THE CHARACTERISTICS OF WRITTEN COMMUNICATIONS

AND ATTITUDES TOWARD COMMUNICATION IN A

SELECTED CORPORATION WITH IMPLICATIONS

FOR IMPROVEMENT IN BUSINESS

WRITING INSTRUCTION

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INTRODUCTION

Professional educators and industrial leaders can learn much from
each other. Both education and industry benefit when each makes avail-
able to the other information about existing conditions and practices.
Cooperation between industry and education in sharing facilities and
knowledge results in mutual respect and in progress in attaining
objectives.

In business education, improvements have been made in many areas
through the cooperative efforts of business educators and industrial
managers. Managers in industry have suggested standards that business
educators could consider as one of the guides in helping young people
prepare for business careers. Professional business educators ask for
advice from industrial leaders, and the educators serve industry as
consultants in planning and in problem solving. This two-way communi-
cation system helps educators in schools of business to more adequate-
ly prepare the student to work effectively in industry.

Although industry and education have worked together in many
projects, business educators and managers in industry could provide
each other with educational information in the area of written commun-
ication. For several years, some controversy has existed regarding
letter writing instruction in business education at the college level.

Information is needed to indicate whether or not present business

writing course objectives and textbook theory make a significant contribution to the education of students preparing for careers in industry.

Statement of the Problem

Some managers in industry believe that business educators could better prepare young men and women for the writing responsibilities they will have in business employment. Personnel managers and training supervisors frequently complain that some recent college graduates in company training programs cannot communicate effectively in writing.

The problem is to get specific information from industry that can serve as a guide to business educators regarding the business writing knowledges and skills that undergraduate students should acquire and the experiences that they should undergo in their pre-employment written communications training.

Elements of the Problem

Answers were sought to the following aspects of communication in a company:

Who are the personnel with writing responsibilities?

What are the company writers' attitudes toward selected aspects of textbook theory?

What are managements' opinions regarding selected aspects of oral and written communication within the company?

What is the readability level of letters in this company?

What kinds of work experiences do the workers have and what are the educational backgrounds and attitudes of the workers in this company who have a contributory responsibility for written communication?

What is the role of the stenographer in written communication?

Definition of Terms

The following terms are used in this study as follows:

Communication
: Communication is the process of sharing information by any means whatsoever.

Business Communication
: Business communication differs from general communication only in that business communication takes place in a business context.

Written Communications
: Written communication refers generally to company-generated letters, memorandums, and business reports and to the letters and reports received by the company. Other items of written communications are specifically mentioned in the text material.

Readability
: In this study, readability refers specifically to word choice, sentence length, and voice.

Clerical Personnel
: The clerical personnel are the 99 workers who normally do not have responsibility for composing letters, memorandums, or reports. The clerical personnel are below the management level and are divided into two groups: secretarial workers and general clerical workers.

Secretarial/Stenographic Workers or Employees
: The secretarial/stenographic workers are the 54 employees who take dictation, type, and perform stenographic duties as part of their regular job.

General Clerical Workers or Employees
: The general clerical workers are the 45 employees who are cashiers and keypunch operators and who generally are not responsible for taking dictation or for performing the work of a stenographer or secretary.

Writers   The "writers" are the people in the
                           company who compose communications
                           as part of their regular job.

General Procedure

A pilot study was made in a corporation to help determine the aspects of company communication which should be studied. Over 250 letters and interoffice memorandums were evaluated. The Gunning Fog Index was used to determine the level of readability and a count was made of the number of active and passive voice sentences. The use of expletives, deadwood phrases, trite expressions, and other aspects of written communication suggested questions which should be asked. Company managers with writing responsibilities were interviewed, and secretarial and clerical personnel gave opinions about the effectiveness of company communications.

The pilot study was of value in constructing the interview questionnaire and in writing the questions answered by secretarial and clerical personnel in the communication study. The pilot study helped determine which aspects of company communications should be studied that would give business educators a better knowledge of writing responsibilities in industry.

The data for the study were obtained by interviewing management personnel, by analyzing letters written by management personnel in various company departments, and by distributing questionnaires to secretarial and clerical personnel.

The study was conducted in the Oklahoma Gas and Electric Company, an independent investor-owned electric utility. The company, incorporated in 1902, supplies electric service to 261 cities and towns

throughout a 30,000 square mile area in Oklahoma and Western Arkansas. The general office in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, and the seven operating divisions employ a total of 2,650 persons. The company reported a total revenue of $113,800,327 for the year 1968.

The president of the company gave permission for the communication research to be conducted in the following departments: Contracts, Accounting, Advertising and Publicity, Sales, Engineering, and Personnel.

The company president explained to the heads of the departments the purpose and nature of the communication study to be made in their company. Company personnel from the president to the clerical personnel with contributory writing responsibilities realized the value of the study, and they were very helpful in the data-gathering phase of the research.

<div align="center">Procedure for Interviewing Management Personnel
with Writing Responsibilities</div>

Fifty-eight managers with writing responsibilities were interviewed about selected aspects of company communications. The in-depth personal interview revealed writers' attitudes about academic courses of most value to their writing responsibilities. The writers gave reasons for naming the courses as being valuable. The company writers also shared their beliefs about aspects of textbook theory and gave suggestions for improving business writing instructions. The in-depth interview revealed managements' opinions about aspects of oral and written communication within the company.

An appointment was made with each manager for an interview. The

length of the interview was usually from 60 minutes to 90 minutes. Many of the interview sessions were 90 minutes in length.

Most of the company writers were familiar with the aspects of business letter writing textbook theory presented. An explanation of each aspect of textbook theory was given, and then questions the company writer had about the writing theory were answered. Each response of the company writer was recorded in shorthand or longhand during the interview session.

An interview form was used to structure the interview, but the company writer was encouraged to continue his response if the explanation related to communication.

Several managers with writing responsibilities mentioned that the interview had been of value to them as a review of writing principles. Some of the writers said that the interview had thoroughly covered communication in their company.

Even though the interviews had taken much time, the company writers at the close of the interview were eager to give assistance if help were needed later.

Procedure for Determining Readability of Company Letters

Some business educators who teach business letter writing courses believe that word choice, sentence length, and voice selection influence readability. These teachers just referred to stress the importance of readable writing in business letters—writing that gets to the point quickly and conveys a message that leaves little opportunity for misinterpretation.

How much importance, if any, does industry place on simplicity

and directness in business letter writing. When managers in industry mention that young college graduates beginning business careers cannot communicate in writing, do the managers mean that the young people are not giving proper attention to word choice, sentence length, and voice selection; or is readability (which includes the qualities of simplicity and directness of style) in writing a consideration at all in industry? Information about the readability level of letters in industry and the nature and purposes of business letters could serve as an indicator of the importance industry places on word choice, sentence length, and voice selection in business writing. If one of the purposes of business letter writing instruction is to help train students to write more effectively in industry, then information about what industry considers to be effective writing is of value to business educators.

Six departments in the company provided a total of 134 letters for evaluation. This evaluation of company letters covered the readability level as measured by the Gunning Fog Index, the writing purposes, and the nature of the business letters in each department. It is believed that 134 letters from six departments is an adequate number to make the sample reasonably representative of the quality of writing throughout the company.

In the analysis of the 134 letters, each letter was given a number. The number of sentences in each letter was recorded and the number of sentences with passive voice was also recorded. The Gunning Fog Index was computed for each letter. The subject and purpose of each letter was determined and an evaluation was made as to whether or not the purpose of the letter had been accomplished.

Procedure for Determining Personnel Attitudes About

Oral and Written Communication in the Company

In addition to interviewing management personnel with writing re-
sponsibilities and determining the readability of company letters, a
study was made of clerical personnel attitudes toward oral and written
communication in the company.

To gather information regarding personnel attitudes about oral
and written communication in the company, a questionnaire was distrib-
uted to each of 99 clerical personnel. The clerical personnel, which
includes both secretarial and general clerical workers, have a part in
the communication process as they receive the oral and written commun-
ication of management personnel, interpret the information, and then
respond to the message. The communication process in a company per-
vades the entire organization. Secretarial workers contribute to the
communication process by typing, taking dictation, and by proofreading.

The company president gave permission for the questionnaires to
be given to the workers while they were on the job. The clerical
personnel returned the completed questionnaire the day following the
distribution.

A cover letter on the questionnaire explained that the questions
are part of a business communication study and that the end result of
this research, hopefully, will be improved instruction in business
letter writing.

Limitations

The in-depth analysis of the communication practices and attitudes
in one company is probably not completely representative of the system

of communication practices and attitudes in all companies.

A possible weakness of the in-depth interview is that the respond-ent may talk to and interact with the interviewer in an unnatural manner. The respondent is sometimes concerned with giving "acceptable" answers. The interviewer attempted to limit the effects of this weak-ness by using care in the phrasing and in the asking of questions.

CHAPTER II

PERSONNEL WITH WRITING RESPONSIBILITIES

Fifty-eight company managers communicate in writing as a part of their regular job. In general, all personnel above the rank of general clerk, stenographer, and secretary communicate in writing as part of their job.

Company personnel who have assigned writing responsibilities include managers of departments, auditors, accountants, statisticians, supervisors, engineers, architects, employment interviewers, members of the sales staff, and company directors.

The titles of the management personnel who communicate in writing as a part of their regular job are:

Titles of Managers

Manager of General Accounting

Manager of Audits

Manager of Corporate Insurance

Manager of General Sales

Manager of Advertising and Publicity

Manager of Community Services

Manager of Industrial and Commercial Sales

Manager of Industrial Development

Manager of Sales Promotion

Manager of Engineering

Titles of Supervisors

Supervisor of Sales Statistics

Supervisor of Publicity

Supervisor of Engineering Records and
  Reproduction

Supervisor of Personnel Records

Supervisor of Employment

Supervisor of Employee Welfare

Supervisor of Group Insurance and Annuities

Supervisor of Credit Union

Titles of Directors and Chiefs

Director of Training and Safety

Director of Personnel Administration

Chief Planning Engineer

Chief of Engineering Services

Chief Mechanical-Structural Engineer

Chief Distribution Engineer

Chief Substation and Transmission Design
  Engineer

The length of employment before the responsibilities began, the
nature of the writing responsibilities, and the educational backgrounds
of the writers are discussed in the following paragraphs.

Length of Employment Before Writing Responsibilities Began

Some of the company writers accepted writing responsibilities almost as soon as they began their work with the company. Some of these writers wrote job-training reports during the first days of employment, and some writers were responsible for preparing interoffice memorandums. These company writers completed forms requiring the composition of a sentence or several sentences in the response column.

Fifteen, or 25 per cent, of the 58 writers accepted writing responsibilities during their first week of employment (Table I). Thirty-five, or 60 per cent, of the 58 writers were responsible for written communication within the first 6 months of employment.

Those writers employed for five years or more before assuming writing responsibilities believe that the number of years they worked before writing is not representative of how long the majority of employees work before writing. These writers worked in operational positions before transferring to jobs where writing became part of the job duties. The fact that many of the new employees who are working in management-trainee positions have writing responsibilities in this company soon after employment suggests that business writing teachers emphasize to young people the immediacy of writing in jobs with industry.

The Nature of the Writing Responsibilities

and Time Spent in Writing

Fifty-three, or 91 per cent of the 58 company writers write letters, reports, and interoffice memorandums.

TABLE I

LENGTH OF EMPLOYMENT BEFORE WRITING RESPONSIBILITIES BEGAN

Length of Employment Before Writing Responsibilities Began	Number of Writers	Per Cent of Writers
Don't Remember	5	9
Immediately	13	22
One Week	15	25
Two Weeks	1	2
30 Days	1	2
60 Days	1	2
6 Months	4	7
1 Year	1	2
1½ Years	2	3
2 Years	2	3
3 or 4 Years	5	9
5 Years	4	7
10 Years	2	3
15 Years	1	2
20 Years	1	2
TOTAL	58	100

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30 Days	1	2
60 Days	1	2
6 Months	4	7
1 Year	1	2
1½ Years	2	3
2 Years	2	3
3 or 4 Years	5	9
5 Years	4	7
10 Years	2	3
15 Years	1	2
20 Years	1	2
TOTAL	58	100

The types of reports written are:

Inventory reports

Investments reports

Committee reports

Audit reports

Insurance statistical reports

Quarterly reports

Financial reports

Advalorem tax reports

Reports to management on proposed
activities

Sales reports

Reports on industries

Annual reports

Budget reports

Technical reports

Engineering reports

Applicant summary reports

Equal opportunity reports

Reports on conventions

In addition to writing letters, reports, and interoffice memo-
randums, the 58 company writers also compose:

Legal documents and contacts

Policies and procedures

Testimonial statements for government
commissions

Safety instructions

Motivational bulletins in accident
prevention

Accounting manuals

Instructions for machine operators

Questionnaires

Completion of incoming questionnaires

Monthly company magazine

Company newsletter

Publicity releases to news media

Promotional advertising copy

Sales quota bulletins

Annual sales conference speeches

Bulletins about new products

Specifications for company engineers

Work schedules

Job descriptions

Job evaluations

Bulletin board announcements about
promotions, retirements, etc.

The writers' estimates of the per cent of time spent in writing
on the job range from 1 per cent to 70 per cent.

Eighteen, or 31 per cent, of the writers believe they spend from
6 to 10 per cent of each work day in communicating by writing (Table
II). Eleven, or 20 per cent, of the writers think that from 21 to 25
per cent of their work day is spent in writing. Only 4 of the 58
writers believe that as much as 50 per cent of their work time is
spent in fulfilling writing responsibilities. The average per cent
of time spent in writing by all the 58 writers is 21 per cent.

The company writers believe that writing responsibilities increase
with the length of service until a top management position is reached.

Top management personnel delegate many writing responsibilities to subordinates.

TABLE II

PER CENT OF TIME SPENT IN WRITING

Estimated Per Cent of Time Spent in Writing	Number of Writers	Per Cent of Writers
No Estimate	3	5
1-5	8	13
6-10	18	31
11-15	3	5
16-20	7	12
21-25	11	20
26-30	-	-
31-35	1	2
36-40	-	-
41-45	-	-
46-50	4	7
51-55	-	-
56-60	1	2
61-65	-	-
66-70	2	3
TOTAL	58	100

Educational Background

The following discussion of the educational backgrounds of the writers includes the academic courses of value to their writing responsibilities and the writers' opinions about the importance of business writing instruction.

