Payne, Cynthia Brooks

A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF HIGH SCHOOL TEACHERS' ATTITUDES TOWARD ERROR IN WRITTEN COMPOSITION COMPARED WITH KEY PRINCIPLES OF MINA SHAUGHNESSY'S THEORY OF COMPOSING

The Ohio State University

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A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF HIGH SCHOOL TEACHERS' ATTITUDES TOWARD ERROR IN WRITTEN COMPOSITION COMPARED WITH KEY PRINCIPLES OF MINA SHAUGHNESSY'S THEORY OF COMPOSING

DISSERETATION

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree Doctor of Philosophy in the Graduate School of The Ohio State University

By

Cynthia Brooks Payne, B.Sc., M.A.

*****

The Ohio State University

1982

Reading Committee:
Dr. Donald Bateman
Dr. Donald Sanders
Dr. Frank Zidonis

Approved By

Donald E. Bateman
Adviser
Department of Humanities
Education
For my son Christopher...

Discere vitare est.

To learn is to live.
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I wish to recognize and pay tribute to a number of people who aided me in the accomplishment of this task, both professionally and personally. It was my good fortune to work with an outstanding graduate committee. It is because of Don Bateman, my principle adviser, that I have learned to ask the right questions, to narrow my focus, and to critically examine my own assumptions about how language should be taught and learned. Donald Sanders introduced me to alternative ways of obtaining meaningful answers to important questions, and Frank Zidonis has consistently demonstrated faith in my academic instincts and abilities.

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people, there is great hope for the improvement of learning in the schools.

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One final debt of gratitude goes back in time to three excellent high school instructors, Margaret Anderson and Mary Elizabeth Schwartz, who taught me how to write well, and John Glass, who taught me why.
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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

General Discussion of the Writing 'Crisis'

In a modern atmosphere teeming with words of every conceivable form, from billboards and bumper stickers to continuous electronic media broadcasts, it might seem difficult to imagine young people suffering from language inadequacies. Our society is constantly exposed to a barrage of communication and has virtually become MacLuhan's global village. Yet during the past decade a growing wave of criticism has been mounted against reading, writing and speaking skills our young people demonstrate in the academic and professional world.

Blame for what many regard as a serious decline in language skills has been placed variously on students' social and cultural background, lack of emphasis on hard skills in the public schools, teacher ill-preparedness, and the declining need for reading and writing abilities brought on by the electronic and computer age. High school teachers blame the ineptness of elementary school teachers, and college and professional people wonder aloud at what goes on in the high schools that such unprepared, illiterate individuals are emerging from the graduating classes and joining the job market.
Statement of the Problem

Whatever the reasons, most people would agree that youngsters coming out of the nation's secondary schools do not read or write as well as they should and that something ought to be done about it. Public concern over the current writing controversy has been greatly stimulated by media reports of increasingly poorer assessment test achievements like the SAT and ACT scores over the past twelve years. The print and electronic press have referred to the situation as a writing 'crisis,' although that may be considered a media-generated term, since there is no evidence we are at a turning point in language skills.

It is more accurate to say that in recent years students have evidenced a gradual decrease in their language performance abilities, as measured by various national tests. The United States Education Commission conceived and carried out the National Assessment of Educational Progress\(^1\) to survey achievements of the nation's students in arts, career development and basic academic subjects. Both the first appraisal, from 1969 to 1970, and the second appraisal in 1974 demonstrated an overall decline in composition skills at the nine, thirteen and seventeen year old levels. Most of the assessment was quantitative in nature, and one must keep in mind that statistical means are not proof in themselves of such a skill decline. However, many educators worry about what they see as a growing polarization between good and bad writers, as discussed in the now famous Newsweek cover story, "Why Johnny Can't Write."\(^2\) The "assessments of the results and the 'decline'
noted over the four to five year period between tests are responsible for much of the media's agitation and the public's response to it."

Many educational critics have begun to reject the pedagogical policies and attitudes of the late sixties and seventies. Those criticisms seem to take two forms. One group holds that the injunction to 'do your own thing,' 'write whatever you feel,' 'don't worry about form, just meaning' may account for the majority of current writing problems high school youngsters exhibit.

High school and college students have been encouraged to believe that language does not require work—that if they wait, they will suddenly blossom and flower into verbal mastery; that if they transcribe what they feel about anything it will somehow turn into what they think. Clearly, to have been told all these things—and millions of school children were and are told these things—is to have been lied to. Language is the medium in which the race lives, it is what we have brought from the past, and it is what has brought us from the past—our link with who we were and who we want to be.4

Another educator similarly deplores the lack of emphasis on hard English skills for the past decade from elementary through secondary school:

Their language, before they come to college, is in most cases the language of non-readers. It lacks the words and the syntactical structures they will need in order to live in the literary world. It is not extensive enough or varied enough to form thoughts of much complexity, and they lack experience in handling more varied and sophisticated elements. Until they are exposed to writing more sophisticated than that of a comic book with a fourth grade vocabulary and syntax, they will remain intellectually helpless. Teachers who lead them to believe that such poverty is not poverty are deluding them.5
Other critics believe that youngsters write poorly as a group because there has for a long time been an over-weighted emphasis on form, structure, and product at the expense of meaning, authentic voice and personal involvement. "The person appears to be a much neglected part of the communication triad." Proponents of these ideas would object to the traditional concept of language as a discrete subject, "a solid body of facts, laws or conclusions transmittable as a unit."7

Perhaps the most severe criticism of all has been leveled at English teachers themselves, their general lack of familiarity with rhetorical theory, their overall pedagogical confusion. "In both the high schools and the colleges, teaching writing turns out to be anyone's guess about what to teach or how or why..., composition is virtually not 'taught' at all, and when it is taught, it is taught with very little understanding..., and when it is evaluated, the evaluation is not consistent with the theory."8 In a decidedly more strident criticism of the current state of writing instruction, Walker Gibson claims that

"Our teaching of English composition, by and large, has been for years a shambles. In the [secondary] schools, it is the area where teachers feel most at sea, confessing themselves most in need of self-confidence and assistance. In the colleges, especially in the universities, it falls characteristically into the least experienced hands, where it is pawed and plied into a thousand inchoate shapes. The composition teacher, as everyone knows, can show no respectable theory; his discipline boasts no scholarship but is planned by dolts, manned by drudges, and avoided if possible by everyone."9

Because so little work has been done to develop a solid, 'respectable' theory of composing, teachers have been forced to concoct their own 'theories,' their own strategies for writing instruction.
Unfortunately, only a handful of energetic, imaginative people bother to formulate their own underlying philosophies. It is possible, even probable, that the majority of high school English teachers simply lapse back into the easiest format available, the path of least resistance in the face of such theoretical barrenness.

Teachers must do something on Monday mornings, and this reality forces them either to do what their teachers did on Monday mornings or to invent English composition anew out of their understanding of the craft and their observations of students learning to write. 10

Background of Mina Shaughnessy

A remarkable body of such observations emerged in Mina P. Shaughnessy's major work Errors and Expectations. Shaughnessy taught composition to severely underprepared freshman writers at the City College of New York during the late sixties. While most of her colleagues were lamenting the low skill level exhibited by these mostly Black and Hispanic open-admissions students, Shaughnessy viewed their distinctively non-academic performance from a radically different perspective by analyzing several thousand student compositions.

Her positive, constructive attitude toward her students' potential abilities, mistakes and frustrations emerged as a collection of analytical observations on the nature of error in the writing process. Her Errors and Expectations: A Guide for the Teaching of Basic Writing is a complex representation of a theory of composing. Basic to her philosophy is the belief that students are able and intelligent language makers whose errors can serve as the keys to improved writing performance. Perhaps the most important underlying message from her work
assures us that there is hope for poor writers; that the composing quagmire in which writing instructors and students find themselves is not bottomless. Based on her observations and recommendations, it is possible to perceive an individual's writing problems, analyze them, explain them and help the writer gain control over them.

The Research Study: An Overview

This paper, then, is the result of a two-part study centering on Shaughnessy's theory of composing and teachers' attitudes toward principles of that theory. Her work, although referred to with respect and frequency by numerous current writers, has not been analyzed thoroughly or sufficiently within the field. Her complex, thickly inlaid discourse offers a plethora of richly illustrative examples, and an array of recommendations for the writing classroom which suggest rather than explicitly state the theoretical framework supporting her words. One must formulate the tenets of her philosophy from between the lines.

I have chosen to focus on teacher attitudes and beliefs toward Shaughnessy's primarily interactionist principles for practical reasons. As an active practitioner and theoretician, Shaughnessy represents the ideal researcher in the area of composition instruction and writing process. Her role as instructor gave her valuable access to data relating directly to the composing process. Her own attitudes directly affected how she dealt with her basic writers, how she encouraged their improvement, and how she recognized their possibilities. Field work
is a neglected but necessary approach in this area of inquiry, and although she did not set out to present scientific results, her insightful and thorough observations based on the many case study papers composed by her students certainly qualify her as an able field researcher and interpreter of subjective data.

As her assumptions and discovered beliefs about her students' abilities affected the shape of her overall pedagogical approach, so every classroom teacher's attitudes will have some impact on the performance of the students under that influence. Therefore, as a professional and humanistic concern, we need to determine what these attitudes and beliefs are, in order to alter them where necessary or reinforce and enlarge them where possible.

Shaughnessy's Theory

The first part of the study will be a formulation and analysis of her theory of composition and the nature of error, as evidenced in Errors and Expectations. I will examine the underlying beliefs and attitudes and observations which make up her approach toward writing instruction. I will also identify and explain six major principles derived from her work. The six main conceptual focal points of Shaughnessy's theory are as follows:

1. HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS ARE LINGUISTICALLY SOPHISTICATED.

2. INEXPERIENCED WRITERS FREQUENTLY MAKE WRITING ERRORS FOR LOGICAL, RATIONAL, INTELLIGENT REASONS.

3. UNSKILLED WRITERS SOMETIMES MAKE ERRORS FOR PSYCHOLOGICAL REASONS.
4. NO ONE PEDAGOGICAL APPROACH IS APPROPRIATE OR SUFFICIENT FOR THE TEACHING OF WRITING.

5. THE WRITING PROCESS IS A CRITICAL AND NEGLECTED FEATURE OF THE COMPOSITION CLASSROOM.

6. THE ABILITY TO REVISE ONE'S OWN ERRORS AND SHORTCOMINGS SHOULD BE A MAJOR GOAL IN THE COMPOSITION CLASSROOM.

An Assessment of Teachers' Attitudes Toward Elements of Shaughnessy's Theory

For the second part of the study, two research tools have been developed which were designed to determine the attitudes current field teachers hold toward some key principles suggested by Shaughnessy's work. Using the secondary school English teachers employed by the Columbus Public Schools during the 1980-1981 academic year as the sample population, I developed and administered a seventy-two item inventory to assess teacher attitudes toward error in writing instruction. In addition, a set of ten discussion questions were used as springboards for thought and response during a series of twelve in-depth interviews with English teachers, also from the Columbus system.

This two-headed method of data collection seems superior to using either one exclusively. The objective nature of the attitude inventory lends itself to statistical analysis which yields information about the whole population being surveyed, rather than selected segments of that group. In addition, the school system itself was very interested in obtaining some hard data about certain aspects of composition instruction currently being considered for revision.
The interviews, on the other hand, permitted the qualitative sorts of observations that helped fill in many of the gaps research inevitably opens. The interviews were tape-recorded and transcribed. All respondents were asked to give their views on the same ten basic questions, but the freedom that conversation permits caused many more salient issues to be raised and discussed.

The interviews were conducted after the final survey had been administered, and they were intended to enlarge on the data derived from the scalar instrument. The elaborate array of personal insights and observations resulting from the interviews made them an extremely useful technique in achieving meaningful results from the study, when combined with what teachers said they believed about error and writing instruction on the attitude inventory.

Contents and Format of the Remainder of the Paper

Chapter II—Review of the Literature

I will examine literature relevant to research in writing instruction, beginning with Janet Emig's work through the decade of the seventies. This investigation will focus primarily on the studies of researchers into the processive phenomenon of composing. Since Shaughnessy concentrates on this aspect of writing in her pedagogy, it is useful to consider how her ideas fit into the interactionist framework.
Other important individuals have contributed to the exploration of the six main principles we examine in this paper, and it is therefore useful and enlightening to see where her ideas overlap or extend the work done in the writing instruction field in recent years. It should then be easier to understand that the key elements of her theory are critical to any responsible study of the subject.

Chapter III—Shaughnessy's Theory of Composing: Formulation and Analysis

Chapter III begins with a descriptive outline of Shaughnessy's book *Errors and Expectations*. I will use the remainder of the chapter to extract, formulate, and analyze the major principles which underscore the work and which can be shown to possess theoretical unity and coherence. The six concepts comprising the basis for the study will be examined individually, accompanied by extensive text references and supportive citations from other prominent figures in the field.

This section will conclude with a discussion of additional elements of Shaughnessy's pedagogy which vary from the six main principles but bear on them nevertheless.

Chapter IV—Methodology: Presentation of the Research Design

Chapter IV will present the research design by which the data was obtained, and the methodology employed to carry out the study. First I will describe the step-by-step process used to assemble an item pool, to develop a pilot instrument, to refine and alter the instrument into its final form for administration to the total
population, how that population was determined, and how the survey was conducted.

Once the final assessment of attitudes yield quantitative data, it is necessary to convert the responses to statistically measurable information in accordance with a typical Likert-type survey methodology. This process is described in detail in Chapter IV, followed by an explanation of the methods of analysis both descriptive and statistical used to interpret the results. The chapter will end with a discussion of the assessment of reliability and validity of the scalar instrument and a description of the field processes used to conduct in-depth interviews for the qualitative arm of the inquiry.

Chapter V--Quantitative Results of the Survey Instrument

Chapter V will present the results of the pilot survey and an interpretation of that information, plus the implications of that interpretation for the revision of the final instrument to improve reliability. Following that will be a presentation of the findings from the final instrument assessment in percentage and statistical terms. I will analyze the results of the six scales within the overall instrument and compare them to Shaughnessy's ideas, and will discuss them one by one in the order they appear in the instrument and in the analysis of Shaughnessy's theory of composing. Tables of statistical means and reliability coefficients are included at the end of the chapter, as well as tables presenting the actual numerical responses of the survey population to the individual items of the instrument.
Chapter VI—In-Depth Interviews

Chapter VI will begin with a step-by-step description of the procedures used to conduct the series of twelve interviews, to select the sample population involved, and to present the responses in a meaningful framework.

Each of the ten question areas and the subsequent responses will then be presented and discussed in the same order as they were introduced in the course of the interviews. Tables are available at the end of the chapter containing the thirteen participants' verbatim responses to each interview question. Wherever appropriate, these comments relate to the quantitative findings derived from the survey of the larger teaching population.

The chapter ends with a discussion of useful, salient answers from the interviews on issues which fall outside the subject area of the ten scheduled questions.

Chapter VII—Conclusions and Implications of the Data: Recommendations for Further Research

The final chapter of the dissertation will be concerned with deriving meaning from the research findings. The implications and conclusions that may be drawn from analyzing the survey results and the interviews will be discussed in terms of the practical applications these findings may suggest. Critical to this part of the project is a consideration of the study's relationship with the host school system and the implications for in-service training and
revamping of college English education programs the results support. This inquiry represents an attempt to research an area of instruction that has manifested itself in a confusing collection of pedagogical approaches and misguided attitudes. There remain extensive areas of this subject to explore, and the chapter will conclude with recommendations for further research.
Chapter I: Footnotes


CHAPTER II

A REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Before analyzing the elements of Shaughnessy's work on composing, it would be useful to survey the field of recent composition research in general, focusing especially on those researchers and practitioners whose ideas precede or overlap Shaughnessy's. This overview of the literature of the last decade which reports the investigations and practice of writing instruction will serve to describe the academic and pedagogical climate into which Shaughnessy's ideas fit. Although her principles represent significant strides forward in bringing current developmental theory into the live classroom, her observations and conclusions did not come into existence within an educational vacuum. Well-versed in the work of her contemporaries and key predecessors, she applied some concepts already afloat in the field to her innovative writing instruction program, while other underlying values and concepts grew independently out of direct, original experience with young, unskilled writers and their behaviors. She build solidly on the work of others, made critical new contributions, and demonstrated how these progressive ideas may be employed successfully in real composing situations.
A Presentation of Two Contrasting Models of Writing Instruction

A growing number of educators consider her work to be representative of the best current thinking available in the area of English language composing. As such, her ideas agree more closely with what has been called Interactionist theory than with the conventional body of assumptions and behaviors known as the Current-Traditional approach. These two sharply contrasting models for composing and writing instruction occupy two widely divergent places on a continuum of writing instruction theory. A brief examination of the characteristics associated with Current-Traditional theory will demonstrate how different its tenets are from those of Shaughnessy and her related predecessors.

The Current-Traditional Model

The Current-Traditional model of writing instruction focuses primarily on the product at the expense of the producer or the process used to achieve the finished piece of discourse. Those who hold with conventional composition theory and practice share this productive view of writing, what might be termed a 'formula' approach. According to this model, writing is a prescriptive task involving a series of hierarchical steps to be mastered consecutively. Following the formula format, if one performs x, y and z correctly and in the prescribed order, then the end product will inevitably be successful.

The Current-Traditional framework implies that language, particularly written language, exists as a stable, unchanging entity
which students can learn to approximate and imitate more closely through exercises and sequential skill-building steps. Formal Standard grammar and expression are held up as the only suitable goal to be approximated within the classroom in both spoken and written modes of discourse.

Conventional composition theory attempts to standardize the writer's product. "It is assumed that all writers can employ identical rule-governed procedures in every communication context and mechanically produce the 'right' arrangement of words." Therefore, any departure from the preferential code known as Standard English is regarded as an error. Conventional instruction thereby exists as judgmental, corrective, a summative effort to identify and eradicate error; in theory, once all error has been corrected, avoided or eliminated, good writing will be the natural result.

Teachers who operate from the Current-Traditional framework encourage writing students to avoid error at all costs. In such a composing atmosphere, form is stressed over content, and the instructor occupies the position of examiner, judge, and critic, relegating the writer to a minor or at least a secondary role in the writing process. "The current-traditional teacher of writing is a figure of authority whose role it is to test and correct whatever students write according to standardized values."5

Conventional writing instruction as practiced by the majority of English teachers for virtually decades has afforded us no insight
into the psychology of composing. It disregards the unconscious, the role of the intuitive, students' inherent linguistic knowledge, and other internal factors directly affecting the writer's behavior, attitude and performance. No effort has been made by conventional theorists to focus on the process of composing written English, to reconstruct what it is that the writer goes through in order to compose. The personhood of the writer and the relationship of the person to the writing act is virtually ignored.

In terms of actual classroom practice, current-traditional teaching has been labeled as 'transmission teaching' for the most part. The instructional pedagogy revolves around a teacher/authoritarian transmitting information to a student receiver who is expected to relay the learned data back in a similar or exactly prescribed form to the instructor as a measure of his 'learning.' The teacher is placed in a strictly corrective posture, and the student is regarded as a virtual tabula rasa, admittedly capable of absorbing knowledge but beginning with no significant store of his own.

**Interactionist Theory**

A relatively recent and fundamentally different body of attitudes and theoretical formulations has been labeled Interactionism. The Interactionist perceives the writing act as essentially processive in nature; writing is generated as a result of people interacting in socially meaningful situations. Writing can be viewed as a manifestation of thinking, an act "socially conditioned and ... impossible"
without the thinking individual's participation in the human community." This refocuses the field of writing instruction on the individual composer and the processes undergone to produce writing. Among noted educators and humanists who might be considered as working from an interactionist base are Piaget, Bruner, Vygotsky, Moffett, Dewey and Freire, all of whom concern themselves with the holistic phenomenon of experience, rather than the discrete components of its results. Interactionist theory tries to account for the place of the person in the writing process, and its instructional practices try to provide "formative intervention aimed to promote self-actualization and cognitive restructuring." 

The Interactionist views writing as containing both social and individual content and expression, and examines the writer's composing process in view of these considerations in order to encourage maximum development of composing abilities. "From an interactionist's viewpoint, in writing (as in all communication) the aim is to build bridges between one's own beliefs or ideas and those of others." Language, including written expression, is fundamentally social and historic in character, springing from the human need for communication with others. Central to Interactionist theory are the major works of L. S. Vygotsky, whose *Thought and Language* (1962) and *Mind in Society* (1978) theorize a dialectical relationship between the person and society, between thinking and speech, and between speech and writing. According to Vygotsky, language development is inevitably entwined with human
activity and social intercourse. Writing, a second order language function, is a "complex cultural activity" with deep roots in social relationships. Unlike the Current-Traditionalist who ignores this dynamic phenomenon, the Interactionist teacher recognizes the influence of motivation and social interaction upon individual students' writing abilities and behaviors, and tries to incorporate opportunities for interchange among students which would most effectively benefit their growth as actively relating human beings.

Interactionist theory favors extensive dialogue within the classroom as a means of creating authentic meaning and motivated writing performance. The study of abstract rules and isolated exercises is rejected in favor of engaging in whole pieces of discourse within which the writer can create his own meaning and can invest his genuine interest. "The interactionist believes that intellectual development results from the conflicts which arise when a person confronts a writing problem which he or she cannot adequately resolve through application of routine strategies."12

The conventional practice of writing a single piece of discourse only once or at the maximum twice after completing a detailed outline of the order and content is soundly rejected by those familiar with interactionist teaching methods. Instead, the whole act of writing is perceived as a recursive process which consists of pre-writing, writing, and re-writing in an atmosphere of dialogue and exposure to a real audience of peer critics. The writer must juggle
her own inner thoughts, her intended purposes, the demands of written
discourse, the viewpoints of an audience, and her own awareness of
self, a far cry from merely turning to pages in a writing handbook and
locating the formulaic solution to a language problem.

Current-Traditional teachers expect students to work at the
same rate of progress, study the same material simultaneously, and
demonstrate a similar pattern of writing performance with other stu-
dents, regardless of what point the writer begins. The Interactionist
classroom witnesses individual and small group work at various levels
of expertise and at various stages of the writing process. The main
text for the course is the student writing itself, and in the context
of peer editing sessions, writers are able to learn to perceive their
own shortcomings through the observations and reactions of others.

Error occupies a decidedly different place in the interaction-
ist setting than in the more conventional classroom. Rather than a
mere academic exercise, locating and correcting errors becomes a
practical, shared activity which relies as much on the student's natural
language abilities as on the assistance of the teacher or peers. Error
elimination becomes a facet of editing, rather than a central activity
to be engaged in simultaneous with composing. Failure to eliminate
all error on the final product does not carry the threat of punitive
reaction which characterizes more conventional evaluating. The teacher
becomes a co-editor, a facilitator of the writing process. Teachers
also engage in writing and revision of their own work, to demonstrate
the process by example, and to gain a more precise understanding of what the student writer goes through. As one educator puts it, "Any English teacher who teaches writing but who does not write is an intellectual and pedagogical fraud."\(^{13}\)

Although a discussion of all the implications Interactionist theory suggests for classroom behavior and improvement would be more appropriately presented in a larger, more detailed form, there are a few crucial characteristics of this body of thinking which should not be left out. Under the Interactionist approach, the teacher respects the individuality of each student, assumes he or she has linguistic ability and resources at hand, treats the student as an equal partner in dialogical exchange, and makes a genuine effort to comprehend the writing process as the writer experiences it, not as the traditional texts prescribe it. Evaluation is used as a means to enter into repeated dialogue with young writers, in an effort to free them from their anxieties and misconceptions about the composing act. The ideal classroom atmosphere according to an informed Interactionist would be one which actively encourages and fosters "authentic dialogue between learners and educators relating as equally knowing subjects."\(^{14}\)

Mina Shaughnessy advocates such a learning environment when she writes:

Precisely because writing is a social act, a kind of synthesis that is reached through the dialectic of discussion, the teaching of writing must often begin with the experience of dialogue and end with the experience of a real audience, not only of teachers but of peers. Yet classrooms in their usual assymetrical arrangements with the teacher on one side, talking, and the students on
the other, listening—or looking at the backs of other students' heads—do not breed discussion.15

When the classroom is opened up to a more open exchange of ideas, fears and observations, students can learn to perceive themselves as valued partners in the learning process rather than as mere passive receptacles of learning deposited at the convenience and choosing of the teacher. The Interactionist philosophy of learning as a continually changing process engaged in by persons of worth and intelligence presumes that teachers have respect for their students' abilities and are willing to act as learners themselves when the situation calls for it. As Freire points out, "How can I dialogue if I always project ignorance onto others and never perceive my own?"16

Review of Literature Relevant to the Composing Process and Writing Instruction

Most research into the teaching and learning of writing has been experimental and correlational in design. Classical research has patterned itself after the Current-Traditional pedagogy which has reigned supreme for many years. Writing has been treated instrumentally, both in its teaching and in its scholarly investigation. Teacher evaluation has conventionally measured student writing performance against the norm of Standard English or some individual concept of 'correct expression.' In a similar manner, experimental design reduces writing research to a quantified experience, while ignoring the personal situations and events that contributed to the writing act. This is not to say that experimental design has no appropriate place
in the research of composition, but rather that it is a lopsided measure of language development and progress when used exclusively to describe the nature of the writing phenomenon.

Surveying the work being conducted by their contemporaries in the early sixties, Braddock, Lloyd-Jones and Schoer came to the rather dismal conclusion that

today's research in composition, taken as a whole, may be compared to chemical research as it emerged from the period of alchemy: some terms are being defined usefully, a number of procedures are being refined, but the field as a whole is laced with dreams, prejudices, and makeshift operations.17

In their influential work Research in Written Composition, Braddock et al. outlined basic problems in conducting research in composition, and showed researchers how to refine the structure and technique of their studies. They summarized existing research and identified five exemplary comparison-group research studies that employed rigorous methodologies and produced important findings.

Of the five central studies cited, only two have anything to do with the actual composing act: the Buxton study, "The Effects of Writing Frequency and Guided Practice on Skill in Written Expression," and the Kincaid study, "Some Factors Affecting Variations in the Quality of Student Writing."18 All are of correlational design, each based on the assumption that we already have a thorough understanding of written products and processes, but wish to examine under what conditions student performance varies from that norm.
Braddock and his colleagues realized that experimental study of composing was not a satisfactory method of eliciting information about how one learns to improve one's compositions, and that more personal, subjective methodologies needed to be developed and tried out. He called for the use of case studies and direct observation of students engaged in the writing act, and subsequently a growing number of composition researchers have used that approach in describing and investigating how writing is performed.

One such researcher was Janet Emig, whose much cited book, The Composing Processes of Twelfth Graders, represents a milestone in composition research, not so much for the conclusions she drew but for the methodology she pursued. Her work attempted to investigate the writing process, a previously unexplored realm, by investigating the composing behaviors of eight high school seniors, as well as the methods followed by established authors. She met with each student in four transcribed sessions during which the students were asked to compose aloud on topics of their choice and assigned topics, and to recount their writing experiences throughout school, as well as to submit an imaginative piece of writing done independently and to confer with the researcher on all the composing tasks involved in the study.

She categorized the two basic types of discourse students engaged in as "school sponsored writing" and "self-sponsored writing," and she reported from her discussions with the students that young writers "do not voluntarily revise school-sponsored writing; they more
readily revise self-sponsored writing.\textsuperscript{20} She also made the observation that, "Most of the criteria by which students' school-sponsored writing is evaluated concerns the accidents rather than the essences of discourse— that is, spelling, punctuation, penmanship, and length rather than thematic development, rhetorical and syntactic sophistication, and fulfillment of intent."\textsuperscript{21} She criticizes traditional texts and pedagogical methods on the grounds that they do not consider the writer's feelings toward the subject, himself, or the act of composing.

From what she gathered in discussing their writing histories with these young people, only 'extensive' or school-sponsored writing is given credence in most school settings.

Almost by definition, this mode is other-directed—in fact, it is other-centered. The concern is with sending a message, a communication out into the world for the edification, the enlightenment, and ultimately the evaluation of another. Often, the other is a teacher, interested chiefly in a product he can criticize rather than in a process he can help initiate through imagination and sustain through empathy and support.\textsuperscript{22}

She prefers to generate "humanistic data" in order to encompass the person-oriented rather than the product-oriented nature of composing. Her recommendations for improvement of writing instruction include an expectation that teachers engage in composing alongside their students, and a preference for evaluation by peers and others besides the teacher alone.

Emig's work most importantly provided a model and demonstrated a serious need for descriptive studies of how students write and under what conditions they compose most successfully. And considering her
humanistic approach to composition research, "Perhaps [the study's] chief value is its steady assumption that persons, rather than mechanisms, compose."23

Although she did not presume to have set up a scientific inquiry into the writing process, some of her findings proved to be replicable in a later study conducted by Terry Mischel in 1974.24 Working with a single twelfth-grade student, Mischel observed the boy composing aloud, interviewed him about his experiences in writing, and analyzed examples of his compositions. His successful replication of Emig's findings helped legitimize the case study as a useful qualitative mode of investigation into writing process. His respondent echoed Emig's students in his negative attitude toward school-sponsored writing, and in his preference for writing and revising self-sponsored compositions. This represented a step further in our understanding of student attitudes and stages of the writing process.

A third in this series of descriptive studies into the behavior of high school writers is Charles Stallard's examination of "the complex question of what happens when good writers attack a writing task."25 Stallard's study differed somewhat from that of Emig and Mischel in that he did not require the students to compose aloud. His respondents were also unaware that they were being observed while they composed, which removes the influence the researcher's presence might have upon their writing performance.
Using comparative groups, he observed fifteen 'good' writers and fifteen students who had been randomly chosen from the twelfth grade of a Virginia public high school. He observed significant behaviors which the students exhibited as they wrote, and interviewed each one after the completion of the writing assignment. Like Emig and Mischel, he also analyzed the papers these thirty youngsters composed for evidence of any other important behaviors or characteristics. He observed certain behaviors in the 'good writer' group which were not evidenced in the control group, and later declared that "the significance of these behaviors lies in what they might suggest about the cognitive processes good writers use to produce their material."**26**

His efforts to describe the behaviors of students in the process of composing made use of multiple data-gathering techniques, all of a qualitative nature—direct observation, the respondents' own reports about their perceptions of and experience with writing, and an analysis of their written discourse.

Other efforts to document the writing processes of senior high students include Lillian Bridwell's study of the revision procedures used by students on their own discourse. One-hundred seventy-one high school seniors were asked to compose an essay in which they described something "they knew well."**27** They worked on the assignment in their own English classes over a three day period in which they recorded pre-writing notes on their topic, composed their essays, and revised them, using different colored ink to display prominently whatever changes
they had made in revising.

This study deserves mention in a survey of composition research literature because Bridwell's testing site was the actual classroom itself, not an artificial setting which may have caused changes in the participants' behavior and performance. She did not employ the same techniques as the previously cited researchers. Her respondents did not compose aloud, nor did she observe them directly in their composing situations. She did, however, thoroughly analyze each paper to determine what sorts of revision methods students employed.

Her findings led her to believe that good writers and less capable writers seem to go about the task of revising differently. Poor writers concentrate on superficial changes of a mechanical nature, like punctuation, spelling, simple grammatical errors. More proficient writers, on the other hand, work at a more advanced level, making changes in phrases, clauses and whole sentences. She also discovered that the papers which had been subjected to the most revision were not necessarily the best written pieces. This would indicate that the effectiveness of revision depends on the level at which it is carried out.

Since the seventies saw so many types of students being admitted to the colleges and universities, through open admissions programs and increased grants to minorities, some of the field research methods used to investigate the phenomenon of high school composing were increasingly being focused on the entering college freshman.
One such effort was conducted by Nancy Sommers, who researched the revision processes of eight college freshmen and seven experienced adult writers.²⁸ Using the qualitative approach of the case study, she investigated linguistic level revisions of the freshman writers compared to those of the adult composers, and discovered that the freshmen made most of their changes at the word and phrase levels, while the more experienced adult writers modified their discourse primarily at the sentence level. The younger, less skilled writers did not seem to operate out of an articulated theory of revision while the experienced writers appeared to set out revising with such a strategy in mind.

Still using the case study method at the college level, researcher Sondra Anne Perl worked with basic writers (or 'unskilled writers') to discover whether or not they possessed operational composing procedures.²⁹ Meeting with five college freshmen on four separate occasions, Perl requested that they compose aloud and write simultaneously. She coded the taped sessions and analyzed them for complexity and nature of behavior, and discovered that, contrary to popular opinion, basic writers do know how to compose and run into some writing problems "because of their already internalized, deeply embedded composing process." Like a person who for years has typed according to his private system of fingering and thus has difficulty learning the complexities of touch-typing, unskilled writers had their own ways of composing and could not be said to be ignorant of the
writing process, even though their work displayed a low level of finished proficiency.

Perl's and others' descriptive studies of young writers in the midst of their composing tasks have afforded us a large body of observations and information formerly unavailable to us in traditional composition research, and they have demonstrated that field research, and particularly the case study, can provide valuable, supportable contributions to the area of writing research. When the research methodology is designed in a manner appropriate to the problem being studied, much vital data can be collected. However, one must be aware of the reactive effects of such research. As Charles Edelsberg phrases it, "Watching students compose under laboratory-type conditions is not the same as observing pupils' in-class writing behavior." The efforts of Emig and others "have dramatically amplified our understanding of students' composing processes yet have contributed little to our awareness of their in-class experience of composition instruction."

Donald Graves and Sharon Pianko have observed student writers in nearly normal classroom situations. Graves worked with second-grade students in an attempt to identify the early composing development of children, while Pianko studied the characteristics of seventeen college remedial and traditional freshman writers in terms of their composing processes. Graves distinguished between two basic types of writers among his second graders—'reactive' and 'reflective.' Pianko discovered that remedial or basic writers behave
similarly to traditional student writers, but do not reflect on their compositions at as deep a level.

Some more recent research projects have found the investigators operating from the Interactionist assumption that the social context in which the writer composes is of critical importance in understanding that writer's individual processive experience. For example, Susan Florio and Christopher Clark, both researchers at the Institute for Research on Teaching, have documented young children's evolvement as writers within the classroom by techniques grounded in the assumption that regards "writing chiefly as a social activity." 34

Although they do not present specific research studies per se, Cooper and Odell 35 in their Research on Composing suggest a wealth of recommendations for inquiry into student writers' experiences. The contributing authors raise crucial questions about areas of writing and composition instruction we have only begun to explore. They raise questions such as: Do different types of writing place different demands on writers? What is the role of 'incubation' in the writing process? How can the issue of invention be explored fruitfully? What are the operating differences between written composition and speech? What is psychologically and physiologically organic to the composing process? How may we most effectively study the phenomenon of social interaction as it affects written discourse of young children? How does an inexperienced writer learn to revise his work in order to communicate to a reader? Is it possible to know all the stages and factors involved
in the writing process, or can we only approximate this understanding?\(^{36}\)

Cooper and Odell as well as other prominent researchers and theoreticians hope to launch us into the eighties and further with eyes opened to new questions and new methods of gathering answers. The literature of composing reviewed for this study draws a picture of writing as a complex process which yields up its secrets, albeit slowly, to descriptive, qualitative inquiry. Empirical research should not be tossed aside as an out-dated methodology, but the researcher should be careful to choose techniques and approaches best suited to his field of inquiry, and working qualitatively with youngsters in the act of writing has allowed us insights into the composing process hitherto unimagined.

Some critics complain about the lack of research by teachers themselves, those influential figures who by their very attitude and approach can change what takes place in the classroom and in the minds of their students. Into this gap steps Mina Shaughnessy, whose publication of *Errors and Expectations* in 1977 sheds new light on some of the very questions raised by Odell and Cooper, among others. Her thinking fits directly into the mainstream of the research previously cited, and the following chapter will be devoted to an explication of her ideas, observations and theoretical constructs, based on the social context of the student-teacher relationship.
Chapter II: Footnotes

1Shaughnessy has been cited extensively in the professional literature since the publication of Errors and Expectations in 1977, as in the following articles:

New Yorker (54:36-7, November 6, 1978). "Meeting Challenges"—excerpt from address by Shaughnessy.

For further explication of Shaughnessy's classroom practices and theories, see "Helping Inexperienced Writers: An Informal Discussion with Mina Shaughnessy." English Journal (Vol. 69, No. 3, March, 1980), pp. 32-37.

2The term "Current-Traditional" is from Daniel Fogarty, Roots for a New Rhetoric. (New York: Teachers' College, Columbia University, 1959).


5Edelsberg, p. 16.


