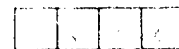


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ANGLICAN LITERATURE AND CULTURE

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PHILOSOPHY, RELIGION AND THEOLOGY

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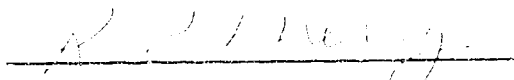
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Adult Academic Upgrading Students

DEGREE: Master of Education

YEAR THIS DEGREE GRANTED: 1994

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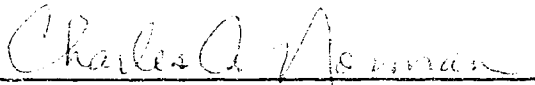

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September, 1994

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Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research

The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research for acceptance, a thesis entitled **Impact of Instruction on the Argumentative Writing of Adult Academic Upgrading Students** submitted by Richard Merry in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Education in **Adult and Higher Education**.


Dr. C. Norman


Dr. G. Malicky


Dr. A. Konrad

DATE: *Sept. 23, 1994*

Dedication

I would like to dedicate this thesis to my mother, whose words of encouragement during my public school years continued to be a driving force throughout this project, and to the memory of my father, who always did everything he could to promote my education.

Abstract

The purpose of this study was to determine the impact of writing instruction on the quality and length of argumentative essays written by adult academic upgrading students. Participants were 30 students from two Grade 10 English academic upgrading classes at a large vocational college. There were 10 male and 20 female students ranging from 19 to 45 years of age including 9 nonnative and 21 native speakers of English as well as the regular classroom teacher.

Two conditions were applied and their effects on essay writing compared. The experimental condition consisted of about 10 hours of classroom instruction over two weeks emphasizing the study of models of argumentative writing, inquiry, prewriting and feedback on a selected topic. The control condition consisted of a one-half hour introduction to a second writing topic one day before essay testing. While the researcher was available at the institution for a number of hours each day to help students with the experimental writing topic, no such assistance was provided for the control writing topic.

Argumentative essays were written by all students in response to both of these conditions and were then collected and compared for differences in length and quality. There were no significant differences between essays written in response to the two conditions in either length or quality.

It was concluded that a variety of student and instructional factors may determine the impact of instruction on adult academic upgrading students' argumentative writing. Most important may be the extent of students' participation in preparatory study and prewriting about information specific to the writing topic. It may be that adults inexperienced in argumentative writing will require more instructional time than was allotted for the present study if a significant impact on writing performance in this mode is desired.

Acknowledgments

I would like to acknowledge all of the staff at the University of Alberta who assisted me in writing this thesis. My sincere thanks to my thesis supervisor, Dr. C. Norman, and to my committee members, Dr. G. Malicky and Dr. A. Konrad. My gratitude is also extended to all of the academic and support staff in the Department of Adult, Career and Technology Education who helped me along the way. Thanks especially to Doreen Sullivan for her help in a variety of matters from beginning to end.

Many thanks to the college administrative personnel and participating classroom teacher and students who made this study possible.

Fellow students were also instrumental in the completion of this thesis. My appreciation especially to Jill Owen-Flood, Alan Rachue and Peter Loney for their encouragement and advice during various stages of this project.

Last, and certainly not least, thanks to all members of my family for their patience and sacrifice.

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of the students. These predictions were based on the contentions that (a) not all students are those from general English tracks in high school who have few writing assignments, (b) may suffer from cognitive and perceptual problems, especially visual and hearing loss, (c) may not have learned that writing is not simply talk on paper and must make this explicit, (d) must meet the argumentative writing requirement of the GED program, and (e) may not even know what an essay is, and so time will have to be spent in explaining and illustrating this form.

It has been stated that the main obstacles to adult high school learners' improvement of academic writing are deficiencies in the ability to develop and present content. However, he observed that even the weakest students could improve their argumentation in minimal time by being placed in situations where the most effective writing strategies readily available to them. The success of this approach would involve maximum student interaction, discussion, prewriting, and revision and maximum involvement by the teacher where needed.

A survey of other adult education projects based on criticisms of previous approaches and promising effective approaches for improving the academic writing skills of the secondary adult students are available in the literature. However, no experimental evidence supporting the reliability of any of these approaches is apparent. The need for such evidence was perceived on the basis of the fact, the researcher's experience teaching language arts to adults, and the awareness of successful research on writing instruction in other educational contexts. It was hypothesized that instruction involving elements of the most successful experimental treatments and recognizing the theory of writing that underwrites effective writing instruction would improve the academic writing of adults seeking high school credit.

The remainder of this thesis contains a review of literature supporting this hypothesis, the procedures undertaken to test it, the results of this testing and the conclusions made as a result. Chapter I is concluded with operational definitions of the important understanding the research problem. A review of research on writing instruction, a summary of this research, a rationale for the experiment with variables studied, and statements of the problem and hypotheses are provided in chapter II. Chapter III contains descriptions of the experimental design, and procedures and materials used. The results of the experiment and the writing completed in response to the instructional

treatment are presented in chapter IV. Chapter V includes a discussion of results, limitations of the study, conclusions and implications for further research.

Definition of Terms

A number of concepts central to this study are defined operationally as follows.

Writing instruction. A set of planned activities which is organized to improve writing performance and which includes design and strategy. Design involves the assessment of the learning needs of students and the selection of teaching procedures and materials. Strategies include introductory motivational activities, orientation to the writing task, presentation of information about how to write, orientation to topic-specific data, student response through discussion, study, prewriting and feedback, and remediation and revision of prewriting completed.

Adult academic upgrading students. High school students who are generally older than mainstream students, have experienced substantial absence from school and are enrolled in programs leading to high school diploma certification.

Writing performance. Tested achievement in writing ability which is assessed in terms of the holistically derived quality and length of argumentative essays submitted.

Transactional writing. Writing to get things done: to inform people (telling them what they need or want to know or what we think they ought to know), to advise or persuade or instruct people. Thus the transactional is used, for example, to record facts, exchange opinions, explain and explore ideas, construct theories, transact business, conduct campaigns, or change public opinion (Britton, 1975).

Argumentative writing. A type of transactional writing done to persuade the reader about one's views on a given issue. Argumentation is characterized by high levels of accurate detail connected through established principles of logic.

Expository writing. A type of transactional writing which aims at informing the reader through recording, reporting, explaining, generalizing or theorizing.

Prewriting. Writing practice which is aimed at preparing the student to be tested for writing ability in various modes under specified conditions. For this study, prewriting was aimed at preparing students to write argumentative essays from memory in a specified time.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Introduction

The major purpose of this chapter is to report previous research on the impact of writing instruction on transactional writing performance as measured in terms of writing variables relevant to the current investigation. Studies reviewed are those concerned with the effects of instruction in general and with specific foci of instruction and generic instructional activities most prominent in the present experimental condition.

For general studies, instruction was described either as a single entity or in terms of a number of foci and/or generic activities of instruction emphasized in the treatments applied. Writing performance results are primarily reported as effects of instruction as a single entity.

For the second category of studies, instruction was described in terms of specific foci where a single identifiable set of methods and materials dominated instruction and was analyzed for its impact alone on writing performance. Foci reviewed are the study of models of writing illustrating desired features of transactional writing and inquiry aimed at argumentation.

The third group of studies is concerned with the impacts of instructional activities which may be applied separately or in conjunction with any focus or foci of instruction. Reviewed in this chapter are investigations of the impacts on writing performance of prewriting and teacher feedback on prewriting. .

A summary of previous studies, a rationale for the selection of independent and dependent variables and a statement of the research problem will complete chapter II.

Studies on the Efficacy of Writing Instruction

General Studies

Although no studies of the impacts of writing instruction on the writing of academic upgrading adults are apparent, researchers during the past three decades have shown that college and high school students receiving writing instruction have consistently achieved higher scores on tests of writing proficiency than have students not receiving instruction (McQueen, Murray and Evans, 1963; Woodward and Phillips, 1967; Sanders and Littlefield, 1975; Shaughnessey, 1977; Bamberg, 1978; Markwood, 1981; Strugula, 1983; Dunn, 1984; Allen, 1985; White and Polin, 1986). Studies undertaken were of two types—those concerned with the effects of previous writing instruction in high school on later writing performance in college and those documenting the impacts of high school or college writing instruction on postinstructional writing. Subjects of these studies were both more proficient and less proficient writers. However, the following review is focussed on less proficient writers since the adult academic upgrading students of the current investigation were assumed to be generally less able writers than proficient mainstream high school and college writers of earlier research.

Effects of Instruction on Later Writing

Writing instruction was described in the following studies in terms of the duration of instruction, the amount of writing submitted for feedback and evaluation, prewriting and other activities undertaken during high school. Because of varying levels of specificity in these descriptions, conclusions about the long-term impacts of writing instruction on writing performance also vary in their specificity.

McQueen, Murray, and Evans (1963) reported better performance on college English Department placement tests and on three separate measures of first-year college English proficiency for students coming from high schools that required more writing instruction. The amount of high school instruction was estimated in terms of the number of words written for essays submitted during a typical week of instruction. Teacher feedback and help in the revision of these

essays were delineated as part of instruction but not analyzed for their impacts. These researchers showed that a greater amount of teacher-assisted writing may result in better writing performance in later testing and coursework requiring substantial writing.

Woodward and Phillips (1967) compared the extents of high school writing instruction received by good and poor college writers in their study of a variety of factors affecting the writing of these students. A questionnaire was used to acquire data on high school instruction and other environmental and personal factors assumed to influence college writing performance. Poor college writers were students who had scored D or E (failing grades) in writing for the college semester previous to the study. High school writing instruction was measured in terms of the number of term papers of considerable length required in courses during the senior year of high school, the time spent by students per week in preparation for that writing, and the amount of voluntary writing completed.

Woodward and Phillips found that the poor writers received significantly lower scores than good writers on all measures of high school writing instruction. They also showed that poor college writers possessed many personal characteristics commonly assumed to affect writing negatively including low academic performance, disinterest in writing and personal unhappiness. However, these researchers concluded that inadequate development of writing skill can be attributed largely to environmental conditions such as lack of reading materials in the home and, most notably, a sparsity of writing experiences in high school. In this study, evidence was provided that writing improvement can be attributed not only to the amount of writing submitted for evaluation during previous coursework but also to the time spent in preparation for that writing.

Bamberg (1978) provided detailed findings for the roles of time and of specific activities of previous writing instruction on later expository writing performance. This researcher demonstrated strong relationships between each of the number of semesters of high school writing instruction, the writing skills emphasized during that instruction, the mode/purpose of prewriting and college expository writing performance. Bamberg selected groups of 122 and 156 first-year college students who had been identified, respectively, as more proficient writers and as less proficient writers on the basis of a college entrance essay examination. All students were asked to indicate on a questionnaire the number of semesters of high school writing instruction in nine skills of writing (word choice, idea support, thesis statement, conciseness, organization, spelling,

mechanics, grammar, and revision) and to rank the three most frequent purposes of prewriting (personal writing, expository writing, summaries, creative writing, research papers, essay exams, or other). The amount of expository writing instruction and practice for each student was calculated by adding the student's score for the number of semesters spent on all nine skills of writing instruction to his/her score for expository prewriting (short expository essays, research papers, and essay exams).

Bamberg found that the more proficient college writers had received significantly more expository writing instruction and prewriting during high school than had the less proficient college writers. More specific results were obtained through an analysis of the effects of three emphases of expository writing instruction (content development, organization, and form) and of the effects of expository prewriting. T-test comparisons of less proficient and more proficient writers' scores on these four categories revealed that differences in the extent of instruction in expository content development and organization and in the extent of expository prewriting contributed most to expository instruction and practice total scores. Differences in instruction in correct written form, that is, grammar punctuation and spelling, contributed the least. Consistent with these results was the observation that the more proficient group had selected more high school semesters of English with more expository writing classes. Less proficient writers were more likely to select fewer semesters of English including more literature and creative writing classes.

Bamberg concluded that the amount of time allotted for writing instruction and prewriting during high school is an important factor in successful college expository writing. However, she also noted that the total amount of time of high school writing instruction was low for both groups, making her conclusion weaker. More important than time, she claimed, was the amount of instruction emphasizing content development, organization and prewriting in the expository mode. Bamberg suggested that the less proficient writers, in focussing on nonexpository, creative writing purposes during high school, may also have spent less time developing the expository writing skills needed for higher scores on the college entrance examination. In sum, this researcher showed that the amount of instruction and prewriting oriented to developing mode-specific writing skills, in this case, the expository mode, is important to later writing in the same mode.