The educational backgrounds of the company writers show preparation in many academic areas. Forty-two, or 72 per cent, of the 58 writers have earned baccalaureate degrees (Table III).

TABLE III

DEGREES HELD BY THE WRITERS

Bachelor of Science	34
Bachelor of Business Administration	6
Bachelor of Arts	1
Bachelor of Fine Arts	1
TOTAL	42
Master of Business Administration	2
Master of Science	1
Juris Doctor	1
TOTAL	4

Seventeen of the company writers majored in engineering, and 18 of the writers majored in business administration and related business areas (Table IV).

TABLE IV

NUMBER OF COLLEGE-TRAINED COMPANY WRITERS AND
THEIR ACADEMIC MAJORS

Academic Majors	Number of Company Writers
Electrical Engineering	11
Business Administration	8
Accounting	7
Mechanical Engineering	5
Home Economics	2
Business Journalism	2
General Business	1
Economics	1
Statistics	1
Industrial Management	1
Journalism	1
English	1
Advertising	1
Architectural Engineering	1
Government	1
Biology	1
Law	1
TOTAL	46

Eighteen of the baccalaureate degrees were granted by the University of Oklahoma (Table V).

TABLE V

INSTITUTIONS GRANTING DEGREES TO COMPANY WRITERS

Colleges and Universities	Number of Company Writers Receiving Degrees
University of Oklahoma	18
Oklahoma State University	14
Oklahoma City University	4
University of Arkansas	3
Texas Christian University	1
Harding College	1
Augustana College	1
Our Lady of the Lake College	1
University of Kansas	1
Oklahoma Baptist University	1
Tulane University	1
TOTAL	46

Most of the degrees earned were granted by the University of Oklahoma and by Oklahoma State University. However, a number of the degrees were granted by universities and colleges in Kansas, Texas,

and Arkansas.

Academic Courses of Value to Writing Responsibilities

The company writers have definite beliefs about the academic coursework of most value to those with writing responsibilities.

Company writers think of a business communication course as being a business letter writing course. Their interpretation of the business communication course is generally based on the way the course was presented when they took the course.

Eighteen, or 31 per cent, of the 58 writers believe that Freshman English or English Composition is the academic area of most value to their writing responsibilities. These 18 writers did not study a business letter writing course in their college work. Thirteen, or 22 per cent, of the company writers believe that a business letter writing course is helping them most with their writing responsibilities.

Other academic courses named as being valuable in preparation for writing responsibilities include: business law, money and banking, modern languages, advertising, psychology, journalism, speech, report writing, and business English.

Company writers give many reasons for naming these courses as being valuable. Comments of the 18 writers who believe that an English course is of most value to their writing responsibilities are:

> English helps one to identify parts of speech
>
> English coursework provides experience in working for clear expression of ideas
>
> The course develops the vocabulary of a student

The diagramming experience in an English
course helps one to understand sentence
structure

English coursework provides training in
organization of thoughts in a sequence

English coursework gives students instruc-
tion in how to condense wordy paragraphs

Comments of the 13 writers who believe that a business letter

writing course is the best preparation for writing in industry are:

Business writing class assignments cover
practical communication problems in industry

Business writing instruction helps one to
develop a clear, concise writing style

Business writing theory covers the compo-
sition of many types of letters

Business letter writing is a much-needed
capstone course in the business curriculum

Other courses writers believe to be of value to good writing

performance, with reasons, are:

Business law, because letter writing is
of a legal nature

Money and banking, because it provides
report writing experiences that help to
develop a direct writing style

Modern languages, because they help to
develop vocabulary and word power

Advertising, because it helps the writer
learn to put the reader into the message

Psychology, because it helps one to under-
stand communication problems

Speech, because it aids one to think and
communicate under pressure;

Report writing, because the instructor
placed more importance on the communication
process than on punctuation and grammar.

In other words, seven courses in addition to specific courses in business letter writing were noted by the 58 writers as being valuable in qualifying them to write more effectively.

From the preceding discussion, one may see that a variety of course work is of value in helping company writers with the many writing responsibilities that industry demands.

Importance of Business Writing Instruction

Although company writers list coursework other than business letter writing courses as being of value to their writing tasks, they believe that business writing instruction helps to alleviate communication problems in industry. Many of the writers who gave merits of studying other courses did not study a business letter writing course in their college work.

All of the 58 writers believe that students planning a career in industry should study business writing. The following are attitudes of the writers:

> The success of an employee in a corporation will depend upon his ability to communicate

> Students who think they will not have writing responsibilities in industry are badly mistaken

> As an employee progresses in the company, his writing responsibilities increase

> An employee's ability to communicate can compensate for many shortcomings

> With most jobs in industry, young people need to write memorandums and short reports beginning the first week of employment

> Adults find it difficult to inform young
> people about the importance of religion
> and hard work and the need for writing
> ability

Company writers believe that writing responsibilities begin earlier with new employees now than in former years. The writers are in agreement that young people considering careers in business should develop positive attitudes toward writing because of the importance industry places on the ability to communicate orally and in writing.

The company writers believe that writing responsibilities increase with the length of service until a top management position is reached.

They believe that a variety of coursework is of value in helping those who have writing responsibilities in industry. The fact that 100 per cent of the writers in this company believe that young people planning a career in industry should study business letter writing should be of some significance to curriculum planners.

CHAPTER III

WRITERS' ATTITUDES TOWARD SELECTED ASPECTS OF TEXTBOOK

THEORY AND THEIR SUGGESTIONS FOR IMPROVING

BUSINESS WRITING INSTRUCTION

Business writing textbook authors discuss writing techniques and
qualities they believe are necessary to communicating effectively in
writing. Many teachers of business writing courses give instruction
to business students in the application of these techniques and qual-
ities, sometimes called writing theory. Some of the aspects of writing
theory that receive considerable attention from authors and teachers
include the use of, or the avoidance of: active voice, expletive
sentence beginnings, deadwood phrases, trite expressions, one-syllable
words, you-attitude, positive tone, and success consciousness. Men in
industry, students, teachers, and curriculum planners sometimes ques-
tion the value of emphasizing these aspects of writing theory.

Attitudes Toward Selected Aspects of Textbook Theory

The data for the study of attitudes was obtained by interviewing.
An aspect of writing theory would be identified and defined by the
interviewer. During this brief discussion, the interviewer would try
to determine whether the company writer understood the meaning of the
term as it applies to writing theory. When the interviewer was reason-
ably certain that the respondent understood the writing theory point,

he would ask the question calling for the attitude of the writer toward that aspect of writing theory.

The 58 writers gave a variety of answers to questions about selected aspects of business letter writing theory. The aspects studied fall generally into two categories: those pertaining specifically to sentence structure and diction; and those pertaining to the writer's viewpoint.

Sentence Structure and Diction

Sentence structure and diction theory aspects are:

Active Voice Construction

Expletives

Deadwood Phrases

Short, Simple Words

Active Voice. Some business letter writing textbook authors support the idea that writers in industry could improve the effectiveness of letters, memorandums, and reports by writing predominantly in active voice. Menning and Wilkinson in their textbook write that passive constructions are usually longer, weaker, and fuzzier than active ones.[1] Business letter writing teachers, in general, favor the effort to write predominately in active voice.

Thirty-seven, or 64 per cent, of the 58 writers believe that writing predominantly in active voice is desirable (Table VI).

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[1]J. H. Menning and C. W. Wilkinson, Communicating Through Letters and Reports, fourth edition, Richard D. Irwin, Inc., Homewood, Illinois, 1967, p. 40.

TABLE VI

THE IMPORTANCE OF ACTIVE VOICE

	Highly Important	Of Some Importance	Of Very Little Importance	No Opinion	Depends	Total
Number of Writers	11	26	14	5	2	58
Per Cent of Writers	19	45	24	9	3	100

Eleven of them believe it is highly desirable. These 37 writers who believe in consciously writing in active voice think that doing so makes writing more concise--that it contributes to a more direct writing style. They admit that conscious use of active voice takes time but think it is worth the effort. One writer uses passive voice, though, to "soothe an angry customer" on occasion.

Fourteen, only 24 per cent, of the 58 writers believe that writing in active voice is of very little importance. Attitudes of these 14 writers include:

> Active voice is not important to the writing responsibilities
>
> Window dressing is sometimes needed to give a letter sufficient length

A number of these fourteen writers believe, as do many teachers of business writing, that a writer should simply strive to communicate well without being conscious of the mechanics for doing so.

The fact that 64 per cent of the writers in this company believe that active voice communicates more effectively than passive voice

seems to justify teachers' efforts to emphasize the merits of active voice in business letter writing.

Expletives. Menning and Wilkinson in their textbook write that expletive beginnings delay the real idea of the sentence and frequently force a writer to use the unemphatic passive voice.[2] Responses from company writers about expletives generally support the view that the expletive beginning delays the main idea of the message.

Thirty-six, or 62 per cent, of the 58 writers believe that eliminating the expletive sentence beginning is desirable (Table VII).

TABLE VII

THE IMPORTANCE OF ELIMINATING THE EXPLETIVE BEGINNING

	Highly Important	of Some Importance	Of Very Little Importance	No Opinion	Depends on the Situation	Total
Number of Writers	15	21	20	1	1	58
Per Cent of Writers	26	36	35	1.5	1.5	100

Fifteen of them believe it is highly important. These 36 writers who believe in eliminating the expletive sentence beginning think that expletives make the main point of the sentence difficult to find.

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[2]Loc. cit.

They believe that the elimination of expletives contributes to clarity and conciseness in writing.

Twenty, or 35 per cent, of the 58 writers think that eliminating the expletive sentence beginning is of very little importance. Attitudes of these twenty writers include:

> Expletives are necessary for change
> of pace in writing
>
> Expletives provide a writer with a
> transitional device
>
> Expletives help a writer to achieve
> conversational tone

The fact that 62 per cent of the writers in this company believe that eliminating the expletive sentence beginning is desirable would seem to warrant some attention to expletives in the business writing classroom.

Deadwood Phrases. Some textbook authors refer to the vague phrase as being deadwood or gobbledygook. William A. Damerst in his textbook, Resourceful Business Communication, writes that gobbledygook is words, phrases, and clauses that are much too long and complex, and that seem to say something meaningful but really say nothing at all.[3] Business writing teachers believe that gobbledygook or deadwood phrases contribute nothing to ideas expressed. Writers in this company have very definite opinions about the elimination of the deadwood phrase.

Fifty-two, or 90 per cent, of the 58 writers believe that eliminating deadwood phrases in business writing is desirable (Table VIII).

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[3]William A. Damerst, Resourceful Business Communication, Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc., Chicago, Illinois, 1966, p. 150.

TABLE VIII

THE IMPORTANCE OF ELIMINATING THE DEADWOOD PHRASE

	Highly Important	Of Some Importance	Of Very Little Importance	No Opinion	Depends Upon the Situation	Total
Number of Writers	33	19	5	-	1	58
Per Cent of Writers	57	33	8	-	2	100

Thirty-three of them believed it is highly important. A number of these 33 writers believe, as do most teachers of business letter writing, that the elimination of deadwood phrases contributes to clarity and to preciseness in expression. One writer thinks that the use of deadwood phrases projects a poor company image to the reader. One of the 33 writers admits that writers who have practiced a writing style for many years often reject ideas such as eliminating deadwood phrases.

Five, only 8 per cent, of the 58 writers believe that the elimination of the deadwood phrase is of very little importance. Attitudes of these five writers are:

> Short sentences make for choppy reading

> The longer phrase something does a better job of explaining

> Short letters sound impersonal

Ninety per cent of the writers in this company believe that the elimination of deadwood phrases contributes to more effective

communication.

Short, Simple Words. For three reasons, short, simple words are
more useful to businessmen than long, complicated words: (1) the
common word is more likely to be understood; (2) it consumes less time
for the dictator, the typist, and the reader; and (3) it calls less
attention to writing style.[4]

Forty-six, or 79 per cent, of the company writers believe that
the use of short, simple words is desirable in business writing (Table
IX).

TABLE IX

THE IMPORTANCE OF SHORT, SIMPLE WORDS

	Highly Important	Of Some Importance	Of Very Little Importance	No Opinion	Depends Upon the Situation	Total
Number of Writers	22	24	8	-	4	58
Per Cent of Writers	38	41	14	-	7	100

Twenty-two of them believe it is highly important. These 46
writers who believe in writing with short words think that doing so

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[4]William C. Himstreet and Wayne M. Baty, Business Communications,
Principles and Methods, second edition, Wadsworth Publishing Company,
Inc., Belmont, California, 1965, pp. 53, 54.

makes the meaning more precise. They think that most readers "skip over the big words" if they do not understand them rather than find the definitions in the dictionary. The writers believe that the use of short words is very important if the writer does not know the reader--that unknown readers may not understand words of many syllables.

Eight, only 14 per cent, of the 58 writers believe that writing with short words is of very little importance. Attitudes of these writers include the following statements:

> Too many short words are monotonous
>
> Readers evaluate the intelligence of
> the writer by the level of language
> he uses
>
> The receiver of a message should govern
> the level of language
>
> Gradeschool words are condescending in
> nature

The fact that 79 per cent of the writers in this company believe that short, simple words contribute to more effective written communication should help to justify a discussion in business writing classes about the relationship of short words to preciseness and clarity of expression.

The Writer's Viewpoint

Selected aspects of writing theory from the writer's viewpoint are:

> You-Attitude
>
> Tone
>
> Success Consciousness

Trite Expressions

You-Attitude. The hard business reason for you-viewpoint

presentation is that when you show you are aware of and are doing

something about your reader's needs or problems, he will react more

favorably to your suggestion.[5]

An example of a short explanation of the you-attitude given to a

company writer follows:

> Some textbook writers say that the you-attitude
> in letter writing emphasizes benefits to the reader
> while subordinating the writer's interests. In
> this approach, the writer shows that he is thinking
> of the reader and his welfare. How do you view the
> use of the you-attitude in company communications?

Fifty-four, or 93 per cent, of the 58 writers believe that the

use of the you-attitude in written communications is desirable (Table

X).

