THE RELATIONSHIP OF CLASSROOM INSTRUCTIONAL

CHARACTERISTICS IN THE DESCRIPTIVE/NARRATIVE MODE

Marcella Pitts

Center for the Study of Evaluation
Graduate School of Education
University of California, Los Angeles

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Public concern over an apparent decline in students' writing skills has prompted educators to examine two central issues: (1) the design of composition curricula and (2) the valid and reliable assessment of students' writing performance. This study addressed these two issues by describing instructional characteristics in a specific curriculum, by developing and employing an analytic rating scale to evaluate students' writing performance, and by examining the relationship of instructional characteristics to writing performance.

Like the other studies described in this symposium, this research was exploratory in nature and exhibits limitations inherent in exploratory studies such as small sample size. Nevertheless, the study provided descriptive information about selected instructional characteristics of composition classrooms and, thereby, provided data relevant to current concerns about composition curricula. Secondly, generalizable procedures for constructing and field testing an analytic rating scale and for training raters in its use were obtained from this research and may contribute to our knowledge base in the area of writing assessment.

Among recent developments in our efforts to calm public anxiety over students' writing skills and to discern how best to teach writing and assess students' writing are the design and implementation of composition courses incorporated as requirements into the high school curriculum. This research focused on a typical curriculum change designed to improve writing skill, a one-semester required composition course developed by a large urban school district and incorporated into the curriculum at the eleventh grade.

Briefly, the course provides instruction in four domains of writing: (1) the sensory/descriptive, (2) the imaginative/narrative, (3) the practical/informative, and (4) the analytic/expository. The recommended minimum number of compositions for each of the domains is three, making the minimal number of completed compositions for the semester 12. Teachers are encouraged to offer instruction in each of the domains and to include in their instruction: (1) prewriting and precomposing activities to elicit ideas from students and to motivate them to write; (2) writing practice to increase flexibility, fluency, skill, and confidence; (3) reinforcement; and (4) instruction in grammar as it relates to the writing process.

The course's curriculum outline and these recommended activities were valuable resources in the design of two instructional questionnaires, the primary data collection instruments in the study.

Information concerning instructional practices was obtained from teachers and students for a selected group of variables: (1) communication of instructional outcomes to students, (2) writing practice, (3) feedback, (4) instructional time use, and (5) teacher expectation. In addition, papers previously assigned and graded by the teachers supplied information about the usual emphases and specificity of correction provided students.

Foremost in the selection of these variables over other instructionally important dimensions identified in the literature* was the fact

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*For this literature review, see Pitts, M. The Relationship of Classroom Instructional Characteristics and Writing in the Descriptive/Narrative Mode. Report to the National Institute of Education (Grant Number OB-NIE-G-78-0213). UCLA Center for the Study of Evaluation, November 1978.

that they involve concrete instructional events. The presence, absence, and frequency of occurrence of these events can be monitored and reported by teachers and students. This was an important consideration given the methodology used in the study, which relied heavily on teacher and student self-report.

Students' writing performance was measured by their combined scores on two narrative/descriptive writing tasks. An analytic rating scale, developed for the study and appropriate for the narrative/descriptive mode, was employed by three high school teachers to rate the writing samples. The teachers, all of whom had rated essays previously, were trained in the use of the rating scale.

Sample

The subjects of the study were the students and teachers in 19 composition classrooms in five high schools in the Los Angeles School District. The selection of the schools in the sample was based on achievement and demographic data published annually by the district. These data were used to develop profiles of individual high schools in the district; the five schools selected for inclusion in the study had relatively homogeneous profiles along these dimensions.

The number of classes participating ranged between three and four per school. Participation was voluntary, with the decision to take part in the study resting with the individual teachers. Six of the classrooms were designated by the participating schools as advanced (above average); 11 as average; and two as skill (below average) classes.

Procedure

Data collection in the five schools took place during the last two weeks of May 1978. Visits to each school were scheduled to provide for an interval of approximately one week between writing assignments. Forty minutes writing time was allotted for each writing occasion; order of topics was counterbalanced by class.

During this period teachers provided the investigator with a set of previously graded student compositions. After the writing samples and sets of graded papers had been collected, students and teachers completed the instructional questionnaires.

All the essays were returned to the students at the completion of the study. Several teachers used the essay as a graded class assignment.

Independent Variables

The independent variables in the study were: (1) communication of instructional outcomes, (2) use of instructional time, (3) writing practice, (4) feedback, and (5) teacher expectation. Information related to each of these variables was collected from teachers and students via questionnaires. Parallel items pertaining to many of the variables appeared on both the teacher and student questionnaires.

