New needs: Revising first-year composition curriculum with email instruction

by

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"A composition is an expression of relationships—between parts and parts, between parts and whole, between the visual and the verbal, between text and context, between reader and composer… And, ultimately, between human beings."

--Kathleen Yancey, *Looking for Sources of Coherence in a Fragmented World,* p. 100

As a researcher, I am no greater than the sum of the "parts," that compose me. These parts aren't the numbers I crunch or the documents I design for instruction. These parts are the individuals propelling me forward, the ones providing support. Anyone who has spent months researching and writing will surely understand what I mean when I write that there are times when the research process tests an investigators' endurance, her ability to keep progressing forward. That is, unless she has alternative sources of support fueling her.

For me, the most prominent lesson learned from this research is this: no matter how daunting or unattainable a research endeavor seems, the support of the people you surround yourself, your parts, make your experience greater or worse. How I came to earn the support of every person who played a part in this experience is beyond me. What I do know is that each one of my parts gave me more support than I ever expected, and for that I am grateful.

I am grateful to Geoffrey Sauer, my major professor, advisor, and committee chair. In a professional capacity, he acted in several important roles, but the most meaningful lessons I learned from him came in the form of personal advice, often as I sat on his couch fretting about how to work through unrelated academic decisions, or on a few occasions work through my own philosophies as a developing scholar. Every time I came knocking for an unexpected visit, picking his brain for answers, he gave me all of his energy and focus no matter how many other priorities he had sitting in his inbox.

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I am grateful to my other committee members, Barbara Blakely, Abby Dubisar, and Maggie LaWare. These scholars gave every bit of support, too, and without hesitation. They helped me edit, revise, and then advised me throughout the process. I have no doubt this took a lot of energy on their parts because anyone who knows me is well aware of my ability to engage with my work relentlessly, and even so, they always matched my energy with an equally relentless outpouring of support.

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I am grateful to every member of my family for supporting me—maybe the largest set of my parts since there are so many of them. As a first-generation college student, I have no doubt that my parents are proud of the work I do. However, I also know that they do not understand it entirely—they tell me they do not—or that they sometimes wonder why I have chosen this work over a glitzier profession, like the lifestyle journalism career I previously pursued. It is difficult for them to explain to their friends what their daughter does, but in spite of this, I cannot appreciate and love them enough for their unquestioning support of the work I have done and what I intend to do with it.

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And finally, I would be remiss if I did not acknowledge how grateful I am to my students. As you will read in the Introduction, there was one student who catalyzed my thinking for this research, but that student is hardly an exception. My interest in every student on my roster is what drives me to do meaningful research. Their ability to develop brilliant, useful communication skills—and to realize just how brilliant and capable they are—inspires me to do research that will improve my students' curricular experiences, and hopefully, their lives. I research to positively affect the dynamics of the field and community I teach in because I appreciate every one of my students for what they continue to teach me. My students drive me to serve them better, and I hope I reciprocate this service with research serves them just as well.

ABSTRACT

Do students need to be taught how to email? Is the first-year composition (FYC) course an effective site for instruction of this online writing genre? In her influential 1984 article "Genre as Social Action," Carolyn R. Miller discusses how genres of communication emerge, becoming distinguished from other genres based on rhetorical constructs otherwise known as conventions. Teaching students to use genre conventions can empower them to communicate more effectively within those genres and in a variety of academic, civic, and professional contexts. This research reports the results of testing an instructional unit on teaching email communication in FYC courses. The instruction was implemented across eight sections of ISUComm Foundation Courses at Iowa State University (ISU) in Fall 2012. Quantitative data were collected and analyzed to see whether two days' worth of instruction could benefit students' email composing abilities; qualitative data was analyzed in tandem to investigate student knowledge and assumptions related to email writing. Ultimately, this study produced data supporting the conclusion that instruction does benefit students and can improve overall scores while furthering the mission of FYC programs.

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

"For the student, genres serve as keys to understanding how to participate in the actions of a

community."