TABLE X

THE IMPORTANCE OF THE YOU-ATTITUDE

	Highly Important	Of Some Importance	Of Very Little Importance	No Opinion	Depends Upon the Situation	Total
Number of Writers	42	12	1	1	2	58
Per Cent of Writers	72	21	2	2	3	100

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[5]Menning and Wilkinson, op. cit., p. 67.

Forty-two of them believe it is highly important. Some of the fifty-four who believe in the use of the you-attitude rate this as the most important aspect of writing theory. The writers believe that the you-attitude is very important to developing and maintaining goodwill but think that the you-attitude is ineffective if sincerity does not accompany the you-viewpoint.

Only one of the 58 writers believe that the you-attitude is of very little importance.

The fact that 93 per cent of the writers in this company believe that the use of the you-attitude contributes to more effective written communication should help to justify the teaching of the you-attitude concept in business letter writing classes.

Positive Tone. Menning and Wilkinson write in their text, "Proper tone and the service attitude are the methods of winning the reader's friendliness. If you want your letters to build goodwill, you will make a conscious effort to control the tone."[6]

Company writers give a variety of opinions about the use of positive tone in written business communication.

Thirty-nine, or 67 per cent, of the 58 writers believe that the conscious effort to control the tone in letters and memorandums is desirable (Table XI).

Thirteen of them believe it is highly desirable. A number of these 39 writers believe, as do many teachers of business letter writing, that a writer should open and close a letter with positive statements—that negative news should fall somewhere in the middle of the

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[6]Ibid., p. 78.

TABLE XI

THE IMPORTANCE OF POSITIVE TONE

	Highly Important	Of Some Importance	Of Very Little Importance	No Opinion	Depends Upon the Situation	Total
Number of Writers	13	26	16	1	2	58
Per Cent of Writers	22	45	28	2	3	100

letter. They admit that writers should apologize if an apology is in order but that writers should not begin a letter with an apology.

Sixteen, only 28 per cent, of the 58 writers believe that writing with positive tone is of very little importance. Attitudes of these writers are:

> Even "please" and "kindly" are red
> flag words to some people
>
> Positive tone seems to be inconsistent
> with the you-attitude
>
> Positive tone does not always tell the
> whole truth

The fact that 67 per cent of the writers in this company believe that the conscious effort to control tone results in more effective written communication should help justify the teaching of how to control tone in business letter writing.

Success Consciousness. An explanation of the success consciousness principle follows:

> Success consciousness is the confident attitude
> that your reader will do what you ask him to do or
> accept the decision your letter announces. Success
> consciousness is based on your own conviction that
> your explanation is adequate, your suggestion legit-
> imate and valuable to your reader, your decision the
> result of adequate evidence and logical, business-
> like reasoning.[7]

Company writers generally favor the use of the success conscious-ness principle in written communication.

Forty-six, or 80 per cent, of the 58 writers believe that the use of the success consciousness principle in written communications is desirable (Table XII).

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[7]Ibid., p. 74.

TABLE XII

THE IMPORTANCE OF SUCCESS CONSCIOUSNESS

	Highly Important	Of Some Importance	Of Very Little Importance	No Opinion	Depends Upon the Situation	Total
Number of Writers	29	17	6	1	5	58
Per Cent of Writers	50	30	10	1.5	8.5	100

Twenty-nine of them believe it is highly desirable. These 46 writers who believe in the use of the success consciousness principle in writing think that a confident tone in written communications is very important. They admit that the writer who has a confident tone in his writing must use caution to avoid being presumptuous. Some company writers believe that conviction in writing is more important in sales letters than in other types of letters.

Six, only 10 per cent, of the 58 writers believe that writing with a confident tone is of very little importance. Attitudes of these six writers are:

Writers in staff positions should avoid the success consciousness principle when writing to line personnel

Confident tone is very close to a "bulldogging attitude"

The success consciousness principle leaves too much room for misinterpretation

The fact that 80 per cent of the writers in this company believe that the success consciousness principle is an effective aspect of writing theory would seem to warrant the inclusion of this principle in the business letter writing instructional program.

Trite Expressions. All kinds of trite expressions and jargon—usually the result of hazy thinking, or not thinking, by the writer—are inclined to dull interest and put the reader to sleep instead of stimulating his mind to action.[8] Other names for the trite expression include: bromides, commercialese, and stereotyped language.

Fifty-eight, or 100 per cent, of the company writers believe that eliminating the trite expression from written communication is desirable (Table XIII).

TABLE XIII

THE IMPORTANCE OF ELIMINATING THE TRITE EXPRESSION

	Highly Important	Of Some Importance	Of Very Little Importance	No Opinion	Depends Upon the Situation	Total
Number of Writers	42	16	-	-	-	58
Per Cent of Writers	72	28	-	-	-	100

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[8]Ibid., p. 41.

Forty-two of them believe it is highly important. These fifty-eight writers who believe in eliminating trite expressions give commonly accepted reasons for their beliefs. The writers believe that trite expressions are unnatural, roundabout, and vague. Other attitudes of these writers include:

> Young executives use these phrases
> until they become more confident
>
> The reader considers the writer as
> being behind the times if he uses
> trite expressions

The fact that 100 per cent of the writers in this company believe that the elimination of trite expressions contributes to more effective written communication would seem to justify in the business writing course an instructional unit about composing alternative statements to the ineffective trite expression.

Suggestions for Improving Business Writing Instruction

Company writers believe that the following ideas may be of value to business educators.

1. Business writing teachers should help students learn how to spell and how to write grammatically correct sentences.

2. Business writing teachers should give students many writing assignments and then evaluate student work promptly.

3. Business writing teachers could better inform students about communication situations in industry if teachers would take jobs in industry during the summer months. Every few years, business teachers should work a full year in industry.

4. Business letter writing teachers should compare treatments of theory in several textbooks rather than use only one text.

5. Teachers should help students to "be themselves" when expressing ideas in writing. Too many students adopt a "textbookish" writing style.

6. Business letter writing teachers should help students understand that communication is flexible and that writing style and tone depend upon:

    (1) The personality of the writer

    (2) The personality of the reader

    (3) The situation

7. Business teachers should provide classroom experiences in oral and written communication since a definite correlation exists between effective speaking and effective writing.

8. Business educators should develop a system approach to teaching communication instead of a subject approach. Business educators should integrate writing instruction in each course in the business curriculum.

9. Teachers should help students learn the process of communication. Students need information about communication theory such as interpretation, inference, observation error, and conclusion formation. Help students to avoid "reading in" information that does not exist.

10. Business teachers should present to students how principles of psychology affect the communication process.

11. Teachers should inform students that "plain talk" messages are more effective than written messages influenced by principles of psychology.

12. Business teachers should inform business letter writing students that management personnel believe that young people are generally too aggressive and tend to over-emphasize in written communication. Company men believe that young people should take more time to evaluate communication situations.

13. Teachers should help students to avoid the "I-concept" in written communications.

14. Business educators should emphasize the fact that advancement in industry depends upon the ability to communicate.

15. Business teachers should help students develop word power. Students should learn to adapt the level of language to the receiver of the message.

16. Teachers should help students to understand that honesty and sincerity are two of the more important attributes of written communication.

17. Teachers should help students to understand that the importance of communication extends beyond business to civic, social, and personal activities.

18. Business writing teachers should give students practical situations to analyze. Students should have experiences in school in eliminating communication mistakes. Communication errors in industry are costly.

19. Teachers should present lesson material that will help students develop an appreciation for communication. Appreciation development is more desirable than learning to identify weaknesses in written communication.

20. Business educators should help students to learn how to communicate in writing with warmth and feeling. Recent college graduates write letters that are "a little cool and curt."

21. Business educators should stop giving higher grades to the longer answers on essay exams. Teachers who are "pleased with volume" on a quiz encourage students to adopt a rambling style of writing.

Although some disagreement exists among company writers about suggestions for communication instruction improvement, the majority think that conciseness, correctness in grammar and spelling, and the principles of the communication process are important aspects in written communication instruction.

CHAPTER IV

MANAGEMENTS' OPINIONS REGARDING SELECTED ASPECTS OF ORAL

AND WRITTEN COMMUNICATION WITHIN THE COMPANY

The 58 company managers with writing responsibilities who gave

opinions about textbook writing theory also gave information about

aspects of oral and wirtten communication in the corporation. These

managers have definite beliefs about the nature and adequacy of in-

formation needed, about factors which make communication difficult to

understand, and about desirable communication media for interoffice

communication. The 58 managers discussed the following aspects of

oral and written communication within the company:

> The nature, sources, and adequacy of in-
> formation needed for management decisions
>
> Understandability of written communications
> received by management
>
> Managements' preferences in communication
> media for interoffice communication
>
> The cost of letter writing

Some of the questions in this survey were suggested by Robert D.

Gieselman in his article, "Applying Survey Methods to Employee Com-

munication."[1]

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[1] Robert D. Gieselman, "Applying Survey Methods to Employee
Communication," The Journal of Business Communication (Fall, 1968),
pp. 20, 21.

The Nature, Sources, and Adequacy of Information

Needed for Management Decisions

The managers were querried as to the nature of the information they need to perform their management functions, the sources of the information, and the adequacy of the information they receive.

The Nature of Information Required for Management Decisions

Thirteen, or 22 per cent, of the 58 managers believe that company communication should include more kinds of information than is now being disseminated (Table XIV).

TABLE XIV

NATURE OF INFORMATION REQUIRED FOR MANAGEMENT DECISIONS

	How To Do Job	Company Policies	Other	Don't Need Any More Information	Total
Number of Writers	1	1	11	45	58
Per Cent of Writers	1.5	1.5	19	78	100

These 13 managers think that the company should ask outside sources to provide operational managers with information about new ideas and innovations. Attitudes of these managers are:

> The company should communicate more
> effectively with employees at the
> operational levels who do not like
> to read
>
> The company should provide informa-
> tion that personnel can apply to
> unsolved problems
>
> The company should provide informa-
> tion about the market situation and
> information from consumer sources

Only two, or 3 per cent, of the 58 managers believe that the
company should provide more information about how to do the job and
about company policies.

The fact that 45, or 78 per cent, of the company managers are
pleased with present company communications should be of some sig-
nificance to higher management of this company. Also, the fact that
none of the 58 company managers need information about company bene-
fits or work rules should be of interest to higher management of this
company.

The group of 13 who want more kinds of information is a reminder
that communication systems need continual evaluation.

The Sources of Information Required for Management Decisions

Managers with writing responsibilities receive information neces-
sary for job performance from a variety of sources.

Twenty-one, or 36 per cent, of the 58 managers think that com-
pany publications provide most of the information they need (Table
XV).

Four, or 7 per cent, of the 58 believe that the immediate super-
visor is the main source of information.

TABLE XV

SOURCES OF INFORMATION REQUIRED FOR MANAGEMENT DECISIONS

	Company Publications	Immediate Supervisor	Fellow Employees	Meetings	Other	Total
Number of Writers	21	4	6	7	20	58
Per Cent of Writers	36	7	10	12	35	100

Six of the 58 company managers think that fellow employees provide most of the information.

Twenty, or 35 per cent, of the managers receive information necessary for decision making from sources other than company publications, supervisors, employees, and company meetings. The 20 managers think that these sources provide required information: salesmen from engineering firms, catalogues and technical guides, manufacturer representatives, and the grapevine method.

Thirteen, or 22.5 per cent, of the 58 managers believe that they receive a large amount of information through the grapevine method (Table XVI).

Three of the 58 think they receive about the same amount of information through the grapevine method as they receive through formal communications.

Thirty-six, or 62 per cent, of the company managers receive a small amount of information through the grapevine method, and 6 managers do not receive any information from the grapevine.

TABLE XVI

THE GRAPEVINE METHOD AS A SOURCE OF INFORMATION

	Information	An Amount About Equal to the Formal Communications Received	Information	None	Total
Number of Writers	13	3	36	6	58
Per Cent of Writers	22.5	5	62	10.5	100

The 13 managers who believe that they receive a large amount of information through the grapevine also believe that most of the grapevine information is reliable.

The 36 company managers who receive a small amount of information through the grapevine method are generally the ones who put little trust in grapevine information.

Attitudes of the company managers, at random, are:

> We couldn't survive without the grapevine system.

> The grapevine is surprisingly reliable

> I ignore grapevine information

> Sometimes I start rumors and the stories always come back to me greatly changed

Managements' Evaluation of the Adequacy of Information Received

The company managers have strong beliefs about the amount of internal and external written information needed to perform the work

in the company. Company managers consider "information" to include company-generated material, incoming letters and reports, trade publications, professional journals, news digests, "junk mail," etc.

Thirty-four, or 58 per cent, of the 58 managers believe the amount of information they receive is about the right amount (Table XVII).

TABLE XVII

ADEQUACY OF INFORMATION RECEIVED

	Too Much	About Right	Not Enough	No Response	Total
Number of Writers	16	34	4	4	58
Per Cent of Writers	28	58	7	7	100

These 34 managers believe that the written information should continue to come to their offices although reading time is limited. They think they should decide on the value of the second and third-class matter rather than permit someone else to sort the mail. These 34 managers believe that a manager cannot get too much information but that the problem is in getting the right kind of information.

Sixteen of the 58 managers think they receive too much information. Attitudes of these managers are:

Time is wasted in deciding what
is relevant

> Mail should be sorted before it
> reaches the manager's desk
>
> The sender of information often does
> not have the ability to pinpoint to
> whom the information should go
>
> Increased use of duplicating machines
> result in more stacks of material to
> read

Four, only 7 per cent, of the 58 managers believe that they do not get enough information. One manager thinks that executives in the same department should know more about the work plans of each.

Types of Material Received but not Read. Company managers were also asked in the interview to identify the types of material received but not read.

Twenty, or 34 per cent, of the 58 managers receive trade publications but do not read them (Table XVIII).

TABLE XVIII

TYPES OF MATERIAL RECEIVED BUT NOT READ

	Trade Publications	Government News Digests	Other	Read All Material Received	Total
Number of Writers	20	4	8	26	58
Per Cent of Writers	34	7	14	45	100

Four, or 7 per cent, of the company managers receive government news digests but do not read them.

Eight of the managers do not read the following material: reports of meetings from other departments in the company, magazines, advertisements, sales bulletins, and educational newsletters.

