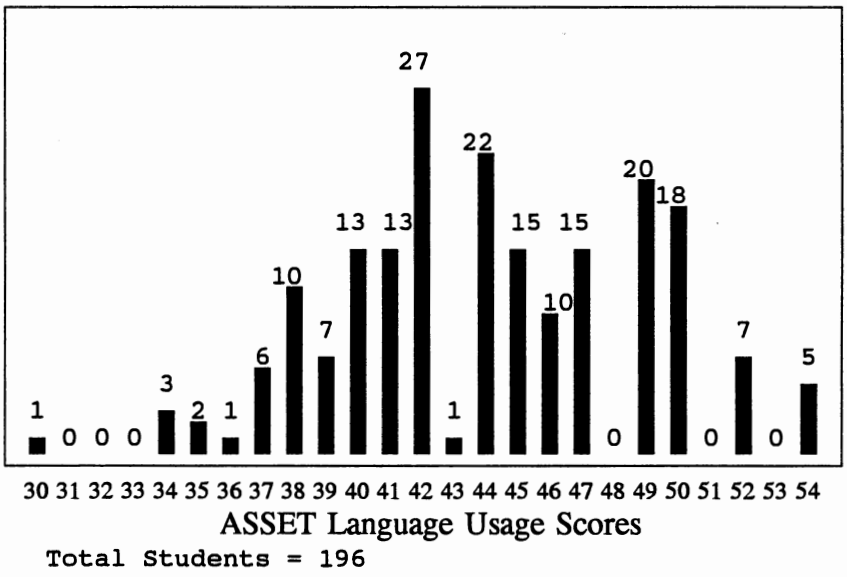

Figure 20. Fall 1990 ASSET Language Usage Scores

The distribution of ASSET scores is roughly symmetric with peaks at the scores of 42 and 49. The mean score is 44.21, and the median score is 44. The standard deviation is 4.68.

Figure 21 lists the scores that the students received on the Writing Placement Test as scored by the modified 4-point scale used exclusively for this study. (The Spring 1991 study will revert back to the original 6-point scale.) At the base line of the histograph are the scores that papers received when the ratings given by both

readers were totaled, and the figures at the top of each bar represents the number of students that received that particular score.

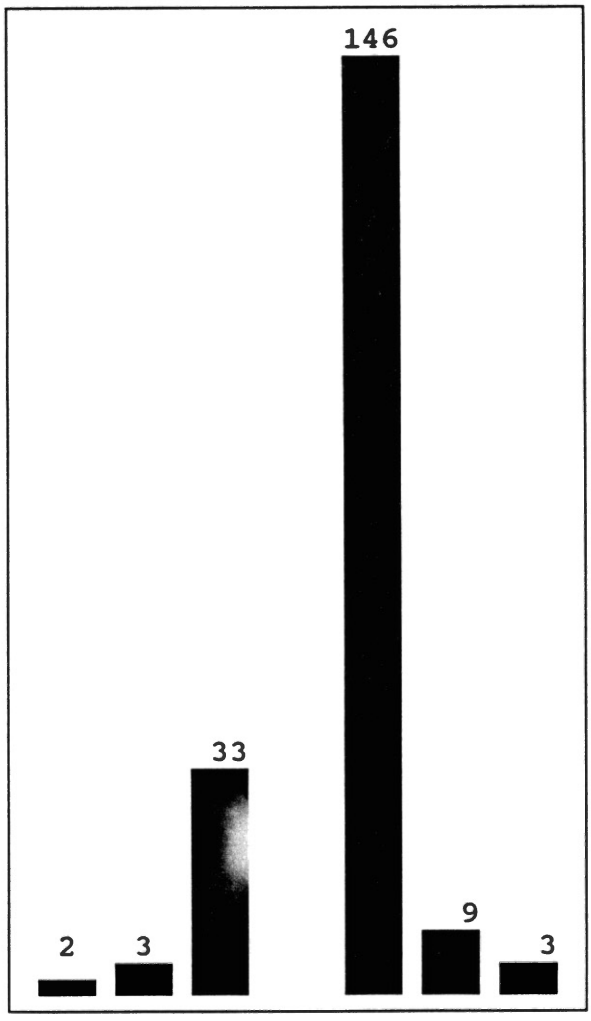

Figure 21. Fall 1990 Scores on the Writing Placement Test

No student received a score of 5 because papers that received both an upper-half score (3 and 4) and a lower-half score (1 and 2) were given to a third reader to rectify the discrepancy. When percentages were rounded to the nearest whole number, 1% of the population of 196 students received a score of 2; 2% received a score of 3; and 17% received a score of 4 on the side of the scale representing nonfluency. On the side of the scale representing proficient writing, 74% of the population received a score of 6; 5% received a score of 7; and 2% of the population received a score of 8. The median score was 6. The curve is roughly symmetric with a large peak at the 6 score.

Figure 22 indicates the final course grades that students received in English 1204, English Composition I. The figure on the bottom axis represents the final grade that students received, and the figure at the top of each bar represents the number of students that received each grade.

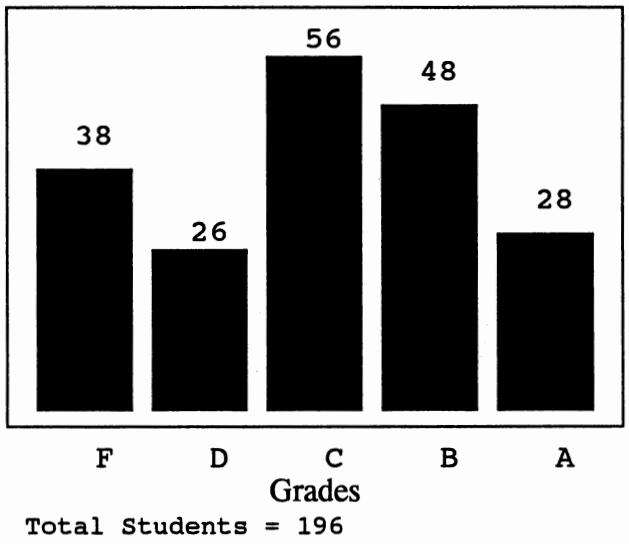

Figure 22. Fall 1990 Final Course Grades

The final grades represent a roughly uniform distribution with a peak at C. When percentages were rounded to the nearest whole number, 19% received a grade of F; 13% received a grade of D; 29% received a grade of C; 25% received a grade of B; and 14% received a grade of A. The mean grade was 2.01 (calculated through the following formula: A=4, B=3, C=2, D=1, F=0), and the median grade was 2.0 or a C.

