THE EFFECTS OF FACE-TO-FACE AND ONLINE PEER FEEDBACK ON BUSINESS STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS OF QUALITY AND EFFECTIVENESS

by

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of

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DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to both my father, Thomas Jefferson (1919–2002) and mother, Alice Mary (1920–). Both taught me the values of persistence, patience, and perseverance. They impressed upon me the paramount importance of treating every person with dignity and respect. Throughout my years, their shared beliefs, words of wisdom, and prayers continue to remain with me. Without their collective spirit and strength, I would not have had the willpower or the fortitude to complete a doctoral program. I thank both of them for all they have taught me and given me in life.

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VITA

Michael Shaw was born in Lake Charles, Louisiana, in 1954. His parents are the late Thomas Jefferson Shaw and Alice Mary Shaw. He received a Bachelor of Arts degree in History and Political Science from the University of Montana, Missoula, in 1976. While serving on active duty in the U.S. Air Force in 1979, he received his Master of Arts in Management and Public Administration from Webster University, Saint Louis, Missouri. In 1994, Michael retired with honor from the U.S. Air Force. For the past 15 years he has worked at Montana State University and taught within the College of Business. He is married to Annmarie Evans-Shaw, has two sons, Eric Michael Shaw and Aaron Christopher Shaw, and one daughter, Jacqueline Michaela Evans-Shaw.

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ABSTRACT

Deficiencies existed in recent research studies examining the use of peer feedback in business-communication writing courses—both face-to-face and online. The purpose of this research study was to provide current educators with a better understanding of the benefits, as well as the limitations, of using formative peer feedback as a strategy to improve collaborative student learning and course-objective outcomes among students in business-writing courses at Montana State University.

This mixed-methods, quasi-experimental study was designed to investigate business-communication students' perceptions of using formative peer feedback to assist them with their assignments in both face-to-face and online learning environments. Three classes of students enrolled in an introductory business-communication writing course engaged in both online and face-to-face peer feedback conditions for two class assignments. Other data sources included a 2008 Lizzio and Wilson questionnaire to assess participants' perceptions of their feedback experience in face-to-face and online feedback conditions, course grades, and individual as well as group interviews.

The data analysis process used multiple methodologies to integrate, analyze, and interpret findings. Analysis of data consisted of analyzing online surveys, and individual and focus-group questionnaires resulted in the coding of student response statements. From online surveys, questionnaires, audiotaped interviews, and instructor observations, response data categories were initialized and synthesized into associated themes for further analysis.

Results for both the positive and negative message show that, overall, students "agreed" that the feedback was developmental in that it helped them to improve, and was encouraging and fair. However, students overall disagreed with statements related to inconsistency of feedback, difficulty reading marker's comments, difficulty understanding feedback, and unknown grading expectations. Students' interview comments further suggested that, through the online process, it was difficult to fully understand marker's comments related to certain aspects of the assignments.

Future research should continue to examine the use of online peer feedback as an assessment formative method. Furthermore, it is suggested that such research first focus on effective protocols that simplify the peer-to-peer feedback process so that students view the online feedback procedure as a fair and equitable form of assessment.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Overview

The focus of this study is to investigate business-communication students' perceptions of using formative peer feedback to assist them with their assignments in both face-to-face and online learning environments. Faculty who possess such knowledge of which peer feedback methods and techniques to employ, as well as what type of peer-to-peer formative assessment strategies constitute institutional "best practices," may be better poised to facilitate student learning. Review of the literature suggests that it is unclear what peer feedback and formative assessment methods are favored by students taking professional-development and business-writing courses.

Within higher education's increasingly diverse context, the formative, empirical purposes of assessment have become more noticeable. Formative assessment objectives are to advance learning while it is happening. The intent is to maximize attainment rather than merely determine accomplishment or failure only after such events have occurred (Boud, 1990; Brown & Knight, 1994). Such assessment is suggested to help students plan their own learning, recognize their own strengths and shortcomings, target areas for corrective action, and develop higher cognitive, as well as other personal and exchangeable professional skills (Boud, 1990; Brown & Knight, 1994). Given this position, attentiveness has grown in self-assessment by students (Boud & Holmes, 1981; Boud, Churches, & Smith, 1986; Gale, 1984) and in peer assessment, which share mutual

features (Topping, 1998). Assessment can be viewed as the act of appraisal or judgment. The word formative can be regarded as refinement of development or maturing in nature. In educational learning, these two words often are used in close association. Bransford, Brown, and Cocking (2000) refer to formative assessment as being a continuous process whose intended consequence is to advance a student's performance outcomes in a course, at a program level, or to improve desired institutional effects.

The use of instructor feedback endures in recognition as an important factor in influencing student-learning outcomes (Mory, 2004; Topping, 1998). Equally important is the use of student peer feedback as a formative assessment process to support classroom learning. Research related to peer-assessment methods and their relative benefits could be found in the following studies. Bouton and Tutty (1975) have reported positive outcomes from peer review, assessment, and evaluation for regular high school students. Karegianes, Pascarella, and Pflaum (1980) indicated operative learning results for low-achieving high school students. Weeks and White (1982) reported advantageous results for students with learning disabilities.

From such peer-assessment research in secondary and postsecondary studies cited by Topping (2003), one can deduce that peer review (if correctly done) can service students on most educational levels to improve their written work and assignments. Effective collaboration and consultations among students are important to promote valid topic and issue understanding, as well as to promote critical analysis and higher levels of thinking to achieve wanted learning outcomes (Black, 2005). For example,

> Peer review is used extensively to improve students' writing in business communication classes (Lynch, 1992) and in English classes on both the

> secondary and post-secondary levels (Topping, 2003). However, a review of the literature reveals few instances when peer review is used in business courses other than business communication, yet business teachers frequently complain about the poor quality of students' written work. It seems reasonable, therefore, that business teachers consider using peer review to improve their students' written submissions. (Rieber, 2006.)

Business colleges and schools face a twofold educational task. The first task is to ensure course content material is taught and understood by students. The secondary task is to facilitate a collaborative-learning environment that nurtures problem solving and team building among students. Research suggests that over the past twelve years, corporate recruiters and business publications both have reported that business firms, public organizations, and non-profit companies "are increasingly looking for college graduates who can work effectively in teams (collaborative-learning) and understand management processes" (Carey, 1998). Representatives within the labor market are critical of secondary and higher education for not paying enough attention to much-needed training skills such as communicating, cooperating, organizing, and problem-solving, as well as using information technology. Holding all such skills is essential to students being competitive for workforce employment (Pauw & Boshuizen, 1997; Nonneman & Cortens, 1999; Tynjala, 1999).

It is noteworthy to acknowledge that present-day employers pursuing new hires place a high value on communication skills possessed by job seekers (U.S. Department of Labor, n.d.). Employers seek job applicants who possess skillsets in communications, as well as the ability to work effectively as team members. These two attributes are consistently rated above technical skills in relationship to the job sought (National Association of Colleges and Employers, 2012). In a 2007 report survey, deans from

business colleges indicated that feedback received from corporations and businesses that regularly hire their school's graduates specified that the ability of prospective employees to write proficiently ranked as one of the top skills sought by organizations (English, Manton, & Walker, 2007).

Various companies consistently report that numerous recent college undergraduates are lacking basic soft skillsets and exhibit deficiencies in communication-related abilities such as subordinate empowerment, effective engagement with colleagues, and have poorly developed team-support skills (National Association of Colleges and Employers, 2011). Thus, employers' observations indicate that college graduates are under-prepared in both their communications and collaborative skillsets. Such comments suggest that business colleges need to do more to facilitate learning related to peer and subordinate communications, problem-solving, and collaborative-learning skills development. In turn, this necessitates business colleges to find and use additional learning methods to teach and formatively assess learning. Peer feedback is one such suggested method in this study to promote learning outcomes among students.

Dochy & McDowell (1997) suggest that there seems to be firm agreement with respect to the benefits and importance of offering quality feedback to students' assigned tasks and that, within educational contextual settings, feedback can equally serve educative and evaluative purposes. Feedback assessment can be viewed as facilitating task enhancement and student development (Hester, 2001). Students view formative feedback on assignments as an important factor in highlighting both their strengths and

areas requiring further development, in addition to elevating their motivation towards superior future grade obtainment (Hyland, 2000).

To advance feedback assessment, educators can employ the use of peer feedback to assist in quickening the teaching process and achieving desired learning outcomes. Because peer feedback is a collaborative process, students develop multiple soft skills through engagement with other peers (Ertmer & Stepich, 2004). The charge of teaching business and learning outcomes can be a demanding task without a well thought-out method of formative assessment. Given the multiple and varied types of formative assessment, as well as peer assessment, the challenge remains in the establishment of an overarching theory or theoretical model that peers can provide formative feedback to promote learning in business-communication courses (Patterson, 1996). Fry (1990) suggests that the capabilities, values, and objectives of each participant associated with peer feedback will result in diverse interactions, thus impacting their learning outcomes with both advantages and disadvantages. However, Keefe and Eplion (2007) suggest that peer feedback has positive effects on student learning when used in business-communication courses. Their study investigated the effects of online peer feedback and formative assessment of upper-level undergraduate students in a business-management class. Their findings indicate that such methods provide stimulus to students as a motivator to excel in their class, leading to higher content mastery of course material and superior grade outcomes.

Problem Statement

The use of formative peer feedback as a learning strategy provides a significant influence on how students view and experience higher education. One such example is developing personal and professional skillsets applicable to future learning and employment or job placement—in other words, what students hope to gain in both the short and long term from the formative peer assessment experience (Boud & Associates, 2010). Formative assessment is often contrasted against summative assessment. Formative assessment supports teachers' and students' interactions in decision-making during learning and educational procedures, as well as processes. Formative assessment is constant and is intended to advance a student's performance in a course, improve students' learning outcomes at a platform level, or improve institutional desired effects (Bransford, Brown, and Cocking, 2000).

On the other hand, summative assessment occurs at the end of a learning process or unit. Ainsworth (2006) indicates the intent of summative assessment is to provide a summation of student achievement over a particular period of time. Summative assessment determines if the content being taught was retained. Carol Boston (2002) suggests that formative peer assessment benefits both teachers and students. According to Falchikov (2001), peer assessment has been defined as a process in which individuals are rated by their peers.

Teachers and student peers, for example, are able to

- determine what standards learners already know and to what degree.

- decide what minor modifications or major changes in instruction they need to make so that all learners can succeed in upcoming instruction and on subsequent assessments.
- create appropriate lessons and activities for groups of learners or individual students.
- inform learners about their current progress in order to help them set goals for improvement (Falchikov, 2001, p. 408).

The benefits of formative peer feedback for students identified by Boston (2002), suggest that they

- are more motivated to learn.
- take responsibility for their own learning.
- become users of assessment alongside the teacher.
- learn valuable, lifelong skills such as self-evaluation, self-assessment, and goal setting (4).

Rieber (2006) further suggests that formative peer feedback provides several benefits for students, which include

- completing assignments ahead of the due date.
- reacting better to peer comments than they do to teacher comments.
- reviewing the assignment directions a second time.
- submitting better writing if they know peers will read their work (Rieber, 2006, p.324).

Such assessment can provide additional benefits to students. Peer feedback as a formative assessment method fosters collaborative team skills (Topping & Ehly, 1998). Such communication skills are essential and sought by business companies in the recruitment of career- and job-seeking applicants (Carey, 1998). There has been much research conducted on the use of peer assessment as a formative assessment method in a variety of disciplines (Topping, 2003). Such feedback is recognized and associated with effective learning in a range of various settings and can result in greater rates of time

productivity on task and reductions in cumulative error (Bangert-Drowns, Kulik, Kulik, & Morgan, 1991; Crooks, 1988; Kulik & Kulik, 1988; Natriello, 1987).

Although peer assessment has been explored within other disciplines, only a handful of studies have been conducted to investigate the use of peer feedback as a formative-assessment method for promoting collaborative learning in business-communications courses. For example, Lynch (1992) incorporated peer feedback as a method for teaching writing skills to students enrolled in an undergraduate business-communication course. His research found the use of feedback may be a very important factor in online environments, more so than in traditional classroom environments (Lynch, 2002; Palloff & Pratt, 2001). Ko & Rossen (2001) went on to state that the lack of student feedback in courses is more likely to cause students to disconnect from online materials or environments, more so than in face-to-face courses.

Vygotsky's 1978 work, titled *Mind in Society: The Development of Higher Psychological Processes*, forwards the perspective of "sociocognitive learning." Grounded in this view is the notion that students are participants within this construct and that their personal interactions with others in structured social environments result in greater understanding and, thus, deeper learning.

However, Black (2005) suggests that there is no guarantee that all student interactions and discourse will result in desired learning outcomes. Black goes on to propose that many online peer-to-peer feedback conversations amount to nothing more than an exchange and a comparison of material without much proof that critical thinking and problem analysis have taken place.

Additional discussion of face-to-face and online peer feedback can be found in Chapter Two.

There is a deficiency in recent research examining the use of peer feedback in business-communication courses—both face-to-face and online. Further research is needed to provide current faculty with a better understanding of the benefits, as well as the limitations, of using formative peer feedback as a strategy to support and improve collaborative student learning. It is possible for formative peer feedback to be a time-consuming method associated with the learning process. For example, instructors may have to divert limited lecture time towards instructing their students in the proper procedures of giving formative peer feedback that is beneficial for both the receiver and the assessor in facilitating learning. In addition, not all business professors understand the value and restrictions of using selective peer feedback methods that best facilitate student learning in the Professional Communication business and writing courses (Rieber, 2006).

Faculty who do possess such knowledge of which peer feedback methods and what types of formative assessment strategies constitute the college's "best practices," may be better poised to facilitate such learning. Furthermore, it may be possible for some institutions to channel their college's faculty-development programs by placing due emphasis on student-peer learning, as well as critical-thinking team skills, that students will need once they leave the academic environment.

Both in-class face-to-face and online feedback methods have the potential to advance learning due to peer interaction. This study makes no advanced suggestion that participants in this research prefer one peer-feedback method over another. However, it

should be noted that the face-to-face method of peer feedback to facilitate formative assessment is a "richer media" environment than that of an electronic platform (Richmond, McCroskey, & Hickson, 2011). Students who find themselves in a "richer media" atmosphere are advantaged in that they can make use of both verbal and nonverbal (peer body language) to derive a deeper understanding of the discourse exchange (Mehrabian, 2011).

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this study was to investigate business-communication students' perceptions of using formative peer feedback to assist them with understanding and achieving the objectives of their business-writing course assignments in both face-to-face and online learning environments. Such writing-assignment objectives included a demonstrative ability to master the customary format for business correspondence, to practice stating the truth while respecting the reader's welfare, as well as to improve the organization, lucidity, and proficiency of individual business writing. Students provided peer feedback during a two-part assignment. For the first part of the assignment, students provided feedback during in-class face-to-face interactions while providing online feedback for the second part of the assignment.

This study sought to understand students' perceptions of the use of the two stated modes of giving and receiving peer feedback, as well as if such student perceptions changed within the context of two different types of feedback assessment environments. In addition, this research sought to understand what role gender played in influencing the

perceptions on both feedback conditions. Furthermore, this study wanted to know how students described their engagements with the face-to-face and online peer-feedback experiences.

Research Questions

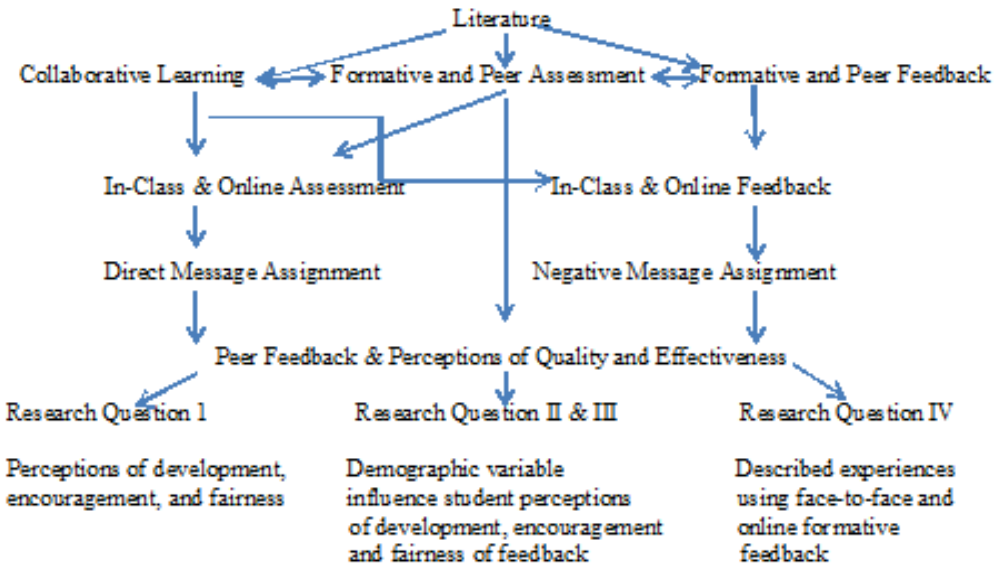
The following research questions were posed for this study:

1. How do business-communication students perceive the use of face-to-face and online peer feedback?
2. Do business-communication students' perceptions of peer feedback differ by face-to-face and online classroom conditions?
3. Does gender affect business-communication students' perceptions of the effectiveness of peer feedback in both face-to-face and online classroom conditions?
4. How do business-communication students describe their experiences using face-to-face and online formative feedback as a strategy for improving their learning?

Thus, the research questions were designed to ascertain if students' perceptions of using formative peer feedback in both face-to-face and online learning environments helped them to achieve the course objectives of their business-writing assignments.

Theoretical Framework

Figure 1. The Conceptual-Theoretical framework consists of literature-reviewed topics and researched categories using a quantitative-qualitative study.



Limitations of Study

The study has several potential sources of error that might influence the data outcomes. The kinds of influences that might cause sources of error may occur due to the size of respective classrooms, class-meeting times, relative and dissimilar student communication skills of paired peers and peer groups, as well as dissimilar, college-level experience. In addition, source error might occur in misunderstanding peer review instructions or variations in instructions from different class instructors delivering such material. Furthermore, student attitudes towards such formative peer feedback assessments might also contribute to source error.

No absolute assumptions were made about preferred peer feedback methods and transferability to other courses. Review of the literature suggests that it is unclear what peer feedback methods are preferred by students taking business-writing and professional-development courses. Although there have been numerous research studies associated with peer feedback related to other academic disciplines, there is a deficiency of research specifically interrelated to the use of peer feedback as an instructional strategy with students enrolled in business-communication courses. In addition, this study will be limited in its sample size and scope.

Delimitations

The participants for this study were students enrolled in an undergraduate business-management-communications course. The required business course is comprised primarily of sophomores from across various university degree majors. The course is a three-credit class intended to improve student skillsets in communicating professionally. Clear, concise, and effective communication can benefit students in attaining their short-term goals or future objectives, such as the type of employment they seek, persuading a superior for greater job compensation, handling customer support, management of their business's goods and services, discussing faster business-to-business transport of deliverables at reduced costs, and establishing an effective working relationship with colleagues. Such communication is similarly crucial to student success in upper-division college courses. To assist students in meeting the future demands of other challenging courses, as well as thought-provoking work, the course focuses on facilitating their improvement of both business-writing and oral-presentation skills.

The specific course objectives require students to show a demonstrative ability to master the expected business-correspondence formats, to practice candid transparency while respecting the reader's concerns, and to improve the structure, clarity, and technical accuracy of business writing. Students who acquired a coherent understanding of all the course objectives were better able to facilitate credible and useful formative peer feedback in both assessment environments. In addition, business students who were successful at giving and receiving feedback developed more effective communications skillsets. Such skillsets are essential for their future job placement and career advancement.