Twenty-six, or 45 per cent, of the company managers read all the material they receive. Some of the managers who do not read all the material that is routed to them merely check off their names and send the publications to the next office. Some of the managers glance at the material to determine its importance and then may take the material home to read if there is not enough time at the office. The managers who do not have time to read all the publications that are sent to their offices believe that greater selectivity in routing materials is the answer.

Need for More Written Communication. Company managers provided additional insight about information adequacy in answering the question about the need for more written communications within the company.

Fifty-one, or 88 per cent, believe that no need exists for more written communications within the company (Table XIX).

Seven, or 12 per cent, of the 58 managers believe that a need does exist for more written communications.

The fifty-one managers who think that no need exists for more written communications are generally strong in their beliefs and add statements such as these:

> The company does a good job in
> keeping us informed

We do not have a communications
problem in this company

TABLE XIX

NEED FOR MORE WRITTEN COMMUNICATIONS

	Yes	No	Total
Number of Writers	7	51	58
Per Cent of Writers	12	88	100

The company managers, in revealing the nature, sources, and adequacy of information needed for decision making, generally agree that the system of company communications is working effectively. The managers believe that a balance between relying on memory and receiving "loads of paper work" is desirable. Most of the company managers believe that an effective balance between oral and written communications has been achieved. Some managers think that if any more memorandums, bulletin board notices, and internal written communications were issued, too much "paper work" would result.

Understandability of Written Communications

Received by Management

The understandability of written communications received by management is another important aspect of the total communication

structure within the company. The subject of understandability of written communications includes a discussion of evaluation of understandability, types of written messages most difficult to understand, and factors in reading difficulty.

General Evaluation of Understandability

Company managers apparently have little difficulty in understanding the incoming letters, memorandums, and reports. Fifty-three, or 91 per cent, of the company managers believe that most written communications that come to their offices are easy to read and understand (Table XX).

TABLE XX

EVALUATION OF UNDERSTANDABILITY OF WRITTEN COMMUNICATIONS

	Most are Easy to Read and Understand	They Are Usually Easy to Read and Understand	They Are Seldom Easy to Read and Understand	They Are Never Easy to Read and Understand	Total
Number of Writers	53	3	2	-	58
Per Cent of Writers	91	5	4	-	100

Three, or 5 per cent, of the managers think that written communications are usually easy to read and understand. Only two of them

believe that letters, memorandums, and reports are seldom easy to read and understand.

Types of Written Messages Most Difficult to Understand

Of course, written communications includes more than letters, memorandums, and reports. Company managers were asked which types of written messages are most difficult to understand.

The types of written messages are not limited to company-generated material. Incoming written communications were mentioned by some of the managers as being difficult to understand.

Eight, or 14 per cent, of the 58 managers think that incoming letters are the most difficult to read and understand (Table XXI).

TABLE XXI

TYPES OF WRITTEN MESSAGES MOST DIFFICULT TO UNDERSTAND

	In-coming Letters	Inter-office Memoran-dums	Company Business Reports	Trade Publi-cations	Govern-ment News Di-gest	Other	No Diffi-culty	Total
Number of Writers	8	5	1	11	9	8	16	58
Per Cent of Writers	14	8.5	1.5	19	15	14	28	100

Six of the company managers believe that company-generated pub-lications, memorandums and company business reports, are the most

difficult to read and understand.

The types of writing named by 14 per cent of the managers as being difficult to read are:

> contracts and legal documents
>
> questionnaires from within industry
>
> professional journals
>
> internal revenue codes and regulations
>
> business reports from other companies
>
> technical letters pertaining to
> engineering concepts

Sixteen, or 28 per cent, of the company managers reported no difficulty in understanding all types of written messages.

Seventy-two per cent of the company managers have some difficulty in reading and understanding written messages.

Factors in Reading Difficulty

Some of the factors cited by business writing textbook authors that make written communications difficult to understand are: poor grammar, poor organization, sentences too long and wordy, and the use of jargon and technical terminology.

Six, or 10 per cent, of the 58 managers believe that poor organization is the main factor that makes written communication difficult to understand (Table XXII).

Sixteen per cent of the company managers think that sentences that are too long and wordy cause many items of written communication to be difficult to understand.

Twenty-eight per cent of the managers gave a variety of reasons why written communications may be difficult to understand:

The writer sometimes assumes that the
reader is well informed

The writer may not be able to anticipate
the reader's point-of-view

The terminology used by other companies
may be different

The writer sometimes includes irrele-
vant material in the message

TABLE XXII

FACTORS IN READING DIFFICULTY

	Organization	Sentences Too Long and Wordy	Too Much Jargon or Technical Terminology	Other	No Difficulty	Total
Number of Writers	6	9	13	16	14	58
Per Cent of Writers	10	16	22	28	24	100

Most of the company managers view incoming communications as
being more difficult to understand than company-generated material.

Managements' Preferences in Communication Media

for Interoffice Communication

Each company manager was asked to give the method of communica-
tion he prefers in communicating with other departments within the
company.

Fifteen, or 26 per cent, of the 58 managers prefer the use of the telephone for interoffice communication (Table XXIII).

Seventeen of the company managers prefer the use of a combination of communication media. Twelve, or 21 per cent, of the 58 believe that circumstances dictate which method of communication to use. Attitudes of the 12 managers are:

> The choice of media depends upon the individual and the importance of the message

> The choice of the communication method depends upon how well the sender knows the receiver

> Writing is the best method of communicating when decisions are to be made at a future date

> Face-to-face communication is best for the communication needed to settle problems

Most of the company managers believe that the telephone is the easiest and quickest communication media but that writing messages is necessary where a record of transactions is important.

The Cost of Letter Writing

When operational expenses are known, management may study each facet of operation to determine methods and practices that would reduce total costs. Although the cost of writing letters is sometimes considered as an operational expense, it would seem that the total cost of writing letters should also reflect management time spent in formulating ideas and concepts to be expressed. The cost to the company in the amount of management time spent in formulating ideas to be expressed in a letter would, of course, be difficult to

TABLE XXIII

MANAGEMENTS' PREFERENCES IN COMMUNICATION MEDIA FOR INTEROFFICE COMMUNICATION

	Telephone	Written Message	Personal Visitation	Telephone and Written Message	Telephone and Personal Visit	Telephone, Written Message, and Personal Visit	Depends	Total
Number of Writers	15	5	9	2	8	7	12	58
Per Cent of Writers	26	8	15	4	14	12	21	100

calculate.

The company managers do not recall that a study has ever been made in their company to determine the average costs of writing letters. They admit that an estimate of letter-writing costs would be of value to most of the departments in the company. However, a few of the managers believe that so many variables are involved in the cost that an estimate is a near impossibility. Some of the managers think that cost should not be considered when the letter discusses matters of a high-level, reflecting the thoughts of several higher management personnel.

The managers view management time in formulating ideas for the letter, management time in dictating the letter, and secretarial time in preparing the letter for mailing as factors to consider in estimating letter-writing costs. The managers estimated the costs of writing a one-page letter in their departments.

Five, or 8 per cent, of the company managers believe that the average cost of writing a one-page letter is less than $2 for each letter (Table XXIV).

Twenty, or 35 per cent, of the managers think that the cost of writing a letter is $4 or more. Fifty per cent of the managers did not give an estimate. A few of the managers who gave no figure think that the estimating of letter-writing costs is a ridiculous idea.

The question of how much an average mailable letter costs cannot be answered scientifically by the dictator's mere estimate. The fact that many of the company managers expressed interest in the question and in the several cost variables should be of interest to the higher management personnel of this company. An employee

awareness of letter writing costs and an interest in reducing costs could possibly result in a reduction in these letter writing costs.

TABLE XXIV

THE COST OF LETTER WRITING

	Less Than $2.00	$2.00 to $2.49	$2.50 to $2.99	$3.00 to $3.49	$3.50 to $3.99	Above $4.00	No Opinion	Total
Number of Writers	5	-	2	1	1	20	29	58
Per Cent of Writers	8	-	4	1.5	1.5	35	50	100

In summary, most of the managers with writing responsibilities are pleased with the system of communication in their company. The company managers have strong beliefs about the amount of internal and external written information needed to perform the work in the company. Over fifty per cent of the managers believe that they receive the right amount of information.

The company managers think they should decide on the value of the second and third-class matter rather than letting someone else sort the mail. Many of the managers believe that a manager cannot get too much information but that the problem is in getting the right kind of information.

Most of the company managers believe that the telephone is the

easiest and quickest media for interoffice communication, but the managers presented reasons why a combination of communication media should be used.

CHAPTER V

READABILITY OF COMPANY LETTERS

Readable writing gets to the point quickly and conveys a message
that leaves little opportunity for misinterpretation. Menning and
Wilkinson write that readability is a factor affecting interest, but
it is more intimately related to clarity.[1] Word choice and sentence
length are two factors that influence the readability level.

Another factor that influences readability is voice. Voice is
that property of a verb which shows whether the subject is acting or
is being acted upon. As business writing teachers know, the voice of
the verb is active when the subject is acting, and passive when the
subject is acted upon. Some business writing textbook authors believe
that letters written predominantly in active voice are more readable
than those written in passive voice.

Although the purposes for writing the letters in each department
is not a necessary part of a readability study, a discussion of the
purposes of the letters is included here for its interest value.

Six departments in the company provided a total of 134 letters
for evaluation. It is believed that 134 letters is an adequate number
to make the sample reasonably representative of the quality of writing
throughout the company. This evaluation of company letters reveals

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[1]Menning and Wilkinson, op. cit., p. 44.

the purposes of the business letters in each department and the read-
ability level. The six company departments are: Contracts, Account-
ing, Advertising and Publicity, Sales, Engineering, and the Personnel
Department.

The Purposes of the Letters Analyzed

An effective business letter can accomplish three objectives:
the letter can inform, can persuade, and can create or maintain good-
will. Almost every business letter is written to accomplish at least
one of these three objectives.

The purpose of all the letters analyzed in the Contracts Depart-
ment is to inform. Some of the letters include discussions about
revised rate sheets, conditions of service, fuel analysis, and rate
studies.

The 30 letters from the Accounting Department discuss subjects
such as payroll periods, transformer schedules, credit card purchase
plans, overhead construction costs, and customer accounting costs.

Twenty-six letters from the Advertising and Publicity Department
show two writing purposes, to persuade and to inform.

The 20 letters from the Sales Department show three purposes for
writing: to inform, to persuade, and to maintain goodwill. Some of
the letters include discussions about location of plants, changes in
service contracts, and about efforts to improve industry.

The purpose of most of the letters from the Engineering Depart-
ment is to inform and to maintain goodwill. The letter subjects
include: plans for study of data processing, permission to make
inspection, evaluation of connectors, and proposed research projects.

Eighteen letters from the Personnel Department show two writing purposes, to maintain goodwill and to inform. All of the 134 letters selected from the six departments communicate clearly and each letter accomplishes the writer's purpose so far as it is possible to determine.

A review of the Gunning Fog Index as a measure of readability follows.

Gunning Fog Index

Communication studies show that for each general level of education there is a level of writing which is easily read and understood. Writing that is readable to one education level can be difficult for those below that level.[2] Company writers should be interested in the fact that readability levels exist for each general level of education. For example, a readability level of 8 would indicate that one who has completed 8 years of school or more would probably have no difficulty understanding that written message.

Business letter writing teachers are aware of the formulas that measure readability. Lesikar writes that these formulas are based on the qualities of writing which show the highest correlation with levels of readability.[3] Most business writing teachers will agree that the Gunning Fox Index is one of the easiest formulas to use in measuring readability. For those who may not be familiar with the Gunning Fox Index, the steps in computing the readability level

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[2] Raymond V. Lesikar, Report Writing For Business, rev. ed., Richard D. Irwin, Inc., Homewood, Ill., 1965, p. 190.

[3] Ibid., p. 191.

include:

1. Determine the average number of words per sentence. That is, first count words and sentences in a sample selected. Then divide the total number of words by the total of sentences.

2. Determine the percentage of hard words in the sample. Words of three syllables or longer are considered to be hard words. But do not count as hard words (1) words that are capitalized, (2) combinations of short, easy words (grasshopper, businessman, bookkeeper), or (3) verb forms made into three syllable words by adding ed or es (repeated, caresses).

3. Add the two factors and multiply by .4. The product is the minimum grade level at which the writing is easily read.[4]

The Gunning Fox Index average for all 134 letters is 8.7 (Table XXV).

TABLE XXV

GUNNING FOG INDEX AVERAGE FOR COMPANY LETTERS

Department	Number of Letters Analyzed	Gunning Fog Index Average (Grade Level)
Contracts	20	8.6
Accounting	30	8
Advertising and Publicity	26	8.6
Sales	20	7.6
Engineering	20	10.6
Personnel	18	8.8
TOTAL	134	Average for all Letters 8.7

[4]Ibid., p. 192.

The twenty letters from the Sales Department have the lowest
Gunning Fox Index average, a 7.6 grade level of readability. The
highest readability level for any of the departments is an average
of 10.6.

The Gunning Fog Index averages reveal that the sample letters
are generally easy to read and understand as far as the Gunning Fog
Index measures readability.

<div align="center">Voice</div>

Of all the parts of speech, the verbs are the strongest; and
verbs are at their strongest when they are in the active voice. Thus
the best in vigorous, lively writing makes good use of active-voice
verbs. Active-voice verbs contrast with the dull, passive forms.[5]
Himstreet and Baty believe that for vivid writing, one should gener-
ally avoid passive verbs. Passive voice verbs are like abstract
nouns--they cloud the picture.[6] The percentage of passive voice con-
struction in letters in each department was determined by dividing
the average number of passive voice sentences per letter by the aver-
age number of sentences per letter.

An evaluation of the 134 company letters reveals that the aver-
age percentage of passive voice construction for each letter is 22
per cent (Table XXVI).

Thirty letters in the Accounting Department have the highest
percentage of passive voice, 32 per cent.

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[5]Ibid., p. 213.

[6]Himstreet and Baty, op. cit., p. 65.