The Spearman Correlation Coefficient

I have used the Spearman Correlation Coefficient to evaluate the following two hypotheses:

Hypothesis 1B:

> There is a positive association between the ASSET Language Skills Test and final grades in English 1204, English Composition I.

Hypothesis 2B:

> There is a positive association between the Writing Placement Test scored by the Modified Primary Trait Scoring Guide and final grades in English 1204, English Composition I.

Table 4 depicts the Spearman Correlation Coefficient of the ASSET Language Test scores and final course grades in English 1204, English Composition I.

TABLE 4

SPEARMAN CORRELATION COEFFICIENT BETWEEN ASSET TEST SCORES AND FINAL GRADES IN ENGLISH 1204

ASSET and **FINAL GRADES**
r = +.27
P < .001
N = 196

A positive association exists between the ASSET Language Usage Scores and Fall 1990 final grades in English Composition I at Barton County Community College, and the P value is significantly below the .05 level allowed for the hypothesis to be accepted. Therefore, the Spearman Correlation Coefficient allows us to accept

Hypothesis 1B. A positive association exists between the ASSET Language Usage Scores and final course grades in English 1204, English Composition I, during the Fall 1990 semester at Barton County Community College.

Table 5 depicts the correlation coefficient of the Writing Placement Test (WPT) as scored by the Modified Primary Trait Scoring Guide and final course grades in English 1204, English Composition I.

TABLE 5

SPEARMAN CORRELATION COEFFICIENT BETWEEN WRITING PLACEMENT TEST SCORES AND FINAL GRADES IN ENGLISH 1204

WPT and **FINAL GRADES**
r = +.45
P < .001
N = 196

A positive association likewise exists between the Writing Placement Test scored by the Modified Primary Trait Scoring Guide and Fall 1990 final grades in English Composition I at Barton County Community College, and the P value is likewise significantly below the .05 level allowed for the hypothesis to be accepted. Therefore, the Spearman Correlation Coefficient allows us to accept Hypothesis 2B.

A positive association exists between the Writing Placement Test as scored by the Modified Primary Trait Scoring Guide and final course grades in English 1204, English Composition I, during the Fall 1990 semester at Barton County Community College. While the Spearman Correlation Coefficient supports both hypotheses, the correlation of +.45 between the Writing Placement Test and final grades is significantly better than the correlation of +.27 between the ASSET Language Usage Scores and final grades.

The Chi Square Test of Independence for Hypothesis 3B

I have used the Chi Square Test of Independence to evaluate the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 3B:

> Final grades in English 1204, English Composition I, are dependent on the scores received on the ASSET Language Skills Test.

Figure 23 pictures the complete breakdown of frequencies of scores of the subjects on the ASSET Language Usage Test and their final grades in English 1204, English Composition I.

ASSET SCORES	Grades F	D	C	B	A
54	1	1		2	1
53					
52	2			3	2
51					
50	2	2	1	7	6
49	3	1	5	6	5
48					
47	2	2	7	2	2
46	1		5	2	2
45	1	3	2	6	3
44	7	4	5	5	1
43				1	
42	6	6	6	7	2

ASSET SCORES	Grades F	D	C	B	A
41	1	4	6		2
40	3	1	6	2	1
39		1	3	3	
38	5		3	1	1
37	1	1	4		
36			1		
35	2				
34	1		2		
33					
32					
31					
30				1	

N= 196

Figure 23. Fall 1990 Cell Frequencies Between ASSET Scores and Final Grades

In order to perform a better Chi Square Test, I pooled scores together so that as many cells as possible have a frequency of at least five cases. On the axis representing grades, I again pooled the A, B, and C cells into one cell to represent satisfactory final grades in English 1204, English Composition I, and the D and F cells into another to represent unsatisfactory grades. On the axis representing ASSET Language Usage scores, I pooled scores from 30 to 39 into one cell, scores from 40 to 49 into a second cell, and scores from 50 to 56 into a third cell. These score divisions

correspond to the recommended scores for placement into English 1194, Introductory Writing Skills (IWS); English 1204, English Composition I; and English 1205, Honors Composition. While the college required specific test scores as a prerequisite for Honors Composition, it did not offer the course during the Fall 1990 semester. Below is Figure 24, which pools the scores from Figure 23 into fewer cells. As in previous tables, the percentage in each cell shows the proportion of students receiving a D-F grade as opposed to an A-B-C grade for each horizontal category.

English 1204 Grades

ASSET SCORES		D-F	A-B-C
	50-56 Honors Comp.	8 27%	22 73%
	40-49 Fresh. Comp	45 33%	91 67%
	30-39 Basic Comp	11 37%	19 63%

N= 196

X^2 = 0.72

P = .70

Figure 24. Fall 1990 Chi Square Test of Independence: ASSET Scores and Final Grades

The P value is above the .05 level allowed for the hypothesis to be accepted. Therefore, the Chi Square Test of Independence allows us to reject Hypothesis 3B. Final grades in English 1204, English Composition I, are not dependent on the scores received on the ASSET Language Usage section during the Fall 1990 semester at Barton County Community College.

The Chi Square Test of Independence for Hypothesis 4B

I have used the Chi Square Test of Independence to evaluate the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 4B:

> Final grades in English 1204, English Composition I, are dependent on the scores received on the Writing Placement Test scored by the Modified Primary Trait Scoring Guide.

Figure 25 pictures the complete breakdown of frequencies of scores of the subjects on the Writing Placement Test as scored by the 4-point version of the Modified Primary Trait Scoring Guide and their final grades in English 1204, English Composition I. As stated earlier, the scores represent the composite ratings of both exam readers. No paper received a score of 5 because no upper- and lower-half score discrepancies were allowed.