The first independent variable, communication of instructional outcomes or intent, was operationally defined as informing students of the skills they were expected to acquire at the end of the semester. In order to ascertain the extent to which teachers had successfully communicated this information, teachers and students were provided with parallel lists of post-instructional skills and asked to select those which matched most closely the instructional outcomes in their classrooms.

An index which measured the agreement between the skills selected by students and teachers was then computed.

The second independent variable, time on academic content, was operationally defined as the amount of time spent on: (1) modes of discourse, (2) writing activities, and (3) features of writing measured by the analytic rating scale developed for the study. Data for the first and second dimensions of this variable were purely descriptive. They involved teachers' estimates of the percentage of instructional time spent on each of the four domains of writing in the curriculum and teachers' and students' reports of the activities on which class time was spent (e.g., reading composition texts, reading literature, prewriting discussions, in-class writing).

The third dimension of this variable was measured by questionnaire items which required teachers and students to indicate the number of class periods (i.e., 0, 1-5, 6-10, over 10) spent on specific features of writing related to description, narrative order, and mechanics.

The third independent variable, practice, was defined as the amount of writing, i.e., frequency and length of assignments written in class and as homework. Another dimension of the practice variable for which descriptive data were obtained was the type and number of writing assignments students completed over the semester. Teachers and students estimated the number of completed compositions that were expository, descriptive, narrative, multi-paragraph, single-paragraph, etc.

The fourth variable, feedback, was composed of three dimensions: immediacy, helpfulness, and instructiveness. The first dimension, immediacy of feedback, was measured by parallel questionnaire items in which teachers and students estimated the time period within which students'

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papers were usually read and returned. Since the results of previous research and data from pilot tests had indicated that the most common methods of providing feedback were individual conferences with students and written comments on compositions, information was obtained from students concerning these evaluation practices. Helpfulness of written feedback on corrected papers and feedback received during individual conferences with the teacher were measured by students' ratings. An item on the student questionnaire also provided a measure of the instructive-ness of feedback, and additional data related to this dimension were obtained in a separate analysis of sets of previously assigned and cor-rected papers provided by the teachers. In addition, teachers reported on the features on which they focused during correction and the usual methods they used to provide feedback.

The fifth independent variable in the study, teacher expectation, was measured by teachers' recollections of the amount of improvement they had expected in students' performance at the beginning of the semester.

Dependent Measure

The writing task in the study was closely related to the sensory/descriptive and imaginative/narrative domains described in the curriculum outline. The task, primarily but not purely narrative, was structured so that descriptive detail would be included in the two compositions students wrote.

Both of the writing assignments used pictures as writing stimuli. Students were directed to write about the scene in the pictures and the events which might have preceded and followed it. They were to include in their essays descriptive detail for readers who would not have an opportunity to look at the pictures. Further, students were directed to

use the third person point-of-view. They were told that the purpose of the assignment was to write a story based on the picture and to include descriptive detail related to setting, characters, and action.

The selection of the pictures and the development of the directions for the two assignments were based on data from field tests with comparable students.

A narrative/descriptive analytic rating scale was developed and used to evaluate students' essays. The features included on the scale were derived from a survey of theoretical and practical works on descriptive and narrative writing as modes of discourse and from an examination of published rating scales. Draft versions of the scale were reviewed by faculty in the UCLA English department and by staff at the Center for the Study of Evaluation. The final version of the scale reflected the changes suggested by the reviewers as well as minor modifications agreed upon by the investigator and the readers prior to the actual rating of students' essays.

As a first step in developing the scale, a review of available theoretical and practical pieces on descriptive and narrative writing was conducted. This review resulted in the identification of four essential features of narrative/descriptive writing which appeared to be appropriate criteria for evaluating relatively short pieces written under timed conditions: setting, characterization, action, and descriptive detail, the inclusion of which contributes to the reader's sense of setting, the characters, and the action or sequence of events.

The selection of these features was supported by a state-of-the-art review of published analytic rating scales relevant to narrative/descriptive writing. A review of non-mode-specific features of these and other

prominent analytic rating scales was also undertaken to identify elements related to mechanics for inclusion in the scale.

Based on this review, a sentence-structure/diction subscale and a grammer/spelling subscale were developed. The criteria on the first scale include fluency and variety of sentence structure, the selection of clear and specific words and their correct use. The grammar dimension of the grammar/spelling subscale focuses on reference errors, tense shifts, punctuation errors, misplaced modifiers, and the like. The first mode-specific subscale, sequence/coherence, includes criteria related to temporal order of events, their logical development, and the continuity with which they are developed. While the criteria for this subscale focus on the narrative aspects of the writing task, the criteria for the other mode-specific features, setting and characterization, focused more on the descriptive aspects of the task.