9 Edelsberg, p. 13.


12 Kroll, p. 751.


14 Elsasser and John-Steiner, p. 368.

15 Shaughnessy, Errors and Expectations, p. 83.


18 Braddock et al., see Chapter IV.


20 Emig, p. 93.

21 Emig, p. 93.

22 Emig, p. 97.

23 Emig, p. 5.


26 Stallard, p. 218.


30 Edelsberg, p. 62.

31 Edelsberg, p. 62.


36 Cooper and Odell, Introduction—a summary of leading questions governing the discussion of the contributing authors.
CHAPTER III

SHAUGHNESSY'S THEORY OF COMPOSING

Although the relevant literature pertaining to English education demonstrates a clear call for solid, dependable composing theory, at present no such theory exists in the strict scientific sense. During the last decade, however, much groundwork has been laid for the formulation of a working theoretical basis by which writing may be learned, taught, and performed successfully.

I am using the term 'theory' in a looser, more general sense than the technical one the scientific research community normally expects. Purists may therefore say 'theory' should not be used at all, but I feel the term is justified in Shaughnessy's case. Hers may be more correctly perceived as a theory in the making. Indeed, it has to be pieced together reflectively, since she does not deliberately and discretely isolate the specific principles underlying her work.

The purpose of this chapter, then, is to identify, state, and explicate some major ideas derived from Shaughnessy's Errors and Expectations, a coherent set of principles which hang together with a degree of theoretical unity.

37
Description and Organization of the Book

Errors and Expectations

The text reveals some pedagogical concepts that have a theoretical character according to Shaughnessy's understanding about how language develops. The analysis of her theoretical stance will be derived from the previously cited Errors and Expectations. I will describe the organization and set-up of the book itself, before dealing with the underlying principles that have evolved from her observations and experience with writing instruction.

The 306-page work is arranged in eight chapters, each one examining an area of concern relating to writing behavior. With each section titled according to its main focus area, the chapters include, in addition to the introduction:

HANDWRITING AND PUNCTUATION
SYNTAX
COMMON ERRORS
SPELLING
VOCABULARY
BEYOND THE SENTENCE
EXPECTATIONS

For each focal area, Shaughnessy proposes and executes three logically connected goals:

1) "...to give examples of the range of problems that occur under each category of difficulty...";
2) "...to reason about the causes of these problems...";
3) "...to suggest ways in which a teacher might approach them..."
Preliminary Analysis of Major Concepts

While the book may at first seem another prescriptive "how-to" manual for writing instructors, its contents represent a far deeper search into the crucial questions the profession encounters today. She offers a pathway toward improved writing performance, but more importantly, she ponders and probes the roots of writing development and the associated difficulties one encounters when that development is arrested or prevented from reaching its full potential.

Whenever an individual deviates from what Shaughnessy calls the "dominant code of literacy," the resulting forms are commonly regarded as errors by those operating successfully within that dominant code. Schools in general, and English teachers in particular, have long supported the primacy and desirability of that dominant code of literacy, usually referred to as Standard English. The very fact that we capitalize the 'Standard' in Standard English aptly demonstrates the status awarded to this chief dialectical variation of our native tongue.

During the number of years that Professor Shaughnessy spent instructing severely deficient freshman writers at the College of the City University of New York during the late sixties and early seventies, she took the opportunity to categorize and study the errors and writing shortcomings these open-admissions students displayed in alarming abundance. Rather than embracing her colleagues' despairing view that "Nothing short of a miracle was going to turn such students into
writers..."³ she set out to analyze the writing behaviors of what
she called 'Basic Writers' with a positive attitude and an open mind
toward new perceptions about those students.

In trying to reason out the causes for 'Basic Writers'* errors,
she cites three important sources--students' explanations and percep-
tions, her colleagues' insights, and her own expertise as a writer.
That latter validation echoes Peter Elbow's assertion that as a
practicing, struggling writer, he understands the inherent problems
in that behavior.⁴

She draws an extensive array of examples for each point she
makes from some four-thousand placement essays written by incoming

The book's underlying persuasion, as stated early on by
Shaughnessy, is

...that BW students write the way they do, not because
they are slow or non-verbal, indifferent to or incapable of
academic excellence, but because they are beginners and must,
like all beginners, learn by making mistakes.⁵

Furthermore, she believes that

...the keys to their development as writers often lie hidden
in the very features of their writing that English teachers have
been trained to brush aside with a marginal code letter or a
scribbled injunction to proofread.⁶

Her ideas amount to nothing less than a whole new way of
looking at writing instruction and the nature of error. As the title
suggests, and as any practicing English teacher realizes, the errors

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*Shaughnessy refers to deficient writers as Basic Writers throughout
her book.
and mistakes made by inexperienced writers can easily dominate the agenda of the teaching-learning situation, if one is not careful.

Janet Emig strongly states the case for this widespread preoccupation with error and its expungement when she asserts that...

much of the teaching of composition in American high schools is essentially a neurotic activity. There is little evidence ... that the persistent pointing out of specific errors in students' themes leads to the elimination of these errors, yet teachers expend much of their energy in this futile and unrewarding exercise.7

If it is true that writing instructors invest too much effort in eliminating error, why, then, does Shaughnessy make it the principal focus of Errors and Expectations? After all, some linguists maintain that error is not important because all linguistic forms are essentially arbitrary. Those holding this viewpoint sometimes wish to excuse or overlook error because they feel over-attention to its eradication could "undermine the writer's pride or confidence in his native language or vernacular."8

Shaughnessy feels this is as irresponsible an approach as the pedagogy which emphasizes error elimination to the exclusion of all other composition concerns. Error should be attended to, but with a different attitude than the one exhibited by the practicing majority of English teachers. Error can only be successfully and reasonably dealt with after one gains an understanding of its sources.

The bulk of her book is devoted to exploring the causes for error and suggesting how students and teachers might get control over composition mistakes through error analysis.
The examples and observations in *Errors and Expectations* are drawn almost entirely from the compositions of basic writers. Shaughnessy insists that the problems of poor writers are the problems all writers experience, though perhaps to a less critical degree. Therefore, though her book is addressed as a guide to the teacher of basic writing, its principles may apply to students at any level of expertise and performance ability.

She sets up a picture of the mental state of a basic writer trying to compose:

He is aware that he leaves a trail of errors behind him when he writes. He can usually think of little else while he's writing. But he doesn't know what to do about it.9

Shaughnessy argues that academic writing exists as a trap for the unskilled writer, not a free medium of communication.

The spoken language, looping back and forth between speakers, offering chances for groping and backing up and even hiding, leaving room for the language of face and hands, of pitch and pauses, is generous and inviting. Next to this rich orchestration, writing is but a line that moves haltingly across the page, exposing as it goes all that the writer doesn't know, then passing into the hands of a stranger who reads it with a lawyer's eye, searching for flaws.10

English teachers typically operate with that diligent lawyer's eye. Correctness has long been a prime concern for English teachers, perhaps because of the emphasis placed on formulaic error-free compositions in their own high school and college years. In addition, correctness is such a "highly measurable feature of acceptable writing,"11 that attention to it can easily overshadow more abstract composing
considerations like individual style, personal content, or overall writing energy, mercurial aspects of the composing process at best.

Shaughnessy sets out to alter the manner in which writing instructors, and educators in general, perceive errors and the students making them. Rather than viewing an individual's composing mistakes as evidence of his resistance to language learning or an inherent inability to assimilate writing instruction, she calls on the professional community to recognize the logic behind his mistakes, the reasoned intelligence that helps generate most of the erroneous forms he produces.

Before analyzing some selected aspects of her composing theory, it is necessary to paint a partial picture of the conditions and assumptions by which a Shaughnessy classroom might operate:

1) The English language is not a static, frozen, unalterable entity, with absolute rules and commandments, but rather a fluid developing phenomenon subject to continual subtle alterations and transformations by its speakers and writers.

English has been robustly inventing itself for centuries—stretching and reshaping and enriching itself with every language and dialect it has encountered.12

Therefore, the classroom teacher should make a point of familiarizing himself with the dialectic and idiosyncratic language habits of his students, respecting the complexity and resourcefulness of their linguistic abilities. Standard English should be taught as the 'dominant code of literacy,' but should also be recognized for what it
actually is, yet another dialectical variant of the entire phenomenon known as 'English,' and one which, a few hundred years hence, might be difficult to recognize by the speakers of that future era's dominant code of literacy. Standard English ought not to be viewed as the sine qua non of American classroom language experience.

2) Dialogue is an essential component of a successful writing classroom; a free environment which permits open, healthy inquiry and exchange should be fostered and encouraged.

Shaughnessy echoes Freire, Moffett, Vygotsky, and numerous other Interactionists in emphasizing the crucial importance of dialogue between teacher and student, student and student, student and himself. She repeatedly emphasizes the value of

listening to what the student says... creating situations in the classroom that encourage students to talk openly about what they don't understand.13

Shaughnessy favors a non-traditional classroom that acknowledges the formal instructor as the main facilitator, and yet gives credence to the thoughts, observations and intrinsic language knowledge of the students.

One of the great values of the decentralized classroom where students participate as teachers as well as learners is that it opens up the students' secret files of misinformation, confusion, humor, and linguistic insight to an extent that is not often possible in the traditional setting.14

3) The teaching of writing should be approached holistically, not as a hierarchical series of isolated steps or stages to be assembled afterward into a finished product.
As described by Shaughnessy, "...writing is not simply the sum of a number of discrete skills, but an expanding world of competencies that interact and collide and finally merge into something we can more easily identify than explain as good writing."\(^{15}\)

She shares the belief with Emig and Elbow that the fullest learning will take place during the composing process itself. Those spontaneous surges of enlightenment and sudden comprehension that cause one to say, "Now I understand," occur most often when students immerse themselves in subjects of genuine interest, use their authentic voices, and then as Peter Elbow recommends, '...damn the torpedos and write.'\(^{16}\)

This plunging into the act of writing *in mediis res* will not by itself transform the basic writer into a skilled one. The unskilled student of writing must be brought to conceive of written English as a system of interrelated words and structures with underlying patterns that may be controlled and altered in systematic ways at the writer's discretion. The skills needed to manipulate language successfully are best learned within contexts, not before contexts.

Punctuation, for example, should be handled through the study of sentence structure. Practice in imbedding will help the student learn the punctuation appropriate to the grammatical concept under consideration. Likewise, vocabulary is more successfully handled by using and investigating real words in real passages of discourse, rather than merely memorizing the traditional weekly spelling and vocabulary list.
In addition to the preceding assumptions about learning and writing instruction, I have identified a set of six principles expressed in the following statements which comprise the bedrock of Shaughnessy's composing theory. While she does not present these concepts as specific recommendations or theoretical constructs, they nonetheless underscore nearly everything she does say, and can be assumed to be the 'givens' from which her work emanates and develops.

The order in which the six statements are presented and explicited does not imply any attempt to rank them by importance or any other hierarchical notion. The first three, however, may be considered to relate more to internal language resources and problems which students possess and display, while the last three statements suggest their writing behaviors and performance abilities.

Identification and Explication of Six Key Principles of Shaughnessy's Composing Theory

1. High School Students Are Linguistically Sophisticated

The average American high school instructor, faced daily with a plethora of ill-written, error-laden papers, may tend to scoff at the idea that her students possess an inherently high degree of linguistic sophistication. Burdened as she is by a self-imposed obligation to preserve and foster Standard English, the instructor has little understanding and even less tolerance for her pupils' sometimes dramatic departures from the academic English he recognizes and respects.
Indeed, when confronted with the statement, "High school students are linguistically sophisticated," an overwhelming 82% of the Columbus, Ohio secondary English teachers responding to a research survey disagreed.* Though by no means conclusive evidence of teachers' true beliefs, this high percentage gives some indication of the negative attitude held by many teachers about their students' language abilities. The errors which abound so plentifully in the discourse of poorer writers have served to convince too many teachers that their students' chances for successful writing improvement are at best severely limited, and more probably hopeless.

As Shaughnessy aptly points out, "teachers' preconceptions about errors are frequently at the center of their misconceptions about B.W. [Basic Writing] students." And since teacher attitude plays such a vital role in establishing a student's confidence and encouraging a successful learning atmosphere, teachers must learn to recognize the extensive language abilities with which their pupils come already armed.

The author admonishes English teachers not to section off students' writing problems, but to maintain "...a readiness to look at these problems in a way that does not ignore the linguistic sophistication of the students nor yet underestimate the complexity of the task they face."*

In keeping with the definition of 'sophisticated' as 'having acquired worldly knowledge,' the youthful writer, however skilled or unskilled performance-wise, has absorbed a great deal of information

* See Chapter V.
about his language, much of it before his exposure to formal education. One has only to listen to a talkative four-year-old to recognize the many structures, transitions, shifts in tense and person he has already assimilated, long before being exposed to the academic labels which are the English teacher's stock in trade.

A steadfast belief in the ability of basic writers to utilize their inherent wealth of linguistic ability was by no means originally conceived by Shaughnessy. The fact that Piaget, Vygotsky, and Chomsky, among others, have all freely espoused the same assumption, however, does not detract from the importance of her asserting the same principle.

For people of normal mental capacities, language, like our bodies, is so comfortable and customary that we scarcely notice its complexity or even its presence. The accomplishments of even the most ordinary speaker are practically astounding on examination. He can generate and comprehend an almost limitless number of new sentences and word combinations, not one of which he may ever have encountered before.

Young men and women who have spoken years of sentences cannot be said to be ignorant of sentences.¹⁹

Yet one has only to visit a teacher's lounge or an English department meeting to hear some exasperated soul complain that his students "don't even know what a sentence is."²⁰ This disconcertingly widespread notion flies in the face of research conducted by William Labov,²¹ who maintains that

...our own studies ... of the grammaticality of everyday speech show that the great majority of utterances in all contexts are complete sentences, and most of the rest can be reduced to grammatical form by a small set of editing rules.²²
Putting aside research and the testimonies of academic authorities, one must surely be aware that "...students, like other speakers, have been successfully communicating in sentences for many years." Some teachers would say 'too successfully,' and fall into the dichotomous and contradictory habit of accusing their students of linguistic ignorance, while on the other hand berating them for talking too much.

Even some well-meaning composition instructors with positive attitudes about their basic writers' learning potential have misread what's called for by underestimating their task. The popularity of the 'Back to Basics' movement notwithstanding, teachers must not also return to work of such juvenile simplicity that they kill their students' interest altogether.

The young adult is not content with 'Dick and Jane' sentences, nor does he characteristically make them. His difficulty appears, rather, to grow out of an imbalance between his mature perceptions and his rudimentary skills in writing.

The writing teacher could help convert the student into a powerful ally in their mutual struggle to make the student a better writer, but several conditions are required to enhance the effort's chances for success. First, the teacher must maintain the conviction that young people know a great deal about language, much of which they cannot articulate or analyze consciously without training. Second, the teacher must demonstrate to the student that he indeed possesses great stores of linguistic knowledge, and can use his grasp of language, mostly gathered before he entered school, to better his composing skills and performance. His poor writing behavior lies in the fact that he's
inexperienced, not stupid or incapable of improvement. Third, the teacher must help the student assume an increasingly greater share of the responsibility for analyzing his errors and shortcomings, confident in his growing ability to gain control over words and their arrangement, but also cognizant of how far he has come already.

The principle that even the poorest of high school writers are to some degree linguistically sophisticated, to a greater extent than most teachers give them credit for, is a crucial component of Shaughnessy's theory. The teacher's attitude about what his student is capable of accomplishing and what he brings to the task already will largely determine how successful their academic relationship will be.

To regard a basic writer as a tabula rasa, waiting for complete enlightenment at the feet of the all-knowing teacher is to ignore totally the student's lifetime of listening to his family, communicating with his peers, arguing with his opponents; in short, using language quite regularly and adequately. For too long, students have not been trained to recognize or respect their own intellectual vibrations, those inner promptings that generally reveal to writers where their best energies lie.25

Shaughnessy sums up the situation and what it calls for in this manner:

...the teacher, confronted at first by what appears to be a hopeless tangle of errors and inadequacies, must learn to see below the surface of these failures the intelligence and linguistic aptitudes of his students. And in doing so, he will himself become a critic of his profession and begin to search for wiser, more efficient ways of teaching young men and women to write.26
2. Inexperienced Writers Frequently Make Writing Errors For Logical, Rational, Intelligent Reasons.

Instead of the chaos of error traditionally associated with basic writers' discourse, Shaughnessy argues that "a closer look will reveal very little that is random or 'illogical' in what they have written." 27

She further advises that a teacher who would work with BW students might well begin by trying to understand the logic of their mistakes in order to determine at what point or points along the developmental path error should be or can be a subject for instruction. 28

Shaughnessy's argument that the majority of errors have a certain logic and underlying rational cause seems to be somewhat of a maverick thought in the field of English Education. Yet she provides literally hundreds of examples throughout her book to back up her claim. The chief points to be made about this theoretical principle are these: Teachers need to recognize and admit that their students have learned to make errors and can, in a sense, unlearn them, or at least can begin to control them; teachers need to categorize and analyze the errors being made until individual patterns of difficulty emerge; teachers should demonstrate to students that there are logical reasons for the mistakes they are making, and that once they understand those causes, their chances for self-directed writing improvement will increase dramatically.

Under the topic 'Linguistic Sophistication,' I discussed the relative ease and skill with which even the poorest writer is able to use speech as a communicative device. This natural language ability,
however, does not automatically transfer to the written word; thus teachers sometimes encounter students who 'speak with the tongues of angels,' and write with the grace of a grounded sloth. Shaughnessy maintains that the mental activities required for speech do not coincide with those needed to produce written discourse. Of course much research remains to be done to isolate and describe the sequential or simultaneous activities involved in spoken or written language. Nevertheless, those who hold that their students will automatically write better after they learn to think and speak better are off the mark in Shaughnessy's book.

The single most important fact about BW students is that although they have been talking every day for a good many years, they have been writing infrequently, and then only in such artificial and strained situations that the communicative purpose of writing has rarely if ever seemed real.29

This gets at the heart of Shaughnessy's criticism of traditional English education in this country—the students do not write enough to become comfortable with that activity. Whether acceding to constraints of time, or personal preferences for teaching literature and other classroom activities that don't involve writing, English instructors as well as teachers of other subject areas do not encourage or require their students to compose nearly enough to benefit the youngsters.

It is small wonder, then, that "the beginning writer does not know how writers behave."30 He is a novice, and when he makes the mistakes any novice can be expected to make, he is held in some degree of
contempt by the very instructor whose task it is to help him along.

What has been so damaging about the experience of B.W. students with written English is that it has been so confusing, and worse, that they have become resigned to this confusion, to not knowing, to the substitution of private tactics or private systems or makeshift strategies for genuine mastery of written English in any form.31

"Unaware of the ways in which writing differs from speaking, he imposes the conditions of speech upon writing."32 This reliance on speech habits can be disastrous when trying to compose. While writing, the B.W. student cannot use all the non-verbal gesticulations, the voice cues, pauses and stresses by which one is able to manipulate the language freely when speaking, and yet he is not familiar with the equivalent written techniques available to achieve the same goals.

The speaker, for example, stops when he has completed a unit of thought, not necessarily when he has finished a unit of grammar known as a sentence. So naturally some sentence fragments result from this reliance on speech patterns and characteristics. "Writing presses the writer toward greater explicitness than he would require of himself in speech."33

An unskilled writer is sometimes logical at points where the language is not. English is known to be a highly irregular tongue, perhaps because of its enormously diverse roots and contributing factors. An example of an incorrect usage which is nonetheless logical would be, 'Two man were walking down the road.' The descriptor 'two' has already informed us that the subject is plural, yet we expect to hear 'men' follow the adjective, even though using two plural indicators
in a single phrase is essentially redundant.

A variation on the theme of language consistency would be a case in which the student incorrectly applies a rule he has learned to a new grammatical situation. Instead of 'I knew,' he may write 'I knowed.' While the erroneous imperfect tense may grate on the ears of an academic individual, it actually represents a logical effort to standardize the language where it deviates from common practice. Small children and new speakers of English will often resort to tacking an 'ed' on to a verb, the past tense of which they're uncertain or unfamiliar. So will the student who has read or written so little that he has no reliable referent to make such a decision. Thus, we run across erroneous but rationally fashioned forms such as 'blowed' (blew), 'runned' (ran), 'be'ed (was or been), or 'singed' (sang).

One logical explanation for the B.W. student's lack of skill in subordinating or condensing sentences is his lack of vocabulary development. He will often wade into deeper syntactical waters than he's capable of managing in order to say something for which he lacks the precise word. He 'goes around Robin Hood's barn,' in essence. He is forced to say 'a person who doesn't believe in God,' when the word 'atheist' is unavailable to him, for example.

Teachers of English have not been trained, for the most part, to seek causes for errors, assigning them to a sort of mental junkpile without stopping to speculate on the nature of their generation. A frequently heard complaint regarding the B.W. student is his tendency
to persist in making the same errors over and over again. This would imply, however, that the writer is employing a consistent pattern of usage, despite instruction to alter it. His private strategies for usage, spelling, or word order have been learned somewhere along the line, and the writer believes for some internal reason that his is correct, however erroneous the form may be in the instructor's eyes. Frequently the B.W. student views it as a logical solution to a language problem he cannot otherwise solve.

As one high school writing teacher pointed out during an interview, no student purposely tries to fill his discourse with errors. He usually thinks he's right at the time he writes the mistake, and there are nearly as many reasons he regards his choices as correct as there are erroneous forms on his papers.

On one hand, he tries to bring the written language under control by developing his own system of personally standardized forms, out of what Shaughnessy considers a natural desire for linguistic simplicity and usefulness to himself as a fledgling writer. B.W. students "...are pressed by their language learning faculties to increase the degree of predictability and efficiency in their use of language."34

On the other hand, unskilled writers have been taught by the American educational system to mistrust their own linguistic instincts in favor of memorizing textbook rules, traditional labels, and teacher preferences for usage and syntax.
They have lost confidence in the very faculties that serve all language learners: their ability to distinguish between essential and redundant features of a language left them logical but wrong; their ability to draw analogies between what they knew of language when they began school and what they had to learn to produce mistakes.35

Obviously, not all writing mistakes fall into the category of reasoned-out, rationally based errors. For those non-standard, unacceptable forms many teachers regard as the result of pure carelessness, Shaughnessy posits other explanations. For example, the sentence in which a student misspells the same word twice in two variant ways might seem on the surface to be the product of carelessness. Shaughnessy, however, considers it a problem of 'visual acuity,' a severely underdeveloped skill for most B.W.'s. Visual acuity refers to a sharpened perceptive ability to see precisely what one has written rather than what one intended to write, or thinks has been written.

Many poor writers, when asked to read an error-laden passage of their own discourse, fail to notice the deletions or sentence fragments or incorrect verb tenses, but instead read as though the errors were not present. They simply do not see the mistakes. The concept of visual acuity ties in with one of Shaughnessy's main explanations for the problems basic writers face. They have not read or written enough to become familiar with standard forms. They spell words wrong, punctuate incorrectly, zigzag from sentence fragments to run-ons with seemingly oblivious ease, they often seem to be inventing the language spontaneously as they go along, to the horror and aggravation of their teachers and their own frustration. Basic writers suffer from:
...a central condition of ill-preparedness with formal written language...[which] pervades all the sub-systems of that skill, producing errors that may be classified under different headings in a composition handbook, but that nonetheless rise from common ground: [1] from the student's rootedness in spoken rather than written language and his habitual preferences for forms of English that diverge in a variety of ways from formal English; [2] from a general lack of visual acuity and memory in relation to written letter and word patterns; [3] from the student's efforts to simulate a register or code he is not sure of; [4] and finally from an urge to move into deep grammatical and lexical waters in the effort to communicate complex thoughts.36

Shaughnessy believes, then, that errors stem from two major sources--those which arise from the writer's lack of familiarity with formal written discourse, and those which poor writers make either consciously or unconsciously in the rational attempt to solve writing problems using what they already know about language.

Highly logical and clear-headed students often write badly because they fail to make explicit some of the implicit logical connections in their arguments.37

The inexperienced writer often runs into trouble wandering too far from his subject because "the complex structures his thoughts evoke require that he does so."38 The Professor recommends various exercises in sentence-combining as an effective approach to enable these young adults to begin matching the maturity of their thoughts with a suitable depth of language capability. As she points out, what sentence-combining often demonstrates is "that the student has already internalized the syntactical forms he needs for complex sentences but that he's 'all thumbs' when he tries to get them into written form."39
Building upon her assumption that young adult basic writers are linguistically sophisticated is the equally strong conviction that the intelligence of their mistakes might be harnessed in the service of learning.

3. Unskilled Writers Sometimes Make Errors for Psychological Reasons.

Since Freud and Jung first conceptualized and described the nature of the unconscious mind and how that relatively inaccessible portion of our brain processes affects our most common behaviors and attitudes, critics have delighted in speculating about writers' motivations. It is hardly a new idea that one's psychological state directly influences how one speaks, acts, looks, or performs any number of complex tasks, including writing. Countless volumes of discourse represent literary critics' attempts to dissect, analyze and examine the psychological conditions under which a Poe or a Conrad or a Dostoevsky composed.

One need hardly be a master of the written word or the analyst's couch to realize that the prevailing psychological mood of the moment will largely direct, govern and guide the tone and form of one's letters to friends, memos to employees, notes to one's self, or even as rigorously rational a task as writing a formal research paper.

If this realization indeed exists in the public domain of understanding, teachers have certainly made poor use of the information in trying to understand their students' psychological states and the
subsequent influence on their written language performance.

The more common psychological effects on one's writing performance are usually recognized by classroom writing instructors. For example, a student may be in a negative mood, or suffer from fatigue or boredom, or dislike the teacher, his classmates, himself or all three simultaneously. He may be distracted by some more pressing demands of his life than the five-hundred word theme due Thursday, or he may be too ill, too angry or too sad to concentrate on the task of composing. Or he may even do poorly because he simply does not like the task of writing in itself. However, as Shaughnessy abundantly points out, there are even underlying reasons for those excuses, usually relating to the young writer's lack of self-confidence or his yearly history of failure to write well enough to satisfy his teachers' expectations.

There exists a veritable host of psychologically related factors which could cause or prevent adequate writing performance. We have barely begun to explore the intricacies and depths of these conditions. In the course of her work, Shaughnessy makes frequent reference to the part the unconscious mind plays in formulating and executing discourse.

She focuses chiefly, however, upon two principal psychological factors influencing B.W. students' writing: the first, fear and anxiety, and the second, memory. The first—fear—is a psychological reaction to certain threatening or stressful circumstances; anxiety, fear's handmaiden, is a condition in which one worries about threatening circumstances whether they actually exist or not. In either case, they
can have a paralyzing effect upon one's ability to translate thought and speech patterns onto paper. The second psychological influence upon the creation of error that we will discuss in this section is memory. While fear is noted by other prominent theoreticians as a negative factor in composing, the concept that poor memory skills will directly effect the commission of writing errors looms as a new postulate in the area of composition instruction. It seems to be an original thought of Shaughnessy's, for none of the other influential people in the field preceding her have cited memory and the abilities associated with it as a factor in making composing mistakes.

Fear and Anxiety

The physical act of composing usually proceeds much more smoothly for the proficient writer than for the basic writer. The more advanced writer performs the skills associated with composing almost automatically, having some time before assimilated them into his subconscious faculties. Decisions about punctuation, spelling, word order, verb tense—these are all made virtually instantaneously by the practiced writer. He does not have to make conscious choices for every letter, word and sentence he composes. This habituated ability to perform the mechanics of writing frees the advanced writer to concern himself with style, content, format, point of view, and other more complex writing considerations.

The basic writer, however, must labor to get the very letters down on the page. Unfamiliar as he is with the writing process, each
step must be consciously thought out.

Without some measure of ease, without being able to assign some operations to habit, or even to indifference, the novice writer is cut off from thinking.

As long as the so-called mechanical processes involved in writing are themselves highly conscious or even labored, the writer is not likely to have easy access to his thoughts.40

The pedagogy that obsessively emphasizes error expungement without the benefit of error analysis and understanding has contributed greatly to the anxiety dilemma in which many B.W. students find themselves. As noted before, few inexperienced writers would actually wish to make large numbers of mistakes, and yet they do not know how to go about ridding themselves of the problem.

Rather than being indifferent to his writing shortcomings, the basic writer "...is aware that he leaves a trail of errors behind him when he writes. He can usually think of little else while he's writing."41 Our writing classes have stressed how our students write more than what they write, overlooking the function of written discourse as an attempt to communicate something meaningful and authentic. For the basic writer, "error is more than a mishap; it is a barrier that keeps him not only from writing something in formal English, but from having something to write."42

Poor writers, like other normal members of the human community, do not enjoy being criticized, castigated or regarded as inferior. Nevertheless, they are usually aware that they're not writing well. How could they not know? They've been getting negative feedback on
their composition performance for years, some for their entire school experience. This often produces the phenomenon which Daly and Miller call "writing apprehension,"\(^{43}\) a "behavior characterized by avoidance of writing and situations perceived by the individual to potentially require some amount of writing, accompanied by the potential for evaluation of that writing."\(^{44}\)

When one is learning to play a musical instrument, the inevitable dissonances one makes can be overwhelmingly disconcerting, a seemingly uncontrollable chaos of disharmonies punctuated by an occasional accidental correct note. So too the novice writer is inhibited by the number of mistakes he makes despite his attempts to make things look and sound satisfactory. "Some writers, inhibited by their fear of error, produce but a few lines an hour."\(^{45}\)

A young person, often burdened with an extreme sense of self-consciousness, does not wish to appear helpless, foolish, or inadequate in any way, especially in a school setting among his peers. "The student lacks confidence in himself in academic situations and fears that writing will not only expose but magnify his inadequacies."\(^{46}\) Therefore, "a reduction of writing apprehension must occur before students can overcome their inhibitions about writing."\(^{47}\) Shaughnessy believes that when a poor writer can be made to recognize and understand his own errors, he will no longer fear making them, which will in turn reduce their occurrence.
If a writer is not worried about being wrong, if he sees a chance for repairing and perfecting his copy at a later point before anyone sees it, he will be free to think about what he means, and not worry so much about the way he is saying things, a worry that almost inevitably cuts him off from his grammatical intuitions.  

Shaughnessy's approach to overcoming a B.W. student's writing apprehension involves the writer's positive perception of himself as a language-maker, as an effector of meaning, as a person who, in the Freirian sense, can come to own words and thereby learn to control them.

Memory

Another psychological cause for error suggested by Shaughnessy is memory, or perhaps the lack of it. The notion that one's ability to store and retrieve multiple complex patterns of words and sentences in mind effects certain writing errors appears to be a concept originating with the author herself. None of Shaughnessy's predecessors or contemporaries, from Emig to Vygotsky to Moffett, deeply explore the role that memory plays in transferring thought to written discourse.

Therefore her thoughts on this psychologically related ability are germaine to any complete discussion of her composing theory. During the course of the interviews conducted for this study, the issue of memory and its effect on writing performance seemed to strike respondents as a completely new idea, one they had not previously encountered. (See Chapter VI, Interview Data.)
In contrast to past eras and cultures, we do not hold good memory skills in especially high esteem, perhaps because they are not needed beyond a certain perfunctory level in our society. Before humans developed writing skills, it was necessary that they commit their personal and societal information to memory as a means of preserving it and passing it forward. Through the oral tradition, whole cultural, tribal, and familial histories were handed down through generations. The order of patriarchal begetting recited in the book of Genesis stands as an example of a tradition most ancient people routinely practiced, recounting their past, their heroes, tragedies, their progenitors, their folklore and mythology, themselves in retrospect. The man or woman who could remember stories from the distant past was highly respected.

The advent of writing fundamentally altered the need to memorize things lest they be lost forever. Once an event or a name or a story was written down, it could survive the faulty human mind and its unreliable ability to carry it forward intact into the future. An idea could be reexamined, conversation could be recorded, ideas could be transferred and preserved indefinitely.

Our electronic age and the advent of computers have further eroded the need for individual memory skills. Nearly every event, name, date and occurrence that takes place can be taped, recorded, filmed, sensed by electrodes, fixed in some permanent, easily accessible manner. People do not have to memorize logarithm tables or chemical valence
charts or passages from Shakespearean plays, but may instead consult reference books or video discs or computer logues. One may add those tediously long columns of figures at the market by consulting the pocket calculator rather than one's mind. Actors refer to cue cards, children check with "Sesame Street" for the order of the alphabet. Beyond learning one's name, one's house number, telephone and social security numbers, a person can probably survive rather well without taxing one's memory much at all.

This lack of emphasis on developing a memory for complex thoughts and patterns of words has affected no one more than the Basic Writing student. He lives in a society that doesn't prize memory ability, he has not read or written enough to commit standard spelling usage and syntax patterns to memory, and he has not had enough experience in formulating analytical discourse to get used to keeping his main idea in mind.

Young adults...may have short memory spans for written sentences simply because they have not read or written enough to develop that kind of memory.49

We discussed under the section on fear and anxiety the need for the writer to assign some operations to habit, so he is not so bogged down with the mechanics of getting words down on paper that he can't think what he wants to say. However, as Shaughnessy points out:

These operations require a memory for written words and grammatical structures that the inexperienced writer may not have. He hears what he says easily enough, but he does not easily recall what he has written once his hand has moved on to another part of the sentence, and unlike the experienced writer, he is not in the habit of reviewing what he has written.50
The problem of memory can operate on several levels during the composing process. A writer may be unable to remember what the beginning of a sentence contains by the time he has completed it. Many subject-verb agreement problems stem from this inability to hold a complex language pattern in mind for long. A basic writer often forgets what his subject is by the time he gets to the verb, particularly if any subordination is involved that separates the two elements.

Often the inexperienced writer tries to sound lofty and formal because he thinks that will sound like better writing. However, some strange, erroneous devices and patterns are initiated "...because the writer is straining to sound formal and in the process gets himself into deeper syntactic waters than he can negotiate without a further development of his memory for written words and structures." 51

Even problems with punctuation can stem from an underdeveloped memory. Students will occasionally "punctuate so as to isolate clauses that are semantically bound to other clauses." 52 This problem, commonly resulting in sentence fragments, suggests a difficulty with holding written sentences in mind when they contain more than one predication or even when one predication contains a compound subject or verb.

Persistently recommended by Shaughnessy is more and more writing practice plus intensive work in sentence-imbedding. In addition, she believes the poor writer must be trained to review his own writing and that of others with a critical eye, rescanning for errors, practicing both visual acuity and memory skills simultaneously. She recognizes
that

the ability to rescan and reword sentences... assumes several things: a memory for unheard sentences, an ability to store verbal patterns visually from right to left... and an ability to suspend closure on those patterns until... the words fit the intended meaning.53

Since Shaughnessy initially developed the notion of memory's effect on writing behavior and development, others since her have delved into the area more intensively. In "Psycholinguistic Foundations of the Writing Process,"54 Collette Daiute develops and explores what she calls the "memory constraint hypothesis,"55 an elaboration of Shaughnessy's ideas about memory. Her study of the words, clauses and syntactic structure of errors suggests that short-term memory limits constrain writers as they compose multi-clause sentences.

The memory constraint hypothesis... is that semantic recoding can make correct completion of multi-clause sentences difficult. As each potential perceptual clause is recoded, there is likely to be difficulty in completing sentences because important grammatical information from the prior clause has faded.56

Daiute agrees with Shaughnessy that the constraints of a poorly developed memory offer an explanation for "why the writers of error sentences do not identify and correct their errors, even though they may re-read their papers."57

Raymond Rodrigues speaks to the issue of memory in composition development as well when he claims that:

Many students, particularly when writing, never seem to move beyond the level of memory. And often, because of the many things which students must memorize... their memories are often faulty or overloaded.58
...as Shaughnessy, in *Errors and Expectations*, has pointed out about basic writers, once they have begun a sentence, they never look back because they might forget what it was they wanted to say. 59

4. No One Pedagogical Approach is Appropriate or Sufficient for the Teaching of Writing

There seem to be as many types of writing errors as there are writers, and indeed, there seem to be as many ways of approaching writing instruction as there are teachers to teach it. So at first, the subject for this section may appear to be self-evident—that there is no single approach to composition instruction that will solve all of the problems of all writing students all of the time.

However, through experience, habit, personal inclination or available course texts, teachers tend to fall into patterns of instruction that emphasize one pedagogical approach more than another. Sometimes writing teachers will adhere to the methods and outlooks of their own former high school and college instructors, preferring to work from a pedagogical framework that is familiar or comfortable from past experience. Another cause for choosing one pedagogy more than another is the nature of the individual teacher's classroom situation. The instructor assesses his students' problems and needs and personalities, and often decides from there what should be the focus of instructional activity.

The latter method of selecting and evolving a flexible personal pedagogy to fit the situation seems more workable than imposing a prior-framed approach upon whatever situation one finds. Shaughnessy insists
...programs are not the answers to the learning problems of students but [that] teachers are and [that] indeed, good teachers create good programs, and [that] the best programs are developed in situ, in response to the needs of individual student populations.  