-Carolyn R. Miller, "Genre as Social Action" 165

One Thursday afternoon a few hours before the start of class, I was caught off-guard by a

student email, and consequently found myself engrossed for multiple reasons. The subject line (

"=(") stunned me. I was equally stunned by the message that followed: "Hey Professor, ummm

i have a little problem, My printer at my apartment ran out of ink so I have no way to print my

paper. Is there any way I can save it on a flash drive and give it to you or print it out at the lab

this afternoon?" No signature followed.

Had it been the first week of the semester, I might have been more surprised. But six

weeks into the course I knew this student well enough to know that this level of colloquialism

was typical of the student's oral communication skills. He was bright, engaged and comfortable

speaking rather informally in most contexts. So the email seemed in keeping with my student's

personality; I even cracked a smile when this message and its subject line appeared in my inbox.

But that lighthearted grimace was quickly chased by concern. I worried about this

communication for two reasons. First, as a new teaching assistant, I worried that this level of

informality suggested a level of disrespect I had not expected. After all, an emoticon in a subject

line or lack of proper capitalization when writing to a college instructor could easily be

interpreted by many as a lack of respect. Being a relatively young instructor, I wondered if this

student's subject line and lack of capitalization was an all-too-telling reflection of my perceived

authority. This question helped me jump to my first conclusion: my lack of experience was

fostering disrespect. Yet this first conclusion was quickly overtaken by a second, less anxious

notion: could it be that my student was not attempting to be disrespectful, but rather, writing informally because he felt it *was* appropriate?

Email, like other genres of writing, is a communicative correspondence that comes with its own specific reader expectations, or conventions. In the case of my student, foregoing formal conventions of the email genre may have several different explanations. First, if asked, the student might have reported that he was not knowledgeable of what email genre conventions exist because he had never received formal instruction or had viable models from which he could learn. A second explanation might be that he was familiar with some conventions, but did not know how to implement them effectively. A third possibility might be that the technology he used to compose the email made following conventions a hassle. For example, a smaller compact device, such as an iPhone, might limit how quickly one can compose a message, so senders using this device might be less inclined to adhere to formal conventions.

Although there was no marker present at the end of the email indicating that the message had been transmitted from a smartphone or tablet, I wondered if the increasing prevalence of communicative technologies might be partly to blame a lack of adherence to genre conventions. Recently, scholars like S.M. Sweeney have put forth evidence that students' email composing processes may be drastically different from the processes of older generations (122). Knowing Sweeney's claim, I wondered if new communicative tools caused this young student to compose differently. Was it possible that he had assumed this level of informality to be "the new normal," namely because lack of proper capitalization, punctuation, and a total disregard for genre conventions of formal email writing were no longer requisite to effective communication in an age of 160-character text messages, 140-character tweets, and other electronic composing tools?

More importantly, how do new genres of electronic composing influence other electronic genres or produce corollaries for which formal conventions have been determined? For writing instructors, this question begets a more traditional pedagogical query: Should instructors be teaching new, often electronic genres of writing in FYC courses, and if so, should instructors be teaching only formal conventions or simultaneously fostering a sense of rhetorical agency in students by discussing when and how to break these conventions in order to be more effective?

Still a fourth notion wrestled with the first three. Could it be that this communication was not the result of new media genres and tools at all, nor was it a rhetorical act intended to divest me of the authority I had as an instructor? Rather, could this email be understood through a more progressive perspective? By foregoing formal conventions of the email genre, was this a conscious expression of rhetorical agency deliberately intended to shift attention from seemingly-artificial hierarchies, and bring our positions closer together?

I determined none of these conclusions to be more likely than the next because the greater conclusion arrived at after a preponderance of each of these was the exigency of email communication instruction. From this incident and past communications with this student, I was able to comfortably determine that this email typified his approach to communication. Past emails from him had been consistently informal, rarely adhering to conventions of subject lines, salutations, and body text, to name only a few. Nonetheless, this approach to communication could prove problematic to his rhetorical success, particularly when writing in a genre that has no audience physically present (Goleman). Despite email being a relatively familiar genre of communication in academic and professional contexts, one that rarely merits formal instruction and practice in undergraduate education, I began to question whether such instruction could improve email communication skills.