Students' essays (n = 228) were rated by three trained readers for each of the features on the narrative/descriptive scale. All the readers were high school English teachers; all had prior experience in holistic rating. Approximately two days were spent training the readers and another one and one-half days were required to read and rate the essays.

Prior to the training and rating sessions, all identifying information was removed from the students' essays and each paper was assigned a code number. All the essays were then typed to facilitate rapid reading and to remove the confounding effects of handwriting. No corrections of any kind were made on the typewritten versions: They were duplicates of the handwritten essays in every respect. In addition to the 228 sample essays, 140 extra essays were prepared in a similar manner for use in rater training and in calculating inter-rater reliability.

Both days of rater training were full-day sessions. The morning of the first day was spent reading, discussing, and applying the rating scale to specially selected training essays chosen to represent the range of essays in the sample. A procedure was followed in which the readers rated one, two, or three essays individually and then discussed their ratings. During the discussions discrepant ratings were examined; elements on the scale and the terms used to describe them were clarified. A first inter-rater reliability check was conducted during the afternoon. A three-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was used to calculate inter-rater reliability for the ratings assigned to 40 essays (two essays written by each of 20 students) read over a one and one-half hour period. The three factors in the analysis were subjects, topics, and raters. A mixed model was employed in which subjects and raters were random factors and topics were fixed.

The second day of training was spent discussing, refining, and applying the subscales for which the initial reliability coefficients had been considerably below the .80 level for average ratings chosen as the test of acceptability. The rating of the 228 essays began when the inter-rater reliability coefficients for each subscale had increased and were greater than .80.

The essays were placed in a different random order for each rater so that the likelihood of all readers rating the same essay at the same point in time was reduced. However, a common group of essays was included in each reader's stack of papers so that another reliability check could be conducted.

The final inter-rater reliability for the 228 essays was quite high, with average ratings of .88 and .89 and single ratings of .72 and .74.

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The total score reliabilities were .94 (average ratings) and .87 (single ratings).

On the average, student performance was not high or low on any one subscale. Furthermore, the mean performance of students in classes designated as above average was consistently higher than the mean performance of students in average and below average classes. The mean performance of average level students was, in turn, consistently higher than the mean performance of students in below average classes. In all cases writing performance was measured by total writing score for each student or mean total writing score in each classroom.

Data Analysis and Results

A two-stage data analysis was performed to examine the relationships between students' and teachers' reports on classroom use of instructional variables and the quality of student writing samples.

In the first stage of the analysis, descriptive statistics were performed on the data from the teacher and student questionnaires. The research questions addressed were:

1. How are selected instructional variables employed in the composition classroom: (a) as reported by students? (b) as reported by teachers?

    ° Are intended instructional outcomes communicated to students?

    ° How do teachers allocate instructional time to writing activities, modes of discourse, and specific writing skills?

    ° What kind and how much opportunity for writing practice is provided?

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° What is the time interval for feedback, what form does it take, and how instructive is the feedback provided students?

2. What expectations do teachers have concerning students' writing performance?

In the second stage of the analysis, a series of multiple regressions was performed to examine the relationships among reported use of the independent variables and student writing performance. The research questions addressed were:

1. What is the relationship between students' writing performance and use of the four instructional variables: (a) as reported by students? (b) as reported by teachers?

2. What is the relationship between students' writing performance, use of the four instructional variables, and teachers' expectations?

Results of the descriptive analysis of the questionnaire data provide a rich base of information concerning instructional practices in the 19 classes in the sample.

According to the teachers and students in these classes, the intended instructional outcomes in the majority of the classrooms were: to write complete and grammatically correct sentences; to write well-organized essays; to include supporting detail in essays; to use a consistent point of view in writing; to follow accepted standards of usage; and to express ideas in an original way. Students in above average level classes were most in concert with their teachers regarding the instructional outcomes in their classrooms.

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With respect to the classroom activities designed to achieve these outcomes, teachers and students in the majority of the classrooms agreed that activities were prewriting discussion, in-class writing, composition analysis, reading literature, and listening to formal lectures by the teacher. The first three activities are recommended in the course's curriculum guide.

The guide also suggests that teachers spend approximately equal time during the semester on each of the four writing domains specified in the curriculum. In fact, eight of the teachers in the sample indicated they divided their available instructional time equally among the four domains. The majority of these teachers taught above average classes.

With respect to the type of assignments completed, the majority of the teachers and their students agreed that teachers offered one-to-five assignments for narrative, descriptive, expository, and argumentative writing over the semester. Also, more than half of the students indicated they had written one-to-five short stories during the course of the semester. Teachers of average level classes assigned more grammar exercises than their counterparts in above average classes, while this latter group assigned more research papers and multi-paragraph essays.