Shaughnessy cites four variables that might influence decisions teachers make about how to teach writing:

1) The variations one finds in writing competencies of students classified as remedial writers;

2) The wide differences among teachers, all of whom have widely varying attitudes and priorities in respect to writing instruction;

3) The imperatives of institutions, varying from school to school; local expectations, central administration dicta; departmental and system-wide standards for performance;

4) The reluctant, subtle phenomenon of the written word, which frequently evades our strictures, slips between our strategies, or grows in spite of them.

She declares: "To understand what tends to go wrong when our students write and to acquire the habit of reasoning about what goes wrong are preliminary steps to deciding how to teach basic writing." She suggests that the teacher attempting to design or redesign a writing course or unit should first define the province of skills and specific behaviors to be covered in an allotted period of time. A skills chart might be helpful in defining and tracking the progress of individual students or the class as a whole.

Each item on the skills chart then ought to be examined from four pedagogical perspectives:
1) What is the goal of instruction?63 Awareness? Improvement? Mastery?

2) What is the best method of instruction? What cognitive strategy will best help the student learn a given concept or word relationship? Memorization? Exposure? Examples to imitate?

3) What is the best mode of instruction? What is the most effective social organization, physical set-up or technology for teaching a writing principle? Small group interaction? Teacher-student conferences? Large audience introduction? Software-audio and video tapes, books, boards, computers?

4) How do the individual items of instruction relate to one another? How much time should be devoted to each discrete skill? In what sequence should concepts be introduced and dealt with?

In addition to all these considerations, Shaughnessy analyzes and describes what she sees as the three main pedagogical approaches from which writing teachers operate:

The pedagogy that stresses grammar;

The pedagogy that stresses process;

The pedagogy that stresses the therapeutic value of writing.

Many teachers place a definite emphasis on the pedagogy stressing grammar. So-called 'current-traditional' English teachers frequently work out of the grammar-error teaching framework. This approach tends to assume "that students do not have command of many of the forms required in written English and must therefore learn them through explicit instruction."64 The teaching of grammar, whether in the abstract or as a set of forms to be generated through practice, suggests certain methodological techniques such as drills and exercises, procedures which lend themselves to enumeration and error quantification.
Teachers who concentrate on the learning of grammatical skills assume that there is much which the student has not managed to internalize in terms of language patterns characteristic of written English.

This pedagogy can easily cause both teachers and students to become over-concerned, even obsessed, with errors, their avoidance and correction. Over-emphasis on the teaching of grammar in the writing classroom sometimes prevents sufficient time from being spent on the writing process itself. The grammar-oriented teacher sometimes stresses correctness to the exclusion of all other writing considerations, even delaying actual writing experience until students master specific, discrete mechanical skills.

During the expressive sixties, greater attention began to be focused on the experiential nature of writing. A whole pedagogical approach grew out of the desire to worry less about structure and mechanics, and to concentrate more on the flow of words and ideas, an almost existential focus on the act of writing for its own sake. The emphasis of this approach lies in various stages and types of composition, including pre-writing, free writing, composing, rescanning, proofreading, and journal-keeping.

As Shaughnessy describes it, the pedagogy that stresses process "tends to minimize the value of grammatical and rhetorical study, and assume, rather, that students already 'know' the wanted forms but cannot produce them, nor anything resembling their own 'voices' until they are encouraged to behave as writers."65
Practitioners of this particular pedagogical approach often feel that the students' writing performance will improve by the sheer volume and extent of writing practice. By becoming familiar with the composing process, the student will grow more comfortable and skilled in expressing mature content in mature ways. Critics claim that increased writing time without benefit of analytical instruction will only serve to reinforce the erroneous patterns students already execute. Teachers with weak grammatical backgrounds may overuse the processive model of instruction to avoid teaching the separate skills that writing involves, known to us as grammar.

The third pedagogical framework that Shaughnessy describes is that which stresses the therapeutic nature of writing. Teachers who focus on this aspect of composing are more concerned with the student's perception of himself rather than the written product he composes or his experience while writing it. Concerns with form or process are merely incidental "to the students' discovery of themselves as individuals with ideas, points of view and memories that are worth writing about." Classrooms which operate out of this pedagogical vision often engage in a great deal of dialogue and social interaction between and among the teacher and students.

Writing content is perceived as important only in that it reveals to the writer inner information about his thoughts, his feelings and attitudes toward himself and the world around him. Compositions are useful as a means of self-exploration, and confidence in one's
self as a worthwhile being is seen as central to the writing act. Topics aim at the affective domain and modes of discourse center on personal composing, what Janet Emig calls "reflexive writing."67

As the statement marking this section asserts, no one of these approaches by itself will serve to create better writers. "A teacher should not have to choose from among these pedagogies, for each addresses but one part of the problem."68

Shaughnessy recommends a blend of pedagogical approaches, an overlap or meshing of systems, methods, modes and techniques that the individual teacher may draw on to deal with the given academic situation. She advocates a holistic approach to writing instruction, and would pay equal heed to the mechanical, processive and personal aspects of composing. A student must learn the underlying structure and systems of formal written English if he is not to be at a severe disadvantage academically and later on in the job market. He can best learn how to approximate formal written codes by frequently engaging in the active composing process and by being trained to discover his own errors and how he might alter them. Once he becomes more at ease with the act of writing, it will free him to say more things, and will actually give him more things to say.

Thought is not merely expressed in words; it comes into existence through them. Every thought tends to connect something with something else, to establish a relationship between things.69

It has always seemed a strange phenomenon that so many students perceive English grammar as a separate entity, a thing foreign to their daily experience. Students seldom recognize any connection
between what they study in the English classroom and the language they use daily.

One suspects that they think of grammar as a network of rules and prohibitions which exist outside the language and are imposed like laws on errant writers. Grammar has so often been taught in just such a prescriptive, dogmatic fashion that, while some students can memorize or replicate or approximate a given grammatical pattern, they have no inductive understanding of its structure or relationship to other patterns. They do not perceive their language as a system or set of systems.

...throughout instruction, a student should be encouraged not simply to have the right answers but to have grammatical reasons for what he does, for grammar is more a way of thinking, a style of inquiry, than a way of being right.

As Shaughnessy sees it, grammar is a web, not a list, of explanations. Grammar should not be handled through the mere memorization of rules alone, but should be approached by thinking through problems as they arise in the context of real writing.

It may well be that traditional grammar-teaching has failed to improve writing not because rules and concepts do not connect with the act of writing but because grammar lessons have traditionally ended up with exercises in workbooks, which by highlighting the feature being studied, rob the student of any practice in seeing that feature in more natural places.

Another pedagogical approach that Shaughnessy delineates and criticizes is what she calls the 'thinking' pedagogy. Teachers favoring this method believe that concentrating upon one's ability to think and conceptualize will improve one's writing performance. The teacher of 'thinking' believes that his students do not know how to think well enough, and therefore aims the classroom agenda at developing the
thinking process, hoping it will somehow rub off onto the writing process.

We are much too ignorant about where and what the wellsprings of thought are to be ready to propose a pedagogy that will draw from them directly. Rather, our ignorance forces us to move about with our pedagogical strategies like someone witching for well water waiting for the vibrations of a slight willow branch to signal the location of springs.73

Shaughnessy prefers to help the student become conscious of the ways in which he can control his already-developed cognitive abilities. By demonstrating to the basic writer that he is actually doing more correctly than incorrectly can both help build confidence and portray the individual writer's task as a manageable one.

For the teacher who realizes his attitude toward writing instruction is too narrow, or for the teacher who supports no particular pedagogical style, the author recommends what she considers the most practical option available:

What is most useful is a repertoire of approaches to a relatively small number of problems rather than an allegiance to a school of grammar.74

In essence, she advocates using whatever works in a given situation, being willing to abandon out-moded or unsuccessful methods when something more workable presents itself, a vaguely Rube Goldberg methodology shored up by the firm belief that inexperienced writers respond to composition instruction that helps them gain control over written language.
5. The Writing Process Is a Critical and Neglected Feature of the Composition Classroom

It is only within the last decade and a half that composition theoreticians have come to recognize the act of writing as a processive phenomenon, rather than a static productive result of that act. Vygotsky, Emig, Elbow and Moffett were all frontrunners in this significant shift of focus from writing product to writing process. They and others began to formulate theory, conduct research and design curricula with this new focus in mind.

New ideas and changes in perspectives filter through the ranks from theoreticians to university people to front-lines teachers and students themselves at an inevitably slow pace. Thus it is not unusual to find co-existing within the same English department of any given high school someone who automatically assumes the validity and practical reality of writing's processive nature alongside someone who has never entertained the idea at all.

The orientation toward composition which the instructor prefers will naturally help determine how the writing classroom will function, what priorities will be emphasized and what behaviors will be rewarded or discouraged. If the teacher primarily concerns himself and his class with the final stage of writing, the end product, certain methodologies and procedures naturally suggest themselves. For example, a product-oriented class will concern itself with error and its elimination, sometimes to the exclusion of almost all other writing considerations. The focus is not on how one arrives at the end product, but
instead on the features and condition of that end result itself.

Little attention is paid to the exchange of dialogue or social interaction and idea exchange among class members, since the emphasis lies in evaluating and correcting pieces of writing after they have been composed.

The teacher in such a setting functions as editor, evaluator, grader, and chief critic, all skills associated with the revision stage of the writing process. Student effort is aimed at creating a rhetorically correct piece of discourse which fulfills specific guidelines, format requirements, and other stipulations regulating the outcome of the writing task.

Janet Emig calls the types of composition promoted in a product-oriented class the "extensive mode of writing." The extensive mode of writing focuses upon composition as a means of conveying a message or a communication to another person or persons. It is the nature and form of that message which is of prime importance. As Emig points out, the style of extensive 'school' writing is impersonal and largely reportorial, yielding to analysis and error counting more than the more personal "reflexive" writing an individual does for one's own purposes.

The writing product orientation emphasizes the 'it,' the discourse itself and its resultant worth and effect in the evaluator's eyes. On the other hand, the writing process orientation recognizes the self involved in creating that discourse, and the complex involuted pathway the writer must travel in order to arrive at the creation of
a product. The process viewpoint considers the pathway as important as the destination, indeed the determiner of the destination. Teachers who concentrate on the writing process value Emig's conviction, as well as Shaughnessy's, that "persons, rather than mechanisms, compose."76

Obviously, these persons are not always composing perfectly with consummate ease. As we have established previously, a good many of them, the basic writers, handle the task poorly because they are so unfamiliar with it. Besides the speaking skills they already practice in abundance, it requires of them new competencies, "the skills of the encoding process, ...the skill of objectifying a statement, of looking at it, changing it by additions, subtractions, substitutions, or inversions, taking the time to get as close a fit as possible between what [they] mean and what [they] say on paper."77 They have not been taught these skills in a sufficiently relevant manner. The emphasis in the typical writing classroom has been on getting everything right the first time.

Unfortunately, the B.W. student has enough trouble getting it right after many times; expecting him to compose, edit and revise almost simultaneously is asking him to draw on a memory experience and performance abilities he has never sufficiently cultivated in the first place. He gets the idea that "the need to change things is the mark of an amateur,"78 despite the routine practices and writing behaviors of active authors, who often cross out four or five words to discover precisely the one they want.
Teachers themselves promote this narrow and inhibiting view of perfection by ignoring all stages of the writing process except the last, where formal correctness becomes important, and by confronting students with models of good writing by well-known writers without ever mentioning the messy process that leads to clarity.79

Students sometimes come to blame themselves for having to revise their work, for taking too long to begin, for not having anything valuable to say once they have begun. And English teachers often penalize them in various ways for these shortcomings, the most common method being low grades. However, a letter or numerical grade can only indicate a subjective evaluation by the teacher on the discursive product itself. "English teachers have been trained to look for and at the end product...without questioning the writer's way of composing it."80 That grade, or those critical remarks in the margin, can sometimes kill whatever willingness a struggling writer has to review his own work, let alone revise it. He'd rather go on with the next assignment, for at least there he's not a failure...yet. Worse, his teacher is all too often so bogged down in correcting and trying to eliminate the host of errors that it seems hopeless, and therefore, the teacher hands out another assignment just to wipe the slate clean and begin again.

There has been no sharing of the critic's job, no recognition of the thoughts and background circumstances which contributed to the process resulting in a given piece of writing.

The beginning writer, like any apprentice, is ignorant of process, with the result that he usually perceives writing as a single act, a gamble with words, rather than a deliberate process whereby meaning is crafted, stage by stage.81
This one-shot 'get-it-all-down-quick-and-hold-your-breath' approach is the logical result of several contributing factors. For one thing, the poor writer may not know what he wants to say, or may have nothing to say at all in a specific composing situation. He also lacks the confidence to venture ideas, for he fears that "writing will not only expose but magnify his inadequacies." His composition suffers from the practice of what Shaughnessy calls premature formulation. He begins to write before he has developed a starting idea, with no preparatory period of incubation, and what the teacher often receives is a chaotic, unworked jumble of thoughts and observations which would more appropriately belong to the pre-writing stage of the composing process.

Some progress has been made to analyze the stages and behaviors implicit in the writing process, but not a great deal. As the NCTE Committee on Research describes Janet Emig's examination of this phenomenon, her work represents "an expedition into new territory, an investigation of the writing process. This is an area hitherto almost untouched by researchers in written composition, who by and large have focused on the written product."83

As described in Chapter II, Emig used the case study method to examine the composing processes of high school students. She not only attempted to identify and isolate discrete behaviors involved in composing, but she also explored what happens to the self as a result of the writing process.
...if certain elements in a certain order characterize the evolution of all student writing, or even most writing in a given mode, and very little is known about the elements or their ordering, the teaching of composition proceeds for both students and teachers as a metaphysical or, at best, a wholly intuitive endeavor.84

Emig criticizes the current-traditional grammar and composition textbooks available to English teachers on the grounds that they misrepresent the nature of writing.

The characterization these texts convey of the composing process is of a quite conscious, wholly rational—at times even mechanical—affair...85

The typical texts adopted by boards of education or English departments, and used by teachers and students themselves do not consider the writer's feelings toward the subject or toward himself during the act of composing.

This view of the writing act as a hierarchical, logical sequence of performances stands at one end of the writing theory spectrum. The following passage, from a commonly used high school grammar and composition textbook, represents a current-traditional account of how the writing endeavor unfolds:

A good writer puts words together in correct, smooth sentences according to the rules of standard usage. He puts sentences together to make paragraphs that are clear and effective, unified and well-developed. Finally, he puts paragraphs together into larger forms of writing—essays, letters, stories, research papers.

In practice, as you know from your own experience, a writer begins with a general plan and ends with details of wording, sentence structure, and grammar. First, he chooses the subject of his composition. Second, he tackles the preparation of his material, from rough ideas to final outline. Third, he undertakes the writing itself, once again beginning with a rough form (the rough draft) and ending with a finished form (the final draft) that is nearly as perfect as he can make it.

These three basic stages of composition are almost always the same for any form of writing.86
Warriner, Mersand and Griffith imply by this that the writing process is essentially linear in nature. Each 'stage' of the process is monolithic, unalterable. Before one writes, one prepares a 'final outline,' freezing all the ideas into a form reproducible in written discourse. A computer might be successfully programmed to produce fine English compositions if such is the case.

Some of the more prominent contemporary linguists take serious exception to the product-oriented viewpoint, with its formulaic, consciously sequential approach to writing. They instead regard writing's processive nature as elemental, the basic operative reality of composing, and spend their energies trying to identify and harness the myriad contributing factors, both conscious and unconscious, emotional and rational, purposeful and accidental, that cause one to write and assist him in the process.

Shaughnessy recognizes and supports the process orientation in writing instruction. She regards it as essential to demonstrate to inexperienced young writers that compositions do not exist in some perfect form outside the writer, but emanate from his interior motives, purposes and experiences, not all of which are fully acknowledged or understood, but which nonetheless exist. Central to her theory is the effort to understand how the writing process breaks down or deviates from the norm in order to help individual writers improve their own processive awareness and abilities.
Shaughnessy would agree with the poet John Ciardi that, "An act of skill is one in which you have to do more things at one time that you have time to think about." This observation assumes one cannot consciously order or even be aware of all the tasks and behaviors involved in the writing process simultaneously, but rather that some of these operations must be assigned to memory, instinct, practiced habit, or other mental processes.

Consider the following passage by Gertrude Stein, representative of the processive view of composing:

You will write... if you will write without thinking of the result in terms of a result, but think of the writing in terms of discovery, which is to say the creation must take place between the pen and the paper, not before in a thought or afterwards in a recasting. Yes, before in a thought, but not in careful thinking. It will come if it is there and if you will let it come, and if you have anything, you will get a sudden creative recognition. You won't know how it was, even what it is, but it will be creation if it came out of the pen and out of you and not out of an architectural drawing of the thing you are doing... You have to know what you want to get; but when you know that, let it take you and if it seems to take you off the track don't hold back, because that is perhaps where instinctively you want to be and if you hold back and try to be always where you have been before, you will go dry.

Shaughnessy deplores the lack of attention given to the writing process itself in most high school and college classrooms, and offers some direct suggestions for how an effective composition class might proceed. Critical to the establishment of a beneficial, interactive atmosphere is the free exchange of dialogue. In this manner, students can discover what they think and feel about things, so they have genuine ideas to write about.
The autonomy of the writer lies in his knowing what he thinks. Without this conviction that he has 'something to mean,' the writer cannot carry on the kind of conversation with himself that leads to writing.\(^89\)

Even when the B.W. student has a reasonably clear idea of what it is he wishes to write about, he is hampered by his inexperience with the physical act of writing, and by his unfamiliarity with what the task entails and requires. Poor writers "lack a sure sense of what the written code will allow. Much of this uneasiness...can be blamed on the writing process itself, which, because it involves different coordinations from those of speech, creates a code-consciousness that can inhibit the writer from doing what he is in fact able to do in the more spontaneous situation of talk."\(^90\)

Macrorie, Elbow, Miller, Judy and certainly Emig all join Shaughnessy in advocating genuine writing experiences in the composition classroom, rather than the continuous repetition of rules, drills and exercises which characterize current-traditional classrooms. Shaughnessy feels that, "It is the business of a writing class to make writing more than an exercise, for only as a writer, rather than as an exerciser, can a student develop the verbal responsiveness to his own thoughts and to the demands of his reader that produces genuinely mature syntax."\(^91\)

In trying to deal with young adult writers, the instructor must take into consideration a number of influential factors—"the amount of writing students do, the preconceptions they have about good and bad writing, their attitude toward themselves as writers, their
composing habits, and the connections they make with ideas and audi-
ences."92

According to Shaughnessy, there are three basic stages, or as
she calls them, a "sequence of concentrations" that appear to be implic-
it in the act of writing:

1) GETTING THE THOUGHT—recognizing it, first, and then exploring
it enough to estimate one's resources (motivational and informa-
tional) for writing about it.

2) GETTING THE THOUGHT DOWN—proceeding, that is, into the thick
of the idea, holding onto it even as the act of articulation
refines and changes it.

3) READYING THE WRITTEN STATEMENT FOR OTHER EYES—a matter of
catching whatever in the content or form is likely to deflect
the reader's attention from the writer's meaning.93

Unfortunately, as she points out, B.W. students usually have
difficulty with each one of these steps in their attempts at composing.
In addition, "...it is not unusual for a student to sound worse before
he sounds better,"94 causing all too many writing instructors to re-
treat into the quantifiable safety of rules and exercises.

As Shaughnessy presents the situation, the composing process is
a crucial and underemphasized aspect of the composition classroom. Emig
explains this disparity between what is being taught in secondary
school English classes and the processes by which real writers compose
in her criticism of current teaching practices:

Partially because they have no direct experience of composing,
teachers of English err in important ways. They underconceptualize
and oversimplify the process of composing. Planning degenerates
into outlining; reformulating becomes the correction of minor
infelicities.95
In the in-depth interviews conducted as part of this research project, the respondents were asked if they themselves did much writing. Of the thirteen interviewees, three indicated they practiced writing for their own pleasure or their own creativity. The remainder cited reasons for their lack of participation in the writing process such as large paper load, loss of interest, lack of time in general. Writing teachers by and large do not write. Therefore, they are separated from the process their students experience, and can only step in during the stage they are most familiar with—editing and evaluation. Shaughnessy believes writing instructors should engage in real composing along with their students, if for no better reason than to regain an empathetic perspective toward the writing tasks they expect their students to accomplish.

Rather than a place where the inexperienced writer practices discrete composing skills, "...the composition course should be the place where the writer not only writes but experiences in a conscious orderly way the stages of the composing process itself."96

6. The Ability to Revise One's Own Errors and Shortcomings Should Be a Major Goal in the Composition Classroom

This final component of Shaughnessy's composing theory chosen for examination in essence ties the other five hypotheses together. It occurs last in a logical sequence that begins with young writers' natural linguistic resources, continues by delineating their difficulties with formal written language, and ends with recommendations for how
they might begin to understand their own composition problems and might learn how to apply solutions to those problems independently.

As Shaughnessy views it, one of the chief factors thwarting B.W. students from improving their compositions is the teachers' expectations that the student compose and revise simultaneously. As unfamiliar as poor writers are with the writing process, they are even less acquainted with the revising process. An occasional marginal injunction to "Proof-read" goes unacknowledged, not because the student is lazy or stupid, but because he has never been adequately trained to identify his own errors, to objectify his paper, to make alterations or improvements that go beyond mere spelling corrections or simple punctuation. He has little or no idea how to go about the revising process because he has no strategies for attacking the problem.

The writing instructor has practiced for years recognizing and correcting the inconsistencies and departures from the standard code which appear in his students' writing. He frequently perceives error correction as his chief responsibility in the writing class, and often spends huge, disproportionate amounts of time, both at school and at home, going over and marking writing mistakes. Many teachers refer to their time spent with student compositions as "correcting" papers. This overwhelming tendency to concentrate on the writing shortcomings of inexperienced composers creates a burden which is more tedious and depressing than many writing instructors care to bear. Ironically, it is a burden they have assumed upon themselves, throwing the writing classroom priorities and responsibilities completely out of balance,
benefitting neither teacher nor student to any great degree.

It is ironic, then, that the teacher, with all his skill and experience in editing, revising and correcting, would expect a student, with his overwhelming inexperience and lack of revising skill, to be able to improve a paper by following instructions to "Proofread" or "Clarify" or make specific what is "Vague." Expecting a fledgling writer to correct his own writing with no recognition of what he has done wrong in the first place is roughly equivalent to asking a patient to perform surgery upon himself with no knowledge of the surgical instruments available and no accurate sense of where his ailing parts are located. Teachers who correct and revise papers for their students as well as teachers who expect the students to revise their own work without providing them with strategies for attack run the danger of being "so bound by the academic conventions as to be insensitive to the difficulties they pose for others." They sometimes forget what a complex and forbidding mystery composing can be for an unprepared writer.

Many writing teachers operate according to what Gene Stanford calls the "Assign-Assess Myth." They assign compositions to their students, collect them and personally evaluate every word, after which they assign yet another composition, again to be assessed solely by the teacher. This becomes a trap for both the teacher and student, with roles and performance functions too rigidly assigned. The teacher selects the subject, sets all the stipulations, marks all the errors, suggests whatever revision needs to be done, and determines a grade
which represents his evaluation of the final product's worth. Typically, no one else reads the student's composition, and the revising he does is usually limited to the correction of minor spelling, punctuation and simple grammar infractions.

This traditional approach of 'assign—have students write—pass it back—and—make—the—next—assignment' removes teachers from interaction with students. Teachers are in the position of reacting to papers, not people.

...we are clinging to a myth that to learn to write well, students must always write whole compositions in which every error is marked by the teacher and that the teacher does not respond to the writing until a finished product is submitted.

There are numerous unfortunate results of this traditional writing instruction format. Some teachers become so overburdened with the task of correcting errors that they shy away from making writing assignments, preferring to require only the amount of writing they can successfully handle by themselves. Or even worse, they dislike the correction task to such a great degree that they avoid it altogether, opting to assign drills and exercises in lieu of composition. This robs the composition student, particularly the poor one, of the frequent writing practice he so desperately needs to become more familiar with the writing process. Many of the teachers who assign relatively few pieces of writing have fallen under the spell of what one teacher calls the "Write Less/Grade Less Principle."
Another phenomenon resulting from the traditional 'student writes/teacher corrects' set-up is the over-graded paper. Some instructors become so zealous in their efforts to locate and expunge errors that an unskillfully executed assignment may well be returned to the student completely covered with correction marks, frequently in bright, accusatory red. The over-graded paper can cause the already unconfident B.W. student to retreat and become defensive, blocking out instruction altogether. A continually criticized student writer who feels overly oppressed is not likely to feel good about his chances for self-improvement. The diligent marking of each writing infraction can too often be deadly defeating.

Finger exercises, trial runs, rough drafts, experimentation—these are all part of the process of learning to write. But, unlike the athlete who is allowed to practice in order to improve skills, the writer in the over-grader's classroom is always playing a varsity game in the glare of the spotlight.101

It is the growing contention among English teachers and educators that more of the onus for spotting mistakes and revising discourse should rest with the student writers themselves, not with the teachers. "It is not the teacher's job to become the student's copyreader, responsible for locating every error."102 This represents a significant shift in perspective from the more traditional outlook, and as such represents another supporting pillar unholding Shaughnessy's composing theory. She not only believes that students should be taught to perform their own revising and correct their own errors, but she gives practical, applicable recommendations for how that might be accomplished.
This is by no means an easy undertaking, for students in general have not been encouraged to develop and apply their analytical abilities, and therefore may lack the confidence they need to overhaul their own work. Teachers must help build this confidence by demonstrating to them that their mistakes occur for reasons, that those reasons can be understood, and that the more acceptable academic forms can be learned just as the erroneous ones were.

The students must be taught the systematic nature of Standard English. He has to become aware that language is subject to analysis and self-manipulation.

To revise a sentence a writer must have a way, a place, a strategy for breaking into it, but beginning writers tend to experience their sentences as an unmanageable stream of words which, once set in motion, cannot be turned back.

Shaughnessy describes the writing behavior of the B.W. student as "headlong," tumbling forward chaotically to the next word, phrase, thought. This forward momentum characterizes what we do quite naturally in speech, and is also appropriate for the composing stage of the writing process. However, if we divide the performances involved in composition into rhetorical skills and editorial skills, we see that a different method of attack must be introduced in teaching students the editorial phase of the composing task.

To become a successful reviser, one must develop the ability to look backward at what has already been set down. This is a complex, analytical procedure most inexperienced writers are unprepared to do without training and practice. It goes against habit for most unskilled
writers to go back over what they have already done. They are used to moving ahead, however unsuccessfully, and "...any pattern that counters this pitch forward...is likely to be avoided or mismanaged, and any behavior that turns [them] back, as re-scanning, rewording, and proof-reading do, is against the grain and must be practiced."105

This ability to rescan or reword sentences or passages assumes several things of the student writer: "a memory for unheard sentences, an ability to store verbal patterns visually from left to right,... and an ability to suspend closure on those patterns until, through additions, deletions, substitutions, or rearrangements, the words fit the intended meaning."106 It also requires that the writer be conscious of his purpose, knowing what it is that he wants to say.

One methodology for familiarizing young writers with revising and editing skills is implied in the biblical observation that it is far easier to notice the beam in the eye of another than to remove the mote in our own. Shaughnessy believes that students should be exposed to one another's work, as well as that of the teacher, in order to gain valuable proofreading experience.

Precisely because writing is a social act, a kind of synthesis that is reached through the dialectic of discussion, the teaching of writing must often begin with the experience of dialogue, and end with the experience of a real audience, not only of teacher but of peers.107

Proofreading, although the central skill for the editorial stage of the writing process, is one of those 'simple' skills students do not often learn well. Teachers commonly instruct students to 'proofread'
a rough draft or final copy in need of revision. "But it is a way of reading that must be learned, not merely enjoined or, worse, taken over by the teacher." 108 Many of the errors that students write would have never been made in speech, yet when an inexperienced writer looks over his work, he frequently misses seeing the errors on the page. Part of the problem is his underdeveloped sense of visual acuity, as previously discussed. But an additional factor is the writer's inability to objectify his own work.

B.W. students are typically egocentric writers, lacking a real sense of audience. They write 'writing,' not 'reading,' and their words flow in a semi-conscious extension of their unconsolidated thoughts. They assume the reader understands their buried meaning through their scrambled grammar and syntax, and have difficulty looking at their discourse as an objective phenomenon subject to analysis.

They could not objectify their own product... although they may well have caught similar errors written by their peers. Nor are they likely to do this so long as teachers keep marking the errors for them rather than training them to see for themselves.109

Though Shaughnessy did not originate the concept of peer evaluation and student editing, she stands behind the idea with a growing company of writing instructors who believe that their students benefit immensely from examining one another's discourse. They gain valuable practice in identifying and helping change writing mistakes, while at the same time comparing their own skills and abilities with those of their peers.
Various curricula and schemes are coming into practice based on this notion that students can help one another and have worthwhile insights to share. One example, proposed and developed by an innovative writing teacher is the "editorial group." Writing students are divided into small groups, each group consisting of three students who take an assigned role. One serves as the author, one the editor, and one the proofreader. They each write a paper, serving as author, and rotate the other two role responsibilities. All receive a group grade or evaluation when the three papers have been satisfactorily revised.

Another plan for collaborative peer assistance developed by a high school composition instructor employs a carefully structured group activity known as the "Critic's Circle." Students read verbatim copies of one another's compositions, complete a critique sheet containing six or seven questions geared to the writing assignment, and then gather in a circle to share their suggestions and observations with the author, who has volunteered his paper for examination. The author afterward receives all the critique sheets for further feedback. There is an opportunity to submit at least two drafts of a composition to the Critic's Circle procedure before the author presents a final version for teacher evaluation.

There is growing support for these interactive types of pedagogical strategies. People naturally seek feedback from their fellows, and settings which encourage peer editing provide ideal opportunities
for inexperienced authors to see how their writing is perceived by a real audience. Ken Macrorie calls such peer groups "helping circles," while Peter Elbow calls for the teacherless writing class. Whatever the arrangement, such a strategy for handling revision is supported by psycholinguist Vygotsky's conviction that collaborative undertakings help advance individual achievement.

We propose that an essential feature of learning is that it creates the zone of proximal development; that is, learning awakens a variety of internal developmental processes that are able to operate only when the child is interacting with people in his environment and in cooperation with his peers. Once these processes are internalized, they become part of the child's independent developmental achievement.

When the individual has become familiar with a stable, consistent method of revising his work, and after he has internalized the perceptions his writing elicits from others, he is ready to rework his own compositions to his own and his instructor's satisfaction.

Shaughnessy keys in on this readiness in her theory. Once the student has been brought to a point where he recognizes that he can alter the language in systematic ways, and once an audience of readers and reactors has shown him how effective his alterations can be, he is ready to tackle revision independently. No longer does he have to depend totally on the teacher for all his editing work. The teacher becomes a facilitator, a collaborator and participant in a mutual and collective effort to provide insights, feedback. It is no fast, simple process, but "eventually a student can learn to correct his own writing what he has learned to correct in someone else's."
Peer editing is often helpful in validating an unconfident writer's sense of worth and respect for his ideas and his genuine ability to improve. Shaughnessy maps out a further strategy for writing improvement which the individual may adopt and apply to his revising task independently. She advocates helping the B.W. student classify the kinds of errors he is making most often. The classification of errors will help demonstrate to a mistake-prone writer that, though he may be committing a large number of errors, they actually boil down to a relatively few types. This makes error elimination seem less hopeless and gargantuan a task.

After a young writer has been helped to classify his errors (for example, subject/verb agreement or shift in tense), he must be trained to analyze them. Error analysis performed by the writer himself yields manyfold benefits. For example, it helps eliminate the mysterious nature of mistakes. "The 'mystery' of error is what most intimidates students—the worry that errors just 'happen' without a person's knowing how or when..." "Most [common errors] finally come under the control of the writer once he has learned to look at them analytically during the proof-reading stage of composition."116

Analyzing errors is no easy task, for it calls upon the student to shift his focus from writing to reading. Shaughnessy reiterates that error correction is an editorial rather than a composing skill, and as such, requires the B.W. student to perceive forms rather than meaning. They are not in the habit of examining sentences to understand the
internal relationship of words and phrases, and must be permitted the opportunity to arrive at grammatical principles intuitively and inductively.

...throughout instruction, a student should be encouraged not simply to have the right answers but to have grammatical reasons for what he does, for grammar is more a way of thinking, a style of inquiry, than a way of being right.\textsuperscript{117}

As a means of shifting the burden of error analysis and correction gradually onto the shoulders of the student writer, Shaughnessy tenders two objectives: 1) to introduce unskilled writers to several key concepts that underscore many of their writing problems, and 2) to equip them with operational strategies for checking these key concepts in their own writing.

Four important concepts which she considers crucial in order for a student to revise his own work are 1) the sentence, 2) inflection, 3) tense, and 4) agreement. The understanding of these grammatical components gives the writer a conceptual framework from which to perceive and correct his own difficulties in these areas. "Grammar should be a matter not of memorizing rules or definitions but of thinking through problems as they arise."\textsuperscript{118}

Encouraging an inexperienced writer to spot and eliminate his own mistakes is slow work, and the results are frequently difficult to measure.

But at this stage of the student's development as a writer, the rate of error reduction...is not as important as other less measurable kinds of behavior—for example, a growing inclination to scrutinize sentences in order to observe the forms of words
or increased confidence in one's ability to make deliberate choices of word forms based on grammatical reasoning.\textsuperscript{119}

To get at his writing problems, the student must spend time learning to discover them. Once he is able to do this, "the analysis of errors becomes a habitual part of the proofreading stage of composition."\textsuperscript{120}

Error analysis, another of the mainstays of Shaughnessy's composing theory, is gaining increased acceptance among practitioners of writing instruction. One high school writing teacher indicates the location of mistakes on his students' early composition drafts without categorizing them as to class or type. "...the procedure requires students to explain in their own words why each error marked on their paper is in fact an error."\textsuperscript{121} The goal of such a strategy is to help students understand and eliminate their own errors, and to accept more responsibility for the accuracy of their own writing.

Students must gain practice in two essential areas in order to become more successful at revising their own writing. They need training in the perception of structure, and training in the recognition of thought patterns. Relating to the perception of structure, Donald Murray, in \textit{A Writer Teaches Writing},\textsuperscript{122} calls for work in 're-vision' -- the practice of 're-seeing' one's own composition.

While Shaughnessy hopes that an awareness of correct form will gradually begin to crop up in early drafts of an assignment, she essentially maintains that "the process of getting things right should be a central concern of the writer only during the proofreading stage of
each composition." Proofreading is an alien and unfamiliar behavior for poor writers, and must be practiced to become a routine discipline. But once it is mastered, the onus of revision will rest in its proper place— with the young writers themselves.

Conclusion

The value of Shaughnessy's work lies not only in the concrete, relevant suggestions and schemas she offers for the improvement of writing instruction, but also in the attitude underlying these methods and procedures. She deeply believes that young writers are intelligent and capable of absorbing language instruction, and she also believes that the vast majority of English teachers are going about writing instruction the wrong way. Teachers too often regard themselves as the priesthood of the English language, dedicated to keeping it pure and undefiled; they should, instead, picture themselves as cultivators, nourishers of a live, growing phenomenon.

The over-concentration, even obsession, with error that has manifested itself in English education for many decades has thrown composition instruction out of balance. "Errors count, but not as much as most English teachers think." Teachers have tended to view their students' errors with repugnance, microscopically, with too little attention to what was being said.

Taking all errors to be the province of remedial English, they doom their students and themselves to a sense of failure when they garner but a limited crop of correct forms by the end of a semester.
Shaughnessy regards the mistakes Basic Writers make on their papers as veritable beacons, signalling not only their inadequate language training, their vast lack of familiarity with the formal written code that comes so easily to an experienced teacher, but also their ingenuity with a linguistic system that operates, for them, like a foreign language. "The student who has learned to make these errors reveals through them, all the linguistic sophistication he needs to correct them."126

In order to accomplish his purpose, the writing instructor must gain respect for his students' talents, motivations, and inherent desire to solve complex problems. The teacher must recognize that, when it comes to an inadequate writer, "Generally little in his formal education has prepared him to detect complexity, let alone cope with it in causal explanations."127 When the teacher begins to believe that his students' errors reflect only their linguistic situation, not their educability, real progress can begin. Through dialogue and error analysis, students can begin to comprehend the sources for many of their own mistakes, and once they have this handle on their writing problems, they can begin to alter and revise their writing in systematic, logical ways.