Approximately 55 to 60 percent of the students were from the business/management degree areas with the remaining 35 to 40 percent consisting of a mix of the sciences and humanities. Historically, about 55 percent of the students enrolled in this sophomore-level business-communication course were female. Minority and international students represented less than 2 percent of the sample population of this study. In addition, 95 percent of the students were within the 18- to 25-year age range, while the remaining 5 percent fell into the category of non-traditional college-age attendees. All students attending the business course were expected to have passed one freshmen-level English and seminar course prior to their entry into the communications course. Results from this study may be generalizable to other introductory business-communication courses with similar student characteristics and similar curricula.

Definitions

Peer Assessment: “An agreement in which individuals consider the amount, level, value, worth, quality, or success of the products or outcomes of learning of peers of similar status.” (Topping, 1998). Formative Assessment: “Formative assessment aids learning by generating feedback information that is of benefit to students and to teachers. Feedback on performance, in class or on assignments, enables students to restructure their understanding/skills and build more powerful ideas and capabilities” (Nicol & Macfarlane-Dick, 2006).

Summative Assessment is concerned with the concluding appraisal to query if an assignment or project met its aims. Summative Valuation focuses on the outcomes of the learner (Black & Harrison, 2003). Collaborative Learning denotes methods and situations in which students participate in a shared assignment where each learner is reliant on, and is answerable to, one another. This can also include face-to-face discussions (Chiu, 2008). Team-Based Learning can be defined as an instructional strategy that is based on procedures for developing high-performance learning teams that can dramatically enhance the quality of student/trainee learning in almost any course (Michaelsen & Sweet, 2012). Learning Community can be defined as a group of students with similar attitudes and objectives who collaborate on class or academic assignments to achieve collective goals and outcomes (Goodyear, De Laat, & Lally, 2006). This study embraced the principles and techniques from both Collaborative Learning and Formative Assessment because each methodology relies on classroom learning communities to

facilitate an exchange of ideas and knowledge to promote the intellectual growth and development of each member of the collective.

Significance of the Study

The benefits of this study will provide an important source of information for informing faculty responsible for teaching business communication and other introductory business courses. Results from this study will identify the peer-feedback strategies which are found to be most beneficial by students in both face-to-face and online learning environments. The findings of such a study can lead to the development and refinement of both methodologies and teaching tools to aid instructors in facilitating peer feedback and formative assessment in both online and in-class face-to-face situations. The application of such refined methods of feedback and assessment has the potential of enhancing student learning outcomes in business-communication courses.

Chapter Summary

The purpose of this study sought to obtain a deeper and richer understanding of the students' preferences on peer feedback in the business-communication course and their respective impact on learning and assignment outcomes, as well as to answer the question why such views are held. The use of student-peer feedback can assist in classroom learning and cognitive development. Proper selection of peer-feedback tools can play a critical role in the enhancement of critical thinking and promote collaborative learning. Such learning is reflected in the literature under many descriptive names. However, the

literary review indicated overwhelmingly that students tend to learn more and develop better cognitive problem-solving skills after being exposed to a team-learning instructional strategy. For example, Michaelsen (2002) suggests that team-based and peer-based learning are specific instructional approaches to provide developmental support of motivated learning teams and to offer prospects for such teams to participate in learning tasks that are significant by design.

In Chapter One, general background information, research purpose, problem, research questions, and significance of the study were presented. Background literature is presented in Chapter Two. Chapter Three will introduce research design, participants, instruments, procedures, and data analysis.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

This literature review examined the topic areas of Collaborative Learning, Critical Thinking, Active Learning, Problem-Based Learning, Formative Assessment, Peer Assessment, Peer Teaching, Peer Feedback and Formative Feedback, Limitations and Disadvantages of Peer Assessment, Peer Assessment and Feedback on Gender, and Online Peer Assessment and Peer Feedback. Such topic areas are important to derive a more coherent understanding of the efficacy of peer feedback and assessment use in academic environments.

Business colleges and schools are faced with a twofold educational task. The first task is to ensure course content material is taught and understood by students. The secondary task is to facilitate a collaborative-learning environment that nurtures problem-solving and team-building among students. Research suggests that, over the past ten years, corporate recruiters and business publications both have reported that business firms, public organizations, and non-profit companies “are increasingly looking for college graduates who can work effectively in teams (collaborative-learning) and understand management processes" (Carey, 1998).

Faculty who use collaborative learning strategies aligned with social constructivist learning theory are more likely to create the type of classroom experiences that provide their students with effective collaborative group skills they will need to conduct

successful transactions. If educators in business colleges are to effectively promote student problem-solving and team-building skills, they need to employ the theory of social constructivism in learning environments. One view of social constructivism in a learning context is that we construct and assign meaning to the world through our interactions with other people and the material objects in our environment (McMahon, 1997; Shunk, 2000). Thus, when educators make use of collaborative and cooperative learning, they are employing some aspect of the social constructivism theory and concepts. Social constructivism emphasizes that knowledge construction is highly influenced by culture and social context (Derry, 1999; McMahon, 1997).

This concept can be viewed as being associated with other developmental theories such as those of Bruner (1966) and Vygotsky (1978), as well as the social cognitive theory of Bandura. The learner is active in the knowledge construction process (Shunk, 2000). An interpretation of this view is that learners link their prior knowledge to new information. In so doing, they assign meaning to their experience of the world and use both subjective and objective interpretive analysis in their problem-solving process. The key assumption behind constructivism is that learners use previous knowledge to interpret, construct, and employ new knowledge. Because active learning is contextual in nature, no two learners will arrive at assigning the same meaning to reality or exactly the same solution in a problem-solving situation.

To appreciate fully the constructivism concept, educators must acknowledge specific assumptions that underlie the bases of social constructivism. To do so will aid educators' understanding and applying models of instruction. One basic assumption is

that human interactions and activities construct perceptions of reality that are relative to each person. The meanings we assign to reality are the result of social exchanges in a cultural context (Kukla, 2000). A secondary assumption is that knowledge is constructed through human interactions. Meaning is created through people's interactions with each other and the objects in their environment (Ernest, 1999; Gredler, 1997; Prat & Floden, 1994). In addition, the social constructivist view is that learning occurs when individuals engage in a meaningful exchange through social activities (McMahon, 1997).

Russian psychologist Lev Vygotsky's (1896-1934) Social Development Theory influenced the development of social constructivism. Vygotsky's work was not known to the west until its publication in 1962. The Social Development Theory puts forth the notion that development is preceded by social interaction and the product of socialization is consciousness and cognition (Vygotsky, 1978). Vygotsky espoused that human tools, such as speech and writing, are products of their culture. Such products mediate social environments. According to Vygotsky, higher thinking skills are the result of the internalization of cultural tools (Crawford, 1996).

Vygotsky's Social Development Theory has implications for instructional models. In Vygotsky's theory, the instructor acts as a collaborator with students by facilitating meaning construction. The students play an active role in the learning process. In this collaborative exchange, both the teacher and student(s) have reciprocal learning experiences (Wertsch, 1955).

In the social constructivists' perspective on learning, both the context in which learning takes place and the social contexts learners carry with them into learning

situations are important (Gredler, 1997). Learners who are engaged in activities of social learning using problem-based or hands-on cooperative methods are likely to strengthen their cognitive tools. Cognitive skills and problem-solving strategies are essential to achieving positive group product outcomes, as well as to assigning meaning through the collaborative learning experience (Gredler, 1997; Prawat & Folden, 1994). Collaboration among learners and facilitators is at the heart of social constructivists' instructional models. Such models may include problem-based instruction, peer collaboration, reciprocal teaching, and cognitive apprenticeships, as well as other methods that involve collective learning (Shunk, 2000).

Information on group learning and constructivist instructional models is abundant throughout the literature. Selective common-practice models used in business schools will be discussed first to provide a context and a framework for how these schools have sought to facilitate content learning of course subject matter. The primary group-learning models that are the central focus of this research are termed "cooperative learning" and "collaborative learning." Although, in recent years, other equally popular learning methods, such as "team-based learning" (TBL) introduced by Michaelsen and Black (Hernandez, 2002), offer intriguing models, this thesis retains a narrower focus on cooperative and collaborative learning. Several team-based-learning concepts are integrated into the researched course pedagogy, but such team-based-learning strategies as individual and group quip retakes are not the focus of this study. Relevant TBL attributes will be addressed later in the analysis of research findings.

Collaborative Learning

The predominant learning strategies that are more in line with the course instructional pedagogy of the researched business-communication-writing course are cooperative learning and collaborative learning. The term "cooperative learning" has been described as a method used in learning environments that fosters semi-structured tasks. On the other hand, "collaborative learning" is a term used to describe tasks that are unstructured (Strijos, 2000). In addition, a lesser but equally important term that is used to describe the use of both cooperative and collaborative learning when group members are interdependent in striving to achieve a common outcome is termed "peer learning" (McKeachie, 1994).

Cooperative-learning activities seek learning outcomes that are beneficial to individual participants, as well as collective group members. This instructional method uses groups of students (four to five) who work together to optimize their own learning and the learning of others (Deutsch, 1962; Johnson & Johnson, 1989).

The central ideal is that each person's efforts result in a mutually beneficial outcome. The student gains from both self-effort and the collective effort in addition to learning from the experience of group members. This method views positive interdependences as central to student and group outcomes. Only when the group achieves its collective objective do individuals reach their goals (Deutsch, 1962; Johnson & Johnson, 1989).

To obtain the highest possible learning outcomes, students must work together in contributing their knowledge, skills, and resources to the task. Normally, no one

individual member possesses all of these attributes on their own. However, this is not to say that all group members will always be willing to share their skills and work productively with others. Opposition stands in contrast to cooperative situations. Competition can produce a negative interdependence in goal achievement. While some students put forth more effort to do a better job because they view group work as a win/no-win situation, some other students do not believe winning is possible. Thus, they put forth a minor achievement effort (Deutsch, 1962; Johnson & Johnson, 1989). Individual and group accountability in addition to interpersonal skills are essential components in establishing the proper tone for positive interdependence. The long-term success of cooperative learning is dependent on the disciplined implementation and understanding of accountability (Johnson & Holubec, 1993).

Collaborative learning plays an essential role in constructive cognitive growth. This learning technique provides a dynamic and rich environment that promotes the learning process. Students often experience sustained interest because the process creates social contexts that are more realistic. Such an environment nurtures positive learning habitats (Piaget, 1928, 1932). Piaget's theory parallels other equally important learning theories that emphasize the importance of shared interaction between peers (Vygotsky, 1978). Creating a collaborative learning experience can also foster the development of skillsets that facilitate planning, as well as problem solving (Blaye, 1989, Blaye et al., 1990).

Though collaborative learning is viewed as an umbrella term for various types of teaching methods that involve the collective intellectual efforts of students or students

and teacher working together, it represents a significant departure from the traditional lecture and note-taking approaches that are a universally recognized and accepted method of knowledge dissemination. As a primary feature, collaborative-learning structure allows for student dialogue. Students are encouraged to converse with fellow students. It is in that process considerable learning happens (Golub, 1998). Researchers also report students who are actively involved in collaborative learning, learn best. This occurs regardless of the subject matter. Students who work and collaborate in small groups tend to learn and retain more of the material than if the same material was presented in another instructional format (Chickering & Gamson, 1991; Whitman, 1988).

Current research suggests that learning is influenced by the context and activities in which it is centered (Brown, Collins, & Duguid, 1989). As students become active and immediate partners in the learning process, they develop and practice higher reasoning and problem-solving skills. However, this development is dependent on the facilitator's guidance in explaining assignment objectives and relevant concepts, and clearly defining group tasks. Facilitators must keep in mind some of their students might never have previously experienced a collaborative-learning group environment and may need practice in mastering such skills as active listening, constructive criticism, and conflict resolution before they can master the content of the subject matter. If this is so, various exercises and guidelines may be needed to help students gain interpersonal group skills (Fiechtner & Davis, 1992). Yet, the best efforts of facilitators may be ignored. Some students may object in principle to having their course grade dependent on the co-work and group outcome of others. In some cases, certain students may feel uncomfortable

during collaboration seeking help or helping others. In such cases, it becomes of paramount importance that the facilitators explain the rationale, provide clear directions, and design meaningful tasks that are well structured and that will not impede student success. Though using collaborative group assignments may limit the amount of course topic material an instructor can cover, research shows student group work increased the ability to solve problems and enhanced understanding of the topic material (Cooper & Associates, 1990). The uses of collaborative learning suggest advantages in student learning. Yet, most research studies on such teaching methods have been done at the primary and secondary levels. Empirical evidence at the college level on its effectiveness is limited. Where such empirical research data exist, the research has been done in non-technical areas (Sanders, 1995).

Collaborative Learning and Critical Thinking

If empirical evidence suggests collaborative-learning methods enhance student critical thinking, then it is logical that instructors and facilitators optimize such methods based on social constructivism by operationalizing principles that lead to such outcomes. Arthur Chickering & Zelda Gamson's *Applying the Seven Principles for Good Practice in Undergraduate Education* stands as a significant work that provides a contextual framework and focus for improving the collaborative-learning process. Chickering & Gamson offer seven principles that are based on research on good teaching and learning in colleges and universities. When these principles are used in conjunction with a collaborative-learning method, they act as an education multiplier that enhances positive

learning outcomes and reinforces constructivism. These now well-known and established principles are that good collaborative-learning practice

1. encourages contact between students and faculty,
2. develops reciprocity and cooperation among students,
3. encourages active learning,
4. gives prompt feedback,
5. emphasizes time on task,
6. communicates high expectations, and
7. respects diverse talents and ways of learning (Chickering & Gamson, 1991).

While, according to Chickering and Gamson, each of these common sense practices can stand on its own, they are based on over 50 years of research on effective teaching and learning. Chickering and Gamson further indicate that, when these guidelines are used together, they employ six crucial forces that stand at the heart of education. The forces are:

- activity,
- expectations,
- cooperation,
- interaction,
- diversity, and
- responsibility (Chickering & Gamson, 1991).

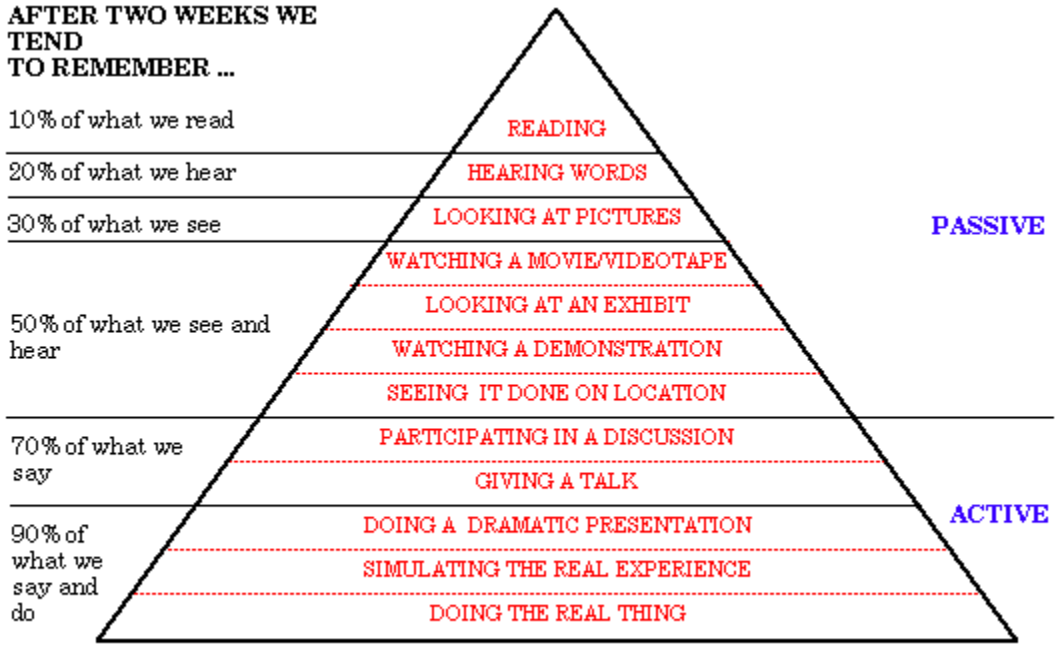
Although all of these crucial forces employed together with Chickering and Gamson's principles help to operationalize collaborative learning, the one main principle that is bedrock to the constructivist learning theory is the encouragement of active learning. Active learning comprises the engagement of students. This means student immersion in more than listening to lectures and note-taking to absorb course material, as well as simple application of acquired information. Students involved in active learning may engage in conversation with each other, or use individual reading, writing, and

reflective skills to move forward the growth process (Felder & Brent, 1997). In Chickering and Gamson's view, learning is an active process rather than a spectator sport. Not much is learned by just sitting in a classroom listening to a teacher and memorizing lectures. Students must talk, write about what they have learned, and relate it to personal experiences and daily life (Chickering & Gamson, 1991).

Active Learning

Edger Dale's *The Cone of Learning* best illustrates the contrast in retention between active and passive learning (Dale, 1969).

Figure 2. The Cone of Learning



Adapted from: Edgar Dale *Audio-Visual Methods in Teaching*, Holt, Rinehart and Winston.

Examples of "active learning" activities include class discussions (held in-person or online), short written exercises, working in pairs, role-playing, debate, and case study analysis. For active learning to be effective, proper instructional guidance should support the activity (Martin, 2007). Using active learning methods early in the learning process is not supported by empirical data (Kirschner, Sweller, & Clark, 2006). Those who decide to use active learning need to understand that it is situational, requires discretion, and requires suitable instructional design. When students engage in active-learning activities, such as working in pairs or in groups, it is often assumed that a secondary level of learning occurs along with content learning. The secondary level of learning is associated with acquiring interpersonal-communication and team-building skills.

A ubiquitous feature of business education is the use of student group projects. “Business schools often assign student group projects to enhance student learning of course content and to build teamwork skills” (Bacon, 2005). Student group projects are omnipresent in business education and are used for numerous reasons. In a survey of deans from business schools and MBA program directors, the most important reason indicated for using teams was to improve learning. The secondary reason was the practical experience students obtained by working in teams (Herman, Keldsen, & Miller, 2001). Michaelsen popularized the active-learning method term “team learning,” which requires the essential conditions of positive student interdependence and individual accountability in group activity to achieve enhanced learning (Michaelsen & Black, 1994). Regardless of the term (active learning, collaborative learning, cooperative

learning, team learning), they all foster the important learning about team building and teamwork along with content learning.

Forming collaborative groups for peer feedback can play an important role in the development of interpersonal skills that are at times referred to as a “soft skill.” Though the primary purpose of a group or team is to collaborate and jointly achieve an agreed-upon outcome, many such units fail in their task because of miscommunication due to the lack of soft skills. Soft skills represent a combination of both intrapersonal and interpersonal skillsets. Such skillsets govern a person's capability to integrate within a specific collective structure and excel in team projects, as well as pursue desired organizational outcomes (Duncan, 2005). Such skillsets include competencies in communication, expressive intelligence, leadership/followership, politeness, conflict resolution, decision-making, and many other community skills. For business and personal success, these skillsets must not be underestimated.

Soft skills can be critical to business success. With the merging of global economies comes a greater need for communications and ability to operate across international cultural lines. Collaborative groups can sustain a competitive business edge. Robbins and Finley (1995) identify several factors why such groups are tuned to achieve positive outcomes. Collaborative problem-solving groups save money by eliminating redundant levels of management. Such groups help increase productivity by seeking opportunities for improving on the efficiencies of older bureaucratic processes. Additionally, such problem-solving groups are multifunctional by nature. They can complete tasks that would be difficult to impossible for a single person.