Effects of Instruction on Postinstructional Writing

The following section contains a review of research conducted on the effects of instruction provided during specified periods of time and/or courses in high school and college settings on writing performance immediately following that instruction. One study was focussed on the importance of the experimental design and testing factors influencing writing outcomes, others on the effects of various instructional treatments on mainstream students, and a third type of study was concerned with less proficient writers specifically.

Sanders and Littlefield (1977) found not only that the duration and mode specificity of writing instruction may significantly affect writing performance immediately following that instruction, but also that registering these effects at all may depend on experimental treatment and testing conditions. They began with the notion that researchers who had observed nonsignificant impacts for instruction on writing may simply have failed to register progress made as a result of that instruction. They explained this notion by suggesting that experimental testing of instruction may (a) be a particularly poor measure of the verbal fluency of weaker writers who need more time to write, (b) limit the subjects' motivation when they are aware that no credit and possibly no response may be received for their efforts, and (c) in stipulating a particular writing mode for testing, fail to register writing abilities acquired by the subjects from previous instruction in other modes.

To test these assumptions, Sanders and Littlefield studied two classes comprised of fifty first-year college students. All students were required to write both an impromptu essay on one of two topics randomly assigned for each class and a researched essay on a topic of each student's own choosing. For the impromptu essay, students writing on the first topic for the pretest wrote on the second topic for the posttest. For the researched topic, students wrote on two different topics, one for pretesting and the other for posttesting. For pretesting, students in one of the classes wrote rough drafts, received teacher feedback and prepared final drafts for the impromptu topics during two, fifty -minute class periods. The same students then followed a similar procedure for personally selected topics, but were allowed one week to collect a specified amount of information on their topics prior to writing. This information was available to students during testing. Students were also given extra time to write final drafts in the presence of their teacher if they desired it. These pretesting procedures

were also followed for the second class, which wrote on the researched essay first and the impromptu essay next. After five subsequent weeks of classroom instruction, the entire procedure was repeated for posttesting. Students were asked to write with the purpose of persuasion in mind for all four essays.

Results were that pretest to posttest gains in general impression as measured on both expository and persuasive writing scales were significant for the researched essay group. No significant differences were observed for the impromptu essays using either scale. It had been hypothesized that students who were to write researched essays on topics of their own choosing following instruction aimed specifically at persuasion would improve writing on a persuasive scale but not on a general expository scale. Greater gains for the researched-topic group on both scales were attributed to experimental conditions for writing which more closely approximated writing instructional activities and procedures of their normal classroom than did experimental conditions for the impromptu group.

Sanders and Littlefield concluded that impromptu essay testing places artificial constraints on the use of writing skills already learned and, as such, is not a valid method for evaluating the results of composition instruction. They maintained, conversely, that the experimental conditions for the researched essay allowed writers to demonstrate more effectively the skills they had already learned during previous classroom instruction. Some implications for the teaching and testing of persuasive writing are that these activities will require opportunity for students to select their own topics, adequate time to develop and organize content, and access to this content and adequate time to present it during testing. Impromptu testing involving assigned topics and rigid scheduling may not provide these conditions and so may not allow students to demonstrate their actual writing skill in a given mode. These implications apply especially to less proficient writers.

A number of investigators have studied less proficient college and high school students in revealing the positive influence of writing instruction on postinstructional writing performance. It was shown in two of these studies that less proficient writers may actually benefit more from instruction than more proficient writers.

Shaughnessey (1977) observed that "underprepared" first-year college students placed in basic writing classes almost all showed modest improvement in writing after one semester of low-intensity instruction. Instruction was

other foci, methods, techniques or approaches to writing instruction. To maintain consistency with the present study, only central use studies are reviewed. The majority were conducted in high school and college settings, although some studies for younger students will also be cited. No studies for adult academic upgrading students were located.

Most studies reported here emphasized the teaching of rhetorical, structural or other qualitative features of expository writing. Comparisons of the impact of model study with the effects of treatments lacking model study or with treatments using other foci of instruction are included.

Andreach (1976) found significant gains in writing for 10th-grade high school students who were taught to imitate organizational features illustrated in models of writing. This researcher compared the effects of model study and conventional grammar-based instruction on expository writing organization. He attributed the greater pretest to posttest gains made by the model imitation group to the fact that both the experimental treatment and the rating scale were concerned with the single component of expository organization. Andreach's results are consistent with Bamberg's (1978) findings showing that instruction focussed on the organization of expository writing may be more effective than instruction emphasizing surface features of writing. As well, his explanation regarding single features of writing is supported by research on feedback suggesting that feedback focussed on single aspects of writing is more effective than feedback spread over a number of features (Beach, 1979).

Wood (1977) also used models illustrating relatively few features in providing evidence for the effectiveness of model study in improving the quality of a number of modes of writing. She trained 10th-, 11th- and 12th-grade teachers to instruct students for six weeks using prepared model study materials. A control group was instructed using a traditional textbook grammar-oriented program. Wood found significant differences between these two groups on pretest to posttest writing quality scores for descriptive, narrative and expository writing. Thus, she provided strong evidence for the efficacy of model study in teaching mode-specific writing by demonstrating the effectiveness for this focus for three distinct writing modes. The matching of writing assessment criteria to the emphases of instruction may have been an important factor in these results if other researchers are correct (Sanders and Littlefield, 1977; Beach, 1979; Land, 1984). In general, they maintained that essay testing conditions must approximate instructional conditions to accurately register writing improvement.

Perry (1980) was one of a number of researchers who hypothesized that specialized and systematic procedures would be needed for effective model study. He tested first-year community college students for their abilities to apply specified structural features learned during the study of models to their own writing. Model study consisted of four weeks of instruction in specialized reading strategies designed to help students to identify the structural features illustrated in the models presented. Each week of reading instruction was followed by one week of instruction in applying to writing the structural features learned during reading of the models. On a pre- to posttest analysis of holistically derived quality scores, Perry found no significant differences between the group receiving this instruction and the control group not receiving it. Perry suggested that achieving the desired improvement in writing skill required more time than was allotted by instruction. He suggested that further research is needed on reading/writing relationships, the implication being that not enough is known about these relationships to ensure effective transfer to writing of the knowledge acquired from model study.

More recent researchers have applied specialized reading strategies more successfully to the study of models. Austin (1983) found significant gains at the .01 level in pretest to posttest scores for recognition of rhetorical techniques and for compositions written following instruction of first-year college students in the recognition of these techniques. A control group which had not received this instruction also produced significant gains at the .05 level in pretest to posttest composition scores but showed no significant gains for technique recognition. The experimental group of 25 college students had received instruction for several weeks involving written exercises and discussion requiring analysis of composition techniques used in model essays. The control group read these models but did not analyze them. Austin concluded that training in the recognition of effective rhetorical techniques through the analysis of models can assist students to write more mature essays than can instructing students to read the models without analysis. Adequate discussion of the features illustrated in the models and prewriting to practice using these features were shown to be essential aspects of effective model analysis.

Davis (1988) provided further evidence that the study of models may be particularly effective in improving the organization of writing in finding significant pretest to posttest gains in coherence. These gains were found following traditional form-centered instruction involving the teaching of the organizational

schemata of specific modes of writing through models. A process-centered, conference-based method of instruction using no model study produced no such gains in either coherence, quality, or length. Davis studied two groups (one for each of the two teaching methods) comprised of a total of 97 first-year college students. For the process-centered group, the students were treated as generators of writing forms while for the traditional method, the teacher was the presenter of knowledge of those forms. Forms were the organizational schemata of specific modes writing, that is, structural frameworks shown to exist in every instance of a given mode.

Davis concluded that the study of mode-specific models guides students to more coherent writing since they learn the organizational schemata pertinent to the mode of writing being studied. These schemata may be more effectively learned through traditional instruction in which the teacher identifies the structures than through student-centered instruction where structures are expected to be acquired by writing and discussion. Davis's findings also support the study of models for improving quality since coherence has been shown to correlate strongly with holistic quality scores in other studies of writing (White and Polin, 1986).

Knudson (1988) also provided convincing evidence for the value of model study to improved transactional writing by comparing the impact of this focus with that of a number of other foci. She instructed 356 high school students in either persuasive or informational writing through (a) the presentation of model pieces of good writing in these modes, focussed on the discourse structures shown in the models, (b) the use of scales, questions, and criteria regarding good writing in these modes, focussed on the students' writing processes as they engaged in all phases of composing, (c) the presentation of both model pieces of writing and scales, questions and criteria, focussed on both discourse structures and writing process, and (d) free writing, where students were provided with pictures and asked to write about the pictures.

Knudson found that for both informational and persuasive writing collected immediately following treatment and again two weeks later, the most effective instructional strategy was the presentation of model pieces of writing alone. One implication given was that an emphasis on the discourse structures of good informational and persuasive writing through model study may result in better organized writing than will teaching techniques focussed on the processes of such writing. Knudson suggested, however, that successful utilization of models

of writing will involve instruction in recognizing the discourse structures of these modes of writing, will allow students to learn discourse structures orally from the models before applying them to writing, and will encourage frequent prewriting. Thus she concurred with Austin (1983) and Davis (1988) regarding the need for systematic analysis of models through discussion and prewriting while adding that this prewriting should be frequent.

In sum, researchers of the impact of the study of model pieces of writing on writing performance have shown that significant effects on the quality of a number of modes of writing can be achieved most readily where mode-specific models are systematically read, discussed, and analyzed in regard to their features. Frequent and substantial writing in conjunction with these activities have also been recommended. However, factors such as the time of instruction, the reading abilities of students and the nature of reading, discussion analysis and writing activities may seriously affect intended writing outcomes.

Greater and more consistent gains in writing have been observed for instructional activities including more student interaction in learning mode-specific features. The nature of these activities and explanations of their effectiveness are reviewed in the following section on the focus of instruction referred to as inquiry.

Inquiry

Hillocks (1986) defined inquiry as instruction which "presents students with sets of data (or requires them to find data) and then initiates activities designed to help students develop skills or strategies for dealing with the data in order to write something about it" (p.211). For example, activities may be initiated which require students to focus on the strategies of formulating generalizations, observing and reporting significant details, or generating criteria for contrasting similar phenomena. Instruction in inquiry differs from instruction presenting models of writing since models would illustrate already-formed generalizations, significant details, and criteria for comparing phenomena.

Instruction emphasizing inquiry typically tries to help students to discover strategies which could be used to develop and organize that data for a specific mode of writing. For example, students might be presented with a problem situation requiring them to develop a policy decision, for instance, regarding what

action to take on a community pollution problem. Students would then work with sets of data relevant to this problem and, in the process, learn strategies which are important to the form(s) of writing most relevant to solving the problem. In this case, strategies needed for argumentative writing such as supporting general opinions with specific facts and predicting opposing arguments might be learned from working with relevant data.

Studies of inquiry have been directed towards analytic, definitional, descriptive and argumentative writing. The following review reports only those concerned with argumentative writing as this mode was the concern of the present study. Researchers of inquiry and argumentation have used a number of distinct techniques to teach argumentative writing strategies, all requiring extensive discussion, student interaction and prewriting. While very few studies are available for argumentation, results have been generally positive.

Troyka (1973) conducted an earlier but major investigation of inquiry and argumentation over one semester of study of 25 experimental and 25 control classes of remedial writers in a two-year college program. She compared the effects of an inquiry technique (simulation-gaming) involving extensive student interaction to solve a problem with the effects of instruction focussing on models of argumentative writing. The inquiry (experimental) treatment was initiated by providing students with information on the setting and background of situation-specific pollution, crime, and drug abuse problems. For each of these problems, prewriting was assigned which required all students to use one of a number of basic writing strategies relevant to argumentation. Students either provided facts and reasons, described incidents, or compared and contrasted. Armed with information needed to present the views of a specific societal group, students worked in small groups to persuade students representing other societal groups of the legitimacy of their group's solution to the problem. Thus, students were expected to learn specific writing strategies important to argumentation by being placed in writing and speaking contexts requiring them to use and develop those strategies. The control groups, by contrast, were instructed by means of traditional lecture, note-taking and reading activities aimed at learning strategies and structures illustrated in models of argumentative writing.

Troyka found that the inquiry group achieved significantly greater pretest to posttest gains in holistically derived writing quality than did the control group. As well, it was found that students who did more writing during the inquiry treatment produced significantly better posttest essays. One explanation

provided for these results was that the inquiry treatment had motivational features which were not included in the traditional treatment and that these features were of particular value to the remedial students. The focus for each problem situation on single, basic writing strategies and extensive small group verbal interaction were suggested by Troyka to minimize the threat of failure and to motivate learning of strategies of argumentation. This learning was more effective than the learning achieved by the study of models since it transferred more effectively to writing.

