

12-2016

Grammar & Writing: Pedagogy Behind Student Achievement

Cheryl M. Louis

St. Catherine University, cmlouis@stkate.edu

Follow this and additional works at: <https://sophia.stkate.edu/maed>

 Part of the [Education Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Louis, Cheryl M.. (2016). Grammar & Writing: Pedagogy Behind Student Achievement. Retrieved from Sophia, the St. Catherine University repository website: <https://sophia.stkate.edu/maed/131>

This Action Research Project is brought to you for free and open access by the Education at SOPHIA. It has been accepted for inclusion in Masters of Arts in Education Action Research Papers by an authorized administrator of SOPHIA. For more information, please contact amshaw@stkate.edu.

Grammar & Writing: Pedagogy Behind Student Achievement

Submitted on December 21, 2015

in fulfillment of final requirements for the MAED degree

Cheryl M. Louis

Saint Catherine University

St. Paul, Minnesota

Advisor_____

Date_____

Abstract

The purpose of this action research was to determine the effects of non-traditional teaching methods (not in isolation) with regards to the use of punctuation rules on student writing. The study took place in three Advanced English 9 classrooms with 78 students participating. Teaching strategies included the use of a web-based punctuation program, teacher-created and web-based instructional videos, teacher-created and web-based punctuation games, and the use of Google Docs via Google Classroom with both editing and conferencing. Data was collected through a student questionnaire, a student writing sample, a punctuation pre-test, two student writing assessments with error tally sheets via Google Docs, and a punctuation post-test. Data was also collected through teacher observations. The results indicated that the use of non-traditional teaching methods did not necessarily impact students' use of punctuation rules on student writing. However, results did indicate that students were more engaged in the study of punctuation rules and were more aware of their writing skills and deficiencies at the conclusion of the study. Results also indicated that students were able to recognize incorrect use of punctuation in writing other than their own. The implication is that student writing with correct usage of punctuation rules needs to be continuous with constant practice and feedback.

Keywords: student writing, non-traditional teaching methods, punctuation rules

Running head: GRAMMAR & WRITING

The history of teaching grammar, including the definition of grammar itself, is a long-standing debate, not only in the United States, but in other countries as well (Kolln & Hancock, 2005; Hu, 2012; Myhill & Watson, 2014). Yet, there are many educators who will still make the argument against teaching grammar despite its continued benefits to students.

One of the many benefits of teaching grammar to today's students is that it improves American College Test (ACT) scores (Kolln & Hancock, 2005; Lane et al., 2009) and prepares students for the new Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) (Kolln & Hancock, 2005). Secondly, grammar skills also are highly regarded for college academia (Bullard & Anderson, 2014). Thirdly, grammar helps both English Language Learners (ELL) students (Myhill & Watson, 2014) as well as foreign language learners (Hu, 2012; Mart, 2013) grasp English skills and concepts more effectively. Finally, knowing grammar skills improves overall writing for the classroom, college, as well as the workplace (Jones et al., 2013; Bullard & Anderson, 2014). But, how should one teach grammar that is beneficial to today's 21st century learner?

How one teaches grammar to improve language acquisition or improve writing is debatable as there are three main methods of teaching it: traditional, contextualized, or others such as the use of humor and/or games (Hu, 2012; Kolln & Hancock, 2005; Jones et al., 2013; Bullard & Anderson, 2014; Beach, 2012; Minchew & Hopper, 2008; Mart, 2013). Traditional methods include explicit instruction with materials such as lecture and/or remote exercises for reinforcement. Contextualized methods include teaching grammar through student writing and/or peer review. The latest trend is teaching grammar through the use of instructional videos and/or games along with student writing or peer review. An interesting aspect that needs to be explored further is if teachers do decide to teach grammar, why are students not able to retain the rules they have learned and apply it to their own writing?

Running head: GRAMMAR & WRITING

The reasons students do not seem to retain grammar skills and/or be able to apply it to their own writing are possibly due to improper teaching methods (Jones et al., 2013). Another reason could have to do with how the adolescent brain learns language (Hu, 2012; Myhill & Watson, 2014). A third possibility could be simply that students may not be psychologically ready for the abstract concepts grammar has to offer (Kolln & Hancock, 2005). Despite the research, students are still expected to master certain grammar skills and concepts on college entrance exams and state-mandated testing for the Common Core standards. How can educators prepare themselves to help today's students learn and retain grammar?

Given information about retention and application, there are things teachers can do to improve student writing with regards to grammar such as games, peer editing/collaboration, devices with Internetwork Operating System (IOS) capabilities, and/or individual instructional methods based upon students' needs (Bullard & Anderson, 2014; Beach, 2012; Minchew & Hopper, 2008; Kolln & Hancock, 2005). Additionally, teachers can make quality instructional videos and make them available to students using a Flipped Classroom model. With the use of technology, the possibilities are endless. Even though technology has opened up new venues for teaching grammar skills and concepts, there are still many educators who simply do not teach their students grammar even though state-mandated testing and college entrance exams require this knowledge of today's learners.

Teachers do not teach grammar for a variety of reasons: lack of skill or confidence, lack of materials/resources, do not feel it is important, and do not enjoy teaching it (Kolln & Hancock, 2005; Myhill & Watson, 2014; Jones et al., 2013; Bullard & Anderson, 2014; Beach, 2012.) If this truly is the case, then teachers need to be better supported and equipped to deal with the demands of the Common Core and college entrance exams. Teachers can be supported

Running head: GRAMMAR & WRITING

by receiving continued training and coursework in the profession itself, completing college coursework in the area of grammar before becoming a classroom teacher, and being willing to change their own perceptions about the importance of grammar on writing (Hadjioannou & Hutchinson, 2010) in high school and beyond.

For the past 20 years, I have used traditional teaching methods for the study of grammar that are not as effective as they could be in my English sections at a public high school located in rural northern Minnesota. Not only did students not know basic grammar (mechanics, usage, agreement, punctuation, parts of speech, subject/verb, phrases, clauses) and have basic writing skills coming into the Advanced English 10 course, they only made marginal gains on the skills assessed despite one day a week of explicit instruction using traditional methods. Furthermore, ACT scores on the English portion taken their junior year tend to be lower than expected despite explicit grammar instruction. This action research reflects the question: To what extent does access to instructional tutorials and/or games on grammar rules improve students' ability to retain and apply grammar rule knowledge to their future writing?

Students will be given a pre-assessment writing assignment in the form of an essay as well as a pretest concerning basic writing and grammar skills. At the end of the data collection period, students will complete a post-assessment writing assignment as well as be given a posttest concerning basic writing and grammar skills. The following methods will be used in my instruction.

- Students will work collaboratively using Google Docs and Turn It In to continually receive feedback on writing assignments.
- I will also individually conference with students via Google Docs via Google Classroom, Turn It In, and face-to-face.

Running head: GRAMMAR & WRITING

- I will use a variety of teaching methods, including the use of iPads and instructional videos, to teach grammar and writing skills.

I will share my findings with my department to help improve overall writing skills as well as improve scores on the English portion of the ACT Plan test given in 10th grade and the ACT Test given in the 11th grade. Results from last five years on these tests, at both the local and state levels, indicate a need for change.

The following review of the literature will address these essential areas: the history of grammar, why teach grammar, best practice for teaching grammar, and what can be done to support teachers in the area of teaching grammar. In the conclusion, I will discuss how the research will enrich my own teaching practices.

Review of Literature

History of Grammar Instruction

The history of teaching grammar, including the definition of grammar itself, includes a long-standing debate, not only in the United States, but in other countries as well. What started out as a Hoyt (1906) and later Rapeer (1913) study concerning the inability of elementary school children to grasp abstract grammar concepts eventually led to a grammar revolution of sorts. By 1935, the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) appointed a committee to make suggestions about the role of grammar in the English curriculum. Unfortunately, the very next year (1936), study after study found that the teaching of formal grammar in isolation was ineffective (Kolln & Hancock, 2005).

It was not until the 1950s and 1960s that a new way of teaching grammar emerged. Chomsky's generative-transformational grammar, one of phrase-structure rules and transformational formulas, was something of note, although he never intended that his theory to become pedagogy. However, that did not seem to matter. Soon, his structure rules and

Running head: GRAMMAR & WRITING

grammatical formulas were appearing in textbooks. This “new grammar” did not last long, however, as teachers were inadequately trained for grammar that looked more like math than linguistics. As a result, teachers continued to teach the eight parts of speech as it was familiar to them (Kolln & Hancock, 2005).

In a convention held in 1963, based on the excitement for a different way of teaching grammar, the NCTE published an “anti-grammar statement that turned into a storm surge of hurricane strength—a statement that continues to inform the profession’s negative grammar philosophy” (Kolln & Hancock, 2005, p. 15). Then when a study conducted in London by Roland Harris came out that said “harmful effect on the correctness of children’s writing,” (p. 16) the United States further developed the anti-grammar policy that dominated the American English curriculum for decades (Kolln & Hancock, 2005).