As might be expected, all the students in the sample wrote in class more frequently than at home. Teachers of above average classes, however, had their students engage in writing activities more often, both at home and in class, than did average level teachers. Moreover, the in-class essays of above average students were longer than those required of average level students.

Above average class teachers also spent more time in individual conferences with students and provided more specific rules and suggestions

for improvement in the written comments on students' papers. Less than half of the teachers of average classes had individual conferences with their students to discuss an assignment. They also wrote fewer directive comments on students' papers and, as might be expected, had a faster turnaround time for corrected papers.

In an analysis of the comments on previously graded papers provided by the teachers, the comments on over one quarter of the sets were rated as highly directive since they included specific rules and suggestions for students. The majority of these papers were from above average level classes. Slightly less than one quarter of the sets provided specific indications of strengths and weakness but failed to suggest specific strategies to improve the paper. A similar percentage contained no comments; and the comments on the remaining papers, nearly one quarter of the total, were too general to be of any instructive value and contained only general remarks about the paper.

In addition, teachers reported they attended to content and mechanics or organization and mechanics when they corrected students' papers. As might be expected, the analysis of both the interlinear notations and comments on the sets of previously graded papers showed that more notations pertained to mechanics.

The results of the descriptive analysis indicate that important differences may exist in instruction between competency levels. The pattern of instruction in above average level classes seemed to rely upon and extend students' initial writing skills. Students wrote more often, wrote longer essays, had more individual conferences with their teachers, and received more instructive feedback than did students in average level classes. Not only did teachers of average level classes make shorter

assignments, these included more grammar practice. Grammar exercises are de-emphasized in above average classes. Thus, the data suggest that these teachers teach to the competency level of their classes. More competent classes receive more demanding instruction; less is expected and asked of less competent groups. Indeed, teachers' expectations concerning the amount of improvement in students' writing performance over the semester is positively and significantly correlated with the school-designated competency or tracking level of the classes.

The powerful influence of tracking level on student performance was more apparent in the regression analyses performed. Results of the multiple regressions based on students' reports, teachers' reports, and the discrepency between the perceptions of both groups indicated that, for the variables examined in this study, classroom tracking level is the single significant variable related to students' writing performance. Thus the analyses revealed no relationship between reported instructional practices and students' performance, despite the findings that such practices tend to vary for classes in different tracking levels.

These results may derive from limitations in the design and scope of the study and from additional constraints imposed by the curriculum itself. Nevertheless, they inform further research and invite secondary analysis.

Because of the exploratory nature of this study, the sample size, using the classroom as the unit of analysis, was extremely small (n = 19). When the sample was further subdivided into tracking levels, numbers were even smaller: average classes, n = 11; above average classes, n = 6; below average classes, n = 2. Within the limitations of the sample size, it was impossible to examine the relationship between total writing score

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or subscale scores and instruction due to the correlation between instruction and tracking level.

An additional constraint which may have hampered the discovery of significant relationships lies in the curriculum itself. This course is only a semester long, and yet the curriculum requires instruction in each of four writing modes. As reported in the findings above, teachers do in fact provide instruction in all four modes. Furthermore, there is some indication that the course is more of a survey of different writing domains than extensive drill. For example, the curriculum recommends that a minimum of three assignments be completed in each of the four domains over the semester. Given that the mission of this course is to provide students with basic writing competencies if they have not mastered these in previous classes, this number appears to be quite conservative. The results showed that teachers provided a moderate amount of writing practice and moderate number of writing assignments in contrast to the more intensive instruction that might be expected in a composition course of this nature. Perhaps limiting the curriculum to fewer modes of discourse or expanding the course length to one full year to accommodate all four modes would strengthen instructional effects. Future studies under such conditions might uncover relationships that were too weak to appear in the present study.

Despite these limitations, other methodological features of the study appear to be promising strategies for studies of this type. First, the collaborative reports of teachers and students provided a reasonable indicator of instructional practices. Teachers and students, especially those in above average classes, were in considerable agreement, and the collection of survey data from both of these groups seems feasible and

practical, especially at the senior high level. Future work might make use of more frequent surveys throughout the semester to prevent honest inaccuracies in recalling information over a long period of time. Studies should also include direct observation of classrooms. Observation of ongoing classroom interactions and instructional processes would allow more precise description of instruction and corroboration of questionnaire data.

A second promising strategy included in this study which could be incoporated into future work was the examination of teachers' naturally occurring comments as a way to qualify their self-report data. Other procedures of qualifying the data provided in this type of study should be examined as well.

Another product of the study which can be applied in other research studies is the narrative/descriptive analytic rating scale developed for the study. Experienced readers with a minimal amount of training can achieve highly reliable ratings using this scale. Moreover, it appears to be a valid measure of writing performance given the high correlation between tracking level and the mean total writing score of students in a particular classroom.