Troyka provided evidence that the argumentative writing of less proficient students will be improved significantly more by the inquiry technique of simulation-gaming than it will be by model study. It appears that a greater amount of student interaction and writing and the resulting higher motivation of students are the features of this technique most important to improving writing quality. Substantial instructional time and the use of role plays may also be important.

Pisano (1980) also suggested that opportunities for discussion and writing were the major factors in the improvement of argumentative writing through inquiry. Pisano used a technique aimed at enhancing the critical thinking skills of eleventh and twelfth graders through oral questioning prior to and following writing exercises in both personal and transactional modes. A control group did not receive this instruction. Pisano found no significant differences between groups in pre- to posttest gains on five measures of critical thinking. However, gains on a holistic measure of writing quality were significantly higher for the experimental group. As well, significant differences were found in the quantity of writing which favored the experimental group.

Pisano attributed his findings to teacher attitudes and the activities surrounding teachers' questioning of students. Control group students who had received instruction from teachers displaying a "closed-restrictive" attitude to students' writing tended to produce perfunctory writing lacking any personal style or commitment to the writing process. Pisano suggested that experimental students' writing displayed these latter qualities because of their contact with "open-receptive" instructors and the substantial discussion and writing (both personal and transactional) done in conjunction with questioning. Findings of this study are evidence of the value of topic-specific questioning in conjunction with substantial discussion and prewriting in increasing the amount and quality of argumentative writing.

While his results were not as conclusive, McCleary (1979) presented further evidence for the effectiveness of inquiry on argumentative writing by applying an inquiry technique concerned with improving logic. He showed that the teaching of formal deductive logic was associated with significant gains on a single-impression writing scale measuring the use of argumentative strategies, but that these gains were not significantly greater than those of a control group receiving no such instruction. The consideration of opposing arguments accounted for a significant portion of the differences that were found.

Fifteen classes of first-year community college students were divided into five groups. Four of these groups received instruction in logic and one served as the control group during 10 hours of instruction over one month. Students in all groups were provided with problem situations describing ethical dilemmas which were to be resolved through logical written arguments. During instructional time, all students were required to analyze the problem situations in terms of strategies basic to ethical arguments including identification of obligations, consequences of actions, and conflicts among these. They were then guided in generating theses, selecting supporting information, predicting opposing arguments, and finally, in applying all these strategies to writing arguments.

McLeary attributed the lack of effectiveness of teaching logic to weaknesses in his experimental design. However, the large gains in writing made by both experimental and control groups were not explained. Since both groups were involved with learning strategies specific to the writing task, it is reasonable to suggest that both groups improved their writing because of these aspects of inquiry. While instruction in logic may have had little effect on writing scores, more evidence was provided in this study suggesting that it is the more extensive writing and discussion common to inquiry techniques which account for the efficacy of this instructional focus.

In sum, researchers who have explored the impacts of inquiry on argumentative writing have shown that guided practice in the use of basic writing strategies and direct instruction in logic or critical thinking may help students to argue more effectively in writing. Such instruction allows students to learn strategies of argumentation by discovering them through discussion and writing activities. Improved argumentation has been suggested by these researchers to be more a result of these activities than it is of improvements in the use of basic writing strategies, logic, or critical thinking.

Studies of Generic Instructional Activities

Prewriting

Hyslop (1983) pointed out that many in the field of English education today believe that students best learn to write by writing. Although some researchers have shown this to be a false assumption, a substantial number have shown that prewriting can improve later writing, depending on the frequency, extent and nature of that prewriting. Such results have been found mostly in mainstream junior high school, high school and college contexts. However, no studies on the effects of prewriting on the writing of adult academic upgrading students have been located. While prewriting has been cited as important both to inquiry and model study, its specific nature has not been described in studies of these foci. A review of research on prewriting which provides such descriptions is provided in this section

Prewriting frequency. The effects of prewriting have been demonstrated by a number of investigators who compared the impacts of frequent, infrequent and no prewriting on postinstructional writing. These investigators have compared the influences of these frequencies of prewriting on students' integration into their writing of content from literature written about and of specified features of expository writing.

Hyslop (1983) investigated the impact of prewriting frequency on expository writing improvement by comparing the effects of two frequencies of prewriting about literature studied. Forty eleventh graders studied literature and wrote weekly about this literature for an initial twelve-week period. During a subsequent twelve-week period, these students also studied literature but wrote daily about that literature. All students wrote pretest and posttest essays for each of the two treatments. Gains in essay quality for the daily prewriting treatment were significantly greater than gains in quality observed for the weekly prewriting treatment. Hyslop concluded that writing daily may be a more effective method of improving writing quality than writing weekly. The use of a Primary Trait Scoring Guide to assess quality suggests that content was a major criteria in this assessment. Therefore, Hyslop also showed that more frequent prewriting about literature on the topic to be written about is likely to improve integration of content from that literature into writing. This contention is consistent with findings which

link more extensive writing with improved content learning (Collins, 1981; Newell, 1987; Langer, 1986b).

Perry (1985) studied the effects of prewriting frequency on the integration into writing of specified traits of expository writing studied in class. She examined the effects on ninth graders' holistically derived writing quality scores of a twelve-week writing program which included daily practice in informative writing. One hundred and eighteen students spent the first 10 to 15 minutes of a daily writing class during a two-week period doing writing exercises designed to practice identifiable traits of informative writing. During the third week, students completed a writing assignment developed according to writing process guidelines which required them to apply what they had learned about the traits of informative writing. This cycle was repeated four times. The experimental group completing daily prewriting showed significant pretest to posttest gains in holistic quality composition scores ($p < .001$). The control group which completed no prewriting produced no significant pretest to posttest gains.

Perry concluded that a program of daily exercises developed to practice the elements of informative writing separately followed by a process-based writing assignment designed to reemphasize and synthesize those elements will effect improved writing performance. This researcher characterized prewriting which may be most effective in the learning of mode-specific features as frequent (daily) and extensive (involving prewriting for all phases of the writing process).

More frequent prewriting has not always been associated with improved writing performance. For example, Chapman (1985) found no significant correlation between the frequency of prewriting done in various modes and the writing achievement of 4th-, 8th- and 11th- grade students. Available literature on this study included no explanation for these results. However, the facts that frequency data were based on previous coursework and reported by students suggest that these data were derived from a lengthy period of instruction. Assuming that this is correct, it can be suggested that frequent prewriting, even over a long period of time, may have little effect on later writing.

Amount and type of prewriting. Other investigators of the efficacy of prewriting have compared the impacts of various types and amounts of prewriting on expository writing performance. Prewriting has been distinguished as guided or nonguided and extended or restricted. Generally, guided and extended prewriting assignments required a greater number of words to be written as well as more inferencing and elaboration than did nonguided or restricted prewriting

assignments. While treatments compared were similar in these respects, no other explanations of why writing quality improvement was associated with more prewriting written during prewriting were offered.

Reilly (1986) studied the effects of guided prewriting compared to nonguided prewriting on the quality of 52 first-year college students' written interpretations of two short stories. The guided (experimental) group was required to make inferences about story characters, settings, and the relationships between characters and setting. The nonguided (control) group answered factual information questions based on the same stories.

Results were that the guided writing group produced significantly better interpretive essays than the nonguided group as measured by pretest effect differences in total quality for both stories combined. Total quality was measured using six four-point scales measuring the amount and specificity of detail of the interpretations, understanding of the stories, character setting relationships, degree of abstraction, fluency (a measure of essay length), and overall quality. The experimental treatment was significant for only one of the two stories. Reilly explained this finding by noting that this story presented more explicit information about the literary concepts to be written about than did the second story. As a result, she maintained, students did more prewriting to infer the literary concepts of these concepts and learned more about character setting relationships than they did for the other story.

Reilly concluded that students writing interpretive essays benefit from prewriting activities inviting inferences since inferencing involves more analysis and organization of ideas than does answering factual information questions. The resulting "deeper interpretation" of the short text may subsequently be transferred to essay writing. Reilly then offered a number of ways of how this transfer to essay writing may have occurred. However, she was not showing more extensive prewriting (involving more writing with the short text) to be associated with a more effective learning transfer. Newell (1987) supports her contention that "learning transfer" can result from prewriting.

Marshall (1987) provided a detailed example of how prewriting improves writing performance. He compared the effects of prewriting assignments inviting extended prewriting to the effects of prewriting assignments on the writing performance of 87 high school students. The control writing condition required students to prewrite for 10 minutes before writing

number of words are made in response to this type of feedback.

Land (1984) compared the effects of content cues, form cues and no teacher feedback on the revision of first drafts and on the holistic quality of final drafts of the expository writing of students varying in age and writing ability. He studied 15 higher and 15 lower ability writers selected from one Grade 7 class and one Grade 11 class. These cues directed the students to (a) revise first drafts as desired, (b) attend to content by adding and/or deleting information, or (c) attend to form (spelling, grammar, punctuation, word choice, and organization). Results were that (a) students cued to make content revisions made significantly more of these revisions at both grade levels than students receiving either of the other cues, (b) essays written by Grade 11 students cued to make content revisions were significantly higher in quality than were essays written by Grade 7 students cued to make content revisions, and (c) correlations between content cues and essay quality were stronger at the 11th-grade level.

The finding that content cues resulted in the most revisions is consistent with Beach's (1979) observations. Both of these researchers made it clear that cues directed at content result in more content revisions than do cues directed at other aspects of writing. As such, the amount of desired revision appears to depend on the specificity of matching between the revision cue and the type of revision expected. Land's findings that Grade 11 students improved their writing quality through content cues better than did Grade 7 students led him to conclude that as writers mature, they make neither more nor different types of revisions but instead employ more effectively the revision strategies they have used over time. Apparently, content feedback may not only be more effective than form or no feedback, it also utilized better by more experienced writers.

In her study of first-year college students, Ziv (1984) added to previous research on the effects of feedback on the writing processes and products of less proficient writers. Four students experiencing problems of organization, logical development and focus on first drafts of a pretest essay were selected. During the semester of instruction, these students wrote seven other essays in which they received oral feedback from their peers on first drafts, written comments from the instructor on second drafts and a composite final grade from the teacher for overall quality on five final drafts. Data on how students reacted to teacher comments written on their second drafts were obtained by tape recordings. Feedback categories were (a) explicit cues where the teacher indicated exact errors and possible revisions, (b) implicit cues where the teacher

called attention to the general problem and suggested alternatives, and (c) teacher corrections, reorganization, and addition or deletion of sentences, phrases and words. Each of these feedback types was also coded in terms of macrolevel comments (referring to conceptual and structural aspects of writing) and microlevel comments (referring to lexical and sentential aspects).

Analysis of final drafts on the macrolevel revealed that explicit cues helped the research subjects to reorganize, strengthen, and make major conceptual changes to their second drafts while implicit cues helped with clarification of ideas. On the microlevel, explicit cues encouraged revision of sentences and word choices without an understanding of why revisions were made. Improvement in overall quality from first to final drafts was not specified in literature available for this study. However, Ziv showed that explicit cues dealing with content and organization tend to produce more revisions of these aspects of writing than do implicit cues. As well, this researcher's suggestion that explicit macrolevel cues are particularly of value to inexperienced writers is consistent with White and Polin's (1986) finding that less proficient students of writing benefited particularly from instructional attention to content development.

The notion that less proficient writers may benefit especially from teacher feedback focussed on macrolevel features of writing has also found support in research on positive teacher feedback. Goodman (1975) studied the effects of teacher feedback directed entirely at macrolevel features of community college student prewriting judged to be effective. For example, where sections of student writing exhibited effective unity, this was pointed out in the form of positive oral or written comments. No comments were made regarding any macrolevel deficiencies or microlevel errors in spelling, word choice and punctuation. Goodman found significant gains in pre- to posttest measures of amplitude (number of words written per hour) and coherence (the number of arbitrarily selected cohesive factors selected during that hour). She suggested, based on a pre- to posttest self-actualization survey, that positive teacher comments on these students' writing improved their perceptions of their own communication abilities as well as their actual ability to communicate. Goodman provided evidence that essay length and organization may be improved by positive teacher feedback.

Teacher feedback and peer feedback. A number of researchers have demonstrated the efficacy of teacher feedback on the processes and products of writing by comparing teacher feedback to peer feedback. Relevant studies have

been located at the high school and college levels.