Grades

WRITNG TEST	F	D	C	B	A
8	1			1	1
7			2	3	4
6	16	21	44	42	23
5					
4	18	4	9	2	
3	2	1			
2	1		1		

N= 196

Figure 25. Fall 1990 Cell Frequencies Between the Writing Placement Test and Final Grades

In order to perform a better Chi Square test, I pooled scores together so that as many cells as possible have a frequency of at least five cases. On the axis representing grades, I have pooled the A, B, and C cells into one cell to represent satisfactory final grades in English 1204, English Composition I, and the D and F cells into another to represent unsatisfactory grades. On the axis representing the Writing Placement Test, I pooled scores from 6 to 8 into one cell and scores from 2 to 4 into a second cell. These score divisions correspond to the recommended scores for placement into English 1204, English Composition I, and English 1194, Introductory Writing Skills (IWS). Below is Figure 26, which pools scores from Figure 25 into fewer cells. The

percentage in each cell shows the proportion of students receiving a D-F grade as opposed to an A-B-C grade for each horizontal category.

English 1204 Grades

WRITING TEST		D-F	A-B-C
	8-12 Eng. Comp.	38 24%	120 76%
	2-6 IWS	26 68%	12 32%

N= 196

X^2 = 27.42

P = .00000

Figure 26. Fall 1990 Chi Square Test of Independence: Writing Placement Test Scores and Final Grades

The P value is below the .05 level allowed for the hypothesis to be accepted. Therefore, the Chi Square Test of Independence accepts Hypothesis 4B. Final grades in English 1204, English Composition I, are dependent on the passing or failing scores on the Writing Placement Test.

Conclusion

The Spearman Correlation Coefficient accepts Hypothesis 1B, which claims a relationship between the ASSET Language Usage Test and final course grades in English 1204, English Composition I, but the Chi Square Test of Independence rejects Hypothesis 3B, which claims that final course grades in English Composition I are dependent on scores received on the ASSET Language Test. Although there is a weak correlation between the ASSET Language Usage Test and final course grades in English Composition I, this relationship does not lead to an adequate placement of students because the correlation is very weak. On the other hand, both the Spearman Correlation Coefficient and the Chi Square Test of Independence accept Hypotheses 2B and 4B, which claim relationships between scores received on the Writing Placement Test as generated by the Modified Primary Trait Scoring Guide and final course grades in English 1204, English Composition I.

Barton County Community College Spring 1991 Study

Presentation of Data

At Barton County Community College, 69 students participated in the Spring 1991 study. As with the fall study, all entering students were required to take the ASSET test battery prior to registration. Figure 27 presents the ASSET scores received by the student population. At the base of the histograph are the ASSET scores, and the figures at the top of each bar represent the number of students that received that particular score.

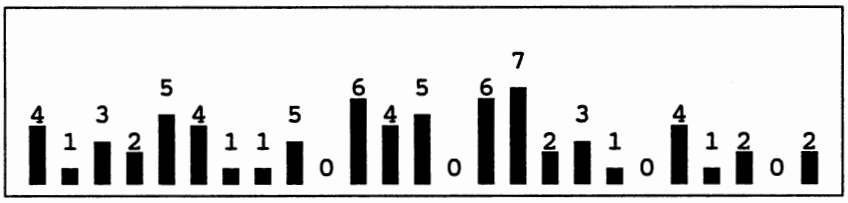

Figure 27. Spring 1991 ASSET Language Usage Scores

The distribution of ASSET scores is roughly uniform with a slight peak at the score of 45. The mean score is 40.77, and the median score is 41. The standard deviation is 7.45.

Figure 28 indicates the scores that the students received on the Writing Placement Test as scored by the original 6-point scale. At the base line of the histograph are the scores that papers received when the ratings given by both readers were totaled, and the figures at the top of each bar represent the number of students who received that particular score.

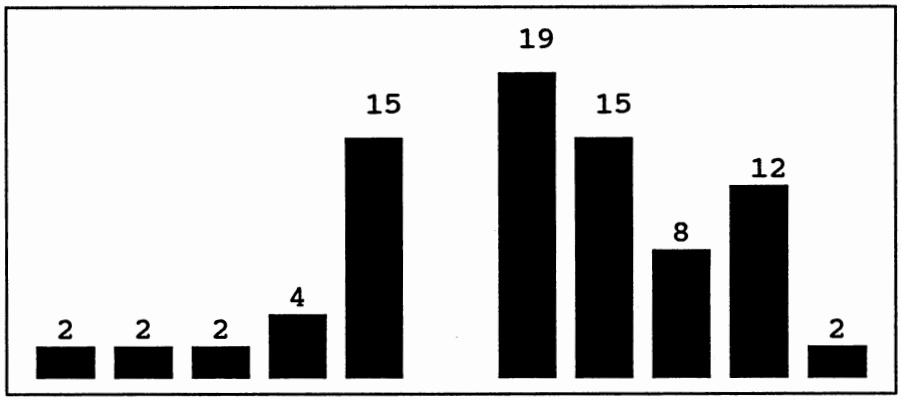

Figure 28. Spring 1991 Scores on the Writing Placement Test

No student received a score of 7 because papers that received both an upper-half score (4-6) and a lower-half score (1-3) were given to a third reader to rectify the discrepancy. When percentages were rounded to the nearest whole number, 3% of the population of 69 students received scores of 2, 3, and 4 respectively; 6% of the population received scores of 5; and 22% received a score of 6 on the side of the scale representing nonfluency. On the side of the scale representing proficient writing, 28% of the population received a score of 8; 22% received a score of 9; 12% received a score of 10; 17% received a score of 11; and 3% received a score of 12. The median score was 6. The distribution of scores is roughly symmetric with a peak at the score of 8.

Figure 29 indicates the final course grades that students received in English 1204, English Composition I. The figure on the bottom axis represents the final

grade that students received, and the figure at the top of each bar represents the number of students who received each grade.

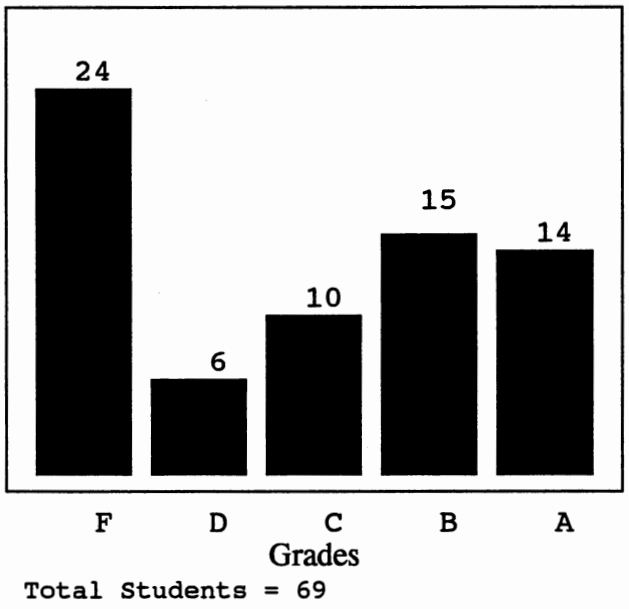

Figure 29. Spring 1991 Final Course Grades

Final grades are basically nonsymmetric. When percentages were rounded to the nearest whole number, 35% of the population received a grade of F; 9% received a grade of D; 15% received a grade of C; 22% received a grade of B; and 20% received a grade of A. The mean final grade was 1.84, and the median was a grade of 2.0 or a C (calculated by the following formula: A=4, B=3, C=2, D=1, F=0).