When collaborative groups are used within an organization applying the "just-in-time" management idea, they can make better use of resources. Such collaborative units are also used to producing higher-quality decisions due to the larger pool of internal knowledge, ideas, and energies available to draw upon to achieve its objectives. Perhaps the most understated reason for the use of collaborative group problem-solving is that they improve processes. Processes are cross-functional. Most times, collaborative group members are process-driven because they represent that of the diverse functions in an organization that are required for its growth, development, and goal accomplishment. Such units are the building blocks of organizations and can be great vehicles for learning; however, they do have their limitations. Collaborative groups can become isolated and develop myopia in approaches to both learning and problem-solving. Unless objectives are clearly stated, even the best groups can lose sight of both short- and long-term goals.

There are several, well-researched, active-learning strategies employed to enhance learning and achieve the positive attributes of business-student collaboration. Problem-based learning (PBL) is one strategy that has potential to support collaborative learning within the context of business-communication courses. Larry Michaelsen and L. Dee Fink, and other academicians, have written extensively on the team, collaborative-learning, instructional strategy; however, their collaborative-learning strategy is not the only group-learning strategy that is identified in the literature. McKeachie and Svinicki also discuss numerous such learning strategies.

In McClatchy's Teaching Tips, the authors indicate that there exist numerous learning strategies. PBL, for example, is an instructional technique that is grounded in a

long history, reaching back to the use of cases in nineteenth-century Harvard Medical School and the philosophy of John Dewey (McKeachie, 2006). According to McKeachie and Svinicki, Group collaboration and problem-based instruction have their bases on the conventions that individuals evolve when they are inspired to engage in problem-solving. Such problem solvers pursue and learn needed knowledge to be successful for future problem-solving (McKeachie, 2006).

Though collaborative learning is reflected in the literature under many descriptive names, the literature indicates overwhelmingly that students tend to learn more, and develop better cognitive problem-solving skills, after being exposed to a collaborative-learning and feedback, instructional strategy. For example, Michaelsen (2002) suggests that collaborative learning represents a specific instructional approach designed to provide developmental support to learning groups that are high-performance focused. Such an approach provides groups ample chances to engage in important learning activities. Michaelsen also suggests the best assignments to foster group interaction require students to make decisions with respect to, and in the context of, a complex set of data, or to make distinct decisions based on an analysis of complex real-world issues.

The article, "The Use of Teams in an Undergraduate Management Program", published in the Journal of Management Education by authors Raymond E. Alie, Henry H. Beam, and Thomas A. Carey (Western Michigan University), indicates that, within the past five to seven years, corporate recruiters and business publications have reported that business firms, public organizations, and non-profit companies are progressively seeking college graduates who can perform successfully in cooperative teams and who appreciate

the processes of management (Carey, 1998). The article is an analysis of two, unique, sequential courses (Management 301 and 302). Both courses provided similar collaborative-based learning experiences that this study seeks to explore.

Since the 1968 management-program study inception at Western Michigan University, more than 5,000 management majors have partaken in a collaborative-learning experience. The Management courses 301 and 302 were in successive 15-week semesters primarily designed around hierarchical student groups (student managers and supervisors) and non-hierarchical, peer-structured, task-force groups respectively. (Carey, 1998). For the first two weeks, both courses employed a standard, 50-minute lecture/discussion segment three times per week.

Although the Western Michigan University study used an intricate methodology to assess a design that ascertained the students' preferences for non-group collaborative-based learning versus group collaborative-based learning, the bottom-line findings of the study, as reported by students and faculty, saw practical experiences were gained from the courses. In Management courses 301 and 302, students indicated that working on assignments that applied the managerial functions of planning, leading, organizing, and controlling was a valued addition to traditional, lecture-based, teaching methods that constituted the core of their respective degree programs. In other words, the application of organizational behavior versus simply studying its basic concepts in the context of team learning proved to be influential.

According to a 1991 survey of graduates, the program built "self-confidence and gave them (students) something additional to use in marketing themselves during job

interviews" (Carey, 1998). In addition, this study appeared to be in agreement with influential recommendations made in a separate study conducted by Professors Lyman Porter and Lawrence McKibbin (1988). According to their view, the basic purpose of business schools is to make their graduate real-world effective from day one of their employment.

Problem-Based Learning

Problem-based learning is another collaborative-learning strategy that has been used by numerous institutions. Problem-based learning (PBL) is employed in numerous medical schools, and offers management education a lot to consider. Management education is often criticized for being disconnected from practice (Behrman & Levin, 1984; Oviatt & Miller, 1989; Porter & McKibbin, 1988). Students, it is alleged, learn concepts and theories that do not pertain to practice. They are trained in mathematical techniques that can rarely be used. They do not develop “soft skills”—for instance, in communication, teamwork, and leadership—nor are they sensitized to the political realities of organizational life. Management education, its critics charge, is too much about rigor and not enough about relevance. PBL should improve business students’ problem-solving skills, as well as their thinking.

Business schools have responded to these criticisms; one remedy being the use of problem-based learning. PBL’s growing popularity in business schools is understandable because it has been used in medical schools as a cure for many of the same inadequacies. PBL originated in the medical school of Canada’s McMaster University in the early

1970s. By the early 1980s, it had spread to medical schools in North America, Europe, and Australia. It has since been adopted by schools of engineering, architecture, social work, law, nursing, and management, among others (Boud & Feletti, 1997).

Management-education programs often rely on collaborative learning, which requires high levels of openness and interpersonal support. Building learning communities often is successful because it addresses in a repeating sequence the alignment of affect with cognition within members' subjective worlds, the integration of cognition across members, the use of shared cognition to generate new affect-rich activities, and the alignment of affect across members. This four-stage cycle enhances management education wherever collaborative learning is important (Boud & Feletti, 1997).

Formative Assessment

According to Bransford, Brown, and Cocking (2000), the process of formative assessment is continuous and is intended to improve a student's performance in a course, improve students' learning outcomes at a program level, or enhance institutional desired results. Individuals responsible for teaching a course or program may use such assessment internally. Furthermore, Bransford, Brown, and Cocking (2000), go on to indicate that assessment lies at the focal point of formal higher education; the processes of teaching and learning need be centered on assessment to provide learners with chances to show their emerging skills/abilities as well as receive direction to enhance their learning efforts.

Michael Scriven is believed to be the first to use and distinguish the terms formative and summative evaluation in 1967. The differences were articulated in terms of the goals for seeking evaluative information and the uses of such information (Scriven, 1967). In Scriven's view, formative evaluations collected information to evaluate the effectiveness of a curriculum. This in turn can be used to guide choices as to which school curriculum to adopt, as well as how to improve it (Dylan, 2006).

Benjamin Bloom's 1971 book, *Handbook of Formative and Summative Evaluation*, explained how formative assessments could be coupled to instructional units in a multiplicity of substantive areas (Bloom, Hasting, & Madaus, 1971). Black and William, however, have suggested that the definition of formative assessment is too restrictive, since such assessments may be used to provide evidence that the intended course of action was indeed appropriate. Black and William propose that practice in a classroom itself is formative. This is so to the extent that evidence about student achievement is "elicited, interpreted, and used by teachers, learners, or their peers, to make decisions about the next steps in instruction that are likely to be better, or better founded, than the decisions they would have taken in the absence of the evidence that was elicited" (Black & William, 2009).

Peer Assessment

The intent of academic assessment is to improve learning quality, performance, and the accreditation of knowledge. Assessment can serve duality of purpose in the forms of formative and summative evaluations. Formative evaluations/assessments serve the

learning needs of students. On the other hand, summative assessments serve societal needs in the evaluation of desired institutional outcomes (Boud, 1990). According to Boud, the need for formative assessment is, at times, neglected.

To offset this phenomenon, alternative means of assessments are required for student learning. Scholler (1998) indicates that such assessment methods are associated with learning approaches of students. Scholler's argument is for tools of alternative assessment designed to engage and elevate student learning. Methods of alternative assessment can encompass the use of collaborative, self, and peer evaluations designed to develop responsible and active learners (Sambell & McDowell, 1998). Reports on such methods indicate that these have helped students to understand their own learning processes (Sluijsmans, 1999).

In higher education, peer assessment has been used as an alternative assessment method. Peer assessment has been defined as a process in which individuals are rated by their peers (Falchikov, 2001). In the peer-assessment process, class members selectively grade the work of other peer members, or engage in constructive critiquing of another's work assignments and provide feedback. The desired result is for students to learn from each other (Falchikov, 2001).

Peer Teaching

Traditionally, "peer-teaching" (or peer-coaching) has most likely been in existence for as long as accessible schools offered education to inclusive segments of the general population. History indicates that headmasters of short-staffed township schools

were indulged to ask their finest pupils to support other students with reduced abilities and slower intellectual capacity. Some of the first successful attempts at peer-teaching occurred in 1798, at a school for the underprivileged, by Joseph Lancaster (Schirmerhorn, 1973).

Peer-teaching is a helpful learning approach in which students play a partial, instructional part. Peer-teaching (or peer-coaching) often times necessitates a form of recognition or compensation for the individual standing in for a teacher or facilitator. At many institutions of higher learning, peer-teaching is an engrained practice. The reciprocal peer-teaching is peer-learning and is often times considered a supplementary element to other more familiar strategies, such as the discussion group (David Boud, Ruth Cohen, & Jane Sampson, 2002).

Peer Assessment Activities and Formative Feedback

It is intuitive to deduce that the forms of assessment activities that students can engage in to provide formative feedback depend on the subject discipline and the context of course material in study. Peer feedback and assessment engage students in reviewing each other's work and then making an assessment against an established criterion. Peer feedback can be viewed as an intervention activity, whereas peer assessment is the outcome of such intervention(s). Peer assessment can be done in typical classroom environments; however, increasingly online technology is being used to facilitate peer assessment and feedback. An example of such is that students might engage in giving

each other feedback on a draft essay assignment so that the final essay can be developed to the maximum extent possible (Orsmond, 2004).

Both instructors and researchers generally agree that "real" learning takes place in the context of student discussion, whether in the classroom or in interactive, online, learning environments. Cunningham (1992) emphasizes the importance of discussion interaction in online courses. Cunningham further notes that it is dialogue among population members that advances learning. As cited in Black (2005), Lang indicates that discussion, regardless if conducted online or face-to-face, engages participants by involving them in a dialog-rich process leading to progressively rigorous, well-informed, and binding understanding of the subject or problem (Black, 2005).

There is other evidence in the literature that demonstrates peer feedback plays an important role in instruction (Mory, 2004; Topping, 1998). Other learning theorists view feedback and discussion as essential to students' learning (Driscoll, 2000). In relative terms, instructional and peer feedback provides students with baseline information that either confirms what they already know or alters their existing knowledge, beliefs, and values (Mory, 2004). Thus, such confirmation of knowledge and skills derived using peer feedback, or as a consequence of community discussion, can be a valuable method and tool to enhance the formative-assessment process.

Limitations and Disadvantages of Peer Assessment

Several researchers and authors have suggested and described limitations, as well as disadvantages or difficulties, with the execution of peer assessment (McDowell, 1995).

Substandard student performers may not view peer feedback as an accurate assessment of their outcomes. On the other hand, some students might not be disposed to consent to any responsibility for assessment of their fellow peers. This view can hold true especially when initiated in a small, socially interconnected group (Falchikov, 1995). Furthermore, Byard (1989) suggested that student groups be monitored and guarded against the abuse of peer relationships based on an unequal balance of power. Thus, peer assessment is not necessarily unanimously viewed as an economical substitute to customary assessments. However, such assessments might potentially add value to the learning environment. Both teachers and students fresh to the peer-assessment experience may show concern over matters of validity and reliability.

Peer Assessment and Feedback on Gender

When student-peer assessments are conducted in collective-learning environments, students have a chance to converse and examine each other's respective contributions. Instructors often times may not have the opportunity to observe direct influences each student made to a shared work assignment. However, peer assessments can offer a mechanism by which group grade points are allotted among the group members relative to their respective contributions. Yet, students grading fellow peers can raise concerns about the legitimacy of such grade-marks, as well as if the rater's gender and ratee's gender influenced the grades given and/or received (Falchikov, 1995).

When tangible dissimilarities in performance exist between student genders, assessments may accurately reflect such contrasts because they are reflective of the

contribution that a student member may have made to the collective-learning practice. For example, several studies in the medical-education arena indicate that women were more skilled at prompting concerns from patients and were more concerned in their consultations (Williams, 1995). Supplementary literature suggests that women lean towards being more receptive to the perspectives of others and willingly integrate such perspectives with their own views. On the other hand, males have a tendency to focus relative to their own perceptions (Boud, D., & Falchikov N., 1989). Such gender appearances might propose that supportive-learning projects may appeal more to female students as opposed to male gender students.

Online Peer Assessment and Peer Feedback

As an alternative method of student evaluation, peer assessment continues to have a profound impact on the assessment process. Research studies indicate an increase in student-teacher, as well as student-student interactions; both are useful in facilitating learning about the ideas of others (Butler & Hodge, 2001). According to Topping (1998), peer assessment can have a positive impact on a learner's understanding in the cognitive, social development, and transferable-skills-learning spheres. Rubin (2002), states that peer assessment can increase student-learning effectiveness. When conducted online, such assessment can provide learners with the freedom to use time and space more effectively. This may lead to softening student attitudes toward using peer assessments for online peer-to-peer assignment feedback (Tsai, 2001). Falchikov (2001) indicates that peer assessment is being used as a method of alternative assessment in higher education.

In this process, groups of individuals rate peers through involvement in various activities such as peer learning and feedback.

One current trend at all levels of education is instructional integration with the Internet. The advent of the Internet presents an ongoing challenge in the integration of instructional learning at multiple levels. In addition, the Internet is proving to be problematic when combined with increased teacher-class size, workloads, and grading procedure delays (Davies, 2000). In a research study of undergraduate students who participated in a computerized peer-assessment project, Davies (2000) found non-anonymous peer assessment was perceived negatively by those students associated with the project. Davies believes the results to be due to the associated difficulty of rating and criticizing of one's peers. On the other hand, other research on anonymous assessment suggests that such methods could be useful in providing more reliable and truthful attitudes toward the peer assessment and feedback processes (Ballantyne, 2002; Lejk & Wyvill, 2001). McGourty (2000) suggests that implementation of online, computerized, formative-learning activities can be beneficial in providing meaningful peer feedback, accelerating grading time, and making anonymous or non-anonymous peer-assessment possible. Use of the Internet in the implementation of peer assessment can prove a beneficial environment for students to freely express their ideas and thoughts in interactions with the course instructor and other students. Such an environment can pose less restriction on timing and location of assessment and feedback (McConnell, 2002; Rubin, 2002; Topping, 1998; Tsai, 2001, 2002).

Summary

As indicated in Chapter One, the primary purpose of this study is to investigate business-communication students' perceptions of using formative peer feedback to assist them with their assignments in both face-to-face and online learning environments. The literature review for this study documented information and knowledge that is currently known in the relevant areas of Collaborative-Learning, Social Constructivism, Formative Assessment, Collaborative Peer Feedback, Problem-Based Learning, and Online Peer Assessment/Peer Feedback. This study's research design, including methodology as well as techniques for data collection and verification, will be presented in Chapter Three.

CHAPTER 3

DESIGN OF THE STUDY

Methods

The use of instructor feedback has been recognized as an important factor in shaping student-learning outcomes (Mory, 2004; Topping, 1998). Equally important is the use of student-peer feedback to support classroom learning. Effective interaction and discussions among students are important to promote valid topic and issue understanding, as well as to promote critical analysis and higher levels of thinking, to achieve desired learning outcomes (Black, 2005). Although there have been numerous research studies on the use of student-peer feedback in business-communications classes and writing courses, little research has been conducted on the students' perceived values of such peer feedback as it relates to class-assignment outcomes.

This study investigated business-communication students' perceptions of using formative peer feedback to assist them with their assignments in both face-to-face and online learning environments. Students provided peer feedback during a two-part assignment. For the first part of the assignment, students provided feedback during face-to-face interactions while providing online feedback for the second part of the assignment.

Research Questions

The rationale for the development and use of such research questions in this study is that they mirrored questions posed in similar research conducted by Alf Lizzio and Keithia Wilson in their 2008 study titled *Feedback on Assessment: Students' Perceptions of Quality and Effectiveness*. Their work examined students' perceptions on feedback received in regards to written assignments. For the 2008 study, Lizzio and Wilson developed a questionnaire to replicate the features of students' appraisal of assessment feedback. The resulting factor analysis of students' assessment ratings has shown three dimensions to the structure of marker feedback perceptions, which are *developmental* (the extent to which students consider that they can make use of or apply the feedback provided—future transferability), *encouragement* (the extent to which students feel encouraged, acknowledged, or supported by the feedback—recognizing effort), and *fairness* feedback (the use of transparent and objective criteria). According to Lizzio and Wilson (2008), all of the feedback dimensions correlated positively with effectiveness ratings. Feedback associated with the developmental dimension related highest with students' appraisals of feedback associated with effective assessment.

Thus, the research questions used in this study mirror Lizzio and Wilson's validated questionnaire, and were used to investigate the effects of face-to-face and online peer feedback on business students' perceptions of quality and effectiveness, as well as to possibly replicate findings in their 2008 research study. The following research questions were posed for this study:

1. How do business-communication students perceive the use of face-to-face and online peer feedback?
2. Do business-communication students' perceptions of peer feedback differ by face-to-face and online classroom conditions?
3. Does gender affect business-communication students' perceptions of the effectiveness of peer feedback in both face-to-face and online classroom conditions?
4. How do business-communication students describe their experiences using face-to-face and online formative feedback as a strategy for improving their learning?

Research Design

A mixed-methods (Burke & Onwuegbuzie, 2004), quasi-experimental research design was used to answer the research questions posed for this study. Three classes of students enrolled in an introductory business-communications class engaged in both online and face-to-face peer feedback conditions for two class assignments. The data sources included a questionnaire to assess participants' perceptions of their feedback experience in face-to-face and online feedback conditions, course grades, and individual interviews.

Students completed an Assessment of Feedback Questionnaire (AFQ) (Lizzio & Wilson, 2008) to rate their perceptions of the feedback experience. Group responses were compared to determine if student perceptions of face-to-face and online feedback differ.

In addition, individual and focus-group interviews were also conducted with students from all classes to obtain a rich, profuse description of students' experiences with both types of peer feedback. The first three research questions were answered using results obtained from an online survey questionnaire based on the AFQ to describe and compare participants' perceptions of face-to-face and online feedback. The fourth research question was answered using results from individual student and class-wide focus-group interviews. Research question four asked: "How do business-communication students describe their experiences using face-to-face and online formative feedback as a strategy for improving their learning?" Using this fourth research question, as well as Lizzio and Wilson's AFQ, the following interview questions were asked of students in this study:

1. In what ways did the comments help you focus on areas you could improve? (Question is based on AFQ's Dimensions of Development and Encouragement.)
2. What did the feedback indicate you got right with your draft assignment? (Question is based on AFQ's Dimension of Encouragement.)
3. Give an example of feedback that you could not understand. (Question is based on AFQ's Dimension of Fairness.)
4. How did the comments make you think further about the topic? (Question is based on AFQ's Dimension of Development.)

5. What was the greatest concern you had about the feedback process? (Question is based on AFQ's Dimensions of Development, Encouragement, and Fairness.)
6. How would you improve the peer feedback face-to-face and online process? (Question is based on AFQ's Dimension of Fairness; however, Development or Encouragement could also be assessed based on the interviewee's reply.)

Participants and Sampling Procedures

Convenience samples of participants in the study were students enrolled in a business-communications course at a public university in the western mountain region of the United States. The demographics consisted of males and females who were both traditional and non-traditional college-age students. The majority of students enrolled in the Business Management Communication (BMGT 205) course were undergraduate sophomore students because this course is required at this level regardless of university major. Approximately 55 to 60 percent of the students were from the business/management degree areas with the remaining 35 to 40 percent consisting of a mix of the sciences and humanities. Approximately 56 percent were female. Minority and international students represented less than 2 percent of the sample population of this study. In addition, 95 percent of the students were within the 18- to 25-year age range, while the remaining 5 percent fell into the category of non-traditional college-age attendees. All students attending the BMGT 205 courses were expected to have passed

one freshmen level English course prior to their entry into the communications course.