Bender (1989) compared the roles of teacher comment, peer comment, and student self-evaluation in the revision processes of advanced and novice college writers. She provided written comments and organized peer feedback for the first drafts of first-year composition students. More proficient students were allowed only peer feedback and self-evaluation. Bender discovered through observation, questionnaires and analyses of first and final drafts of six case study writers that both teacher and peer feedback have specific benefits for revision. However, both more proficient and less proficient writers who lacked confidence in their own writing appeared to require teacher feedback in addition to peer support. Peer comments primarily supplemented teacher comments, and supplanted them only when they were in line with the teacher's goals for the writing. As well, while peer feedback was associated with clarification and reorganization, teacher comments were associated more with major content revisions. This researcher provided evidence for the value of teacher written comment by showing it to be more likely than peer comments to result in the major revisions which might improve the writing quality of both advanced and novice writers.

Boss (1988) provided further support for the advantages of written teacher feedback over peer feedback on the writing of first-year college students. Students were assigned to groups receiving either teacher written comments and corrections or peer feedback. A set of analytic composition scales was employed for both treatments to guide draft revision and grading. While both groups showed significant pre- posttest gains in writing quality, these gains were not significantly different. However, these students were found through an attitude survey to prefer explicit teacher feedback over peer feedback. This researcher provided further support for the advantages of explicit teacher feedback by revealing significant pre- to posttest improvement in writing quality and a student preference for this type of feedback.

Some researchers have found neither a significant increase in needed revisions nor improvements in writing as a result of providing teacher feedback. For example, Onore (1983) found that revisions done by college writers in response to teacher comments did not improve text quality significantly. She concluded from analyses of student reporting-in-protocols, interviews and text drafts that teacher involvement in students' writing processes is more important

that feedback on students' written products in improving their abilities to write.

Onore stated,

Good teacher commentary demands reentry into the composing process without a necessary textual result, that redrafting is not the cure for composing problems, that revision may be defined as the discovery and exploration of new meanings and connections, and that growth resides in writers' processes and not in the texts they produce.

In sum, investigators of feedback on prewriting have shown that teacher written feedback is generally more effective than students' self-evaluations, peer feedback or no feedback in improving postinstructional writing quality and/or increasing the amount of writing. This feedback appears to be most effective when it is explicit and directed at macrolevel features of writing, matched with instructional emphases and evaluation criteria, and focussed on fewer aspects of writing. Feedback directed at content development is more effective than feedback aimed at surface features of writing, especially for less experienced writers. As well, feedback aimed at prewriting organization may improve the organization of later writing if this feedback is primarily positive. Finally, writers characterized as having a negative concept of their writing abilities may write more and improve their writing organization as a result of positive feedback.

Summary of Literature Review

Investigators have shown that writing instruction delineated in terms of a number of instructional foci and generic activities, single foci, or the generic activities of prewriting and feedback may enhance the quality and/or increase the length of writing. While each of these types of instruction were shown to consist of certain characteristics, some features common to all types are apparent. The aim of this section is to summarize these features and their effects on writing in order to provide a background to the statement of the research problem.

General studies. Researchers of instruction delineated in terms of a number of foci and activities have noted that longer overall periods and more class time for instruction, specific instructional emphases and prewriting were associated with higher quality and/or longer essays. The most effective instructional emphases and prewriting were shown to be those most closely matched to the mode and features of writing evaluated by post-instructional writing tests. For expository writing improvement, instructional emphasis and prewriting in developing content is likely to be effective for less proficient writers. More time to research the writing topic, more prewriting, more teacher feedback and revision and a match between instructional and testing conditions were also identified as effective instructional features.

Study of models of writing. Researchers of the the study of models of writing have demonstrated that systematic teaching of the recognition of mode-specific features of writing along with extensive prewriting aimed at integrating those features into writing were effective in improving writing quality and organization. Adequate time for these activities may be especially important to long-term effects on writing. It was also shown that an instructional emphasis on single features of specific modes of writing matched with writing evaluation criteria is effective. Instructional variables cited as affecting the outcome of model study included the frequency of prewriting, the reading abilities of students, and the teacher's approach to instruction.

Inquiry. Researchers of inquiry have shown that facilitation of the use of generic expository writing strategies and direct teaching of critical thinking and logic may improve the quality and increase the amount of argumentative writing completed. Most important to these results were the extent of student verbal

interaction, discussion, questioning and prewriting in both transactional and personal modes. An open attitude of teachers to student oral responses was shown to be an important factor in the impact of inquiry on learning argumentative strategies, while certain strategies appear to be more readily learned than others.

Prewriting. Investigators of prewriting have shown that more frequent prewriting over substantial instructional periods may improve the quality of expository writing. This may be true for prewriting about literature studied and for prewriting done to learn generic features of expository writing. It was also shown that more extensive prewriting was associated with improved essay quality where this prewriting was completed in response to inferential questions. Overall, where writing in response to specified readings is desired, students need substantial opportunity to interpret, learn and organize in memory the content of those readings.

Feedback on prewriting. It has been shown that teacher feedback directed at content development and organization is more likely to result in improved quality and longer essays than student self-revision, peer feedback and no feedback. While investigators consistently attributed these results to an emphasis in feedback on content development, it was also claimed that feedback focussed on fewer writing criteria is more effective than feedback diffused over a number of writing criteria. Less proficient writers may benefit most from content feedback, especially if it is explicit. Finally, it was demonstrated that positive teacher comments on macrolevel aspects of less proficient writers' prewriting are effective in enhancing the organization and length of later writing.

Overall, the effectiveness of specific instructional foci in improving the quality and increasing the length of transactional writing may depend largely on the nature and extent of (a) the study of mode-specific features, and (b) discussion and prewriting in regard to these features and mode-specific writing strategies. As well, adequate and frequent prewriting and teacher feedback on the content and organization of prewriting are important. Adequate instructional time and an emphasis on content development features specifically matched to evaluation criteria may be of particular benefit to less proficient writers.

Selection of Independent and Dependent Variables

The purpose of the current investigation was to determine the effects of instruction comprised primarily of the study of models of writing, inquiry, prewriting and teacher feedback on the holistic quality and length of adult academic upgrading student writing. Selection of all these independent and dependent variables was based in part on the awareness of previous studies containing reports of significant associations between them. A number of other considerations were also used to select the dependent measures.

An holistic measure of writing quality was selected, first, because it could provide a single measure accounting for a number of criteria commonly used to assess transactional writing (Myers, 1980). At the same time, variable weightings could be assigned to each of these criteria according to the emphases of the experimental condition and the students' strengths and weaknesses in writing. Thus, for this study, a holistic quality score was presumed to provide a valid measure of the students' responses to instruction emphasizing content development and organization and providing minimal attention to surface language features. These were, in order, the perceived strengths and weaknesses of the students, as based on the review of literature.

The high reliability of holistic quality scoring has been established in previous research and is another reason for selecting this measure. For example, Cooper (1977) reported that "When raters are from similar backgrounds and they are trained with a holistic scoring guide ... they can achieve scoring reliabilities in the high eighties and nineties on their summed scores from multiple pieces of a student's writing " (p.19).

Finally, holistic scoring of writing quality would allow for judgments about surface writing errors interfering with the readability of essays. While surface feature errors were less heavily weighted, judgments about this criterion were felt to be essential to a valid assessment of quality.

In sum, an holistic quality score was viewed as a valid and reliable measure of written responses to the major emphases of the experimental condition. This measure would also allow for variable weighting to suit the perceived writing strengths and weaknesses of the participating students.

The second dependent variable, essay length, was defined for the purposes of this study as the total number of words per essay (Mullis and Mellon, 1980). Length was selected for the following reasons. First, it was expected that essay length would be a valid measure of the subjects' responses to the experimental emphasis on content development. Although more words may not necessarily indicate a more detailed and well-developed essay, researchers have shown that students who have committed more content about the writing topic to memory write longer essays (Chesky, 1987). Thus, assuming that substantial instruction (the experimental condition) focussed on the learning of topic-specific content would result in more information committed to memory than limited instruction simply introducing a topic (the control condition), it was hypothesized that substantial instruction would, similarly, result in longer essays.

Secondly, it was expected that essay length would provide a simple, yet accurate indicator of written responses to the experimental emphasis on organization. Chesky (1987) also provided support for this expectation by showing that students who hold in memory a more highly organized knowledge of a topic also produce longer essays. Again, assuming that substantial instruction in organizing topic-specific content would produce a more highly organized knowledge of a topic than limited instruction in this skill, it was hypothesized that the experimental treatment would, similarly, result in longer essays.

Statement of the Research Problem

The general purpose of the research conducted was to assess the efficacy of writing instruction delivered over a substantial period of time on the transactional writing performance of adult academic upgrading students. This purpose was met through a comparison of the impacts of two instructional conditions on essay quality and essay length. The experimental condition consisted of about ten hours of instruction over two weeks emphasizing the content development and organization of written arguments on one topic and the control condition consisted of about one-half hour of introduction to a second writing topic. Two specific research questions were investigated as follows:

1. What is the difference between the impact of substantial writing instruction comprised primarily of the study of models of argumentative writing, inquiry using topic-specific data, prewriting and teacher feedback and the impact

of limited writing instruction comprised of a brief topic introduction on the quality of adult academic upgrading students' argumentative writing?

2. What is the difference between the impact of substantial writing instruction comprised primarily of the study of models of argumentative writing, inquiry using topic-specific data, prewriting and teacher feedback and the impact of limited writing instruction comprised of a brief topic introduction on the length of adult academic upgrading students' argumentative writing?

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Subjects

The subjects of this study were 30 students from two Grade 10 English adult academic upgrading classes in a large vocational college. The two classes were those of one teacher who had volunteered to participate following a request by the researcher to the senior English instructor. Permission to involve these students in the required classroom instruction and writing test was obtained from the college's research and development office and the chairperson of the academic upgrading department.

Participants in the two classes were 10 male and 20 female students ranging in age from 19 to 45 years including 9 nonnative and 21 native speakers of English as well as the regular classroom teacher. Specific data on course entry reading and writing abilities and other characteristics of students were not available.

One reason for the selection of these students was that it was convenient to investigate two intact classroom groups receiving instruction from a single teacher. Acquiring volunteers or students with more specific characteristics would have meant major interruptions of regular classes. A second reason was that students were identified as having similar reading abilities based on their performances on the Test of Adult Basic Education (TABE). Thirdly, students were predicted to have similar writing abilities on the basis of institutional writing requirements for entry into Grade 10 English. Finally, these students were

predicted to be capable of writing argumentative essays providing a thesis and supporting points since many had received recent instruction in that mode of writing.

Consent to proceed with this study was obtained from the students through a memorandum which outlined the study's purposes and assured anonymity and the option to withdraw at any time. All students enrolled in the two classes participated.

Design

A two condition within subjects design in which all subjects were administered both experimental and control treatments was employed for the study. Subjects were selected as two intact classroom groups which were offered for research by the cooperating teacher. To control for the transfer of essay writing experience between tests of responses to the two conditions counterbalancing was implemented. Each of the two intact classes was divided into two groups with equal numbers of students. On the first day of testing and for each class, one of these two groups was tested for its response to the experimental condition, while the second group was tested for its response to the control condition. On the second day of testing, all students were tested for their responses to the condition for which they had not yet been tested.

Procedures

Instructional Design for Experimental and Control Writing Topics

A number of preparations were made prior to implementation of the study for both conditions. Selection of writing topics, research materials, and other materials was undertaken in consultation with the cooperating teacher, the teacher and students.

Introduction to the Topic

The purposes of this activity were to stimulate interest in the issue of gun control, to inform students of the basics of their writing task, and to initiate the building of students' knowledge of this issue. The topic was stated orally and the specific question for research and essay writing was presented on the blackboard for the class. Students were then requested to volunteer their opinions orally and to use any available source of information to briefly support them. Class discussion of individual opinions and notetaking on information perceived to be relevant were encouraged to create interest and to increase the amount of information available to the students for subsequent research and writing. Students were informed that they would be developing an essay on gun control, and that it would be completed in class and graded by their regular teacher as part of their course mark. The duration of this activity was about 20 minutes.

Essay Writing Instructions and Guidelines

The students were provided with written general instructions and guidelines specifying the mode, length, organization and content of essays to be submitted (see Appendix A). The purposes of these were to inform students of the general requirements of acceptable essays and to advise them about specific characteristics of higher scoring essays. The general guidelines on structure and length were distributed and discussed on the second class meeting while specific content guidelines were discussed during the fifth meeting. Both were briefly reviewed just prior to final essay testing.