Having resolved some of my worries, a new concern arose for my student: Would this approach to email communication work against him with different audiences, particularly correspondence with professors, potential employers, and others occupying positions of authority? Did he know the difference between formal and informal styles of writing within the email communication genre? And if so, did he know when to use one over the other in order to create a rhetorically-effective communication?

With these questions in mind, approaching my student with the intention to help him seemed to be a next logical move. And considering that written communication is the focus of ENGL 150, the FYC course in which my student was enrolled, it also seemed logical that I, the writing instructor, would be the most appropriate source for writing support.[1] But before I offered to help, I paused to consider whether or not I was acting within the scope of my instructional and curricular duties. Perhaps I was not, which brought forward another question now driving this research: Should the teaching of the email communication genre be reserved for instruction in subsequent advanced communication courses? I anticipate that some scholars might deem advanced communication courses, such as Iowa State's Business Communication ENGL 302, to be a more appropriate site for such instruction.[2] Would this student appreciate me

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[1] Offered every academic term at Iowa State University, **ENGL 150: ("Critical Thinking and Communication")** is a required three-credit-hour course administered by the university's communication across the curriculum initiative, ISUComm. The course description underscores the ISUComm Foundation Courses' curricular goals: "Application of critical reading and thinking abilities to topics of civic and cultural importance. Introduction of basic oral, visual, and electronic communication principles to support writing development. Initiation of communication portfolio" ("English 150/250 Course Descriptions").

[2] English 302: ("Business Communication") is one of several courses offered in advanced communication studies by ISUComm. Generally, the course is taken by third- or fourth-year students who have already passed through the prerequisite ISUComm Foundation Courses, ENGL 150 and ENGL 250. In this course, principles of written, oral, visual, and electronic communication continue to be explored, usually in a business or workplace context. Genres

advising him on how to follow conventions of this genre or would an offer of extra assistance be taken as a remedial gesture, thus fostering insecurity in future work?

In the thick of this inquiry is where my research begins. What started as an informal email sparked a chain of questions uncovering a potential shortcoming in which new media genres need to be taught in composition courses, and why.

Introduction to Genre Theory

Carolyn R. Miller, in her influential 1984 article "Genre as Social Action," defines genre as "a particular type of discourse classification, a classification based in rhetorical practice" (155). She discusses how some discourses are classified based on "typified" written constructs that emerge over time and distinguish one type of writing from the next (Miller 157). For the purposes of this research, the term "conventions" will be used to refer to all written rhetorical constructs or "typifications" potentially distinguishing email as a genre separate from other written and electronic genres of composing.

In the epigraph at the outset of this chapter, a quote from Miller suggested that when studying genres of writing students stand to gain cultural insights and opportunities for understanding how to communicate effectively. In turn, and more importantly, one can begin to see how these genres and their associated conventions function as the rhetorical means by which communicators participate in various discursive realms. For students, this means that any written communication can be studied and its conventions learned with the intention of elevating one's position or influence in society—be it socially, culturally, or politically. Put another way, the power hierarchies that exist between students and persons perceived as more powerful than them,

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taught may include email correspondence in addition to the traditional letter, memo, proposals, reports, application letters, resumes, and much more ("ENGL 302").

such as professors, deans, potential employers, etc., might require students to compose an email formally, following all conventions.