APPENDIX

NARRATIVE/DESCRIPTIVE RATING SCALE

1. Sequence/Coherence--criteria for rating:

   1 point   There is no clear temporal (chronological) order to the events in the narrative. The reader is not sure which event comes first or follows any other event. In fact a sequence may not be related at all. The paper may be purely expository or descriptive.

   2 points There is a noticeable beginning and end although the temporal order of events may not be clear. Events are merely listed rather than progressively and logically related to each other. Sentences and paragraphs are poorly tied together. There are lapses in coherence; or, if transitions are used, they may be used incorrectly or repetitiously.

   3 points The temporal order of events is clear. Transitions are used correctly. The paper has continuity and there is a clear progression of ideas, although there may be minor lapses in motivation and logic.

   4 points This paper has all the elements of a "3" paper, with the addition of a sense of control from beginning to end. The sequencing of events is so well done that the reader has a sense of movement. There is a logical progression of ideas. Transitions may be expertly used and movement facilitated by a variety of transitions. The paper is often interesting, original and may include conflict.

II. Setting--criteria for rating:

1 point
The setting of the narrative is not clear to the reader because: (1) the writer does not specify where or when the action is taking place; (2) the reader is unable to infer the setting from the information included in the narrative. The setting is so vague, general and unspecific that the reader has no image of time or place.

2 points
The setting of the narrative is apparent to the reader. The actual place or time is stated or inferred, but there is little or no elaboration.

3 points
The reader has a clear understanding of setting. The setting is more explicitly stated than in a "2" paper. Details may relate to geographic location, time period, or general environment through which the characters move.

4 points
This paper includes all the elements of a "3" paper, with the addition of excellent use of detail. The writer uses specific detail to describe the setting. The setting is so developed that it seems to give the events a "real" place in which to happen. The setting is an important component in furthering the narrative.

III. Characterization--criteria for rating:

1 point
Characters are not identified or only barely identified: by name, noun, pronoun or there may be one or more adjectives which act like labels. However, there is no conscious attempt to develop the characters through their speech, actions, reactions to other characters or other characters' reactions to them.

2 points Compared to a "1" paper, this narrative includes more
information about one or more characters but this informa-
tion is not elaborated. Details may only be listed, not
developed. Characters are not clearly established.

3 points Detail, interpretative comments, specific actions and
reactions of the characters may be included. One or more
of the characters may be a stereotype. Character is
established and a specific direction for development is
indicated.

4 points One or more of the characters in the narrative may emerge
as a unique, attention-getting person. A specific char-
acter is well-developed through dialogue, action, reac-
tions to other characters, or by descriptions and/or
interpretations of the character's appearance, feelings,
or thoughts.

IV. Sentence Structure/Diction--criteria for rating:

1 point Sentences are garbled, incomplete. Numerous structural
problems interfere with the reader's comprehension. The
sentences are not coherent; words are merely strung
together. Monosyllabic words are used and the vocabulary
is childish.

2 points Sentences may be short and choppy or run-on. There may
be fragments and comma splices. Word choice is limited.
Words may be used incorrectly, repetitiously and
inaccurately.

3 points The sentences read without noticeable breaks and there is
variety in sentence structure. There may be some sentence

errors but the paper is fluent. Word choice is exact and appropriate although uninspired. There may be several cliches and overworked expressions. The paper may be stilted or inflated.

4 points   The paper has mature sentences making it easy and pleasing to read. It is marked by strong and precise diction. Vivid descriptive words which suit the writer's purpose are used.

V. Grammar/Spelling--criteria for rating:

1 point   There are numerous grammatical errors (e.g., agreement, pronoun reference, misplaced modifiers, tense shift, punctuation) which interfere with the paper's readability. The writer seems to have no grasp of basic spelling rules.

2 points   This paper is readable although the grammatical errors are distracting. There are several spelling errors in common words.

3 points   The paper is basically competent. Errors are noticeable but they do not interfere with the writer's message. Spelling errors occur in words that are harder to spell.

4 points   This paper has very few or no grammatical or spelling errors. The errors that remain make little difference to the reader; they are editorial problems and slips.

LIST OF TABLES

TABLE 1

FINAL INTER-RATER RELIABILITY FOR 228 COMPOSITIONS

(Number of Readers =3)

	Sequence	Setting	Character-ization	Sentence Structure/ Diction	Grammar/ Spelling	TOTAL
Mean Rating	.89	.88	.89	.88	.89	.94
Single Rating	.72	.72	.72	.72	.74	.87

TABLE 2

MEANS AND STANDARD DEVIATIONS OF DEPENDENT MEASURE BY TRACKING LEVEL

	TRACKING LEVEL *					
	3		2		1	
Dependent Measure	x	SD	x	SD	x	SD
Subscale 1	3.04	.304	2.47	.291	1.95	.233
Subscale 2	2.85	.297	2.19	.247	1.92	.156
Subscale 3	2.85	.248	2.33	.138	2.00	.085
Subscale 4	3.07	.384	2.505	.194	1.78	.078
Subscale 5	3.12	.462	2.498	.204	1.75	.156

1 = below average classes; 2 = average level; 3 = above average class-

es.