Specific content guidelines consisted of nine categories of information that could be integrated into essay writing (Langer, 1980). These categories were discussed and the students' comprehension of them tested by elicitation of oral examples. It was pointed out that higher scoring essays would be those integrating information considered to demonstrate a higher level of knowledge. For example, definitions demonstrated a higher level than first-hand experience.

The duration of these activities was approximately 20 minutes. Other instructions and guidelines relevant to daily instructional activities were also provided during about 25 minutes of instructional time. Specifics of those instructions are given with the activity for which they were provided.

Content Study and Inquiry

The following section contains a description of those instructional activities, procedures and materials which were primarily aimed at the students' learning and integration into memory of information from readings on the experimental condition writing topic. A secondary objective of this instruction was the learning of the basic argumentative writing strategies of deductive organization and consideration of opposing points of view. General elements of the inquiry reported in previous research were employed to achieve this learning. These included substantial motivational activities, discussion, questioning and prewriting surrounding topic-specific data.

Small Group Discussion

Students were organized into dyads on several occasions during the two-week period to (a) stimulate the expression of topic-specific personal knowledge and experience and the recall of information from readings and audio-visual materials studied, and (b) assist in the organization of ideas and information into cogent written arguments. Pairs of students working together by personal choice were requested to jot down and share orally with the class their consensus in the form of opinions supported by specific reasons. The class was then encouraged to agree or disagree or question the consensus given and to take notes about information seen as supportive of their personal opinions. Small group work was facilitated for discussion of opinions both on the general topic and specific arguments of gun control. This strategy was applied during about 30 minutes of class time.

Study of Audio-visual Materials

Videocassettes portraying the views of various societal groups advocating or opposing stricter gun control were viewed by the students. As well, information presented within tables, graphs, charts and cartoons was displayed on overhead projections (see Appendix B). The aims of these activities were to motivate class discussion of the topic and to provide opportunity for notetaking and interpretation of verbal and nonverbal data presented. Discussion and notetaking on this data were presumed to assist students in the collection of information needed for detailed support of their opinions on gun control.

Videocassette viewing was followed by brief discussion only, as this activity was intended primarily for motivation and notetaking. Students were also encouraged to look at both sides of the issue before developing their opinions. Sample interpretations of data presented on overheads were provided orally and

student interpretations were requested given the questions “What does it mean?”, and “How could this information support your position?”. Opportunity to discuss information identified by both the students and the researcher was provided. The duration of film viewing and discussion of film contents was about 30 minutes, while the discussion of fact sheets and cartoons constituted about 35 minutes.

Study of Topic-specific Literature

A variety of reading activities and materials was employed to increase the extent and organization of topic-specific information available to the students for other pretesting activities and the in-class essay test. During class time, students were assisted in locating this information in the readings distributed, discussing its content and organization, and preparing to integrate it into convincing arguments. Canadian government documents regarding gun control as well as newspaper and magazine articles pertinent to the gun control debate in Canada, the United States and Europe were used as sources of information. Following are descriptions of the nature and purposes of specific activities undertaken.

Background and legislation. The researcher employed overhead projections and photocopies of the government documents to orient the students to important information. This data consisted primarily of basic definitions, objectives, history and legislation relevant to gun control. Students were requested to highlight in copies of the documents distributed to them the information identified by the researcher as important for their essays. Key definitions, literal comprehension questions and a question designed for students to collect data supporting their opinions were assigned for out-of-class completion in written form (see Appendix C). This activity was limited to the first and second instructional days and was completed in about 35 minutes.

Introduction to arguments for and against stricter gun control. Recent newspaper and magazine articles on the issue of gun control were distributed during the second and fourth class meetings. Literal and inferential comprehension questions requiring students to reproduce factual information and summarize selected arguments presented in the articles were assigned for out-of-class completion (see Appendix C). A preview of the questions was provided to ensure effective and efficient completion.

Feedback for student answers to the questions was given one day after each set of readings was assigned. Information relevant to the questions was highlighted and displayed on overhead projections and students were

encouraged to correct and complete their responses where necessary and to express points of agreement and disagreement orally. This introduction to established arguments occurred during the third and fifth meetings and occupied about 30 minutes of instructional time.

Study and prewriting of arguments. These activities were initiated in discussion of the content and organization of sample arguments identified by the researcher and the students in the articles distributed. Students were then assigned to study these and the remaining arguments and to prepare for writing from memory during the next class periods. One objective was that students would become familiar enough with the content of arguments both supporting and opposing stricter gun control legislation to participate in class discussion. The second was that they would be able to select arguments which they could most readily present because of personal knowledge, interest and/or commitment to these arguments. Thirdly, it was expected that extensive study and prewriting would be necessary for students to internalize the deductive organization and specific content of three arguments well enough to present them from memory during posttesting.

To prepare for the first in-class prewriting task, students were asked to commit to memory one argument supporting their basic opinions on gun control. For the prewriting task assigned on the fourth class meeting, they were asked to write out in point form outlines all that they could recall about the argument selected. These outlines were collected for written and oral feedback and returned to students on the following day for further research and writing.

Preparation for the second in-class writing task consisted of general spoken feedback to the class on their outlines submitted and discussion of the arguments in the articles not yet covered. Students were provided with a written list of the eight pro-gun control and six anti-gun control propositions described earlier. The researcher again discussed how the remaining propositions were supported by adequate and deductively organized detail. Finally, students were requested to choose two more arguments and to prepare paragraph form summaries for in-class prewriting from memory on the following day. Feedback was again provided as it was for the first writing task.

These outlines and summaries were assigned during the third and fifth class meetings following discussion of vocabulary and comprehension questions assigned previously. In-class writing occurred during the fourth and sixth meetings. Identification and discussion of sample arguments comprised about

50 minutes of instructional time while instructions regarding study and in-class writing occupied about 10 minutes and in-class writing occurred during 40 minutes. Following written and oral feedback on summaries and outlines, students were assigned on the sixth meeting to prepare first drafts of five-paragraph argumentative essays including introductory and concluding paragraphs.

Instruction in reading strategies. Since the subjects were having difficulty answering the first set of comprehension questions, brief instruction in scanning techniques was provided. Key words from sample comprehension questions were identified and their application in locating specific information in the readings was demonstrated. Students practiced this technique by locating information using key words from other questions and sharing their findings with the class. This activity was implemented during the fourth meeting and lasted for 15 minutes.

In sum, activities involving inquiry consisted of discussion and writing activities emphasizing the students' learning of topic-specific content and basic strategies of argumentative writing. These activities occupied about four hours of instructional time.

Study of Models of Argumentative Writing

The study of models of writing involved primarily the illustration and discussion of thesis-support arguments as presented in sample single paragraphs and outlines of single paragraphs. The major objective of this study was that students would be able to recognize and write deductive arguments in the form of opinion statements followed by supporting details. Secondly they would become familiar with how varying levels of content knowledge could be represented in essays receiving higher scores. Three types of models were employed as follows.

Outlines of arguments unrelated to gun control. First, questions about topics expected to motivate the participation of all students were directed to the students. One such question was "Is it better to be single or married?" These questions and the oral responses elicited from students were recorded on the blackboard in point form as "yes" or "no" statements of opinion with supporting details. The general-to-specific organization of the resulting outlines was then discussed by the researcher. The students were asked to record the models for

future reference and essay writing. These procedures were repeated using a topic suggested by the students. Time spent on this activity was about 30 minutes during the third and sixth instructional days.

Arguments from topic-specific readings. A number of arguments for and against stronger gun control were selected by the researcher and students from the media articles on gun control previously distributed. Class discussion was then used to demonstrate the deductive organization of these arguments by highlighting and labelling on overhead projections general statements and the supporting points for individual arguments. Students were encouraged to follow the same procedure on their copies of the articles and then to demonstrate an understanding of deductive structure by highlighting and labelling it in other arguments. Feedback to students regarding their understanding was briefly given to the class as a whole. This activity occurred during about 45 minutes of instructional time on the third and fourth class days

Summary paragraphs of arguments in topic-specific readings. Students were asked to identify topic sentences and supporting details in model paragraphs prepared by the researcher as examples of what would be expected in written essays (see Appendix D). They were also taught about various levels of specificity of content knowledge (see Appendix A) and then asked to identify examples of the these levels in the models. Definitions were said to indicate a more specific level of knowledge of the topic while reports of first-hand experience represented the most general knowledge of the topic. Students were reminded that greater content specificity would result in higher scoring essays. They were provided with copies of these models to assist them in their own writing. This activity occurred during about 45 minutes on the fifth day of instruction.

In sum, the use of models of writing constituted about two hours of instructional time and was intended to illustrate general structural and specific content features of the required thesis-support essays. Since a crucial concern was to elicit essays adequate for college curriculum purposes in a limited period of time, model study was primarily focussed on content. The argumentative structure of deductive organization was the secondary emphasis of this activity.

Feedback on Prewriting

Both oral and written feedback were provided by the researcher for comprehension questions, outlines and summaries written in class, and first drafts prepared both during and outside of class time. The participating teacher assisted with some one-to-one conferences for first drafts during the last two class periods before testing.

Feedback on the comprehension questions consisted of spoken comments about responses given orally and voluntarily by students during class time. Specific written comments to individuals and general oral feedback to the class were provided for the outline and two summaries written in class on the three subtopics selected by each of the students. Feedback on first drafts of five-paragraph essays consisted of written comments from the researcher and one-to-one conferences with both the researcher and the participating teacher. Most feedback was given on the day following submission of prewriting.

The essential purpose of feedback was to inform students of the adequacy of content development and organization in their writing. Feedback was directed at these aspects of writing primarily through explicit written comments noting apparent organization and levels of content specificity and suggesting reorganization and/or further elaboration. Microlevel feedback concerned with spelling, sentence structure, lexical choice and mechanics was provided only if weaknesses in these features interfered with comprehension of meaning. Students were encouraged to revise and resubmit all of their writing for further written and/or oral comments. The total time spent on the provision of feedback during class time was about 60 minutes.

Instructional Strategies for Control Writing Topic

The following section contains a summary of the activities, procedures and materials used to stimulate writing on the control condition writing topic (pollution). This instruction was facilitated by the researcher only on the day preceding the first day of the essay writing tests and occupied about one-half hour. There was a brief introduction to the writing topic and task, a class discussion of relevant data and suggestions of how students could organize their available knowledge for essay writing tests.

Topic Introduction

A general definition of the concept of pollution as well as the specific question and subtopics for essay writing were presented on the blackboard. A discussion was then initiated in which students were invited to express and support their opinions on the issue of pollution. This activity lasted for about 10 minutes.

Discussion of Topic-specific Data

Numerical and verbal facts regarding the origins of pollution and, in particular, the deleterious effects of this phenomenon, were presented on overhead projections to stimulate interest in the topic of pollution. These overheads consisted of two pages of information presented in highly detailed paragraphs (see Appendix E). Information perceived to be of special interest was underlined and read orally to the students who were encouraged to offer any comments felt to be relevant. No notetaking was allowed during the 20 minutes of this activity.

Orientation to Essay Writing

A chart was sketched on the blackboard and suggested as a possible framework for students' organization of their knowledge of each of the three subtopics assigned for writing on the issue of pollution. This chart consisted of grids headed by the names of the three general types of pollution on the vertical axis and the labels Location, Causes, and Effects on the horizontal axis. Sample data extracted from the two information sheets were entered onto the chart. Students were then asked to orally provide examples of their own to complete the chart. Again, no notetaking was allowed and students were reminded not to research or discuss the topic before testing. However, they were encouraged to fill in a similar chart outside of class to ensure that their essays' content and organization were adequate for both research and college curriculum purposes.

Essay Writing Tests

All students were requested to write a two- to three-page essay on each of the topics of gun control and pollution during two consecutive classroom periods beginning on the day after the last day of instruction. Following are the specific procedures used to elicit written essay responses to the experimental and control conditions.

On the first day of testing, each of the two classes was divided into two groups equal in numbers of students. For each class, one of the two groups was assigned to write on the experimental topic and the other was assigned to write on the control topic. On the second day of testing, students were assigned to write essays on the topic not written about on the first day.