TABLE XXVI

PERCENTAGE OF PASSIVE VOICE IN COMPANY LETTERS

Department	Number of Letters Analyzed	Average Number of Sentences per Letter	Average Number of Passive Voice Sentences per Letter	Percentage of Passive Voice
Contracts	20	6	1.8	.30
Accounting	30	5	1.6	.32
Advertising and Publicity	26	4.5	.7	.16
Sales	20	5	.5	.10
Engineering	20	7	1.5	.21
Personnel	18	7	1.6	.23
	Total 134	Average 5.8	Average 1.3	Average .22

The average percentage of passive voice for the twenty letters in the Sales Department is 10 per cent, the lowest percentage of the six departments.

The average percentage of passive voice sentences for each of the 134 letters, 22 per cent, indicates that the writers in this company do not write predominantly in passive voice. Most of the writers make good use of strong, active-voice verbs.

The Gunning Fog Index averages for 134 letters reveal that the sample letters are generally easy to read and understand.

An evaluation of the same 134 letters shows that the average percentage of passive voice construction for each letter is 22 per cent. This per cent indicates that these company writers do not

write predominantly with passive form.

CHAPTER VI

WORK EXPERIENCE, EDUCATIONAL BACKGROUND, AND ATTITUDES

OF THE CLERICAL PERSONNEL TOWARD COMMUNICATION

Business educators who plan instructional units in the business

writing courses need information not only from those who have writing

responsibilities in industry but also from the clerical personnel who

assist the company writers in preparing mailable letters and reports.

The clerical personnel, which includes both secretarial and gen-

eral clerical workers, have a part in the communication process as

they receive the oral and written communication of management person-

nel, interpret the information, and then respond to the message. The

communication process in a company pervades the entire organization.

Secretarial workers contribute to the communication process by typing,

taking dictation, and by proofreading.

To gather information about the work experience, educational

background, and attitudes of workers with contributory responsibility

for written communication, a questionnaire was distributed to each of

99 clerical personnel. Four of the six pages were answered by all of

the 99 personnel. These four pages asked for information about work

experience background, educational background, and attitudes toward

communication. The last two pages of the six-page questionnaire asked

for information about the role of the stenographer in written communi-

cation. The role of the stenographer in written communication is

discussed in Chapter VII.

Secretaries, stenographers, typists, and a few clerks completed the entire six pages of the questionnaire, including the special two-page section. These 54 workers are referred to as the "secretarial group." Forty-five of the 99 with contributory responsibility for written communication completed four of the six pages. These 45 employees who are clerks, cashiers, and customer service consultants are referred to as the "general clerical group."

The work experience background of the employees shows that many of the workers have valuable experience and records of service in their jobs.

Work Experience Background

Secretarial and general clerical employees presented information about their job assignments and prior work responsibilities.

Present Job

Fifty-four of the 99 clerical personnel perform the duties of secretaries, stenographers, and typists (Table XXVII).

The clerks in the secretarial group indicated that they have secretarial responsibilities by completing the last two pages of the six-page questionnaire.

Forty-five of the 99 clerical personnel do not perform the duties of secretaries, stenographers, or typists. Because of the nature of their job responsibilities, these 45 employees are referred to as the "general clerical group" (Table XXVIII).

TABLE XXVII

JOB CLASSIFICATION OF SECRETARIAL EMPLOYEES

Job Classification	Number of Employees
Stenographer	22
Secretary	19
Clerk	6
Clerk-Typist	4
Typist	2
Legal Clerk	1
TOTAL	54

TABLE XXVIII

JOB CLASSIFICATION OF GENERAL CLERICAL EMPLOYEES

Job Classification	Number of Employees
Clerk	31
Customer Service Consultant	3
Pre Audit Clerk	2
Deposit Clerk	1
Inspection Clerk	1
Meter Owned Clerk	1
Clerk-Typist	1
Cashier Clerk	1
Transfer Clerk	1
Accounting Clerk	1
Petty Cash Clerk	1
Keypunch Operator	1
TOTAL	45

The clerk-typist in the general clerical group did not complete the two-page section of the questionnaire, that section which asks for information from secretaries, stenographers, and typists.

Each of the 99 gave the length of time employed in the present job assignment. In the group of 54 secretarial employees, the range of time spent in the present job assignment for 22 stenographers is from 1 month to 20 years (Table XXIX).

TABLE XXIX

LENGTH OF PRESENT JOB ASSIGNMENT FOR SECRETARIAL EMPLOYEES

Job Classification	Number of Employees	Range of Time Spent in Job Assignment by Members of Job Classification	Average Length of Time Spent in Job Assignment by Members of Job Classification
Stenographer	22	1 month to 20 years	2 years, 8 months
Secretary	19	1 week to 20 years	3 years, 6 months
Clerk	6	2 years to 13 years	8 years
Clerk-Typist	4	6 months to 3 years	1 year, 6 months
Typist	2	1 month to 5 months	3 months
Legal Clerk	1	7 years	7 years
	Total 54	Average 2 years to 9 years, 4 months	Average 3 years, 10 months

Thirty-one clerks in the group of 45 general clerical workers have worked an average of 3 years and 8 months in their present job

assignments (Table XXX).

TABLE XXX

LENGTH OF PRESENT JOB ASSIGNMENT FOR GENERAL CLERICAL EMPLOYEES

Job Classification	Number of Employees	Range of Time Spent in Job Assignment by Members of Job Classification	Average Length of Time Spent in Job Assignment by Members of Job Classification
Clerk	31	1 month	3 years, 8 months
Customer Service Consultant	3	1 year, 7 months to 7 years	5 years
Pre Audit Clerk	2	3 years, 6 months	3 years, 6 months
Deposit Clerk	1	1 year	1 year
Inspection Clerk	1	4 years	4 years
Meter-Owned Clerk	1	4 months	4 months
Clerk-Typist	1	1 week	1 week
Cashier Clerk	1	2 years	2 years
Transfer Clerk	1	8 months	8 months
Accounting Clerk	1	7 months	7 months
Petty Cash Clerk	1	3 months	3 months
Keypunch Operator	1	6 years	6 years
	Total 45	Average 1 year, 8 months to 3 years, 8 months	Average 2 years, 3 months

The 99 clerical personnel gave information about any responsibilities they might have for communicating to others in writing. Twenty-three, or 43 per cent, of the 54 secretarial employees have responsibilities on their present job for communicating to others in writing. Their writing responsibilities are:

> Answering letters when the supervisor
> is out of town.
>
> Writing letters for the supervisor about
> hotel reservations
>
> Composing transmittal letters
>
> Preparing wage and salary reports
>
> Composing the weekly departmental newsletter
>
> Writing interoffice memorandums

Seventeen, or 38 per cent, of the 45 general clerical workers have responsibilities on their present job for communicating to others in writing. Their writing responsibilities are:

> Writing instructions for jobs within the
> department
>
> Writing service orders and miscellaneous
> orders
>
> Preparing payroll instructions
>
> Writing instructions on orders
>
> Writing instructions for the collection of
> delinquent accounts
>
> Composing letters to other departments
>
> Writing credit extensions, service orders,
> and change of address orders
>
> Preparing payment report cards that go to
> the collection agency

Forty of the 99 clerical personnel have responsibilities on their present job for communicating to others in writing.

Fifteen, or 28 per cent, of the 54 secretarial workers had writing responsibilities on jobs prior to their present job. Their writing responsibilities on the prior jobs were:

>Composing letters in answer to supervisors' correspondence

>Writing letters to answer inquiries

>Writing letters to companies to order supplies

>Answering customer complaints in writing

>Writing letters and reports for investigators

Seventeen, or 38 per cent, of the 45 general clerical workers had writing responsibilities on jobs prior to their work with this company. Their writing responsibilities on prior jobs were:

>Writing letters to customers about their accounts

>Preparing end-of-month reports

>Writing departmental news for a monthly magazine

>Composing credit letters

>Writing service orders

Thirty-two of the 99 clerical personnel had writing responsibilities on jobs prior to their present job.

Prior Work Assignments

The 99 clerical personnel listed work assignments they had prior to their present assignments.

Many of the secretaries worked as typists and stenographers within the company prior to their present job assignments. The stenographers were cashiers, typists, and clerks before they began their present

jobs. The clerks worked in the company as keypunch operators and cashiers. The 99 also gave the length of time they worked in their job assignments.

In the group of 54 secretarial employees, 20, or 37 per cent of the 54 had not held a job within the company prior to the present job. Seventeen secretaries worked an average of 9 years and 6 months in prior job assignments within the company.

In the group of 45 general clerical workers, 16, or 36 per cent of the 45 had not held a job within the company before they began their present jobs. Seventeen clerks worked an average of 2 years and 11 months in prior job assignments within the company.

Forty-two, or 78 per cent, of the 54 secretarial workers held jobs before employment with the company. Thirty-seven, or 82 per cent, of the 45 general clerical workers held jobs before employment with the company (Table XXXI).

TABLE XXXI

NUMBER OF WORKERS HOLDING JOBS BEFORE
EMPLOYMENT WITH THIS COMPANY

	Number of Jobs Before Present Employment	Those Who Did Not Hold Jobs Prior to Present Employment	Total
Secretarial Workers	42	12	54
General Clerical Workers	37	8	45

The work experience background of the secretarial and general clerical employees shows that many have long records of service in the jobs they now hold.

Educational Background

The following discussion of the worker's educational background includes: university education, major field of study, and enrollment in short courses.

College or University Education

Twenty-five, or 46 per cent, of the 54 workers in the secretarial group attended a college or university (Table XXXII).

TABLE XXXII

COMPANY EMPLOYEES WHO ATTENDED COLLEGE

	Secretarial Workers	General Clerical Workers
Number who attended	25	14
Number who did not attend	29	31
TOTAL	54	45

Three, or 6 per cent, of the 54 secretarial workers hold a college degree. Seven per cent of the general clerical workers graduated from college (Table XXXIII).

TABLE XXXIII

COMPANY EMPLOYEES WHO HOLD COLLEGE DEGREES

	Secretarial Workers	General Clerical Workers
Number with degrees	3	4
Number without degrees	51	41
TOTAL	54	45

Nine of the 54 secretarial workers chose business administration as their major field of study (Table XXXIV).

TABLE XXXIV

COLLEGE MAJORS CHOSEN BY SECRETARIAL WORKERS

	Number Choosing College Majors	
College Major	Employees Who Attended College	Employees Who Graduated
Business Administration	9	
Business Education	4	2
Secretarial Science	3	
Elementary Education	3	
English	1	1
Special Education	1	
Speech Therapy	1	
TOTALS	22	3

Two of the 45 general clerical workers chose business administration as their major field of study (Table XXXV).

TABLE XXXV

COLLEGE MAJORS CHOSEN BY GENERAL CLERICAL WORKERS

College Major	Number Choosing College Majors	
	Employees Who Attended College	Employees Who Graduated
Business Administration	2	
General Business	2	1
Home Economics	2	1
English	1	
Interior Decorating	1	1
Psychology	1	1
Pre-Med	1	—
TOTAL	10	4

The company workers with contributory responsibility for written communication listed three college courses that they believe have helped them most in their work with the company.

The 54 employees in the secretarial group believe that typewriting, English, and shorthand have helped them in their job responsibilities (Table XXXVI).

Three of the 45 employees in the general clerical group believe

TABLE XXXVI

EMPLOYEE RATING OF COLLEGE COURSES OF VALUE TO JOB RESPONSIBILITIES

| | Secretarial Workers | | | | |
Name of Course	Number of Workers Listing Course as First Choice	Name of Course	Number of Workers Listing Course as Second Choice	Name of Course	Number of Workers Listing Course as Third Choice
Typewriting	8	Shorthand	8	English	4
English	6	English	5	Typewriting	3
Business English	2	Typewriting	4	Business Mathematics	2
Shorthand	2	Business Machines	2	Business Machines	2
Speech	1	Speech	1	Business Communications	2
Business Administration	1	Economics	1	Shorthand	2
				Accounting	1
				Secretarial Administration	1
				Psychology	1

a course in accounting has helped them most with their job responsibilities (Table XXXVII).

The 99 clerical personnel gave information about the business letter writing courses they studied in college.

Eight, or 15 per cent, of the 54 secretarial workers took a business letter writing course in college. Opinions about the business letter writing course are:

> Letter styles and methods of
> writing various types of letters
> were taught in the course.
>
> An effective instructor made the
> course interesting and informative
>
> The course was too mechanical in that
> every student was expected to conform
> too closely to rigid rules.

Three, or 7 per cent, of the 45 general clerical workers took a business letter writing course in college.

With the secretarial and general clerical groups combined, eleven of the 99 employees took a business letter writing course in college. Their opinions about the course indicate that the learning of letter styles and the learning about how to write various types of letters are important learning outcomes.

Attendance at Letter Writing Short Courses

Employees in the company are encouraged to enroll in short courses. The courses are taught in the evenings in company conference rooms by college instructors.

Six, or 11 per cent, of the 54 secretarial workers have attended a short course in letter writing. Five of the 6 secretarial workers believe that the company-sponsored letter writing course is of value

TABLE XXXVII

EMPLOYEE RATING OF COLLEGE COURSES OF VALUE TO JOB RESPONSIBILITIES

General Clerical Workers					
Name of Course	Number of Workers Listing Course as First Choice	Name of Course	Number of Workers Listing Course as Second Choice	Name of Course	Number of Workers Listing Course as Third Choice
Accounting	3	Business Mathematics	3	Speech	2
English	2	English	2	Business Mathematics	1
Typewriting	1	Typewriting	1	Psychology	1
General Mathematics	1	Business Machines	1	Filing	1
Personal Relations	1	Speech	1	Typewriting	1
				Sociology	1

to them. One of the workers believes that the course could have been

of some worth if the instructor had been "more effective in his presen-

tation." Attitudes of the five secretarial employees who believe the

course helped them are:

> The course included the teaching
> of grammar and business forms

> The course helped me learn how to
> get to the point in writing

Eight, or 18 per cent, of the 45 general clerical workers have

attended a short course in letter writing. Seven of the 8 employees

believe that the letter writing course is of value to them. The em-

ployee who thinks the course was of little value gave for his reason

that he was unable to use what he had learned. Attitudes of the seven

who approved of the letter writing course are:

> The course helped me to learn
> proper punctuation and the arrange-
> ment of the parts of the letter

> The course helped me to express
> ideas in writing

> The course helped me to get across
> the main points in a letter without
> having to write two-page letters

Of the 99 clerical personnel, 14 have attended a short course in

letter writing. Twelve of the 14 employees believe that the letter

writing course is of value to them.