The Spearman Correlation Coefficient

As with the Fall 1990 study, I have used the Spearman Correlation Coefficient to evaluate the following two hypotheses:

Hypothesis 1B:

> There is a positive association between the ASSET Language Skills Test and final grades in English 1204, English Composition I.

Hypothesis 2B:

> There is a positive association between the Writing Placement Test scored by the Modified Primary Trait Scoring Guide and final grades in English 1204, English Composition I.

Table 6 depicts the Spearman Correlation Coefficient of the ASSET Language Test scores and final course grades in English 1204, English Composition I.

TABLE 6

SPEARMAN CORRELATION COEFFICIENT BETWEEN ASSET TEST SCORES AND FINAL GRADES IN ENGLISH 1204

ASSET and **FINAL GRADES**
r = +.15
P > .05
N = 69

The correlation coefficient of +.15 indicates an extremely weak relationship. The P value is also greater than the .05 allowed to determine significance. Therefore, the Spearman Correlation Coefficient allows us to reject Hypothesis 1B. No positive association exists between the ASSET Language Test and final course grades in English 1204 during the Spring 1991 study at Barton County Community College.

Table 7 depicts the correlation coefficient of the Writing Placement Test (WPT) as scored by the Modified Primary Trait Scoring Guide and final course grades in English 1204, English Composition I.

TABLE 7

SPEARMAN CORRELATION COEFFICIENT BETWEEN WRITING PLACEMENT TEST SCORES AND FINAL GRADES IN ENGLISH 1204

WPT and **FINAL GRADES**
r = +.52
P < .001
N = 69

A significant positive association of +.52 exists between scores on the Writing Placement Test and Spring 1991 final grades in English Composition I at Barton County Community College, and the P value is significantly below the .05 level

allowed for the hypothesis to be accepted. Therefore, the Spearman Correlation Coefficient supports Hypothesis 2B. A positive association exists between the Writing Placement Test as scored by the Modified Primary Trait Scoring Guide and final course grades in English 1204, English Composition I.

The Chi Square Test of Independence for Hypothesis 3B

I have used the Chi Square Test of Independence to evaluate the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 3B:

> Final grades in English 1204, English Composition I, are dependent on the scores received on the ASSET Language Skills Test.

Figure 30 pictures the complete breakdown of frequencies of scores of the subjects on the ASSET Language Usage Test and final grades in English 1204, English Composition I.

ASSET SCORES	Grades F	D	C	B	A
54	1				1
53					
52					2
51	1				
50	2		1		1
49					
48			1		
47					3
46	1			1	
45	1		2	2	2
44	4		1	1	
43					
42	1	2		1	1

ASSET SCORES	Grades F	D	C	B	A
41	1	1		1	1
40	1			3	2
39					
38	2		1	2	
37	1				
36			1		
35			1	3	
34	3	1		1	
33		2			
32	2				1
31			1		
30	3		1		

N= 69

Figure 30. Spring 1991 Cell Frequencies Between ASSET Scores and Final Grades

In order to perform a better Chi Square Test, I pooled scores together so that as many cells as possible have a frequency of at least five cases. As with the Fall 1990 study, I pooled the A, B, and C cells into one cell on the axis representing grades to represent satisfactory final grades in English 1204, English Composition I, and the D and F cells into another to represent unsatisfactory grades. On the axis representing ASSET Language Usage scores, I pooled scores from 30 to 39 into one cell, scores from 40 to 49 into a second cell, and scores from 50 to 56 into a third cell. These

score divisions correspond to the recommended scores for placement into English 1194, Introductory Writing Skills (IWS): English 1204, English Composition I; and English 1205, Honors Composition I. While the college has set scores as a prerequisite for Honors Composition I, it again did not offer the course during the Spring 1991 semester. Below is Figure 31, which pools the scores from Figure 30 into fewer cells. The percentage in each cell shows the proportion of the students receiving a D-F grade as opposed to an A-B-C grade for each horizontal category.

English 1204 Grades

ASSET SCORES		D-F	A-B-C
	50-56 Honors Comp.	4 44%	5 56%
	40-49 Fresh. Comp	12 35%	22 65%
	30-39 Basic Comp	14 54%	12 46%

N= 69

X^2 = 0.61

P = .74

Figure 31. Spring 1991 Chi Square Test of Independence: ASSET Scores and Final Grades

The P value is significantly above the .05 level allowed for the hypothesis to be accepted. Therefore, the Chi Square Test of Independence allows us to reject Hypothesis 3B. Final grades in English Composition I are not dependent on the scores received on the ASSET Language Usage Test during the Spring 1991 semester at Barton County Community College.

The Chi Square Test of Independence for Hypothesis 4B

I have used the Chi Square Test of Independence to evaluate the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 4B

> Final grades in English 1204, English Composition I, are dependent on the scores received on the Writing Placement Test scored by the Modified Primary Trait Scoring Guide.

Figure 32 pictures the complete breakdown of frequencies of scores of the subjects on the Writing Placement Test as scored by the original 6-point version of the Modified Primary Trait Scoring Guide and their final grades in English 1204, English Composition I. As previously stated, the scores represent the composite ratings of both exam readers. No paper received a score of 7 because no upper- and lower-half score discrepancies were allowed.