Specific instructions and advice were provided in writing (see Appendix F) and read with the students to allow for questions. Instructions included a reiteration of each of the subtopics and of the specific question to be written about. Students were given 10 minutes to jot down and organize everything that they could recall about each of their three subtopics. Some general guidelines and advice intended to assist students in maximum recall, organization, clarity, and specificity were also read aloud. Students were then allotted 40 minutes to write essays without the assistance of their organizational notes or any other materials on the topic. Some further specifications and advice regarding content, format, and audience were also given in writing and orally for this final phase of testing.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

This chapter contains a description of the procedures used to obtain raw scores for the quality and length of essays written in response to experimental and control conditions. Procedures and results for the analyses of raw scores are also presented.

Holistic Quality Scoring Procedures

The procedures used to establish criteria to rate essays, to identify prototypes (sample essays which illustrate the criteria for each rating on the holistic scale), to score essays using these prototypes, and to achieve interrater reliability were based on Myers' (1980) holistic procedures. Modifications were made in consultation with thesis advisory personnel.

The major criteria for the quality assessment were selected primarily according to the emphases of the experimental treatment, that is, content development and organization of argumentative essays. The minor criteria of punctuation, spelling, capitalization, and sentence structure were selected as being essential to the accurate assessment of any type of writing. As well, it was intended that these secondary criteria could be utilized to make decisions on essays considered to be on the borderline of any of the four holistic ratings. It was decided to overlook grammar errors because of the substantial number of subjects for whom English is a second language.

A system for rating essays on a scale of one to four was selected on the bases of the purpose of scoring and the grade level of students. Myers (1980) has pointed out that six- and eight- point scales are generally employed when

three or four grade levels are involved and a spread is required to identify differences in phrasing and maturity of content. In the present study, students were all at the same grade level, and it was felt that the general profile provided by the four-point scale would be sufficient to demonstrate the differential effects of the two conditions.

Prototypes were identified and applied to scoring as follows. First, all essays were read by the researcher and scored according to the initial set of criteria. Next, a second rater received a selection of eight papers considered as prototypical ones, twos, threes and fours for each of the two topics written about. Finally, modifications were made to the initial criteria due to the second rater's inability to distinguish clear threes and fours for some of the essays. The modified criteria and prototypes (see Appendix G) were then used by the researcher to score the remaining essays on the four point holistic scale.

Interrater reliability was established as follows. Essays were randomly selected from a stack of all papers until a total of 10 essays was chosen which included at least one paper for each of the four possible holistic scores. Clear copies of these 10 papers were then submitted to a third rater, a practicing teacher of composition. This rater was informed of the holistic scoring procedures used by the researcher through a discussion of the modified prototypes and criteria. He then scored the 10 essays and the percent of agreement on quality scores between himself and the researcher was determined. Since a 90% agreement was reached, scores previously assigned by the researcher to all papers were tabulated for analysis.

Analysis of Holistic Quality Scores

Observed and expected frequencies of total quality scores for all 100 essays written in response to both the experimental and control conditions were calculated. A chi square test was performed to ascertain if significant differences in the quality of essays produced by the two conditions existed. The results of the chi square test indicated that essays written following subject matter treatment were of higher quality than essays written following the control condition. No significant differences were found in the quality of the essays produced by the two conditions. Observed and expected frequencies of quality scores and results of the chi square analysis are presented in Table 10.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION, LIMITATIONS, CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

The results of the study indicate that the use of the proposed model for the prediction of the effect of the change in the input variables on the output variables is very effective. The model can be used for the prediction of the effect of the change in the input variables on the output variables. The model can be used for the prediction of the effect of the change in the input variables on the output variables.

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students' reading abilities. While course entry reading scores were not available, it is suggested that ability was generally lower than that of the high school and college students of previously successful research. Students ranged in age from 19 to 45 years and so it is reasonable to assume that a substantial proportion of them had left school, perhaps due to lower academic achievement. It is likely that facility in reading was an important factor in those situations as reading ability is central to most school subjects. It may also be that the life experience of these adults with the issue of concern was a factor in their comprehension of the topic-specific readings. It has been shown that personal experience with a given concept may interfere with understanding of the meaning of that concept intended by the writer (Nicholson, 1984).

Because of reading ability, students may have had problems in comprehending the large amount of relatively difficult and unfamiliar topic-specific information presented to them. Magazine articles distributed contained somewhat detailed arguments based on concepts of gun control legislation not widely discussed in common media. The apparent need to teach scanning techniques to complete literal comprehension questions is one indicator that students had difficulty comprehending these articles.

It may also be that reading abilities affected writing performance by reducing the potential impact of the study of models of writing. While the study of models was a major aspect of instruction, reading and analysis of the models was described by a number of researchers as an activity fundamental to effective model study (Austin, 1983; Knudson, 1988). Perry (1980) actually demonstrated that higher initial reading skill was associated with the positive impact of model study. Considering the importance of proficiency in reading to model study, students may have been less able than those of previous research to benefit from this instruction. Because of difficulty in analyzing the models presented, they may not have learned the features of argumentative writing illustrated in the models well enough to transfer these features effectively to writing.

Reading ability may also have influenced the impact of prewriting. While some researchers have shown that more prewriting about a given topic is associated with greater gains in the quality of later writing on the same topic (Marshall, 1987), others have noted that comprehension of the readings upon which writing is to be based is a crucial factor in these results. For examples, Reilly (1986) maintained that prewriting will be ineffective if reading materials are too difficult, and Louque (1983) attributed the lack of significant prewriting effects

on later writing quality to lower reading abilities. Considering that these conditions may have existed in the present study, students might not have benefited significantly from prewriting.

Information Processing Ability

It may be that students had difficulty in processing the information in the topic-specific readings. This was a particularly important skill considering the requirement to write essays from memory without the benefit of these readings or prewritten materials. One indication that students may have experienced problems processing topic-specific information effectively was their generally limited oral participation during in-class discussions. Clearly, voluntary participation in discussion of any topic is more likely if the topic is well understood and organized in memory. Another possible indicator of processing difficulty was the prominence of prewriting which was almost verbatim from the readings. This prewriting lacked breadth and suggests that students may have had difficulty in integrating information from the variety of sources provided into their writing.

The effectiveness of oral and written teacher feedback on prewriting may also have been reduced by the students' information processing skills. It could be that the low rate of student revision of prewriting was, in part, due to this factor. Cohen (1987a) provided support for this hypothesis in showing that students consistently have difficulties in processing teacher feedback well enough to make significant writing improvement.

Considering the requirement for in-class writing from memory, both prewriting and final tests of writing may also have been affected significantly by weaknesses in information processing skill. While it is commonly accepted that information which is processed more effectively is also better recalled, research showing positive associations between the organization of information in memory and better writing (Langer, 1984; Chesky, 1987) is further evidence for this contention.

Participation in Discussion

While oral discussion has been identified by previous researchers as an important element in most of the instructional activities used in the present study,

voluntary student responses during class time, small group and one-to-one discussions were generally limited. This may have also reduced the potential impact of a number of major instructional activities of the current investigation.

Limited discussion could have reduced the impact of the study of models of argumentative writing. Research in which adequate discussion is consistently identified as crucial to the learning of features illustrated in models (Austin, 1983; Knudson, 1988) is evidence for this hypothesis.

Discussion may have also influenced the impact of inquiry. In his research on inquiry, Pisano (1980) attributed improvement in the quality of high school argumentative writing largely to questioning designed to stimulate critical thinking. For the current study, questioning was an aspect of most instruction as it was employed to encourage students' critical viewing of films, to elicit interpretations of numerical data displayed and to draw attention to the use of the writing strategies illustrated in topic-specific readings. It may be that the limited response to this questioning reduced the impact of these inquiry activities.

Finally, the impact of written teacher feedback may have been affected by limited discussion in the form of revision conferences. It may be that this feedback had little positive influence on writing since the amount of revision done in response to it was apparently very low. More revision has been associated with improved writing quality by a number of researchers (Beach, 1979; Land, 1984). More discussion through one-to-one conferences is likely to have increased the amount of revision since such dialogue could clarify and expand students' understanding of needed revisions. While such opportunities were available for a number of hours daily outside the classroom, few students sought this help.

Motivation

Student motivation may not have been high enough for effective integration of a large amount of unfamiliar information into a relatively difficult mode of writing in a comparatively short time. Limited classroom discussion, submission of first drafts and numbers of students seeking assistance in revising their prewriting were possible indicators of this.

The impact of inquiry activities on the quality of writing might have been reduced by lower motivation if Troyka (1974) is correct. Troyka found that over

one semester of instruction, a selected inquiry technique resulted in significant gains in the quality of remedial college student argumentative essay writing. She attributed this outcome to certain features of prewriting and student verbal communication which provided increased motivation due to a diminished threat of failure. Extensive student interaction and prewriting requiring students to utilize familiar writing strategies were suggested to provide these benefits.

The present study included a number of instructional features similar to those used by Troyka as it was concentrated on two basic strategies of argumentative writing. Reading, discussion and prewriting were facilitated to teach these strategies. Small group discussion, audio-visual presentations and discussion of numerical data were used to involve students in the issue through peer interaction, the opportunity to express personal ideas, and stimulation of thinking. Personal choice of subtopics of the issue was another motivational feature. However, while both Troyka (1974) and Pisano (1980) attributed learning of argumentative strategies and improved writing quality largely to the amount of prewriting and discussion during inquiry, language production in these senses was low during the present study. It may be that motivation played an important role in that situation.

Writing Ability

Although course entry writing scores were not available, it may be that the writing skills of students were not strong enough for the task set out. This judgment is based in part on the observation that prewriting was generally brief and weak in content development and organization. It lacked, in general, the kind of elaboration that might indicate a comprehensive integration of information from the topic-specific readings. Little evidence of the consideration of opposing points of view (a standard strategy of argumentation) was apparent. A second indicator of generally low writing proficiency in relation to the task was the large proportion of final essays assessed quality scores of two on a scale of four.

Assuming that these are valid indicators of generally lower writing abilities, it may be that students of the present study possessed a number of specific characteristics of less proficient adult writers identified by researchers. Such descriptions, in turn, suggest more specific explanations of how writing abilities may have reduced the impact of instruction.

Perl (1979) pointed out that unskilled college writers are weak in planning skills. It may be that the often list-like quality of supporting points and the lack of elaborating details were reflections of deficiencies in planning ability for students of the present study. Generally unclear summaries and sparse outlines completed for in-class prewriting were other possible indicators of underdeveloped planning skills.

Another trait of unskilled writers widely discussed is weakness in the ability to elaborate ideas. In their studies of basic high school and college writers, Shaughnessey (1977) and Cayer and Sacks (1979) attributed poor elaboration to inadequate knowledge of strategies specific to this skill. For example, one such strategy cited by Shaughnessey involves allowing for the "incubation" of ideas. She suggested that basic writers tend to begin writing before this event has occurred. It may be that this phenomenon accounts in part for the substantial amount of somewhat unoriginal prewriting that was submitted. The contention of Marshall (1987) that skill in elaboration during prewriting is crucial to improving the quality of later writing is further evidence that lack of student skill in elaboration may have contributed substantially to the current writing outcomes.

Instructional and Testing Factors

It is probable that a number of aspects of instruction influenced the results of this study substantially. These include time for instruction, accreditation for prewriting, topic and subtopic selection, and classroom instructions. As well, essay testing conditions may have affected demonstration of the gains actually made by students in their abilities to write arguments on the experimental writing topic.

Time

First, the overall period of time available for the experimental treatment may have been insufficient. While two weeks were allotted by the cooperating institution, this was significantly less time than was allowed for previously successful instruction. For examples, Sanders and Littlefield observed the results of five weeks of instruction, Markwood and Shaughnessey (1977) studied one college semester, and Strugala (1983) studied the effects of sixteen weeks

of instruction. As well, a number of researchers specifically implicated time as an important factor in writing improvement (McQueen, Murray and Evans, 1963; Woodward and Phillips, 1967; Bamberg, 1978; Perry, 1980; Markwood, 1981; Allen, 1985). These researchers showed that students receiving more instruction, and, in particular, more instruction aimed at the specific writing features evaluated, demonstrated superior writing abilities.

Considering these differences in overall periods of instruction and the demonstrated importance of this factor, it may be that students needed more time to prepare for the essay writing test. Class time was devoted mostly to discussion of the content-specific readings and to lecture, illustration and perception checks regarding the desired features of essays to be written. Thus, students were expected to complete most of their study and integration into writing of content-specific information outside of class time. The demands of other courses and of adulthood may have limited the amount out-of-class time that students could commit to these preparatory tasks.