By 1966, at a seminar on the teaching of English that was held at Dartmouth College, it was decided that a “learner-centered” (Kolln & Hancock, 2005, p. 16) view of education needed to be embraced. In this, concepts such as free writing, journaling, peer review, along with encouraging students’ personal expression in writing, gave way to the replacement of formal, traditional study of grammar. In *Writing for Power* by Elbow (1981), he stated that grammar interfered with writing:

“Learning grammar is a formidable task that takes crucial energy away from working on your writing, and worse yet, the process of learning grammar interferes with writing...For most people, nothing helps their writing so much as learning to ignore grammar” (p. 16).

In 1968, even using the term “standard English” was seen as elitist and an “affront to students whose home language deviated from that so-called standard” (Kolln & Hancock, 2005, p. 17). Despite a small effort to reinstate grammar instruction in a back-to-basics movement of the 1970s—mostly driven by public dissatisfaction with student achievement—in 1985 the

Running head: GRAMMAR & WRITING

NCTE stated the following: “ample evidence from 50 years of research has shown the teaching of grammar in isolation does not lead to improvement in students’ speaking and writing, and that in fact, it hinders development of students’ oral and written language” (p. 17-18). Although many teachers continued to teach grammar, often behind closed doors, there were many school districts that simply removed it from the curriculum (Kolln & Hancock, 2005).

The NCTE’s anti-grammar policy has led to the production of teachers who most likely did not take a modern grammar course in college, let alone study grammar in their middle and high schools before attending college. Recently, there has been a surge to bring grammar back to the K-12 curriculum in the advent of statewide testing policies. Additionally, *No Child Left Behind* has also forced schools to take another look at their curricula with the advent of mandated, statewide standardized testing which includes demonstrations of grammar knowledge. The new SAT has begun testing grammatical structures in context and requires a timed essay (Kolln & Hancock, 2005), and the ACT has an English portion which measures a student’s rhetorical skills such as style, organization and strategy, as well as mechanical skills, such as sentence structure, basic grammar, and punctuation (Lane et al., 2009) in addition to an optional timed essay. Most colleges in the United States require either the SAT or ACT for admission, and the ACT is now accepted by almost all colleges in the United States (Lane et al., 2009). Finally, grammar in the United States is “principally data-driven through Common Core Standards...and two of the three Language Anchor standards relate to accuracy and avoidance of error” (Myhill & Watson, 2014, p. 43). If students are to be judged based upon these college entrance exams which include the testing of grammatical concepts as they relate to writing, then they should be taught those concepts somewhere in their education by teachers who are knowledgeable in the area of grammatical concepts.

Running head: GRAMMAR & WRITING

Why Teach Grammar?

As noted earlier, the history of grammar instruction over the past 50 years is one of “contestation, debate and dissent: and 50 years on we are no closer to reaching a consensus about the role of grammar in the English/Language Arts curriculum” (Myhill & Watson, 2014, p. 41). However, as stated previously, there are good reasons to teach it: knowing grammar skills improves college entrance exam scores (Lane et al., 2009), aids students in obtaining better grades in college coursework, and improves the quality of writing in the workplace as well as trust in the public’s eye (Bullard & Anderson, 2014).

Current college entrance exams require grammatical knowledge. The ACT is taken by 11th grade students across the country each year, and admissions committees use these scores to “compare the academic achievement of applicants and to draw inferences about the probability of successful performance at the university level” (Lane et al., 2009, p. 4). Students performing well on a college entrance exam could receive better financial aid packages or benefit from scholarship money that can be applied towards college tuition.

In addition to teaching grammar to improve college entrance exam scores, some college professors report that many students are not adequately prepared for college writing. Students lack basic writing skills and are becoming frustrated by poor grades that result from “grammar deficiencies” (Bullard & Anderson, 2014, p. 5).

Finally, a 2004 survey of 120 American corporations shows that clear writing is important in both hiring and promotions. Furthermore, employers spend approximately \$3 billion a year teaching employees how to write because their employees lack the necessary grammar skills connected with writing. In a 1984 an American Society of Newspaper Editors study found that accuracy played a role in the decline of media credibility. Several years later, a similar study

Running head: GRAMMAR & WRITING

concluded that it specifically was an increasing number of errors that contributed to the decline. In fact, “A majority of readers cited spelling and grammar errors in their local newspapers as a reason they lost faith in the media” (Bullard & Anderson, 2014, p. 6). It stands to reason, then, that at the very least basic grammar writing skills need to be taught in secondary classrooms.

Grammar Pedagogy

Over the past 50 years or so, there have been a number of research studies or meta-analyses concerning the effect that grammar teaching has on student writing; all of those “concluded that the teaching of school grammar has little or no effect on students” (Myhill & Watson, 2014, p. 47). As a result, recent research in the area of grammar instruction, as it pertains to writing suggests a different method, other than the traditional method, should be used. This method involves teaching grammar in context rather than in isolation.

A study done by Fearn and Farnan (2007) found “strong positive effects on students’ writing in high schools when teaching made connections between the grammar being taught and children’s writing” (Myhill & Watson, 2014, p. 49). It is suggested, then, that *writing drives the grammar and not the other way around* as previously thought. In other words, the role of grammar in the English Language Arts curriculum is one that “promotes students’ explicit metalinguistic understanding of how grammar choices shape meaning in texts and of the writing choices available to them, founded upon a descriptive, functionally oriented understanding of grammar” (Myhill & Watson, 2014, p. 54).

Prescriptive grammar is the study of how language should be used and how the rules are used; descriptive grammar, on the other hand, is looking at language that is already in use. A prescriptivist theory says the importance of grammar is securing correctness in written expression; a descriptivist theory believes the importance of grammar is to illustrate how written

Running head: GRAMMAR & WRITING

text generates meaning in different contexts (Jones et al., 2013). The study conducted by Jones, Myhill, and Bailey (2013) sought to investigate whether the use of teaching materials which embedded grammar teaching within teaching units for writing improved students' performance in writing. Both groups of students were taught the three types of writing over the same period, addressing the same curriculum teaching objectives, and producing the same written pieces consisting of a fictional narrative, a written persuasive speech, and a poetry portfolio of three poems with reflective annotation. Both groups were given the same set of stimulus materials and resources, but only the intervention group had detailed teaching units, planned at lesson level, in which grammar was explicitly taught. The results were as follows: the embedded teaching of grammar in the context of writing had an overall beneficial effect on students' achievement in writing, with the more able writers receiving the most benefit. This study also concluded that the intervention was most effective with teachers who had between 5 and 10 years of teaching experience (Jones et al., 2013). In other words, able-writing students benefitted more with a teacher who knew the material. Clearly, there is a positive relationship between grammar and writing.

Grammar Instructional Strategies

If one is not going to use traditional methods such as textbooks and remote exercises for teaching grammar, there are alternative ways teachers can improve student writing with regard to grammar such as games, peer editing/collaboration, devices with IOS capabilities, and/or just-in-time teaching based upon students' needs.

According to Bullard and Anderson (2013), students are more apt to embrace learning grammar by playing games. They state, however, that although there is no guarantee that students will learn grammar concepts through games, the evidence shows that students will be

Running head: GRAMMAR & WRITING

more engaged in the learning process. Games offer qualities such as immediate feedback, where students can see improvement quickly with the perception of “feeling good at something” (Bullard & Anderson, 2013, p. 8). When students play games they often have teammates depending on them which motivates them to work harder. Finally, games require students to pay attention in class (Bullard & Anderson, 2013). In Bullard and Anderson’s study (2013), they wanted to determine whether students’ mastery and retention of basic grammar skills improves more by playing games than by traditional methods of grammar instruction. They taught students in a beginning editing course basic grammar skills: one semester with PowerPoint presentations followed with traditional exercises and one semester using games such as *Jeopardy* and *20 Questions*. All students took a grammar skills pretest at the start of the semester as well as a posttest at the end of the semester. The pretest scores between the two groups did not have a significant difference. Both groups showed some benefit from the instruction. There was, also, however, not a significant difference between the two groups aggregate scores on the posttest. However, they did find that for lower-scoring students, the games type of instruction yielded positive results. Additionally, there were three students in the traditional group who scored 100% on the posttest but six in the games group scored 100% on the posttest. Finally, a survey was given to the students of both semesters. Both groups were asked in an anonymous survey, “How interesting did you find last week’s lesson?” to which 62% of the games group responded with “very interesting” while 49.4% of the traditional group responded with “somewhat interesting” (Bullard & Anderson, 2013, p. 11). Even though students showed gains with both methods, students with the lowest scores on the pretest had the most gain in the games group. Overall, whether or not games improve learning grammar concepts more than direct instruction, students felt the lessons were more interesting when games were added to the curriculum.