WRITNG TEST	Grades					
		F	D	C	B	A
	12					
	11				2	
	10	1		2	2	3
	9	3		3	3	6
	8	6		3	5	5
	7					
	6	6	4	2	3	
	5	3	1			
	4	2				
	3	1	1			
	2	2				

N= 69

Figure 32. Spring 1991 Cell Frequencies Between the Writing Placement Test and Final Grades

As with earlier studies, I pooled scores together so that as many cells as possible have a frequency of at least five cases. On the axis representing grades, I pooled the A, B, and C cells into one cell to represent satisfactory final grades in English 1204, English Composition I, and the D and F cells into another to represent unsatisfactory grades. On the axis representing the Writing Placement Test, I pooled scores from 8 to 12 into one cell and scores from 2 to 6 into a second cell. The score divisions correspond to the recommended scores for placement into English 1204, English

Composition I, and English 1194, Introductory Writing Skills (IWS). Below is Figure 33, which pools scores from Figure 32 into fewer cells to allow as many cells as possible to have a frequency of at least five cases. The percentage in each cell shows the proportion of the students receiving a D-F grade as opposed to an A-B-C grade for each horizontal category.

English 1204 Grades

WRITING TEST		D-F	A-B-C
	8-12 Eng. Comp.	10 23%	34 77%
	2-6 IWS	20 80%	5 20%

N= 69

X^2 = 21.28

P = .00000

Figure 33. Spring 1991 Chi Square Test of Independence: Writing Placement Test Scores and Final Grades

The P value is significantly below the .05 level allowed for the hypothesis to be accepted. Therefore, the Chi Square Test of Independence allows us to accept

Hypothesis 4B. Final grades are dependent on the passing or failing scores on the Writing Placement Test.

Conclusion

Both the Spearman Correlation coefficient and the Chi Square Test of Independence reject Hypotheses 1 and 3, which claim a positive relationship between scores on the ASSET Language Usage Test and final grades in English 1204, English Composition I, during the Spring 1991 semester at Barton County Community College. On the other hand, both the Spearman Correlation Coefficient and the Chi Square Test of Independence accept Hypothesis 2 and 4, which claim a positive relationship between the Writing Placement Test as scored by the Modified Primary Trait Scoring Guide and final course grades in English Composition I.

Summary

With the exception of the Fall 1990 experiment, the Spearman Correlation Coefficient failed to support Hypothesis 1A, which claims a positive association between the ACT English section and final course grades in English 1113 (Freshman Composition I) at Oklahoma State University, and Hypothesis 1B, which claims a positive association between the ASSET Language Usage Test and final course grades in English 1204 (English Composition I) at Barton County Community College. On the other hand, the Spearman Correlation Coefficient continuously supported Hypotheses 2A and 2B, which claim a positive association between the Writing Placement Test and final grades in the standard entry-level English composition

course at both schools. Likewise, the Chi Square Test of Independence continuously rejected Hypothesis 3A, which claims that final course grades in English 1113 (Freshman Composition I) are dependent on the scores received on the ACT English subsection at Oklahoma State University, and Hypothesis 3B, which claims that final course grades in English 1204 (English Composition I) are dependent on the scores received on the ASSET Language Skills Test at Barton County Community College. However, the Chi Square Test of Independence continuously supported Hypotheses 4A and 4B, which claim that final grades in the standard entry-level English composition course at both schools.

Chapter VII will provide a discussion of these results.

CHAPTER VII

DISCUSSION OF THE ANALYSIS OF DATA

This dissertation has presented and statistically tested a new way of scoring essay tests to identify students who need developmental composition. Both the Spearman Correlation Coefficient and the Chi Square Test of Independence support the hypotheses that claim a relationship between scores on the Writing Placement Test scored by the Modified Primary Trait Scoring Guide and final course grades in the standard freshman composition course both at Oklahoma State University and at Barton County Community College. On the other hand, with the exception of the Fall 1990 study at Barton County Community College, both statistical measures failed to support the hypotheses claiming a relationship between the ACT/ASSET tests and final grades in the standard composition course.

Oklahoma State University

At Oklahoma State University, both the Spearman Correlation Coefficient and the Chi Square Test of Independence failed to support either Hypothesis 1 or 3. Therefore, there is little evidence of a relationship between scores students receive on the ACT and performance in English 1113, Freshman Composition I, as indicated by final grades. Inasmuch as the American College Testing Program is emphatic in their claim that the ACT has not been designed as a placement instrument, the lack of

relationship between the ACT English subscores and final course grades in English 1113, Freshman Composition I, should not be construed as a weakness in the ACT. Rather, these results demonstrate that colleges that use ACT English subscores for placement purposes should also use an alternate placement instrument to confirm the scores that students received on the ACT.

Both the Spearman Correlation Coefficient and the Chi Square Test of Independence supported both Hypotheses 2A and 4A. Therefore, both statistical measures support the assertion that the Writing Placement Test scored by the Modified Primary Trait Guide is a reasonable predictor of future performance in English 1113, Freshman Composition I, as indicated by final grades. However, the support is not extremely strong. The Spearman Correlation Coefficient was only a +.30, indicating a rather weak correlation between the Writing Placement Test and final course grades. While the Chi Square Test of Independence supported a dependency between scores on the writing test and final course grades, cell frequencies within Figure 19 (page 104) point to problems within the test. Of those who received scores indicating language proficiency (scores of 8-12), 92% received a grade of A, B, or C, and 8% received a grade of D or F. However, of those who received scores indicating nonfluency (scores of 2-6), 77% received a grade of A, B, or C, and only 23% received a grade of D or F.

One factor that could account for these percentages is test administration. When students were asked to participate in the research design, they were not told the nature of the design. Rather, the instructors distributed sheets containing the writing topic and instructions, reviewed the sheets to be sure that no student had any

questions, and asked the students to do their best job. Each instructor was careful to assure students that he or she would not see the results of the experiment and that the results would not affect student grades. Because students knew that their essay responses would not count against them, some may have been tempted to do less than their best. Almost every instructor who administered the test mentioned that a few students wrote only for a few minutes and then left the class. This lack of concern may explain why a significant number of papers received nonfluent scores but yet went on to succeed in the course.

Although 40 students or 77% of those who received composite scores from 2-6 received a final grade of C, B, or A in Freshman Composition I, the grade-point average in Freshman Composition I was significantly lower for those who received composite scores from 8-12. When final grades were calculated by assigning grades the following weights (A=4, B=3, C=2, D=1, F=0), the group that received scores from 8-12 averaged 2.77, but the group that received scores from 2-6 averaged 2.00, a difference of .77 grade point average. The median grade of the 8-12 group was 3.0 or a B, but the median grade of the 2-6 group was 2.0 or a C, an entire grade difference. None of the 2-6 group received an A in the course, but 28 students or 16% of the 8-12 group received an A. While a disturbing number of students who scored from 2-6 received a satisfactory grade (C, B, or A) in Freshman Composition I, the average grade for the 2-6 group was significantly lower than that received by the 8-12 group.