Students may have required more time to sufficiently understand the issue of concern. While efforts were made to ensure that experimental and control writing topics were similar, substantial differences may have existed between these topics in their familiarity to the students. For example, the issue of gun control has had less media coverage and public attention over recent years than has the issue of pollution. Most of the available time may have been needed to learn the basic concepts of gun control, leaving little time for a deeper understanding. Assuming that students generally lacked strong reading and information processing skills, and that essays were to be written from memory in class, it is reasonable to claim that adequate out-of-class time to acquire this understanding was especially important.

Students may have needed more time to benefit from the study of models of writing. Some model study researchers have directly attributed insufficient time to the nonsignificant impact of this type of instruction (Perry, 1980). Others have explained that it is one thing to recognize specified features of writing in models and yet another to apply these features effectively to writing performance (Hillocks, 1986). Thus, although classroom instruction in specified features of argumentative writing was provided, it may be that the amount of prewriting in applying these features to writing was not sufficient. The importance of adequate prewriting to successful model study has been espoused consistently by researchers of this instructional focus (Perry, 1980; Austin, 1983; Knudson,

1988).

It may be that the overall instructional period was insufficient to achieve the clear benefits of inquiry observed by previous researchers. In general, researchers of inquiry specified extensive prewriting in order to internalize strategies specific to argumentation. Again, while prewriting directed at these strategies was expected to be completed out of class, students may have felt short of time to use strategies requiring more reading and writing than was necessary to achieve credit. For example, they may have avoided attention to opposing points of view and still presented the arguments they had selected. It is generally accepted, however, that arguments based on consideration of opposing points of view are likely to be better elaborated and more convincing than those not using such information. It has also been demonstrated experimentally that consideration of opposing points of view may contribute significantly to improved argumentative writing (McCleary, 1979).

Accreditation

Based on substantial experience of the researcher in teaching writing, it may be that the generally low amount and quality of prewriting submitted for feedback were consequences, in part, of a lack of credit. Although outlines, summaries and first drafts of essays were assigned to all students, no credit was awarded for this prewriting. One influence of credit has been explained in terms of perceptions of writers of the role of their audience. For example, Langer (1984) explained that high school students wrote substantially less when the teacher was perceived as an examiner rather than a contributor to ongoing development of the writing topic. Students concentrated on what instructions from the teacher had led them to believe would be the essential elements of credit. It may be that students of the present study used a similar strategy due to comparable perceptions of the researcher as an examiner, thereby restricting the amount of prewriting completed.

Writing Topic and Subtopics

In spite of measures taken to select a topic of interest to all students, it may be that a substantial number of students were not interested or willing

enough to involve themselves fully in the topic assigned. While a few students who were gun owners demonstrated strong views on the subject of gun control during discussion, others limited their input. It is possible that negative real-life experiences or, perhaps, lack of experience with the subject matter reduced the willingness of other students to discuss the matter.

Differences in the subtopics used for research on the two topics may have also affected outcomes. It may be that the experimental condition subtopics were more restrictive than the subtopics assigned for the control condition. The greater specificity of gun control subtopics may have limited the amount of information from nonreading sources that could have been integrated by students into their writing. The more general nature of pollution subtopics may have been conducive to the use of information from a wider variety of sources such as media and first-hand experience. This may have been an advantage to students in terms of content development for the topic of pollution.

Classroom Instructions

The motivation for students to write more and to elaborate more may have been curtailed by instructions given. Students were informed during the second class that they would be required to write only two to three pages on the topic assigned. As well, they were instructed to limit the amount of more general, personal information and to concentrate on specific information from reliable written sources. It may be that students followed these instructions closely, thereby reducing their prewriting. Research showing that more prewriting is associated with improvement in the quality of later writing (Woodward and Phillips, 1967; Reilly, 1983; Marshall, 1987) is evidence that the students' generally limited prewriting may also have also reduced the quality of their argumentative essays.

Testing Conditions

Finally, certain essay testing conditions may have reduced the impact of instruction. Students wrote on assigned topics from memory in a specified time without the benefit of prewritten materials. Sanders and Littlefield (1977) maintained that such conditions may not register the writing skill improvements

actually acquired from classroom instruction. It seems clear that writing on topics of the students' own choosing without the need to remember substantial information and with extra time to write would be of particular benefit to less proficient writers.

In sum, writing instruction was focussed at all times on those features of writing most heavily weighted for the holistic evaluation, that is, content development and organization. However, a number of student and experimental factors may have confounded the impact of these emphases on the quality and length of postinstructional essays. Students may not have possessed the reading, information processing and writing abilities needed to integrate a relatively large amount of unfamiliar and conceptually difficult information into well-elaborated arguments. Limited overall time, motivation and certain instructional guidelines may have interacted with these abilities to seriously limit the amount of prewriting completed. On the whole, this shortage of prewriting may have been the major factor reducing the intended benefits of writing instruction.

Limitations of the Study

The absence of significant effects for writing instruction on the quality and length of argumentative essays can be attributed in part to a number of factors beyond the control of the researcher. These factors can be described broadly in terms of institutional requirements, experimental conditions, student characteristics and student behavior in response to this condition.

1. Variation in the reading and writing abilities of the students may have affected the validity of the results. While these abilities have been demonstrated to affect writing performance, they could not be strictly controlled without major disruptions to the institution.

2. The overall period of time available for this research may have limited students in their abilities to respond effectively. The cooperating institution was able to allot two weeks in comparison to the five or more weeks applied to most previously successful research on instruction. It may be that this condition particularly reduced the opportunity for the generally less experienced writers of this study to effectively complete preparatory reading and writing assignments.

3. Since students were to receive institutional credit for the final written

essays alone, control of the extent of topic-specific study and prewriting was limited. Extra credit is one way to increase the extent of this preparatory work.

4. No accurate means of controlling the difficulty, familiarity and interest to students of topics selected for writing were available. It may be that variation in any or all of these criteria contributed significantly to the results, thereby reducing the validity of the comparison made.

5. The time available for this study did not allow for students to improve their generic writing skills significantly. However, any improvements in such skills as argumentative content development and organization gained through the experimental treatment could have been applied equally to both experimental and control posttests, thus affecting the validity of the comparison.

6. Finally, this study was limited by the researcher's familiarity with the students as individuals and by his own knowledge of the intricacies of effective writing instruction.

Conclusions

It is concluded that ten hours of classroom writing instruction over two weeks emphasizing the study of models of writing, inquiry into topic-specific data, prewriting and teacher feedback may not improve the quality or increase the length of adult academic upgrading students' argumentative writing significantly. Certain features of this instruction as well as student academic ability and motivation to participate both during and outside of the class may confound its intended benefits.

No conclusions can be made about the influence of these factors on model study, inquiry, prewriting or teacher feedback on prewriting since essays were analyzed as products of these activities as a whole. However, the impacts of certain general instructional features stated by previous researchers as crucial to writing improvement and which were also prominent in the experimental condition may have been affected significantly. The extent and nature of study, discussion and prewriting directed at the integration of the content of topic-specific readings into writing appear to be those features.

The impact of study and discussion of topic-specific information may have been significantly reduced by the students' abilities to read, comprehend and process this content and by their interest in and familiarity with the writing topic.

The effective learning of a relatively extensive amount of information on a complex social issue in a brief period of time may have required language reception abilities beyond those generally held by the students.

The impact of prewriting may have been significantly reduced by the students' skills in developing and organizing written arguments, by the extent of their participation in activities aimed at learning general principles of argumentative writing, by their reading abilities and by their understanding of the writing topic. It may be that these factors all reduced the amount of prewriting completed, and, in turn, the extent of learning about the topic as well as feedback and revision of written representations of this learning.

A number of instructional factors may have also reduced the potential benefits of study, discussion and prewriting. In particular, the time available to students to apply classroom learning to study and prewriting may have been insufficient, especially considering the relative academic skills of students. The lack of credit for pretest exercises may have also reduced the amount of preparatory work done by students with adult responsibilities and substantial other coursework.

In sum, adult academic upgrading students may require more extensive preparatory work than was provided for by this study if instruction is to have a significant influence on their argumentative writing. While insufficient time for preparation is an obvious impediment to this end, a host of other instructional features and student characteristics can be said to account for the impact of writing instruction on argumentative writing performance.

Implications for Further Research

Although the experimental treatment did not, under the experimental conditions, instruction would affect argumentative writing performance, a number of other factors, such as time allotted, a number of recommended activities, prewriting, and so forth, may be important. Future research might be aimed at testing the experimental conditions and finding out important general features of writing instruction that are important to the success of this study. As well, longer-term evaluation of the impact of the experimental conditions are suggested.

1. Concerning the generalizability of the results of this study, the experimental treatment may have been more effective than the control treatment in the

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APPENDIX A

Instructions and Guidelines for Essay Writing

General Guidelines for Essay Writing

1. You will be expected to write an essay of 250-300 words (2 to 3 pages double-spaced) answering the question, "Do we need stricter gun control in Canada?"

2. The essay should include at least three detailed arguments supporting your opinion on this issue. A simple listing of the many possible arguments will result in a low mark. As such, those arguments felt to be most important should be chosen and supported by details taken mainly from the readings handed out in class. You may also use first-hand experience and information taken from other sources, but these should not be relied upon.

Specific Content Guidelines for Essay Writing

The following are definitions and examples of different types of information, ordered from higher to lower levels, which may be integrated into your essays. Essays receiving higher scores will generally have more of the higher level types of information.

1. Superordinate Concept: A higher category concept. e.g. A sawed-off shotgun is a type of prohibited weapon.
2. Definition: A comprehensive description. e.g. A prohibited weapon is one which has no legitimate recreational use and therefore may be dangerous to personal safety.
3. Linking: Comparison of one concept to another. e.g. Banning certain types of weapons to block criminal activity is like banning certain types of cars to stop drunk driving.
4. Analogy: Comparisons for a literal idea. e.g. The gun is the ultimate machine in the war against humanity.
5. Example: Something specific to a category. e.g. An example of a restricted weapon is a pistol.
6. Defining Characteristic: Defines an important part of something. e.g. A government makes laws.
7. Association: What does the word make you think of? e.g. 'Black market' may make you think of a papaya.
8. First-hand Experience: A reaction based on experience. e.g. Your only experience with the word "warrant" may be an arrest you saw on television.

APPENDIX B

Audio-visual Materials Used for Classroom Discussion

These materials and their original sources are not included as obtaining copyright permission was not considered practicable and presentation of this data not essential to understanding the research. Utilized were tables and graphs presenting Canadian statistics on opinions about the issue of gun control, the amount of gun ownership and the use of guns in selected crimes. As well, cartoons illustrating the various views on gun control were used.

APPENDIX C

Literature, Vocabulary, and Comprehension Questions

Topic-specific Literature

These materials are not included here as obtaining copyright permission was not felt to be practicable and presentation of this data not considered essential to understanding or replicating this research. Utilized were a variety of Canadian government documents on gun control legislation and magazine and newspaper articles reporting the arguments surrounding the issue of gun control. A partial list of some of these documents and articles and their sources is provided below.

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Canadian Gun Control Legislation

Vocabulary

firearm-
 weapon-
 prohibited weapon-
 restricted weapon-
 mandatory prohibition-
 discretionary prohibition-
 preemptive prohibition-
 legislation-
 cartridge magazine-
 sentence-
 screening-
 semi-automatic weapons-

Comprehension Questions

Current Gun Control Legislation in Canada

1. What are the major objectives of gun control?
2. Define prohibited weapons and give some examples of them.
3. a) Define restricted weapons and give some examples.
 b) What does a person need to own a restricted weapon?
 c) What are five legal reasons to own a restricted weapon?
4. a) What privilege is given for possession of a Firearms Acquisition Certificate?
 b) List briefly five reasons for refusal of a Firearms Acquisition Certificate.
5. What rights do minors have to use guns? (One sentence)
6. When may a warrant for arrest be issued by police? A search be made without a warrant?
7. What are four reasons for prohibiting the use or ownership of any firearm?
8. What are the penalties for:
 - a) Making a false statement to get a gun permit?
 - b) Pointing a firearm at another person?
 - c) Transporting firearms carelessly?
 - d) Carrying concealed weapons without a permit?
 - e) Giving, lending or selling weapons to minors or persons of unsound mind?

Background to current legislation

1. What is the current control environment in the UK?
 2. What happened in 1996 in the UK?
- Implementing Canada's cycle of 1987-1990
1. Why has new legislation been introduced?
 2. What it states, accepted, and the reasons
 3. What generally has been accepted in the international community in legislation and up to 1990?
 4. What has been most recommended in the 1990s?
 5. What is the main principle of the current legislation?
 6. What about a common international?
 7. a) What are the new weapons and the new technology?
b) How will the power be shifted?
c) What is the impact of the new technology?
d) What changes in the world of the 1990s?
 8. What trends are there in the world of the 1990s?
that laws are strict to control the weapons

What is the current control environment in the UK?