The employees' reasons for believing in the worth of the letter

writing short course should be of interest to business educators. The

workers believe that conciseness in letter writing is important and

that learning how to express ideas in writing is necessary. They be-

lieve that learning the placement of letter parts and learning letter

format is important.

Attitudes Toward Communication

The 99 clerical personnel expressed ideas about oral and written communication in the company. The secretarial and general clerical employees evaluated their own communicating abilities and the company bulletin boards as a source of information. They also evaluated informal communication channels as sources of information.

Evaluation of Their Own Communicating Abilities

Forty-six, or 85 per cent, of the 54 secretarial workers believe they are average in ability to communicate information orally in comparison with other company employees (Table XXXVIII).

TABLE XXXVIII

EMPLOYEE RATING OF ABILITY TO COMMUNICATE ORALLY IN
COMPARISON WITH OTHER COMPANY EMPLOYEES

	Secretarial Employees				
	Above Average	Average	Below Average	Don't Know	Total
Number of Employees	2	46	3	3	54
Per Cent of Employees	4	85	5.5	5.5	100

Thirty-five, or 78 per cent, of the 45 general clerical workers believe they are average in ability to communicate information orally in comparison with other company employees (Table XXXIX).

TABLE XXXIX

EMPLOYEE RATING OF ABILITY TO COMMUNICATE ORALLY IN
COMPARISON WITH OTHER COMPANY EMPLOYEES

| | General Clerical Employees | | | | |
	Above Average	Average	Below Average	Don't Know	Total
Number of Employees	6	35	2	2	45
Per Cent of Employees	14	78	4	4	100

Only 8 of the 99 clerical personnel think they are above average in ability to communicate information orally in comparison with other company employees.

The 99 company employees evaluated their ability to communicate information to others in writing (for example, business letters and reports) in comparison with other company employees.

Three, or 5 per cent, of the 54 secretarial workers believe they are above average in ability to communicate information to others in writing in comparison with other company employees (Table XL).

A stenographer who rated herself as above average in writing ability believes that the letters she composes are explicit, understandable, and pleasing to the customer.

Attitudes of secretaries and stenographers who rate themselves as average are:

> Others express their ideas better
> than I do but I get my point
> across

> Experience helps compensate for my
> lack of training

TABLE XL

EMPLOYEE RATING OF ABILITY TO COMMUNICATE IN WRITING IN
COMPARISON WITH OTHER COMPANY EMPLOYEES

| | Secretarial Employees | | | | |
	Above Average	Average	Below Average	Don't Know	Total
Number of Employees	3	42	1	8	54
Per Cent of Employees	5	78	2	15	100

A clerk who believes his writing ability is below average ex-
plained that his job does not require as much communicating as other
departments and therefore he does not have the experience other com-
pany employees have.

Three of the 45 general clerical workers think they are above
average in ability to communicate information to others in writing in
comparison with other company employees (Table XLI).

TABLE XLI

EMPLOYEE RATING OF ABILITY TO COMMUNICATE IN WRITING IN
COMPARISON WITH OTHER COMPANY EMPLOYEES

| | General Clerical Employees | | | | |
	Above Average	Average	Below Average	Don't Know	Total
Number of Employees	3	24	10	8	45
Per Cent of Employees	6	54	22	18	100

Comments of those who rated themselves below average in writing ability are:

> I can tell someone something much
> better than I can write it
>
> I haven't had formal training in
> how to write
>
> I have not had any experience in
> writing letters

Only 6 of the 99 clerical personnel believe they are above average in ability to communicate information to others in writing as compared with other company employees.

Twenty-three of the 99 clerical personnel rate themselves as above average listeners (Table XLII).

TABLE XLII

EMPLOYEE RATING OF ABILITY TO LISTEN

| | Secretarial and General Clerical Employees | | | | |
	Above Average	Average	Below Average	Have No Idea	Total
Number of Employees	23	72	2	2	99
Per Cent of Employees	23	73	2	2	100

Thirty-four, or 63 per cent, of the 54 secretarial employees believe they would accept a position, if offered, that required the composition of many letters or reports as part of the job duties (Table XLIII).

TABLE XLIII

EMPLOYEE RESPONSE TO JOB OFFER REQUIRING WRITING RESPONSIBILITIES

| | Secretarial Employees | | | | |
	Favorable Response	Unfavorable Response	Don't Know	No Response	Total
Number of Employees	34	15	2	3	54
Per Cent of Employees	63	28	4	5	100

Attitudes of the 34 making a favorable response are:

I would enjoy composition and I would perform to the best of my ability

With a little reviewing, I could do the job

I would accept with some anxiety but the work soulds interesting

I could handle writing responsibilities with the help of others

I would feel flattered in that management considered me qualified for writing duties

I would put forth every effort to meet the challenge

I would accept writing responsibilities as a challenge and attack the job with optimism

Attitudes of the 15 secretarial workers making an unfavorable response to the hypothetical offer of increased writing responsibilities are:

I feel I would decline because of lack of education

I have a fear of composing letters

I would have to be desperate for a
job before I would accept a job of
writing letters and reports

Seventeen, or 38 per cent, of the 45 general clerical workers

believe they would accept a position, if offered, that required the

composition of many letters or reports as part of the job duties

(Table XLIV).

TABLE XLIV

EMPLOYEE RESPONSE TO JOB OFFER REQUIRING WRITING RESPONSIBILITIES

| | General Clerical Employees | | | | |
	Favorable Response	Unfavorable Response	Don't Know	No Response	Total
Number of Employees	17	13	7	8	45
Per Cent of Employees	38	30	15	17	100

The attitudes of the 45 general clerical workers were similar to

those of the secretarial employees. The general clerical employees

who gave a favorable response believe that they could handle writing

responsibilities after a review of business writing textbooks. They

think that guidance from experienced personnel would be helpful at

the beginning of the new job.

Most of the 99 clerical personnel who gave an unfavorable re-

sponse to accepting a possible job offer requiring the composition of

letters and reports believe that they do not have adequate education

or experience or both. A significant response of these workers is that they would be willing to try to fulfill the job responsibilities if given encouragement and help.

The fact that many secretarial and general clerical employees would accept writing responsibilities if they had taken writing courses may be of interest to business educators who consider including business letter writing in all secretarial programs.

Evaluation of Bulletin Boards as a Source of Information

In addition to sharing attitudes about their own communicating abilities, the 99 clerical personnel also evaluated the company bulletin boards as a source of information. This source of information may be an important aspect of communication.

The 99 clerical personnel presented beliefs and data about the type of information received from bulletin boards, how often employees read bulletin boards, and about the locations, sizes, and purposes of bulletin boards.

Thirty-seven, or 68 per cent, of the 54 secretarial workers believe they get information from company bulletin boards that they do not get from other sources (Table XLV).

TABLE XLV

COMPANY BULLETIN BOARDS AS SOURCES OF INFORMATION

| | Secretarial Employees Who List Company Bulletin Boards As Unique Sources of Information | | |
	Yes	No	Total
Number of Employees	37	17	54
Per Cent of Employees	68	32	100

TABLE XLVI

COMPANY BULLETIN BOARDS AS SOURCES OF INFORMATION

| | General Clerical Employees Who List Company Bulletin Boards as Unique Sources of Information | | |
	Yes	No	Total
Number of Employees	26	19	45
Per Cent of Employees	58	42	100

The 54 workers gave the types of information received from bulletin boards:

Type of Information	Number of Employees Listing Types of Information Received
Death Notices	15
Promotions	13
Retirement Notices	8
Sale of Company Equipment	7
Company Courses to be Offered	6
Funeral Notices	6
Company Meetings	5
Transfer Notices	4
Company Social Events	4
Company Athletic Events	4
Credit Union Reports	3
Company Awards	2
Holidays	2
Illness of Company Employees	1
Safety Information	1

Twenty-six, or 58 per cent, of the 45 general clerical employees believe they get information from company bulletin boards that they do not get from other sources (Table XLVI).

The 45 general clerical employees gave the types of information received from bulletin boards:

Type of Information	Number of Employees Listing Types of Information Received
Death Notices	8
Company Meetings	5
Retirement Notices	4
Sale of Company Equipment	4
Transfer Notices	3
Promotion Notices	3
Funeral Notices	3
Company Courses to be Offered	3
Company Social Events	2
Safety Information	2
Credit Union Reports	1
Illness of Company Employees	1
Company Awards	1

Sixty-three of the 99 clerical personnel believe they get information from company bulletin boards that they do not get from other sources.

Thirty-two, or 60 per cent, of the 54 secretarial employees read the information on the company bulletin boards at least once each day (Table XLVII).

Eleven of the secretarial workers read the information on the company bulletin board at least once a week. Other responses about the frequency of reading company bulletin boards are:

Every two or three days

Occasionally

When something new is added to
the board

TABLE XLVII

EMPLOYEE FREQUENCY OF READING COMPANY BULLETIN BOARDS

| | Secretarial Employees | | | |
	Several Times Each Day	At Least Once Each Day	Other	Total
Number of Employees	5	32	17	54
Per Cent of Employees	9	60	31	100

Thirty-nine, or 87 per cent, of the 45 general clerical employees
read the information on the company bulletin boards at least once each
day (Table XLVIII).

TABLE XLVIII

EMPLOYEE FREQUENCY OF READING COMPANY BULLETIN BOARDS

| | General Clerical Employees | | | |
	Several Times Each Day	At Least Once Each Day	Other	Total
Number of Employees	1	39	5	45
Per Cent of Employees	2	87	11	100

One employee believes that most information comes through conversation. However, the fact that 71 of the 99 clerical personnel read the information on the company bulletin boards at least once each day should be of some significance to those who evaluate the bulletin boards as a source of information.

All of the 99 workers believe that the locations and sizes of company bulletin boards are about right for the communication purposes intended. Also, the 99 think that in regard to the location of bulletin boards, the placement of the boards is satisfactory (placed in areas where they would be easily noticed by employees).

Opinions of the 99 clerical personnel about ways to make the company bulletin boards more effective are:

> Use of color, pictures, and captions
>
> Removal of funeral notices after services
>
> Use of short poems or sayings would improve morale
>
> Posting of information about retired employees

Many of the secretarial and general clerical employees think that the main purpose served by company bulletin boards is to inform employees about company events and business.

The fact that many of the company employees read the bulletin board often and consider the company bulletin board as a unique source of information should be of some significance to management and others who evaluate bulletin boards as a source of information. The fact that 99 clerical personnel in a company generally believe that the bulletin board conveys information effectively should be of some significance to business educators who teach business letter writing

courses.

Evaluation of Informal Communication Channels as Sources of Information

From the discussion in Chapter IV, 36 of the 58 company writers indicated they receive a small amount of information through the grapevine method. The 99 workers also provide information about the company's informal communication channels.

Twenty-seven, or 50 per cent, of the 54 secretarial workers have had the need to ask people other than their supervisors for information pertaining to their work.

> Comments of the 27 are:
>
> I prefer to ask fellow office
> workers rather than bother my
> supervisor
>
> I may ask another typist a question
> because I think it is simple enough
> that he or she can explain
>
> Sometimes I know that others can
> help me more than my supervisor

Twenty-three of the 45 general clerical employees have had the need to ask people other than their supervisors for information about their work. Comments of the 23 workers are similar to those of the 27 secretarial employees who ask people other than their supervisors for information:

> In my work, I ask many people for
> information
>
> I ask the person who trained me
>
> I get help from my co-workers

Fifty of the 99 clerical personnel have needed to ask people other than their supervisors for information about their work.

Thirty-nine, or 72 per cent, of the 54 secretarial workers get information from fellow workers before they get the same information through official channels. Thirteen, or 33 per cent, of the 39 believe that the information they receive through informal sources is always correct.

Thirty-four, or 75 per cent, of the 45 general clerical workers get information from fellow workers before they get the same information through official channels. Nine, or 26 per cent, of the 34 believe that the information they receive through informal sources is always correct.

The fact that so many company employees receive information through informal channels should be of some significance to company management and to business educators who have an interest in communication channels in industry.

Forty-six, or 85 per cent, of the 54 secretarial employees believe they are told everything they want to know about their job and their company.

Forty-two, or 93 per cent, of the 45 general clerical employees also believe they are told everything they want to know about their job and their company.

Information from the 99 clerical personnel reveals that many of the employees would accept responsibility for composing letters and reports if help and encouragement were given to them. Some of the employee attitudes indicate that lack of education is a factor in declining a position requiring writing responsibilities.

Many of the 99 employees receive information through informal communication channels, but they rely on written communication to

verify the oral communication. Company workers generally have more confidence in their ability to communicate orally than they have in their ability to communicate in writing.

The work experience record of the secretarial and general clerical employees shows a variety of jobs held. The length of time worked in some jobs helps make the employee opinions and attitudes more significant.

Employee opinions about the college courses of value to job responsibilities should be of interest to business educators who are constantly searching for data to use in improving curricula and in improving instructional units in individual courses.

The fact that secretarial and general clerical employees generally believe that they receive help through letter writing courses in the use of correct grammar, spelling, format, and word choice should be of some significance to company management and to business educators.

Available information about work experience, employee attitudes, and writing responsibilities in industry can assist business educators in determining the desirable knowledges and skills that undergraduates should acquire in business letter writing training.

CHAPTER VII

THE ROLE OF THE STENOGRAPHER IN WRITTEN COMMUNICATION

The 54 secretarial workers, mostly secretaries, stenographers,
and typists, provided information about their responsibilities in
written communication. In addition to providing information about the
extent of stenographic responsibility for message composition, the 54
employees gave opinions about the attitudes of dictators toward stenog-
raphers' editing of dictated messages.

Information about the role of the stenographer in written commun-
ication may be of value to business educators in determining the amount
and kinds of business writing training that secretarial students should
undergo.

The Extent of Stenographic Responsibility

for Message Composition

The 54 secretarial workers were asked a series of questions about
their job responsibilities in written company communications. These
questions and the replies are discussed in the following paragraphs.

Question: What part do you play in the process of writing
letters, memos, and reports?

Thirty-three, or 60 per cent, of the secretarial employees take
dictation in shorthand (Table XLIX).