Although the possible factors hindering these results could be rectified to arrive at a better test, a comprehensive university such as Oklahoma State may not be

the ideal location to perfect a new type of methodology for evaluating writing. The University now requires a composite ACT score of 22 for admission, and only a small percentage of entering students may actually need a basic composition course. Rather, a college with a less restrictive admissions policy might be a more ideal location to evaluate a new method for evaluating student writing for placement.

Barton County Community College

At Barton County Community College, the Spearman Correlation Coefficient supported Hypothesis 1B during the Fall 1990 exam but failed to support it during the Spring 1991 exam. During the Fall 1990 experiment, the Spearman Correlation Coefficient found a positive relationship between the ASSET Language Usage Test and final grades in English Composition I, but the support was not as strong as the relationship between the Writing Placement Test and final grades. The test found a correlation coefficient of +.27 between ASSET and final course grades, but it found a stronger correlation coefficient of +.45 between the Writing Placement Test and final grades. The Spring 1991 Spearman Correlation Coefficient, on the other hand, failed to substantiate a positive correlation below the .05 level stipulated in Chapter V for accepting any of the hypotheses. In both cases, the correlations generated by the Spearman were much weaker than those that it generated for the Writing Placement Test.

A possible reason for this split between support and nonsupport of Hypothesis 1B during the Fall 1990 and Spring 1991 semesters could lie in the distribution of ASSET scores. While the Fall 1990 scores formed a roughly symmetric curve, the

Spring 1991 scores formed a more even distribution, leading to a relatively flat curve. The higher standard deviation of 7.45 points to the greater diversity of the spring population was more diverse in its abilities than the fall one. This diversity, combined with large number of unsatisfactory final grades at the end of the semester, could have contributed to this split. On the other hand, the Chi Square Test of Independence failed to support Hypothesis 3B, testing the relationship between ASSET scores and final grades for both the Fall 1990 and Spring 1991 experiments. Therefore, the Chi Square Test of Independence failed to support the assertion that a relationship exists between the ASSET Language Usage Scores and final grades in English 1204, English Composition I.

Both statistical measures allow us to conclude that the ASSET Language Usage Test is not a good predictor of future performance in English 1206, English Composition I. Of those who "failed" the ASSET test (scores below 40), a substantial percentage of students (63% in the Fall 1990 study and 46% in the Spring 1991 study) received final grades of C or better in English 1204, English Composition I, at the end of the semester. Of those who "passed" the test (scores of 40 and above) an equally disturbing percentage of students (32% in the Fall 1990 study and 37% in the Spring 1991 study) received final grades of D or F in the same course. Both the statistical findings and simple calculated percentages argue strongly against the validity of the ASSET Language Test as a predictor of student performance in English 1204, English Composition I, (the standard entry-level course) at Barton County Community College.

In the manual distributed to administrators, The American College Testing Program does little to counter the findings described above. Rather, the publishers advertise ASSET as a criterion-referenced battery of tests designed primarily for advising students of their strengths and weaknesses; American College Testing does not claim that their test can determine placement nor does it recommend cut-off scores for course placement for any of its tests. While colleges may set scores based on their own correlations between scores and final grades, the data from both the fall and spring tests show that this may not be possible at Barton County Community College. Of students receiving the top five scores (50-54) on the ASSET Language Usage Test, 8 students, or 27% of a population of 30 students; and 4 students, or 44% of a population of 9 students, received either a D or F in the Fall 1990 and Spring 1991 semesters respectively. The significant numbers of students receiving unsatisfactory English Composition I grades makes any attempt to set satisfactory cut-off scores problematic.

On the other hand, both the Spearman Correlation Coefficient and the Chi Square Test of Independence supported the relationship between the Writing Placement Test scored by the Modified Primary Trait Scoring Guide and final grades. Percentages of students receiving satisfactory and unsatisfactory final grades in English Composition I also speak highly of the Writing Placement Test scored by the Modified Primary Trait Scoring Guide. Of those students who received scores indicating nonfluency during the Fall 1990 Semester, 26 students, or 68% of the population of 38 students, received a D or F in English Composition I. Of those students who received scores indicating nonfluency during the Spring 1991 semester,

the figures were even more predictive of student failure. Of the population of 25 students who received 2-6 scores, 80% received a D or F in English Composition I. Of those who received 8-12 scores, 24% of the population of 158 students received a D or F in English Composition I during the Fall 1990 Semester, and 23% of the population of 44 students received a D or F in English Composition I during the Spring 1991 Semester.

Although simple percentages point to the successful predictive validity of the Modified Primary Trait Scoring Guide, the low correlation coefficients remain disturbing. During the Fall 1990 Semester, the Spearman Correlation Coefficient between the Writing Placement Test and final course grades was +.45, and in the Spring 1991 Semester, it was a +.52. While both of these correlation coefficients are moderate at best, the testing literature seems to indicate that higher correlations are unlikely, given that many confounding variables affect final course grades. According to Ward et al. (1986), major multiple-choice tests of writing ability have traditionally sustained correlation coefficients between .30 to .40. In researching correlations between direct writing tests and final course grades, McKendry (1992) found that the correlation coefficients were also roughly between .30 to .40. Therefore, the Spearman Correlation Coefficients generated for the Writing Placement Test at Barton County Community College (especially the Spring 1991 test) appear to be weak, they compare favorably with those generated by tests given at other institutions.

The Barton County Community College studies showed that the Writing Placement Test was a more effective predictor there than in the Oklahoma State University study. The Spearman Correlation Coefficient, the Chi Square Test of

Independence, and numbers of students receiving satisfactory/unsatisfactory final grades in English Composition I substantiate the effectiveness of the test. The success of the test may be attributed to two causes.