The nature of composition is essentially processive, and one must keep firmly in mind that "Writing is something writers are always learning to do."128 Composing is as much a way of exploring one's thought as recording what has already been thought. By relegating a concern for being correct to the revision stage of the writing process, the inexperienced writer can gain confidence in producing writing in an authentic
voice with real meaning. At a later point, when he has found something he wants to say, he can begin to tailor it for the eyes of other people. But he cannot take on this task without getting his grammatical bearings, "so that he can reason rather than hazard his way through his difficulties."129

Unfortunately, through their training and pedagogical experience, "English teachers have begun to realize that little in their background has prepared them to teach writing to someone who has not already learned to do it."130 One of the chief factors that keeps teachers in this unrealistic fog is that they do not write enough to recognize the difficulty of the task for their less experienced students. Shaughnessy believes that teachers themselves should carry out the assignments they give, in order to identify more closely with what their young writers go through.

She also strongly advocates peer assistance in editing, reworking and revising each individual's compositions. Learning to recognize the shortcomings of other writers in one's group can lead to spotting the flaws in one's own work. Having others read a student's material causes him to develop a sense of audience, which helps him realize his accountability to the reader at all times.

Instead of despairing over the seemingly endless stream of mistakes poor writers make, Shaughnessy counsels teachers to look for the intelligence that has caused these writers to learn the mistakes in the first place. Her central concern is that teachers must believe in the
possibility of their students' growth and writing improvement. A teacher operating with negative attitudes toward his students' edubility defeats his purpose at the onset of writing instruction.

Assume at the outset that...[errors]...can be brought under control. Nothing inhibits growth among B.W. students more than the conviction that their errors are both infinite and unpredictable. ...teachers too often communicate this message themselves. ...Once, however, the student senses a teacher's confidence in the face of a problem the student has despaired of solving, he begins to redefine his situation.131

If indeed the teacher's attitude is so crucial to successful writing improvement among B.W. students, it would be well worthwhile to examine the prevalent attitudes toward writing instruction held by current writing instructors and English teachers in general. In the following chapter, I will describe the evolution and set-up of a research design to explore teacher attitudes and beliefs about specific aspects of Shaughnessy's composing theory, and writing instruction in general.
Chapter III: Footnotes


3. Shaughnessy, p. 3.


5. Shaughnessy, p. 4.


15. Shaughnessy, p. 287.

16. Elbow, Writing Without Teachers, p. 27.


22 Labov, p. 222.
23 Shaughnessy, p. 17.
24 Shaughnessy, p. 66.
25 Shaughnessy, p. 82.
26 Shaughnessy, p. 292.
27 Shaughnessy, p. 5.
28 Shaughnessy, p. 13.
30 Shaughnessy, p. 79.
31 Shaughnessy, p. 10.
32 Shaughnessy, p. 79.
33 Shaughnessy, p. 73.
34 Shaughnessy, p. 10.
35 Shaughnessy, p. 10.
36 Shaughnessy, p. 161.
38 Shaughnessy, p. 67.
39 Shaughnessy, p. 78.
41 Shaughnessy, p. 7.
42 Shaughnessy, p. 11.

45 Shaughnessy, p. 7.

46 Shaughnessy, p. 85.

47 Fox, p. 39.

48 Shaughnessy, p. 79.

49 Shaughnessy, p. 80.

50 Shaughnessy, p. 59.

51 Shaughnessy, p. 65.

52 Shaughnessy, p. 28.

53 Shaughnessy, p. 80.


55 Daiute, p. 9.

56 Daiute, p. 9.

57 Daiute, p. 18.


59 Rodrigues, p. 164.

60 Shaughnessy, p. 6.

61 Shaughnessy, p. 284.

62 Shaughnessy, p. 284.

63 Shaughnessy, p. 286

64 Shaughnessy, p. 73.
65 Shaughnessy, p. 73.
66 Shaughnessy, p. 73.
67 Emig, p. 91.
68 Shaughnessy, p. 73.
70 Shaughnessy, p. 129.
71 Shaughnessy, p. 129.
72 Shaughnessy, p. 155.
73 Shaughnessy, p. 236.
74 Shaughnessy, p. 156.
75 Emig, p. 4.
76 Emig, p. 5.
77 Shaughnessy, p. 79.
78 Shaughnessy, p. 79.
79 Shaughnessy, p. 79.
80 Shaughnessy, p. 81.
81 Shaughnessy, p. 81.
82 Shaughnessy, p. 85.
83 Emig, Introduction.
84 Emig, p. 1.
85 Emig, p. 16.
87 John Ciardi, as quoted in Emig, *The Composing Processes of Twelfth Graders*, p. 16.

88 Gertrude Stein, as quoted in Emig's *The Composing Processes of Twelfth Graders*, p. 22.

89 Shaughnessy, p. 81.

90 Shaughnessy, p. 44.

91 Shaughnessy, p. 89.

92 Shaughnessy, p. 89.

93 Shaughnessy, p. 81.

94 Shaughnessy, p. 194.

95 Emig, p. 98.

96 Shaughnessy, p. 81.

97 Shaughnessy, p. 225.


103 Shaughnessy, p. 78.


105 Shaughnessy, p. 80.

106 Shaughnessy, p. 80.
107  Shaughnessy, p. 83.
108  Shaughnessy, p. 85.
109  Shaughnessy, p. 85.
113  Elbow, Writing Without Teachers.
114  Vygotsky, Mind in Society, p. 90.
115  Shaughnessy, p. 123.
116  Shaughnessy, p. 127.
117  Shaughnessy, p. 129.
118  Shaughnessy, p. 137.
119  Shaughnessy, p. 159.
120  Shaughnessy, p. 186.
123  Shaughnessy, p. 289.
124  Shaughnessy, p. 120.
125  Shaughnessy, p. 119.
126  Shaughnessy, p. 118.
127  Shaughnessy, p. 263.
CHAPTER IV

METHODOLOGY

In developing a methodology for conducting social research of both a quantitative and qualitative nature, it is first necessary to identify the aims and objectives such a study might encompass. As set forth in Chapter I, the principal object of this research endeavor is the attempt to identify and describe high school English teachers' attitudes and beliefs toward the role of error in writing instruction. A corollary goal is the development of research techniques to determine to what extent teachers concur with selected principles of Mina Shaughnessy's composing theory.

Reviewing the Objectives of the Study

The objectives of the study having been established, there are a series of interrelated steps by which typical social research is conducted. These steps or stages, as outlined by Oppenheim in 1966, are as follows:

1) A review of the relevant literature pertaining to the subject, and discussion with those informed and interested in that subject;

2) Designing the study; making hypotheses specific to a situation, or making the hypotheses operational;

3) Designing or adapting the necessary research methods and techniques; piloting and revising the instruments;
4) The sampling process, the selection of people to be approached as potential respondents;

5) The field-work stage; collection of data and returns;

6) Data processing, coding of responses, preparation of punch cards;

7) Statistical analysis, testing for statistical significance;

8) Assembling results and testing hypotheses;

9) Writing up the results; relating findings to other research; drawing conclusions and interpretations about the results of the study. 1

As Oppenheim defines it, "The function of research design is to help us obtain clear answers to meaningful questions." 2 Shaughnessy's Errors and Expectations, described and analyzed in detail in Chapter III, represents to some English educators a superior presentation of 'clear answers to meaningful questions' in the area of writing instruction. As such, it made a logical starting place for formulating research tools appropriate to this inquiry.

The literature most directly appropriate to the subject at hand is Shaughnessy's main work, Errors and Expectations. A page by page search of the text yielded an initial pool of two-hundred and fifty statements English teachers might agree or disagree with. Then an effort was made to cluster statements derived in this manner around central ideas or controlling principles. Five general groupings emerged from this process, all of which seemed at first to represent theoretical tenets of Shaughnessy. After submitting these five clusters of ideas to colleagues and the principal academic advisor on this project,
it was found that a sixth category of statement clusters was needed to encompass an additional theoretical notion critical to Shaughnessy's composing theory, that of psychological error.

The final six categories or 'principles' which grew from an in-depth examination of Errors and Expectations are as follows (the same six statements were examined one by one in Chapter III):

1) HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS ARE LINGUISTICALLY SOPHISTICATED.
2) INEXPERIENCED WRITERS FREQUENTLY MAKE WRITING ERRORS FOR LOGICAL, RATIONAL, INTELLIGENT REASONS.
3) UNSKILLED WRITERS SOMETIMES MAKE ERRORS FOR PSYCHOLOGICAL REASONS.
4) NO ONE PEDAGOGICAL APPROACH IS APPROPRIATE OR SUFFICIENT FOR THE TEACHING OF WRITING.
5) THE WRITING PROCESS IS A CRITICAL AND NEGLECTED FEATURE OF THE COMPOSITION CLASSROOM.
6) THE ABILITY TO REVISE ONE'S ERRORS AND SHORTCOMINGS SHOULD BE A MAJOR GOAL IN THE COMPOSITION CLASSROOM.

Identifying the Population

It was then necessary to identify a population on whom to try out these principles. The Columbus, Ohio public school system with its seventeen high schools and some two hundred secondary English teachers represented the largest sample of young adult writing students and writing instructors in the local area. In addition to geographical convenience, this system displayed a more varied cross-section in terms of economic background, racial diversity, and teacher experience than any of the other surrounding school systems. Moreover, the Columbus
system desired some descriptive and analytical information about its secondary English program, and was thus willing to support this inquiry in order to learn more about how the secondary writing curriculum could be improved.

**Selecting the Research Tools**

Schatzmann and Strauss cite three major methods applicable to analyzing social research data: straight description, analytic description and substantive theory. The present inquiry touches upon all three methods to varying degrees, and requires somewhat different research techniques for each one. Straight description may be accomplished by quantitative means, for example, the simple tabulation of numerical and percentage responses to an attitude assessing instrument by a sample population, or by qualitative means, for example the verbatim or summary presentation of participants' responses to interview questions.

Analytical description involves breaking descriptive data into classes or sets or clusters of ideas and respondents. This method lends itself more facilely to statistical manipulation to determine significant variance between or among groups or categories of data, in order to identify which variables affect the attitudes and beliefs of the participant population.

Both straight and analytical description can yield linkages between classes of data. The analysis of these relationships can help develop sets of propositions which may hold together as substantive theory. Indeed, the whole of this research endeavor has focused on a
substantive theory of composing, and the data-gathering techniques employed were designed to explore such theory and its component parts in depth.

In deciding what methods to apply to the problem, it is crucial to recognize the considerable gap between what quantitative and qualitative research attempts to achieve. It could be described as the SCIENCE/INSIGHT controversy. On one hand, hard replicable data gives the researcher something solid to hold on to and upon which to build his case. The danger in relying solely on statistically derived conclusions is that one tends to lose sight of the human element in the results. Researchers relying on quantitative techniques alone may come to regard their populations as "people appearing as numbers in their tables and as correlations in their matrices." However, the essentially subjective nature of the qualitative approach exposes itself to a significant lack of reliability and to the researcher's demon, personal bias. It depends too much on the sharp intuitive nature of the researcher, his 'genius.'

Therefore, a blend of both designs was developed to apply to this attitude assessment project, in the hope that one design would largely compensate for the shortcomings of the other, as well as provide supportive and overlapping data wherever possible. An attitude inventory was assembled and refined and designed to be administered to the total population of Columbus high school English teachers, while an interview guide was prepared to be used as a foundation for in-depth
conversations with a small representative number of teachers selected out of the greater English teacher population.

Development of the Likert Type Inventory

It was determined that a Likert-type attitude inventory would allow for a suitable range of responses to pairs of statements focusing on each of the six theoretical tenets from Shaughnessy's theory. The typical Likert-type instrument model contains scales consisting of pairs of positive and negative statements centering on the major controlling idea within each scale. Each statement can be reacted along a continuum ranging from 'Strongly Agree' to 'Strongly Disagree,' with the responses 'Strongly Agree' and 'Agree' receiving weights of 5 and 4 points respectively, 'Undecided' receiving a value of 3, and the responses 'Disagree' and 'Strongly Disagree' receiving 2 and 1 points in turn.

It is thus possible to obtain raw numerical scores indicating a degree of agreement with the instrument as a whole or its six discrete scales. A high score would indicate greater agreement with Shaughnessy's principles, while a low score would demonstrate a lack of agreement with her theory and its parts.

A critical element in designing a Likert-type instrument is the generation and refinement of individual item statements. Their clear, precise, unambiguous presentation will assure a high degree of reliability, so careful attention was given to the formulation of items. Initially, a large number of paired positively and negatively phrased
statements were listed under each of the six principles to be tested, some thirty to forty apiece. Gradually, this list was reduced to a more workable number through the advice of fellow colleagues and English teachers.

It was not desirable, however, to overly reduce the item pool, since, "The more aspects of a particular attitude one can include, the more one is likely to get scores that will mean something in terms of an underlying attitude."^7

Refining the Instrument Statements

A list of 84 items consisting of seven positive and negative pairs per sub scale was printed up and distributed to a small group of English teachers, English graduate students and professors for expert validation. These people were asked to judge each item for its clarity, lack of ambiguity, importance relative to the central topic, and how it might be improved.

Of the 84 initial items, twelve statements were deemed less suitable than the rest and were subsequently dropped, leaving an item list of 72 statements, arranged into six scales containing from five to seven pairs, opposite versions of ideas appropriate to each separate scale. The scales were arranged as follows:

- Scale 1 - 14 items - 7 pairs
- Scale 2 - 12 items - 6 pairs
- Scale 3 - 10 items - 5 pairs
- Scale 4 - 12 items - 6 pairs
- Scale 5 - 12 items - 6 pairs
- Scale 6 - 12 items - 6 pairs
The six scales comprising the pilot instrument were presented in the same order as the six principles of Shaughnessy's theory which were analyzed in Chapter III. The first three scales explore the inherent abilities students naturally possess, their raw material, and the factors that might counteract these resources. The last three scales deal essentially with student performance, what they actively demonstrate because of or in spite of those abilities. Rather than mixing the six scales randomly, it seemed best to allow respondents to concentrate on the two major emphases of thought without jumping back and forth. The six scales were arranged in the following order, with the item breakdown included:

- Scale 1 - Linguistic Sophistication - Item 1 to Item 14
- Scale 2 - Logically Based Error - Item 15 to Item 26
- Scale 3 - Psychologically Based Error - Item 27 to Item 36
- Scale 4 - Pedagogical Approaches - Item 37 to Item 48
- Scale 5 - Writing Process - Item 49 to Item 60
- Scale 6 - Student Revision - Item 61 to Item 72

Within each separate scale, the items were presented according to random order\(^8\) to help reduce the phenomenon of response set on the part of the participants. On the pilot survey, there were no external divisions between scales apparent to the respondents, in the hope that they would react to each item on its own basis. Respondents who completed the inventory could score from a low of 72 points to a high of 360 points, with a median raw score of 216.
Identifying the Pilot Group

For the pilot group, the English department of a high school which typifies the Columbus public secondary high schools was selected to represent the total system population of English teachers. Linden-McKinley High School was suggested by the school system's language arts supervisor as an ideal place to conduct the pilot study, partly because its English department members were extremely cooperative in ventures of this nature, and also because they possessed a good deal of experience in teaching composition and as such would have informed opinions about the pertinent issues.

The pilot study was conducted on April 13, 1981, and involved ten English teachers who completed the pilot attitude inventory of seventy-two items. Before they were given time to fill out the instrument, they were given a brief explanation of the purposes and objectives of the study, and were encouraged to ask questions. The time used for completion of the ten instruments was approximately one-half hour, after which, a few teachers remained behind to discuss issues raised by the survey and the project as a whole. A copy of the pilot instrument is included at the end of this chapter, and as can be seen, ample space was provided for additional comments and critiques of items. The sample population took advantage of the opportunity to make suggestions for improvements on a number of the items, and suggested a few other areas they felt had not been adequately dealt with. These comments proved to be very helpful in determining the final form of statements for the
total population survey.

The Pilot Study

Following the administration of the sample survey to the Linden-McKinley English faculty, the resultant data was analyzed numerically and statistically. First, the raw response scores were coded, key punched and computer analyzed to obtain reliability coefficients and to perform one-way analyses of variance. The sample survey began with a biographical data sheet consisting of ten questions regarding the respondents' personal background, age, teaching experience, present teaching situation and attitude toward teaching composition. Each variable was analyzed for its relative significance in relation to respondents' attitudes, and none of the biographical variables were found to be significant at the .05 level or below.

Through item analysis, statements receiving a negative correlation item to item were identified and targeted for improvement or removal from the final instrument. Table 33 presents the item analysis data identifying weak statements in the pilot survey. Using Cronback's alpha as a technique to achieve full scale and individual scale reliability analysis, the overall instrument received an alpha of 0.91860. Table 2 shows the reliability analysis data for the six sub scales of the pilot instrument. The reader may note that Scale 3 received a markedly lower alpha coefficient than the other individual scales, and would therefore require reformulation on the final version of the instrument. The full scale coefficient 0.91860 indicates a high degree of reliability on the
instrument as a whole, with strong coefficients for three sub scales, satisfactory reliability coefficients for two sub scales, and one unsatisfactory result on the previously mentioned scale.

**Refining the Instrument for the Final Survey**

Of the seventy-two original pilot items, eleven received negative correlations and thus needed to be examined to decide whether removing them or rewording them would be the most effective technique in formulating the final instrument. With the assistance of five high school English teachers, graduate students, and committee advisors, the eleven statements were reworked a number of times to eliminate their relative ambiguity or lack of precision. It was ultimately decided that none of the eleven items should be removed, since they all covered areas that needed to be dealt with in the final survey to some degree. Paring down the instrument does not necessarily yield satisfactory information, and the more data one can gather pertinent to a specific question, the more dependable answers may be obtained. The eleven statements had, nevertheless, to be revised into tighter, more explicit forms, which was accomplished by rewording each one until a small group could all agree that a given statement conveyed a specific meaning.

**Identifying the Final Survey Population**

During winter of 1981, all the senior high schools were contacted and asked to provide me with current teaching schedules for their English department members for both first and second semester. 'English'
teachers were defined as anyone assigned a regular (as opposed to developmentally handicapped) English class either first or second semester, and since the guidelines set down by the system's language arts curriculum directors require that every regular English class at the senior high level contain a writing component, each English teacher could technically be considered a writing instructor, at least occasionally. It might be noted that the educable mentally retarded instructors and learning disability tutors working in the high schools reported that they did very little writing per se, and were therefore inappropriate respondents to the planned survey.

A list of teachers and their subject assignments as of the beginning of the 1980-1981 school year was obtained from the secondary language arts supervisor. This information made it possible to cross-reference names of current English teachers to be contacted as potential respondents with the individual high school daily schedules. This cross-referencing yielded a list of 188 active English teachers at the seventeen secondary schools in the Columbus system. Ten of these people had been participants in the pilot study, and were subsequently unsuitable respondents for the final survey, since their responses could well have been prejudiced by their exposure to the earlier version of the instrument and its contents. That left 178 individuals to contact.

**Data Collection: The Final Survey**

Typically, field research conducted through the mails is unsatisfactory in terms of response rate and representativeness of the
total population. Fortunately, it was possible to communicate with all
the potential respondents through the inter-school mail system, a more
convenient and direct approach to the individuals I sought to contact.
Public school teachers receive numerous requests for participation in
research studies of a survey nature, and it was therefore necessary to
convince them of the relative importance this particular study implied.
Many field research authors recommend sending a cover letter along with
the instrument which explains its intentions and assures the respondents
of confidentiality, feedback, and anonymity in return for their coopera-
tive participation.9 As Berdie and Anderson point out, "To obtain a
respondent's involvement and cooperation, it is necessary to impress him
with the seriousness and importance of the project. [Potential respon-
dents] must be assured that the results will justify the time and effort
expended in filling out the questionnaire."10 This was accomplished by
including an introductory cover letter to be read before the teacher be-
gan the attitude inventory. A copy of the cover letter is included at
the end of this chapter.

Another helpful recommendation from field research experts is
the inclusion where possible of an endorsement of the project by an
appropriate person or group connected with the sample population.11
This came in the form of a letter from the Secondary Supervisor of
Language Arts for the school system upon which the project focused. A
copy of that endorsement is presented at the end of the chapter.
The final questionnaire package contained, in order, an endorsement letter encouraging all high school English teachers to complete the survey, an introductory letter explaining the aims of the study and the survey and guaranteeing privacy of responses, a biographical data sheet designed to gather specific personal and experiential information from each respondent, and finally a three-page attitude inventory containing seventy-two items to be answered along a continuum from 'Strongly Agree' to 'Strongly Disagree.' The survey instrument itself contained one-half page of blank space available to each respondent for additional comments or criticisms of the survey.

The biographical data sheet consisted of ten question areas which sought the following information: (A copy of the bio sheet is included at the chapter's end.):

1) Number of years teaching experience;
2) English only on present schedule, or English and other subjects;
3) Undergraduate course work in writing instruction;
4) Graduate work in writing instruction;
5) In-service training experience within school systems;
6) Present teaching schedule—primarily composition or non-comp courses;
7) Age;
8) Ethnic heritage;
9) Enjoyment of writing instruction;
10) Preparedness to teach writing.

At the top of the first page of the attitude inventory were specific instructions for marking and responding to the items. Items were numbered sequentially from '1' to '72' and five possible responses were made available in a column on the right side of each page. Respondents were asked to circle one of these five: SA=Strongly Agree; A=
A=Agree; U=Undecided; D=Disagree; and SD=Strongly Disagree. Page 1 of the instrument contained items '1' through '28,' Page 2 contained items '29' through '56,' and Page 3 held items '57' through '72,' plus ample space for remarks by individual respondents.

Participants were requested to return the completed surveys to me through school mail or to the Language Arts Supervisor's office, to be forwarded to me. My name and phone number as well as my address were printed both on the cover letter and the final page of the survey, in order for those who needed an extra copy or a replacement copy to secure one promptly. The final surveys were sent out on May 18, 1981, and respondents were encouraged to return them as soon as possible, preferably within two weeks.

Follow-Up Techniques

A critical factor in conducting successful survey research is achieving a high rate of return, and since surveys are by nature less personal than other more face-to-face methods, a considerable portion of the total survey population can be expected not to reply on first exposure to the instrument. This necessitates the design of several follow-up plans to encourage more participation by additional respondents. As a specific tactic in encouraging greater returns, "The use of follow-ups, or reminders, is certainly the most potential technique yet discovered for increasing the response rate."12
One week after the initial mailing of the instrument package to all potential respondents in the system, the first follow-up letter was sent on May 26, 1981 to each person who had not, by that time, returned the completed questionnaire. The letter encouraged people to locate their original surveys, request new ones, and complete them promptly. This tactic brought in around thirty completed questionnaires, and as soon as this response began to wane, a second follow-up letter was sent out via school mail, along with a second copy of the survey and a hand-written note from me. Perhaps another ten to fifteen completions were received after this letter was received.

The academic year ended in mid-June, so contacting people through school mail was no longer an option. This necessitated follow-up three, a phoning campaign. Beginning the week school dismissed, I contacted nearly everyone who had not yet returned a completed survey and asked them to participate in the study. This activity proved profitable in two ways—it yielded a few more cooperative respondents who, through discussion, saw the positive benefits of the study and agreed to complete the inventory, and it enabled me to reduce the potential respondent list from 178 people to 166 individuals. Of the twelve teachers dropped from the population sample, several were on leave due to illness or maternity, a few had moved from the district, and the remainder had changed teaching schedules during mid-year and could not be considered as current English teachers. So the new N=166.
As a fourth attempt to increase the response rate, I mailed additional copies of the instrument to those not yet responding, along with handwritten letters asking for cooperation. This was backed up by a second round of phone calls in mid-July. By the time the data were key-punched and tabulated, 116 teachers out of 166 had returned completed survey forms, representing a return rate of 70%, a respectable response for questionnaire research.

If the follow-up strategy used to obtain a 70% response rate seems a bit excessive, it should be noted that persistence is a highly successful technique in questionnaire research. To sum up the underlying purpose of follow-up strategies, "The ultimate objective is to obtain as many responses as possible, in the form of completed questionnaires which provide usable data. If questionnaire forms meet the criteria of physical attractiveness and obvious consideration for the respondent, it is believed that the percentage of replies will be sufficiently high to fulfill the requirements of the investigator. Every conceivable inducement should be used in the hope of convincing one more potential respondent to take the time and effort necessary to answer the questionnaire."

Data Coding and Processing

Responses on the survey items were converted into numerical values according to a typical Likert-type model, with a high score of five indicating agreement with Shaughnessy and a low score of one displaying disagreement with her principles. These scores were transferred
to computer cards through key punching, and each individual respondent was assigned a code number from one to 116 which identified that person's data throughout the computer tabulation. Names of respondents were not used at any time during the study except during the data collection phase to keep track of who had responded and who had not.

The quantified data was then submitted to statistical analysis in order to derive numerical and descriptive information about the sample population and their attitudes toward the survey items and Shaughnessy's composing theory as it is represented by them. An item to item analysis was conducted, as well as tests for statistical significance, including Scheffe range tests and one-way analyses of variance.

Tables were derived from the information resulting from this statistical analysis, and they can be found at the end of Chapter V. They include a raw score and percentage breakdown of respondents' answers, a comparison of respondents' data with the philosophy of Shaughnessy, means and standard deviations for dependent variables by the independent biographical variables, one-way analyses of variance by the biographical variables, and notation of significant differences at the .05 level or less. In addition, Cronbach's alpha procedure was applied to determine the reliability of the six sub scales of the instrument and of the survey as a whole, in order to establish internal consistency.
Conducting and Analyzing the Interviews

In-Depth Interviews

Although the quantitative approach to educational research, rooted for the most part in statistical theory, is predominantly practiced in the field, certain field-oriented non-statistical methods of research are gaining growing acceptance as legitimate strategies. Such a strategy is the in-depth interview, which allows the respondent more personal involvement and opportunity for expression and elaboration than quantitative methods afford. It is not sufficient to this inquiry to content ourselves with figures and percentages. As educational researchers, we are dealing with human beings, who can too easily be lost in the emphasis on measurement. Teachers and their beliefs represent educational phenomena which must be examined "...as they exist in the natural world: as wholes to be understood in depth despite their complexity and subtlety, demanding investigation through careful, systematic means appropriate to their nature, rather than simply through means which possess the cachet of scientific credibility in the 'hard sciences.'"15

With this goal in mind, an interview guide was developed which consisted of ten structured questions or question areas. The interviews for which the guides would be a springboard were conceived to be open-ended, allowing for maximum exchange between the interviewer and the respondent, both along the structured guidelines and along whatever path emerged in the course of individual interview sessions. The ten question areas were derived from a close reading of Shaughnessy, consultation
with fellow English teachers, and personal knowledge of what is involved in the writing instruction exchange between teacher and student.

In all, twelve senior high school English teachers from the Columbus school system participated in these interviews, six men and six women. They taught at seven different high schools, and varied considerably in age and teaching experience. Their permission was secured to interview them and to tape record the conversation which took place. They were informed about the purpose of the study, the aim of the interview sessions, and what would be done with the resulting data.

I met privately with all twelve respondents, in school or home settings, and using the prepared interview guide, went through all the question areas with each one. The discussions took anywhere from twenty minutes to one hour and a half, and yielded responses of a plentiful and insightful nature to both the scheduled questions and numerous other issues touching the writing instruction situation.

Analyzing the Interviews

Using the recorded conversations of all twelve participants, I transcribed our discussions verbatim. Since in the course of thirty minutes, the usual length of these interviews, many things are said of an irrelevant nature to the focal subject, it was not practical to reprint the conversations in their entirety. Instead, pertinent data was extracted from the transcriptions, and specific answers to the ten scheduled question areas were assembled into lists. It is possible, therefore, to examine precisely what the respondents said in answer to
each of the interview queries. These results are further discussed question by question in Chapter VI. In addition to the topics common to all the interviewees, their comments and expressed attitudes to corrolary issues are presented as well. Comparisons, similarities and differences of attitude and belief emerged, and an attempt to point out trends, majority responses and pertinent quotes was made, wherever that information appeared useful or enlightening.

Organization and Presentation of the Remaining Chapters

The remaining three chapters of the dissertation are devoted to presenting and accounting for the results of the research. Chapter V, "Quantitative Results," examines and discusses the statistically analyzed data derived from the research questionnaire. Chapter VI, "In-Depth Interviews," probes the twelve interviews conducted with English teachers and draws comparisons where possible with the quantitative data. Chapter VII, "Conclusion--Impact of the Results," accounts for the outcome of the research results, explains their relative significance in the light of the current writing instruction situation, suggests applicability of the data, and offers a prospectus for further research along similar or related lines.
English Department Member

______________________________High School:

Dear __________________________:

You are asked to take part in a study concerning how young people learn to write and learn to make errors. Composition is a critical skill area, and too many of our students are leaving high school with a terribly underdeveloped writing ability.

I realize how precious your personal time is. However, full participation is necessary in order to make this study as valid and useful as possible to us all.

Enclosed is an attitude inventory I have developed as part of my graduate work. You will use fifteen to twenty minutes to complete the seventy-two items, which seek to discover your attitudes and beliefs about the nature of error in composition.

The data derived from your responses will be kept strictly confidential, to be used only by myself. Your name is on this form only for coding and counting purposes.

If you need clarification on any item of the survey, please feel free to call me at home. Should you want additional copies of the survey, I will be happy to supply what you need.

Please let me thank you in advance for your helpful participation. Whatever findings result from this study will be made available to you upon request.

Sincere thanks,

[Signature]

Cynthia Brooks Payne
891-5792
To: Senior High English Teachers  
From: James S. Sims, Supervisor, English Language Arts  
Subject: Survey on Composition Instruction  
Date: May 15, 1981

Please take a few minutes to complete the attached survey on attitudes and beliefs related to the teaching of writing skills. By doing so, you will not only be assisting a professional colleague in her research project, but you will also be providing information to help a planning committee structure system-wide staff development opportunities for the next few years.

The Mastery Learning Program in Written Communications which is currently being designed for implementation by 1985 necessitates an intensive staff development component. Your responses on this survey will help us design an inservice program which is more meaningful and applicable to your program of instruction.

I have proposed a preopening, August workshop for senior-high English teachers. If funded, you will be able to hear Ms. Payne discuss the results of the survey in one of the workshop sessions. (More information about the August event will follow soon.)

Thank you for giving a few minutes of your valuable time to complete the survey. I appreciate your continuing effort to help improve the teaching of English in Columbus Public Schools.

Please return the survey to me at Alum Crest Center within the next few days.

Attachment
Data Sheet: For the following information items, please mark the appropriate answer with a check mark or by filling in the blank where called for: (The information will be kept confidential, and your name will not be used.)

1. Number of years teaching experience, including this year:
   1-5  6-10  11-15  16-20  21 & over

2. At the present time, English is the only subject I teach.
   I presently teach other subjects in addition to English.
   *If you now teach something other than English, please specify:

3. As an undergraduate, I took one or more courses in how to teach writing.

4. I have had graduate work in writing instruction.
   I have taken no graduate work in writing instruction.

5. Since I began to teach English, I have participated in one or more in-service training sessions dealing with composition.
   Since I began to teach English, I have taken part in no in-service training on the subject of composition.

6. I primarily or exclusively teach composition courses.
   For the most part, I teach courses other than composition.

7. Approximate age: 21-35  36-45  46-59  60 and over

8. Ethnic background:
   Black  Hispanic  Oriental  White

9. I enjoy teaching writing.
   I do not enjoy teaching writing.

10. I am well-prepared to teach composition.
    I am ill-prepared to teach composition.
    I am somewhat prepared to teach composition, but need help.
## TEACHERS' ATTITUDES AND BELIEFS TOWARD CRITICAL ISSUES RELATING TO COMPOSITION INSTRUCTION

**INSTRUCTIONS:** Please read the following statements carefully. Then indicate your reactions by circling one of the five possible responses after each statement:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>SA</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>U</th>
<th>D</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. People learn their language poorly without school.</td>
<td>SA</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>U</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>SD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Students are too used to making errors to stop making them.</td>
<td>SA</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>U</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>SD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Poor writers have many ideas, but lack the skill to articulate them.</td>
<td>SA</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>U</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>SD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. High school students are linguistically sophisticated.</td>
<td>SA</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>U</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>SD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. My students do not know what an English sentence is.</td>
<td>SA</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>U</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>SD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Most spoken English is ungrammatical.</td>
<td>SA</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>U</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>SD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Writing competency can be achieved at any age.</td>
<td>SA</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>U</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>SD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Poor writers have few ideas.</td>
<td>SA</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>U</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>SD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Young people learn the majority of their language without formal instruction.</td>
<td>SA</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>U</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>SD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Errors are learned, and can be unlearned.</td>
<td>SA</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>U</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>SD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. High school students are generally ignorant about the English language.</td>
<td>SA</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>U</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>SD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. The majority of speech is in sentence form.</td>
<td>SA</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>U</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>SD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. There is little hope for much writing improvement by the time a student reaches high school.</td>
<td>SA</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>U</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>SD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. Young people are skilled sentence makers.</td>
<td>SA</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>U</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>SD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. Speech and writing are produced by similar mental processes.</td>
<td>SA</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>U</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>SD</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
16. Writers make errors through their reasoning processes.

17. Dialects are linguistically inferior to Standard English.

18. Poor writers compose the way they do because they are ill-prepared with formal written language.

19. Writing errors demonstrate logical strategies students use to deal with language problems.

20. A writer who habitually omits terminal -s's lacks the concept of plurality.

21. Poor writers compose badly because they are non-verbal.

22. Dialects are as complex and resourceful as Standard English.

23. An individual thinks differently to produce speech than to produce writing.

24. Errors represent poor writers' inability to learn.

25. Leaving final -s's off words does not demonstrate that the writer lacks the concept of plurality.

26. Students make writing errors at random rather than through reason.

27. Encouraging students to discuss their writing problems diminishes their fear of making mistakes.

28. Poor writers are characteristically unable to maintain single lines of thought in their compositions.

29. Fear of error often bars the poor writer from having something to write.

30. Young people, while verbal, have not read or written enough to develop long memory spans for written words.
31. The unskilled writer often has spelling problems because he has difficulty remembering what he has seen or has written.

32. My students do not generally care whether or not they make writing errors.

33. Poor writers cannot sustain lines of thought in their compositions because they rely on speech habits.

34. Unskilled writers have trouble keeping words in mind because they are less verbal than better writers.

35. Poor writers often spell badly because their language ability is limited.

36. Talking about types of errors will not erase students' anxieties about committing errors.

37. Correctness is the most important feature of writing.

38. A lot of writing practice will help improve my students' composition skills considerably.

39. An inexperienced writer should work through a hierarchy of learning tasks in order of their importance.

40. A student should learn grammar by analyzing his own errors.

41. The difficulties of poor writers are the difficulties of all writers, magnified.

42. Grammar study most effectively improves my students' writing.

43. Standard English grammar should be learned by the memorization of rules.

44. Errors and structural problems should be dealt with in the context of a piece of writing.
45. The most important aspect of writing is clear communication.

46. The main goal of composition instruction is to enable a student to communicate clearly through writing.

47. Poor writers demonstrate different composition problems than good writers.

48. The aim of writing instruction is to perfect structure.

49. My students produce better writing when I give them specific restrictions and stipulations.

50. I regard editing and evaluation as my primary responsibility as a composition teacher.

51. No student should be encouraged to write until he has mastered the English sentence.

52. I attend to all aspects of the writing process in my English classroom.

53. Writing students should compose as much as possible.

54. An inexperienced writer composes better without specific restrictions and stipulations.

55. All stages of the writing process are equally important.

56. Too much time is devoted to grammar exercises and drills in the English classroom.

57. When my students compose, I serve most usefully as a facilitator of the writing process.

58. I emphasize certain features of the writing process more than others in my English classroom.

59. Developmental stages of composition are not as important as the final product.

60. Students need to master grammar skills through drills and exercises before they write compositions.
61. There is no satisfactory way of attacking errors systematically.
62. Poor writers are generally not able to correct and revise their compositions on their own.
63. The need to change things is the mark of an amateur writer.
64. Classifying types of errors helps students attack writing errors systematically.
65. Students do not benefit from reading one another's work.
66. I read my students' papers principally to correct errors.
67. Revision is an integral part of the composition process.
68. Analyzing reasons for errors will not especially improve one's writing ability.
69. A writer should revise and correct his own work.
70. When students read one another's compositions, they gain valuable proofreading experience.
71. When looking at my students' writing, I read mainly for content.
72. Students can gain control over error once they perceive reasons for their mistakes.

Thank you for completing this inventory of your attitudes! This space is provided for your comments and elaborations, or for criticisms or critiques of specific items in the survey.

Cindy Payne
Follow-Up Number 1:

Mifflin High School
May 26, 1981

Dear _____________:

Last week you received an attitude inventory which seeks to discover your professional beliefs and attitudes about the nature of error in composition.

If you have not already done so, I urge you to take the few minutes necessary to complete the inventory and return it to me at Mifflin High School, or to Jim Sims at the Alumcrest Instructional Center.