Running head: GRAMMAR & WRITING

With the growing trend of 1:1 devices in classrooms across the globe, there are several ideas and curriculum advancements being made that are helping students collaborate in ways they never have been able to before. According to Richard Beach (2012), technology fosters “collaborative reading, writing, discussion, and gaming, allowing students to share their work in a larger public square with competing interests” (p. 48). In a study done in Maine on the use of laptops, there was a significant increase in students’ writing scores (Beach, 2012). Furthermore, in an argumentative writing comparison of game-based instruction versus story-based instruction, it was concluded that gains were higher for the game-based group, and students in the game-based groups were more engaged, more motivated, and had fewer teacher reprimands to stay on task (Beach, 2012). In addition, Beach (2012) reports that teachers who use video conferencing for the purpose of giving feedback led to positive increases in students’ reading and writing test scores, along with motivation, retention, and self-esteem.

If the use of instructional videos and/or the use of games potentially increases scores for the lowest groups and engages the majority of the groups, why not make a curriculum change to include these types of materials in the area of the study of grammar?

Teacher Perceptions Concerning Grammar

Teachers may not teach grammar for a variety of reasons: lack of skill or confidence, lack of materials—or resources—do not feel it is important, or they do not enjoy teaching it. According to Kolln and Hancock (2005), teachers are “happy to go on record as knowing nothing whatsoever about the grammar of their native language” (p. 21). However, the fault does not seem to lie with teachers, especially those of the past several decades where grammar was not even a part of their school’s curriculum. Some of those students have even become English teachers—without knowledge of grammar. Yet, it is expected that English teachers teach the

Running head: GRAMMAR & WRITING

connection between formal choices as well as the rhetorical aspects of writing (Kolln & Hancock, 2013). According to Myhill and Watson (2014), the literature shows a trend among teachers “to view grammar as reactionary and restrictive, to value it less than literary aspects of the subject, and to be anxious about teaching it” (p. 50). Yet, in the United States, the Common Core as well as various standardized tests demand students to know grammatical constructions. As a result, there is widespread agreement that even if students do not need to know all grammar has to offer, teachers’ grammatical knowledge needs to be in place (Myhill & Watson, 2014). Jones, Myhill, and Bailey (2013) agree that teachers do not have the grammatical knowledge needed to teach grammar with confidence. This lack of confidence in turn leads to students not being taught grammar or being taught inaccurately. As the debate continues even today, there is “an emerging consensus that grammar may be important in developing learners’ understanding of how language works and, specifically, how grammar choices are significant in shaping and constructing meaning” (Myhill & Watson, 2014, p. 53). Furthermore, the teaching of grammar promotes “students’ explicit metalinguistic understanding of how grammar choices shape meaning in texts and of the writing choices available to them, founded upon a descriptive, functionally oriented understanding of grammar” (Myhill & Watson, 2014, p. 54). Bullard & Anderson (2014) further state that lack of grammatical skills being taught in today’s K-12 classrooms has left many students unprepared for college writing classes. There seem to be discrepancies between what colleges want from their entering students as far as writing skills and what high school teachers actually teach. A 2009 national curriculum study by ACT, Inc., found that college instructors rank usage and punctuation as more essential for success in English and writing than do high school teachers (Bullard & Anderson, 2014). Bullard and Anderson (2014) further cite Weaver’s findings:

Running head: GRAMMAR & WRITING

“Grammatical concepts must often be taught and retaught, to individuals as well as to groups or classes, and students may long afterwards continue to need guidance in actually applying what they have, in some sense or to some degree, already learned. There is no quick fix” (p. 7).

Despite the continued importance of grammar in writing as well as various standardized testing, grammar is not being taught in many middle schools and high schools.

Support for Teachers

Finally, teachers can be supported by continued training and coursework in the profession itself, taking college coursework that involves the study of grammar and writing before becoming a classroom teacher, and being willing to change their own perceptions about the importance of grammar knowledge on writing ability (Hadjioannou & Hutchinson, 2010). In their study, pre-service teachers were asked about their concerns for teaching grammar. They then were asked to take a survey; 94% of the respondents reported that they had had formal grammar instruction but none of them expressed a high understanding of it. Furthermore, on a scale 1-5 with 5 being the highest, these pre-service teachers were asked to rank their knowledge of grammar; 87% chose 3 or below. Finally, the pre-service teachers took a pretest. The average score was 51.6%, with a low range of 35 to a high of 85 (Hadjioannou & Hutchinson, 2010). Pre-service teachers expressed things like

“I had many English classes throughout my school years, but I cannot remember having too many direct grammar lessons. I remember lessons about different parts of speech and how to identify and use them, but never why we use certain words and structures over others” (p. 97).

The pre-service teachers were then asked to create lesson plans based on various aspects of grammar. Each week they would receive guidance in the form of peer feedback on how to make the lessons even better. By the end of the semester, the pre-service teachers began to understand the importance of learning the grammar in order to be a well-prepared teacher. For

Running head: GRAMMAR & WRITING

example, one teacher noted that she could "...be aware not only of where students come from, but I also need to dig deeper and really assess where they are in their proficiency so I can guide them better" (p. 101). Ultimately, the study found that having grammar gaps can be a detriment not only for the pre-service teachers themselves but for the students they will be teaching in their classrooms. Having a firm foundation in grammar before entering college would help as professors could build upon that knowledge instead of starting at the beginning. Colleges could then help pre-service teachers learn how to teach grammar in a functional-linguistic approach that is able to then be applied to individuals in their classrooms (Hadjiannou & Hutchinson, 2010).

Discussion

The literature reveals many items of interest for my action research project. The history of grammar teaching, including the definition of grammar itself, is a long-standing debate, not only in the United States, but in other countries as well (Kolln & Hancock, 2005; Myhill & Watson, 2014). While teaching grammar improves ACT scores (Kolln & Hancock, 2005; Lane et al., 2009) and prepares students for the new SAT (Kolln & Hancock, 2005), grammar skills also are highly regarded for college academia (Bullard & Anderson, 2014). Finally, knowing grammar skills improves overall writing for the classroom, college, as well as the workplace (Jones et al., 2013; Bullard & Anderson, 2014).

The literature also highlights that how one teaches grammar to improve language acquisition (or to improve writing) is still debatable. Three primary methods of teaching grammar were prominent: traditional, contextualized, or more interactively such as with the use of instructional videos and/or games (Kolln & Hancock, 2005; Jones et al., 2013; Bullard & Anderson, 2014; Beach, 2012). The reasons students do not retain grammar skills and/or unable

Running head: GRAMMAR & WRITING

to apply them to their own writing are possibly due to the following: improper teaching methods (Jones et al., 2013), how the adolescent brain learns language (Myhill & Watson, 2014), or, that students may not be psychologically ready for the abstract concepts grammar has to offer (Kolln & Hancock, 2005). Given the information about retention and application, teachers can improve student writing using games, peer editing/collaboration, devices with IOS capabilities, and/or individual instructional methods based upon students' needs (Bullard & Anderson, 2014; Beach, 2012; Kolln & Hancock, 2005).

Finally, the literature cites that teachers do not teach grammar for a variety of reasons: lack of skill or confidence, lack of materials/resources, do not feel it is important, and do not enjoy teaching it (Kolln & Hancock, 2005; Myhill & Watson, 2014; Jones et al., 2013; Bullard & Anderson, 2014; Beach, 2012.) However, teachers can be supported by continued training and coursework in the profession itself, college coursework before becoming a classroom teacher, and be willing to change their own perceptions about the importance of grammar in writing (Hadjioannou & Hutchinson, 2010).

Methodology

Based upon the literature reviewed, I have decided to stop using traditional methods to teach grammar in relation to writing for a more contextualized approach that fosters collaboration as well as differentiation. There were a number of different paths I considered as I developed a plan for improving student writing as it pertains to grammar in my high school Advanced English 9 classroom. The format I decided upon was a Back-to-School Questionnaire, a beginning assessment essay, a punctuation pretest, four proofreading paragraphs, various instructional games and videos, two individual writing assessments, and a punctuation posttest.

Running head: GRAMMAR & WRITING

I first gave a Back-to-School Questionnaire (Appendix A) to my students to find out what they were hoping to get out of my class. Many wrote that they wanted to improve their overall writing skills, especially in the area of grammar and punctuation.

I then gave a Goals Essay (Appendix B) to all 78 of my students to ascertain their writing concerns upon coming into my classroom. They were told to use proper essay format and to use their best punctuation and grammar skills. Additionally, the test was timed; students had 30 minutes to complete their essays. The types of errors I noticed were the following: commas/comma splices, run-ons/fragments, capitalization, apostrophes, usage (verb, pronoun), agreement (subject/verb, pronoun), and commonly confused words.

Next, I gave all 78 of my students a Punctuation Pre-test (Appendix C) from www.grammarbook.com to see if they were able to recognize punctuation errors in a given set of sentences. The punctuation pretest contained 44 multiple-choice test items, and the types of errors to recognize were the following: commas, apostrophes, end marks, semicolons, colons, capitalization, punctuation with quotation marks, and writing with numbers. I used ZipGrade to determine the percent correct for each question posed for all 78 students.