First, the faculty at Barton County Community College led students to believe that the test was a bonafide placement instrument instead of an experiment. The English Department had been dissatisfied with the ASSET Language Usage Test because they observed that a significant number of students traditionally passed the test only to enroll in English Composition I and receive D or F grades. In their enthusiasm to try a new type of test, they told students that the Department was giving a writing sample test to confirm their placement in English Composition I. Even though the faculty knew that they would not see the results of the experiment until after the semester was over, they led students to believe that they would be required to enroll in a remedial course if they did not do well on the writing test. The fear of punishment may have been a key motivation for students to do their best job, and the more stringent testing conditions at Barton County Community College may have helped make the Writing Placement Test scored by the Modified Primary Trait Scoring Guide look more favorable in an empirical study.

Second, as an open-admission junior college, Barton County naturally has more nonfluent basic writers than would a comprehensive university such as Oklahoma State. The more academically diverse student body may have allowed the writing test to identify students in need of developmental composition in greater numbers than would a similar test at Oklahoma State University.

Conclusion

Statistically, an essay test scored by the Modified Primary Trait Scoring guide has been substantiated as a good means for identifying and placing students in composition courses. In addition, simple calculations comparing satisfactory/unsatisfactory final grades in English Composition I at Barton County Community College speak highly for the test. At Oklahoma State University, significant numbers of students earned satisfactory composition grades even though they received a low score on the writing test, but the median final course grade of those who earned nonfluent scores on the writing test was one grade lower than the median final course grade of those who earned proficient scores on the test. Whereas the median final grade for proficient students was a B, the median grade for the nonfluent students was a C. While the Oklahoma State University study cannot substantiate a significant failure rate, the differences in median grades still has significance. These findings indicate that an essay test scored by the Modified Primary Trait Guide shows promise in enabling English departments to identify and place nonfluent basic writers in developmental composition and shows good predictive validity in that students who ignore test results receive significantly lower grades in freshman composition courses both at Oklahoma State University and Barton County Community College.

CHAPTER VIII

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Alan C. Purves (1992) describes writing assessment as a highly complicated state of affairs. While indirect multiple-choice exams do not require students to compose ideas on paper, direct writing assessments allow students to produce only first-draft material. This situation led Purves to coin the phrase "PDQ" quality, an acronym referring to the results of direct assessment as "perceived draft quality" or"pretty damn quick." While writing samples written under these conditions can lead researchers to postulate questionable conclusions about general writing competency, writing samples produced for placement purposes can well be a reliable means for directing students to appropriate composition courses if faculty know what to look for as they evaluate writing. A tool such as the Modified Primary Trait Scoring Guide may very well provide faculty the appropriate criteria for identifying nonfluent basic writers and placing them in developmental composition courses because the Guide asks faculty to evaluate papers for fluency as the criterion for placement rather than the students' ability to generate essays that are creative and thought-provoking. Moreover, because students will most likely generate the same quality of writing in the assessment as they would initially produce in class, the scoring guide will help faculty identify those students who produce aberrant features

that cannot be remediated through a series of carefully designed classroom activities and writing assignments during the course of the regular composition sequence.

While both indirect standardized multiple-choice tests and direct essays scored by holistic, analytic, and primary trait methods have been widely used to evaluate writing, these methods have not always worked well when departments have tried to use them to identify and place nonfluent basic writers in developmental composition classes. Therefore, in creating effective placement instruments, testmakers must leave these methods and develop a better one. This study has sought to develop and statistically evaluate a new scoring rubric for evaluating the writing samples produced from direct assessment and has named this rubric The Modified Primary Trait Scoring Guide. This rubric differs from those of holistic, primary trait, and analytic scoring because the Modified Primary Trait Scoring Guide establishes basic writing fluency as the domain measured. This new scoring method shares some of the assumptions of the three traditional direct writing assessment measures, but it also departs from them in that the new method seeks to match students to particular course curricula rather than generically evaluating writing. Because the new scoring guide was used at both Oklahoma State University and Barton County Community College, this study has sought to show that the Modified Primary Trait Scoring Guide has the potential to be a standardized test rather than a site-specific one as are most locally-developed tests. At each school the Modified Primary Trait Scoring Guide was compared to the established placement instruments (ACT English subscores at Oklahoma State University and ASSET Language Usage Scores at Barton County Community College) through the use of the Spearman Correlation Coefficient and the Chi Square Test of Independence.

This dissertation has shown that both the Spearman Correlation Coefficient and the Chi Square Test of Independence support the claim that a relationship exists between scores on the Writing Placement Test scored by the Modified Primary Trait Scoring Guide and final course grades both at Oklahoma State University and at Barton County Community College. On the other hand, both statistical measures failed to support a relationship between either the ACT test at Oklahoma State University or the ASSET Test at Barton County Community College and final course grades in the standard freshman composition class at both schools except for the Spearman Correlation Coefficient during the Fall 1990 study. Even though the Spearman Rho lent support to the hypothesis claiming a relationship between the ASSET Test and final course grades, this support was not strong.

While the Modified Trait Scoring Guide appears to have done a satisfactory job in identifying basic writers and placing them in developmental composition, its success rate is not even; the Guide did a much better job in identifying and placing basic writers in developmental courses at Barton County Community College than it did at Oklahoma State University. Part of the problem with the Guide is typical with any type of assessment measure. While exam administrators can consistently train groups of readers to produce uniform scoring results, colleges and universities cannot do the same for particular course curricula. Therefore, when a test wavers in its effectiveness in predicting final course grades, part of the problem may lie with the course curriculum, rather than with the test itself. Assumptions behind both test and course curriculum must arrive at an adequate match for faculty and students to profit from any placement decisions that the test generates. The use of the Modified

Primary Trait Scoring Guide as a sole device for placing students may be possible, but the use of any one test to the exclusion of other means of assessment may present more problems than it may solve. The development of a new way of scoring essays promises a better and more reliable means for placing students, but several issues may need to be addressed to improve this method and allow it to take its place among the other methods of direct essay assessment. While the number of research questions that can be explored may be limitless, the following seven seem to be the most important.

First, the Modified Trait Scoring Guide needs to be piloted in a wider variety of colleges. Oklahoma State University and Barton County Community College represent schools on the opposite sides of the academic spectrum. The test appeared to work more satisfactorily at Barton County Community College. Part of the success can be attributed to the nature of a two-year college as an open-admissions institution that normally accepts basic writers in large numbers. However, part of the success rate could be that the test fit well with the particular departmental philosophy and course curriculum. The test therefore needs to be piloted at a variety of schools, and results need to be compared to see the rate of success that the Modified Trait Scoring Guide has from campus to campus. From the results, researchers can look for ways of adapting the scoring guide to best meet the needs of a variety of schools with different missions and needs.