English teachers are consulted far too little about major professional and academic issues; yet who would have more experience-based opinions than active, in-classroom teachers? That is why I focused my study at the instructional level, to find out what you believe about how writing should be taught.

Most of us could use some assistance in the teaching of composition. It is a neglected, underdeveloped area of our subject matter, and Mr. Sims plans to structure in-service work around this topic. Your participation in this study will assist him in planning the most useful, relevant materials and assistance possible to us all.

Should you need a replacement survey, please give me a call at home, or drop me a line at Mifflin High School.

Sincere thanks,

Mrs. Cindy Payne
891-5792
Interview Guide:

Name: ____________________________ Date __________

School __________________________

Grades taught __________________________

Subjects taught this year __________________________

Number of years teaching experience _______ Approximate age _______

Are you now or have you been a composition teacher? ___________

1) Do you make it a practice to have your English students do at least some writing in each English class? Only some classes? Regularly? Occasionally? Infrequently? Do you feel strongly about the need for your students to write?

2) Do your students write well? Are many of them competent writers? Are many of them incompetent writers? (Ball-park percentages) What would you consider to be a "competent" writer?

3) Do your students seem better or worse at writing than students you've had in the past? In what ways are they better or worse? Cite examples if possible.

4) What would you say are your students' best composition skills? What do they do well or at least better than other tasks in the writing process? Could you elaborate?
5) How do you account for some students' inability to write, or for their writing shortcomings? Could you speculate on the reasons for their writing problems?

6) Why do students make the specific types of writing mistakes they make? When you see a paper full of errors, how do you react? Is error a sign of someone's lack of language ability? Can error be successfully dealt with, or is it an insurmountable problem?

7) What is the role of the teacher in the composition process? Editor? Evaluator? Grader? Reviser? How big a part should a teacher take in the revision of students' writing? Should more of the burden of revision be on the shoulders of the writers themselves?


9) How qualified do you feel to teach composition? Has your training and background adequately prepared you to handle the writing situations you find in your English classrooms? What would help you become a better teacher of composition?
10) Do you have a general philosophy toward the teaching of writing and how it should be done? Can you elaborate? What would you hope your English students would learn about the process of writing?

Thank you very much,

Cindy Payne
891-5792
Chapter IV: Footnotes


2Ibid., p. 7.


5Ibid., p. 109.


7Oppenheim, p. 113.


9Schatzman and Strauss, p. 30.


11Ibid., p. 29.


CHAPTER V

INTERPRETING THE DATA

Description of the Survey Instrument and the Process Used to Accomplish the Survey

As discussed in Chapter IV, the final survey instrument utilized in this project contained seventy-two items grouped into six separate scalar sections. Each of the six scales contain from five to seven pairs of items, each pair consisting of one positive and one negative statement representing opposing views on some teacher attitude or belief about error and composition instruction.

Respondents were not made aware of the internal divisions of items into separate scales; the instrument appeared to be a sequential presentation of the full seventy-two items without divisions. No attempt was made to group the scalar items on separate pages, nor were any titles or spaces used to indicate the dividing points between scales. This was done in the hope that respondents would react to each item on its own merit, rather than as part of a sub-set of questions, aimed at testing a controlling idea.

In analyzing the data and interpreting the results of this project, it must be kept in mind that what individuals say they think, what they believe, and what they put into practice are fundamentally
different considerations. This study seeks to define what the English teachers of a given school system say they believe about error and writing instruction. Verifying the internal psychological truth of teachers' stated beliefs and demonstrating to what extent they act on those beliefs is work more appropriately undertaken under separate research topics.

First, I will present and discuss the responses to the survey statements both by scale and by individual item by descriptive analysis of the numerical percentages which occur. Afterward will follow a descriptive presentation of the extent to which the respondents agreed or disagreed with Mina Shaughnessy on the six scalar sections of the survey, and with the individual items within each of those scales.

For tables presenting the statements of each scale, the actual numerical response distribution for each item, and a percentage figure indicating those who agreed or disagreed with the survey statement, please consult Tables 1 through 6.

Discussion of the Data on a Scale by Scale Basis

Responses to Scale One: Based on the Controlling Idea: "HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS ARE LINGUISTICALLY SOPHISTICATED."

Eighty-two percent of those teachers responding to the survey disagreed that high school students are linguistically sophisticated, while 76% did not feel young people are skilled sentence-makers, both responses quite at odds with one of Shaughnessy's basic tenets.
However, when asked whether poor writers have few ideas, a full 91% disagreed. Eighty-two percent felt that poor writers indeed have many ideas, but lack the skill to articulate them.

Ninety-three percent of the respondents were willing to agree that young people learn most of their language without formal instruction, but this view shifted considerably when some 56% agreed that people learn their language poorly without schooling.

When asked about the nature of speech, respondents presented a wider range of views, with 53% feeling that most spoken English is ungrammatical and 37% agreeing that the majority of speech is in sentence form.

Only 32% of those answering felt that their students did not know what an English sentence is, although as cited previously, 76% felt their students were not skilled sentence-makers.

In one of the more pronounced instances of disagreement within this particular scale, a full 97% of the respondents believed that errors are learned, and can therefore be unlearned. In keeping with this hopeful attitude, 75% felt that writing competency can be achieved at any age. Reinforcing this data, 87% felt that there is still hope for considerable writing improvement by the time a youngster reaches high school.

On the issue of student linguistic sophistication, respondents indicated they felt that:
--High school students are not linguistically sophisticated.

--They are not skilled sentence-makers.

--They have learned to make errors, and with formal schooling, can learn not to make those errors.

--They know what sentences are. They, for the most part, however, do not speak in sentences.

--They are not especially good at creating sentences.

--They have many ideas.

--It is not too late for them to become good writers.

**Points of Comparison with Shaughnessy on Scale One**

Respondents' attitudes correspond with those of Shaughnessy on several key items of Scale One. Specifically, 97% agreed with Shaughnessy that errors are learned and as such can be unlearned. A solid 87% concur with the theorist that it is not too late for writing improvement by the time a student reaches secondary school, and 75% believe along with her that writing competency can be achieved at any age.

When asked whether youngsters learn their language primarily without formal instruction, 93% agreed with Shaughnessy that they did, but only 44% felt that they learned it well in that manner.

A middle range of disagreement with Shaughnessy exists on the issue of speech and grammar. Sixty-eight percent of those answering believe along with Shaughnessy that their students do in fact know what an English sentence is, although 63% disagree with her that most people speak in sentences.
Split virtually down the middle are the 48% who believe that students are generally ignorant about English and the 52% who think with Shaughnessy that they are not.

There are two prominent examples of disagreement between respondents and Shaughnessy. Seventy-six percent of the teachers did not feel that young people are proficient sentence-makers, and a more definite 82% did not believe that their students were linguistically sophisticated.

On the issue of linguistic sophistication, respondents compare with Shaughnessy on the following points:

They strongly agree with her that young people have learned to make errors and that it is far from too late to correct that condition. They further concurred that young people have many ideas and learn much of their language before they go to school.

There is little support for the idea that students are sophisticated language makers, particularly sentence-makers, an essential Shaughnessy belief.

Respondents could not make a clear decision about whether schooling is essential for good language learning, or about the degree of grammaticality in spoken English.

Responses to Scale Two: Based on the Controlling Idea: "INEXPERIENCED WRITERS FREQUENTLY MAKE WRITING ERRORS FOR RATIONAL, LOGICAL, INTELLIGENT REASONS."

This scale produced a similar incidence of agreement with Shaughnessy's principles when compared with the first scalar section.
A significant 94% of those responding disagreed that errors were evidence of poor writers' learning inabilities. An 85% majority of respondents further felt that poor writers compose badly because they're ill-prepared with formal written English, not because they are unintelligent. Nor did 81% of the teachers feel students' writing problems exist because they are non-verbal.

Since Shaughnessy believes the tendency of some students to cling to speech habits causes some errors, certain items probed this issue. When asked whether one thinks differently in order to speak than to write, 65% agreed, leaving 35% opposing the notion.

Curiously, while 80% of the responding teachers felt that dialects are as complex and resourceful as Standard English, a disproportionate 38% considered dialects to be linguistically inferior to Standard English, a seeming contradiction in attitudes.

When presented with an example of a dialectal usage, omitting a final 's' from the end of a word, a full 88% recognized that the student using such a variant form does not necessarily lack the grammatical concept of plurality.

Responses to items suggesting logical causes for writing errors yielded somewhat inconsistent attitudes. For example, 61% of those responding said they believed that students make writing errors at random, while a contradictory 64% agreed that writing errors demonstrate logical strategies to solve language problems. A more evenly divided response is the 47% agreeing and 53% disagreeing with the statement that writers
make mistakes through their reasoning processes.

On the issue of rationally-based errors, respondents indicated that they believe:

1) Errors are not proof of poor writers' abilities, and that because they happen to use a non-Standard form, they may still know the concept for which the form stands;

2) Poor writers are ill-prepared with formal written English, and make mistakes because of that ill-preparedness.

3) Dialects are as complex as Standard English, and are not inferior to Standard English

4) Poor writers are by no means non-verbal.

On two points, respondents diverged widely in their opinions, even offering contradictory responses to both sides of the points. On one hand the majority felt that speech and writing are produced by similar mental processes, while they also believed one thinks differently to speak and to write. On the issue of causes for error, teachers believed students make writing errors at random by a three to two majority. However, a similar percentage saw writing mistakes as evidence of logical strategies.

Some of the contradictory responses could be seen as proof that these issues were entirely new to the sample population, who had by and large never considered these issues previously.

Points of Comparison with Shaughnessy on Scale Two

Respondents agreed with Shaughnessy by a strong 94% that errors do not prove writers' abilities, and 81% also supported her view that poor writers are not non-verbal. In trying to pin down the cause for
errors, 85% could agree with her that poor writers are ill-prepared with academic English, and when presented with an example of non-Standard usage, 88% felt along with her that the incorrect usage did not prove they lacked the concept behind it.

Eighty percent of those responding concurred with Shaughnessy that dialects are as complex and resourceful as Standard English, but a curious 62% still felt dialects were inferior to Standard English.

A surprising 64% agreed with one of Shaughnessy's key theoretical points—that errors often represent logical strategies to handle language problems. However, 61% still felt that students make writing errors at random. This inconsistency could be attributed to the newness of the concept of logically-based error and teachers' unfamiliarity with the idea.

Using 60% as a percentage indicating a clear majority, respondents agreed with Shaughnessy on nine out of twelve items, disagreed on two, and split on one item.

Responses to Scale Three: Based on the Controlling Idea: "STUDENTS SOMETIMES MAKE ERRORS FOR PSYCHOLOGICAL REASONS."

Scale Three yielded less agreement with Shaughnessy than any of the other five scales, possibly because the concept of memory effecting errors was a new idea to the respondents. Scale Three consists of ten items all focusing on psychological factors which influence writing errors.
Eighty-one percent of those answering recognized that the fear of error can bar the inexperienced writer from having something to say. A concurring 91% believed that encouraging students to discuss their composition problems would help eliminate their fear of writing errors. A smaller 71% believed that talking about categories of errors would help erase students' anxieties about making those mistakes.

Several items explored the issue of memory and the part it plays in making composition mistakes. Seventy-nine percent of the teachers answering agreed that young people were verbal, but that they had not read or written enough to develop long memory spans. This lack of developed memory for what one has seen or written often creates spelling errors, according to 74% of the respondents.

While 74% believed that poor writers are characteristically unable to maintain single lines of thought in their compositions, only 25% thought this inability stems from their reliance on speech habits. Only 37% of the respondents agreed that poor writers are less verbal than better writers and therefore less able to keep words in mind.

The remaining two items produced mixed responses. Fifty-six percent felt that the language inability of poor writers causes spelling errors, while 44% disagreed that this was so. On the issue of student concern over error, 54% felt that their students did not really care whether they made writing errors or not, while the other 46% disagreed with this viewpoint.
On the issue of psychologically caused error, respondents indicated the following beliefs and attitudes:

1) Fear of making mistakes can adversely affect one's writing performance;

2) It is beneficial to discuss students' composition problems as a means of reducing their anxiety about writing errors;

3) Students do not sustain lines of thought very well in their compositions because they lack a long memory span for what they've seen or written;

4) Memory can be a cause for spelling problems;

5) Poor writers are not necessarily less verbal than better writers.

Points of Comparison with Shaughnessy on Scale Three

Ninety-one percent of the respondents agreed with Shaughnessy that teacher and student dialogue about writing problems will help diminish the poor writer's fear of error. According to 71%, discussing specific types of error may well help erase students' error anxieties. Eighty-one percent went along with her view that error anxiety can prevent the writer from having anything to write.

A 79% majority of teachers concurred, along with Shaughnessy, that youngsters have not developed long memory spans for written words, and a healthy 74% thought this lack of memory practice causes frequent spelling errors to be committed.

Shaughnessy's belief that poor writers are no less verbal than better writers found agreement among 63% of the answering teachers, but that was the final instance of agreement with her ideas within this scale.
A slim 56% majority went against her theoretical convictions by agreeing that poor writers' language ability is limited, causing spelling errors. Shaughnessy, of course, maintains that even the most inexperienced writer has significant language ability.

A similar 56% felt, unlike the Professor, that their students do not care one way or another about making composition errors.

Respondents differed significantly with Shaughnessy on two items. Seventy-four percent of those responding thought that it was characteristic of the poor writer not to be able to sustain a single line of thought in their compositions. A similar 75% attributed students' tendency not to keep a line of thought going to their reliance on speech habits, whereas Shaughnessy believes an underdeveloped memory span is the primary cause of this problem.

Of the ten items comprising Scale Three, respondents agreed with Shaughnessy on six items, disagreed on two items, and split on the remaining two items.

Responses to Scale Four: Based on the Controlling Idea: "NO ONE PEDAGOGICAL APPROACH IS APPROPRIATE OR SUFFICIENT FOR THE TEACHING OF WRITING."

The data derived from this scale yielded a large incidence of agreement with Shaughnessy. The largest percentage of agreement among respondents centered on the purpose and goal of writing and writing instruction. Ninety-six percent felt that the most important aspect of writing was clear communication, and another 96% believed that teaching
a student to communicate clearly was the chief goal of writing instruction.

The data revealed that 90% of those answering considered frequent writing practice a big help in improving students' composition skills.

Several items explored teachers' attitudes toward grammar instruction. The traditional view that grammar study will most effectively improve students' writing was rejected by 75% of the participants. Another 75% disagreed that Standard English grammar should be learned by the memorization of rules. Seventy-three percent of the responding teachers did not feel that the aim of writing instruction was to perfect structure.

Seventy-eight percent of those answering the item agreed that students should learn grammar by analyzing their own errors. Error analysis is a procedure not often employed by classroom teachers or their students, so it can be seen as somewhat surprising that so many participants in the survey backed the idea. Ninety-one percent indicated that they felt errors and structural problems should be dealt with in the context of a piece of real discourse, rather than as a series of discrete exercises.

The notion that poor writers demonstrate different types of writing difficulties than better writers was upheld by 63% of those responding to that item. An even larger 73% thought that an inexperienced writer should work through a hierarchy of learning tasks, in
order of their importance. This would suggest that they believe such a hierarchy exists in reality.

Although many critics of English instruction and writing instruction in particular would cite an over-concern among teachers with error and correctness, 89% of the teachers rejected correctness as the most important feature of writing.

Though most responses were clear-cut and unambiguous in this scale, there was one glaring instance of inconsistency to be noted. As already cited, 63% believed that poor and good composers demonstrated different composition problems, a contradictory 65% agreed that the difficulties of poor writers are the difficulties of all writers, only magnified.

On the issue of pedagogical practices and their appropriateness, responding teachers indicated that they held the beliefs:

1) The most important aspect of writing is clear communication, and that clear communication should be the principle goal of writing instruction;

2) Writing problems should be handled in the context of real compositions. The memorization of rules has little effect on writing improvement;

3) Grammar study will not necessarily help a poor writer, unless he can be brought to analyze his own errors and writing weaknesses;

4) A considerable amount of writing practice will serve as a tremendous help in developing students' writing skills;

5) A hierarchy of learning tasks associated with the writing act exists and should be attended to by inexperienced writers;
6) Correctness is not the most important feature of the writing process;  
7) Perfecting structure should not be the chief aim of the writing instructor.

Points of Comparison with Shaughnessy on Scale Four

The data from Scale Four revealed a significant degree of agreement with the beliefs and attitudes of Mina Shaughnessy. Foremost among the points agreed upon were the two items dealing with communication and its place in the writing experience. Ninety-six percent felt that clear communication was the most important aspect of writing, and another 96% saw the main goal of writing instruction as the fostering of clear written communication.

Ninety-one percent go along with Shaughnessy's belief that errors and structural problems should be handled within a piece of discourse itself, rather than exclusively through drills and exercises and rote memorization. A similar 90%, however, felt that a greater volume of writing practice by itself would be a great help in improving one's writing skills.

Error analysis stands as one of Shaughnessy's main cornerstones of writing theory, and the idea that a student should learn grammar by analyzing his own errors was supported by a surprising 78% of the respondents.

The traditional beliefs that grammar study and rote memorization of rules will best improve one's writing abilities was soundly rejected by 75% of the teachers. Eighty-nine percent of the responding
participants believed that neither correctness nor perfected structure (73%) were the best or most useful aims of writing instruction, as Shaughnessy steadfastly maintains.

In the one solid instance of disagreement with Shaughnessy on Scale Four, 73% believed that a hierarchy of learning tasks exists which a poor writer should follow in order to improve his skills in composing. Shaughnessy naturally feels that no such hierarchy pertains, but that many skills and performance abilities must be practiced and nurtured simultaneously in the midst of genuine discourse.

One issue brought contradictory results, with 65% agreeing with Shaughnessy that the difficulties of poor writers are the same ones better writers face, only to a lesser degree, while another 63% indicated they thought poor writers demonstrate different types of writing problems than good writers.

Of the twelve items comprising Scale Four, respondents agreed soundly with Shaughnessy on ten items, and disagreed on the remaining two.

Responses to Scale Five: Based on the Controlling Idea: "THE WRITING PROCESS IS A CRITICAL AND NEGLECTED FEATURE OF THE COMPOSITION CLASSROOM."

The twelve items comprising the Fifth Scale focused on the writing process and how much of a part it should play in the composition classroom. Many modern theorists criticize the traditional writing classroom for its lack of emphasis on the writing procedure in favor of drills, exercises, and rote memorization.
The largest percentage of agreement on an item in Scale Five was the 95% concurrence on the issue of writing frequency. These respondents felt that students should write as much as possible. A similar 92% disagreed that composing should be postponed until a student has mastered the English sentence. On a related point, only 25% of those answering believed students need to master skills through drills and exercises before they write whole compositions. So it seems the overwhelming majority feel that a prime activity to be engaged in within the writing classroom is the composing process itself, and that that process need not be delayed until some skill mastery is achieved.

Teachers admitted, by a 92% majority, that they tended to emphasize certain features of the writing classroom more than others. Only 14% were willing to say that the final product is more important than the developmental stages of the composing process, while the other 86% disagreed.

Several items aimed at ascertaining how teachers perceived their role as a composition teacher. Although many critics of the traditional approach would say that teachers spend a hugely disproportionate amount of time in editing and evaluating, the teachers who responded to this inquiry rejected that role as their primary responsibility by a margin of two to one (66% to 34%). Ninety-one percent saw their primary function in the composition class as a facilitator of the writing process.

Sixty-two percent of the responding teachers indicated they believed that all stages of the writing process are equally important,
although the figure dropped to 56% of those who agreed that they attend to all aspects of the writing process in their English classroom. When presented with the possibility that too much time is devoted to grammar exercises and drills, 63% disagreed, leaving only 37% with the statement.

The remaining two items of Scale Five produced contradictory results. When confronted with the item, "My students produce better writing when I give them specific restrictions and stipulations," 80% agreed with the statement. However, responding to the item, "An inexperienced writer composes better without specific restrictions and stipulations," 81% agreed with that statement, although the two items represent diametrically opposite views of the same issue. It is perhaps possible that on quick perusal, respondents mistook them for the same statement repeated twice. Otherwise, I can offer no reasonable explanation for this discrepancy.

On the issue of the importance of the writing process, respondents indicated that they believed:

1) Students should compose as much as possible;

2) They should not be held back from writing until they have mastered certain discrete skills, but should plunge right in.

3) The writing teacher serves most usefully as a facilitator of the composition process, rather than an editor and evaluator.

4) Developmental stages of the composing process are just as important as the final product, and in fact, all stages of the writing process are equally important.

5) While the teacher should attend to all aspects of the writing process in the English classroom, some features of the process are emphasized more than others.
6) Teachers do not place too much emphasis on drills and exercises in the English classroom.

Although Items 49 and 54 produced high percentage results, they contradict one another so directly that they cannot be fairly included in the list of teacher attitudes on Scale Five.

**Points of Comparison with Shaughnessy on Scale Five**

The highest incidence of agreement with Shaughnessy on an item in Scale Five occurs in Item 53, "Writing students should compose as much as possible." Ninety-five percent of the teachers taking part agreed with this notion, one of Shaughnessy's strongly maintained recommendations. A similar 92% went along with Shaughnessy in believing that writing need not be postponed until after the student masters the English sentence. Indeed, Shaughnessy would feel that a student actually learns the English sentence through participating in written discourse. A 75% majority who felt there was no need to master skills through drills and exercises before composing concurred with the Professor, who sees the need for such exercises only after one runs into difficulty in the course of writing.

Ninety-one percent of the participants saw their role as a composition instructor as one in which they facilitate the writing process, echoing Shaughnessy's belief that teachers help students most by concentrating on the composing stage of writing, rather than sitting back and serving as editors and evaluators after the final product is handed in. Only 34% saw themselves in this light.
A healthy 86% agreed with Shaughnessy that the developmental stages of the writing process are equally as important as the final product. Indeed, 62% thought that all stages of the writing process are equally important.

One significant area of disagreement with Shaughnessy's ideas occurs in relationship to Item 58, "I emphasize certain features of the writing process more than others in my English classroom." Respondents contradicted themselves slightly by indicating they thought all aspects of the writing process are of equal value, and then admitting they attend to some more than others. This could simply be a recognition on their parts that they believe one thing and do another. In any case, Shaughnessy certainly recommends that all phases of the composition process must be given equal weight and attention, from pre-writing and pre-formulation to the revision of the final product. Another related item, Number 52, "I attend to all aspects of the writing process in my English classroom," yielded results which split down the middle, 56% agreeing and 44% disagreeing.

The remaining two items, as previously discussed, brought directly opposite results, and as such cannot be said to yield much valuable information. Shaughnessy believes that free, unrestricted writing is of a higher quality and genuineness than assignments with too many specific stipulations. Eighty-one percent agreed with her on this, while an almost equal 80% disagreed simultaneously.
The data indicated that of the twelve items comprising Scale Five, eight produced agreement with Shaughnessy, three produced disagreement, and the remaining item divided down the middle.

Responses to Scale Six: Based on the Controlling Idea: "THE ABILITY TO REVISE ONE'S OWN ERRORS AND SHORTCOMINGS SHOULD BE A MAJOR GOAL IN THE COMPOSITION CLASSROOM"

The twelve items making up Scale Six centered on the revision process, and on how that process might be accomplished by the writing students themselves, rather than on their instructors. Much of the writing teacher's time is taken up with correcting errors, suggesting revisions, editing the final product, all tasks that might more profitably be accomplished by the writing student. This scale of the survey produced the greatest amount of agreement with Shaughnessy's ideas of all the six scalar sections.

No only was there much agreement with Shaughnessy, that agreement took the form of very high percentages. Ninety-six percent of those responding, for example, felt that revision was an integral part of the composing process. In another item relating to the issue of revision, 94% disagreed that changing things is the mark of an amateur writer, recognizing that even excellent composers sometimes find it necessary to alter and revise their discourse.

A strong 91% of the teachers believe that a writer should revise and correct his own work, although 68% feel that poor writers are not generally able to correct or revise their compositions on their own.
Several items focused on the issue of error analysis, for example Item 64, "Classifying types of errors helps students attack writing errors systematically." Ninety-five percent of the teachers answering agreed that this was so, while another 91% thought that students can gain control over error once they perceive reasons for their errors. When presented with the statement, "There is no satisfactory way of attacking errors systematically," (Item 61) only 33% agreed. An even smaller 17% agreed that analyzing reasons for error will not especially improve one's writing ability.

Items 66 and 71 dealt with the teacher's intent when reading student papers. When asked to respond to the statement, "I read my students' papers principally to correct errors," only 20% agreed, although the response figure only climbed to 48% agreement on the item, "When looking at my students' writing, I read mainly for content."

The final two items in Scale Six explored teachers' attitudes toward the idea of peer evaluation or peer editing. Items 65 and 70 presented two sides of the question, 'Should students read one another's papers.' Ninety-five percent believed that when students read one another's compositions, they gain valuable proofreading experience, while an overwhelming 99% rejected the idea that students do not benefit from reading one another's work.

On the issue of student revision of writing, teachers indicated they believed that:
1) Students can benefit tremendously from reading one another's compositions, particularly in the area of proofreading experience.

2) Revision is an integral part of the composing process, and students who learn to revise their own work will experience writing improvement.

3) Error analysis, specifically analyzing one's own types of mistakes, helps students attack errors systematically, and may result in writing improvement.

4) Students can gain control over error once they perceive reasons for their mistakes.

5) When a teacher reads a student paper, the main purpose should not be to correct errors.

Points of Comparison with Shaughnessy on Scale Six

Scale Six, focusing on the revising stage of composing, produced some of the strongest examples of agreement with Shaughnessy's composing theory on the entire survey. Teachers may not behave in their English classrooms as they indicate they believe on the survey items, but their responses are in surprising concurrence with the Professor's ideas.

Two out of three responding teachers disagreed along with Shaughnessy that there is no satisfactory way to attack errors systematically. A strong 95% believed with her that classifying types of errors helps students attack writing errors in a methodical manner, while 83% felt as she does that analyzing error will improve one's writing ability.

Ninety-six percent regarded revision as an integral part of the composing process, and an only slightly smaller 91% believe the writer
should revise and correct his own work, rather than leaving that task
to the writing instructor. The revision process is made easier once
students perceive reasons for their mistakes. They can then gain con-
trol over their individual errors, according to 91% of the respondents.
This whole attitude that the responsibility of error analysis and re-
vision should be performed by the student writer himself falls into
place with one of Shaughnessy's major concepts.

While 94% disagreed along with Shaughnessy that the need to
change things is the mark of an amateur writer alone, only a slim 32%
believed with her that inexperienced writers are able to correct and
revise their compositions on their own.

The two items aimed at determining what purpose teachers have
in mind when they read student papers produced mixed results. Eighty
percent of the responding teachers said that they did not read student
papers in order to correct errors, a charge long lodged by critics of
the traditional methodology, but only 48% indicated they read papers
mainly for content, the apparent opposite of form or correctness.

The remaining two items yielded great agreement with Shaughnessy
on the matter of peer editing and evaluation. A near unanimous 91% of
the participants felt that students clearly benefit from reading one
another's papers, while 95% believed the benefit students obtained from
such a practice was in the area of proofreading. Shaughnessy, of course,
strongly recommends peer editing and discussion as a means of familiar-
izing students with spotting errors, sharpening their visual acuity,
then transferring this newly developed ability to their own papers.

On the issue of student revision, respondents agreed with Shaughnessy on ten out of twelve items, disagreed on one, and divided more or less evenly on the remaining one item.

**Analysis of Demographic Variables**

In addition to being asked to answer the seventy-two items on the survey instrument, respondents were requested to supply some demographic data. On a biographical sheet attached to the instrument were ten question areas relating to personal and professional experience and background. All respondents were asked to indicate their years of teaching experience, whether or not they taught English only or composition only, their writing methods course background on both undergraduate and graduate levels, inservice training in writing instruction, their age and ethnic heritage, whether they enjoyed teaching writing, and to what extent they felt prepared to teach composition. There was also space for elaboration and additional comments.

The responses to these ten variables were statistically examined in order to see if any differences could help shed light on teacher attitudes toward error and writing instruction. The demographic variables were tested for F probabilities by one-way analyses of variance. Wherever three or more sub-groups existed within one independent variable, the Scheffe range test was administered to determine significant differences between pairs of groups.
The arrangement of this section will be a discussion of each independent demographic variable, the presentation of its statistical data in table form, and an examination of each variable for significant differences among sub-groups. An attempt will be made to account for such instances wherever possible. The odd tables 1 through 19 contain the mean scores and standard deviations for the dependent variables LINGS, LOGER, PSYCHER, PEDAG, WRTNGPRO, and STRVSN (which correspond with the six sub-scales of the instrument) by each of the ten demographic variables TCHEXP, ENG, COURSE, GRADWK, INSERV, COMP, AGE, BKGRND, WRIT, and PREP (which correspond to the ten questions on the biographical sheet).

The even tables 2 through 20 display one-way analyses of variance on the dependent variables LINGS, LOGER, etc., by the demographic variables TCHEXP, ENG, etc.

Question One: (Characterized by TCHEXP):

"Number of years teaching experience, including this year:

1-5   6-10   11-15   16-20   21 and over

Teaching experience was divided into five sub-groups according to the number of years respondents had taught: Group 1, one to five years; Group 2, six to ten years; Group 3, eleven to fifteen years; Group 4, sixteen to twenty years; and Group 5, more than twenty years. The five sub-groups broke down numerically as follows:
Group 1 (1-5) 19
Group 2 (6-10) 36
Group 3 (11-15) 35
Group 4 (16-20) 16
Group 5 (20+) 10

N = 116

One-way analyses of variance by teaching experience (see Table 2), produced two instances of significant difference at the .05 level, suggesting that one's relative teaching experience may help determine one's attitude toward the writing process and toward student revision.

The Scheffe range test (see Table 1) indicated that Group 2 and Group 3 disagreed significantly on the writing process and student revision. Group 2, teachers with six to ten years of experience, tended to recognize and encourage the processive nature of composition more so than Group 3, teachers with eleven to fifteen years of experience. It is possible that Group 2 teachers have been exposed to more interactionist theory and processive thinking than Group 3 because English education programs only began stressing process in roughly the last decade, when most of Group 2 would have been in school. With a difficult job market, many Group 2 teachers would likely have taken some graduate work before actually teaching writing, and they may have been influenced by this course work toward more processive attitudes. Group 3 teachers, because of their training, may cling to more typically traditional attitudes than Group 2.

In considering the difference between Group 2's more positive attitudes toward student revision than Group 3, one might consider the
time frame in which many Group 2 teachers began to teach. The early seventies marked a time when there was growing interest in and awareness of individuals' innate language abilities, so teachers educated during that very socially conscious period might consider their students more naturally capable of self-revision than teachers just a few years previously.

Question Two: (Characterized by ENG):

"At the present time, English is the only subject I teach."

or

"I presently teach other subjects in addition to English."

The point of Question Two was to determine if teachers who teach English exclusively differed significantly from multiple-subject teachers in their attitudes toward key writing instruction issues. Of the 116 teachers who responded, 85 taught English only, while 31 taught other subjects in addition to English, primarily foreign languages.

One-way analyses of variance (see Table 4) yielded no instance of significant difference between the two sub-groups. The Scheffe range test is not performed on fewer than three groups, but it is observable that Group 1 and Group 2 differ only slightly in terms of mean scores (see Table 3).

Question Three: (Characterized by COURSE):

"As an undergraduate, I took one or more courses in how to teach writing."
"As an undergraduate, I took no courses on how to teach writing."

This question was asked to determine if it made any difference in teachers' attitudes toward the study's key areas to have taken methods courses specifically focusing on how to teach writing. It must be noted that merely asking someone if he has had certain courses is not as reliable as looking at his records, since memories are faulty. Also, some general English methods courses may have devoted time to the issue of writing instruction without focusing on that area exclusively. With that in mind, out of 116 responding, 57 indicated that they had taken some specific undergraduate instruction in teaching writing, while 59 said they had had no such instruction.

The statistical analysis of the data through one-ways yielded no significant differences between Group 1 and Group 2 on any of the dependent variables (see Tables 5 and 6).

Question Four: (Characterized by GRADWK):

"I have had graduate work in writing instruction"

or

"I have taken no graduate work in writing instruction"

Similar to Question Three, this question area was included to discover whether those who have taken graduate courses in writing instruction methods differ significantly from those who have not in terms of their attitudes toward the various dependent variables. Of the 116 teachers who answered this item, 51 said they had taken some graduate
instruction in writing methods, while 65 reported that they had not.

Table 8 shows that the two groups disagreed significantly at the .05 level on the issue of linguistic sophistication among high school students (LINGS). This might be explained by the fact that graduate work allows more opportunity for the study of theory that the undergraduate curriculum, and much current English educational theory assumes the underlying linguistic sophistication of young adults.

There were no other instances of significant difference between these groups.

**Question Five: (Characterized by INSERV):**

"Since I began to teach English, I have participated in one or more in-service training sessions dealing with composition"

or

"Since I began to teach English, I have taken part in no in-service training on the subject of composition."

Since in-service training within individual school systems is another source of exposure to writing instruction methods for English teachers besides academic course work, it seemed important to assess the extent of participation by the responding teachers. Of the 116 people answering this question, 94 indicated they had taken part in such training sessions at some point in their teaching experience; 22 teachers said they had not participated in such activities. This item generated numerous marginal notes, for the most part negative, about teachers' in-service training experiences. A few people said they were too often run by people outside the system who didn't know what they
were talking about, and others saw such activities as a waste of time because the sessions gave them no concrete, specific methods to deal with young adult writers in successful ways. Only two people indicated by personal comment that this sort of activity had in any way been of practical assistance to them in their professional lives.

The data (see Table 9 and Table 10) indicate no significant differences between those who have had in-service training and those who have not.

**Question Six: (Characterized by COMP):**

"I primarily or exclusively teach composition courses."

or

"For the most part, I teach courses other than composition."

Since the research study was intended to examine writing and writing instruction, it seemed logical to seek out those who serve primarily as writing instructors on a day to day basis, and to determine whether their attitudes differ significantly from English teachers who focus more on the other language arts. One-hundred sixteen respondents answered this question, and of them, 36 regarded themselves primarily as composition instructors, while 80 said they were not writing instructors.

One-way analyses of variance by COMP produced one instance of significant difference at the .05 level (see Table 12), on the dependent variable WRTNGPRO. This would indicate that English teachers who were
principally writing instructors had a more positive attitude toward the processive nature of composition than English teachers who did not teach writing. Perhaps teachers who had daily experience teaching students to write saw more writing improvement from focusing on the writing process itself than those who lacked this observational experience.

Question Seven: (Characterized by AGE):

"Approximate age: 21-25  36-45  46-59  60 and over"

The demographic variable of chronological age was divided into four sub-groups, as cited in the question. Individuals were more reluctant to provide this information than other less personal data. Of the 114 responding, 67 were between 21 and 35, 28 were between 36 and 45, 17 were between 46 and 59, and 2 were 60 or over.

The Scheffe range test found no groups significantly different, while one-way analyses of variance backed this finding up by producing no groups significant at the .05 level (see Table 13 and Table 14).

Question Eight: (Characterized by BKGRND):

"Ethnic background
Black___ Hispanic___ Oriental___ White___"

This question was included to determine if ethnic origin was a significant factor in teachers' opinions toward the dependent variables. Although four principle group choices were provided, Group 2 and Group 3 received no responses. Of the 116 individuals answering, 100 indicated they were White and the remaining 16 reported they were Black.
The Scheffe range test could not be performed, since two subgroups were empty (see Table 15). One-way analyses of variance showed no significant differences in response between Black and White English teachers on the various dependent variables.

Question Nine: (Characterized by WRIT):

"I enjoy teaching writing"

or

"I do not enjoy teaching writing"

Since the research survey was designed to discover teacher attitudes, it seemed appropriate to ask teachers directly about their attitudes toward teaching writing. One's attitude would naturally influence how he regards his task and how he goes about performing it. Of the 116 responding to this question area, 78 said they enjoyed teaching composition, while the remaining 38 indicated they did not enjoy performing this task.

This attitude difference was borne out in the data analysis. Of the six dependent variables, Group 1 and Group 2 differed significantly on five categories, linguistic sophistication, psychological error, pedagogical approach, writing process and student revision (see Table 18). Group 1, those who enjoyed teaching writing, had consistently higher mean scores than Group 2, those who did not like to teach writing. This would indicate a uniformly more positive attitude toward elements of Shaughnessay's theory on the part of Group 1, who seemed to have a higher
opinion of what their students were capable of and could be taught to do independently than Group 2 had.

It might be noted that a number of Group 2 respondents made marginal notes about why they did not care for composition instruction, citing the paper overload, student disinterest, and a general lack of language ability among their pupils.