On Mondays each week, I gave all 78 students a Proofreading Paragraph (Appendix D) from Education World's Every-Day Edits collection. Each proofreading paragraph contained 10 errors. The first week's proofreading errors were the following types: subject/verb agreement, comma (dates), spelling, agreement (number), usage, verb tense, underlining/italics, and capitalization. The second week's proofreading errors were the following types: apostrophe, end mark, commas (dates), usage, capitalization, spelling, and subject/verb agreement. The third week's proofreading errors were the following types: commas (appositives), spelling, usage, capitalization, and apostrophe. Finally, the fourth week's proofreading errors were the following

Running head: GRAMMAR & WRITING

types: end mark, usage, apostrophe, underlining/italics, commas (items in a series and compound sentence) and capitalization. With large group discussion, I noted the most common error types. Additionally, students received sentence practice from grammarbook.com via Google Classroom and used their iPads with Notability to complete the work.

On Wednesdays, I used instructional videos from Grammar Girl: Quick & Dirty Tips and various games like Kahoot! or Quizziz using iPads or the Web to reinforce grammar/punctuation skills taught the previous week. Students received sentence practice from grammarbook.com via Google Classroom and used their iPads and Notability to complete the work.

Every other Friday, I had students complete writing assignments (Appendix E) in conjunction with their ACT weekly vocabulary words. The assignment for Week 2 was the following: Using Google Docs, type a paragraph about how your school year is going so far using 7 of the 10 vocabulary words correctly. The assignment for Week 4 was the following: Using Google Docs, type a friendly letter to someone of your choosing discussing the positives/negatives of social media use by teens using 7 of the 10 vocabulary words correctly. For these two individual writing assignments, I tallied the following types of errors: commas/comma splices, run-ons/fragments, capitalization, apostrophes, usage (verb, pronoun), agreement (subject/verb, pronoun), and commonly confused words. These were the same types of errors I had tallied on their original essays.

Finally, I gave 73 of my 78 students the same test (Appendix C) that I had used as the pretest. I again used ZipGrade to determine the percent correct for each question posed for all 78 students.

Analysis of Data

Running head: GRAMMAR & WRITING

The study began with the Advanced English 9 students completing a Back-to-School Questionnaire (See Appendix A). The purpose of the questionnaire was to gather information about the students' thoughts concerning various aspects of English coming into my classroom. The questionnaire asked students 10 multi-part, short-answer questions, but the following two questions in particular were of significance to this study: 1. What are you hoping to learn in this class? What do you like about English? What do you dislike? 6. Do you do any writing other than what's assigned in your classes? Tell me about it! If you don't do any extra writing, why not? Concerning school writing, what kind of writing is easiest for you? What kind of writing is the most difficult for you?

In reading through the 78 questionnaires collected, 54 out of 78 students or 69% indicated that they were hoping to learn better grammar and/or punctuation rules. In response to what students do not like about English, 41 out of 78 or 53 % indicated that they did not like all of the grammar and/or punctuation rules. As far as any writing they do outside of class, 4 out of 78 or 5% stated they do extra writing other than what is assigned for school. For the 74 students who do not do extra writing, 61 or 82% stated they were "too busy" or "didn't have time." Concerning writing that is easiest for students, 49 out of 78 or 63% indicated that creative types of writing were easiest; 51 out of 78 or 65% indicated that research writing was the most difficult. Although I had a pretty good understanding of what areas needed to be addressed as far as students' grammar and/or punctuation skills, I felt I needed additional information as to the particular types of grammar and/or punctuation that required the most study.

The study continued with the students completing a Goals Essay (Appendix B). The purpose of the essay was to gather information about the students' specific writing skills and deficiencies. After reviewing and conferencing with students both individually and as a large

Running head: GRAMMAR & WRITING

group, together we determined the following areas concerning grammar and/or punctuation that needed improvement: using commas correctly, fixing comma splices, fixing run-on sentences, fixing fragments by understanding subjects and verbs, capitalization rules, apostrophe rules, verb usage and agreement, pronoun usage and agreement, and understanding commonly confused words. All 78 papers had those particular groupings of errors in varying degrees; however, all 78 essays had errors in comma usage and 18 out of 78 or 23% had errors concerning comma splices. Now that I had a better understanding of the types of grammar and/or punctuation that needed to be addressed in students' personal writing, I wanted to ascertain the particular grammar and/or punctuation skills that my students as a whole understood or could recognize given a set of questions.

The study continued with the students completing a Punctuation Pre-test from www.grammarbook.com (Appendix C). The purpose of the Punctuation Pre-test was to gather information about the students' skills. The Punctuation Pre-test covered the following areas: commas, apostrophes, end marks, semicolons, colons, capitalization, punctuation with quotation marks, and writing with numbers. The students tested, in order of deficiency, below 80% mastery in the following concepts: #2 commas with direct address; #4 with comma splices; #1 with capitalization with direction; #36 with commas and city/state; #12 with commas and essential clauses; #9, #7, #40 with commas and introductory/connecting words, terms, and phrases; #15, #6, #28 joining independent clauses with semicolons (not commas); #38 using commas before titles; #42 & #44 with hyphenating between fractions; #32 & #31 plural possessives; #13, #18, & #29 commas with interrupters; #3 & #19 questions with quotation marks; #24 & #14 commas with independent and dependent clauses; #43 commas with dates; #27 commas with independent/dependent clauses; #30 & #37 colons with a list; #33 possessive with its/it's; #39

Running head: GRAMMAR & WRITING

capitalization with quotation marks; #8 your/your're; #34 pronoun agreement; #41 non-essential commas; and, finally, #20 academic subjects and capitalization.

Of the 44 test items, 33 were not considered to be at mastery (or 80%). Of the 33 items not considered at mastery, 19 had to do with that of commas. Although I had decided to address all items of deficiency, I decided to specifically focus on that of commas since that seemed to comprise most of the punctuation errors my incoming Advanced 9 English students were making.

The study continued with the students completing a Proofreading Paragraph exercise from Education World's Every-day Edits each Monday (Appendix D). The purpose of the Proofreading Paragraph was to gather information about the students' proofreading skills. Students completed the Proofreading Paragraphs in table groups and then reported findings to the large group as needed.

The Proofreading Paragraphs covered the following areas: Proofreading Paragraph #1 subject/verb agreement, commas (dates), spelling, agreement (number), usage, verb tense, underlining/italics, and capitalization. Proofreading Paragraph #2 covered the following areas: apostrophe, end mark, commas (dates), usage, capitalization, spelling, and subject/verb agreement. Proofreading Paragraph #3 covered the following areas: commas (appositives), spelling, usage, capitalization, and apostrophe. Finally, Proofreading Paragraph #4 covered the following types: end mark, usage, apostrophe, underlining/italics, commas (items in a series and compound sentence), and capitalization. Each Monday, table groups were given the proofreading paragraph; groups were able to easily find most of the errors. The specific results were as follows: Proofreading Paragraph #1 had an average score of 7 out of 10 items correct, where commas with dates and agreement (number) being the most common errors; Proofreading

Running head: GRAMMAR & WRITING

Paragraph #2 had an average score of 8 out of 10 items correct, where commas with dates and subject/verb agreement being the most common errors; Proofreading Paragraph #3 had an average score of 6 out of 10 items correct, where commas with appositives, usage, and apostrophe being the most common errors; finally, Proofreading Paragraph #4 had an average of 7 out of 10 items correct, where commas with items in a series, commas with compound sentence, and usage being the most common errors. Although I was surprised at the low score of Proofreading Paragraph #3, more concerning was the fact that Proofreading Paragraph #2 continued to show that students did not understand commas with dates despite repetition of the concept the very next week. Overall, even though each week was comprised of different punctuation rules and their usage, commas continued to be problematic not only for my students to recognize but use correctly in their own writing as well.

Various methods were used to teach content material: grammarbook.com, Internet videos, teacher-created videos, and Google Docs editing with teacher feedback. Students completed various exercises using grammarbook.com as a guide; all worksheets (via iPad with Notability) were completed and scored during class as a whole group during class on Mondays and Wednesdays. The concepts specifically covered were the following: commas (all instances), semicolons/colons, quotation marks/question marks, parentheses/brackets, apostrophes, hyphens, capitalization, and writing with numbers. Students were then allowed to keep these sheets for studying/reviewing purposes as they had a final test at the end of the quarter over concepts covered each week. On Wednesdays, students played games like Kahoot, Quizizz, or Jeopardy! either reviewing past weeks or covering new concepts; every other Friday, there was a small writing exercise due to Google Classroom.