TABLE 3

Instructional Outcomes Selected
by Teachers and Students

Outcome	Percent Students (N=326)	Percent Teachers (N=19)
Employ words appropriate to topic, audience, etc.	60%	74%
Use correct spelling	75	74
Use consistent point of view	51	74
Use correct sentence structure	78	90
Use varied sentence structure	31	58
Write a complete sentence	78	90
Write a coherent multi-paragraph essay	70	74
Express ideas in an orginal way	62	68
Listen and observe carefully	36	63
Support ideas with evidence	72	95
Follow accepted standards of usage	52	89
Speak in front of a group	27	37
Write a well-organized essay	85	90
Use transitions	39	82

TABLE 4

Teachers' and Students' Reports
of Classroom Activities

Activity	Percent Students (N=327)	Percent Teachers (N=19)
Prewriting discussion	86%	89%
Lecture	59	63
Writing in-class	74	89
Reading: texts	25	68
Reading: literature	62	89
Writing from models	38	68
Reading aloud (teachers)	46	63
Reading essays to class (students)	30	58
Analyzing compositions	68	89
Revising compositions	42	63

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TABLE 5

Teachers' and Students' Reports of Time on
Features of Narrative/Descriptive Writing

| Features | Number of Class Periods | | | | | | | | N | |
| | 0 | | 1-5 | | 6-10 | | Over 10 | | | |
	%tchrs	%stdnts	%tchrs	%stdnts	%tchrs	%stdnts	%tchrs	%stdnts	Tchr	Stdnt
Descriptive Features	0%	3%	37%	44%	42%	42%	16%	11%	19	313
Narrative Order	0	5	37	41	53	44	11	10	19	316
Mechanics	0	4	32	40	37	41	31	15	19	308

TABLE 6

Teachers' and Students' Report of Time on Features of
Narrative/Descriptive WRiting by Tracking Level (1,2,3)

Features of Narrative/Descriptive Writing	Number of Class Periods														
	0			1-5			6-10			Over 10			N		
	1	2	3	1	2	3	1	2	3	1	2	3	1	2	3
Students' Report							Level								
Descriptive Features	3%	2%	4%	52%	43%	45%	33%	43%	43%	12%	12%	8%	33	174	105
Narrative Order	9	6	1	29	53	27	47	37	55	15	4	17	34	177	105
Mechanics	0	5	4	39	42	38	--	40	43	22	13	15	31	176	101
Teachers' Report															
Descriptive Features	0	0	0	0	46	33.3	100	36	33.3	0	18	33.3	2	11	6
Narrative Order	0	0	0	0	36	50	100	55	33	0	9	17	2	11	6
Mechanics	0	0	0	0	18	0	100	36	46	0	50	17	2	11	6

TABLE 7

Teachers' and Students' Reports
of Writing Practice

Writing Practice	In-class		Homework	
	%teachers	%students	%teachers	%students
Frequency	(N=19)	(N=323)	(N=19)	(N=311)
Daily	26%	13%	0%	6%
Twice a week	26	21	21	15
Once a week	33	28	37	23
Once every 2 weeks	5	18	26	23
Once a month	5	7	11	6
1 or 2 times a semester	0	8	0	10
Never	5	3	5	10
Average Length	(N=19)	(N=310)	(N=19)	(N=276)
Less than one page	35%	15%	16%	10%
One page	30	68	16	47
Two or more pages	35	17	68	43

TABLE 8

Students' and Teachers' Reports of Writing Practice by Tracking Level (1,2,3)

	In-Class			Homework		
Levels	1	2	3	1	2	3
Students						
Frequency	n=34	n=185	n=104	n=32	n=179	n=100
Daily	17%	6%	23%	3%	2%	16%
Twice a week	35	18	21	38	11	14
Once a week	15	34	22	19	33	23
Once every 2 weeks	9	21	20	13	22	29
Once a month	15	4	8	9	8	1
1 or 2 times a semester	6	12	5	13	12	7
Never	3	5	1	5	12	10
Average Length	n=33	n-173	n=104	n=30	n=160	n=86
Less than one page	15%	10%	22%	3%	9%	13%
One page	52	75	60	53	51	37
Two or more pages	33	14	18	43	40	50
Teachers						
Frequency	n=2	n=11	n=6	n=2	n=11	n=6
Daily	50%	27%	17%	0%	0%	0%
Twice a week	50	18	32	0	9	49
Once a week	0	46	17	100	36	17
Once every two weeks	0	0	17	0	36	17
Once a month	0	0	17	0	9	17
1 or 2 times a semester	0	0	0	0	0	0
Never	0	9	0	0	9	0
Average Length	n=2	n-10	n=5	n=2	n=11	n=6
Less than one page	50%	40%	20%	0%	18%	17%
One page	0	30	40	0	18	17