What happened in 1996 in the UK?

Canada's Cycle

1987-1990

1991-1995

1996-2000

2001-2005

2006-2010

2011-2015

2016-2020

2021-2025

2026-2030

2031-2035

2036-2040

2041-2045

2046-2050

2051-2055

Comprehension Questions

General Articles

Search for a Law

1. Why do advocates of stricter gun control think it's too easy to get guns? (Four reasons)
2. Why do the police support tougher gun laws?
3. What is the fear of gun control advocates about gun magazine size?
4. State four points given against stricter gun control and eight points given for tougher gun control.

No Right to Bear Arms

(see page 7)

1. What is the fear of those who oppose tougher gun control?
2. How does violent crime in Canada compare to the U.S. ?
3. Why are gun owners incensed by Miss Campbell's proposals?

(see page 9)

Briefly summarize the following arguments against gun control and present your own counterarguments if you can.

1. Magazine size limitation.
2. Equating gun ownership with crime.
3. Rape and firearms.
4. Firearm murder and women.

What two things other than gun control do gun users suggest may prevent crime?

Articles Supporting Stricter Gun Control

Do Guns Save Lives?

1. What two positive things can guns be used for according to some?
2. What claim is made in support of guns?
3. What are the problems with this claim? (Two points)

More Weapons Mean More Shootings

1. Why may some people talk about shootings?
2. Why is the Vancouver police chief disturbed by current trends in gun use?
3. State four statistics which support tougher gun laws.

Reason, Passion at Gun Hearing

1. What is the position of each of people mentioned in the article?
2. Summarize two complaints given against gun control.

Six Killed in Swiss Rampage

1. What happened? How?
2. Why did the killings take place according to the writer?

Articles Opposing Stricter Gun ControlThe Right to Bear (and die) by Arms

1. What do many American men and women love according to the writer?
2. Why is gun ownership sacred to some Americans?
3. What will happen in 1989 in American schools?

The Voice Ottawa Doesn't Want to Hear

1. What in general does Damgaard say about Bill C-80?
2. What three points does he make against tighter laws?
3. Who does Damgaard think will gain power by the new laws?

Deterrence and Interdiction

1. What is deterrence?
2. What is interdiction?
3. What is the position of the NRA?
4. Summarize briefly each of the arguments presented against gun control including (a) crime and guns, (b) collecting illegal guns, and (c) international laws.

APPENDIX D

Models of Written Arguments on Experimental Topic

Argument Supporting Stricter Gun Control Legislation

It is far too easy to purchase any type of gun in Canada. For one thing, while gun advocates argue that there is too much red tape involved in purchasing a weapon, the current gun registration system allows for the possession of weapons by those who should clearly not own them. Psychologically imbalanced persons can purchase firearms since psychiatrists may not release or even be aware of the violent behavior or potentially dangerous attitudes of their patients. The killing of fourteen Montreal women is only one example of the possible outcome of this situation. Young people with an ownership permit can obtain as many weapons as they please, while unlicensed users can borrow guns from licensed owners if parental consent and limited training is provided. Under these conditions, youths can and do acquire guns to play with unsupervised, to show their macho, and in increasingly more instances, to commit violent crimes. Secondly, while gun proponents claim that black markets run by criminals are another result of gun control, certain weapons needed only in open warfare are easily obtainable under current legislation. The purchase of 45,000 semi-automatic weapons in 1990 in Canada and the refusal of only four ownership applications are strong evidence of this laxity. These weapons are capable of firing in rapid succession and hardly fair to those animals being hunted with them. Aren't the rights of these animals and the personal freedoms of those afraid to walk the streets at night because of such weapons as important as the freedoms of those wanting to own them?

Argument Opposing Stronger Gun Control

Stricter gun laws will interfere with the rights of those who must own guns and with the personal liberties of other responsible gun owners. The police and the military depend on guns for the roles that they fulfill in society. Without full access to weaponry, these people will be unable to protect the public or to control armed standoffs. Trappers require guns in order to secure food and protect themselves from wild animals. Tougher gun laws would seriously restrict their abilities to maintain their livelihood. Ranchers and farmers would be prevented from protecting their livestock from predators. Large numbers of cattle and other livestock are taken each year and economic losses are substantial. Tighter gun

laws would make outlaws of many sports people. The proposed ban on semi-automatic weapons would eliminate certain Olympic events. Trap shooting and target practice, widespread hobbies, would be severely reduced, while sports hunting would be limited. Gun sports help to develop concentration, are effective relaxants and necessary aspects of social life for many. Finally, while retailers would be deprived of the right to sell what they wish to in a supposedly free society, consumers may also be unable to purchase what they like. Tighter gun control would only hamper harmless gun owners while doing nothing to control the criminal use of guns.

APPENDIX E

Motivational Data Used to Introduce Control Topic

Names of authors were not available and so this data is not included here to avoid copyright infringement. Shown to students on overhead projections were a number of highly detailed fact sheets on air, water and noise pollution which emphasized the detrimental effects of these phenomena.

APPENDIX F

Instructions and Guidelines for Essay Testing

Preparation for Essay Writing

You will be given 10 minutes for each of the 3 arguments that you selected to jot down everything that you can remember about them. You will be assigned to write on only one of the following two topics today.

Topic 1- Why do we need to have better protection of our environment against pollution?

Topic 2- Should Canadian gun control legislation be stronger?

Write down as much as you can in the time allotted for each argument, keeping in mind that information provided should be as specific as possible. Keep your main ideas in mind as you do this try and to think of all the articles that you studied. Make the technical words you use clear by explaining them fully.

Essay Writing Test

Write an argumentative essay of 2 to 3 pages on the topic assigned to you today. If you can't remember much about a particular argument that you are using, add any information that supports your opinion and makes your essay long and detailed enough. Address your essay to the regular classroom teacher as part of the English 10 course requirements.

APPENDIX G

Criteria and Prototypes for Holistic Quality Scoring

Criteria for Holistic Quality Score of Four (4)

Content

Paragraph topics. Essay presents one (1) valid argument for each of three (3) distinct developmental paragraphs. Each argument is clearly stated and answers the assignment question by developing the thesis statement.

Major details. Two (2) to four (4) distinct, valid ideas which clearly develop their respective argument and are clearly stated. More general than minor details.

Minor details. One (and often 2 or more) elaborative details are used to develop most major details. Most of these details are clearly relevant to the preceding levels of discussion, quite specific and apparently accurate. Selection of minor details reflects more study and reading than everyday experience (which is likely to produce more details which are more general, less accurate and possibly less relevant to preceding levels of discussion).

Note: The amount, relevancy, validity, specificity and accuracy of the above types of information are judged in relation to literature on the subtopic to which they apply.

Organization

Introduction. Generally effective attention-getting information and a thesis statement are provided in an introductory paragraph.

Coherence. All paragraphs exhibit a generally logical and smooth flow of most details as well as generally appropriate and effective use of transitional devices to link them.

Unity. Most Major and minor details are clearly relevant to paragraph topics.

Conclusion. Generally effective final paragraph which sums up the essay and closes with a recommendation, question or other final thought.

Mechanics

Generally few errors in spelling, sentence structure, capitalization or punctuation which make meanings unclear. Grammar errors are not considered unless they produce problems of comprehensibility.

Prototype for Holistic Quality Score of Four (4)

First of all, 10 dollars wouldn't stop anybody from getting a Firearms Acquisition Certificate- FAC in short. To get a FAC, they don't have to take a test as difficult as a driving test, so they can get an FAC easier than a driver's licence. Police do the test before issue an FAC, but that doesn't reveal if a person is depressed or abusive. Moreover, doctor won't release any information about mental health. Marc Lepine looked very normal before he gunned down 14

people. A restricted weapon can fire many bullets with one pull of the trigger. Last year, 45,000 restricted weapon applications were registered; only 4 were refused. And youths at the age of 16, the age of immature, easy to get angry, and quickly to make a wrong decision, can get gun legally. With one FAC he can get guns, as many as he wants. The officer's 17 years old son in Ottawa committed crime involving firearm is an example.

Criteria for Holistic Quality Score of Three (3)

Content

Paragraph topics. Essay presents three (3) distinct, valid arguments, all of which develop the thesis statement. One of the arguments may be less clearly stated.

Major details. Developmental paragraphs contain generally fewer major details which may also be less distinct and /or relevant than those in essays scored four.

Minor details. Generally fewer distinct details used to elaborate than were used in essays scored four. Details used may be less relevant, clear and/or specific and may reflect more everyday experience than reading and study compared to essays scored four.

Organization

May display any or all of the following in relation to essays scored four:

Introduction. Less clear thesis statement and/or attention-getting information.

Coherence. May be less logical and/or smooth with less effective use of transitions. Connection of ideas may be more list-like and /or less thoughtful than essays scored four.

Unity. Most major and minor details are relevant to the paragraph topic.

Conclusion. May be less effective in terms of summing up and/or interest. May be absent.

Mechanics

Generally few errors in spelling, sentence structure, punctuation and capitalization but may be more than in essays scored four.

Prototype of Writing Receiving Holistic Quality Score of Three (3)

First of all, Firearms Acquisition Certificates are far too easy to get. For a low fee of ten dollars, anyone can apply for one, even teenagers. A doctor's fee should also be necessary when applying to state the person's stability, stating that he isn't psychotic. Marc Lepine appeared normal when he was interviewed for his permit. He shot fourteen women on a campus in Montreal. Out of all the FACs applied for, a minor one percent are refused and only four percent of restricted weapon permits were denied. A restricted weapon being a firearm that is capable of firing rapidly with one pull of the trigger. There should definitely be stricter laws here.

Criteria for Holistic Quality Score of Two (2)

Content

Paragraph topics. May be fewer than three arguments which are not clearly introduced in topic sentences and/or not clearly relevant to the thesis and/or more recommendations than they are arguments.

Major topics. Generally not clearly stated and have weak connections to the thesis or paragraph topics. Often only one or two distinct major details per argument (paragraph).

Minor details. May be often more general and based more on personal experience than on reading and study. May also be sparse, inaccurate, irrelevant or unimportant. May be more like recommendations which also do not answer the specific question assigned for writing on the topic.

Note: Essays scored two are generally shorter than those scored three or four.

Organization

Introduction. May lack clear thesis statement and/or interest and be poorly organized.

Coherence. Ideas are often connected in a list-like manner rather than by appropriate transitions.

Unity. May be some ideas which are irrelevant to a given paragraph topic.

Conclusion. May be absent or weaker than those for essays scored three.

Mechanics

May be considerable errors in spelling, punctuation, capitalization and/or sentence structure which interfere with comprehension of meaning and/or weaken coherence.

Prototype of Writing Receiving Holistic Quality Score of Two (2)

It's getting easier to get an EFC these days. Because of the low \$10 fee, it is too affordable for those who are not interested in collecting guns or those who need it for food and to support their families with. Only 1%, 4 out of 45,000 applicants were refused last year. This is an astounding number of people who own guns that are registered. In Canada 21% of people own gun licences, also in Alberta 39% of people own gun licences. That's alot of people with guns that the government is aware of.

Criteria for Holistic Quality Score of One (1)

Content

Paragraph topics. Two or fewer distinct arguments which may not be introduced clearly or are not clearly relevant to the writing question or topic.

Major details. Generally two or fewer distinct supporting points. May be stated as specific examples rather than general points.

Minor points. May be absent, very general and experience based, inaccurate and/or unimportant.

Note: Likely to be quite short and lacking development compared to higher scoring essays.

Organization

Introduction. Absent, short and/or lacks attention-getting information and clear thesis statement.

Coherence. Quite weak. May be a listing of information.

Unity. Usually weak, depending on the presence of a topic sentence.

Conclusion. Usually absent; if present, short and ineffective.

Mechanics

Considerable errors in spelling, punctuation, capitalization and/or sentence structure.

Prototype of Writing Receiving Holistic Quality Score of One (1)

One thing of gun control is it's too easy for anyone to have a gun legally or illegally. legally a 16 year old with 10 dollars could go out and purchase an FAC

(firearms acquisition certificate) then, he or she may purchase any amount of any weapon with ammunition. Illegally, people with guns seem to have know problems in having them in their possession, therefore crimes and murder keep happening.