Question Ten: (Characterized by PREP):

"I am well-prepared to teach composition."

or

"I am ill-prepared to teach composition."

or

"I am somewhat prepared to teach composition, but need help."

The last question on the biographical data sheet, this item aimed at determining teachers' self-perceptions in reference to their sense of preparedness to teach writing. It was divided as shown into three groups, allowing for a middle range between those who considered themselves successfully prepared and those who felt totally ill-prepared to teach writing.

Of the 116 responding, 43 considered themselves well-prepared to teach composition, 7 were ill-prepared, and a majority 65 admitted they were somewhat prepared but could use some assistance. Group 1, those who regarded themselves as well-prepared, consistently scored higher means than the other two groups (see Table 19), which would indicate a more positive attitude toward the six dependent variables.
Conversely, Group 2, those who felt ill-prepared to teach composition, registered lower mean scores in five out of six categories than either Group 1 or Group 3. Group 2 teachers displayed the least positive attitude toward the dependent variables of the three groups.

One-way analyses of variance produced five instances of significant difference among pairs at the .05 level (see Table 20). The Scheffe range test revealed that Group 1 differed from Group 2 on the issue of linguistic sophistication, showing that well-prepared teachers believed their students to be more linguistically sophisticated than ill-prepared teachers do. It must be noted, however, that Group 2 was extremely small, making the figures more unreliable than the larger groups.

On the dependent variable logical error, well-prepared teachers saw error as a logical phenomenon to a much greater degree than teachers who felt the need for help. The dependent variable, psychological error, produced the most significant instance of disagreement of all six variables. Group 3 differed from Group 2, while Group 1 also differed from Group 2. Perhaps Group 2 teachers (those who were ill-prepared) had never considered the possibility of a psychological component to error, and therefore looked at writing error so differently than the other two groups.

Groups 1 and 3 displayed significant differences of opinion on both writing process and student revision. It is possible, as suggested before, that Group 1 has had more success and experience teaching writing, and therefore bears a more positive attitude toward these variables, having seen how they affect student composition performance.
### TABLE 1
MEANS AND STANDARD DEVIATIONS FOR DEPENDENT VARIABLES BY THE INDEPENDENT VARIABLE TCHEXP: (TEACHING EXPERIENCE)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
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<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>LINGS</td>
<td>44.21</td>
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<td>41.31</td>
<td>3.18</td>
<td>32.00</td>
<td>3.25</td>
<td>43.21</td>
<td>3.51</td>
<td>38.21</td>
<td>3.38</td>
<td>44.21</td>
<td>4.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LOGER</td>
<td>47.47</td>
<td>5.18</td>
<td>41.61</td>
<td>4.38</td>
<td>33.39</td>
<td>3.05</td>
<td>44.03</td>
<td>5.32</td>
<td>40.64</td>
<td>4.72</td>
<td>46.61</td>
<td>4.79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PSYCHER</td>
<td>44.77</td>
<td>5.89</td>
<td>39.43</td>
<td>4.25</td>
<td>31.43</td>
<td>3.82</td>
<td>40.97</td>
<td>4.14</td>
<td>36.89</td>
<td>4.25</td>
<td>42.94</td>
<td>3.86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PEDAG</td>
<td>46.93</td>
<td>5.97</td>
<td>41.31</td>
<td>3.03</td>
<td>32.38</td>
<td>3.84</td>
<td>42.75</td>
<td>3.96</td>
<td>39.31</td>
<td>3.40</td>
<td>44.06</td>
<td>5.03</td>
</tr>
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<td>47.00</td>
<td>6.44</td>
<td>40.20</td>
<td>5.27</td>
<td>32.40</td>
<td>4.41</td>
<td>43.60</td>
<td>3.44</td>
<td>38.20</td>
<td>2.35</td>
<td>44.30</td>
<td>3.16</td>
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<tr>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Denotes significant difference between or among pairs.

### TABLE 2
ONE WAY ANALYSES OF VARIANCE: BY TEACHING EXPERIENCE (TCHEXP) ON DEPENDENT VARIABLES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
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<th>SS</th>
<th>MS</th>
<th>F ratio</th>
<th>F prob</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>LINGS</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>201.386</td>
<td>50.346</td>
<td>1.760</td>
<td>.142</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LOGER</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>101.930</td>
<td>25.482</td>
<td>1.525</td>
<td>.199</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PSYCHER</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>70.945</td>
<td>17.736</td>
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<td>.216</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PEDAG</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>180.785</td>
<td>45.196</td>
<td>2.348</td>
<td>.058</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WRINGPRO</td>
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<td>263.567</td>
<td>67.892</td>
<td>4.014</td>
<td>.004**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>STRVSN</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>249.972</td>
<td>62.493</td>
<td>3.334</td>
<td>.013**</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Denotes significant difference at the .05 level or less

N = 116
### Table 3

**Means and Standard Deviations for Dependent Variables by the Independent Variable ENG:** (English Only or English and Other Subjects)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>LINGS</th>
<th>LOGER</th>
<th>PSYCHER</th>
<th>PEDAG</th>
<th>WRINGPRO</th>
<th>STRVSN</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
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<td>SD</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>SD</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>SD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group 1</td>
<td>46.35</td>
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<td>40.45</td>
<td>3.81</td>
<td>32.35</td>
<td>3.51</td>
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<td></td>
<td>42.79</td>
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<td>38.65</td>
<td>3.91</td>
<td>44.21</td>
<td>4.37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group 2</td>
<td>45.32</td>
<td>5.43</td>
<td>41.54</td>
<td>4.86</td>
<td>32.32</td>
<td>3.54</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>5.36</td>
<td>38.90</td>
<td>5.16</td>
<td>45.52</td>
<td>4.79</td>
</tr>
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</table>

### Table 4

**One Way Analyses of Variance: By ENG on Dependent Variables**

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Source</th>
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<th>MS</th>
<th>F ratio</th>
<th>F prob</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>LINGS</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>24.137</td>
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<td>.367</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LOGER</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>27.529</td>
<td>27.529</td>
<td>1.627</td>
<td>.204</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PSYCHER</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.032</td>
<td>0.032</td>
<td>.003</td>
<td>.959</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PEDAG</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.301</td>
<td>.301</td>
<td>.015</td>
<td>.903</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WRINGPRO</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.452</td>
<td>1.452</td>
<td>.079</td>
<td>.778</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>STRVSN</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>38.694</td>
<td>38.694</td>
<td>1.925</td>
<td>.168</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

N = 116
TABLE 5
MEANS AND STANDARD DEVIATIONS FOR DEPENDENT VARIABLES BY THE INDEPENDENT VARIABLE COURSE: (COURSEWK IN TCHING WRITING OR NONE)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>LINGS</th>
<th>LOGER</th>
<th>PSYCHER</th>
<th>PEDAG</th>
<th>WRITNGPRO</th>
<th>STRVSN</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Group 1</td>
<td>46.95</td>
<td>5.23</td>
<td>40.89</td>
<td>4.10</td>
<td>32.63</td>
<td>3.19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group 2</td>
<td>45.58</td>
<td>5.60</td>
<td>40.59</td>
<td>4.17</td>
<td>32.07</td>
<td>3.79</td>
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</table>

TABLE 6
ONE WAY ANALYSES OF VARIANCE: BY COURSE ON DEPENDENT VARIABLES

<table>
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<th>SOURCE</th>
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<th>F ratio</th>
<th>F prob</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>LINGS</td>
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<td>30.184</td>
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<td>1</td>
<td>2.610</td>
<td>2.610</td>
<td>.152</td>
<td>.697</td>
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<td>9.242</td>
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<td>.387</td>
</tr>
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<td>.067</td>
<td>.067</td>
<td>.003</td>
<td>.954</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WRITNGPRO</td>
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<td>.442</td>
<td>.442</td>
<td>.024</td>
<td>.876</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>1.236</td>
<td>1.236</td>
<td>.061</td>
<td>.806</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

N = 116
### TABLE 7

MEANS AND STANDARD DEVIATIONS FOR DEPENDENT VARIABLES BY THE INDEPENDENT VARIABLE GRADWK: (Gradwk in teaching writing or none)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>LINGS</th>
<th>LOGER</th>
<th>PSYCHER</th>
<th>PEDAG</th>
<th>WRNGPRO</th>
<th>STRVSN</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
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<td>M</td>
<td>SD</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>SD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group 1</td>
<td>47.39</td>
<td>5.24</td>
<td>41.10</td>
<td>4.39</td>
<td>33.00</td>
<td>3.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group 2</td>
<td>45.05</td>
<td>5.37</td>
<td>40.46</td>
<td>3.91</td>
<td>31.83</td>
<td>3.68</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### TABLE 8

ONE WAY ANALYSES OF VARIANCE: BY GRADWK ON DEPENDENT VARIABLES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SOURCE</th>
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<th>SS</th>
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<th>F prob</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>LINGS</td>
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<td>157.292</td>
<td>5.570</td>
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</tr>
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<td>LOGER</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>11.561</td>
<td>11.561</td>
<td>.678</td>
<td>.412</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PSYCHER</td>
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<td>39.094</td>
<td>39.094</td>
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</tr>
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<td>.524</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
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<td>16.053</td>
<td>16.053</td>
<td>.791</td>
<td>.375</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Denotes significant difference at the .05 level or less.

N = 116
TABLE 9

MEANS AND STANDARD DEVIATIONS FOR DEPENDENT VARIABLES BY THE INDEPENDENT VARIABLE INSERV: (Inservice training in teaching writing or none)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LINGS</th>
<th>LOGER</th>
<th>PSYCHER</th>
<th>PEDAG</th>
<th>WRTPGPRO</th>
<th>STRVSN</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>M</td>
<td>SD</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>SD</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>SD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>-------</td>
<td>---------</td>
<td>-------</td>
<td>----------</td>
<td>--------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group 1</td>
<td>46.24</td>
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<td>40.72</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
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<td>45.36</td>
<td>6.11</td>
<td>40.82</td>
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TABLE 10

ONE WAY ANALYSES OF VARIANCE: BY INSERV ON DEPENDENT VARIABLES

<table>
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<th>SOURCE</th>
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<th>F prob</th>
</tr>
</thead>
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<td>.156</td>
<td>.009</td>
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<td>10.345</td>
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<td>3.379</td>
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<td>37.120</td>
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<td>10.506</td>
<td>.516</td>
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N = 116
### Table 11
MEANS AND STANDARD DEVIATIONS FOR DEPENDENT VARIABLES BY THE INDEPENDENT VARIABLE

**COMP:** (Composition courses only or w. other subjects)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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<th>LOGER</th>
<th>PSYCHER</th>
<th>PEDAG</th>
<th>WRNGPRO</th>
<th>STRVSN</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>M</td>
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<td>M</td>
<td>SD</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>SD</td>
<td>M</td>
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<td>-------</td>
<td>---------</td>
<td>--------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group 1</td>
<td>46.47</td>
<td>5.32</td>
<td>41.36</td>
<td>3.86</td>
<td>32.72</td>
<td>3.34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>42.50</td>
<td>4.07</td>
<td>39.91</td>
<td>3.49</td>
<td>45.25</td>
<td>4.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>5.49</td>
<td>40.46</td>
<td>4.23</td>
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<td>3.58</td>
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<tr>
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<td>42.88</td>
<td>4.68</td>
<td>38.18</td>
<td>4.48</td>
<td>44.25</td>
<td>4.66</td>
</tr>
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</table>

### Table 12
ONE WAY ANALYSES OF VARIANCE: BY **COMP** ON DEPENDENT VARIABLES

<table>
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<tr>
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<th>MS</th>
<th>F ratio</th>
<th>F prob</th>
</tr>
</thead>
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<td>8.149</td>
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<td>20.013</td>
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<td>7.428</td>
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<td>3.564</td>
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<td>.675</td>
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</tr>
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<td>24.887</td>
<td>24.887</td>
<td>1.230</td>
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</table>

* Denotes significant difference at the .05 level or less.

N = 116
### Table 13

**Means and Standard Deviations for Dependent Variables by the Independent Variable Age**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>LINGS M</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>LOGER M</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>PSYCHER M</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>PEDAG M</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>WRTNPRO M</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>STRVSN M</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Group 1</td>
<td>45.88</td>
<td>5.55</td>
<td>40.82</td>
<td>4.15</td>
<td>32.28</td>
<td>3.47</td>
<td>43.25</td>
<td>4.89</td>
<td>38.90</td>
<td>4.77</td>
<td>44.96</td>
<td>4.59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group 2</td>
<td>46.48</td>
<td>4.71</td>
<td>40.86</td>
<td>4.09</td>
<td>32.69</td>
<td>3.91</td>
<td>41.86</td>
<td>3.75</td>
<td>38.00</td>
<td>3.92</td>
<td>44.21</td>
<td>4.35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group 3</td>
<td>46.06</td>
<td>6.46</td>
<td>40.61</td>
<td>4.37</td>
<td>31.94</td>
<td>3.24</td>
<td>42.11</td>
<td>4.10</td>
<td>39.28</td>
<td>2.67</td>
<td>43.39</td>
<td>4.58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group 4</td>
<td>47.00</td>
<td>1.41</td>
<td>37.50</td>
<td>2.12</td>
<td>33.00</td>
<td>1.41</td>
<td>45.00</td>
<td>1.41</td>
<td>38.00</td>
<td>2.83</td>
<td>47.00</td>
<td>1.41</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

### Table 14

**One Way Analyses of Variance: By Age on Independent Variables**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th>MS</th>
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<th>F prob</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>LINGS</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>9.076</td>
<td>3.025</td>
<td>.101</td>
<td>.959</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LOGER</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>22.139</td>
<td>7.379</td>
<td>.427</td>
<td>.734</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PSYCHER</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7.447</td>
<td>2.482</td>
<td>.198</td>
<td>.897</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PEDAG</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>57.359</td>
<td>19.119</td>
<td>.948</td>
<td>.420</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WRTNPRO</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>23.699</td>
<td>7.899</td>
<td>.429</td>
<td>.733</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>STRVSN</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>50.704</td>
<td>16.901</td>
<td>.830</td>
<td>.479</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

N = 114
### TABLE 15

**MEANS AND STANDARD DEVIATIONS FOR DEPENDENT VARIABLES BY THE INDEPENDENT VARIABLE BKGRND: (ETHNIC HERITAGE)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>LINGS</th>
<th>LOGER</th>
<th>PSYCHER</th>
<th>PEDAG</th>
<th>WRINGPRO</th>
<th>STRVSN</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>M</td>
<td>SD</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>SD</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>SD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group 1</td>
<td>46.75</td>
<td>5.05</td>
<td>40.00</td>
<td>3.44</td>
<td>31.69</td>
<td>2.65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group 2</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group 3</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group 4</td>
<td>45.97</td>
<td>5.49</td>
<td>40.86</td>
<td>4.23</td>
<td>32.45</td>
<td>3.62</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### TABLE 16

**ONE WAY ANALYSES OF VARIANCE: ON DEPENDENT VARIABLES BY BKGRND**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SOURCE</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>SS</th>
<th>MS</th>
<th>F ratio</th>
<th>F prob</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>LINGS</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>8.383</td>
<td>8.383</td>
<td>.284</td>
<td>.595</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LOGER</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>10.144</td>
<td>10.144</td>
<td>.594</td>
<td>.442</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PSYCHER</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>8.045</td>
<td>8.045</td>
<td>.654</td>
<td>.420</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PEDAG</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.120</td>
<td>.120</td>
<td>.006</td>
<td>.939</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WRINGPRO</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>1.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>STRVSN</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>12.190</td>
<td>12.190</td>
<td>.599</td>
<td>.440</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

N = 116
### TABLE 17

Means and Standard Deviations for Dependent Variables by the Independent Variable WRT: (Enjoyment Teaching Writing, or None)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>LINGS</th>
<th>LOGER</th>
<th>PSYCHER</th>
<th>PEDAG</th>
<th>WRTNGPRO</th>
<th>STRVSN</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>M</td>
<td>SD</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>SD</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>SD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group 1</td>
<td>47.41</td>
<td>5.06</td>
<td>41.15</td>
<td>4.20</td>
<td>33.20</td>
<td>3.21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group 2</td>
<td>43.34</td>
<td>5.14</td>
<td>39.89</td>
<td>3.87</td>
<td>30.58</td>
<td>3.45</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### TABLE 18

One Way Analyses of Variance: By WRT on Dependent Variables

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SOURCE</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>SS</th>
<th>MS</th>
<th>F ratio</th>
<th>F prob</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>LINGS</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>422.897</td>
<td>422.897</td>
<td>16.324</td>
<td>.000**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LOGER</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>40.477</td>
<td>40.477</td>
<td>2.409</td>
<td>.123</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PSYCHER</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>176.234</td>
<td>176.234</td>
<td>16.281</td>
<td>.000**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PEDAG</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>196.356</td>
<td>196.356</td>
<td>10.554</td>
<td>.002**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WRTNGPRO</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>227.185</td>
<td>227.185</td>
<td>13.936</td>
<td>.000**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>STRVSN</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>210.291</td>
<td>210.291</td>
<td>11.306</td>
<td>.001**</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

** Denotes significant difference at the .05 level or less.  
N = 116
### TABLE 19

**MEANS AND STANDARD DEVIATIONS FOR DEPENDENT VARIABLES BY THE INDEPENDENT VARIABLE PREP: (HOW PREPARED TEACHERS ARE TO TEACH COMPOSITION)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>LINGS</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th>LOGER</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th>PSYCHER</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th>PEDAG</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th>WRTNGPRO</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th>STRVSN</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>M</td>
<td>SD</td>
<td></td>
<td>M</td>
<td>SD</td>
<td></td>
<td>M</td>
<td>SD</td>
<td></td>
<td>M</td>
<td>SD</td>
<td></td>
<td>M</td>
<td>SD</td>
<td></td>
<td>M</td>
<td>SD</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group 1</td>
<td>47.44*</td>
<td>5.08</td>
<td></td>
<td>47.33**</td>
<td>4.40</td>
<td></td>
<td>33.37*</td>
<td>3.56</td>
<td></td>
<td>43.79</td>
<td>4.58</td>
<td></td>
<td>40.16*</td>
<td>4.30</td>
<td></td>
<td>46.21*</td>
<td>4.36</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group 2</td>
<td>41.71*</td>
<td>6.60</td>
<td></td>
<td>38.57</td>
<td>4.50</td>
<td></td>
<td>28.00*</td>
<td>3.83</td>
<td></td>
<td>40.86</td>
<td>4.10</td>
<td></td>
<td>36.29</td>
<td>4.23</td>
<td></td>
<td>44.29</td>
<td>4.57</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group 3</td>
<td>45.61</td>
<td>5.30</td>
<td></td>
<td>39.95*</td>
<td>3.62</td>
<td></td>
<td>32.14*</td>
<td>3.09</td>
<td></td>
<td>42.23</td>
<td>4.39</td>
<td></td>
<td>38.06*</td>
<td>4.02</td>
<td></td>
<td>43.45*</td>
<td>4.32</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Denotes significant difference between or among pairs.

### TABLE 20

**ONE WAY ANALYSES OF VARIANCE BY PREP ON DEPENDENT VARIABLES**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SOURCE</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>SS</th>
<th>MS</th>
<th>F ratio</th>
<th>F prob</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>LINGS</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>227.103</td>
<td>113.552</td>
<td>4.043</td>
<td>.020**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LOGER</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>181.174</td>
<td>90.587</td>
<td>5.726</td>
<td>.004**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PSYCHER</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>180.276</td>
<td>90.138</td>
<td>8.209</td>
<td>.001**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PEDAG</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>89.152</td>
<td>44.576</td>
<td>2.251</td>
<td>.110</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WRTNGPRO</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>159.118</td>
<td>79.559</td>
<td>4.643</td>
<td>.012**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>STRVSN</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>198.047</td>
<td>99.023</td>
<td>5.230</td>
<td>.007**</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

** Denotes significant difference between groups at the .05 level. N = 115
Percentages of respondents agreeing or disagreeing with the refined survey statements:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ITEM</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>D</th>
<th>U</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>SA</th>
<th>% Agree</th>
<th>% Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. People learn their language poorly without school.</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>56%</td>
<td>44%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Students are so used to making writing errors to stop making them.</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>70%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Poor writers have many ideas, but lack the skill to articulate them.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>82%</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. High school students are linguistically sophisticated.</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>82%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. My students do not know what an English sentence is.</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>68%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Most spoken English is ungrammatical.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>53%</td>
<td>47%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Writing competency can be achieved at any age.</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>75%</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Poor writers have few ideas.</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>91%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Young people learn the majority of their language without formal instruction</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>93%</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Errors are learned, and can be unlearned.</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>97%</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. High school students are generally ignorant about the English language.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>52%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. The majority of speech is in sentence form.</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>63%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. There is little hope for much writing improvement by the time a student reaches high school.</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>87%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. Young people are skilled sentence-makers.</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>76%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* SD=Strongly Disagree; D=Disagree; U=Undecided; A=Agree; SA=Strongly Agree. Percentages computed from the total of those responding positively or negatively show those who agree or disagree with the statements from the survey. These percentages do not reflect an "Undecided" category. Also, the A's and SA's, the D's and SD's were grouped together to figure these percentages.
Percentages agreeing or disagreeing with the survey statements:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ITEM</th>
<th>%SD</th>
<th>D</th>
<th>U</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>SA</th>
<th>Of those responding:</th>
<th>% Agree</th>
<th>% Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>15. Speech and writing are produced by similar mental processes.</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>61%</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16. Writers make errors through their reasoning processes.</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>47%</td>
<td>53%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17. Dialects are linguistically inferior to Standard English.</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>62%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18. Poor writers compose the way they do because they are ill-prepared with formal written language.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>85%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19. Writing errors demonstrate logical strategies students use to deal with language problems.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>64%</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20. A writer who habitually omits terminal s's lacks the concept of plurality.</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>84%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21. Poor writers compose badly because they are non-verbal.</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>81%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22. Dialects are as complex and resourceful as Standard English.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23. An individual thinks differently to produce speech than to produce writing.</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>65%</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24. Errors represent poor writers' inability to learn.</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>94%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25. Leaving final s's off words does not demonstrate that the writer lacks the concept of plurality.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>88%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26. Students make writing errors at random rather than through reason.</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>61%</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* SD=Strongly Disagree; D=Disagree; U=Undecided; A=Agree; SA=Strongly Agree. Percentages showing those agreeing and those disagreeing were computed from the total of those responding positively or negatively; these percentages do not include those responding in the "Undecided" category. The A's and SA's as well as the D's and SD's were grouped together in order to figure these percentages.
Percentages agreeing or disagreeing with the survey statements:

**TABLE 23**

RESPONSES TO SCALE THREE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ITEM</th>
<th>*SD</th>
<th>D</th>
<th>U</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>SA</th>
<th>Of those responding:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>% Agree   % Disagree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27. Encouraging students to discuss their writing problems diminishes their fear of making mistakes.</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>91% 9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28. Poor writers are characteristically unable to maintain single lines of thought in their compositions.</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>74% 26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29. Fear of error often bars the poor writer from having something to write.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>81% 19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30. Young people, while verbal, have not read or written enough to develop long memory spans for written words.</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>79% 21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31. The unskilled writer often has spelling problems because he has difficulty remembering what he has seen or written.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>74% 26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>32. My students do not generally care whether or not they make writing errors.</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>54% 46%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>33. Poor writers cannot sustain lines of thought in their compositions because they rely on speech habits.</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>25% 75%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>34. Unskilled writers have trouble keeping words in mind because they are less verbal than better writers.</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>37% 63%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35. Poor writers often spell badly because their language ability is limited.</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>56% 44%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36. Talking about types of errors will not erase students' anxieties about committing errors.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>30</td>
<td></td>
<td>29% 71%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*SD=Strongly Agree; D=Disagree; U=Undecided; A=Agree; SA=Strongly Agree. Percentages showing those agreeing and those disagreeing were computed from the total of those responding positively or negatively; these percentages do not include those responding in the "Undecided" category. The A's and SA's as well as the D's and SD's were grouped together in order to figure these percentages.
Percentages agreeing or disagreeing with the survey statements:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ITEM</th>
<th>%SD</th>
<th>D</th>
<th>U</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>SA</th>
<th>% Agree</th>
<th>% Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>37. Correctness is the most important feature of writing.</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>89%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>38. A lot of writing practice will help improve my students' composition skills considerably.</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>90%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>39. An inexperienced writer should work through a hierarchy of learning tasks, in order of their importance.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>73%</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40. A student should learn grammar by analyzing his own errors.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>78%</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41. The difficulties of poor writers are the difficulties of all writers magnified.</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>65%</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>42. Grammar study most effectively improves my students' writing.</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>75%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>43. Standard English grammar should be learned by the memorization of rules.</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>75%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>44. Errors and structural problems should be dealt with in the context of a piece of writing.</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>91%</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45. The most important aspect of writing is clear communication.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>96%</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>46. The main goal of composition instruction is to enable a student to communicate clearly through writing.</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>96%</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>47. Poor writers demonstrate different composition problems than good writers.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>63%</td>
<td>37%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>48. The aim of writing instruction is to perfect structure.</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>73%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* SD=Strongly Disagree; D=Disagree; U=Undecided; A=Agree; SA=Strongly Agree. Percentages showing those agreeing and disagreeing were computed from the total of those responding positively or negatively. These percentages do not include those responding in the "Undecided" category. The A's and SA's as well as the D's and SD's were grouped together in order to figure these percentages.
Percentages agreeing or disagreeing with the survey statements:

TABLE 25
RESPONSES TO SCALE FIVE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>D</th>
<th>U</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>SA</th>
<th>Of those responding:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>% Agree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>49. My students produce better writing when I give them specific</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>80%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>restrictions and stipulations.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50. I regard editing and evaluation as my primary responsibility</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>34%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>as a composition teacher.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>51. No student should be encouraged to write until he has</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mastered the English sentence.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>52. I attend to all aspects of the writing process in my</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>56%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English classroom.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>53. Writing students should compose as much as possible.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>95%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>54. An inexperienced writer composes better without specific</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>81%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>restrictions and stipulations.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>55. All stages of the writing process are equally important.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>62%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>56. Too much time is devoted to grammar exercises and drills in</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>37%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>the English classroom.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>57. When my students compose, I serve most usefully as a</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>91%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>facilitator of the writing process.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>58. I emphasize certain features of the writing process more</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>92%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>than others in my English classroom.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>59. Developmental stages of composition are not as important as</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>the final product.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60. Students need to master grammar skills through drills &amp;</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>exercises before they write compositions.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* SD=Strongly Disagree; D=Disagree; U=Undecided; A=Agree; SA=Strongly Agree. Percentages showing those agreeing and those disagreeing were computed from the total of those responding positively or negatively; these percentages do not include those responding in the "Undecided" category. The A's and SA's as well as the D's and SD's were grouped together in order to figure these percentages.
Percentages agreeing or disagreeing with the survey statement:

TABLE 26
RESPONSES TO SCALE SIX

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>*SD</th>
<th>D</th>
<th>U</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>SA</th>
<th>Of those responding:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>% Agree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>61. There is no satisfactory way of attacking errors systematically.</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>62. Poor writers are not generally able to correct and revise their compositions on their own.</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>68%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>63. The need to change things is the mark of an amateur writer.</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>64. Classifying types of errors helps students attack writing errors systematically.</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>95%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>65. Students do not benefit from reading one another's work.</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>66. I read my students' papers principally to correct errors.</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>67. Revision is an integral part of the composition process.</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>96%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>68. Analyzing reasons for errors will not especially improve one's writing ability.</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>69. A writer should revise and correct his own work.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>91%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>70. When students read one another's compositions, they gain valuable proofreading experience.</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>95%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>71. When looking at my students' writing, I read mainly for content.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>48%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>72. Students can gain control over error once they perceive reasons for their errors.</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>91%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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Percentages agreeing or disagreeing with Shaughnessy's principles:

**TABLE 27**

**RESPONSES TO SCALE ONE**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>D</th>
<th>U</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>SA</th>
<th>% Agree</th>
<th>% Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. People learn their language poorly without school.</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>56%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Students are too used to making writing errors to stop making them.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>70%</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Poor writers have many ideas, but lack the skill to articulate them.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>82%</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. High school students are linguistically sophisticated.</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>82%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. My students do not know what an English sentence is.</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>68%</td>
<td>32%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Most spoken English is ungrammatical.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>47%</td>
<td>53%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Writing competency can be achieved at any age.</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>75%</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Poor writers have few ideas.</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>91%</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Young people learn the majority of their language without formal instruction.</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>93%</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Errors are learned, and can be unlearned.</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>97%</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. High school students are generally ignorant about the English language.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>52%</td>
<td>48%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. The majority of speech is in sentence form.</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>63%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. There is little hope for much writing improvement by the time a student reaches high school.</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>87%</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. Young people are skilled sentence-makers.</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>76%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* SD=Strongly Disagree; D=Disagree; U=Undecided; A=Agree; SA=Strongly Agree. Percentages showing those agreeing or disagreeing with Shaughnessy were computed from the total of those responding positively or negatively; these percentages do not include those responding in the "Undecided" category. The A's and SA's as well as the D's and SD's were grouped together in order to figure these percentages.
Percentages agreeing or disagreeing with Shaughnessy's principles:

### TABLE 28

**RESPONSES TO SCALE TWO**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>*SD</th>
<th>D</th>
<th>U</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>SA</th>
<th>% Agree</th>
<th>% Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>15. Speech and writing are produced by similar mental processes.</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>61%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16. Writers make errors through their reasoning processes.</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>47%</td>
<td>53%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17. Dialects are linguistically inferior to Standard English.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>62%</td>
<td>38%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18. Poor writers compose the way they do because they are ill-prepared with formal written language.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>85%</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19. Writing errors demonstrate logical strategies students use to deal with language.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>64%</td>
<td>36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20. A writer who habitually omits terminal -s's lacks the concept of plurality.</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>94%</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21. Poor writers compose badly because they are non-verbal.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>81%</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22. Dialects are as complex and resourceful as Standard English.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23. An individual thinks differently to produce speech than to produce writing.</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>65%</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24. Errors represent poor writers' inability to learn.</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>94%</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25. Leaving the final -s's off words does not demonstrate that the writer lacks the concept of plurality.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>94%</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26. Students make writing errors at random rather than through reason.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>61%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*SD=Strongly Disagree; D=Disagree; U=Undecided; A=Agree; SA=Strongly Agree. Percentages showing those agreeing or disagreeing with Shaughnessy's ideas were computed from the total of those responding positively or negatively; these percentages do not include those responding in the "Undecided" category. The A's and SA's as well as the D's and SD's were grouped together in order to figure these percentages.
Percentages agreeing or disagreeing with Shaughnessy's principles:

TABLE 29
RESPONSES TO SCALE THREE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>*SD</th>
<th>D</th>
<th>U</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>SA</th>
<th>Of those responding:</th>
<th>% Agree</th>
<th>% Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>27. Encouraging students to discuss their writing problems diminishes their fear of making mistakes.</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>91%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28. Poor writers are characteristically unable to maintain single lines of thought in their compositions.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>74%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29. Fear of error often bars the poor writer from having something to write.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>81%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30. Young people, while verbal, have not read or written enough to develop long memory spans for written words.</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>79%</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31. The unskilled writer often has spelling problems because he has difficulty remembering what he has seen or has written.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>74%</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>32. My students do not generally care whether or not they make writing errors.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>54%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>33. Poor writers cannot sustain lines of thought in their compositions because they rely on speech habits.</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>75%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>34. Unskilled writers have trouble keeping words in mind because they are less verbal than better writers.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>63%</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35. Poor writers often spell badly because their language ability is limited.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>56%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36. Talking about types of errors will not erase students' anxieties about committing errors.</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>71%</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*SD=Strongly Disagree; D=Disagree; U=Undecided; A=Agree; SA=Strongly Agree. Percentages showing those agreeing or disagreeing with Shaughnessy were computed from totals of those responding positively or negatively; these percentages do not include those responding in the "Undecided" category. The A's and SA's as well as the D's and SD's were grouped together in order to figure these percentages.
Percentages agreeing or disagreeing with Shaughnessy's principles:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>*SD</th>
<th>D</th>
<th>U</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>SA</th>
<th>Of those responding:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>% Agree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>37. Correctness is the most important feature of writing.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>89%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>38. A lot of writing practice will help improve my students' composition skills considerably.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>90%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>39. An inexperienced writer should work through an hierarchy of learning tasks, in order of their importance.</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40. A student should learn grammar by analyzing his own errors.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>78%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41. The difficulties of poor writers are the difficulties of all writers, magnified.</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>65%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>42. Grammar study most effectively improves my students' writing.</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>75%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>43. Standard English grammar should be learned by the memorization of rules.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>75%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>44. Errors and structural problems should be dealt with in the context of a piece of writing.</td>
<td></td>
<td>10</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>91%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45. The most important aspect of writing is clear communication.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>96%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>46. The main goal of composition instruction in to enable a student to communicate clearly through writing.</td>
<td></td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>96%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>47. Poor writers demonstrate different composition problems than good writers.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>37%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>48. The aim of writing instruction is to perfect structure.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>73%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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Percentages agreeing or disagreeing with Shaughnessy's principles:

### TABLE 31

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>D</th>
<th>U</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>SA</th>
<th>Of those responding:</th>
<th>% Agree</th>
<th>% Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>49. My students produce better writing when I give them specific restrictions and stipulations.</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>80%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50. I regard editing and evaluation as my primary responsibility as a composition teacher.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td>66%</td>
<td>34%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>51. No student should be encouraged to write until he has mastered the English sentence.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>30</td>
<td></td>
<td>92%</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>52. I attend to all aspects of the writing process in my English classroom.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>9</td>
<td></td>
<td>56%</td>
<td>44%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>53. Writing students should compose as much as possible</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>24</td>
<td></td>
<td>95%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>54. An inexperienced writer composes better without specific restrictions and stipulations.</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td>81%</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>55. All stages of the writing process are equally important.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
<td>62%</td>
<td>38%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>56. Too much time is devoted to grammar exercises and drills in the English classroom.</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>63%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>57. When my students compose, I serve most usefully as a facilitator of the writing process.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
<td>91%</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>58. I emphasize certain features of the writing process more than others in my English classroom.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>9</td>
<td></td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>92%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>59. Developmental stages of composition are not as important as the final product.</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>17</td>
<td></td>
<td>86%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60. Students need to master grammar skills through drills &amp; exercises before they write compositions.</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>12</td>
<td></td>
<td>75%</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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Percentages agreeing or disagreeing with Shaughnessy's principles:

**TABLE 32**

**RESPONSES TO SCALE SIX**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th><em>SD</em></th>
<th>D</th>
<th>U</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>SA</th>
<th>Of those responding:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>61.  There is no satisfactory way of attacking errors systematically.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>67% 33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>62.  Poor writers are not generally able to correct and revise their compositions on their own.</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>32% 68%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>63.  The need to change things is the mark of an amateur writer.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>94% 6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>64.  Classifying types of errors helps students attack writing errors systematically.</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>95% 5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>65.  Students do not benefit from reading one another's work.</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>99% 1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>66.  I read my students' papers principally to correct errors.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>80% 20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>67.  Revision is an integral part of the composition process.</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>96% 4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>68.  Analyzing reasons for errors will not especially improve one's writing ability.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>83% 17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>69.  A writer should revise and correct his own work.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>91% 9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>70.  When students read one another's compositions, they gain valuable proofreading experience.</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>95% 5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>71.  When looking at my students' writing, I read mainly for content.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>48% 52%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>72.  Students can gain control over errors once they perceive reasons for their mistakes.</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>91% 9%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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CHAPTER VI

PERSONAL IN-DEPTH INTERVIEWS

Description of Interview Conditions
and Procedures

In an effort to obtain some in-depth qualitative data exploring teachers' attitudes toward error and composition instruction, I conducted a series of twelve interviews with current Columbus Public School English instructors. The teaching experience of this group of respondents ranged from a minimum of five years to a maximum of seventeen years, giving an average classroom experience of 9.75 years each. Six participants were teaching composition courses at the time of their interviews, while the remaining six, teaching English in some form, were not writing instructors per se at the time of our conversations. Of the six who were not teaching courses specifically focusing on composition, five had at some point taught composition, while one respondent had never taught writing as a discrete subject.

The interviews were held at many different locations and times, but in each case, the situation was roughly similar. A teacher-respondent and I, serving as the interviewer, would utilize a vacant classroom or office for a period from twenty minutes to an hour discussing the issue of error and composition instruction. All the conversations were taped and later transcribed. The transcriptions of
the twelve interviews are included in the appendix at the end of this project report.

Recognizing the dangers and complications of the open-ended interview as a research tool, I nevertheless feel that reactive research on a personal level is as critical in determining attitudes and beliefs of individuals as unobtrusive measures or non-reactive techniques. The interviews seemed a logical follow-up to the objective data achieved through the survey instrument.