According to business communication scholar Larry Beason, if students know what those conventions are and how to incorporate them effectively into email writing, then those students will be perceived as more competent (33). When perceived as competent it becomes more likely that the power dynamic will equalize, which might eventually enable a student to use informalities in email writing because she or he has established his or her writing competency by having conformed to genre conventions in the past. From a modernist perspective, a better, more desirable outcome of learning genre conventions might be that through learning conventions students learn to recognize when and how genre conventions can be reworked in unconventional ways to bring about meaningful change. For example, those lacking in genre knowledge may strive to learn the conventions, but a subaltern few might break those conscientiously break certain genre conventions to have a greater rhetorical impact on their audience. In doing so, they aim to level power hierarchies by not resisting the conventions that sustain them. Enough resistance could bring about change.

An example of this occurs when a writer attempts to professionalize an email communication with a preset signature. The signature, a textual stamp that can be set to appear at the bottom of each newly-opened email draft, is itself is a rhetorical strategy for asserting power because it commonly includes titles, important positions, and services deemed relevant (Bawarshi 337). In the same right, the inclusion of a signature can also be interpreted as a reification of hierarchies because the rhetorical act of including it positions the speaker within his or her institutional context, thereby legitimizing existing hierarchies. A student's purpose in including an e-signature may be to elevate her/ himself within a discursive context where power

relations exist and should be recognized, but the act may have unforeseen consequences. Simply by reminding one's audience that such relations exist, the student subordinates his or her position by reinforcing his or her location within a hierarchy instead of refusing to acknowledge such stratifications of power. This example undergirds much of genre theory and it informed much of the instructional design tested in this study, everything from the wording of learning objectives to the pre- and post-test email assignments tested.

Study Design and Potential for Change

This research reports the results of a study that tested an instructional unit on the email communication genre designed for and implemented across eight sections of ISUComm Foundation Courses at Iowa State University in November 2012 (See Appendix A). Quantitative data collection consisted of pre-test evaluations of students' email-writing skill sets by evaluating how well participants adhered to genre conventions prior to receiving formal instruction on this genre of writing in comparison to post-test evaluations, written and assessed after receiving formal instruction. (See Appendices B and C.) The goal was to investigate student knowledge and assumptions about writing conventions in the email genre through analysis of student assumptions about the email genre and whether or not students perceive there to be a benefit from receiving email instruction.

An example of benefit might be simply improving one's ability to write formal email messages using a genre convention, such as the e-signature or subject lines. For the most part, the benefit of learning email conventions was the driving learning outcome of the instructional unit. Students were assigned readings that focused on genre conventions or "rules" of writing "good" emails as opposed to "poor" ones to give them ideas about how society expects email to

be composed (Appendix A). Much like a writing model for an essay, this instruction aimed to give students a foundation of knowledge they could build from in the future.

In as much as instruction was delivered to students on how to adhere to genre conventions, a secondary learning outcome of the instructional design was the fostering of critical awareness in students regarding the rhetorical agency they hold when communicating with the email genre, particularly when using conventions. Although the study of conventions took priority in each learning scenario, at several points in the unit students were asked to think about how these conventions are used with questions such as these:

- Were there any conventions you were unaware of? Any you found surprising?

- Were there conventions that you were aware of, but chose not to employ in your regular email correspondence? Why or why not?

- Do you find the conventions helpful or alienating? Explain why.

Drawing from these questions, instructors engaged students in class discussions about the benefits and drawbacks of using writing conventions. That is, how might unquestioning acceptance and implementation of conventions limit a composer's rhetorical agency? The term rhetorical agency has been defined by many different scholars in countless different ways.[3] For this endeavor, rhetorical agency is best understood through a modernist, empirical definition. John Louis Lucaites and Celeste Michelle Condit define it as "individuals and groups

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[3] During in-class discussions, the term rhetorical agency was not utilized as frequently as critical awareness was utilized. It is important to note that both will be used interchangeably throughout this write-up, but critical awareness is used more often when discussing this secondary learning outcome with students. Rhetorical agency is also used, but more often to refer back to scholarship on the concept.

can affect the world in which they live - and its importance in theorizing the possibility of acting to make meaningful social and personal change" (611-612).