Running head: GRAMMAR & WRITING

The study continued with the students completing individual assignments using Google Docs (Appendix E). The purpose of the Google Docs assignments was to gather information about the students' skills after both small and large group instruction. The Google Docs, both paragraph and friendly letter, covered the following areas: commas/comma splices, run-ons/fragments, capitalization, apostrophes, usage (subject/verb & pronoun), and commonly confused words. These were the same types of errors I observed on their goals essays at the start of the study. The results from the Google Docs Paragraph were the following types of errors: 205 comma usage (clauses, phrases, dates, city/state, compound sentences), 37 comma splices, 31 run-on sentences, 24 fragments, 13 capitalization, 3 apostrophes, 34 verb usage, 16 pronoun usage, and 22 commonly confused words. The total number of comma-type errors was 273. Two weeks later, students submitted a second Google Docs Friendly Letter. The results from this second assessment were the following: 222 comma usage (clauses, phrases, dates, city/state, compound sentences), 40 comma splices, 38 run-on sentences, 24 fragments, 23 capitalization, 12 apostrophes, 13 verb usage, 15 pronoun usage, and 33 commonly confused words. The total number of comma-type errors was 300. (Figure 1)

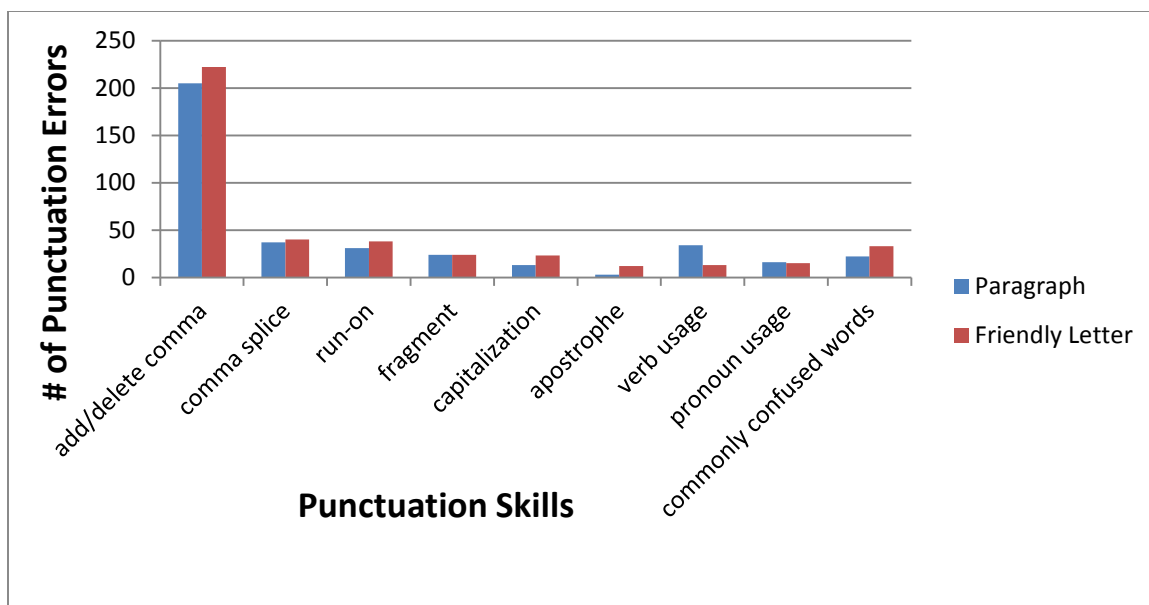


Figure 1. Number of Punctuation Errors after Punctuation Skills Taught

The study ended with the students completing a Punctuation Post-test (Appendix C). The purpose of the Punctuation Post-test was to gather information about the students' skills after approximately six weeks of large group, small group, and individual instruction. The Punctuation Post-test covered the following areas: commas, apostrophes, end marks, semicolons, colons, capitalization, punctuation with quotation marks, and writing with numbers. The students tested, in order of deficiency, below 80% mastery in the following concepts: #2 commas with direct address; #9, #7, #40 with commas and introductory/connecting words, terms, and phrases; #12 with commas and essential clauses; #4 with comma splices; #1 with capitalization with direction; #32 & #31 plural possessives; #15, #6, #28 joining independent clauses with semicolons (not commas); #38 using commas before titles; #27 commas with independent/dependent clauses; #34 pronoun agreement; #42 & #44 with hyphenating between fractions; #24 & #14 commas with independent and dependent clauses; #13, #18, & #29 commas with interrupters; #39 capitalization with quotation marks; #39 capitalization with quotation marks; #36 with commas

Running head: GRAMMAR & WRITING

and city/state; #33 possessive with its/it's; #3 & #19 questions with quotation marks; #26 connect contrasting parts of a sentence with just a comma; #43 commas with dates; #8 your/your're; #30 & #37 colons with a list; #41 non-essential commas; and, finally, #20 academic subjects and capitalization.

Of the 44 test items, 34 were not considered to be at mastery (or 80%). Of the 34 items not considered at mastery, 20 had to do with that of commas. Upon first glance, one would perhaps conclude that students had not made any progress; in fact, they had gone down by one question in particular: #26. This was the rule of connecting contrasting parts of a sentence with just a comma. On the pre-test students had achieved an 84.6% mastery; on the post-test students had achieved a mere 64.9%. In analyzing the test further, I was not able to find another question that matched this particular concept. Placing that anomalous piece of data aside, I decided to match the most commonly missed errors on the proofreading paragraphs done in small groups each week to see if students had indeed made any progress as individuals. As stated earlier, the three particular types of commas in the four proofreading paragraphs were commas with compound sentences, commas with dates, and commas with appositives. Question #24 specifically dealt with commas and compound sentences; the students' pre-test score was 44.9 % with the post-test score being 55.4%. Question #43 specifically addressed the use of commas with dates; the students' pre-test score was 51.3% with the post-test score being 64.9%. Finally, there were two different questions that addressed commas with appositives. Question #41 had a pre-test score of 78.2% with the post-test score being 77.0%, and Question #23 had a pre-test score of 92.3% with a post-test score of 93.2%. Although only Question #23 fell into the 80% mastery percentage, one can easily see from Figure 2 that there indeed was growth in three out of the four questions concerning the aforementioned particular punctuation rules of comma use.

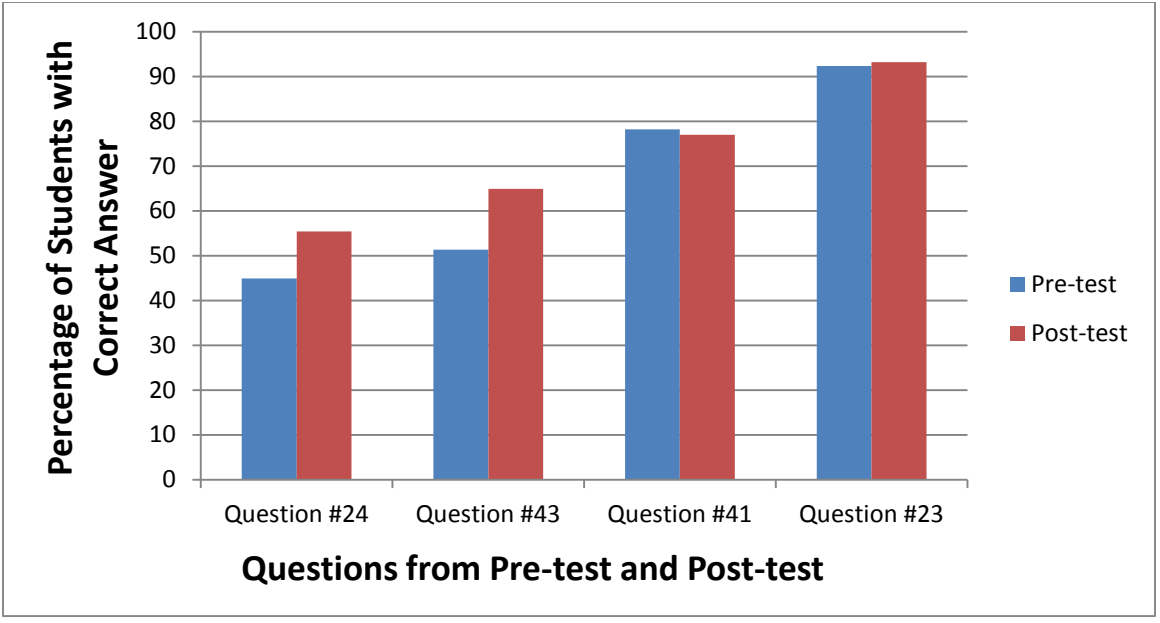


Figure 2. Percentage of Questions Dealing with Commas from Pre-test to Post-test Scores

Analyzing the pre-test and post-test data to see if students had made overall improvement with all 44 test questions yielded the following results: 73 out of 78 students took the post-test. Out of those 73, 49 or 67% showed improvement, 7 or 1% stayed the same, and 17 or 23% did worse in their overall scores. (Figure 3)