30

TABLE 9

Teachers' and Students' Reports of Number of Writing Assignments

Type of Assignment	Number of Assignments									
	0		1-5		6-10		Over 10		N	
	%tchr	%stdnt	%tchr	%stdnt	%tchr	%stdnt	%tchr	%stdnt	Tchr	Stdnt
1. paragraph essays	11%	13%	47%	60%	26%	16%	16%	12%	19	321
Multi-paragraph essays	5	2	26	45	11	30	58	23	19	323
Poems	44	69	56	29	0	1.6	0	.3	18	321
Short stories	--	33	--	55	--	9	--	.3	--	323
Research papers	47	57	53	38	0	3.2	0	1.6	19	316
Practical/Informative	5	54	74	33	16	9	5	4	19	325
Narrative	6	16	83	57	11	13	0	4	18	318
Descriptive	5	5	68	71	21	19	5	5	19	325
Expository	10	18	58	64	16	12	16	6	18	317
Argumentative	22	30	68	59	11	9	0	2	19	321
Grammar Exercises	16	22	16	46	32	19	36	13	19	324
Vocabulary Exercises	16	30	37	37	21	13	26	20	19	325

TABLE 10

Students' Report of Number of Writing
Assignments by Tracking Level

Type of Assignment	0			1-5			6-10			Over 10			N		
Level	1	2	3	1	2	3	1	2	3	1	2	3	1	2	3
1 paragraph compositions	12%	15%	9%	70%	51%	72%	9%	20%	10%	9%	14%	9%	34	183	105
Multi-paragraph comps.	0	4	0	53	41	51	29	28	33	18	27.	16	34	183	105
Poems	56	76	62	38	22	37	3	2	1	3	0	0	34	182	106
Short stories	24	39	26	62	48	6?	9	10.	7	5	3	2	34	184	105
Research papers	46	66	45	48	28	52	0	4	3	6	2	0	33	181	103
Practical/informative	23	53	66	47	32	30	12	12	3	18	3	1	34	185	105
Narrative	18	24	31	61	59	51	18	13	12	3	4	6	33	179	106
Descriptive	6	2	10	67	69	77	21	23	10	6	6	3	33	186	105
Expository	24	22	10	55	57	78	15	16	6	6	5	6	33	178	106
Argumentative	46	37	11	48	51	78	3	9	9	3	3	1	33	182	106
Grammar Exercises	24	26	39	29	35	43	18	16	8	29	23	10	34	186	105
Vocabulary Exercises	12	23	23	52	40	56	27	24	7	9	13	14	33	185	106

Number of Assignments

TABLE 11

Teachers' Report of Number of Writing
Assignments by Tracking Level

Number of Assignments

Type of Assignment Level	0			1-5			6-10			Over 10			N		
	1	2	3	1	2	3	1	2	3	1	2	3	1	2	3
One-paragraph compositons	0%	18%	0%	50%	27%	83%	0%	37%	0%	50%	18%	17%	2	11	6
Multi-paragraph compositions	0	0	17	50	27	17	0	0	33	50	73	33	2	11	6
Poems	50	50	33	50	50	67	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	10	6
Research Papers	50	64	17	50	36	83	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	11	6
Practical Informative Essays	0	9	0	50	64	100	50	18	0	0	9	0	2	11	6
Narrative Essays	0	10	0	100	80	83	0	10	17	0	0	0	2	10	6
Descriptive Essays	0	9	0	100	55	83	0	27	17	0	9	0	2	11	6
Expository Essays	0	18	0	100	46	67	0	9	33	0	21	0	2	11	6
Argumentative Essays	50	30	0	50	50	100	0	20	0	0	0	0	2	10	6
Grammar Exercises	0	9	33	0	18	17	100	18	33	0	55	17	2	11	6
Vocabulary Exercises	0	9	33	50	45	17	50	9	33	0	36	17	2	11	6

TABLE 12

Teacher's Reports of Feedback Method

Method	Level	1	2	3	
		n=2	n=11	n=6	N=19
Individual Conferences*		0%	45%	83%	53%
Letter Grades		100	90	100	95
Written Comments		100	64	100	79
Whole Class Discussion		50	36	18	37

*70% of the students (n=326) indicated they had individual conferences with their teachers: level 1 = 62%; level 2 = 60%; level 3 = 90%.