Students enrolled in three sections of BMGT 205 were selected as the convenience sample for this study and participated in both face-to-face and online feedback conditions for two course assignments. A power analysis for the comparative portion of the study indicated that a total of 124 students were needed to detect a moderate effect of .50.

Instruments

Although the following assignments and their associated rubrics are not classified as "instruments" as such, they did play an important role in the collection and analysis of data. During the peer-feedback activities, students used the Direct Message Feedback rubric and the rubric developed to provide feedback for the Negative Message Assignment. Both assignments were developed from course objectives that were established by the College of Business's Academic Programs and Academic Assessment of Learning Committees in conjunction with the Management Option Course Coordinator. Both assignments, as well as their associated rubrics, were piloted, refined, and used for the past 12 years in the BMGT 205 Professional Communications Course. Both of these rubrics and assignments are located in Appendix A. In addition, a full description of these assignments is below in the Direct Message and Negative Message Assignments area. The Assignment Feedback Questionnaire (AFQ) developed by Lizzio & Wilson (2008) was used to collect data about students' perceptions of peer feedback and is located in Appendix B.

The AFQ consists of 15 items that respondents rated using a 7-point Likert scale (1= not at all, 4 = moderately, 7 = very) to describe the type of feedback received on assignments and assessments. Results from an exploratory analysis of the initial 24-item scale retained 15 items that formed 3 distinct factors. The first factor identified, accounting for 32 percent of the scale variance, was interpreted as "Development." This factor captured 7 of the 15 AFQ items. The items associated with the Development factor assess perceptions of formative feedback, which provide guidance, direction, and strategies for proficient performance. The second factor, identified as "Encouragement," accounted for 7.9% of the variance and consisted of four items written to reflect the positive aspects of feedback. The third factor identified was interpreted as "Fairness" and comprised 6.8% of the scale variance. This factor captured four items written to assess perceptions of the clarity and consistency of formative feedback. Coefficient alphas for each factor were reported as follows: Development = .85, Encouragement = .82, and Fairness = 0. 66. See Factor Loadings for the Assessment Feedback Questionnaire Table located in Chapter Four under Assessment Feedback Questionnaire (AFQ) Factor Analysis Results.

In addition to the AFQ, individual and follow-up group interviews were conducted to provide a more in-depth understanding of students' perceptions of the use of formative peer feedback. Six, open-ended interview questions were reviewed by other Business Management 205 instructors to provide feedback about the clarity and accuracy of the interview prompts to elicit in-depth descriptions of formative peer feedback experiences. The individual and group interview questions posed to the students were: 1)

In what ways did the comments help you focus on areas you could improve? 2) What did the feedback indicate you got right with your draft assignment? 3) Give an example of feedback that you could not understand. 4) How did the comments make you think further about the topic? 5) What was the greatest concern you had about the feedback process? 6) How would you improve the peer feedback face-to-face and online process? The interview protocol is located in Appendix C.

Curriculum

Professional Communication Fundamentals (BMGT 205) is a three-credit course designed to increase student skills in communicating professionally. Clear communication can help students achieve goals they hold now or will hold in the future. Clear communication is necessary for obtaining a job, persuading supervisors, coworkers, and peers. Such communications skills are important in managing customers' expectations of their company's goods and services, negotiating faster delivery or reduced costs from an organization's suppliers, and sharing work and responsibilities effectively with colleagues. Communicating clearly will also be crucial to student success in upper-division courses. To help students meet the future demands of challenging courses and interesting work, the BMGT 205 course focuses on helping students to improve writing, speaking, and presentation skills.

Direct Message and Negative Message Assignments

The Direct and Negative Message Assignments are designed to instruct students

in the best practices of how to present factual business information to a receiving party with honest candor, transparency, and without embellishments of known information. Both assignments' activities consisted of one class period of introducing the assignment instructions as well as proposed assignment solutions to the students. An additional class period was dedicated to students providing a peer group face-to-face feedback or online feedback using instructional peer review worksheets designed by BMGT 205 course instructors through collaborative effort (see Appendix A). Each assignment process was designed to be completed within three class periods of 50 minutes each.

The Negative Message Assignment was designed to instruct students in the best communication practices of how to present negative news to a receiver in an indirect approach to ensure that the party understands the reasons for the negative. The assignment also stressed the use of factual business information to a receiving party with honest transparency and without embellishments of known information. This assignment used persuasive elements of logic to suggest to the receiver an alternative means of achieving their needs.

Assignment Objectives:

To demonstrate mastery of customary format for business correspondence.
To practice stating the truth while respecting the reader's welfare.
To improve the organization, lucidity, and proficiency of writing.

The Direct Message Assignment was designed to teach students the use of written communication best practice principles of truthfulness and transparency, and to demonstrate these principles by developing a message that is clear, concise, and factually to-the-point while at the same time being respectful of the receiver's perception of proper

business etiquette and polite message tone.

Assignment Objectives:

To demonstrate mastery of customary format for business correspondence.
To practice stating the truth while respecting the reader's concerns.
To improve the organization, clarity, and factual proficiency of writing.

Procedures

As in the Lizzio & Wilson (2008) and the Chory-Assad (2002) studies, intact-class student groups were used to conduct the research. The Chory-Assad study indicated that perceptions of undergraduate students from an intact-classroom environment employing management procedures based on fair, intact-classroom settings were a more accurate predictor of student incentive than just their hopes of getting superior grades. This current research study on business students' perceptions of quality and effectiveness in regards to peer feedback used three intact classes to achieve a sufficient sample size to conduct research with meaningful outcomes. The three intact groups consisted of students enrolled in Professional Business Communications BMGT 205 courses.

Data Collection

The individual interviews were conducted on March 4, 2014, and the follow-up back-check group interview was done on March 11, 2014. Transcriptions were made from field notes and recordings for back-check interviews of individuals in focus-group sections. All back-check interviews were conducted on March 11, 2014, at the times and locations indicated: BMGT 205 Section #6 – 10:00 a.m. Location – Gains Hall – Room

43 – 4/11/2014, BMGT 205 Section #7 – 4:10 p.m. Location – Read Hall – Room 201 – 4/11/2014, BMGT 205 Section #8 – 2:10 p.m. Location – Read Hall – Room 202 – 4/11/2014. A total of 16 students were interviewed. The lead researcher conducted all of the interviews in a classroom setting.

Interview Question Development and Protocol

The student interview questions were developed based on Lizzio and Wilson's original 2008 study in which they created and used an Assessment Feedback Questionnaire (AFQ). The original questionnaire was composed of three distinctive dimensions: Development, Encouragement, and Fairness (see Table 6). The first dimension consists of seven items interpreted as Development while the second and third dimensions each consist of four items each. The design of each interview question coincided with one or more dimensions of Lizzio and Wilson's original AFQ. The six, opened-ended interview questions were designed to solicit a qualitative response from the interviewees on their perceptions on the effects of face-to-face and online peer feedback on business students in the context of quality and effectiveness.

The six interview questions used in this study to assess students' attitudes in regards to research question #4 are indicated below. In addition to the interview questions are their respective, associated dimensions used to explore attitudes in a qualitative manner.

Interview Questions and Related AFQ Dimensions

1. In what ways did the comments help you focus on areas you could improve? (Question is based on AFQ's Dimensions of Development and Encouragement.)
2. What did the feedback indicate you got right with your draft assignment? (Question is based on AFQ's Dimension of Encouragement.)
3. Give an example of feedback that you could not understand. (Question is based on AFQ's Dimension of Fairness.)
4. How did the comments make you think further about the topic? (Question is based on AFQ's Dimension of Development.)
5. What was the greatest concern you had about the feedback process? (Question is based on AFQ's Dimensions of Development, Encouragement, and Fairness.)
6. How would you improve the peer feedback face-to-face and online process? (Question is based on AFQ's Dimension of Fairness; however, Development or Encouragement could also be assessed based on the interviewee's reply.)

Individual students were randomly selected by an impartial BMGT 205 course instructor to participate in the interview process. This was done by the neutral instructor drawing a minimum of five numbers, or a maximum of six (ranging from 1 through 45) from folded strips of paper from a lid-covered box, and associating that number with a

current term, numerical class list of students assigned to the course. The students were interviewed in classroom settings by the lead research instructor. The procedure was done for each class student group. A total of 16 students made up three focus groups and were asked to reply to the six, open-ended questions below. Before qualitative themes could be developed, qualitative codes and their associated meanings were first established to identify student responses given to each research question. Based upon the combination of qualitative codes to a question response, associated themes emerged.

Steps for Inductive Data Analysis

In step #1 of the inductive data analysis process, responses were collected and back-checked with the interviewee for accuracy. Once all interviewees for each section provided verification to the authenticity of their respective comments, all written and transcribed information was entered verbatim into a secure computer database for analysis prior to coding. In step #2 of the inductive data analysis process, multiple readings of each participant's response were conducted prior to and after data entry to ensure that correct individual responses were key-punched into the data base. This process consisted of multiple readings of the participant's responses.

Step #3 consisted of identifying comments that led to preliminary segmenting of attitudes related to possible themes. In the initial review of the interview sheets, prior to coding and uploading into a data base, margin notes (Creswell, 2007) were used to highlight key points and divergent statements possibly to be used during the back-checking process. After the back-checking process with student focus groups, step # 4

consisted of using margin notes again to identify common features leading to a set of preliminary qualitative codes to be used in conjunction with emerging themes.

Step #5 consisted of the creation of a working definition for each code to manage the data in a systematic fashion. One example is the codes concerning the interviewee's disposition towards given interview questions. Code B = Beneficial remark/comment. This means that a student had a positive inclination towards the majority of elements in the posed interview question. Code D = Difficult to understand remark/comment. The code and definition means that the student stated difficulty interpreting the marker's feedback comments. Code U = Unfavorable. This code means the student expressed negative feelings towards the majority of elements within the asked question.

In Step #6, interview questions were segmented by question numbers and the responses were segregated by course section for meaningful coding and analysis. Each course section was considered the unit of individual analysis. In Step #7 a comparative code analysis was used across each course section for consistency and similarities in a constant comparison approach as suggested by Strauss & Corbin, (2007). Step #8 examined each of the three course sections. No section was coded differently and codes remained consistent in their meaning as suggested by Cockrell, Placier, Cockrell, & Middleton, (1999).

In Step #9, the organization of coded data was reviewed again to ensure that the categories accurately represented the best approach to answer research questions in this study. In step #10, examples of coded categories used in this study are: B = Beneficial remark/comment, D = Difficult to understand remark/comment, ER = Emotional

response focused, F = Favorable attitude towards feedback , N = Neutral attitude towards feedback, U = Unfavorable attitude towards received feedback, R = Recalled information/process focused, CR = Candid remark(s), CRO = Candid remark(s) Online focused, CRIC = Candid remark(s) In-class focused, DA = Draft assignment focused, WM = Writing mechanics focused, 1 = males, 2 = females, 6 = class section #6, 7 = class section #7, 8 = class section #8, and the numbers 1 through 16 represent the order in which individual interviewees' questionnaires were received.

The derived qualitative themes and their associated coding are: 1) Effectively communicated-feedback focused = (B, F, R, CR), 2) Miscommunicated-feedback focused = (D, ER, N, ER), 3) Assignment-structure-process focused = (DA, WM, CR), 4) Protocol-structure-process focused = (DA, CRO, CRIC), 5) Online-process-value focused = (CRO, CR, ER), 6) In-class-process-value focused = (CRIC, CR, ER). Four, overarching, qualitative themes that emerged were: Effectively communicated-feedback focused, Miscommunicated-feedback focused, Online-process-value focused, In-class-process-value focused.

Students from each of the three class sections were asked to complete assignments on message-writing activities. These three classes were randomly assigned to the face-to-face or online feedback conditions for a Direct Message Assignment. Then, the three classes were put into opposite feedback conditions for the Negative Direct Message Assignment (Table 1). For the first assignment, the face-to-face group used the "Direct Message Activity" and participated in face-to-face feedback while the online group completed the same activity while providing online feedback. Participants in both the

face-to-face and online groups used the Direct Message rubric to provide performance feedback (see Appendix A) for the Direct Message Assignment. Participants in both the face-to-face and online peer feedback conditions were randomly assigned to two different peer-feedback dyads. The two dyads were formed so that participants giving feedback when in dyad 1 were able to receive feedback on their Direct Message Assignment while participating in dyad 2 (Table 2).

The Direct Message Assignment was designed to instruct best practices in presenting factual business information to a receiving party with honest candor, transparency, and without embellishment of known information. The assignment objectives were to demonstrate mastery of customary letter formats for business correspondence, to practice stating the truth while respecting the reader's welfare, and to improve the organization, lucidity, and proficiency of writing. Although the Direct Message Assignment was designed for students to simply convey provided and known facts to the reader within the protocol of the assignment objectives, students experienced a steep learning curve in orientating themselves within the proper guidelines on how to give meaningful peer feedback. Thus, a basic business-letter writing assignment was offset with a second tier of in-class instructions and training aimed at developing adequate peer-feedback skills so that the sample group could conduct peer-to-peer feedback and formative assessment in a comprehensible manner.

Table 1. Experimental Conditions

	Feedback Condition			Data Sources
	Group 1 n=47	Group 2 n= 33	Group 3 n=33	
Activity	Face–to-Face	Online	Face-to-Face	
Direct Message				Direct Message Rubric Scores AFQ Student Focus-Group Interviews Individual Student Interviews
Negative Message	Face–to-Face	Online	Face-to-Face	Negative Message Rubric Scores AFQ Student Focus-Group Interviews Individual Student Interviews

The Negative Message Assignment objectives mirrored the Direct Message Assignment goals with the exception that the task was more complex by design and mandated extra peer feedback. The Negative Message Assignment required students to place greater emphasis on the use of appropriate business *tone* (word choice) of their communications with additional sensitivity toward the reader's concerns. This assignment necessitated the need for further attention to detail in providing peer feedback and may have influenced students' perceptions of quality and effectiveness.

Although the same procedures were used for the Negative Message Assignment, the feedback conditions were counterbalanced to control for the effects of two different

assignment tasks (Raghavarao & Padgett, 2014). For the Negative Message Assignment, students who were in the face-to-face group for the Direct Message activity provided online feedback for the Negative Direct Message activity. Students who participated in the online feedback condition for the Direct Message activity participated in face-to-face feedback for the Negative Direct Message activity. Both groups used the same Negative and Direct Message feedback rubrics. Participants in each group were randomly assigned to two different feedback dyads (Table 2). A description of the experimental conditions is found in Table 2.

Table 2. Participants' Feedback Role by Dyad

Participants' Feedback Role	Feedback Dyad Condition
Giving Feedback	Dyad 1
Receiving Feedback	Dyad 2

After each assignment, students in both groups rated the difficulty of the assignment and completed the Assessment Feedback Questionnaire (AFQ). Finally, individual student and class focus-group interviews were conducted with participants using the interview protocol found in Appendix C.

Data Analysis

The data analysis process used multiple methodologies to integrate, analyze, and interpret findings. Initial difficulty ratings were checked to ensure that the assignments did not differ in difficulty across feedback conditions. Research questions 1 and 2 were answered using a descriptive analysis of participants' responses from the Assessment

Feedback Questionnaire. A one between, one within repeated measures analysis of variance was conducted to answer research question 2 to determine if differences exist between participants perceptions of face-to-face and online peer feedback activities. To answer the third research question, a content analysis of student- and focus-group-interview transcripts was conducted to identify common themes that emerged from the interview transcripts describing students' perspectives of the peer feedback process. One-Way Multivariate Analysis of Covariance (MANCOVA) using student ACT scores as the covariate was conducted to compare feedback condition and gender on students' perceptions of feedback from the three feedback factors of Lizzio and Wilson's (2008) Assessment Feedback Questionnaire. Multiple methods provided triangulation to synthesize the phenomenon of the study from which an interpretive model of the findings was developed and presented.

Data Analysis for Qualitative Research

The steps below were done to ensure, thorough inductive data analysis, that the perspectives of participants were accurately represented as outlined by Lincoln and Guba (1985). (View Qualitative Methods area for complete steps.)

1. Responses were collected and entered verbatim into a database.
2. Multiple readings were done for each participant's completed response.
3. Key points, common aspects, and unique/divergent statements in the form of margin notes were done.

4. A preliminary set of codes were done through the use of margin notes to identify common and distinct information.
5. A working definition for each associated code was established to manage data in a systematic fashion.
6. Each response was segmented (the unit of analysis) into distinct units that could be properly and meaningfully coded.
7. Coding attempts were compared to notes to ascertain similarities and differences in the assigned codes.
8. Each segment that was coded differently was examined and discussed until appropriately represented in meaning.
9. Coded data was organized into categories to accurately represent complex data and to best answer the study's research questions.
10. One example of coded dated was gender responses to research questions.

Qualitative Analysis Procedures

Examination of qualitative data began with collecting interview responses and entering interviewee comments verbatim into a database. The database was completed after each complete set of responses from the participant was reviewed multiple times for accuracy and quality control of transcription. The next step in data analysis consisted of identification of key points and categorization of common themes and codes as suggested by Creswell (2007). This procedure permitted the researcher to formulate characterization

for each code, and permitted the data to be categorized into precise elements of analysis, therefore generating a working classification for each code and letting the data be surveyed in a systematic manner. Finally, the coded data was organized into themes that would accurately represent the complexity of the data and best answer the study's qualitative research questions.

The coded data was used in association with the six interview questions/responses and generated six, associated, primary themes that, in-turn, generated four overarching themes of experience to conditions of peer feedback. From the generation of six, base-line themes linked to respective interview questions, overarching themes were produced by a numerical assessment of the coded themes from all interviewed participants in the three class sessions. From there, the arching themes were assessed for student perceptions to the efficacy of the online peer-feedback, as well as face-to-face peer-feedback methods. Lastly, the researcher found that the coded data were organized into themes that would correctly embody the involvedness of the research evidence and accurately address and answer the study's research question. The individual and group interview questions posed to the students were: 1) What ways did the comments help you focus on areas you could improve? 2) What did the feedback indicate you got right with your draft assignment? 3) Give an example of feedback that you could not understand. 4) How did the comments make you think further about the topic? 5) What was the greatest concern you had about the feedback process? 6) How would you improve the peer feedback face-to-face and online process?

Trustworthiness of Qualitative Data Collection Methods

Trustworthiness in qualitative research can be defined as a procedure by which processes are constructed and developed to increase the dependability, credibility, transferability, and confirm-ability, of a given study (Creswell, 2007; Maxwell, 2005). The verification process and trustworthiness was established through the following procedures. Yeasmin & Rahman (2012) suggest that triangulation techniques are beneficial for cross-checking and can be advantageous in providing completeness and confirmation between different types of research methods. Triangulation was used for a thorough comparison of survey data, field note observations, and results from individual student and focus-group interviews. Peer auditing provided a balanced perspective on interpretations, evaluation, data validation, and theme categorization.

Member checking was used to ensure that what data the researcher collected and analyzed were correctly represented. Confidentiality of all the involved participants was in accordance with the Institutional Research Board's policies and procedures. The researcher has taught at the current university for over 14 years in the areas of communications and business management, as well as contributed to editing the published works of other academicians in the fields of business management and professional communication. Furthermore, the researcher has over 20 years' platform teaching experience at various colleges, universities, and technical schools throughout the United States.

Role of the Researcher

As a College of Business educator, the principal investigator seeks to discover the objective truth about the effectiveness of peer-to-peer feedback, as well as student perceptions of such feedback and its impact on their respective learning outcomes. The investigator seeks objectivity beyond the scope of personal beliefs, established values, and preconceived theories about the research questions to be investigated. The researcher seeks objective factual knowledge, yet understands that subjectivity is a factor that is not possible to eliminate from the analysis. Thus, 14 years of teaching similar assignments and subject matter creates multiple challenges for the investigator.