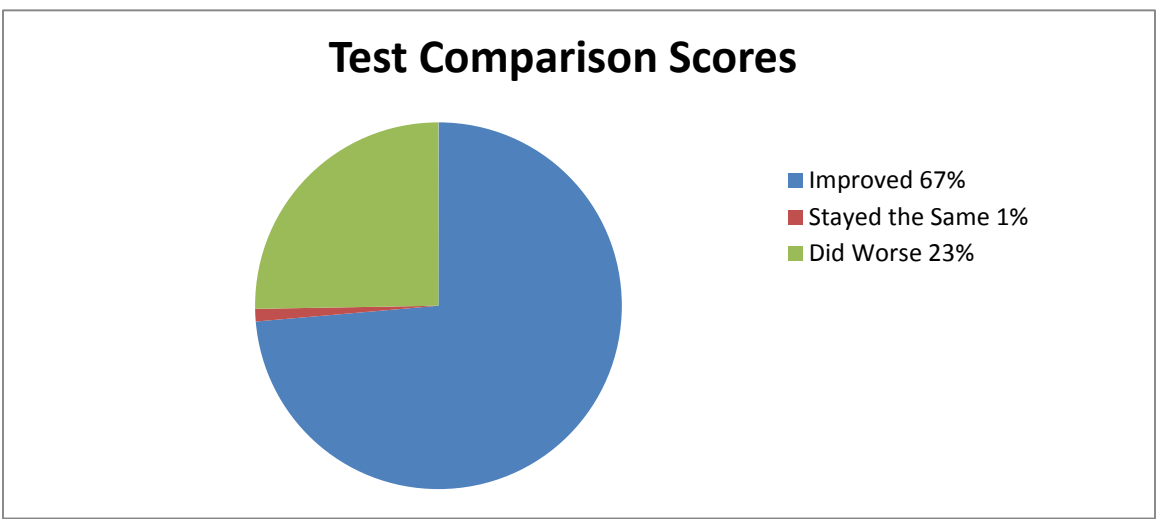


Figure 3. Punctuation Pre-test and Post-test Scores Comparison

Running head: GRAMMAR & WRITING

Overall, the results of my study showed that the non-traditional teaching practices were effective and had a positive impact on student writing as students were more aware of mistakes they made and how to correct them. In the following section, I will share my response to the results of the study. I will also include the impact these results will have on my future teaching practices as well as student learning.

Action Plan

After analyzing the results of the study, it is apparent that improving students' writing with regards to grammar and its punctuation rules needs to be a continuous process. Weekly teaching of punctuation skills in both a small and large group format followed by individual assessments every two weeks is not so concrete. Students must be given continual opportunities to practice their skills and receive lots of feedback in varying formats in order to gain the knowledge of punctuation rules that eventually will become so familiar that they transfer successfully to individual students' writing assessments.

Starting with the Back-to-School Questionnaire, I found it important to get to know what my students needed from my class this year. As stated in the previous section, the majority of students noted that they needed practice in grammar and writing skills. When I shared the results with my students, they were not surprised as they expressed such sentiments as "That's the one area where I lost points on my papers last year" or "Did you know that grammar is tested in every class, even on history projects" or "My teacher last year told us that we weren't good at grammar, but then she never taught it to us. I was scared to enter high school not knowing things." I assured the classes that they indeed would know some grammar and punctuation rules by the end of this school year. Even though I gained some good insight as to where to start this grammar and punctuation journey with my students, I think the next time I want to ascertain

Running head: GRAMMAR & WRITING

student-perceived skills I will use a Google Form with specified options in order to pinpoint exactly what it is my students feel they are strongest and weakest with regards to punctuation and writing. I believe analyzing this type of data in a different format would also prove less time consuming as well as be more accurate. Now that I had a vague idea of what to teach, I decided to get more specific in my endeavor to find out what students really needed to learn.

When I gave the Goals Essay topic to my students, I told them to do their best writing. I wanted to see the specific types of punctuation errors they made in their own writing. I had them write out their answers using pencil and paper; I also timed their writing for 30 minutes so as to mimic what an ACT writing session might be like as well as find out what their writing was like without the use of devices. Using class time avoided the students' want of using spellcheck, grammar check, etc. In other words, I wanted the data to be real and authentic. What I found was that students made a plethora of punctuation errors ranging from various comma errors to fragments to commonly confused words. Because some of the errors were so blatantly obvious, I wondered if the writing format itself or the fact that it was timed, perhaps a combination of both factors, led to poorer demonstration of writing skills. When I shared the results of the Goals Essay with my students, they reaffirmed my assumptions and told me that the pressure of having been timed along with trying to remember what proper essay format was after having been out of school all summer was difficult. They also shared with me that there were three different teachers they had had the previous year. One in particular did not spend a lot of time on punctuation skills or writing skills but focused more on oral presentations and various types of speeches instead. One student remarked, "We didn't do any writing, and the writing we did do wasn't graded on grammar. She said it was the content and how you delivered it that was important." When I use this particular assessment again, I plan to not have a particular writing

Running head: GRAMMAR & WRITING

format; changing the writing format should lessen student anxiety about meeting time constraints. Despite the various factors that may or may not have skewed my results, I decided to forge ahead with the next step of my data collection process.

Based upon the results of the Goals Essay, I decided to give a Punctuation Pre-test in order to find out exactly which punctuation rules students already knew and which ones they plainly did not know. In my initial analysis, I found that most of the punctuation skills they were lacking involved comma usage, run-on sentences, and fragments. I felt like the test indicated what I needed to focus on in the upcoming weeks; I planned my teaching methods accordingly based upon the information I had at the time.

Each week, I administered Proofreading Paragraphs to table groups to see if students could identify a given number of errors. Using Every-day Edits from www.EducationWorld.com as my guide, the students were to identify 10 errors in the paragraph ranging from commas to subject/verb agreement to commonly confused words, among others. Although table groups did well in finding the errors and had some great discussion regarding which ones they should make changes to, I quickly saw that telling students the number of errors to locate might have skewed the results of whether or not students truly understood the proofreading skills placed before them. Next time I use these Proofreading Paragraphs as part of a lesson, I will simply have an undisclosed amount of errors to see what the results may yield. I will continue to allow students to work in their table groups as the discussion I witnessed was truly an enjoyable experience.

Although the Proofreading Paragraphs were a great way to get started, students needed additional instruction on the punctuation rules themselves. Each week after the Proofreading Paragraph, I had students study and use the rules located on www.grammarbook.com to complete sentence exercises. Students worked together, and we corrected the exercises at the end

Running head: GRAMMAR & WRITING

of class. Generally, I think the exercises were successful in that they allowed students to get to know the various rules on a given type of punctuation. In addition to www.grammarbook.com, I used instructional videos from the same site along with pod casts from Grammar Girl's www.quickanddirtytips.com site. I then posted these links on Google Classroom for students to access at any time. On Wednesdays, I used gaming tools such as Kahoot! or Quizziz as a fun way to reinforce punctuation skills. Although the students loved the games, I found them to not be a good way of ascertaining what punctuation tools students were grasping as well as which rules they may need more instruction. Not only was I completely new to these types of learning tools, my students were also new to iPads. I think the more we play educational-type games, the more comfortable my students will become; I should then be able to see how to better assess their use in my curriculum. Finally, I am now aware that there are apps like MyGrammarLab where I can create hundreds of practice exercises to help my students improve their grammar. This app is part of a blended grammar course which uses a book, online instruction, and the app. Students can choose the grammar they want to study, decide how many questions they want to answer, and create their own tests. There is also a glossary feature as well as a lightbulb icon to help students locate where to find additional information in the book. Pearson, who on their website claims to be the leading publisher of English language teaching materials, is behind this blended curriculum. The only hurdle I face, even though the app is free, is my district's app acquisition policy. As it stands right now, I would have to apply to have the app put onto my students' devices and be able to justify why an entire student body should have access to this app. At this time, all iPads have the exact same apps installed on them. Since I do not currently have access to such materials, I had to find another way to assess my students' understanding of punctuation skills.

Running head: GRAMMAR & WRITING

Every other week I had students complete a particular writing assignment using 7 of their 10 ACT words for the week. The first assignment was a paragraph about how their school year was going so far, and the second was a friendly letter addressing the positives and negatives of social media use by teens. I tallied the type and number of punctuation errors on both assignments. Even though I was disappointed in the results showing that students had actually made more errors in their own writing the second time, I have a couple of reasons as to why this occurred. First of all, I was having my students use 7 of 10 ACT vocabulary words correctly in a piece of writing with a particular subject matter. Secondly, I changed the format from the first two-week period assessment to the four-week assessment period. When I do this assessment again, I am going to use the same writing format and not include the ACT word use as part of the assessment. Sharing the graph of the results with my students yielded some interesting discussion. “The words were really hard that week” or “I had never written in friendly letter format before.” They also shared that with texting or computer software with spellcheck and grammar check students are not as careful in their punctuation choices as the autocorrect features catch many of their mistakes. Finally, they told me that because I allow them to redo or retest on any given assignment the pressure is not always there to do a good job the first time. In fact, with Google Classroom, I was able to give them generic feedback like “punctuation needed” when I returned their assignments. Even though I did not require students to fix their mistakes, I had 100% of my students fix and resubmit their assignments for the option of obtaining a better grade. After this second set of tallied data, I was ready to see what my students had actually gained by giving them the same test I had towards the beginning of the study.