Second, more research needs to be done concerning topic development and discourse mode. In this dissertation, only one question was with the scoring guide. Although logic seems to dictate that the same types of questions already in use for

other writing assessments would produce good results with the Modified Primary Trait Scoring Guide, the opposite could also prove to be true. The scoring guide needs to be subjected to other types of questions to see if it will work equally well. In the same vein, research also needs to be done concerning the appropriateness of a variety of writing topics for assessment for placement versus assessment for other purposes.

Third, the Modified Primary Trait Scoring Guide will need to be reexamined continuously as research sheds new light on basic writers. This dissertation has sought to examine the key issues germane to basic writers, and the Guide has been constructed to respond to those issues. As research surfaces, many of the assumptions governing the scoring guide may need to be reexamined and modified.

Fourth, additional research needs to explore the relationships between features within student discourse and the individual reader's perceptions toward writing in general so that testing specialists can comprehend the extraneous variables that affect the way that exam readers score papers. A significant body of research is dedicated to the features within papers that most influence exam readers using holistic scoring guides, but few have looked at the influences that cause readers to override scoring guides in favor of their own perceptions toward writing. More research about the influences of writing quality on rater judgment is needed, especially in the area of those features of nonfluent writing listed in the scoring guide. Other than the area of content and organization, researchers know, for example, very little concerning what features most influence rater judgment (Huot, 1990a). Huot (1990a) summarizes this idea as the tension between the control necessary to achieve interrater reliability and

the natural variation inherent in the perceptions of separate raters. Sullivan (1986) found that major disagreements among exam readers come from papers that depart in radical ways from descriptions in scoring rubrics and anchor papers. On the other hand, Hoetker (1982) found that raters tend to assign the lowest acceptable or passing score when evaluating papers in ways that will diversely affect student lives. Except for protocol analysis studies done by Vaughan (1987) and Huot (1988), little attempt has been made to analyze the logic that exam readers use to rate student writing (Huot, 1990b).

Fifth, more research needs to be done on the differing reactions of faculty as they move from one type of assessment to another. Because exam raters bring into the scoring session a knowledge of the demands of the classes that they teach, their decisions are often influenced more by their knowledge of curriculum than by the constraints of the scoring guide. Because faculty know that they are influencing student lives in important ways, research needs to examine the relationship between these outside influences and their effect on the ways that faculty interpret scoring guides. Almost no research has been done to compare the effects of curriculum on exam readers. Studies performed on specific college campuses need to gauge the predictive validity of exams scored by readers unfamiliar with specific course curriculum as opposed to faculty who import curriculum knowledge into an exam session. Knowledge in this area is crucial if the test is to be used for large-scale rather than campus-specific assessment.

Sixth, further study is needed to find ways of improving the predictive validity of writing samples scored by the Modified Primary Trait Guide. The correlation

coefficients, though favorable when compared with those of other tests, still are not strong. Part of the answer could lie in the better training of exam readers, but much of the solution could lie in the area of curriculum standardization within individual colleges. It could be that most of the problem rests in the fact that student grades are often influenced by significant factors other than actual writing ability. On the other hand, it may very well be impossible to improve correlation coefficients between placement instruments and final course grades, and a reinterpretation of what represents a strong correlation for assessments of this type may be in order.

Seventh, in the course of this dissertation I introduced the idea of using Christensen diagrams to train inexperienced exam readers in evaluating writing according to the Modified Primary Trait Scoring Guide. No doubt, these diagrams could be helpful for other types of assessment. Further study needs to be done to determine whether diagrams of this type can significantly improve inter-rater reliabilities on various types of writing assessment conducted with exam readers of various levels of experience in large-scale writing assessment.

As further research explores the usefulness of the Modified Primary Trait Scoring Guide, other research areas will no doubt surface. Although this dissertation unveiled a new way of reading student writing for placement purposes, no doubt many questions are still unanswered and many flaws in the system remain unaddressed; however, the potential for this new method of scoring papers to have an impact on writing assessment for placement is very likely if others are willing to experiment with the method, look to the issues surrounding it, and resolve any problems inherent within it.

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APPENDIX

HOLISTIC SCORING GUIDE

Appendix

Holistic Scoring Guide
English Placement Test
Oklahoma State University
Summer 1988

6	Give this score to the essay that completely answers all parts of the question. The response identifies a place, describes it, and tells why that place is a good one to meet people. The topic is clear and provides thought-provoking assertions, explanations, illustrations, and syntax. It demonstrates the writer's ability to create a unique and focused response to the topic. While the essay is not completely free from minor structural and spelling errors, it nevertheless indicates that the writer has a solid mastery of the conventions of written English.
5	Give this score to the essay that provides a clear, organized response to all parts of the topic. (The response identifies a place, describes it, and tells why that place is good to meet people.) While the essay completely responds to the topic, it lacks the creative approach of a **6** paper. The essay will contain minor structural and spelling errors.
4	Give this score to the essay responds to the topic, but it fails to adequately describe the place or to tell why it is a good place to meet people. The development of the writer's assertions and the reasons these assertions may be incomplete or rudimentary, but both parts of the essay have a logical organization even though relationships may be clear. The essay may contain one or two major errors in structure and spelling, but these errors will not distract the reader from the topic.
3	Give this score to the essay that does not respond to the specific tasks of the topic because the writer has misunderstood but has not ignored nor argued against its tasks. The response shows that the writer has the abilities to make clear assertions and can adequately support those assertions with clear illustrations. The essay will contain major errors in structure, but these errors will not distract the reader from the topic.
2	Give this score to the essay that responds to only one part of the topic. The writer fails to describe the place adequately or he or she fails to give reasons why the place is a good one to met people. Although the response slights one or both parts of the question, it is not in the form of a narrative. The essay contains serious errors distract the reader's attention from the topic.
1	Give this score to the essay that lacks a discernible pattern of organization or that is so short that any judgment of the writer's competence is impossible. Assertions are not clear, and supporting ideas do not relate to the assertion or to any other supporting ideas. Give this score to the writer who attempts to redesign the assignment by telling a story. The essay displays such a high frequency of error that the reader's attention is distracted from the content.

VITA

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Candidate for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Thesis: THE USE OF THE MODIFIED PRIMARY TRAIT SCORING GUIDE FOR PLACING STUDENTS IN FRESHMAN COMPOSITION

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