Adding to that definition, Marilyn M. Cooper has expanded how scholars once understood the teaching of rhetorical agency through writing. Cooper argues that agency need not arise from "conscious mental acts, though consciousness does play a role," and she goes on to explain that writers enact rhetorical agency even when they are not aware of it (421). So when writing an email to someone more powerful than the composer, the composer does exercise power by practicing her or his rhetorical agency. She or he made conscious decisions to adhere to or disregard conventions of the email genre, and thus enacted her or his agency, leading to some effect on the receiver of the email (be it positive or negative, effective or ineffective). Thus, all composers possess agency, albeit some are more conscious of it than others.

Whether or not that agency is being enacted in a rhetorically effective way depends on both how it is crafted and how it is received. As is often the case, readers recognize writing as successful when it adheres to conventions (Miller 157). Yet in certain instances, conventions can be broken for greater, more effective rhetorical impact (Beason 33).[4] To give students a stronger sense of their rhetorical agency, they were asked to think about how they might do this, which again was discussed with students as the development of critical awareness of the email genre and its conventions. Students were also encouraged to be critical of the genre by considering how conventions can limit their rhetorical effectiveness and competency in the eyes of their audiences.

Dialogues on critical awareness were built into the instructional unit through in-class discussion time. Students discussed the purpose and rhetorical impact of formal openings and

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[4] To be discussed in greater detail in Chapter Two.

closings; the convention made for lively discussion because a substantial number of student participants attached little value to that convention, seeing it more as an extra, unnecessary step impeding the efficiency and speed of their communications. This is just one example of several critical awareness discussions pertaining to incorporation of genre conventions built into the instructional design of this study; the outcomes of these discussions will be explored more in later chapters. For the purposes of introducing this study, however, the investigator wants to make explicit that this instructional unit was designed working from the assumption that writing instructors have an obligation to teach conventions, and they may also teach students how to effectively break those conventions. Ideally, instructors assist students in thinking about how to do this, but only after deliberating over the rhetorical costs and benefits.

The practical impetus for this research seems simple, but its potential impact is substantial. For writing program administrators, this could mean critically rethinking and revising curricula to incorporate the emergent needs of new electronic communication genres by shifting the field's perspective on what genres students need instruction on in order to compose successfully in new media contexts. For composition instructors, this change will be met with either resistance or enthusiasm, depending on whether one's assessment of the significance of electronic composition relative to current-traditional genres continue to anchor writing instruction across many universities. Third, and most importantly, for students a revision of FYC curriculum to include new media genres may be the greatest watershed in terms of potential for change. Some might argue that email communication is hardly new and cannot be clustered along with other media in the "new media" genre. Yet, consider Lev Manovich's explanation of what "popular understanding" considers new media in his book *The Language of New Media*:

> The Internet, Web sites, computers multimedia, computer games, CD-ROMs and DVD, virtual reality… As can be seen from these examples, the popular understanding of new media identifies it with the use of a computer for destruction and exhibition rather than production. Accordingly, texts distributed on a computer (Webs sites and electronic books are considered to be new media, whereas texts distributed on paper are not. Similarly, photographs that are put on a CD-ROM and require a computer to be viewed are considered new media; the same photographs printed in a book are not. (19)

Manovich questions popular understanding about what makes something a "new medium." The brief listing of common examples demonstrates how broad and inclusive this concept can be, but the exclusion of non-computer-generated media places some limitations on the concept. Later, Manovich takes issue with these limitations, arguing that even non-computer-generated media can be folded into the concept of new media, but for the purposes of this study what is important to note is (1) email is a computer-generated medium and (2) despite the fact that email has existed for several decades it can still be understood as a new media genre based on popular understanding. This association has significant implications for writing programs because the implications of teaching new media genres in FYC entail "new ways of interpreting the world, new ideologies" that may change how students produce rhetorical compositions, what makes them effective, and how they are taught (Manovich 77).