TABLE 13

Students' Ratings of Teachers' Comments

by Tracking Level

	Helpfulness				
Track Level	Very Helpful	Helpful	Not Helpful		N
1	25%	75%	0%		20
2	43	53	4		107
3	41	54	5		89

	Instructiveness				
Track Level	Very Instructive	Instructive	Non-Instructive	No Comment	N
1	41	18	12	29	34
2	33	42	16	9	184
3	62	33	2	3	106

TABLE 14

Teachers' Report of Features of
Writing Examined during Theme Correction

Feature	Percent of Teachers (N=19)
Organization	11%
Content & Mechanics	32
Organization & Mechanics	36
Content, Organization & Mechanics	11
Creativity & Mechanics	5
Creativity, Mechanics & Organization	5

TABLE 15

Teachers' and Students' Reports of
Immediacy of Feedback

Group	Students' Compositions Returned Within:					N
	1 day	2-3 days	Week	2-3 weeks	Month	
Teachers	5%	37%	32%	21%	5%	19
Level 1	0	50	50	0	0	2
Level 2	9	36	36	9	9	11
Level 3	0	33	17	50	0	6
Students	3%	28%	29%	31%	9%	300
Level 1	13	57	17	13	0	30
Level 2	3	30	34	25	9	166
Level 3	1	18	23	47	12	104

TABLE 16

Means and Standard Deviations
of the Variables in the Regression Based
on Student Report

Varable	X	SD
	N=19	
Time on Description	2.50	.296
Time on Narrative Order	2.61	.367
Time on Mechanics	2.64	.293
Amount of Writing Practice	.958	.210
Helpfulness of Feedback	2.29	.192
Immediacy of Feedback	2.98	.712
Instructiveness of Feedback	3.07	.449
Track Level	2.21	.630
Total Score	12.64	2.04

TABLE 17

Regression Coefficients for
Total Writing Score Regression on Student Report

Independent Variable	Unstandardized b	Standard Error b	Standardized B	F
Time on Description	-0.797	1.241	-.115	.412
Time on Narrative Order	.492	1.039	.088	.225
Time on Mechanics	-0.997	1.710	-.143	.340
Amount of Practice	.164	1.817	.017	-.008
Helpfulness of Feedback	-1.324	2.089	-.124	.402
Immediacy of Feedback	.693	.513	.244	1.829
Instructiveness of Feedback	.235	1.324	.052	.032
Track Level	2.963	.589	.914	25.263*

$*p < .01$, $R^2 = .81$, Adjusted $R^2 = .66$

TABLE 18

Means and Standard Deviations of the Variables in the Regression Based in Teacher Report

Variable	$\bar{X}$ N=19	SD
Time on Description	2.72	.632
Time on Narrative Order	2.83	.650
Time on Mechanics	2.91	.843
Amount of Practice	1.09	.484
Immediacy of Feedback	3.16	1.010
Track Level	2.21	.631
Total Score	12.64	2.044

TABLE 19

Regression Coefficients for Total Writing Score Regressed on Teacher Report

Independent Variable	Unstandardized b	Standard Error b	Standardized B	F
Time on Description	.444	.606	.137	.537
Time on Narrative Order	-.251	.803	.080	.097
Time on Mechanics	.371	.474	.153	.613
Amount of Practice	-.289	.539	.068	.288
Immediacy of Feedback	.393	.274	.195	2.067
Track Level	3.000	.440	.927	46.529*

*$p < .01$

$R^2 = .82$

Adj. $R^2 = .73$

TABLE 20

Values of the Variables in the Regression Based on the Discrepancy Between Students and Teacher Reports

Variable	$\bar{X}$	SD
		N=19
Task Description	.439	.078
Time on Description	.520	.440
Time on Narrative Order	.693	.479
Time on Mechanics	.717	.473
Amount of Practice	1.098	.453
Immediacy of Feedback	.491	.296
Tracking Level	2.210	.631
Total Score	12.643	2.044

TABLE 21

Unstandardized Regression Coefficients for Total Writing Score Regressed on Discrepancy Between Teacher and Student Reports

Independent Variable	Unstandardized b	Standard Error b	Standardized B	F
Total Description	3.907	4.293	.149	.828
Time on Description	.576	.688	.124	.701
Time on Narrative Order	.333	.630	.078	.279
Time on Mechanics	-.429	.751	-.100	.318
Amount of Practice	.213	.643	.047	.110
Immediacy of Feedback	1.338	1.107	.193	1.461
Initial Ability	3.193	.545	.985	34.382*

$*p < .01$, $R^2 = .83$, Adj. $R^2 = .70$