Discussion of the Responses to Each of the Ten Scheduled Interview Questions, Question by Question

Chapter VI will be presented in this manner—the responses to each of the ten specific interview question areas will be condensed, presented and summarized. Then whenever possible and illuminating, comparisons will be drawn between the attitudes represented by the survey data and the attitudes expressed verbally by the interview participants. Responses and ideas that fell outside the ten structured question areas, but nevertheless provide valuable insights into the overall research topic, will be presented and discussed, and related where appropriate to the survey findings.

Question One: "Do you make it a practice to have your English students do at least some writing in each English class? How often? Regularly? Occasionally? Infrequently? Do you feel strongly about the need for your students to write?

Of the twelve respondents, ten expressed the view that writing belongs in every type of English class, not only the composition course.
Of the two teachers who did not require their students to write in non-composing classes, one felt his ninth graders demonstrated such low level skills competency that he spent the school year on grammar; although the other respondent reported that he reserved "regular writing for the writing classes," he ideally felt the need to have all his English students write more. He cited time constraints and lack of skill in evaluating as reasons for his practices.

The ten who indicated that the act of writing was a necessary procedure for all English students ranged from, "I think it's the number one priority," to "Yeh, but we don't concentrate on it." "I don't think they can get enough of it" is the way another participant reacted. One respondent felt strongly about having students write frequently, but said she did not see the need to grade it all. The most commonly cited interval for writing was once a week.

Although the overwhelming majority of interviewees felt all English students should do some writing, most were willing to relegate regular, intensive writing to the composition class itself. This presents a problem in the school system's ninth and tenth grade curriculum, which offers no writing courses at those levels, but rather incorporates composing in with literature, grammar and other facets of a general year-long language arts course.

Question Two: "Do your students write well? Are many of them competent writers? What would you consider to be a competent writer?

The question, "Do your students write well?" yielded distinctively negative answers from some of the people interviewed. "Ninety
nine percent of them can’t handle it;" "No way;" "The tenth grade--
no-one!" Ball park estimates of how many students are competent com-
posers went from a low one percent to a high of forty percent. Several
respondents felt there was no valid way to assess this because the per-
formance of their own classes differed so drastically from other classes
and grades and eras the teachers had experienced.

The point of the question was to get a general feeling for
teachers' beliefs about their students' writing performance, and the
reaction was generally a poor opinion of their pupils' composing talents.

The other segment of this question area, "What would you con-
sider to be a competent writer," brought more mixed responses. Some
teachers echoed the more traditional view that a competent writer
"has knowledge of what an English sentence is," or "has grammatically
correct sentence structure," or "good sentence structure in the para-
graph form."

A few less formulaic responses emphasized the communicability
of the student writing. For example, "Being a competent writer is
being able to have a flow of thought that's consistent and tied to-
gether." A competent writer is "one whose language accurately re-
flects what he wishes to say," or "a person who can communicate clearly
through the written word," and finally, "someone who feels he or she
has gotten out the idea completely, has expressed it in his own voice
comfortably. [He] recognizes that his work can go further and knows
how to get it there."
Teachers have widely divergent opinions on what comprises competence in written composition, a situation that exacerbates the writing crisis students currently demonstrate. Since there are no consistent standards for judgment, a student who communicates the written word adequately in one teacher's viewpoint may fall far short of another instructor's standards.

Question Three: "Do your students seem better or worse than students you have had in the past? In what ways are they better or worse? Cite examples if possible."

Using the subjective, non-scientific criterion of the opinions heard in the teachers' lounge, one might expect to encounter little but negative attitudes toward student writing skills. This research inquiry itself is an outgrowth of the general consensus that successful young adult writing is in deplorable shape. The responses nevertheless belied this generalized view, splitting roughly evenly into divergent camps.

Of the twelve interview participants, five said they believed their students were, on the whole, better at writing than students they had encountered in their previous teaching experience. Six teachers felt their current English students were demonstrating worse composition proficiency than former students in their classes. One individual considered his students' writing performance to be roughly on the same level as that of other years.

The five who saw writing improvement expressed varying reasons for their viewpoints. In particular, three people cited previous
teaching situations at different grade levels which made their present students seem better by comparison. One teacher believed the motivation level seemed higher among his writers now than in the past, and another who had moved from general English courses to elective writing courses believed this accounted for his current students' improved writing status.

The individual who felt there had not been much change in composition performance during her experience felt that "many of the problems are the same problems that we've had all along."

Of the six respondents who thought their students were doing worse now, three attributed the decline in performance to differences in the students' socio-economic backgrounds and to differences in grade level. One teacher believed her inner city student population demonstrated markedly lower standard skills than suburban students she had previously taught. Another respondent who had taught writing before at a private high school compared his current students' abilities quite unfavorably.

Among specific instances of writing performance decline, teachers cited spelling, punctuation, syntax, clarity, what one teacher called, "a gradual weakening of performance abilities." One respondent felt the form had not necessarily gone down hill, but rather the quality of the writing content. Another considered laziness a prime cause of worsened writing conditions.
Some of the mechanical and syntactical errors which loomed large in the respondents' minds were attributed to many students' tendencies to write as they speak. Other causes mentioned were general immaturity, short attention span, and laziness. The most negative respondent reported, "They're worse at everything."

Question Four: "What would you say are your students' best composition skills? What do they do well or at least better than other tasks in the writing process? Can you elaborate?"

The principal response derived from this question area focused on content and creativity as students' best composition-related abilities. Of the twelve respondents, no-one cited performance skills such as grammaticality or punctuation as strong points in their students' writing repertoire.

Nine teachers specifically mentioned content or creativity as the part of written composition their students could handle, if not expertly, at least better than other aspects of the writing process. One teacher felt that, "Their imagination and their ideas are better than their grammar." Another said, "The first thing that popped into my mind was creativity," although he further remarked that, "they're somewhat of a disappointment in that area also."

Two people remarked on the improved quality of student writing emerging from a creative atmosphere compared with a comparatively restrictive setting; another respondent, however, made just the opposite observation—that, given too much leeway in writing direction, tone and
topic, his students have no idea how to proceed.

In terms of genre types, one teacher noted that her students wrote "some nice descriptive papers," while a different respondent mentioned the relatively higher quality of his students' short narratives and poetry.

One particular participant admitted that he was so frustrated by the low skill level his pupils demonstrated that he seldom required them to do writing assignments. On the rare occasions when they did compose, they seemed to do best drawing on their own personal experience, an observation Shaughnessy would support wholeheartedly.

The one respondent of the twelve who worked the most with peer editing indicated that self-criticism, critiquing one's own content and form, was the skill which stood out most clearly among her writers.

Although, as indicated earlier, no-one cited mechanical skills as strong points, one teacher felt his students could approach the problem of spelling better than other composition trouble areas because they had at least a vague working idea of how to use a dictionary. This would suggest that if one has a systematic plan of attack, it might be easier to approach the task of writing and revising. Shaughnessy's system of error analysis provides such a systematic approach.

Question Five: "How do you account for students' inability to write, or for their writing shortcomings? Could you speculate on reasons for their writing problems?"

The most common response to this question area was that writing has been devalued in our society, and is therefore perceived and
practiced as an increasingly less important communication skill. "It's just less in demand in society." "Writing's a very second-rate skill for most kids." "All around them they don't have to write... they can pick up the phone." As one respondent pointed out, "If there's no value placed on something, you have no desire to do it."

Hand in hand with the general impression that writing is unimportant is what three teachers call lack of motivation. "They have to have some motivation. There are very few around here who see a need for writing." "...not wanting to apply themselves, not wanting to do a good job" certainly characterizes the motivation problem as many teachers see it.

Three people saw as a source of writing problems their students' reliance on personal speech habits. "...they feel that if you can understand what I'm talking about, it's O.K." Their "parents don't speak Standard English... ." One respondent attributed the majority of writing errors to carelessness, a view which Shaughnessy refutes with countless examples of internal consistency which characterizes many writing errors.

Three teachers believed their students had writing problems because they have not read enough, "...and they haven't been doing it for years and years and years." Though this is undoubtedly a significant contributing factor, the belief that one must read well in order to write well exemplifies the traditional techniques of 'pattern copying,' in which the student reads samples of good compositions and
then tries to emulate the patterns and styles which that writing demonstrates. The emphasis in this technique rests on reading, not writing, although as Moffett points out, reading is absolutely essential to successful composing progress.

Only one teacher said that students' lack of experience contributed significantly to their writing problems. "A lot of teachers don't require writing." The consistent, nearly unanimous failure to mention this cause for error demonstrates, at least in part, Shaughnessy's contention that too little attention is paid to the writing process itself.

One individual felt students develop writing problems because they have no sense of audience, and one believed errors are learned patterns, and that through their early schooling (or 'mis-schooling'), some students learn erroneous forms as they would any other language pattern. A different respondent saw the problem of writing errors looming ever larger because of the lack of one-to-one student-teacher time.

Only one individual declined to speculate on the reasons for students' writing shortcomings by replying, "I'm not sure."

Question Six: "Why do students make the specific types of writing mistakes they make? When you see a paper full of errors, how do you react? Is error a sign of someone's lack of language ability? Can error successfully be dealt with, or is it an insurmountable problem?"

This question probes deeper into the issues raised by Question Five, and as such, elicited more comments and discussion between the
When asked how they tend to react to an error-laden paper, one blunt respondent said, "Almost anyone would think of stupidity when you see a person write a paper that you can't make anything out of." Another believed, "mistakes wouldn't necessarily mean that a person is lacking in ability." A third person, whose responses were more in line with Shaughnessy's thinking in general, replied, "Usually it means to me that the student has not had much practice at writing. He probably does not like to write."

One person again mentioned 'carelessness' as the specific cause for individual errors, although he recognized the linguistic sophistication they possess internally. "When you pin them down, they know the stuff. They are by no means stupid. They clearly know a lot about their language." Another teacher defined writing errors as examples of "language gone astray."

Since no one brought it up directly and independently during the interviews, I injected the issue of memory and its bearing on the commission of error. I asked each respondent to assess the role which memory might play in making writing mistakes. With two exceptions, they all said they had never considered memory as a contributing factor to writing problems, except on the most rudimentary level, like remembering vocabulary words or spellings of words. This seemed to be a uniformly new idea to ten of the twelve interviewees, and as such, would support the thesis that Shaughnessy has contributed an original concept to the
field of writing instruction. The two people who cited memory as a contributing factor in error development had both studied Shaughnessy's work and had first encountered the concept through reading her.

When confronted with the hypothesis that most errors have a rational, intelligent basis, most respondents admitted they had never before considered this viewpoint. "Mistakes are intelligent? That sounds strange, but it also sounds basically sensible. It's a new thought to me... I do think that errors fall into categories, and kids are really not making as many as it appears on the surface."

Among other explanations for specific error commission, respondents mentioned poor attention span, lack of concentration, difficulty switching from vernacular to Standard English and back, and the desire to sound formal which results in hypercorrections.

Faced with the question of whether writing improvement is hopeless, whether error elimination is possible, the responses were nearly all positive, if guarded. "I think anybody can change, but it's just a little late to pick it up easily." "You know they're capable of doing it right. Maybe nobody bothered to teach them." "Error is not insurmountable." "Error can certainly be dealt with. We are often-times too critical."

Two people went along with Shaughnessy's view that error must be learned. "I think it's what they've been taught... you have to un-learn it." The respondents could not agree on causes for error, and
reported that they had not put much thought to the matter before our discussion brought it up. Almost all, however, felt it could be worked on successfully. Their attitudes were, for the most part, positive, a condition Shaughnessy would regard as critical to learning progress.

Question Seven: "What is the role of the teacher in the composition process? How big a part should the teacher take in the revision of students' writing? Should more of the burden of revision be on the shoulders of the writers themselves?

This question area corresponds closely to Statement Six of Shaughnessy's composing theory: "The ability to revise one's own errors and shortcomings should be a major goal in the composition classroom." The interview items under Question Seven were designed to probe respondents' attitudes and beliefs toward their appropriate role in the composing process, and how one helps students begin to revise their own work and correct their own errors more successfully.

If the interviewees could not readily describe their role in writing instruction, I would supply some of the more obvious and common ones to stimulate a reaction, such as 'editor,' 'grader,' 'reviser,' or 'evaluator.' In addition to these four suggestions which characterize roles teachers might assume, there were several new roles mentioned by respondents: that of 'motivator,' 'facilitator,' and 'catalyst.' These three teacher functions are loosely related, since they suggest that it is the teacher's job to get things going, keep them moving, and provide the overall impetus for the writing process.
Six of the twelve participants stated that revision should definitely be the students' responsibility, although two qualified that view by saying in effect, 'My students are so poor at revising that I have to do it for them.' "I've thought revising should be a student's task. But, there is very little ability to revise papers." "...unless I point out the errors, they don't know what they're doing." "Because of the students' need for structure, I feel I have to almost be there in every process a little."

The majority of respondents felt it was their responsibility to read whatever their students passed in, but not their responsibility to grade it all, to mark every error. One woman, however, who expressed a notably negative opinion toward writing instruction, said, "I go through the paper and correct every single mistake. It takes hours and hours." This, of course, runs contrary to Shaughnessy's view that students should be taught to identify and eliminate their own mistakes through error analysis and peer editing.

The consensus among the twelve teachers was that one might serve most usefully as an editor, after the student has revised his own work sufficiently that he feels it is complete. Little emphasis was placed upon the teacher's function during the writing process, only on what the teacher should do after the product has been completed.

The attitude toward the necessity for extensive revision ranged from one man's view that, "Revision is vital," to another's belief that, "It hampers their imaginations to be constantly revising." Most
respondents supported Shaughnessy's principle that students benefit most when they perform their own writing alterations for reasons they've been trained to understand.

Question Eight: "On the average, how often should a student write? What types of writing benefit a poor writer? Does frequency of writing help poor writers to improve? What does help?

The group of items under Question Eight are designed to elicit the opinions of experienced English teachers on what specific methods and techniques actually contribute to writing improvement.

Since traditional English grammar and composition texts contain countless drills and exercises focusing on discrete language skills, and since writing teachers use those exercises as the heart of their writing instruction curricula, it seemed important to have the interviewees assess the relative merits of such activities. Five teachers saw the constant employment of drills and exercises as non-productive, two viewed them as valuable to a limited degree, and one person saw them as definitely beneficial to his students' writing progress. On the negative side, "I think exercises and drills teach you to do exercises and drills," and "No, I don't think drills help at all," and "There's no correlation." One man regarded drills as the only practical method of learning grammar in a large group of students, while another suggested computer-supported instructional drills for students with specific individual problems.
On the issue of writing frequency, there were varying opinions, as on every facet of writing instruction thus far. Suggestions for frequency intervals between writing assignments ranged from "at least every ten days" and "a two-page composition once a week" to a more frenetic "Write every day--write something--anything." One teacher expressed it this way--"More, more, more. They need to write as much as they can, they desperately need the practice."

Some respondents regard an emphasis on simple writing frequency as a solution to writing problems with a dim eye. Several point out that frequency will do no good without guided instruction along the way. One lady wants her students "to write less frequently, but to be trained as to what they're supposed to be writing, about the things they're supposed to work on." Another notes that, "Practice makes perfect, if you're practicing correctly." The view that coincides most closely with Shaughnessy's thinking states, "I think frequency is good, but you need to give them instruction as they go along, and break the writing experience down into manageable parts, not just let them write blind."

Additional beneficial techniques and approaches mentioned by respondents include sentence-combining, individual one-to-one instruction, sentence diagramming and peer reading. On the last method, the majority of respondents said having students read one another's work would be helpful, but only five actually employed that technique in their classrooms.
Question Nine: "How qualified do you feel to teach composition? Has your training and background adequately prepared you to handle the writing situations you find in your English classroom? What would help you become a better teacher of composition?

The question of how qualified the interview respondents consider themselves seems important in view of how directly their self-perceptions might affect their teaching performance and relationships with their students.

In our discussions the majority of the participants regarded themselves as qualified to teach composition to varying degrees, from "Extremely qualified" to "Just barely." When asked to credit the source of their expertise in writing instruction, they variously named their backgrounds in high school, undergraduate college courses, graduate work and on-the-job-experience.

The foremost source cited by the twelve respondents was on-the-job experience. Five people said that they gained the most practical and applicable experience from their students and their in-class work. "It's been on-the-job training, and I've had a few textbooks that have helped." "I'm continually learning from other students." "A lot of it is just trial and error."

Four people indicated that they had received graduate training in writing instruction, and all four agreed that it had helped them become better composition teachers. "I've had good grad courses in teaching writing, it's just the undergraduate years that were useless." The fellow who felt "just barely" qualified to teach writing classes
said that his graduate writing course was the only exposure he had had to the problems he actually faced in the high school classroom.

Several individuals credited their present English teaching abilities to their high school background, particularly the area of grammar. One person regretted, however, that he seemed to know less and teach less rigorously than several secondary English teachers he'd had.

Only one person said she had taken any profitable instruction in teaching composition during her teacher training period, and she was the least experienced and youngest of the respondents. This could be a sign of the recent attempts by college English education departments to concentrate more heavily on reading and writing methods training.

Indeed, there is a definite call for such work before new teachers enter English classrooms. Of the twelve respondents, eight remarked with varying degrees of vigor that their undergraduate writing instruction training was sadly lacking in substance or completely nonexistent. One person made the not uncommon criticism that colleges know very little about high schools and what actually goes on in them, and present courses which exemplify this gap in perception.

As it appears, these teachers felt that their academic background did not outfit them as competent writing teachers. After floundering for competency on the job within the classroom, often for years, most of them managed to develop their own style, their own plan of
attack, a respectable degree of instructional proficiency. At least
half of the respondents had gone back to get more training, which in
some cases reinforced their intuitive knowledge and in other cases
gave individuals a whole new theoretical framework from which to teach.

Their sometimes severe condemnation of their undergraduate
training harkens to Shaughnessy's criticism of college and university
failure to offer practical training in crucial areas such as reading
and writing.

Question Ten: "Do you have a general philosophy toward the teaching of
writing and how it should be done? Can you elaborate? What would you hope your English students would learn
about the process of writing?

Question Ten seeks to probe perhaps the most amorphous, vague
aspect of writing instruction of all—the individual teacher's under-
lying philosophy toward his task, what he inwardly regards as his
causa operandi, his reason for his task, and his hopes for accomplish-
ing it.

Most of the twelve respondents in the interview series reacted
with surprise or a measure of dread when asked to encapsulate their
philosophy of writing instruction. Predictably the statement which
this line of questioning elicited varied more than any of the other
queries.

Though the replies did not readily lend themselves to summary,
some respondents' answers echoed others. For example, several respon-
dents wanted their students to experience the joy of writing, the
intrinsic pleasure one may derive from creating something original. As one teacher put it, "...I love to write myself. It's enjoyable to me, and I like to teach what I enjoy... So I would like to teach my students that writing can be enjoyable, that it's fun... ."

Another said, "I would love for them to come out of it with a sense that if they wanted to sit down some day and write a poem, that they can do it without regret or without feeling they should have to hide...and never let anyone see it. There's pleasure in it. I would like them to see the joy of writing." Still another respondent remarked, "I personally feel writing should not be a task. It should be a pleasure.

A larger group of responses clustered around the concept of basic competence and efficient communication. Aside from the more abstract, ethereal pleasures it brings one, writing ought to be mastered for practical purposes. "I think everyone should write Standard English well enough so that when another person reads it, he's going to understand it. That's what we're here for." One teacher felt that, "Writing does have importance, because if you're going to get by in this world, you have to be able to communicate." A third replied, "Writing is an extension of a person. We have become lazy in our communication."

Imparting a sense of success, self-regard, and achievement was a major aim for three teachers. "I am a published writer and like to write. I try to stretch their heads. Writing makes the brain work."
"My goal is to make the students accomplish something and know a little."
"I'd like them to be able to say, 'This is something I can do. I feel comfortable with it, I can get better at it, and I know how to.'"

Two people were concerned with trying to acquaint their students with the processive nature of writing. "My philosophy is to teach writing as a subjective process. We would concentrate on the process, not the product." Another teacher elaborated on this theme: "I would like for them to realize that it is a process, it's a long one and a complex one, and they're not going to master it in one semester. Error-free writing is not necessarily good writing. If they don't know how to get down what they think... that's what I think teachers need to help kids with... saying what they want to say the way they want it said. I tell my students that I'm not here as a magician. If the kids are lucky and hard-working, they'll have improved somewhat by the time they finish the course, but even some improvement is worth the effort they've invested in trying." It is worth noting that this last passage came from a teacher who had done extensive work building an interactionist writing program, after studying Shaughnessy, Vygotsky, Macrorie, and other influential thinkers of that theoretical school.

Only one individual said he had never had a thought-out philosophy of writing and writing instruction, although his comments would bely this assertion. He saw great value in dialogue. He believed that "these kids have a lot of creative things in them, but have never had a chance, or have never known how to get at them." This sums up
several crucial Shaughnessy precepts—students, being young adult thinkers and speakers of their language, have the makings of competent writers and analytical thinkers, but need to be released into their own resources. By learning to gain control over their own writing growth, they don't have to rely totally on the preferences and dictates of an instructor, but can instead begin to trust their own naturally bright intuitions and clothe them in more publically acceptable language at the same time.

Additional Findings from the Interview Conversations

In addition to the data acquired in response to the ten structured questions, there are numerous comments that fall somewhat outside the ten areas but reveal useful information nonetheless. The following is a representative sampling of these observations which bear on error and writing instruction.

One factor which would naturally influence the teaching-learning atmosphere is the instructor's attitude toward his task and his own writing abilities and limitations. One teacher remarks, "I like teaching, I enjoy teaching. I didn't go into it to get out of the draft." Another views her task from the other end of the scale: "I love English, but I certainly don't enjoy teaching it, it's so frustrating." The same individual continues, "I'm really surprised I'm a teacher at all, because I am not a good speaker at all. But I write very well." The scale balances with the teacher who says,
"It's difficult for me to teach writing because I don't think I'm a good writer."

The interviews yielded a number of observations about high school students' linguistic sophistication and innate language resources. These are important to consider for they directly relate to the issues Shaughnessy's Statement Number One raises. Several respondents volunteered their belief that while their students had considerable linguistic ability, they lacked the self-awareness and confidence needed to employ that sophistication. "They're not really knowledgeable about their sophistication. They can quite often handle it without knowing it's sophisticated." "...if you just really dig for it, it's there, but they don't know it's there. They refuse to believe it's there and they don't want to attempt to get at it." Another responded, "They just don't know how to tap their resources." One person points out that, "You don't have to be an English teacher to know whether something makes sense." An instructor with many years of experience remarks with dismay that, "They seem so ill at ease when someone is really listening or reading their work. They choke on their own writing and speech." It may well be the faulty words and not the inner meanings and complexities which characterize so many students as poor language learners. "Language is more of a problem than their thinking is. Language is often a disguise for their deepest thoughts."

Though most respondents conceded that their writers, though poor, nonetheless had great personal resources to draw on, not all agreed with
one teacher's observation that, "A lot of times a good thinker is a poor writer." At odds with that view, "A mechanically sound, grammatically correct paper will show generally more thought and more of an ability to think." This person appears to connect correctness with intelligence and depth, a thought Shaughnessy would reject.

A few people speculated on what makes a good writer. One felt that, "...a person who generally writes well, speaks well and reads a lot," echoed by another's belief that, "You have to read a lot to become a good writer."

An additional condition which contributes greatly to good writing performance as mentioned by several respondents is an interest in one's subject. As one woman expresses it, "That's the first thing we have to be able to do, to get at what they are thinking." Dialogue enters in here—"We do a lot of talking before we write." "They can sometimes evolve their own subject matter from talking about what they find valuable and important." One teacher sees a logical connection between the familiarity one has with his topic and the quality of the resultant writing. "The more you know about a subject, the more likely you are to know the structure of it."

Unfortunately poor writers sometimes have trouble using their abilities freely for psychological reasons, reflecting the thesis of Shaughnessy's Statement Number Three. "Having been put down so often and having been made all too aware of their errors, they've learned not to very adventurous in school and particularly in writing." "You
can be anxious and that in itself will keep you from learning."

Poor writers do better when released from the barriers imposed by an emphasis on too much structure, according to a few respondents. "The creative process is enjoyable for them." One teacher who has taught both open-ended and tightly structured composition formats comments, "I find that when it's totally structured, the writing is good, but it's not as creative, as free-flowing." One respondent's remark neatly encapsulates the assumptions in Shaughnessy's Statement Number Four, which emphasizes the under-valued benefits of engaging in the writing process unhindered: "One thing [the writer] has to feel when he writes that paper is, 'I'm free and I can write what I want to. I can worry about my subject. I don't have to stop every second and see if I have this sentence right or that word spelled right.'"

How does a teacher instill this interest in the task of writing? As one teacher characterized the problem, "You must create interest in writing, but you must also give them a sound base to work from." This approach bridges the gap between the view that holds "...writing for writing's sake" as all-important and the belief that writing instruction must focus on the practical, productive skills one will need to function in the social world.

Respondents offered a variety of techniques and activities they believed would enhance their writing students' chances for progress. For example, one touted the virtues of outlining, while another recommended sentence diagramming, both practices that emphasize the
particularization of language learning, a concentration on discrete
and individual skills. One teacher described this outlook metaphorically as the "building brick" approach—the acquisition of language
skills or 'bricks' eventually resulting in an aggregate 'building.'
It is the hierarchical approach which assumes a ranked orderly process
of elements one must master to write well. Teachers who espouse this
view frequently work in units, although one respondent firmly rejected
this technique: "I don't work in units. Each skill is integrated
throughout the school year." Another instructor who favored the holis-
tic approach to writing instruction rejected the technique of practicing
separate skills through exercises and drills: "I see composition as
a drill within itself. It is a mastery of many skills."

It is not surprising for people to recommend as beneficial what
they themselves have experienced successfully. One teacher of basic
composition courses said, "I learned the five-paragraph theme in high
school, and I used variations of that on every paper I ever wrote in
college." This format is an artificial formula approach to theme-
writing, and as such might prove very successful in a strictly academic
setting. It assumes that the writer has his topic well in hand and
can employ summary skills to a far greater degree than most basic
writers can handle well. As one respondent scornfully remarked, "Open
Time Magazine and try to find a five-paragraph theme!"

During the course of the interviews, some further suggestions
emerged concerning productive writing instruction. Several people
brought up the issue of dialect differences, and how important it is for teachers to understand and respect their students' individual dialectical characteristics. One person felt that, "Everyone is bi-dialectical." Another teacher, referring to some teachers' tendency to look down on their students' speaking habits and backgrounds, said, "If you judge their language as bad, you're saying their existence is bad, in essence." One teacher even recommended incorporating both ethnic and regional vernacular into the official English curriculum. "I think that Standard English must be taught, it must be held up as a goal for the student; but I also think that the dialect of the street should be taught." Another favors pointing out dialectical differences because, "they don't know it's an error [in terms of Standard English] to write the way some of them talk." The majority agreed that "...they know what sentences are, or at least they know how to make them verbally." However it is plain to most writing instructors when dealing with basic writers that "...their verbal skills and their writing skills do not correlate very well." If they are shown the underlying structure of their own dialectical usages, it may be a positive step toward their learning Standard English more successfully. One foreign language teacher who also instructs English went one step further than the others by declaring, "I think any teacher who wants to teach grammar and writing should have a knowledge of foreign language."

In addition to purely mechanical and technical strategies, the responding teachers often expressed the need for a more humanistic
approach to the teacher-student relationship and general atmosphere. One fellow saw the necessity of responding to students' work promptly. "To me feedback is most important. I don't use a lay reader, because I think compositions are kind of personal, and I think you have to grade them on your own." Two people mentioned the importance of positive feedback through praise. "The important thing is to praise them a little." "Students need to be encouraged more than anything else. [After praising them] ...kind of sneak into the negative aspects of their writing."

One particularly articulate respondent discussed at some length the importance of working out writing or other language problems in general as a group. "The socialization process of writing or speaking as a group or with a group would seem to me to be crucial to learning writing, particularly in the elementary years." This same teacher points out that "No one ever teaches them the mechanism for constructive criticism. They don't know how to critique without criticizing." This emphasis on the effectiveness of group interaction in language development, a Vygotskian principle, was met with polite interest by the majority of interviewees, but most of them displayed no real enthusiasm or understanding of how such strategies work. It would seem that most English teachers are threatened by the idea of altering their traditional role as authoritarian prescriptor to that of group motivator or writing facilitator. They have little idea of how to go about it.
The problem of simply not knowing how to proceed may be a prime source of the 'writing crisis' we have been examining. "A lot of teachers of writing realize that the old ways don't work, but I think they just don't know what else to do or they don't want to work at getting new ideas or they blame it on the kids." One person, however, had a very clear vision of what to do, and she was able to express it in great detail. A student of interactionist theory who had designed her curriculum loosely around the ideas of Macrorie said, "I really stress the power of writing in general, that they have the power to manipulate words the way they decide to."

The teachers I spoke with appeared to divide into two camps, those who has positive attitudes toward composition instruction and those who did not. Though not a scientifically grounded observation, it happened that the three teachers who expressed negative views about their students' chances for improvement were the ones who adhered to the current-traditional model of English instruction, who for years had tried to teach the way they had themselves been taught, by drill, by rote, by particularization of skills.

Their comments, and indeed the tone of their interviews, were on the whole repressed and negative. "It seems like now that they've reached the point of ninth grade, they've learned the basics or they haven't and they won't." "I think that by the time I get them, there is not a whole lot that I can do." "I really don't see too much difference in the way they write at the beginning and at the end of the
course." And perhaps the most negative attitude of all: "They're never going to sit here and have to communicate fairly large thoughts. They're never going to be in my world, so for their lives and what they're going through, it's as if their language is sufficient."

Conversely, those nine people who expressed at least hopeful outlooks toward writing instruction were the ones willing to entertain new ideas. Some of these nine had taken advanced course work in teaching writing, some had just learned the hard way, through trial and error. But they all felt to one degree or another that something could be achieved, that workable methods existed or could be developed to solve almost every poor writer's 'crisis.'

For example, the woman who had incorporated many interactionist principles into her daily instructional strategy said, "You know Shaughnessy gets into the way kids make groups or types of errors. It's a magic thing to see a junior or senior in high school with a paper filled with mistakes see the number of errors go from twenty-three wrong to three types of mistakes."

Even positive, hopeful writing teachers must have realistic expectations about what can be accomplished. The Pollyanna view that all students can be brought to Shakespearean composing standards in the course of one semester if the key is found to their individual problems will yield disappointing results. "Even if everything is going well and you have a really involved class, they're still going to improve from here to here. But it may have been the biggest step
they've ever taken in learning to write."

The opinion that perhaps most clearly links both Shaughnessy's attitudes and those of the majority of English teachers' polled and interviewed is this:

I can't believe that ninety percent of a population of students I basically have respect for would keep failing on purpose. That doesn't make very much sense in terms of human nature.

Summary of Verbatim Responses by Each of the Thirteen Participants to Each of the Ten Scheduled Interview Question Areas

Interview Data: Summary of Responses Verbatim

Question One: "Do you make it a practice to have your English students do at least some writing in each English class? How often? Regularly, Occasionally, Infrequently? Do you feel strongly about the need for your students to write?

#1 Most of the time, on a regular basis. Even non-writing classes.

#2 Yes, but I don't feel strongly about grading all of it. It's important to have them write, but I find it almost impossible to keep my sanity in a school like this and do hours and hours of grading. On a regular basis, only in courses that are by definition a writing class.

#3 Yes—it's just a habit. I always have, so I always do it. The non-writing classes—maybe once a week.

#4 Yeah, un-huh. The World Lit class is paired with Advanced Comp. so there's plenty of time later. But definitely, yes.

#5 Oh, yes. I think it's the number one priority, being able to express yourself on paper intelligently, letting someone know what you're talking about.

#6 Yes—I think it's important for them to write, even if it's a lit course. I have them write on what they read. Analysis, essay, so forth.
I reserve regular writing for the writing classes. I feel the need to have all my students write, since that's a weakness. However, I do not feel equipped to teach or evaluate writing the way I'd like to, and this year it's not possible for me to take the time to do that.

Yeah, but we don't concentrate on it. Only occasionally. I try to make it on an occasional basis, but it's been somewhat infrequent this year. There are so many areas to cover in a tenth grade English class.

Every class does writing, but not daily. The tenth graders are doing autobiographies.

Yes, definitely, very much so. I don't think they can get enough of it. In the writing classes, all the time. In the non-writing classes, irregularly. I have a number of expository writing classes, and just can't spend the time on writing in all the other classes. They do a lot of note-taking, which of course is a writing skill.

In the ninth grade I've not taught English composition, for it was obvious the students had no fundamental grammar competency. Basically, the year was spent doing grammar exercises.

I require at least one piece of formal writing each week. All my classes follow this pattern.

Question Two: "Do your students write well? Are many of them competent writers? Are many of them incompetent writers? (ball park percentages). What would you consider to be a "competent" writer?

I would say out of twenty-one people I had in my Writer's Workshop class, three or four wrote well; that is, well enough to be considered on their grade level. The other sixty to seventy percent did not write well at all.

(A competent writer is...) a person who has unity of thought, a person who has grammatically correct sentence structure, who has good sentence structure in the paragraph form.

Some remarkably so; but the ones that write well are generally good readers and enjoy reading. I would say five... oh, one to five percent write ... competently. (The rest of them) below average, I would say, whatever below average is.
No! Competent? I would say ten percent, at the most. That's just saying they're able to write a paragraph without thousands of mistakes and spelling errors, and not even taking into consideration content—just simply being able to get it down on paper. Maybe fifty percent of them could exist in the world and not be laughed at because of their writing.

I think that most of them have good ideas. Many of them have trouble getting those ideas on paper.

That's a hard question. If I said 'well' like some of my students seven or eight years ago, no. I don't even think they can compare. The writing's not as expressive, and it's not as clear, and the grammar's terrible. I'd say 65-71% can make themselves understood.

Many of them are competent, but they're all seniors. The tenth graders—no one. (A competent writer is) someone who had knowledge of what a sentence is, and can write a unified, coherent paragraph.

I don't know if I'm a good evaluator of that. I consider them to be quite good by comparison (to the junior high students I taught). As far as professional writing, adult writing, college level writing, they're still lacking.

No way. Competent? About 20% And that's high. (Being a competent writer is) being able to have a flow of thought that's consistent and tied together, where they don't go off on tangents and stuff.

88% of them cannot handle it. They do not exhibit a big range of performance. All seem to be at the elementary level of skill.

For me, I don't think that very many high school students, if any, could possibly be competent in the sense of publication or anything like that. A competent writer... is one who cannot feel a great level of frustration once he's done with the third draft, someone who feels he or she has gotten out the idea completely, has expressed it in his own voice comfortably, who can finish a paper and can smile. (He) recognizes that his work can go farther and knows how to get it there.

I suppose 60% are incompetent writers, 20% are competent, and the remaining 20% are borderline. I consider a competent writer as one whose language accurately reflects what he wishes to say.

A competent writer is a person who can communicate clearly through the written word. I would say that 70 of my 175 are competent.
Question Three: "Do your students seem better or worse at writing than students you've had in the past? In what ways are they better or worse? Cite examples if possible."

#1 Is that a loaded question because of desegregation? No, because of the three people I said were good writers, two were black and one was white. So on the whole, maybe it's just a better group of kids than I've had in the past. When I first started here in '75 the writing that I saw was atrocious. Since that time, the writing level has gone up. Sentence structure is better defined in their minds, I think. They stick with one subject until they've explained it thoroughly. There are fewer mistakes.

#2 I can't compare all my teaching situations directly, because they've been so different, some inner-city, some suburban. Here, they lack standard skills...or let's say capitalization, tense. If they come from a lower socio-economic area, their skills in punctuation and mechanics are poor, and then composing complete sentences.

#3 Oh, I'd say they're worse. To be really honest, I think they're getting worse content-wise. They don't seem to put as much thought into the content. It's worse all the way around, but not drastically worse.

#4 I think that many of the problems are the same problems that we've had all along. It's hard for me to judge because when I first started to teach, I never had a chance to teach writing courses, so it's difficult to make comparisons.

#6 The seniors are better. The tenth graders are the same as I've always had them. They were bad before, and they're bad now.

#8 Well, when I taught seventh and eighth graders at Shawnee, they wrote quite well, so there is quite a difference here. It all goes hand in hand. Everything. They're worse at everything.

#9 There is a general trend downward--nothing sudden, just a gradual weakening of performance abilities. They can speak fairly coherently, but they sure can't write. The biggest problem I face is their laziness.

#10 Overall, their motivation is much better here than at schools I've taught at previously.
The students seem worse. They are worse in number one: spelling, and number two: syntax, and number three: clarity. It doesn't bother me that they punctuate so poorly, however. I notice that students tend to write as they speak. The net result is sentence fragments and lots of commas. Transitional words are very difficult for them.