In keeping focus on unbiased methodology in the research of peer-to-peer feedback, as well as assignments dealing with professional-communication writing, is a contentious challenge to the intellect. However, because of the over-a-decade's subject-matter expertise, the researcher believes an objective truth can be drawn from both an insider's and an outsider's relative perspectives. One technique the researcher uses in maintaining objectivity is seeking independent opinions and analytical insight from fellow colleagues on the fairness and validity of developed assessment tools and any detectable biases the researcher might direct towards individual students or groups.

Summary

The purpose of this study seeks to obtain a deeper and further descriptive understanding of the BMGT 205 students' views and values for using peer feedback to improve their learning outcomes. A supplementary understanding is desired on the use of

such feedback to improve outcomes on class assignments, as well as to determine the statistical correlation between students' stated views on the value of using peer feedback in a business-communication course to promote peer learning.

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

Introduction

This study was undertaken to investigate business-communication students' perceptions of using formative peer feedback to assist them with their assignments in both face-to-face and online learning environments. Student responses to questions one through three were collected using an online survey questionnaire that employed a Likert scale rating. Responses to research question four were obtained using individual and focus-group interviews consisting of five to six students from each intact-class group. The research questions posed for this study are as follows:

1. How do business-communication students perceive the use of face-to-face and online peer feedback?
2. Do business-communication students' perceptions of peer feedback differ by face-to-face and online classroom conditions?
3. Does gender affect business-communication students' perceptions of the effectiveness of peer feedback in both face-to-face and online classroom conditions?
4. How do business-communication students describe their experiences using face-to-face and online formative feedback as a strategy for improving their learning?

A mixed-methods (Burke & Onwuegbuzie, 2004), quasi-experimental research design was used to answer the research questions posed for this study. Students enrolled in three class sections of BMGT 205 (Professional Business Communication) and participated in both online and face-to-face peer-feedback conditions for two course assignments. Students in the face-to-face and online feedback conditions were compared on their perceptions of the quality of feedback using the Assessment of Feedback Questionnaire (AFQ) developed by Lizzio & Wilson (2008). In addition, assignment grades and data from focus-group and individual interviews were also analyzed to answer the research questions posed for this study.

Participant Demographics

A total of 79 BMGT 205 students participated in the Negative Feedback Assignment. Of those students, the majority were males (58%), while the most frequent college rank reported was sophomore level (54%). The average age was 21 years (SD = 2.3). The average student ACT score was 17.24 (SD = 10.90).

Participants' major areas of study included:

- Business
- Agriculture
- Animal Science
- Engineering
- Arts and Architecture
- Political Science

- Ecology
- Health and Human Development
- Veterinary Medicine
- General Studies

Table 3 indicates student demographics by negative feedback assignment.

Table 3. Student Demographics by Negative Feedback Assignment

	Percent and Frequency
Feedback Condition	
Face-to-Face	30 (30)
Online	49 (62)
Gender	
Males	58 (46)
Females	42 (33)
College Rank	
Freshman	14 (18)
Sophomore	43 (54)
Junior	17 (22)
Senior	5 (6)

Table note: Attrition of students from the sample is the cause of the less than 100%.

Positive Feedback Assignment

A total of 87 BMGT 205 students participated in the Positive Feedback Assignment. Of those students, the majority were females (44%), while the most frequent college rank reported was sophomore level (47%). The average age was 21 years (SD = 2.4). The average ACT score was 16.5 (SD = 11.29). The major areas of study for students participating in the positive-feedback assignment were the same as those listed for the negative-feedback assignment. Table 4 indicates student demographics by direct message feedback assignment.

Table 4. Student Demographics for the Direct Message Assignment

	Percent and Frequency
Feedback Condition	
Face-to-Face	66(57)
Online	34(39)
Gender	
Males	44(48)
Females	49(56)
College Rank	
Freshman	20(17)
Sophomore	47(41)
Junior	26(23)
Senior	7(6)

Table note: Attrition of students from the sample is the cause of the less than 100%.

Assessment Feedback Questionnaire (AFQ) Factor Analysis Results

Prior to both the Negative and Direct Message Assignments, a principal components analysis was conducted to determine if the items for the AFQ formed the same factor structure as for the original factor structure for the AFQ reported by Lizzio and Wilson's (2008) study. Results from the analysis found that the factor structure for BMGT 205 students mirrored that of the original AFQ developed in 2008. The factor structure and loadings are reported in Table 5.

Table 5. Factor Loadings for the Assessment Feedback Questionnaire

		Components and Factor Loadings		
		Development	**Encouragement**	**Fairness**
Development				
1	Showed me how to critically assess my own work.	**.819**	.118	.028
2	Critical feedback was given on the quality of work.	**.801**	.300	.005
3	Comments helped me to focus on areas I could improve.	**.772**	.146	.160
4	Feedback was provided that I could use in future assignments.	**.687**	.392	-.149
5	Marker offered opportunities to clarify their comments.	**.661**	.234	.080
6	Comments made me think further about the topic.	**.654**	.306	.083
7	Commented on not just what was wrong, but also what to do about it.	**.579**	.339	.209
Encouragement				
8	Acknowledged my good points.	.378	**.838**	.102
9	Positive comments were made.	.273	**.769**	.116
10	Recognized the effort I had made.	.350	**.763**	.116
11	Indicated what I had got right.	.412	**.748**	.094
Fairness				
12	Feedback was inconsistent or contradictory.	.066	.161	**.890**
13	Marker's writing was difficult to read.	.060	.075	**.864**
14	It was hard to know what was expected.	.257	.010	**.724**
15	Gave feedback that I could not understand.	-.204	.330	**.523**
Eigenvalues		**6.39**	**2.35**	**1.17**
Percent of Variance		**42.60**	**15.70**	**7.81**
Coefficient Alpha		**.87**	**.90**	**.74**

The first factor to emerge consisted of 7 items interpreted as development, and was responsible for approximately 43% of the variance of items. The second factor to emerge consisted of 4 items and was interpreted as Encouragement. The Encouragement factor was found to capture approximately 16% of the item variance. The last factor, interpreted as Fairness (as defined by Lizzio and Wilson), captured 4 items and was found to explain about 8% of the item variance. The coefficient alphas for the 3 factors

ranged from .90 to .74. The reliabilities are similar to those found by Lizzio and Wilson's 2008 study.

Results

The first three research questions were posed to investigate how students, in general, perceived peer feedback in both online and face-to-face conditions and to determine if perceptions of feedback differed by feedback condition and by gender. The restated research questions are:

1. How do business-communication students perceive the use of face-to-face and online peer feedback?
2. Do business-communication students' perceptions of peer feedback differ by face-to-face and online classroom conditions?
3. Does gender affect business-communication students' perceptions of the effectiveness of peer feedback in both face-to-face and online classroom conditions?
4. How do business-communication students describe their experiences using face-to-face and online formative feedback as a strategy for improving their learning?

The first research question was answered by calculating the descriptive statistics reported in Table 6 for students' overall perceptions of the feedback they received during both the Negative and Positive Direct Message Assignments. Results for both the direct and negative message show that overall students "agreed" that the feedback was

development in that it helped them to improve, and it was encouraging and fair. The lowest level of agreement was for the statement, "feedback was provided that I could use for future assignments" (direct message) and "marker offered opportunities to clarify their comments" (for the negative message). However, students, overall, disagreed with statements related to inconsistency of feedback, difficulty reading marker's comments, difficulty understanding feedback, and unknown grading expectations.

The findings in this study are consistent with the 2008 study of Lizzio and Wilson. However, the reasons for the low agreement levels in regards to fairness remain at best both assumptive and speculative. When the quantitative data results from the face-to-face and online constructs are analyzed along with the qualitative survey data, a different interpretation of the research results comes into focus. The AFQ's dimension of Fairness consisted of four questions: 1) Feedback was inconsistent or contradictory? 2) Marker's writing was difficult to read? 3) Was it hard to know what was expected? 4) Marker gave feedback that could not be understood? The low agreement levels within the dimension of Fairness were more apparent as indicated by the individual and group interview data. The low agreement levels possibly resulted from participants not fully understanding proper assignment protocol procedures for peer-feedback delivery in relation to both types of assessment conditions. With regards to the low agreement levels for Fairness in the Negative Message Assignment, contributing factors may have been due to the complexity of the assignment that introduced a new business-writing principle that required students to complete their assignment using a discrete style of transparency and tone. Furthermore, by the time in the semester students were required to give peer

feedback, they may have experienced both "feedback overload and feedback burnout." Such speculative conditions could have produced a degree of apathy in giving, receiving, and applying peer feedback, resulting in lower agreement levels within the dimension of Fairness.

Table 6. Descriptive Statistics for AFQ for Direct and Negative Messages

		Direct Message		Negative Message	
		Mean	SD	M	SD
Development					
1	Showed me how to critically assess my own work.	5.17	1.33	5.24	1.65
2	Critical feedback was given on the quality of work.	5.35	1.36	5.50	1.50
3	Comments helped me to focus on areas I could improve.	5.90	.99	5.58	1.52
4	Feedback was provided that I could use in future assignments.	5.05	1.52	5.10	1.80
5	Marker offered opportunities to clarify their comments.	5.27	1.60	4.87	1.86
6	Comments made me think further about the topic.	5.43	1.43	5.17	1.70
7	Commented on not just what was wrong, but also what to do about it.				
Encouragement					
8	Acknowledged my good points.	5.45	1.51	5.77	1.40
9	Positive comments were made.	5.69	1.24	6.00	1.01
10	Recognized the effort I had made.	5.39	1.42	5.68	1.36
11	Indicated what I had got right.	5.30	1.55	5.71	1.40
Fairness					
12	Feedback was inconsistent or contradictory.	2.57	1.65	2.60	1.87
13	Marker's writing was difficult to read.	2.20	1.17	2.14	1.45
14	It was hard to know what was expected.	2.50	1.49	2.43	1.61
15	Gave feedback that I could not understand.	1.86	1.10	1.85	1.31

Research questions two and three were posed to determine if students' perceptions of feedback differed by feedback condition (face-to-face or online) and by gender. To answer these questions, a Factorial Multivariate Analysis of Covariance (MANCOVA) using student ACT scores as the covariate was conducted to compare feedback condition and gender on students' perceptions of feedback from the three feedback factors of Lizzio and Wilson's (2008) Assessment Feedback Questionnaire. The first MANCOVA was conducted for the Negative Message feedback results. Table 7 reports the descriptive statistics for students' perceptions of feedback for the Negative Message Assignment by feedback condition and gender.

Table 7. Descriptive Statistics for AFQ Factors for Negative Message by Feedback Condition and Gender

AFQ Factor	Gender	N	Mean	SD
Development				
Face-to-Face				
	Male	19	5.96	.789
	Female	10	5.86	1.15
Online				
	Male	26	4.86	1.56
	Female	23	4.92	1.61
Encouragement				
Face-to-Face				
	Male	19	5.92	.750
	Female	10	6.32	.986
Online				
	Male	26	5.24	1.22
	Female	23	5.86	1.40
Fairness				
Face-to-Face				
	Male	19	2.30	1.43
	Female	10	1.95	1.26
Online				
	Male	26	2.57	1.42
	Female	23	2.00	1.06

Table note: The Fairness scale is reverse scored.

Results for the Factorial MANCOVA analyzing students' perceptions of feedback for the Negative Message were not significant for feedback condition, *Wilks Lambda* = .908, $F_{(3, 71)}$ = 2.46), p =.074, gender, *Wilks Lambda* = .915, $F_{(3,71)}$ =2.21, p = .095 or the feedback condition by gender interaction, *Wilks Lambda* = .998, $F_{(3,71)}$=.051, p = .985. However, the follow-up One Way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) for the feedback condition was significant when comparing face-to-face and online conditions for Development, $F_{(1,73)}$=6.47, p =.013, and Encouragement, $F_{(1,73)}$=4.22, p =.043. Students in the face-to-face condition (M = 5.93, SD = .91) expressed significantly higher mean positive perceptions than students in the online condition. Likewise, students in the face-to-face condition expressed significantly higher positive perceptions of encouragement than students in the online condition.

A Factorial MANCOVA was also conducted for the Direct Message feedback results and Table 8 reports the descriptive statistics for students' perceptions of feedback for the Direct Message Assignment by feedback condition and gender. Results for the Factorial MANCOVA analyzing students' perceptions of feedback for the Direct Message were not significant for feedback condition, *Wilks Lambda* = .072, $F_{(3, 76)}$ = .988), p =.89, gender, *Wilks Lambda* = .956, $F_{(3,76)}$ =.1.60, p = .332 or the feedback by gender interaction, *Wilks Lambda* = .978, $F_{(3,76)}$=.978, p = .630. The follow-up One Way Analysis of Variance for Feedback Type, Gender, and the feedback condition by gender were also not found to be significant.

Table 8. Descriptive Statistics for AFQ Factors for Direct Message by Feedback Condition and Gender

AFQ Factor	Gender	n	Mean	SD
Development				
Face-to-Face				
	Male	27	5.45	1.14
	Female	28	5.36	.993
Online				
	Male	9	5.10	1.30
	Female	19	5.23	.960
Encouragement				
Face-to-Face				
	Male	27	5.64	1.37
	Female	28	5.25	1.25
Online				
	Male	9	5.13	1.90
	Female	19	5.50	.720
Fairness				
Face-to-Face				
	Male	27	2.00	1.10
	Female	28	2.42	1.10
Online				
	Male	9	2.11	.674
	Female	19	2.55	1.00

Table note: The Fairness scale is reverse scored.

The summary of findings for research questions two and three can be expressed by stating the following. Findings for research question number two indicate the feedback type was significant when comparing face-to-face and online conditions for Development and Encouragement. Students in the face-to-face condition expressed significantly higher mean positive perceptions than students in the online condition. Likewise, students in the face-to-face condition expressed significantly higher positive perceptions of Encouragement than students in the online condition. Findings for research question

number three showed that the results for the One Way MANCOVA analyzing students' perceptions of feedback were not significant for feedback condition. A supplemental follow-up using a One Way Analysis of Variance for feedback type was conducted and determined that Gender and the feedback condition by gender were also not found to be significant.

Qualitative Results

The method of analysis of the qualitative data originated with the collection of all interviewee's responses and recording their respective comments precisely into a record database. The database was completed after each contributor's full set of replies were reviewed multiple times to certify the precision of the process of transcription. The succeeding phase in data analysis involved documentation of important facts and classification of shared themes and codes as indicated by Creswell (2007).

The rationale for using qualitative methods in association with research study question number four was to discover, define, and interpret business students' experiences in relationship to their involvement in using face-to-face and online formative feedback as a strategy for improving their learning. The themes derived for the analysis of research question number four were the results of individual interviews as well as back-checking focus-group interviews. Both individual interviews and follow-up back-check interviews are located in the Appendix section of this report (Appendices E and F).

There were a total of 16 students who were asked and did complete the survey questionnaire consisting of six, open-ended questions. Only after a follow-up interview was conducted with all three class sections for verification and group back-checking of initial responses were coding symbols and their associated themes assigned. Such coding and themes were linked to a total of 96 interview question responses. In the follow-up individual and group interviews conducted on March 11, 2014, each student acknowledged or added to their original responses. There were no deletions to the initial responses. Only after the back-checking of all interview responses did the coding of each questionnaire's replies begin.

As previously stated, the examples of coded categories used in this study are; B = Beneficial remark/comment, D = Difficult to understand remark/comment, ER = Emotional-response focused, F = Favorable attitude toward feedback, N = Neutral attitude towards feedback, U = Unfavorable attitude towards received feedback, R = Recalled-information/process focused, CR = Candid remark(s), CRO = Candid-remark(s)-online focused, CRIC = Candid-remark(s)-in-class focused, DA = Draft-assignment focused, WM = Writing-mechanics focused, 1 = males, 2 = females, 6 = class section #6, 7 = class section #7, 8 = class section # 8, and the numbers 1 through 16 represent the order in which individual interviewees' questionnaires were received. Table 9 provides a concise example of the qualitative code symbols and their associated meanings.

Table 9. Qualitative Code Symbols and Associated Meanings

n	Code	Associated Meaning
1.	B	Beneficial remark/comment
2.	D	Difficult to understand remark/comment
3.	ER	Emotional response focused
4.	F	Favorable attitude toward feedback
5.	N	Neutral attitude towards feedback
6.	U	Unfavorable attitude toward received feedback
7.	R	Recalled information/process focused
8.	CR	Candid remark(s)
9.	CRO	Candid remark(s) online focused
10.	CRIC	Candid remark(s) in-class focused
11.	DA	Draft assignment focused
12.	WM	Writing mechanics focused

As formerly specified, the derived qualitative themes and their associated coding are: 1) Effectively Communicated-feedback Focused = (B, F, R, CR), 2) Miscommunicated-feedback Focused = (D, U, ER, N, ER), 3) Assignment-Structure-Process Focused = (DA, WM, CR), 4) Protocol-Structure-Process Focused = (DA, CRO, CRIC), 5) Online-Process-Value Focused = (CRO, CR, ER), 6) In-class-Process-Value Focused = (CRIC, CR, ER). Four overarching qualitative themes that emerged are: Effectively Communicated-feedback Focused, Miscommunicated-feedback Focused, Online-Process-Value Focused, In-class-Process-Value Focused. All coding took place outside of the classroom in a quiet and undisturbed environment. The responses on each interviewee's questionnaire were clearly assigned and marked with qualitative codes and accompanying themes as dictated by the individual responses. Table 10 provides a concise list of the qualitative themes and their associated coding.

Table 10. Qualitative Themes and Associated Coding

n.	Qualitative Themes	Associated Coding
1.	Effectively Communicated-feedback Focused	(B, F, R, CR)
2.	Miscommunicated-feedback Focused	(D, U, ER, N, ER)
3.	Assignment Structure Process Focused	(DA, WM, CR)
4.	Protocol Structure Process Focused	(DA, CRO, CRIC)
5.	Online Process Value Focused	(CRO, CR, ER)
6.	In-class Process Value Focused	(CRIC, CR, ER)

After a comparative analysis of all themes associated with individual and group replies, four overarching themes emerged. Table 11 provides indication of the overarching themes.

Table 11. Overarching Qualitative Themes

	Overarching Qualitative Themes
1.	Effectively Communicated-feedback focused
2.	Miscommunicated-feedback focused
3.	Online Process Value Focused
4.	In-class Process Value Focused

Table 12 represents the qualitative interview questions asked during individual and focus-group interviews. All qualitative interview datasheets with student replies, as well as coding and theme analysis of each interviewee by class section number, can be viewed in Appendix E.

Table 12**.** Qualitative Interview Questions for Individuals and Focus Groups

Qualitative Interview Questions for Individuals and Focus Groups
1. In what ways did the comments help you focus on areas you could improve?
2. What did the feedback indicate you got right with your draft assignment?
3. Give an example of feedback that you could not understand.
4. How did the comments make you think further about the topic?

Table 12**.** Qualitative Interview Questions for Individuals and Focus Groups Cont.

Qualitative Interview Questions for Individuals and Focus Groups
5. What was the greatest concern you had about the feedback process?
6. How would you improve the peer feedback face-to-face and online process?

In addition to aiding in the development of themes and overarching themes, selective, qualitative coding symbols aided in analyzing student responses, as well as deriving a deeper understanding of their attitudes toward subject elements in interview questions posed. The following three qualitative codes, by themselves, did not result in theme development, but rather were used in conjunction with the full compliments of other coding symbols to complete the theme construction activity. The code symbol F equals Favorable. This means that a student had a positive inclination towards the majority of elements in the posed interview question. The code symbol N equals Neutral. The definition of Neutral means that the student showed no bias either way in attitude to the question posed. The code symbol U equals Unfavorable. This code means the student expressed negative feelings towards the majority of elements within the asked question.