TABLE XLIX

STENOGRAPHIC RESPONSIBILITY FOR WRITING LETTERS, MEMOS, AND REPORTS

Writing Responsibilities		
No. 1*	No. 2**	No. 3***
Responsibility Number	Number of Employees with This Responsibility	Per Cent of Employees
1	33	60
2	51	94
3	21	39
1 and 2	31	57
1 and 3	13	24
2 and 3	20	37
1, 2, and 3	12	22

*Take Dictation in Shorthand. **Type Letters, Memos, or Reports for Signature. ***Have the Responsibility for Composing (all or in part) Letters, Memos, or Reports for Someone else's Signature.

Question: If you take dictation, type letters and reports, or compose for the company as part of your job responsibilities, do you believe that a knowledge of punctuation, grammar, and sentence structure is very important, of some importance, or not very important?

All 54 employees believe that in their work a knowledge of punctuation, grammar, and sentence structure is very important.

Question: Do any of the people who dictate letters to you dictate the punctuation marks?

Twenty-four of the secretarial workers who take dictation are given punctuation marks by the one who dictates the letter. Paragraph indentions, periods, and commas are most frequently dictated to the 24 employees. Of course, some transcribing of notes is from longhand. The workers gave information about their changing the punctuation

taken in dictation or from longhand when transcribing notes.

Question: When you transcribe notes taken in dictation or from longhand do you change the dictated punctuation?

Seven, or 13 per cent, of the 54 often make changes in punctuation during the transcribing of the notes (Table L).

TABLE L

STENOGRAPHIC EDITING OF PUNCTUATION

	Often Make Changes	Sometimes Make Changes	Never Make Changes Even Though Changes Are Needed	Dictated Punctuation is Usually Correct	Response	Total
Number of Employees	7	27	1	10	9	54
Per Cent of Employees	13	50	2	19	16	100

Comments, at random, about making changes in punctuation:

Making necessary changes is a part of my job

My supervisor's punctuation seldom needs correcting

I make sure the corrections meet with my supervisor's approval before I type the letter

Question: When you transcribe notes dictated to you or from longhand, do you make changes in the grammar (such as changing a "was" to "were" etc.)?

The 54 secretarial workers provided information about their making changes in grammar when they transcribe from dictated notes or from longhand. Nine, or 17 per cent, of the 54 often make changes in grammar (Table LI).

TABLE LI

STENOGRAPHIC EDITING OF GRAMMAR

	Often Make Changes	Sometimes Make Changes	Never Make Changes Even Though Changes Are Needed	Dictated Grammar is Usually Correct	No Response	Total
Number of Employees	9	32	0	9	4	54
Per Cent of Employees	17	59	0	17	7	100

Question: When you transcribe notes or type from longhand copy, do you add words or substitute words for the dictated words in order to make the meaning of the message more clear?

Only 4 of the 54 employees indicated that they often add words or make substitutions (Table LII).

Comments, at random, about making changes in word choice:

I seldom add words or make substitutions because my supervisor usually thinks about what he wants to say before dictation is given

I substitute words only with the approval of my supervisor

If I have any doubt about additions or
substitutions changing the meaning, I
check with the dictator

TABLE LII

STENOGRAPHIC EDITING OF WORD CHOICE

	1	2	3	4	No Response	Total
Number of Employees	4	34	2	9	5	54
Per Cent of Employees	7	63	4	17	9	100

1. Often Add Words or Make Substitutions
2. Sometimes Add Words or Make Substitutions
3. Never Add Words of Substitute Words Even Though Change Would Make Message More Clear
4. Added Words or Substitutions Would Not Usually Make the Meaning More Clear

Question: When you transcribe or type from longhand copy, do you change the order of the dictated message (such as rearranging sentence structure or taking a sentence out of one paragraph and putting it in another paragraph) so that the meaning of the message will be more clear and coherent?

The 54 secretarial workers provided information about their changing the order of the dictated message when they transcribe or type from longhand copy. Nineteen, or 35 per cent, of the 54 sometimes change the order of the message (Table LIII).

Many workers believe they would never make these changes without first discussing the change with the dictator.

TABLE LIII

STENOGRAPHIC CHANGING OF THE ORDER OF THE MESSAGE

	1	2	3	4	No Response	Total
Number of Employees	2	19	8	20	5	54
Per Cent of Employees	4	35	15	37	9	100

1. Often Change Order of the Message. 2. Sometimes Change the Order of the Message. 3. Never Change the Order Even Though Changes are Needed. 4. A Change in the Order Would Not Usually Make Message More Clear.

Question: Who would you say is basically responsible for spelling and punctuation in letters, memos, and reports?

Forty-four, or 82 per cent, of the 54 secretarial employees believe they are basically responsible for spelling and punctuating in letters, memos, and reports (Table LIV).

TABLE LIV

STENOGRAPHIC RESPONSIBILITY FOR SPELLING AND PUNCTUATION

	Who Would You Say is Basically Responsible for Spelling and Punctuating in Letters, Memos, and Reports				
	The Person For Whom You Type	You	Both	No Response	Total
Number of Employees	2	44	4	4	54
Per Cent of Employees	4	82	7	7	100

Attitudes of the secretarial workers toward the responsibility

for correct spelling and punctuation are:

>The stenographer should find the super-
>visor's errors and the supervisor should
>detect the stenographer's errors
>
>A secretary is responsible for the appear-
>ance of a letter; but as for content, the
>responsibility is on the person dictating
>or composing the letter or report
>
>The secretary should help her supervisor
>in every way possible, and her making
>sure that letters and reports have
>correct spelling and punctuation is one
>way to help

During the interview sessions with the 58 company managers who

have writing responsibilities (Chapters II, III, and IV), many of these

writers indicated a desire that their secretaries change spelling,

grammar, and word choice where needed. Some of the writers think that

the formation and expression of ideas is their responsibility, and

that the mechanics of the written ideas expressed in letters and re-

ports should be the responsibility of the secretary or stenographer.

Of course, not all of the company managers who compose letters, memos,

and reports believe that the responsibility for correct grammar,

spelling, and punctuation should be left to the secretary.

Attitudes of Dictators Toward Stenographers' Editing
of Dictated Messages

The 54 secretarial workers provided information about the atti-

tudes of the people for whom they type toward the stenographers'

changes in punctuation, grammar, word choice, and sentence structure.

Question: Do you feel free to make changes in punctuation,
grammar, word choice, and sentence structure?

Forty-two, or 78 per cent, of the 54 feel free to make changes in punctuation, grammar, word choice, and sentence structure when they believe these changes would help make the message more clear (Table LV).

TABLE LV

STENOGRAPHIC FREEDOM TO EDIT DICTATED MESSAGES

	Do You Feel Free to Make Changes in Dictated Messages			
	Yes	No	No Response	Total
Number of Employees	42	7	5	54
Per Cent of Employees	78	13	9	100

Comments of the secretarial workers about making changes:

Supervisors say they appreciate secretarial assistance

My supervisor has always indicated that I was to feel free to make changes if the changes would clarify the thought

I change punctuation if it needs to be changed; but as for word choice or sentence structure, I leave it as it is

I never make a change in word choice because the supervisors have used the words for so long that they would change it back like they had it

Question: What is the attitude of the people for whom you type (or transcribe) toward your making changes in punctuation, grammar, word choice, and sentence structure?

Forty-six of the 54 employees explained the attitude of the people for whom they type toward the stenographers' editing of dictated messages. Eight of the workers made no response. The gist of all 46 responses is that the supervisor expects the stenographer or secretary to make corrections where needed. About half the workers who responded believe that changes are welcomed and that the supervisors have a fine attitude toward the stenographer's editing. Only one secretary did not have any idea about her supervisor's attitude toward editing of messages by stenographers.

The fact that many secretaries and stenographers have the responsibility for editing dictated messages, and the fact that many of these secretarial workers have the responsibility for composing letters, memos, or reports for someone else's signature should be of significance to business educators in determining the amount and kinds of business writing training that secretarial students should undergo.

CHAPTER VIII

SUMMARY, IMPLICATIONS, AND SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

A summary of the study, major findings with implications for writing instruction, and suggestions for further research follow.

Summary

A study was made of the characteristics of written communications and attitudes toward communication in the Oklahoma Gas and Electric Company, an independent investor-owned electric utility. Data about the status of communication came from the following sources:

> Fifty-eight company managers who compose letters, memorandums, and reports as a part of their job responsibilities were interviewed. Throughout the following discussion, this group is referred to as "the writers"

> One hundred thirty-four company letters

> Ninety-nine clerical personnel with contributory responsibility for written communication

Answers were sought to the following aspects of communication in the company:

> Who are the personnel with writing responsibilities?

> What are the company writers' attitudes toward selected aspects of textbook theory?

What are the managements' opinions regarding selected aspects of oral and written communication within the company?

What is the readability level of letters in this company?

What kinds of work experiences do the workers have and what are the educational backgrounds and attitudes of the workers in this company who have a contributory responsibility for written communication?

What is the role of the stenographer in written communication?

The Problem

The problem was to get specific information from industry that can serve as a guide to business educators regarding the business writing knowledges and skills that undergraduate students should acquire and the experiences that they should undergo in their pre-employment written communications training.

Major Findings

The findings follow the organization of the thesis body.

Personnel with Writing Responsibilities

1. In general, personnel at the supervisory level or higher compose letters, memorandums, and reports as part of their job.

2. Clerical personnel, in general, do not compose letters, memorandums, and reports as part of their job.

3. The writers believe that writing responsibilities begin earlier with new employees now than in former years.

4. The writers spend about 20 per cent of their time in fulfilling their writing responsibilities.

5. The majority of the writers have earned baccalaureate degrees.

6. A variety of coursework is of value in helping company writers with their writing responsibilities.

7. All of the writers believe that students planning a career in industry should study business writing.

Writers' Attitudes Toward Selected Aspects of Textbook Theory and Their Suggestions for Improving Business Writing Instruction

1. The majority of the company writers believe that writing predominantly in active voice is desirable.

2. The majority of the writers believe that eliminating the expletive sentence beginning is desirable. They also favor the elimination of deadwood phrases in business writing.

3. More than 75 per cent of the writers favor the use of short, simple words in business writing.

4. Almost all of the company writers favor the use of the you-attitude in written communications.

5. The majority of the writers believe that the conscious effort to control the tone in letters and memorandums is desirable.

6. More than 75 per cent of the writers believe that the use of the success consciousness principle in written communications is desirable.

7. All of the company writers favor the elimination of trite expressions.

8. Company writers believe that business educators can improve business writing instruction by:

Giving students many writing assignments
and evaluating the assignments promptly

Using treatments of writing theory in
several textbooks rather than relying
solely on one author's viewpoint

Providing classroom experiences in oral
as well as written communication, since
a correlation exists between effective
speaking and effective writing

Integrating writing instruction in each
course in the business curriculum

Managements' Opinions Regarding Selected Aspects of Oral and Written Communication Within the Company

1. The majority of the company managers are pleased with the amount and kinds of present company communications.

2. More than half of the company managers receive a small amount of information through the grapevine method.

3. More than 90 per cent of the company managers believe that most written communications that come to their offices are easy to read and understand.

4. Most of the company managers view incoming communications as being more difficult to understand than company-generated material.

5. Company managers favor the use of the telephone for inter-office communication unless a written record is required for the file.

Readability of Company Letters

1. The majority of the company letters that were analyzed show two main objectives: to inform and to maintain goodwill.

2. The Gunning Fog Index averages reveal that the company

letters are generally easy to read and understand, so far as the Gunning Fog Index measures readability.

3. Most of the company writers make good use of strong, active-voice verbs.

Work Experience, Educational Background, and Attitudes of the Clerical Personnel Toward Communication

1. Less than half of the clerical personnel have responsibilities on their present job for communicating to others in writing.

2. The work experience background of the clerical personnel shows that many have long records of service in the jobs they now hold.

3. Only a small percentage of the clerical personnel took a business letter writing course in college.

4. The clerical personnel who took a business letter writing course generally believe that they received help in the use of correct grammar, spelling, format, and word choice.

5. The majority of the clerical personnel believe they get information from company bulletin boards that they do not get from other sources.

6. The majority of the clerical personnel read the information on the company bulletin boards at least once each day.

7. Half of the clerical personnel have had the need to ask people other than their supervisors for information pertaining to their work.

8. Clerical personnel generally have more confidence in their ability to communicate orally than they have in their ability to communicate in writing.

9. In answer to questioning as to courses of value to them in their present job, secretarial/stenographic employees mentioned few courses other than shorthand, typewriting, and English.

10. The majority of the secretarial employees believe they would accept a position, if offered, that required the composition of many letters or reports as part of the job duties.

The Role of the Stenographer in Written Communication

1. The majority of the secretarial workers take dictation in shorthand.

2. The majority of the secretarial workers believe they are basically responsible for spelling and punctuation in letters, memos, and reports, and that, therefore, a knowledge of punctuation, grammar, and sentence structure is vital.

3. More than 75 per cent of the secretarial employees feel free to make changes in punctuation, grammar, word choice, and sentence structure when they believe these changes would help make the message more clear.

Implications

Based upon the responses of personnel in this one corporation, and insofar as these responses may be representative of personnel in other corporations, several implications seem to be warranted.

(1) The fact that many new employees who work in management-trainee positions have writing responsibilities soon after employment suggests that business writing teachers emphasize to young people the immediacy of writing in jobs with industry.

(2) Instruction in business letter writing can help young people write clearly and effectively on jobs in industry.

(3) The modern textbooks in business writing are presenting writing theory that is applicable to the types of writing found in industry.

(4) Conciseness, correctness in grammar and spelling, and the principles of the communication process are important aspects of written communication instruction.

(5) Effective business communication depends upon the use of a combination of communication media.

(6) The teaching of business letter writing to students in all secretarial programs would help these students adjust to writing responsibilities they will have in industry.

(7) Business writing instructors could better inform students about communication situations in industry if instructors would accept jobs in industry during the summer months or during vacation periods. Industry should make these jobs available to business writing teachers.

(8) The teaching of typewriting, English, and shorthand courses continues to be important for the training of secretaries.

(9) Written communication continues as an important method of disseminating company information because company personnel consider the written message to be more reliable than the oral message.

(10) Business writing teachers need to know more about how to help students develop the proper attitude toward writing.