What makes this potential for change even greater is the longevity of this genre. Although some new media genres become outdated or lose user interest quickly, the everyday email remains a recognizable and frequently used genre of writing. A slew of studies in the late 1980s and mid-1990s estimate that most people working in professional environments receive as

few as 20 emails a day, as many as 39 (Szóstek 724, Burgess 75). More recent estimates from a 2005 study suggest that the average person receives 105 emails per day, and as an interesting side note, professors read almost two times more of those emails than undergraduate students or staff members (Dabbish et al. 695). Also in 2005, the Bureau of Labor Statistics reported "the most commonly reported task" in the American workplace was sending email, with approximately seventy-seven million users sending and receiving electronic communications every day. Prior to entering the workplace and other professional contexts, another study found that undergraduate students "spent an average of three to seven hours a day on the internet, with the majority of their activities involving emailing" or a related corollary genre of emailing, "instant messaging" (Gay and Hembrooke).

Considering the frequency at which students and workers are using email as a primary means of communication, a compelling argument can be made for the teaching of email communication as a legitimate writing genre with legitimate conventions to be learned. In order to be rhetorically effective communicators in both academic and professional contexts, students need knowledge of genre conventions through instruction. The research on email frequency is enough to suggest that a need exists. This research alone is enough to incite productive questioning of whether or not students need email instruction and if FYC programs are the best places to support that need.

The frequency of email exchange means that this genre of writing runs the risk of becoming invisible (Mehlenbacher 281). With so many people emailing so frequently throughout the day—and often under busy, time-sensitive circumstances—it is easy to overlook email as a legitimate genre of writing or assume that frequent exposure allows one to easily intuit what the conventions are and how to use them in a rhetorically effective way (Mehlenbacher 281). Yet,

recent studies show that formal instruction of email communications effectively improves students' ability to communicate using formal conventions (Burgess 79). In addition to teaching this genre and modeling formal conventions of organization, context, style, delivery, and substance, writing instructors ought to offer thought-provoking conversations on adherence to these conventions and how they might be used to achieve a stronger, more effective rhetorical impact. By engaging students in critical thinking about genre conventions, not only will they learn how to use the conventions, they will learn how to use them well.

Further, the resulting rhetorical effect of adhering to conventions may not always be desirable. A hastily-composed email that foregoes conventions might discredit the sender, but such an email can and should also be analyzed in terms of rhetorical impact on the receiver. The time it takes to compose a hasty email may not match the magnitude of rhetorical impact had on the receiver. More often than not, failing to use conventions damages the sender's credibility. If the implications of overlooking or simply not implementing conventions are discussed in the classroom, students may be better informed about the implications of foregoing conventions, and hence, better able to use conventions to achieve rhetorical outcomes. Similarly, because the conventions students communicate with in emails greatly influences how they are perceived, judgments made about their competence or their rhetorical efficacy as composers gives exigency to this problem and merits consideration of incorporation into FYC curricula. For this study, the research questions are:

- Will instruction on the email communication genre improve students' abilities to implement genre-related conventions?

- Is the FYC course the best entry point for educating college students about the generic conventions of email communication?

- How do students feel about conforming to genre conventions? Does it give them a sense of rhetorical agency or leave them feeling the limits on their rhetorical power?

The Need in Context(s)

By the time college students pass through their first- or even second-year composition course, the academy as well as the general public expects them to be proficient written communicators (Downs and Wardle 553). Email communication may be counted among the composition genres students are expected to know. Writing instructors assume that students know how to write email. It is not uncommon for other university faculty and working professionals to grumble about what they perceive to be a communicative deficiency in the most current generation of college students or recently-graduated young professionals. Instructors, given their position in the instructor-to-student power dynamic, expect students to adhere to genre conventions as universal rules, learning conventions, such as correct titles in salutations, proper grammar, or pre-determined organizational structures instead of teaching writing as "context-specific," guided but not always determined by conventions (Downs and Wardle 559).