Table 13. Replies to Interview Questions and Response Ratings

Replies to Questions and Number of Responses - Favorable =F, Neutral = N, Unfavorable = U						
Question *n.*	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q5	Q6
Section #6	F=3, U=3	F=5	F=3, U=3	F=4, U=2	U=6	N=3, N=3
Section #7	F=4, U=1	F=4, N=1	F=2, U=3	F=2, U=3	U=5	N=2, U=3
Section #8	F=5	F=5	F=2, U=3	F=5	U=5	F=1,N=2,U=2

From analysis of the rated responses to the interview questions within only the qualitative context of this study, it is suggested the following student opinions can be deduced.

1. Students viewed peer feedback as being helpful in focusing on areas of the assignment by 76.6%.
2. Students specified that their feedback showed what they got right with their assignment drafts by 46.6% of the times. This means that 53.4% of the times the feedback was not beneficial to the receiving student.
3. Students identified that peer feedback provided information that they could not understand 46.6 % of the times. This means that 53.4% of the times the information was understood.
4. Students stated that the feedback comments made them think further about the topic by 59% of the times received. Thus, 41% of the times, feedback did not encourage the students to think more about the topic.
5. The greatest concern that students had with the feedback process is that the online method of feedback was slower and more problematic in obtaining useful feedback. Face-to-face was preferred by 100%.
6. Forty percent of students recommended improvement of the face-to-face and online feedback by adding more time to the process, while 60% preferred to do away with the online feedback and keep the face-to-face method.

In the final analysis of qualitative research question number four (How do business-communication students describe their experiences using face-to-face and online formative feedback as a strategy for improving their learning?), the results are ambiguous. From student interviews, it appears that many students value the use of face-to-face feedback as a tool leading to formative assessment. Such information provided is deemed beneficial to understanding and completing assignments. However, such value is not shown in the student qualitative responses to the efficacy of the online feedback method. Student suggestions range from adding more feedback time, modification of the protocol by having students upload paper assignments to the Desire-to-Learn (D2L) student management system, to not employing an online form of peer feedback. Because the online feedback drew such adverse student comments, it is recommended that a future study be undertaken to observe only online methods of peer-to-peer feedback leading to favorable student assignment outcomes, as well as beneficial formative assessment.

The results of research questions one through four can be summarized by stating the following findings. For research question number one, students perceived, overall, that peer feedback for both the Positive and Negative Message Assignments in face-to-face and online modes helped them to improve and was encouraging and fair. It was also noted that students disagreed overall with statements related to inconsistency of feedback, difficulty reading marker's comments, difficulty understanding feedback, and unknown grading expectations.

Research question number two sought to determine if students' perceptions of feedback differed by feedback condition (face-to-face or online). The feedback type was

significant when comparing face-to-face and online conditions for Development and Encouragement. Students in the face-to-face condition expressed significantly higher mean positive perceptions than students in the online condition. Likewise, students in the face-to-face condition expressed significantly higher positive perceptions of encouragement than students in the online condition.

Research question number three was posed to ascertain if gender affects business-communication students' perceptions of the effectiveness of peer feedback in both face-to-face and online classroom conditions. The results for the One Way MANCOVA analyzing students' perceptions of feedback were not significant for feedback conditions. A supplemental follow-up using a One Way Analysis of Variance for feedback type was conducted and concluded that Gender and the feedback condition by gender were also not found to be significant.

Research question number four wanted to understand how business-communication students describe their experiences using face-to-face and online formative feedback as a strategy for improving student learning. Analysis of qualitative research question number four produced varied results. Student interviews suggest that many students value the use of face-to-face feedback as a tool leading to formative assessment, and information provided was beneficial to understanding and completing assignments. Nevertheless, such value was not revealed in the students' qualitative responses to the efficacy of the online feedback method.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduction

The purpose of this concluding chapter is to synthesize key findings of the research study, as well as to provide discussion and concluding remarks about the research analysis. In addition, another intention of this chapter is to deliver the interpretive analysis in such a way that it links specific findings to researched literature and noted conclusions to the importance of peer feedback in association with the formative learning process. Furthermore, the prospect of future research is also suggested.

Elements of the literature suggest that, though peer assessment has been used and studied within other disciplines, only a handful of research studies have been conducted to investigate the use of peer feedback as a formative-assessment method for promoting learning in business-communications courses. Lynch (1992) incorporated peer feedback as a technique for teaching writing skills to students enrolled in an undergraduate business-communication course. Lynch's research found the use of feedback may be a very important factor in online environments, more-so than in traditional classroom environments as indicated by Palloff & Pratt, (2001).

In addition, noting the changing nature of online courses from the 1990s to today due to enhanced user interface, connection links, and Internet speed, the benefits of using online learning environments have increased in focus for

facilitating peer feedback and formative assessments. Furthermore, Ko & Rossen, (2001) state that the lack of student feedback in courses is more likely to cause students to disconnect from online materials or environments more so than in face-to-face courses. In linking peer feedback to formative assessment, it is noted that, according to Bransford, Brown, and Cocking (2000), the process of formative assessment is continuous and is intended to improve a student's performance in a course, improve students' learning outcomes at a program level, or enhance institutional desired results.

Increasingly, peer-to-peer assessment has been used as supplemental to the formative-assessment process. Peer assessment has been defined as a process in which individuals are rated by their peers (Falchikov, 2001). In the peer-assessment process, class members selectively grade the work of other peer members, or engage in constructive critiquing of another's work assignments, and provide feedback. The desired result is for students to learn from each other (Falchikov, 2001).

Within this study, a major aspect of the literature review focused on the noted works of Lizzio and Wilson's 2008 research study, *Feedback on Assessment: Students' Perceptions of Quality and Effectiveness*. Lizzio and Wilson's study provided the bases for a questionnaire to assess participants' perceptions of their feedback experience in face-to-face and online feedback conditions, course grades, and individual interviews. The questionnaire is known as the Assessment of Feedback Questionnaire (AFQ) (Lizzio & Wilson, 2008). The purpose of Lizzio & Wilson's study, as well as this study, is to rate students' perceptions of their feedback experience in the dimensions of Development, Encouragement, and Fairness.

Prior to both students working the Negative and Direct Message Assignments, a principal components analysis was conducted to determine if the items for the AFQ formed the same factor structure as for the original factor structure for the AFQ reported by Lizzio and Wilson's (2008) study. Results from the analysis found that the factor structure for BMGT 205 students mirrored that of the original AFQ developed in 2008.

Research Question 1: How do business-communication students perceive the use of face-to-face and online peer feedback?

Results for both the positive and negative message show that, overall, students "agreed" that the feedback was developmental in that it helped them to improve, and was encouraging and fair. The lowest level of agreement was for the statement, "Feedback was provided that I could use for future assignments" (positive message) and "Marker offered opportunities to clarify their comments" (for the negative message). However, students overall disagreed with statements related to inconsistency of feedback, difficulty reading marker's comments, difficulty understanding feedback, and unknown grading expectations.

Many of the student disagreements with statements related to inconsistency of feedback and difficulty reading marker's comments were found to be tied to the online process as specified in interview comments associated with the qualitative research question four. From the students' interview comments, it is further suggested that, through the online process, it was difficult to fully understand the marker's comments as they related to certain aspects of the assignments. When noticeable differences in performance exist between learners, assessments may accurately reflect such contrasts

because they are reflective of the contribution that a student member may have made to the collective learning practice (Williams, 1995). On the other hand, the finding results of both the positive and negative messages show the dimensions of Development and Encouragement to be consistent with findings from Lizzio and Wilson's (2008) research.

Results from this study found that the dimension of Fairness displayed the lowest agreement levels of all of the AFQ dimensions. From responses, the dimension of Fairness indicated by the individual- and group-interview data, it is apparent that students took issues with the marker's feedback assessments and its usefulness. It is possible that the low agreement levels resulted from participants not completely comprehending the assignment's proper protocol procedures for peer feedback transfer relative to both types of assessment conditions. In other words, additional pre-training in how to give and receive peer feedback may have been warranted.

The low agreement levels for Fairness in the context of the Negative Message Assignment may have resulted from several contributing factors. One such factor may have been due to the assignment complexity that introduced new business-writing principles that required students to complete their assignment using a discrete style of transparency and proper business tone. Moreover, later in the semester when students were required to give and receive peer feedback, they may have experienced both "feedback overload and feedback burnout." Such speculative phenomena could have been an influential factor giving rise to a heightened degree of apathy in giving, receiving, and applying peer feedback resulting in lower agreement levels within the dimension of Fairness.

Like the findings of this study, the findings of the Lizzio and Wilson (2008) study suggested that students were able to describe the assessment qualities of peer feedback that they did value as well as the peer feedback they did not value. The meaning of students' perceptions of peer feedback could be understood in the contextual dimensions of Development, Encouragement, and Fairness. A range of personal attributes, such as age and gender, and academic variables, such as ACT/SAT scores, did not significantly have an influence on the perceptions of feedback assessment. Lastly, although all three feedback dimensions correlated positively with the rating of effectiveness, the dimension of Developmental feedback was most intensely aligned with the learners' appraisals of effective assessment peer feedback.

Research Question 2: Do business-communication students' perceptions of peer feedback differ by face-to-face and online classroom conditions?

Research question two was posed to determine if students' perceptions of feedback differed by feedback condition (face-to-face or online). The feedback type was significant when comparing face-to-face and online conditions for Development and Encouragement. Students in the face-to-face condition expressed significantly higher mean positive perceptions than students in the online condition. Likewise, students in the face-to-face condition expressed significantly higher positive perceptions of Encouragement than students in the online condition.

The findings in research question two are reinforced by written comments and remarks focus-group members made in answering the qualitative research question (#4). Results suggest that students experienced difficulty with the online feedback method due

to several convergent factors that can be supported through the literature. This finding is supported by one student whose interview response states, “There were not many suggestions about areas I could improve. It was difficult to know what to fix because there are no corrections made on a physical piece of paper.” Another cited interviewee states, “I could not understand when I was told to rearrange certain sentences. It would have been easier to ask the reviewer in person.”

Falchikov (1995) suggests some students might not be disposed to consent to any responsibility for assessment of fellow peers. If true, then such adverse attitudes can create difficulties with the peer feedback dimensions as outlined by Lizzio and Wilson. Furthermore, Byard (1989) suggested the monitoring of student feedback groups to guard against the abuse of peer relationships based on an unequal balance of power. Such negative relationships can lead to unfair feedback assessments. Byard goes on to suggest that student new to methods in a peer-assessment experience may show concern over matters of validity and reliability. Overall, results from this study suggest that the online method of peer feedback used in this study requires a higher degree of local protocol reliability and validity before it could be deemed dependable for implementation in both feedback conditions.

Several individual and group remarks concerning both conditions of peer feedback provided insight into several student concerns. One example reflecting the issue of reliability with the online condition can be ascertained from the following interview comment, “My concern was not understanding the feedback I was given online, then having to ask a question and not having the reviewer reply to me before the deadline.

Face-to-face is a quicker process." Another interview statement relating to the matter of reliability and student feedback training and protocol validity can be deduced from the following statement, "I'm concerned about the online feedback, for me, it wasn't very helpful. The online can be confusing because you don't get to talk to the editor, if you don't understand what or where the errors you made are." It is believed that both of these comments can be attributed to the lack of a comprehensive student pre-training program dealing with how to give, and make use of, peer feedback and the need for clear, as well as concise, protocol instructions on how to give, post, solicit, and use peer feedback.

Results from this study are similar to findings from Byard's study (1989), which found that students were concerned about validity and reliability. Another comment from student interviews seems to support Falchikov's (1995) suggestion that some students might not be disposed to consent to any responsibility for assessment of fellow peers. This can be deduced from the following interview statement, "I believe that students get as much as they put into the feedback. Unfortunately, some students give zero feedback. I believe we should be able to grade our reviewer." Furthermore, the following statement can be viewed as supportive of Byard's (1989) suggestion that peer relationships based on an unequal balance of power can lead to unfair feedback assessments (real or perceived). "Peer reviews only work when your partner is at/above your level; if you get a partner that doesn't understand the assignment or is not a good writer, they can't really offer you constructive feedback."

Research Question 3: Does gender affect business-communication students' perceptions of the effectiveness of peer feedback in both face-to-face and online classroom conditions?

Research question three was posed to determine if students' perceptions of feedback differed by feedback condition (face-to-face or online) and by gender. The results for the One Way MANCOVA analyzing students' perceptions of feedback were not significant for feedback condition. In addition, a follow-up One Way Analysis of Variance for feedback type was conducted, and concluded that Gender and the feedback condition by gender were also not found to be significant.

Although the feedback conditions by gender were not found to be significant, when such findings are viewed in association with literature on gender and feedback, two seemingly contradictory views surface. There are elements of literature that propose that females exhibit inclinations toward being more proactive and receptive to the perspectives of others and a willingness to integrate the perspectives of others with their own views. In addition, males have a propensity to focus relative to their own perceptions (Boud, D. & Falchikov N., 1989). Boud and Falchikov further suggest that such gender appearances might propose that supportive learning projects may appeal more to female students than to male students. If this notion is true, then it can be deduced that females are more inclined to show a higher degree of Development, Encouragement, and Fairness (dimensions outlined by Lizzio and Wilson) over their male peers when providing and receiving feedback.

An opposing view presented in the literature and that supports research question three findings can be found in Elizabeth Tomlinson's 2009 study, *Gender and Peer Response*. It describes that learning-group members participate in "culture building" wherein codification of norms, rules, and behavior guide group interaction. If this notion is true and "culture building" has occurred in the student groups in this study, then it can be deduced that gender appearances would not be as diverse as Boud and Falchikov suggested, leading to no gender difference in the view of the peer-feedback conditions.

Research Question 4: How do business-communication students describe their experiences using face-to-face and online formative feedback as a strategy for improving their learning?

Analysis of qualitative research question number four produced mixed results. Student interviews suggest that many students value the use of face-to-face feedback as a tool leading to formative assessment, and information provided was beneficial to understanding and completing assignments. Nevertheless, such worth was not shown in the students' qualitative responses to the efficacy of the online feedback method.

In regards to online feedback, students' suggestions ranged from adding more feedback time, modification of the protocol by having students upload paper assignments to the Desire-to-Learn (D2L) student management system, or not employing an online form of peer feedback. These views are perhaps the result of students' perceptions of fairness (Lizzio and Wilson, 2008) related to the online feedback validity of instructional protocol, online feedback design, and employment.

Implications for Practice

If instructors or teaching facilitators intend to use face-to-face or online peer feedback as a technique to supplement formative assessment, this researcher recommends that procedures and protocols be well thought out in advance of employment of such methods. Such approaches to peer feedback should be tested and retested to ensure students experience Development, Encouragement, and Fairness throughout the learning process. Not to do so can have adverse consequences on students' learning experiences and formative-assessment outcomes (Ferris, 1999; Topping, 1998). When peer feedback procedures are used correctly and wisely, this method of formative assessment can be beneficial to students and their learning environments (Mory, 2004; Topping, 1998).

Based on the findings of this study, there are several practices that can be recommended for implementation. First recommended practice: before students are allowed to evaluate the work of a fellow peer, they should first show that they can critically assess their own work. It is suggested this practice be done under in-class instructor supervision. A prelude to this practice may require proficiency instruction and training in how to properly give peer feedback. This first practice would aid students in their understanding the dimension of Development. Second recommended practice: the instructor encourages students to use candor with their feedback comments by signifying good points and by offering the receiver opportunities for clarification of feedback remarks. This second practice would aid students in their understanding the dimensions of both Development and Encouragement. Third recommended practice: it is suggested that the instructor provide advice to students on how to avoid giving feedback that is

inconsistent or contradictory. This third practice would aid students in their understanding the dimension of Fairness in giving peer feedback.

Implications for Further Research

Results of this research study can provide the bases for a future inquiry of online peer-to-peer feedback as a means of formative assessment. Because the online feedback component of this study drew several adverse student comments, it is recommended that a future study be undertaken to observe only online methods of peer-to-peer feedback that can lead to favorable and beneficial formative assessment. Possible variables a researcher may consider using in a future research study of online peer-to-peer feedback might include: race, gender, age, computer-skill level, GPA, experience in giving peer feedback, as well as the degree of postsecondary education.

Future research using online peer feedback may also be implemented as a formative-assessment tool for business courses other than business writing. To further research the online condition of using peer feedback as a formative-assessment tool, this researcher would recommend discrete specificity of peer-to-peer pairing groups, such as female-to-female, female-to-male, and male-to-male, to see if the three dimensions of Development, Encouragement, and Fairness as outlined in Lizzio and Wilson's 2008 study produce similar statistical outcomes. Such research pairings may help with the understanding of how, and perhaps why, gender may be influential in a student's perception of peer feedback. It is recommended that accounting and finance courses explore the prospect of using an online method of peer feedback and assessment.

However, such suggested future research may face varying degrees of limitations and potential source error that might adversely impact data outcomes.

A principal investigator conducting a future research study may face source error due to pairing students with dissimilar communication and technical skillsets, college-level experience, student attitudes towards giving and receiving peer feedback, misunderstanding of peer-review protocol instructions, class meeting times, as well as the classroom environment and aesthetics. It is recommended that these potential sources of error be contemplated before undertaking a future research study.

Conclusions and Recommendations

This research study explored several dimensions of student learning, such as formative assessment, peer feedback face-to-face, and online feedback and assessment. As indicated by Bransford, Brown, and Cocking (2000), the process of formative assessment is continuous and is intended to improve a student's performance in a course, improve students' learning outcomes at a program level, or enhance institutional desired results. At face value, this suggestion can be interpreted to mean that formative assessment will only grow in use and value in coming years. Educators must continue to look for new and innovative measures to using such assessment. Butler & Hodge (2001) suggested that peer assessment can be used as an alternative formative method of student evaluation and continues to have a profound impact on the assessment process. Butler and Hodge further suggest that research studies indicate an increase in student-to-student interactions, and those interactions are useful in facilitating learning about the ideas of

others (Butler & Hodge, 2001). Accordingly, Topping (1998) noted that the use of peer assessment can have a positive impact on a learner's understanding in the cognitive, social-development, and transferable-skills learning spheres. Rubin (2002) states that peer assessment can increase student learning effectiveness and, when conducted online, such assessment methods can provide learners with the freedom to use time and space more effectively.

This study can make a noted contribution to the literature by documenting the use of online and face-to-face peer feedback in the context that, though such formative methods have inherent and potential benefits to learning outcomes, there are no guarantees they will always produce desired results as noted in the online component of this study. However, it is not recommended that the use of online feedback be abandoned due to being too difficult to implement, but rather be viewed as a golden opportunity to fully explore, develop, and exploit to its maximum potential as a viable learning methodology.

Just as it took time for the face-to-face peer feedback technique to mature in significance as a useful assessment method, so, too, shall the practice of using online peer feedback. This will no doubt necessitate the added and meticulous attention of educators. Thus, this researcher believes that online peer feedback needs supplemental time and application to fully develop into an effective tool for learning and assessment. It is recommended that research continue in the area of online peer feedback. Furthermore, it is suggested that such research first focus on effective protocols that simplify the process so that students view it as a fair and equitable form of assessment.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

DIRECT MESSAGE & NEGATIVE MESSAGE

ASSIGNMENTS, RUBRICS & PEER REVIEW GUIDE

BMGT 205
Direct Message Assignment

Due Date Draft, for Peer Review:	October 11, 2013
Due Date Assignment, for Instructor Evaluation:	October 14, 2013

Total Possible Points: 60

Assignment Objectives:

- To demonstrate mastery of customary format for business correspondence
- To practice stating the truth while respecting the reader's / hearer's concerns
- To improve the organization, clarity, and professionalism of your writing

Scenario:

You are the manager of two Electronics Experience stores in Bozeman. These stores employ 65 people and have combined annual sales totaling more than $55 million. There are four Electronics Experience stores throughout Montana. Known for discount consumer electronics, from notebook computers to MP3 players, the Electronics Experience Corporation (EEC) has more than 53 retail stores and 1,900 employees in the western half of the United States. EEC filed for Chapter 11 bankruptcy protection from its creditors six months ago, after failing to compete effectively with Radio Shack and Super-Buy in its retail markets.