Despite having had over four weeks of instruction involving many different tools and resources, the data from the post-test suggested that students had not made any gains in their

Running head: GRAMMAR & WRITING

punctuation skills. Looking at my pre-test/post-test questions a bit more closely revealed that certain types of punctuation rules or concepts were represented only once on the entire test. Perhaps if more items of each type of skill were addressed, the results may have changed. The next time I give this particular pre-test/post-test, I will be sure to include more questions so that each punctuation rule is accounted for at least twice.

Overall, all of the data suggests that students did make gains in punctuation rule knowledge, they were more aware of their own punctuation usage, and they did use the feedback given by me via Google Docs/Google Classroom to improve their writing scores. Various methods were used and proved helpful to improve students' individual writing practices. I believe more time for the data collection part of the study could have produced more favorable results as writing and the acquisition of punctuation skills is one that takes time as students seem to learn in a variety of ways and move at different paces.

After analyzing the data gathered throughout the study, there were a number of areas that I feel would benefit from a few changes. First, the use of non-traditional methods of teaching grammar and punctuation in this technological age in order to keep the students of the 21st century learning and engaged needs to be an ongoing process. The tools available change daily; teachers are no longer bound to a textbook their district chose to purchase. Secondly, teaching students the importance of punctuation on the English portion of the ACT as well as how punctuation choices affect their overall writing scores in all of their academic classes is critical for their future success as it may or may not determine whether or not they attend college or attend the college of their choice. Finally, pursuing opportunities for better individualized curriculum and finding the funds necessary to do so is essential as students seem to not only learn at different paces but also seem to learn in a variety of ways. My district currently does not

Running head: GRAMMAR & WRITING

have grammar and punctuation curriculum; each teacher at each grade level simply picks and chooses the rules they feel are most important. Because there is not any type of scaffolding whatsoever, students come to the high school with highly varied skill levels making it difficult to close the gap by the time these same students take their ACT tests their junior year.

It is evident from my study that the effects of using non-traditional teaching methods with regards to the use of punctuation rules on student writing are positive. It is important to remember that writing needs to be a continuous process with quality feedback. Teachers and students should work together to individualize writing instruction as much as possible, and students need to be able to access and use the various tools the 21st century educational system has to offer. It is up to teachers as educational leaders to ensure student success in the high school academic classroom, on standardized tests such as the ACT, and in college where knowing and using punctuation skills and rules correctly is essential.

References

- Beach, R. (2012). Uses of digital tools and literacies in the English language arts classroom. *Research in the Schools, 19*(1),45-59.
- Bullard, S., & Anderson, N. (2014). "I'll take commas for \$200": An instructional intervention using games to help students master grammar skills. *Journalism & Mass Communication Educator, 69*(1), 5-16.
- Fogarty, M. (2013). Grammar Girl :: Quick and Dirty Tips™. Retrieved November 28, 2015, from <http://www.quickanddirtytips.com/grammar-girl>.
- Hadjioannou, X., & Hutchinson, M. (2010). Putting the G back in English: Preparing pre-service teachers to teach grammar. *English Teaching: Practice and Critique, 9*(3), 90-105.
- Jones, S., Myhill, D., & Bailey, T. (2013). Grammar for writing? An investigation of the effects of contextualised grammar teaching on students' writing. *Springer, 26*, 1241-1263.
- Kolln, M., & Hancock, C. (2005). The story of English grammar in United States schools. *English Teaching: Practice and Critique, 4*(3),11-31.
- Lane, K., Kalberg, J., Mofield, E., Wehby, J., & Parks, R. (2009). Preparing students for college entrance exams: Findings of a secondary intervention conducted within a three-tiered model of support. *Remedial and Special Education, 30*(1), 3-18.
- Myhill, D., & Watson, A. (2014). The role of grammar in the writing curriculum: A review of the literature. *Child Language Teaching and Therapy, 30*(1), 41-62.

Running head: GRAMMAR & WRITING

The Blue Book of Grammar and Punctuation: Grammar and Punctuation. Retrieved November 28, 2015, from <http://www.grammarbook.com/>.

(2004). Every-Day Edits - Education World. Retrieved November 28, 2015, from http://www.educationworld.com/a_lesson/archives/edit.shtml.

Appendix A

Back-to-School Questionnaire

Please answer the following questions as fully as you can. Use complete sentences and the best grammar and spelling you can. I will be the only one reading your responses, so don't be shy! ☺

1. What are you hoping to learn in this class? What do you like about English? What do you dislike?
2. What are your future schooling plans? Are you going to college? If so, are you going to a 2-year or 4-year college? What are you planning to major in at this point? What kind of job do you hope to have in the future?
3. Tell me about your favorite bands, songs, TV shows, etc.
4. Tell me about your favorite book or movie. What was the title of it? Why do you think you liked it so much?
5. What reading do you do currently? Are you reading a book? If so, tell me about it. Do you read magazines? If so, which ones? Do you read the newspaper? If so, which one? If you currently do not read anything, why not?
6. Do you do any writing other than what's assigned in your classes? Tell me about it! If you don't do any extra writing, why not? Concerning school writing, what kind of writing is easiest for you? What kind of writing is the most difficult for you?
7. What school/community activities do you participate in currently? If you don't currently participate in anything, please explain why not.
8. What are your hobbies? What do you love to do in your spare time?
9. Tell me about the most important people in your life.
10. Finally, what are you most looking forward to this semester/year? Why?

Appendix C

Punctuation, Capitalization, and Writing Numbers Pre-test/Post-test

Directions: Please mark your answers on the provided scan sheet.

1. Choose the correct sentence.
 - a. Go West three blocks and turn right.
 - b. Go west three blocks and turn right.
 - c. Go West three blocks, and turn right.

2. Choose the correct sentence.
 - a. Yes, sir, I will do it immediately.
 - b. Yes sir, I will do it immediately.
 - c. Yes, Sir, I will do it immediately.
 - d. Yes Sir, I will do it immediately.

3. Choose the correct sentence.
 - a. "How," I asked, "Can you always be so forgetful?"
 - b. "How," I asked, "Can you always be so forgetful"?
 - c. "How," I asked, "can you always be so forgetful?"
 - d. "How," I asked, "can you always be so forgetful"?

4. Choose the correct sentence.
 - a. The mayor frowned, he didn't like what he saw.
 - b. The Mayor frowned, He didn't like what he saw.
 - c. The Mayor frowned; He didn't like what he saw.
 - d. The mayor frowned. He didn't like what he saw.

5. Choose the correct sentence.
 - a. Although we have a competent staff; bottlenecks do occur.
 - b. Although we have a competent staff, bottlenecks do occur.
 - c. Although we have a competent Staff; bottlenecks do occur.
 - d. Although we have a competent Staff, bottlenecks do occur.

6. Choose the correct sentence.
 - a. I did not receive the order; therefore, I will not pay my bill.
 - b. I did not receive the order: Therefore, I will not pay my bill.
 - c. I did not receive the order; therefore; I will not pay my bill.
 - d. I did not receive the order, therefore; I will not pay my bill.

7. Choose the correct sentence.
 - a. We offer a variety of drinks, for instance: beer.
 - b. We offer a variety of drinks, for instance, beer.
 - c. We offer a variety of drinks for instance, beer.

Running head: GRAMMAR & WRITING

8. Choose the correct sentence.
 - a. Is that book yours'?
 - b. Is that book your's?
 - c. Is that book yours?

9. Choose the correct sentence.
 - a. We have much to do; for example, the carpets need vacuuming.
 - b. We have much to do for example: the carpets need vacuuming.
 - c. We have much to do, for example: the carpets need vacuuming.
 - d. We have much to do, for example. The carpets need vacuuming.

10. Choose the correct sentence.
 - a. No you cannot stay out late tonight.
 - b. No, you cannot stay out, late, tonight.
 - c. No, you cannot stay out late tonight.
 - d. No you cannot stay, out late, tonight.

11. Choose the correct sentence.
 - a. Because of his embezzling the company went bankrupt.
 - b. Because of his embezzling, the Company went bankrupt.
 - c. Because of his embezzling the Company went bankrupt.
 - d. Because of his embezzling, the company went bankrupt.

12. Choose the correct sentence.
 - a. A proposal, that makes harassment of whales illegal, has just passed.
 - b. A proposal that makes harassment of whales illegal has just passed.
 - c. A proposal that makes harassment of whales illegal, has just passed.

13. Choose the correct sentence.
 - a. You may of course: call us anytime you wish.
 - b. You may of course, call us anytime you wish.
 - c. You may, of course, call us anytime you wish.
 - d. You may, of course call us anytime you wish.

14. Choose the correct sentence.
 - a. Paolo hurried to the depot to meet his aunt and two cousins.
 - b. Paolo hurried to the depot to meet his aunt, and two cousins.
 - c. Paolo hurried to the depot to meet his Aunt and two Cousins.
 - d. Paolo hurried to the depot to meet his Aunt, and two Cousins.

15. Choose the correct sentence.
 - a. Finish your job, it is imperative that you do.
 - b. Finish your job, it is imperative, that you do.
 - c. Finish your job it is imperative that you do.
 - d. Finish your job; it is imperative that you do.