(11) Business educators can help students develop the proper attitude toward business writing by rejecting the dogmatic approach

to communication evident in some textbooks.

(12) Business educators should motivate students in the business writing classes by emphasizing the fact that success and advancement in industry depends upon the ability to communicate.

Suggestions for Further Research

Suggestions for research in business communication are:

(1) The present study could be repeated in various types of industries so that comparisons of data could be made.

(2) Additional studies could be made of the effectiveness of letter writing and report writing in industry with the receivers as the major sources of data.

(3) Research is needed to determine to what extent industry uses computerized messages and how industrial technology will influence the area of business communication, business writing in particular.

(4) A behavioral science study in how attitudes are developed toward writing, vocabulary formation, and other aspects related to verbal intelligence would have implications in business writing instruction; specifically in the area of how to develop in students the proper attitude toward writing business letters and reports.

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APPENDIX A

INTERVIEW GUIDE:

WRITERS' ATTITUDES TOWARD SELECTED ASPECTS OF TEXTBOOK THEORY AND THEIR

SUGGESTIONS FOR IMPROVING BUSINESS WRITING INSTRUCTION

WRITERS' ATTITUDES TOWARD SELECTED ASPECTS OF TEXTBOOK THEORY AND

THEIR SUGGESTIONS FOR IMPROVING BUSINESS WRITING INSTRUCTION

1. Textbook authors write that passive voice constructions are usually longer and weaker than active ones. These writers say that the use of "to be" verbs (be, is, am, are, was, were, been, being) usually produces flat writing, partly because it leads to a passive style.

   Writing predominantly in active voice in company communications is

   _____Highly Important
   _____Of Some Importance
   _____Of Very Little Importance
   _____No Opinion

2. Some textbook authors state that "there are" and "it was" beginnings (expletives) delay the real idea of the sentence. The sentence "There are 1 million people in Cincinnati" is not so vivid as "One million people live in Cincinnati."

   In industry, the elimination of expletives in writing is

   _____Highly Important
   _____Of Some Importance
   _____Of Very Little Importance
   _____No Opinion

3. Some business communicators refer to wasteful expressions as being deadwood phrases. They say that these phrases take the long way around and contribute nothing to the written message. Some of these expressions listed in textbooks are: At an early date (for "soon"), at this time (for "now"), and due to the fact that (for "because").

   The elimination of deadwood phrases in writing is

   _____Highly Important
   _____Of Some Importance
   _____Of Very Little Importance
   _____No Opinion

4. Textbook authors say that trite expressions and jargon are inclined to dull interest and put the reader to sleep instead of stimulating his mind to action. Trite expressions have been called "bromides" because of the use of bromides as sedatives and sleep-inducing medicines. Trite expressions include: Thanking you for past favors, As per your letter, Attached please find, Trusting to receive, Pursuant to your request, Please be advised, etc.

The elimination of trite expressions in company writing is

_____Highly Important
_____Of Some Importance
_____Of Very Little Importance
_____No Opinion

5. Some business communicators mention that writers should shun big words when simpler words are just as effective. The one-syllable word may "pack a heavier punch" than the many-syllable word. The following pairs are close enough to be often interchangeable: about for approximately, find out for ascertain, first for initial, get for obtain, give for render, enough for sufficient, etc.

The use of one-syllable words in place of many-syllable words is

_____Highly Important
_____Of Some Importance
_____Of Very Little Importance
_____No Opinion

6. Communications writers say that the "you-attitude" in letter writing emphasizes benefits to the reader while subordinating the writer's interests. In this approach, the writer shows that he is thinking of the reader and his welfare.

The use of the "you-attitude" in company communications is

_____Highly Important
_____Of Some Importance
_____Of Very Little Importance
_____No Opinion

7. One textbook states that letters have greater prospects for success if the writer focuses on positive ideas. A positive statement followed by its negative counterpart: We can definitely assure you your table by September 28 (We are sorry that we cannot furnish the table by September 15). Negative words include "sorry," "unfortunately," "delay," "cannot," and "inconvenience."

The use of positive tone in company communications is

_____Highly Important
_____Of Some Importance
_____Of Very Little Importance
_____No Opinion

8. Success consciousness is the confident attitude that the reader will do what the writer asks or accept the decision the letter announces. The writer should guard against any phrasing which suggests that the reader may not take the action that is suggested by the writer. The statement "If you'd like" reminds the reader of his option to reject the proposal. "Hope," "trust," and "if" are destroyers of success consciousness. The implication of doubt

are removed quickly with this statement: "We're glad to send you this information."

The principle of "success consciousness" in company writing is

_____Highly Important
_____Of Some Importance
_____Of Very Little Importance
_____No Opinion

9. We would appreciate your suggestions for course content in business communications. What should we be teaching in business communications?

10. How long were you with the company before you had writing responsibilities?

APPENDIX B

INTERVIEW GUIDE:

MANAGEMENTS' OPINIONS REGARDING SELECTED ASPECTS OF ORAL

AND WRITTEN COMMUNICATION WITHIN THE COMPANY

MANAGEMENTS' OPINIONS REGARDING SELECTED ASPECTS OF ORAL

AND WRITTEN COMMUNICATION WITHIN THE COMPANY

1. Do you get enough information?

_____Too much
_____About right
_____Not enough

2. What kinds of information do you need more of?

_____How to do job
_____Company policies
_____Industry "picture"
_____Benefits
_____Work rules
_____Other (Specify)
_____Don't need nny more

3. Where do you get most of your information?

_____Company publications
_____Immediate supervisor
_____Fellow employees
_____Meetings
_____Other (Specify)

4. Do you feel free to ask your supervisor for help in your work?

_____Always feel free
_____Usually feel free
_____Seldom feel free
_____Never feel free

5. Are most written communications in your office easy to read and understand?

_____Most are easy to read and understand
_____They are usually easy to read and understand
_____They are seldom easy to read and understand
_____They are never easy to read and understand

6. What are the chief things that make written communications in your office hard to understand?

_____Poor grammar
_____Poor organization
_____Too long and wordy
_____Too much jargon or technical terminology
_____Paragraphs and sentences poorly constructed
_____Other

7. What particular types of written messages are the most difficult to read and understand?

_____Incoming letters
_____Carbon copies of outgoing letters
_____Interoffice Memorandums
_____Company business reports
_____Company bulletins and publications
_____Informal notes
_____Trade Publications
_____Government News Digests
_____No difficulty
_____Other

8. The written material you now receive but do not read includes

_____Incoming letters
_____Carbon copies of outgoing letters
_____Interoffice Memorandums
_____Company business reports
_____Company bulletins and publications
_____Informal notes
_____Trade publications
_____Government news digests
_____Other

9. Does a need exist for more written communications within this company?

_____Yes
_____No

10. In your communication with other departments within the company, which method of communication do you prefer?

_____Telephone
_____Written message
_____Personal visitation to office
_____Convey message during coffee break
_____Other

11. How much company information do you receive by the grapevine method?

_____A large amount
_____An amount about equal to the formal communications received
_____A small amount
_____None

APPENDIX C

INTERVIEW GUIDE:

PERSONNEL WITH WRITING RESPONSIBILITIES

PERSONNEL WITH WRITING RESPONSIBILITIES

Position in Company	Educational Background	College Major	Academic Courses of Most Value to Writing Responsibilities	Reason for Naming This Course As Being Valuable

APPENDIX D

ANALYSIS FORM:

ANALYSIS OF WRITTEN COMMUNICATIONS

ANALYSIS OF WRITTEN COMMUNICATIONS

Number of Sentences	Subject	Purpose	In My Opinion, Was the Purpose Accomplished	Sentences with Passive Voice	Gunning Fog Index

APPENDIX E

COMMUNICATION QUESTIONNAIRE

COMMUNICATION QUESTIONNAIRE

1. What is your job classification?

2. How long have you been assigned to the specific job you now hold?

3. Please list any work assignments you had with this company, if any, prior to your present assignment. If none, check here_____.

   1._____ For about how long?_____

   2._____ For about how long?_____

   3._____ For about how long?_____

4. Please list jobs held before employment with this company. If none, check here_____.

   1._____ For about how long?_____

   2._____ For about how long?_____

   3._____ For about how long?_____

5. Did you attend a college or university? Yes_____ No_____

6. Do you hold a college degree? Yes_____ No_____

7. What was your major field of study in college? (if applicable)

8. Please list--in the order of importance--the three college courses that you believe have helped you the most in your work with this company. (if applicable)

   1._____

   2._____

   3._____

9. Do you have any responsibilities on your present job for communicating to others in writing? Yes_____ No_____
   If Yes, please explain.

10. Did you have writing responsibilities on any jobs previous to your present job? Yes_____ No_____ If Yes, please explain.

11. How would you rate your ability to communicate information to others _orally_ in comparison with other company employees?

     _____Above average
     _____Average
     _____Below average
     _____Don't know

12. How would you rate your ability to communicate information to others _in writing_ (for example, business letters and reports) in comparison with other company employees?

     _____Above average
     _____Average
     _____Below average
     _____Don't know

Please explain why you rate your writing ability this way.

13. How do you rate yourself as a listener?

     _____Above average
     _____Average
     _____Below average
     _____Have no idea

14. If you were offered a position that required the composition of many letters and/or reports as part of your duties, what do you anticipate your reaction might be?

15. Have you ever attended a short course in letter writing?
Yes_____ No_____
If so, was it of value to you? Yes_____ No_____
How, or why not?_____

_____

_____

16. Did you take any business communication courses in college? (if applicable) Yes_____ No_____

If Yes, what did you take_____

_____

What did you like about the course, and what did you not like, if anything?

_____

_____

17. Do you ever get information from company bulletin boards that you don't get from other sources? Yes_____ No_____

If your answer is Yes, please tell the type of information you receive.

_____

_____

18. How often do you read the information on the company bulletin board?

_____Several times each day
_____At least once each day
_____Other (Please Specify)   _____

_____

19. Are locations and sizes of bulletin boards

_____about right for the communication purposes intended
_____inadequate for the communication purposes intended

20. In regard to the location of bulletin boards, is the placement of the boards

_____satisfactory (placed in areas where they would be easily
               noticed by employees)
_____unsatisfactory (placed in "hidden" areas where employees
               would need to make a special effort to read
               the bulletin boards)

21. Please suggest ways in which you think bulletin boards might be made more effective as a communication medium.

_____

_____

22. In your opinion, what is the main purpose served by bulletin boards in your company?

_____

_____

23. Do you ever have need to ask people other than your supervisor for information pertaining to your work? Yes_____ No_____

If so, please exlain.

24. Do you ever get information from fellow workers <u>before</u> you get the same information through official channels?

Yes_____ No_____

If your answer is Yes, is the information received from your fellow workers always correct? Yes_____ No_____

25. Are you, in general, told everything you <u>want</u> to know about your job and your company? Yes_____ No_____
If your answer is No, please explain.

The remaining questions (26 through 35) are to be answered only by secretaries, stenographers, and typists.

26. What part do you play in the process of writing letters, memos, and reports?

_____Do you take dictation in shorthand?
_____Do you type letters, memos, or reports for signature?
_____Do you have the responsibility for composing (all or in part) letters, memos, or reports for someone else's signature?
_____Other (Please Explain)

27. If you take dictation, type letters and reports, or compose for the company as part of your job responsibilities, do you believe that knowledge of punctuation, grammar, and sentence structure is

_____Very important
_____Of some importance
_____Not very important

28. Do any of the people who dictate letters to you dictate the punctuation marks?

Yes_____ No_____ If your answer is Yes, which marks are dictated?

29. When you transcribe notes taken in dictation or from longhand do you change the dictated punctuation?

_____Often make changes
_____Sometimes make changes
_____Never make changes even though you feel changes are needed
_____The dictated punctuation is usually correct

Please comment if you desire.

30. When you transcribe notes dictated to you or from longhand, do you make changes in the grammar (such as changing a "was" to "were" etc.)?

_____Often make changes in grammar
_____Sometimes make changes in grammar
_____Never make changes even though you feel changes are needed
_____The dictated grammar is usually correct

Please comment if you desire.

31. When you transcribe notes or type from longhand copy, do you add words or substitute words for the dictated words in order to make the meaning of the message more clear?

_____Often add words or make substitutions
_____Sometimes add words or make substitutions
_____Never add words or substitute words even though you feel such changes would make the message more clear
_____Added words or substitutions would not usually make the meaning more clear

Please comment if you desire

32. When you transcribe or type from longhand copy, do you change the order of the dictated message (such as rearranging sentence structure or taking a sentence out of one paragraph and putting it in another paragraph) so that the meaning of the message will be more clear and coherent?

_____Often change the order of the message
_____Sometimes change the order of the message
_____Never change the order even though you feel changes are needed
_____A change in the order would not usually make the message more clear

Please comment if you desire

33. Do you feel free to make changes in punctuation, grammar, word choice, and sentence structure when you believe these changes would help make the message more clear? Yes___ No___

    Please comment if you desire

34. What is the attitude of the people for whom you type (or transcribe) toward your making changes in punctuation, grammar, word choice, and sentence structure?

35. Who would you say is basically responsible for spelling and punctuation in letters, memos, and reports?

    _____The person for whom you type
    _____You

    Please comment if you desire

VITA

Wayne Henry Cole

Candidate for the Degree of

Doctor of Education

Thesis: THE CHARACTERISTICS OF WRITTEN COMMUNICATIONS AND
ATTITUDES TOWARD COMMUNICATION IN A SELECTED
CORPORATION WITH IMPLICATIONS FOR IMPROVEMENT
IN BUSINESS WRITING INSTRUCTION

Major Field: Business Education   Minor Field: Higher Education

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Education: Attended elementary and secondary school at Shawnee,
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Oklahoma Baptist University in May, 1958; the Master of
Science degree from Oklahoma State University, with a major
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Professional Experience: Taught at Harjo High School, Maud,
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Taught as an instructor and assistant professor in the
Department of Business at East Texas State University,
Commerce, Texas, 1965-1967. Taught in the Department of
Business Education as a graduate assistant and instructor,
1967-1969, at Oklahoma State University.

Professional Organizations: Member of Delta Pi Epsilon, Delta
Sigma Pi, Pi Omega Pi, Mountain-Plains Business Education
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Association of College Teachers.