Challenge:

You have just returned from a meeting with the company's district manager, who told you and other retail store managers how EEC's chief executive officer (CEO) will deal with the corporate bankruptcy issue. EEC's CEO plans to close 21 retail outlets in 7 states and eliminate more than 660 jobs. She hopes that the corporation will emerge from bankruptcy by the end of next year. The reductions in facilities and workforce will save EEC an estimated $496 million annually.

Because EEC's future may affect Bozeman's economy, the Director of the Bozeman Chamber of Commerce is anxious to know what information you have received. Currently, the information you received from the district manager is that neither the Bozeman nor Billings EEC store is slated for closure and that no employee layoffs will be announced for the local area. There were, however, no indications that additional store reductions will not occur in the future. A possibility of a second round of store closures and layoffs may exist.

Task:

Write a one-page letter addressed to the Director of the Bozeman Chamber of Commerce. In your own words, please explain EEC's ongoing corporate changes, reassure the director with any good news you have obtained that is relevant, and acknowledge, but de-emphasize negative elements. Make sure you include only information provided to you in this assignment. State the facts of what you were told at your meeting. Remember to build goodwill with the director by writing your letter from his point-of-view. Again, the reader needs to know all what you were told.

Additional Assignment Instructions:

Your letter should be in block style, formatted in the traditional business manner. You can review the example in Figure 6.1 on page 144 in the *Essentials of Business Communication* text for reference.

Your letter should be printed in 12-point, Times New Roman font, with 1-inch left and right margins. It must be no more than one page long.

Your letter should include the following addresses in correct block letter format places:

(Your name), Manager
Electronics Experience Corporation
925 Mill Ave, Suite 755
Bozeman, MT 59715

Address your letter to:

Mr. Richard H. Knight, Director
Chamber of Commerce – Bozeman
2015 Commerce Way
Bozeman, MT 59718

- **NOTE: It is your responsibility to ensure that your final assignment posting is electronically delivered on-time to the correct / proper drop-box area. Once an assignment due date is reached, any assignment sent to or remains in a wrong drop-box for final grade evaluation, will receive zero points.**

Direct Message Rubric

Assignment Rubric:

TO:	
FROM:	
DATE:	
SUBJECT:	Direct message evaluation

Content (up to 60 points) Specific to letter: ○ Communicates that the Bozeman store is not scheduled to close ○ Provides explanation, using appropriate information, of company's anticipated changes ○ De-emphasizes any negative elements and refrains from exacerbating reader's anxiety ○ Builds reader's goodwill General: ○ Organization ○ Clarity of main points ○ Logic and support for assertions	
Writing quality (deducting as many as 40 points) Sentence structure Punctuation Other grammar Typographical and spelling accuracy	
Format (deducting as many as 20 points) 1-page length Business-letter block format	
Assignment submitted to TurnItIn.com ___Yes ___ No and within standard of originality standard ___ Yes ___ No (deducting as many as 60 Points)	
Comments:	
Grade (out of possible 60 points):	

Direct Message Peer Review Guide

Your Name: _____

Names of Persons Whose Letter You Are Reviewing:

_____

_____

Today's Date: _____

1st Impression—Appearance / Image

Quickly scan the letter.

_____ Does the page appear well organized, balanced, and cleanly printed?

_____ Is the return address correctly placed, including the street address, city, state, and zip code?

_____ Is the date correctly placed below the return address and in traditional format (Month Spelled Out the Date Numeral, Year)?

_____ Is the inside address accurate?

_____ Is the salutation appropriate and followed by a colon or comma?

_____ Are all paragraphs left-aligned and single-spaced?

_____ Are there double-spaces between paragraphs, between the inside address and salutation, between the salutation and first paragraph, between the last paragraph and complimentary close?

_____ Is the complimentary close appropriate and followed by a comma?

_____ Are the inside address, salutation, and complimentary close left-aligned?

_____ Is the letter signed in blue or black ink in the right place?

2nd Impression—Organization, Content, and Tone

Now read the letter carefully. Put asterisks (*) in the margin wherever the reading gets awkward or puzzling. Put checkmarks (√) in the margin wherever the reading goes smoothly!

_____ Does the letter open with a clear statement in the first paragraph?

_____ Does the first paragraph express good news, if appropriate?

_____ Is information in the middle of the letter presented logically and in an order that is easy to follow? Does it explain / support the first paragraph's information?

_____ Does the letter close pleasantly and contribute to the reader's goodwill in the last paragraph?

_____ Does the author avoid statements that unnecessarily create anxiety or concern in the reader?

_____ Are the facts supported with hard numbers and dollar figures?

_____ Is the bad news clearly stated?

Subsequent Readings—Readability

You are encouraged to use your own methods for analyzing a written document! However, if you need guidance, you can use the following approaches.

_____ Circle the verbs in every sentence. Are they active? Lively? Remember: "To be" verbs—"am," "is," "are," etc. are weak verbs, and you can vastly increase your writing quality by **strengthening the verbs**. Write multiple suggestions in the margins for *stronger* verbs that have similar meanings to those in each sentence.

_____ Circle the prepositions in every sentence. Ask yourself; is there a way to say this *without* using a prepositional phrase? You can eliminate *many* extra words if you **eliminate or streamline prepositional phrases**. Write in the margins your suggestions for rephrasing to eliminate unnecessary words.

_____ Look for words that are used multiple times in the same sentence or paragraph. (Also look for alternate forms of the same words—for example, "achieved" and "achievements" and "will achieve.") Recall: Repeating words can undermine their meaning—and repetition can suggest the writer lacks imagination or conscientiousness. Circle repeated words. Write in the margins suggestions for alternative word choices or phrases to **eliminate repetitious wording**.

_____ Consider the pattern of the sentences. A steady drumbeat of subject-verb-object – subject-verb-object can become boring to the reader. Make at least one suggestion for reordering a sentence, so that it begins with a subordinate clause rather than the subject. (Examples include: "When…," "While…," "During…," "Although….")

_____ Is the letter error-free in spelling, grammar, and punctuation?

Now offer face-to-face comments to the writer on each of the elements above. *A good critique includes BOTH specific praise for what is effective and specific questions or suggestions for what is ineffective.* Try to help each writer find ways to explain with confidence why they are pursuing the chosen opportunity.

Negative Message Assignment

BMGT 205
Negative Message Assignment

Due Date Draft, for Peer Review:	October 18, 2013
Due Date Assignment, for Instructor Evaluation:	October 21, 2013

Total Possible Points: 70

Assignment Objectives:

- To demonstrate mastery of customary format for business correspondence
- To practice communicating clearly a message that may be unwanted, while respecting the reader's / hearer's concerns
- To improve the organization, clarity, and professionalism of your writing

Scenario:

You are the manager of Frank's Fitness Center. One of the center's new customers, Memphis Morgan, has applied for an extended membership, which qualifies a user for all the center's testing, exercise, recreation, yoga, and aerobics facilities and programs. Applicants must have a solid credit rating to qualify for extended memberships. The multiservice program is expensive for the club to maintain because it necessitates having a large staff. Your center has other programs, including the Drop In and Work Out plan, which offers use of available facilities on a cash basis. It enables a member to reserve space on the racquetball and handball courts and to sign up for yoga and exercise classes, space permitting.

Challenge:

You liked Memphis when you met him, and he seemed greatly interested in fitness and in a healthy lifestyle. After running a credit check, though, you have learned that his credit rating is unquestionably unhealthy. His credit report indicates that he is delinquent in payments to four businesses, including Get-Fit Garage, one of your competitors. Extended membership decisions must be made based on business principles, not on how likable a customer is. Because Memphis is deeply in debt, you may actually feel guilty if you assisted him in taking on still more financial obligations.

Task:

Write a letter (using your own words) refusing Memphis Morgan's application for an extended membership but encourage his cash business. Suggest that he make an inquiry to the credit-reporting agency Experian to learn about his credit report. While everyone can receive one free credit report each year from each credit-reporting company (there are three credit-reporting agencies), he can receive a report from Experian for free if he mentions this application.

Make sure that you include information to increase the credibility of your decision, and make sure that you omit information unnecessary to share. Write your letter so that it is truthful and so that it builds the Center's relationship with Memphis Morgan, even though the application for extended membership is not accepted. Order the letter's information logically and courteously, and remember to build goodwill.

Additional Assignment Instructions:

Your letter should be in block style, formatted in the traditional business manner. You can review the example in Figure 6.1 on page 144 in the *Essentials of Business Communication* text for reference.

Your letter should be printed in 12-point, Times New Roman font, with 1-inch left and right margins. It must be no more than one page long.

Your letter should have the following addresses in the proper block document format order (view page 144 in your main text for example):

(Your Name), Manager
Frank's Fitness Center
7500 Gymnasium Way
Webster, CA 98730

Mr. Memphis Morgan
130 Sierra Drive
Webster, CA 98729

- **NOTE: It is your responsibility to ensure that your final assignment posting is electronically delivered on-time to the correct / proper drop-box area. Once an assignment due date is reached, any assignment sent to or remains in a wrong drop-box for final grade evaluation, will receive zero points.**

Negative Message Rubric

Assignment Rubric

TO:	
FROM:	Instructor
DATE:	
SUBJECT:	Negative message evaluation

Content (up to 70 points) Specific to letter: ○ Opening with a neutral statement, encouraging the recipient to continue reading ○ Explanation, using appropriate information, of company's decision processes ○ Clear communication of bad news in understated way that de-personalizes news ○ De-emphasis of negative elements with no repetition of bad news ○ Alternative explained ○ Closing with forward-looking, warm statement to build reader's goodwill General: ○ Organization ○ Clarity of main points ○ Logic and support for assertions	
Writing quality (deducting as many as 30 points) Sentence structure Punctuation Other grammar Typographical and spelling accuracy	
Format (deducting as many as 20 points) 1-page length Business-letter block format	
Assignment submitted to TurnItIn.com ___Yes ___ No and within standard of originality standard ___ Yes ___ No (deducting as many as 70 Points) Comments:	
Grade (out of possible 70 points):	

Negative Message Peer Review Guide

Your Name: _____

Names of Persons Whose Letter You Are Reviewing:

_____
_____

Today's Date: _____

1st Impression—Appearance / Image

Quickly scan the letter.

_____ Does the page appear well organized, balanced, and cleanly printed?

_____ Is the return address correctly placed, including the street address, city, state, and zip-code?

_____ Is the date correctly placed below the return address and in traditional format (Month Spelled Out Date Numeral, Year)?

_____ Is the inside address accurate?

_____ Is the salutation appropriate and followed by a colon or comma?

_____ Are all paragraphs left-aligned and single-spaced?

_____ Are there double-spaces between paragraphs, between the inside address and salutation, between the salutation and first paragraph, between the last paragraph and complimentary close?

_____ Is the complimentary close appropriate and followed by a comma?

_____ Are the inside address, salutation, and complimentary close left-aligned?

_____ Is the letter signed in blue or black ink in the right place?

2nd Impression—Organization, Content, and Tone

Now read the letter carefully. Put asterisks (*) in the margin wherever the reading gets awkward or puzzling. Put checkmarks (√) in the margin wherever the reading goes smoothly!

_____ Does the first paragraph express a <u>neutral statement (buffer)</u> to encourage the recipient to continue reading?

_____ Does the author explain the <u>process for decision-making</u> in the following paragraph(s) and convey that the matter is taken seriously?

_____ Does the author provide a *clear* but *understated* expression of the bad news?

_____ Does the author avoid repeating bad news? (Repetition serves to emphasize the news!)

_____ Does the author offer an <u>alternative</u>, if appropriate?

_____ Does the last paragraph contain a pleasant, forward-looking statement and contribute to the reader's goodwill?

_____ Is information in the letter presented logically, with topics grouped coherently together, in an order that is easy for the reader to follow?

_____ Is only accurate information (based on the assignment) included in the letter?

_____ Does the author avoid statements that unnecessarily create anxiety or concern in the reader?

_____ Does the author omit any information inappropriate to share with the recipient in this context?

Since this letter is written specifically to refuse a credit application, it is appropriate to consider the following, as well:

_____ Does the author avoid language that causes hard feelings?

_____ Does the author avoid stating anything that could cause a lawsuit?

_____ Does the letter convey that the business wants to retain the recipient as a customer?

_____ Does the letter leave open the possibility that the recipient could receive credit in the future—without raising expectations falsely?

Subsequent Readings—Readability

You are encouraged to use your own methods for critiquing a written document! But if you need guidance, you can use the following approaches.

_____ Circle the verbs in every sentence. Are they active? lively? Remember: "To be" verbs—"am," "is," "are," etc. are weak verbs, and you can vastly increase your writing quality by **strengthening the verbs**. Write multiple suggestions in the margins for *stronger* verbs that have similar meanings to those in each sentence.

_____ Circle the prepositions in every sentence. Ask yourself: Is there a way to say this *without* using a prepositional phrase? You can eliminate *many* extra words if you **eliminate or streamline prepositional phrases**. Write in the margins your suggestions for rephrasing to eliminate unnecessary words.

_____ Look for words that are used multiple times in the same sentence or paragraph. (Also look for alternate forms of the same words—for example, "achieved" and "achievements" and "will achieve.") Recall: Repeating words can undermine their meaning—and repetition can suggest the writer lacks imagination or conscientiousness. Circle repeated words. Write in the margins suggestions for alternative word choices or phrases to **eliminate repetitious wording**.

_____ Consider the pattern of the sentences. A steady drumbeat of subject-verb-object – subject-verb-object can become boring to the reader. Make at least one suggestion for reordering a sentence, so that it begins with a subordinate clause rather than the subject. (Examples include: "When…," "While…," "During…," "Although….")

_____ Is the letter error-free in spelling, grammar, and punctuation?

Now offer face-to-face comments to the writer on each of the elements above. *A good critique includes BOTH specific praise for what is effective and specific questions or suggestions for what is ineffective.* Try to help each writer find ways to explain with confidence why they are pursuing the chosen opportunity.

APPENDIX B

FEEDBACK QUESTIONNAIRE (AFQ) DEVELOPED

BY LIZZION & WILSON (2008)

Questions and Item-scale

Seven-point Likert scale (1= not at all, 4 = moderately, 7 = very)

1. Comments helped me focus on areas I could improve 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
2. Showed me how to critically assess my own work 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
3. Commented on not just what was wrong, but also what to do about it 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
4. Feedback was provided that I could use in future assignments 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
5. Critical feedback was given on the quality of the work 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
6. Marker offered opportunities to clarify their comments 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
7. Comments made me think further about the topic 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
8. Acknowledged my good points or ideas 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
9. Indicated what I had got right 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
10. Recognized the effort I had made 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
11. Positive comments were made 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
12. Gave feedback that I couldn't understand 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
13. Feedback was inconsistent or contradictory 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
14. It was hard to know what was expected 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
15. Marker's writing was difficult to read 1 2 3 4 5 6 7

APPENDIX C

INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Individual students will be randomly selected by another neutral BMGT 205 course instructor to participate in the interview process. This will be done by the neutral instructor drawing 5 numbers (ranging from 1 through 45) from folded strips of paper from a lad covered box and associating that number with a current term numerical class list of course students. The five students will be interviewed in classroom settings. The procedure will be done for each class student group. The five students will make up the focus group and asked to reply to the 6 open-ended questions below:

Interview Questions

1. In what ways did the comments helped you focus on areas you could improve?
2. What did the feedback indicated you got right with your draft assignment?
3. Give an example of feedback that you could not understand.
4. How did the comments made you think further about the topic?
5. What was the greatest concern you had about the feedback process?
6. How would you improve the peer feedback face-to- face and online process?

APPENDIX D

INTERVIEW CODING SHEET PROTOCOL

Key Legend for coding by first order number:

The first number equals the course section. Example: #2 = Course section # 2.

6 = section # 6

7= section # 7

8= section # 8

Key Legend for coding by second order number:

The second order number equals the number order of the student interviewed. Example Section # =1 indicates the first student interviewed for the study.

Key Legend for coding by inverted initials:

The First and last initials of the student interviewed are inverted using an alphabet sub-key to produce coded initials to provide a private identifier for use in the findings portion of the research study.

Inverted key used:

A B C D E F G H I J K L M N O P Q R S T U V W X Y Z becomes

Z Y X W V U T S R Q P O N M L K J I H G F E D C B A

A cross-index of coded initials to student I.D. and Interviewee name is in secured field notes.

Interviewees:

First and Secondary numbers	Initials	Male =1 Female= 2	Student I.D.
Interviewee Name			
1. 6-1	HH	2	
2. 6-2	NI	2	
3. 6-3	NV	1	
4. 6-4	NS	2	
5. 6-5	YV	1	
6. 6-6	ZS	2	
7. 7-12	IX	1	
8. 7-13	ZX	2	
9. 7-14	SW	1	
10. 7-15	OH	2	
11. 7-16	PN	2	
12. 8- 7	PQ	2	
13. 8-8	Q T	1	
14. 8-9	MD	2	
15. 8-10	NH	2	
16. 8-11	OO	1	

APPENDIX E

INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT SHEETS

Transcript from written replies to interview questions conducted on March 4, 2014 at 10:00 a.m. in Gains Hall, Room 43.

Student #_6-1-HH (Date 4/4/2014)

Individual Interview Questions to Online Surveys and Feedback

(Your written comments are welcomed) **Participation is voluntary, and you can choose to not answer any question that you do not want to answer, and you can stop at any time.**

1. In what ways did the comments helped you focus on areas you could improve?

   "The comments helped me to remember to include certain elements form the syllabus, as well as to organize and properly format my writing." Effectively communicated-feedback Focused = (B, F, R, CR) & Assignment Structure Process Focused = (DA, WM, CR).

2. What did the feedback indicated you got right with your draft assignment?

   "They indicated that I was off to a good start and that I put the negative news gently in between two buffers." Effectively communicated-feedback Focused = (B, F, R, CR) & Assignment Structure Process Focused = (DA, WM, CR).

3. Give an example of feedback that you could not understand.

   "I understood all of it." Effectively communicated-feedback Focused = (B, F, R, CR).

4. How did the comments made you think further about the topic?

"They made me see the topic in a slightly different way which allowed me to cover the requirements indicated by the assignment." Effectively communicated-feedback Focused = (B, F, R, CR).

5. What was the greatest concern you had about the feedback process?

   "I was worried about hurting people's feelings and since there wasn't specific feedback from the instructor, I was worried we may miss important elements." Miscommunicated-feedback Focused = (D, U, ER, N, ER), Assignment Structure Process Focused = (DA, WM, CR) & Protocol Structure Process Focused = (DA, CRO, CRIC)

6. How would you improve the peer feedback face-to- face and online process?

   "The professor read the drafts quickly, as well." Miscommunicated-feedback Focused = (D, U, ER, N, ER) & Protocol Structure Process Focused = (DA, CRO, CRIC)

Transcript from written replies to interview questions conducted on March 4, 2014 at 10:00 a.m. in Gains Hall, Room 43.

Student #__6-2-NI_(4/4/2014)

Individual Interview to Online Survey and Feedback

(Your written comments are welcomed)_ **Participation is voluntary, and you can choose to not answer any question that you do not want to answer, and you can stop at any time.**

1. In what ways did the comments helped you focus on areas you could improve?

   "There were not many suggestions about areas I could improve. It was difficult to know what to fix because there are no corrections made on a physical piece of paper." Miscommunicated-feedback Focused = (D, U, ER, N, ER) & Assignment Structure Process Focused = (DA, WM, CR).