Spelling errors still run rampant. But this is due to their age and short attention span. They are allergic to dictionaries. On the whole, they are better writers.

Question Four: 'What would you say are your students' best composition skills? What do they do well or at least better than other tasks in the writing process? Can you elaborate?

I think the people that I see improving work better in a creative type setting as opposed to an expository setting. When the mind is allowed to create, at least with students that I've seen, the writing seems to be better.

I haven't required a lot because of a lot... of frustrations, but the few things I've had are from their experience. They write some nice descriptive papers. They use comparisons and metaphors naturally.

They do better if I give them a set structure. If I say, 'Let's have some free writing today, they don't know where to start.

As far as their attitude is concerned, they seem to enjoy Writers' Workshop more than they enjoy Advanced Composition, just because of the nature of the material involved.

Their imaginations and their ideas are better than their grammar. That's not to say that their imaginations are that good.

It's a combination... Probably expression of ideas.

Content probably, and structure would be second. The syntax of individual sentences...well...not so hot, although it is competent enough to communicate.

The first thing that popped into my mind was creativity. But I'm not even sure if that's true... because they're somewhat of a disappointment in that area also.
They can work with spelling, because they have a vague idea of how to work with a dictionary, but otherwise, they have no strengths. Certainly their grammar and spelling are lacking.

They do better, now, at self-criticism, at looking at content and asking if an idea's supported. They seem to get the points we've been trying to get across for years better in a group-support situation.

Curiously, they seem better at short prose. They write poetry quite well, as if word selection in rhyme shows some relationship between thought and word choice. They write narrative prose the best, argumentative prose the worst. They do one thing very, very well—plagiarize the encyclopedia.

Learning to write in standard style, with good sentence structure, and learning the paragraph form.

Question Five: "How do you account for students' inability to write, or for their writing shortcomings? Could you speculate on reasons for their writing problems?"

I think about that a lot. Simply because a lot of teachers don't require writing. A lot of oral things are given. ...some of the kids are just too lazy to really give a hoot about what they write. ...their verbal skills and writing skills do not correlate very well. ...many are bi-dialectical.

I don't excuse it or try to account for it. It's just less in demand in society. It's not used anymore. His parents don't speak Standard English... he doesn't see people reading in the home. ...writing is a very second-rate skill for most kids.

Motivation. ...they have to have some motivation. There are very few around here who see a need for writing.

I think that part of it is that they don't feel there is any necessity to write well. ...All around them, they don't have to write letters—they can pick up the phone. Everything is very oral.

Their speech habits, even poor speech habits, and they feel that if you can understand what I'm talking about, it's O.K. Not being able to read, not wanting to read, not wanting to apply themselves, not wanting to do a good job.
Carelessness. When you pin them down, they know the stuff. They are by no means stupid. Perhaps they're intimidated by 'formal English.'

Errors are learned patterns. I believe they're learned just like any language is learned.

...the inability to write in some sense of audience.

More time is needed in one-on-one for students who have composition problems.

Question Six: "Why do students make the specific types of writing mistakes they make? When you see a paper full of errors, how do you react? Is error a sign of someone's lack of language ability? Can error successfully be dealt with, or is it an insurmountable problem?

When they have to use the King's Standard English, it's not spoken on the street, and they try to speak it for seven hours here in school, then it just doesn't come across.

It depends on the kinds of errors. For inner-city kids, their parents don't speak Standard English. (Sometimes) they'll try so hard to be correct and in doing so...the hypercorrect problem. There's no reward given for correct writing. The very odd kid gets self-satisfaction out of writing well. Another factor is learning disabilities. Stress. Memory is a very-low-level skill that teachers don't stress. ...I hadn't thought about it much before. Memory is a pattern for writing. It also involves a lack of concentration.

Almost anyone would think of stupidity when you see a paper that you can't make anything out of. I think you almost instantly tend to think they're stupid. ...I think the kids have no mental picture of structure.

...mistakes wouldn't necessarily mean that a person is lacking in ability. But I don't quite understand what you mean about...mistakes are intelligent? That sounds strange, but it also sounds basically sensible. It's a new thought to me. ...I do think that errors fall into categories, and kids are really not making as many as it appears on the surface.
Writing has gone down hill so much that a 'b.' would be the highest grade...that I could put on a paper these days. You know (they're) capable of doing it right. Maybe nobody ever bothered to teach them.

I think it's a lack of concentration early on, not paying attention. Not noticing errors that they make and attempting to correct them. I think the attention span of students who make a lot of errors has always been short.

Usually it means to me that the student has not had much practice at writing. He probably does not like to write.

I think anybody can change, but it's just... a little late to pick it up easily. ...I think it's (errors) what they've been taught. ...you have to unlearn it. It's stupid to talk about analyzing errors with my ninth graders.

Carelessness. When you pin them down they know the stuff. They are by no means stupid. They clearly know a lot about their language. Perhaps they're intimidated by 'formal English.'

Errors are learned patterns, and from intuition fortified by theory, I do believe they're learned just like any language is learned.

Mistakes seldom bother me. What is said bothers me--not how. Error is a sign of language ability gone astray. Language is more of a problem than their thinking is. Error is not insurmountable.

Error can certainly be dealt with. It is important to put positive comments on their papers. We are oftentimes too critical.

Question Seven: "What is the role of the teacher in the composition process? How big a part should the teacher take in the revision of students' writing? Should more of the burden of revision be on the shoulders of the writers themselves?

Facilitator sounds good to me. I think we should help and guide as much as possible. On one hand, we should facilitate their own creative style of writing. On the other hand, that they should know the rules before they break them.

All of those things, but I would say something else even more so. Did you mention (motivator). I think a motivator is the most important thing. Then you can work with editing. ...I've thought (revising) should be a student's task. But there is very little ability to revise papers.
#3 I got away from (grading everything) very quickly. Because of
the students' need for structure now, I feel I have to almost
be there in every process a little. I don't like to be in on
too much of their original work, because I notice that when they
finish, it's my work. I don't mark all errors.

#4 No, they revise for me, and then their grade gets changed whenever
they improve what's wrong. They can revise as many times as they
want to. I must admit, I am sometimes very tired of reading it,
but it's worth it. To me that's more beneficial than writing
another paper, without taking the time to repair and improve the
first one.

#5 I don't usually hand something back and say, "Write this over."
It hampers their imaginations to be constantly revising. I try
to emphasize that grammar is just half the battle.

#6 Well, unless I point out the errors, they don't know what they're
doing. I go through the paper and correct every single mistake.
It takes hours and hours. I don't know how to motivate them.
I tell them over and over again how important it is to write.
The good writers realize it—that's why they're good. There's
only so much you can do.

#7 No, I don't feel it's my responsibility to grade everything. In
actual experience, my track record's lousy. I would like to do a
lot more looking at individual students' writing than I do. I
have them trade papers. Revision is vital. I don't even send in
a letter to the editor without revising it a few times.

#8 The role of a motivator—that's important. But I also have to be
the primary teacher, instructing them in new areas they know
nothing about. It's really important for the teacher of composi-
tion to teach it, not to just let them write with no direction.
...some teachers just keep assigning compositions, and that's
their form of learning. That in itself is not enough.

#9 A teacher has to provide interesting topics. He checks rough
drafts and marks for errors. However on the rewrite, they fre-
quently make the same errors anyway.

#10 I think the bulk of the revision process should be on the students,
but they need to be taught how to do it. They need to be taught
how to look at their own writing. I see my role as giving them
a process that they can take with them, and then let them go when
they know how. I see my job as giving them the ability to, as you
said, 'enumerate and eradicate' errors by themselves.
#11 I like to edit. The teacher has no business revising. That's the student's job. Yes, the burden of any paper is on the writer—not the teacher.

#12 Both editor and catalyst are a teacher's roles. You must create interest in writing. But you must also give them a sound base to work from.

Question Eight: "On the average, how often should a student write? What types of writing benefit a poor writer? Does frequency of writing help poor writers to improve? What does help?

#1 I think that without guidance, writing's going to stay on the same level or maybe move up a notch, but as far as getting excellence, no. In larger classes, it has to be by exercise, has to on a GROUP level. In harder cases, individual attention must be given. (Drills and exercises) probably turn them off.

#2 I would encourage a student to read every day, and perhaps write in a journal of their own every day; to write less frequently, but trained as to what they're supposed to be writing about and the things they're supposed to work on. I have spent more time on each assignment. I don't think (drills and exercises) help you write better. There's no correlation. Yes...(they read one another's writing). It should help more than it does.

#3 I think exercises and drills teach you to do exercises and drills. That's why I don't do it that way. I think the basic thing that needs to be taught is diagramming. I think the kids have no mental picture of structure.

#4 No, I don't (think drills help) at all. I think it's important to go over errors, and I do use sentence-combining, but I don't like to think of it as a drill, ...I think that if you start with a sentence and go on to the paragraph, by the time you get them to write something, they're so bored that they don't really care. Problems can be worked on after they've written something. The brain moves so fast that the hand can't always keep up with it.

#5 Some students are hung up on the grammar. They don't understand why this is a good or a bad sentence, but they worry about it; I try to emphasize that grammar is just half the battle.
I suggest having other people read their stuff to point out errors. They just won't do it. They don't want anyone else to see their writing. In advanced comp, I have them do at least a two-page composition once a week. I sometimes make up dittos with sentences off their papers, containing errors, and we go over them.

More, more, more. They need to write as much as they can, they desperately need the practice. Many of their problems are a problem of unfamiliarity. (Exercises for specific usage problems) have a limited value. You do it so that you have an awareness of it. I also think that a computer-supported instruction program would help, because it deals with specific usage problems.

I think frequency is good, but you need to break the writing experience down into manageable parts and give them instruction as they go along, not just let them write blind.

Often. They should ideally write when they're interested. To be a writer, one must write. (They should do) resumes, autobiographies, applications, letters--things which tend toward the practical genres. Practice makes perfect, if you're practicing correctly. (The problem) can only be changed if the individual student wants it. The more errors he makes, the less able he is to write. Error is neither dumb or smart--it is just a sign of carelessness.

I started out with that whole bag of teaching grammar by exercise and building up from the bottom. I tried going to basics until I was purple in the face and it didn't work.

Write every day--write something--anything. The writing that benefits the poorest writer is diary writing. Sometimes frequency helps, but only in conjunction with learning about punctuation, capitalization, sentence structure, and parts of speech. Exercises are good, individual instruction even better.

Students should write at least every ten days. You become stale. I see composition as a drill in itself. It is a mastery of many skills.
Question Nine: "How qualified do you feel to teach composition? Has your training and background adequately prepared you to handle the writing situations you find in your English classrooms? What would help you become a better teacher of composition?

#1 Extremely qualified. I have a super background in grammar. I'm good. I know composition. I'm continually learning from other students and from books, but I know what an expository paragraph or an expository paper is supposed to look like. I knew it in high school. I certainly didn't (take a composition teaching course in college).

#2 Very. If I were to get a job at another institution, that's what it would be for probably. I don't think I'm a good writer. No, I didn't (have training in teaching writing). It's been on the job training, and I've had a few textbooks that have helped.

#3 Because of background? Not very. Because of experience gained over a period of time, decently. I am not good at teaching basic communication. I've never had a methods course in teaching writing.

#4 Well, I don't know. I feel more qualified now than I did eight years ago. I have had writing courses, but not writing methods courses.

#5 I feel I can do a pretty good job, but certainly not as structured a job as the teachers I had in school. They were tough.

#6 I've had courses in college in teaching composition. My training was theoretically all well and good, but practically, it hasn't helped much.

#7 Not from college. From high school, yes. I had a really good background in high school. You know, I'm really strong in grammar and English, but there are a lot of jerks who are graduating who are not. I've had good graduate courses in teaching writing, it's just the undergraduate years that were useless.

#8 I took some writing classes, but no writing methods classes. I learned most of what I know on the job.

#9 Taking the time to study theory has made a tremendous difference. There were things I did intuitively. A lot of it is just trial and error.
#11 I feel qualified—just barely. There is not enough evidence of classroom problems with writing being taught as part of teacher training. Colleges, for the most part, know little about high schools. I feel more courses at OSU would qualify me if OSU offered Bateman's classes en masse.

#12 I had a poor undergraduate and high school background. I have been fortunate enough to work with good people who have helped me, and I have taken a number of courses in this area.

Question Ten: "Do you have a general philosophy toward the teaching of writing and how it should be done? Can you elaborate? What would you hope your English students would learn about the process of writing?

#1 I go into a writing class thinking everyone's on the same level. I don't think anyone's hopeless. I think there are different levels of ability. I think everyone should write Standard English well enough so that when another person reads it, he's going to understand it. That's what we're here for.

#2 Anything that works is great. I'm not a purist or a fanatic about a certain approach. I don't feel bound to any one form or technique.

#3 No, I don't have any thought-out philosophy of writing. Never have. I think these kids have a lot of creative things in them, but have never had a chance, or have never known how to get at them. Dialogue's important.

   I would like them to feel that they should not feel ashamed to write something, and that they're good enough that they don't have to blush if somebody looks at it. I would love for them to come out of it with a sense that if they wanted to sit down some day and write a poem, that they can do it without regret or without feeling they should have to hide in their room and never let anyone see it. There's pleasure in it. I would like them to see the joy of writing.

#4 I've never sat down and formally thought, "This is my philosophy," but I love to write myself. It's enjoyable for me, and I like to teach what I enjoy, because then it isn't as difficult to teach it. So I would like to teach my students that writing can be enjoyable, that it is fun, and that it's a nice hobby...if you're depressed or something, to sit down and write a little poem or a little short story.
#5 My goal is to make the students accomplish something and to know a little. If you want to get to the kids, you have to let them know you're interested. The most important thing is to grade those papers, hand them back, reinforce their success, praise them a little.

#6 I try...I think I try to make it as individual as possible. (I would like them to) realize how important it is. I don't think this free-writing-creative-writing--let-them-write-it-any-way-they-want-to is worth much, so I guess that makes me a traditionalist. I think they've been turned loose too much, and that's why a lot of them can't write now.

#7 You buy the forest and then chop down the trees. To have something to say and to organize it with your listener in mind is basic. I'd like them to be able to say, "This is something I can do. I feel comfortable with it, I can get better at it, and I know how to.

#8 Well, that's something I think about. I still don't have a definite opinion on that. Writing does have importance, because if you're going to get by in this world, you have to be able to communicate. Writing has certainly helped me to be a better logician--I can put together rational arguments that can really intimidate people. I don't enjoy writing, because it's such a struggle. I love English, but I certainly don't enjoy teaching it, it's so frustrating.

#9 I am a published writer, and like to write. I see writing as a means of communication. I try to stretch their heads. Writing makes the brain work.

#10 I would like for them to realize that it is a process, and it's a long one, and a complex one, and they're not going to master it in one semester. Error-free writing is not necessarily good writing. If they don't know how to get down what they think...that's what I think teachers need to help kids with...saying what they want to say the way they want it said.

I tell my students that I'm not here as a magician. If the kids are lucky and hardworking, they'll have improved somewhat by the time they finish the course, but even some improvement is worth the effort they've invested in trying.

#11 My philosophy is to teach writing as a subjective process. We would concentrate on the process, not the product. We would concentrate on the relationship between thought and language. We, perhaps, could call part of that relationship writing. I personally feel writing should not be a task. It should be a pleasure.
Writing is an extension of a person. We have become lazy in our means of communication. It is hard to write well. That is why people don't write.
CHAPTER VII

CONCLUSIONS, IMPLICATIONS OF THE DATA,
SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

Most educators would support the concept that teacher attitudes can inhibit or inspire student achievement. However, researchers have done little to examine the relationship between teacher attitudes and effective composition instruction. What individual classroom instructors believe about their students' resources and potential capacities will help shape the daily curriculum perhaps more than any other single factor. "A more direct explanation for lack of research on the relationship between teacher attitudes and effective composition instruction lies in the paucity of adequate measures of teacher attitudes."

Review of the Study's Objectives

This study was undertaken, then, to help map out teacher attitudes toward composition instruction and to develop data gathering techniques which enable researchers to tap those attitudes and explore them more fully. A two-fold method was devised to study the beliefs of a given school system's secondary English teachers toward the task of writing instruction. First an attitude inventory was developed, piloted and administered to the whole high school English teacher population of the Columbus, Ohio, public schools. Second, a series of
in-depth interviews were conducted with twelve teachers selected from the larger population because of their willingness to share their ideas on the topic of error and writing instruction.

Most research undertakings are fraught with some degree of difficulty, and this study proved to be no exception. Both the empirical and field methods used to obtain the study's raw data present underlying shortcomings which must be recognized and dealt with. For example, the use of the questionnaire is "based on the assumption that the respondent will give truthful answers." Since the respondent fills out the instrument himself, there is no way to know if he is being honest, or indeed if he knows what he really believes. He may have prejudices toward the study topic, or may be undecided or confused about the issues but wants to appear knowledgeable. He may react negatively because he dislikes taking surveys, or conversely he may respond in a manner he perceives as pleasing to the researcher or his own peers.

Another condition to be reckoned with is the inconsistency between belief and performance. The teacher may say he feels a given way in a given situation, although he reacts quite differently in the classroom. Labov (1966) found considerable variation between linguistic affect and behavior, and as Oppenheim points out, we cannot necessarily predict behavior from attitude. As many of us have come to realize, "People are often poor predictors of their own behavior." Added to these factors is the problem that attitude assessment instruments do not readily lend themselves and their data to measures
of validity. It is difficult to ascertain the external validity of questionnaire data because of insufficient criteria. "The truth is that the validity of any and all attitude tests is unknown. None of the tests, including the Guttmen and Likert, have been able to demonstrate the validity of the instrument beyond face validity or common sense." 6

Reliability of the Instrument:
The Item Analysis

The data from the final population (N=116) was submitted to the same item analysis techniques as was the pre-test data. Since pre-test items yielding negative correlations were revised and reworded rather than eliminated, the seventy-two pre-test items can be compared directly with the seventy-two final test items in terms of correlation. This comparative information is presented in Table 33.

Eleven items received negative correlations on the pre-test. After revision and re-examination, ten of those eleven items yielded markedly improved correlation data on the final test. Item 12 remained in the negative correlation category. From the final test data, Items 18, 30, 31, 55 and 58 weakened to a negative correlation, having produced positive correlations on the pre-test. The items were worded precisely the same on the final survey as on the pilot test. This decreased correlation could be partially accounted for by considering the relatively small (N=10) pre-test population, which could not accurately predict which items would cause the most weakness in the instrument as
a whole. The much larger final population reacted differently in interpreting these five items than the more cohesive pilot group.

Items receiving negative correlations either on the pre-test or on the final test:

TABLE 33

ITEM ANALYSIS ON PRE-TEST POPULATION COMPARED WITH ITEM ANALYSIS ON FINAL POPULATION:

ITEM TO ITEM CORRELATIONS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Correlation</th>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Correlation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Scale 1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>-.096</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>.008</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>-.009</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>.720</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>-.261</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>-.124</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Scale 2 | | | |
| 18 | .039 | 18 | -.176 |

| Scale 3 | | | |
| 27 | -.069 | 27 | .350 |
| 28 | -.395 | 28 | .240 |
| 30 | .098 | 30 | -.003 |
| 31 | .236 | 31 | -.162 |
| 33 | -.294 | 33 | .301 |

| Scale 4 | | | |
| 38 | -.134 | 38 | .216 |
| 46 | -.023 | 46 | .119 |

| Scale 5 | | | |
| 49 | -.412 | 49 | .143 |
| 54 | -.095 | 54 | .202 |
| 55 | .464 | 55 | -.018 |
| 58 | .624 | 58 | -.045 |

| Scale 6 | | | |
| 70 | -.134 | 70 | .393 |

N = 116
The reliability of the whole instrument and its component scales is also of critical importance in attitude measurement. Should any scale receive a low reliability coefficient, that would be an indication of a lack of unified perception by the respondents regarding items within that scale. Such a situation exists in this study. The whole instrument demonstrates a strong coefficient of 0.848, although two of the sub scales produced relatively low coefficients, indicating everyone did not perceive the items in a similar manner. One method of eliminating this problem would have been to drop the two categories as separate scales and to integrate the items into the remaining four scales. This would not have been satisfactory, however, for both low scales are based on key principles of Shaughnessy's theory, the basis for the entire inquiry. The items could not have been integrated successfully into the other scales according to rational criteria, and the information sought was too important for them to be dropped altogether.

It is suggested that anyone using this survey instrument as a tool for replicative research take steps to revise or possibly enlarge Scale Two (Logically Based Error) and Scale Three (Psychologically Based Error). Scale Three in particular contained fewer items than the rest, which may help explain its problem with reliability.

Another possible explanation for the low reliability coefficients produced by Scale Two and Three is the unfamiliarity on the part of respondents toward the concepts these scales explored. As a
theoretical proposition the notion that errors are formed through logical thinking processes or are generated by psychological attitudes is predictably a wholly new idea to a large percentage of the respondents. Their lack of unified perception and possible misinterpretation of certain survey items on any of the six scales could be partially attributed to the newness of the ideas themselves. This would suggest that more research needs to be done along the same lines after an increasing number of teachers become acquainted with interactionist theory and Shaughnessy's work in particular.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scale Name</th>
<th>Items Range</th>
<th>Alpha</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Scale Full</td>
<td>1 through 72</td>
<td>0.848</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scale Lings</td>
<td>1 through 14</td>
<td>0.597</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scale Loger</td>
<td>15 through 26</td>
<td>0.420</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scale Psycher</td>
<td>27 through 36</td>
<td>0.385</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scale Pedag</td>
<td>37 through 48</td>
<td>0.600</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scale Wrtngpro</td>
<td>49 through 60</td>
<td>0.498</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scale Strvsn</td>
<td>61 through 72</td>
<td>0.670</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Limitations of the Study

There exist within the study a few additional limitations which may have had bearing on the results. Time became a factor, since the final instrument was not administered until near the end of the school year. Teachers' attitudes toward their students and their professional tasks may by year's end tend to be more negative than at the onset of school in the autumn. The makeup of the sample population accounts for some influence on the findings, since not all of
the respondents taught writing much, and some not at all. Therefore, some teachers would hold more informed opinions than others on the subject of writing instruction.

Although the aim of the study was to measure teachers' attitudes toward error and writing instruction against the tenets of a specific theory of discourse, it is possible that significant areas of attitude were omitted from the instrument items. Respondents were forced to answer within the parameters of the inventory. There was also no follow-up study; a comparative examination of teacher attitudes at different times might yield different results. These factors should all be acknowledged and dealt with in designing any similar or overlapping research.

The results of the in-depth interviews have to be considered in the light of similar limitations which nearly all field work techniques possess. The researcher must consider six important factors influencing the nature of interviewees' responses:

1) **Knowledgeability** -- Is the respondent's knowledge valid, firsthand? Is he alert, objective, reliable, reasonably sensitive?

2) **Reportorial Ability** -- Is the respondent's memory generally reliable and specific? Can he recount details, and does he express himself adequately?

3) **Reactive Effects of the Interview Situation** -- Was the respondent especially attentive to the researcher's reactions or conscious of the researcher's status? Did comments and expressions prejudice his responses?

4) **Ulterior Motives** -- Was the respondent trying to slant results, expose something or someone, sidetrack the researcher? Was he rationalizing?
5) **Bars to Spontaneity** — Did the social context influence the respondent's answer? Were others present? Was he anxious about them overhearing?

6) **Idiosyncratic Factors** — Was the respondent in a particular mood, fatigued, bothered by his work situation? Was he animated or obsessed with something? Was there any notable discontinuity with other attitudes?

With these limitations in mind, the interviewer must take care not to bias the responses of the participants with his own attitudes and feelings. These personal slants will emerge more influentially in the course of face-to-face conversations than in the context of a printed survey, because personal discourse allows for verbal cues as well as non-verbal expressions and gestures which could affect a respondent's answer. Care was taken by this interviewer to control the interjection of subjective attitudes into the discussions, and each respondent was asked the same ten structured questions in as similar a manner as possible. Measures were employed to ensure privacy to encourage respondents to express themselves freely and honestly.

Taking in consideration the inherent imperfections of social research, the changeability of human feelings and opinions, and the occasional inconsistencies between belief and behavior, it is still useful and relevant to acquire impressions about teacher attitudes. If attitudes are perceived as mediational influences, they appear to be of fundamental importance. And if educators plan to deal with problems through identifying attitudes, a description of those feelings is a sensible starting place.
Generalizations about Teachers' Attitudes

Many of the generalizations about secondary English teachers' language attitudes encountered in the literature were demonstrated by this study to be inaccurate or at least somewhat exaggerated. None of the following assumptions commonly found in recent critical writings were found to be characteristic of teachers as a group:

-- the presumption of error as a sign of language inability;
-- the condemnation of dialects as inferior variations of English;
-- an exaggerated commitment to Standard English as the only acceptable form of spoken or written language;
-- an over-emphasis on formal grammar study;
-- the perception of correctness as the most important aspect of writing instruction;
-- the principal role of the writing teacher as corrector and evaluator.

Not all findings were as positive. For example, only 10% of the teachers said they write, which would indicate that an alarming 90% do not write. However, in general these results pleasantly reassure us that the field of writing instruction is open to change and no longer committed solidly to the traditional pedagogical practices that have proved so ineffectual in recent years. There are naturally individuals who still possess extreme forms of these traditional assumptions, as is obvious from the split opinions occurring in each of the six content areas. These splits need to be interpreted on an item-to-item basis or by examining patterns of related responses.
### TABLE 34
MEANS OF RESPONDENTS TO CONTENT AREAS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Content Area</th>
<th>% Agreed</th>
<th>% Disagreed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>52%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>that high school students are linguistically sophisticated.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>52%</td>
<td>48%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>that many errors are logically based.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>that some errors are psychologically based.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>63%</td>
<td>37%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>that no one pedagogical approach will solve all writing problems.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>56%</td>
<td>44%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>that the writing process is a critical and neglected feature of the writing classroom.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>55%</td>
<td>45%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>that students should be taught how to correct their own errors and revise their own writing.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Conclusions Derived from the Data on the Six Main Principles of Shaughnessy's Composing Theory Under Investigation**

**Content Area 1: Linguistic Sophistication**

Teachers solidly disagreed with Shaughnessy's belief that students are linguistically sophisticated. Although the majority felt that students know what an English sentence is, nearly the same number considered them very unskilled in making sentences. And it must be noted that a full one-third of the respondents expressed the belief that their English students did not know what an English sentence is,
even though Shaughnessy points out that young people have been using them nearly all their speaking lives.

A very high proportion of respondents recognized that young people learn to make errors and can learn to stop making them. Most teachers felt that there was always hope for dramatic improvement and that people could learn to write well at any age, a strong instance of agreement with Shaughnessy.

On the issue of linguistic sophistication, then, most teachers did not regard their students as already possessing a wealth of language resources and abilities. They were willing to recognize their students' great potential for learning, although they deprecated the students' existing skills as language makers.

Content Area 2: Logically Based Error

Responses to the second section of the instrument indicate disagreement and inconsistency of belief regarding the causes of error. It may be that English teachers have not been called upon to speculate on reasons for writing error in the past.

The responding teachers agreed strongly with Shaughnessy that errors do not by themselves indicate linguistic inability. This is a refreshing result, considering the decades of negative attitudes toward error and concomitantly the intelligence of those making errors.

Many teachers attributed students' writing errors to their ill-preparedness with academic English, while others laid the blame on informal speech habits and dialectal preferences. Belying their
traditional training which stresses respect for and usage of Standard English to the exclusion of all other variants, most teachers expressed a positive attitude toward the resourcefulness and complexity of dialects, although a significant minority still regard some dialects as inferior.

Respondents could not agree on the basic premise underlying this content area, that most error is rationally, intelligently based. The sample population split rather evenly, with half claiming error occurs at random and the other half believing that writing mistakes occur through one's reasoning processes. This is an area that definitely calls for additional inquiry and research.

Content Area 3: Psychologically Based Error

Respondents recognized that certain psychological states such as fear and anxiety can have a direct effect upon student writing. The nature of the classroom atmosphere and teacher-student relationship will naturally contribute to or compensate for the student's ability to relax and become comfortable with the writing process. The majority of teachers acknowledged the value of dialogue in removing or reducing error anxiety, and agreed that dialogue had an important place in the writing class.

The second type of psychologically based error is related to the phenomenon of memory, and the majority of respondents did not endorse memory as a prime serious factor in error generation. This can
probably be attributed to the originality of the concept in Shaughnessy's work. Most teachers indicated that the poor writer's inability to sustain a line of thought stemmed from a reliance on speech habits rather than on an underdeveloped use of memory skills, a significant point of disagreement with Shaughnessy.

Content Area 4: Pedagogical Approaches

Recent literature which criticizes the typical pedagogical practices of most writing teachers would have us believe that English teachers are very out of step with reality and current theory. They are often portrayed negatively as rigid grammarians obsessed with the importance of drills and exercises and error elimination. That, of course, is an accurate picture of some teachers, but the majority of respondents in this sample displayed surprisingly untraditional attitudes toward pedagogical procedure.

The respondents almost unanimously felt that the principal goal of writing instruction was the development of clear communication, that clarity is not necessarily always expressed in formal Standard English. Most believed that grammar study, while useful to a degree, would not significantly improve student writing performance. Most felt what was needed was frequent writing practice and error analysis, both strong Shaughnessy tenets.

The teachers seemed to prefer a holistic approach to writing instruction, dealing with error in the context of real writing. Somewhat contradictorily, a majority believed there exists a hierarchy of
learning tasks which need to be mastered in order to write well.

Overall, respondents supported Shaughnessy's ideas strongly in this area. They rejected perfecting structure as the prime goal in the classroom, and preferred to focus on content and meaning.

Content Area 5: Writing Process

Teachers have been criticized for their lack of attention to the processive nature of writing. While they may organize their actual curriculum differently, they largely agreed with Shaughnessy that the task of the writing instructor is to familiarize the student with this processive nature, and that the best single method of learning to write is to compose as frequently as possible. Nor did they feel, by and large, that the student should wait to compose until he has mastered the sentence or any other discrete composing skill.

On the surface, then, teachers believe the best procedure is to plunge in medias res, handling whatever difficulties arise after some writing has been accomplished. Most saw their role as that of a facilitator, although one in three preferred to reserve voluntary comment and evaluative involvement until after the final product was handed in. There was great agreement among participants that the processive stages of composing written language were as important as the final product, although they admitted to emphasizing some stages more than others. Clearly, not enough is known about the writing process to expect teachers to handle it perfectly, but their recognizing
its developmental nature is a step forward in the light of Shaughnessy's theory.

Content Area 6: Student Revision

This content area yielded the greatest agreement with Shaughnessy's ideas of all six concepts examined in the study. It would seem teachers are quite willing to turn over the task of error correction and revising to their students, but are somewhat unsure how to go about it.

The respondents felt for the most part that their students were unable at their present level of expertise to revise their own work successfully. There was great agreement on how crucial revision was to the whole task of composing, and although Shaughnessy's concept of error analysis is relatively new to the profession, teachers responded positively to its implications.

Participants in the study also recognized and acknowledged the potential value of peer critiquing and editing, although most admitted having little or no experience instituting such a procedure. It was agreed that once students perceive reasons for their errors, they can begin to eliminate them by themselves through their own analysis and through the process of peer editing.

The entire survey yielded considerably more agreement with Shaughnessy's principles than one might have expected from current teachers active in the field. They expressed more positive attitudes
toward parts of her theory focusing on pedagogy and writing production than on her beliefs about student language sophistication and the causes of error.

**Implications of the Study's Findings**

Having examined the results and patterns of teacher attitudes toward error and writing instruction, it is important to consider the implications of these findings. For one thing, the whole field of language learning is opening up to broader forms of conceptualization. It is imperative that teachers in the field be in the vanguard of such progress, for if growth takes place only at the theoretical level, no real impact will be made on students themselves.

Shaughnessy's work represents a major step forward in closing the chasm between theory and practice. Her principles were derived inductively, out of her wealth of hands-on experience teaching 'hopeless' young people to improve their own writing. Perhaps individual teachers have arrived at some of the same ideas she espouses, but for lack of confidence and peer support have returned to more traditional approaches. Those innovative teachers need to know that there is theory backing up their fledgling methods, that they are not engaging in dialogue and teaching error analysis and encouraging peer editing at random, for lack of any better curricular strategy. And for those unacquainted with these notions, her work offers a veritable bounty of concrete suggestions for how to approach the problems teachers have been struggling with all their professional lives.
Recommendations for Additional Research Appropriate to the Topic of Composition Process, the Nature of Error, and Writing Instruction

One general impression emerged from the study which may underlie the relevance Shaughnessy's ideas could bring to writing instruction. Those respondents who despaired the most about having to teach writing, those who saw it as an overly difficult, sometimes hopelessly useless endeavor were roughly the same people who most strongly supported traditional methods and attitudes. Typically, they would endorse old-fashioned tactics and then agree that those methods do not work very well. In marginal notes these people were much more inclined to blame their students' lack of ability on motivation rather than worn out, inappropriate strategies and attitudes they believed should still be employed.

On the other hand, respondents who favored what might be termed interactionist principles, those who most closely identified with Shaughnessy's ideas, were more enthusiastic about teaching writing, more positive about their students' abilities, more tolerant of writing error than their more traditionally inclined counterparts.

This would suggest the appropriateness of further research seeking correlations between training, pedagogical preferences and attitudes toward teaching writing. It would also be worthwhile to investigate the difference between what writing teachers say they believe and how they perform in the composition classroom. Along this line, a comparative study investigating teachers' attitudes
toward writing instruction before and after they have been exposed to interactionist theory and methods would be relevant to the field. Similarly, a study might be devised which examines student writing performance and attitude under a traditional pedagogy and one modeled on Shaughnessy's principles.

During the 1970's, many college classes and secondary school system inservice training sessions were devoted to learning the principles of group dynamics and small group interaction. This became a useful, effective technique for managing--some would say manipulating--a group of students and allowing for more dialogical interchange between teachers and students. Many English teachers became disenchanted with inservice and graduate work of this kind, however, because it still did not adequately address the pedagogical needs of the front lines teacher facing a class full of students on Monday morning.

Teachers call instead for practical assistance in communicating the 'meat and potatoes' aspects of language acquisition to their uninvolved, unmotivated basic writers and readers. The groundwork has been laid by Shaughnessy for just such practical assistance. The teaching of error analysis, the management of peer editing groups, the recognition of causes for student error, the acknowledgment of dialects as structured, rational communication systems, the training of students to correct their own errors and revise their own compositions based on rational criteria are all suitable, relevant topics
for inservice sessions or college English education course work.

A great number of English teachers from this study's population indicated they needed help teaching writing and felt largely ill-prepared by their professional backgrounds to perform their task competently. Teachers should not always be compelled to discover successful methods at random, on their own, through hit-or-miss tactics. When a body of observations, analyses and experience-based recommendations with as much clarity and profound depth as Shaughnessy's appears on the professional scene, it needs to be introduced to as many writing instructors as possible. Everyone need not copy her program in toto. Indeed, that would be against the very heart of her recommendations. But she has charted a course formerly unrecognized, and her work challenges English teachers to broaden their own conceptualizations, their understanding of the fluid process known as language, their own attitudes toward the task of teaching someone totally inexperienced how to gain control of real words to frame real meaning. Only when her theory is incorporated in situ within the individual classroom can it be tested for its full worth.

Shaughnessy is not without her critics. Her work represents such a radical departure from traditional writing instruction that her motives have come under the scrutiny of some skeptics. For example, in a negative critique of Errors and Expectations two years after its publication, John Rouse saw in her program an attempt to socialize lower class young people by making them rigidly conform to the language
expectations of the power class which seeks to reinforce their submissive place in the status quo. Even a few study respondents suspected ulterior motives of linguistic oppression on her part.

In the main, however, her work stands as a long stride forward in the development of effective, meaningful instruction strategies. This will be achieved when teachers see the task of helping a student learn to write as a positive, hopeful, achievable goal. To accomplish this, many teachers must alter their beliefs about the nature of the writing process and the phenomenology of linguistic growth. "We become particularly aware of the strength and pervasiveness of attitudes when we try to change them." A growing number of people feel that Shaughnessy exhibits a significant change for the better.
Chapter VII: Footnotes


2. Berdie and Anderson, p. 11.


4. Oppenheim, p. 75.

5. Oppenheim, p. 73.


Shaughnessy, Mina P. "Diving In: An Introduction to Basic Writing," College Composition and Communication, Vol. 27, No. 3, October, 1976, pp. 234-239.


Walsche, R. D. "What's Basic to Teaching Writing?" English Journal Vol 68, No. 9, December, 1979, pp. 51-56.