16. Choose the correct sentence.
- Sofia's and Aidan's house was recently repainted.
 - Sofia and Aidan's house was recently repainted.
 - Sofia's and Aidan's house were recently repainted.
 - Sofias and Aidans house was recently repainted.
17. Choose the correct sentence.
- "Stop it!" I said. "Don't ever do that again."
 - "Stop it!" I said: "Don't ever do that again."
 - "Stop it! I said. Don't ever do that again."
18. Choose the correct sentence.
- I would therefore like: to have an explanation for the missing cash.
 - I would, therefore, like to have an explanation for the missing cash.
 - I would therefore, like to have an explanation for the missing cash.
19. Choose the correct sentence.
- "Would you like to accompany me?," he asked.
 - "Would you like to accompany me," he asked?
 - "Would you like to accompany me"? he asked.
 - "Would you like to accompany me?" he asked.
20. Choose the correct sentence.
- I have always had a mental block, against math.
 - I have always had, a mental block against Math.
 - I have always had a mental block against Math.
 - I have always had a mental block against math.
21. Choose the correct sentence.
- He is a strong healthy man.
 - He is a strong, healthy man.
 - He is a strong, healthy, man.
22. Choose the correct sentence.
- To apply for this very demanding job: you must have previous experience.
 - To apply for this very demanding job, you must have previous experience.
 - To apply, for this very demanding job, you must have previous experience.
23. Choose the correct sentence.
- Marge, the woman, with blond hair, will be our speaker this evening.
 - Marge, the woman with blond hair will be our speaker this evening.
 - Marge, the woman with blond hair, will be our speaker this evening.
 - Marge, the woman with blond hair, will be our speaker, this evening.

Running head: GRAMMAR & WRITING

24. Choose the correct sentence.
- He thought quickly and then answered the question in complete detail.
 - He thought quickly, and then, answered the question in complete detail.
 - He thought quickly, and then answered the question, in complete detail.
25. Choose the correct sentence.
- He asked if he could be excused?
 - He asked if he could be excused.
 - He asked, if he could be excused.
26. Choose the correct sentence.
- It is hailing not raining.
 - It is hailing; not raining.
 - It is hailing, not raining.
 - It is hailing. Not raining.
27. Choose the correct sentence.
- We will grant you immunity if you decide to cooperate with us.
 - We will grant you immunity; if you decide to cooperate with us.
 - We will grant you immunity, if you decide to cooperate, with us.
 - We will grant you immunity if you decide, to cooperate with us.
28. Choose the correct sentence.
- You signed the contract, consequently you must: provide us with the raw materials.
 - You signed the contract, consequently; you must provide us with the raw materials.
 - You signed the contract; consequently, you must provide us with the raw materials.
29. Choose the correct sentence.
- I would like however, to read the fine print first.
 - I would like, however, to read the fine print first.
 - I would like; however, to read the fine print first.
 - I would like, however to read the fine print first.
30. Choose the correct sentence.
- You are required to bring the following; sleeping bag, food, and a sewing kit.
 - You are required to bring the following; Sleeping bag, food, and a sewing kit.
 - You are required to bring the following: Sleeping bag, food, and a sewing kit.
 - You are required to bring the following: sleeping bag, food, and a sewing kit.
31. Choose the correct sentence.
- The three companies' computers were stolen.
 - The three companie's computers were stolen.
 - The three company's computers were stolen.

Running head: GRAMMAR & WRITING

- d. The three companys' computers were stolen.
32. Choose the correct sentence.
- The womens' department store is upstairs and to your left.
 - The women's department store is upstairs and to your left.
 - The womens department store is upstairs and to your left.
33. Choose the correct sentence.
- It's clear that its paw is hurt.
 - It's clear that it's paw is hurt.
 - Its clear that its paw is hurt.
 - Its clear that it's paw is hurt.
34. Choose the correct sentence.
- One of the lawyer's left her briefcase.
 - One of the lawyers left her briefcase.
 - One of the lawyers' left her briefcase.
35. Choose the correct sentence.
- She asked, "Have you finished reading *The Great Gatsby*?"
 - She asked, "Have you finished reading *The Great Gatsby*".
 - She asked, "Have you finished reading *The Great Gatsby*."
 - She asked, "Have you finished reading *The Great Gatsby*?"
36. Choose the correct sentence.
- He was born in Dayton Ohio in 1990.
 - He was born in Dayton, Ohio in 1990.
 - He was born in Dayton, Ohio, in 1990.
37. Choose the correct sentence.
- I need to locate four states on the map, Arkansas, Ohio, Illinois, and Utah.
 - I need to locate four states on the map: Arkansas, Ohio, Illinois, and Utah.
 - I need to locate four states on the map; Arkansas, Ohio, Illinois, and Utah.
38. Choose the correct sentence.
- The note read, "Hi Camille. I haven't heard from you in two weeks."
 - The note read, "Hi, Camille. I haven't heard from you in two weeks."
 - The note read "Hi, Camille. I haven't heard from you in two weeks".
39. Choose the correct sentence.
- The veterinarian said, "Unless its bleeding and doesn't stop, don't worry about it."
 - The veterinarian said, "unless it's bleeding and doesn't stop, do'nt worry about it."
 - The veterinarian said, "Unless it's bleeding and doesn't stop, don't worry about it."

Running head: GRAMMAR & WRITING

- d. The veterinarian said, “unless it’s bleeding and doesn’t stop, don’t worry about it.”
40. Choose the correct sentence.
- Wendy said, “This is her karma, not mine.”
 - Wendy said, “This is her karma not mine.”
 - Wendy said, “This is her karma, not mine”.
 - Wendy said, “this is her karma, not mine.”
41. Choose the correct sentence.
- His wife Juanita just arrived at the house.
 - His wife, Juanita just arrived at the house.
 - His wife, Juanita, just arrived at the house.
 - His wife Juanita, just arrived, at the house.
42. Choose the correct sentence.
- One fourth of the police force voted for a pay raise of ninety five dollars a day.
 - One fourth of the police force voted for a pay raise of ninety-five dollars a day.
 - One-fourth of the police force voted for a pay raise of ninety-five dollars a day.
 - One-fourth of the police force voted for a pay raise of ninety five dollars a day.
43. Choose the correct sentence.
- Bella was born on May 13 1995 in Harlem.
 - Bella was born on May 13, 1995, in Harlem.
 - Bella was born on May 13, 1995 in Harlem.
44. Choose the correct sentence.
- A half is slightly less than three fifths.
 - A-half is slightly less than three-fifths.
 - A half is slightly less than three-fifths.

Appendix D

Proofreading Paragraphs

Week 1 Proofreading Paragraph

(10) Edgar Rice Burroughs is born on September 1 1875, in Chicago, Illinois. As a seller of pencil sharpener, he was always looking through magazines to spot ads for his sharpeners. He read many stories in those magazines as he look through them. He knew that he could write even better tales than the ones he read in those magazines! Some of Burroughs' famous works include Tarzan of the apes and The Land That Time Forgot.

Week 2 Proofreading Paragraph

(10) Who set 11 world record's in track and field. Jesse Owens, an American athlete who was born on September 12, 1913 did that and much more. One day while Jesse was in college, he broke five world records and tyed another. All that happened in just 45 minutes! In 1936, Jesse competed at the Olympic Games in berlin, germany. He won for gold medels there. Jesse were awarded the Medal of Freedom by president Ford in 1976.

Week 3 Proofreading Paragraph

(10) In September 1846, a german astronomer Johann Galle became the first to observe the planet Neptune. The eighth plant, Neptune is named for the roman god of the Sea. Neptune is about 30 times farther from the sun than planet earth is. It is also large than our planet. Have you heard that Neptunes orbit sometimes crosses that of Pluto? That means there are times when Neptune -- not Pluto -- is the most distent planet from the sun!

Running head: GRAMMAR & WRITING

Week 4 Proofreading Paragraph

(10) Have you read a book by Lemony Snicket! Lemony Snicket is not a real persons name. Its and imaginary name used by the author of the A Series of Unfortunate Events books. In those books, which were first published in Septemer of 1999, readers follow Violet Klaus, and Sunny as they attempt to protect there fortune from greedy count Olaf. The identity of Lemony is secret but he communicates through his representative, Daniel Handler.

Appendix E

Google Docs Paragraph & Google Docs Friendly Letter

Writing Assignment for Vocabulary Lesson #2

Using Google Docs, type a paragraph about how your school year is going so far using 7 of the 10 of the vocabulary words in this lesson correctly. You may use the words in any form or tense. Be sure to have topic and concluding sentences in your paragraph. Finally, please turn your assignment in to Google Classroom.

Writing Assignment for Vocabulary Lesson #4

Using Google Docs, type a friendly letter to someone of your choosing discussing the positives and/or negatives of social media use by teens using 7 of the 10 of the vocabulary words in this lesson correctly. You may use the words in any form or tense. Be sure to follow proper friendly letter format! Finally, please turn your assignment in to Google Classroom.