2. What did the feedback indicated you got right with your draft assignment?

   "It indicated my formatting, wording of the negative news and tone was correct." Effectively communicated-feedback Focused = (B, F, R, CR) & Assignment Structure Process Focused = (DA, WM, CR)

3. Give an example of feedback that you could not understand.

   "I became a little confused while reading the last sentence of the second paragraph. This wasn't as helpful because I couldn't discuss why the reader thought it was confusing." Miscommunicated-feedback Focused = (D, U, ER, N, ER) & Assignment Structure Process Focused = (DA, WM, CR).

4. How did the comments made you think further about the topic?

   "It didn't make me think more about the topic, but it made me look over my grammar more carefully." Miscommunicated-feedback Focused = (D, U, ER, N, ER) & Assignment Structure Process Focused = (DA, WM, CR).

5. What was the greatest concern you had about the feedback process?

   "That the process isn't a discussion." Miscommunicated-feedback Focused = (D, U, ER, N, ER) & Protocol Structure Process Focused = (DA, CRO, CRIC).

6. How would you improve the peer feedback face-to- face and online process?

"I like the face-to-face feedback. The online process should be more of an instant message system." Effectively communicated-feedback Focused = (B, F, R, CR), (CRO, CR, ER), In-class Process Value Focused = (CRIC, CR, ER) & Protocol Structure Process Focused = (DA, CRO, CRIC).

Transcript from written replies to interview questions conducted on March 4, 2014 at 10:00 a.m. in Gains Hall, Room 43.

Student #__6-3-NV__(4/4/2014)

Personal Interview to Online Surveys and Feedback

(Your written comments are welcomed) **Participation is voluntary, and you can choose to not answer any question that you do not want to answer, and you can stop at any time.**

1. In what ways did the comments helped you focus on areas you could improve?

   "**I didn't think the comment for the Negative Message helped me because we had to post about it to the discussion board online. I prefer to make comments face-to-face on any document; like what we did for the Direct Message." Assignment Structure Process Focused = (DA, WM, CR), Online Process Value Focused = (CRO, CR, ER) & Effectively communicated-feedback Focused = (B, F, R, CR).**

2. What did the feedback indicated you got right with your draft assignment?

   "Positive feedback and indicating what I did correctly helped with my draft assignment. Knowing that I hit some key points, I was able to go back and read

what I needed to fix." Effectively communicated-feedback Focused = (B, F, R, CR), & Assignment Structure Process Focused = (DA, WM, CR).

3. Give an example of feedback that you could not understand.

   "The feedback was clear for the Direct Message But not for the Negative message. Example – When the comments were posted online, I had to go back and fine my mistakes." Effectively communicated-feedback Focused = (B, F, R, CR), Miscommunicated-feedback Focused = (D, U, ER, N, ER) & Assignment Structure Process Focused = (DA, WM, CR).

4. How did the comments made you think further about the topic?

   "The comments for the Direct Message helped me because I was able to get a better understanding about the topic I was talking about. It also helped me make sure I had all the events in order. The Negative message comments weren't resourceful." Effectively communicated-feedback Focused = (B, F, R, CR) & Miscommunicated-feedback Focused = (D, U, ER, N, ER).

5. What was the greatest concern you had about the feedback process?

   "I think the online feedback is not as helpful as the face-to-face feedback." Online Process Value Focused = (CRO, CR, ER), In-class Process Value Focused = (CRIC, CR, ER) & Miscommunicated-feedback Focused = (D, U, ER, N, ER).

6. How would you improve the peer feedback face-to- face and online process?

   "Make sure you put specific things the individual need to correct with both face-to-face and online feedback. Also make sure to always state the positives on the paper." Miscommunicated-feedback Focused = (D, U, ER, N, ER), Assignment

Structure Process Focused = (DA, WM, CR), Online Process Value Focused = (CRO, CR, ER), In-class Process Value Focused = (CRIC, CR, ER).

Transcript from written replies to interview questions conducted on March 4, 2014 at 10:00 a.m. in Gains Hall, Room 43.

Student # 6-4-NS (4/4/2014)

Personal Interview to Online Surveys and Feedback

(Your written comments are welcomed) **Participation is voluntary, and you can choose to not answer any question that you do not want to answer, and you can stop at any time.**

1. In what ways did the comments helped you focus on areas you could improve?

   "Comments were pretty vague. If it was a person to person discussion, I would have been able to understand my weaknesses a lot better." Miscommunicated-feedback Focused = (D, U, ER, N, ER) & Assignment Structure Process Focused = (DA, WM, CR).

2. What did the feedback indicated you got right with your draft assignment?

   "I hit all of the key points with everything being in order, indicating the "sandwich" style." Effectively communicated-feedback Focused = (B, F, R, CR) & Assignment Structure Process Focused = (DA, WM, CR).

3. Give an example of feedback that you could not understand.

"It was suggested I use stronger verbs, but I wouldn't like an example of what different words I could have used, as well as where my weak verbs were located." Miscommunicated-feedback Focused = (D, U, ER, N, ER) & Assignment Structure Process Focused = (DA, WM, CR).

4. How did the comments made you think further about the topic?

   "Didn't engage me to think further about much. Typing words can only go so far." Effectively communicated-feedback Focused = (B, F, R, CR), Online Process Value Focused = (CRO, CR, ER) & In-class Process Value Focused = (CRIC, CR, ER).

5. What was the greatest concern you had about the feedback process?

   "I really didn't like the online feedback through D2L. It was so hard to communicate my critical words through the internet." Miscommunicated-feedback Focused = D, U, ER, N, ER) & Online Process Value Focused = (CRO, CR, ER).

6. How would you improve the peer feedback face-to- face and online process?

   "**Face-to-Face is a good set up the way it is. Online process for feedback is terrible and I feel that it is a very poor way to communicate critiques over a paper that could be done in person." Effectively communicated-feedback Focused = (B, F, R, CR), Online Process Value Focused = (CRO, CR, ER), Miscommunicated-feedback Focused = (D, U, ER, N, ER), & In-class Process Value Focused = (CRIC, CR, ER).**

Transcript from written replies to interview questions conducted on March 4, 2014 at 10:00 a.m. in Gains Hall, Room 43.

Student #_6-5-YV_(4/4/2014)

Personal Interview to Online Surveys and Feedback

(Your written comments are welcomed) **Participation is voluntary, and you can choose to not answer any question that you do not want to answer, and you can stop at any time.**

1. In what ways did the comments helped you focus on areas you could improve?

   "It helped me realize my formatting details and errors." Effectively communicated-feedback Focused = (B, F, R, CR).

2. What did the feedback indicated you got right with your draft assignment?

   "That I was glad with my draft and (it) came off as friendly and sincere." Effectively communicated-feedback Focused = (B, F, R, CR) & Assignment Structure Process Focused = (DA, WM, CR).

3. Give an example of feedback that you could not understand.

   "I could not understand what I wrote that presented goodwill tone." Miscommunicated-feedback Focused = (D, U, ER, N, ER) & Assignment Structure Process Focused = (DA, WM, CR) .

4. How did the comments made you think further about the topic?

"It made me further think about the smallest formatting details." Effectively communicated-feedback Focused = (B, F, R, CR) & Assignment Structure Process Focused = (DA, WM, CR).

5. What was the greatest concern you had about the feedback process?

"The greatest concern I had was that it wouldn't be helpful but it was." Effectively communicated-feedback Focused = (B, F, R, CR), Online Process Value Focused = (CRO, CR, ER) & In-class Process Value Focused = (CRIC, CR, ER).

6. How would you improve the peer feedback face-to- face and online process?

"**Only encourage more face-to-face feedback because you can be more sincere." Online Process Value Focused = (CRO, CR, ER) & Effectively communicated-feedback Focused = (B, F, R, CR).**

Transcript from written replies to interview questions conducted on March 4, 2014 at 10:00 a.m. in Gains Hall, Room 43.

Student # 6-6-ZS (4/4/2014)

Personal Interview to Online Surveys

(Your written comments are welcomed) **Participation is voluntary, and you can choose to not answer any question that you do not want to answer, and you can stop at any time.**

1. In what ways did the comments helped you focus on areas you could improve?

"My peer reviewer was specific about what paragraph or aspect of my paper needed improvement." Effectively communicated-feedback Focused = (B, F, R, CR) & Assignment Structure Process Focused = (DA, WM, CR).

2. What did the feedback indicated you got right with your draft assignment?

   "Comments related to my organization." Effectively communicated-feedback Focused = (B, F, R, CR) & Assignment Structure Process Focused = (DA, WM, CR).

3. Give an example of feedback that you could not understand.

   N/A. "My peer-reviewer was very clear. I could understand all feedback." Effectively communicated-feedback Focused = (B, F, R, CR).

4. How did the comments made you think further about the topic?

   "Made me think about how another student would word a sentence or what they would add to make my paper stronger." Effectively communicated-feedback Focused = (B, F, R, CR) & Assignment Structure Process Focused = (DA, WM, CR).

5. What was the greatest concern you had about the feedback process?

   "If I had a different peer reviewer that wasn't specific with feedback online, I couldn't see the spelling mistakes or specific spots in the paper that need work; online is more difficult to communicate comments." Miscommunicated-feedback Focused = (D, U, ER, N, ER) & Online Process Value Focused = (CRO, CR, ER).

6. How would you improve the peer feedback face-to- face and online process?

"If paper could be uploaded online to see comments on paper that would be helpful. I believe the face-to-face for me is more effective and helpful." Protocol Structure Process Focused = (DA, CRO, CRIC) & Effectively communicated-feedback Focused = (B, F, R, CR).

Transcript from written replies to interview questions conducted on March 4, 2014 at 4:10 p.m. in Reid Hall, Room 201

Student #_7-12_IX_(4/4/2014)

Personal Interview to Online Surveys and Feedback

(Your written comments are welcomed) **Participation is voluntary, and you can choose to not answer any question that you do not want to answer, and you can stop at any time.**

1. In what ways did the comments helped you focus on areas you could improve?

   "I believe that students get as much as they put into feedback. Unfortunately, some students give zero feedback. I believe we should be able to grade our reviewer." Miscommunicated-feedback Focused = (D, U, ER, N, ER), Protocol Structure Process Focused = (DA, CRO, CRIC), Online Process Value Focused = (CRO, CR, ER) & In-class Process Value Focused = (CRIC, CR, ER).

2. What did the feedback indicated you got right with your draft assignment?

   No comment made. Miscommunicated-feedback Focused = (D, U, ER, N, ER).

3. Give an example of feedback that you could not understand.

"I did not get online feedback at all from me reviewer and did not participate in the face-to-face feedback." Miscommunicated-feedback Focused = (D, U, ER, N, ER) & Online Process Value Focused = (CRO, CR, ER).

4. How did the comments made you think further about the topic?

   "I did not get an online comment in time to review it before I turned in the paper. In fact when I looked after the due date; nothing was ever posted in the discussion section ever." Miscommunicated-feedback Focused = (D, U, ER, N, ER) & Online Process Value Focused = (CRO, CR, ER).

5. What was the greatest concern you had about the feedback process?

   "Students not getting any feedback at all; that day in class was a waste of my time. I would have been better off just working on the paper during this time." Miscommunicated-feedback Focused = (D, U, ER, N, ER), Online Process Value Focused = (CRO, CR, ER), & Protocol Structure Process Focused = (DA, CRO, CRIC).

6. How would you improve the peer feedback face-to- face and online process?

   "Have everyone do their online feedback in class, that way we know the feedback will be done." Online Process Value Focused = (CRO, CR, ER), & Protocol Structure Process Focused = (DA, CRO, CRIC).

Transcript from written replies to interview questions conducted on March 4, 2014 at 4:10 p.m. in Reid Hall, Room 201

Student #__7-13-ZX (4/4/2014)

Personal Interview to Online Surveys and Feedback

(Your written comments are welcomed) **Participation is voluntary, and you can choose to not answer any question that you do not want to answer, and you can stop at any time.**

1. In what ways did the comments helped you focus on areas you could improve?

   "The comments helped me focus on using correct language and eliminating unnecessary language and words in my projects." Effectively communicated-feedback Focused = (B, F, R, CR) & Assignment Structure Process Focused = (DA, WM, CR).

2. What did the feedback indicated you got right with your draft assignment?

   "It indicated I had all the correct parts of the assignment.' Effectively communicated-feedback Focused = (B, F, R, CR) & Assignment Structure Process Focused = (DA, WM, CR).

3. Give an example of feedback that you could not understand.

   "In the online feedback it was hard to understand which parts of my paper they were talking about." Miscommunicated-feedback Focused = (D, U, ER, N, ER) & Online Process Value Focused = (CRO, CR, ER).

4. How did the comments made you think further about the topic?

   "The comments made me view the topic from a different point of view, as well as helped me construct my sentences and paragraphs to be more understandable."

Effectively communicated-feedback Focused = (B, F, R, CR) & Assignment Structure Process Focused = (DA, WM, CR).

5. What was the greatest concern you had about the feedback process?

"The greatest concern I had, was with the online feedback. It was a lot harder to understand what my peer was trying to say and I didn't get much out of it." Miscommunicated-feedback Focused = (D, U, ER, N, ER) & Online Process Value Focused = (CRO, CR, ER).

6. How would you improve the peer feedback face-to- face and online process?

"To improve face-to-face feedback, I would make sure everyone actually had a draft and give people a little more time to go over each other's paper. To improve the online process, I would upload the document online so students can show where they think edits should be made, because it is hard to describe changes online without having the actual paper." Protocol Structure Process Focused = (DA, CRO, CRIC) & Online Process Value Focused = (CRO, CR, ER).

Transcript from written replies to interview questions conducted on March 4, 2014 at 4:10 p.m. in Reid Hall, Room 201

Student #__7-14-SW_(4/4/2014)

Personal Interview to Online Surveys and Feedback

(Your written comments are welcomed) **Participation is voluntary, and you can choose to not answer any question that you do not want to answer, and you can stop at any time.**

1. In what ways did the comments helped you focus on areas you could improve?

   "The comments helped me get a different perspective of writing and also helped me see mistakes that I had over looked." Effectively communicated-feedback Focused = (B, F, R, CR) & Assignment Structure Process Focused = (DA, WM, CR).

2. What did the feedback indicated you got right with your draft assignment?

   "The feedback usually had a few good points stating what I had gotten right. It usually encouraged me that I was focusing on the correct topic and I was hitting all of the main requirements." Effectively communicated-feedback Focused = (B, F, R, CR) & Assignment Structure Process Focused = (DA, WM, CR).

3. Give an example of feedback that you could not understand.

   "N/A No example to given." Miscommunicated-feedback Focused = (D, U, ER, N, ER)

4. How did the comments made you think further about the topic?

   "The comments helped me think about new ways to write my papers." Effectively communicated-feedback Focused = (B, F, R, CR) & Assignment Structure Process Focused =(DA, WM, CR).

5. What was the greatest concern you had about the feedback process?

"The reviewers - not taking the process seriously and writing poor feedback." Miscommunicated-feedback Focused = (D, U, ER, N, ER) & Protocol Structure Process Focused = (DA, CRO, CRIC).

6. How would you improve the peer feedback face-to- face and online process?

"Online – upload the papers with highlighted areas and comments. Face-to-Face - Allow students to take papers home and review." Online Process Value Focused = (CRO, CR, ER) & Protocol Structure Process Focused = (DA, CRO, CRIC).

APPENDIX F

TRANSCRIPTIONS OF BACK-CHECK INTERVIEWS

Below are transcriptions from field notes and recordings of back-check interviews of individuals in focus group sections. All interviews were conducted on March 11, 2014 at the times and locations indicated.

BMGT 205 Section #6 – 10:00 a.m. Location – Gains Hall – Room 43 – 4/11/2014. Six interviewees were present for the follow-up session. The members were: HH, NI, NV, NS, YV and ZS.

Interviewer: Ok, thank you for all showing up for this follow-up interview to back check the information…we will get started in just a few. First, I need to hand you back your individual interview questionnaire sheets you completed in class on March 4th. I will pass the sheets to you. I need for you to first verify that the comments on the sheet are indeed your remarks… ok, this is NV's transcribed comments…ok, here's your sheet.

Also I need to add that your name will be removed from your comments and I will substitute a unique code identifier for each of you. Any questions… here is your copy YV…I might add that you are allow to stop this follow-up interview at any time.

Ok, everyone got their comment sheet?

Interviewees replies: ZS…yea, HH…yes, YV…yes, NI…it's mine, NS…yep, NI…got it.

Interviewer: Please look over your replies and see if there are any things you would like to add or change about your replies…take a moment…..ok, any replies or comments…NONE, NONE! Well I have a few follow-up questions for some of you.

Interviewer: HH, you indicated you got something out of both methods of feedback. Do you have additional comments?

Interviewee HH: Well…I was worried that I would hard the feeling of the other person that I was reviewing, but I worked through it. I understand the process after I got started.

Interviewer: NI, you stated that you like the face-to-face, but didn't care much for the online process…tells me why?

Interviewee NI: The online feedback didn't have much of a discussion. It didn't make me think much about the topic or the grammar. I would do away with the online feedback.

Interviewer: Ok, I know our time is limited so, let me move to the next question that I have. NV, you also said the online feedback was not as helpful as the face-to-face process. Do you have any additional remarks on that?

Interviewee NV: No…I just didn't like the process. Like NI, we had a short time to do it and the feedback was not that good.

Interviewee NS: Yea, it was pretty vague. As, I said, online is terrible. I wouldn't do feedback that way.

Interviewer: Anyone else have anything to add?

Interviewee ZS: The D2L feedback worked for me. My peer reviewer gave specific feedback. I didn't have any problems.

Interviewer: Ok, anyone has other comments?.... Ok, thank you for your time.

BMGT 205 Section #7 – 4:10 p.m. Location – Read Hall – Room 201 – 4/11/2014. Five interviewees were present for the follow-up session. The members were: IX, ZX, SW, OH, and PN.

Interviewer: Ok, I'm recording now. Please look over the returned comment sheets that you completed on March 4 and let me know if the comments are the way you wrote them and if you want to make any clarification to your remarks.

Interviewee ZX: I found both the methods of feedback to be useful. However, the online feedback was a little more difficult to understand the reviewer's comments because the comments were not post to my paper. I think that should be a requirement if online is use by students in the future.

Interviewee SW: I agree. Uploaded papers should be highlighted will comments just like in face-to-face.

Interviewee OH: I don't think so. Get rid of the feedback online…it was a waste of time. The comments are vague and difficult to work with.

Interviewer: Ok, I know we are getting close to the end of our time, so do any of you have other comments to add…. Always than, thank you for your time.

BMGT 205 Section #8 – 2:10 p.m. Location – Read Hall – Room 202 – 4/11/2014. Five interviewees were present for the follow-up session. The members were: PQ, QT, MD, NH, and OO.

Interviewer: Alright, I am recording now. Hello and I thank all of you for agreeing to meet again to back-check your written comments you made back on March 4th. As any point, you can stop the interview process. Please take a look at you remakes and let me know if you would like to change or add to your remarks. Either of you can start when ready….

Interviewee PQ: The remarks on the sheet are mine. I would like to say again that I believe the D2L online feedback could work better if we had more time to complete the feedback.

Interviewee MD: As I said, both procedures are useful. Face-to-face is better because they are right there and I could ask more questions about things. You can't do that online. It is not a good was to do feedback.

Interviewee QT: That's what I say. Stick with the in-class feedback. It is more effective sitting down and talking with someone vs. over some computer waiting for their reply.

Interviewer: NH: You also stated to get rid of the online feedback. Why?

Interviewee NH: I just didn't work for me. The feedback I received was poor and at times, I did not understand what my reviewer was talking about. Face-to-face is better for peer feedback.

Interviewer: OO, you are sitting not saying anything. Do you have something to add?

Interviewee OO: Only that face-to-face is a good method…I got something out of it. The online method has to be put together better for it to be of any use.

Interviewer: We are about out of time, anybody else have anything to add? ….Ok, if nothing…thank you for your comments and your time.