Numerous newspaper and magazine writers have published articles on this dilemma within the last five years, enough to indicate that these expectations are not being met—not even partially (Laff 2007; Middleton 2011; Writing 2012). Consequently, educators from across the disciplines have publicly aired grievances about contemporary students' lack of email communication proficiency, perhaps most vocally from disciplines unrelated to communication, such as engineering and the sciences (Barass xv-xvi). It is not an unfounded assumption that these disciplines consider it the FYC program's responsibility to teach students to "learn to write," but what is an unfair assumption to make is that FYC should be helping students master

most genres of writing, in a semester or two's time, and without additional development later in discipline-specific writing courses (McLeod and Maimon 579-580). Does this mean instructors and writing program administrators should entertain these assumptions? Is it composition's lot to fulfill them? Certainly, an expectation exists. Though it may be unrealistic or even irresponsible to be the sole discipline teaching as many genres of writing as possible, email may be an exception worth integrating into FYC curricula, especially given the frequency at which students communicate with authority figures through email.

This problem—or rather, miscommunication—may stem from a number of indeterminate causes. Additionally, it is worth acknowledging that every student's and instructor's experiences with email communication is highly variable and situational. Some may have received instruction on how to write emails or have been exposed frequently to strong models. Some may have no prior instruction or access to strong models at all. Therefore, the problem may stem from a lack of prior instruction or prior exposure to model communicators. Increasingly, students are entering college from labor-class backgrounds (Terenzini et al. 1). Therefore, it is possible that these populations lack access to effective email communicators to serve as models of indirect instruction, i.e. parents and mentoring professionals from whom they could have garnered previous exposure to conventions of the email communication genre over a prolonged developmental period. Also, what is considered "effective" email communication is inherently problematic in that it privileges those who better understand the genre conventions and undervalues those who do not. Oftentimes, formal conventions are privileged over informal ones that value different or new ways of communicating, such as shorter body text or intentional disregard of correct spelling, punctuation, grammar, and formatting. This was seen in the case of my student, and it is commonly cited as problematic by the aforementioned populations who

frequently take issue with writing teachers for not teaching students to write better in all contexts (Bartlett, Barass).

To compound matters, not only may these students lack viable models to aid their development, rarely do they receive formal training in these genre conventions at any point during their academic careers. In rare cases, students may learn about email communication in a professional communication course, such as the ENGL 302 (Introduction to Business Communication) course offered at Iowa State University. This instruction is rare, however, because it is only required as a general education requirement for some degree programs. For many students, these courses are not available at all because the course sections offered each semester are limited and class sizes are capped at 24 (ENGL 302).

Considering the frequency with which business professionals communicate via email and electronic modes of discourse, such as text messaging or instant messaging, it becomes more and more clear why instruction in the email genre will be imperative to students' communicative success (Sumecki, Chipul and Ojiako 407). Students ought to be exposed to the conventions of this genre through formal instruction. Without this exposure, they may never receive the guidance they need to prepare for electronic communication exchanges with readers who expect formality and adherence to convention. This might in turn lead to students' communicative competencies being incorrectly evaluated as inadequate by future instructors and employers. Therefore, I turn to a program most proximate to my work, the one I teach for, ISUComm Foundation Communication. Currently, the multimodal curriculum for ISUComm's Foundation Courses, ENGL 150 and ENGL 250, does not feature email communication instruction, but the program's multimodal emphasis makes it an ideal site for such learning to occur.

The FYC Course: An Ideal Site for Instruction

Traditionally, an overwhelming number of communication genres force instructors of FYC courses to carefully pick and choose what should be taught within the time constraints of a semester. A select, innovative few, however, have branched out from the current-traditional approach to teaching written genres by teaching traditional essay genres in tandem with or in addition to new media genres of composition (Lunsford 3-4; McLeod 82-83). Namely, these other modes include oral, visual, electronic communication genres. In ISUComm Foundation Courses, the incorporation of this multimodal curriculum is often referred to as "the WOVE approach," the acronym standing for written, oral, visual, and electronic communication (*Instructor Guide: ISUComm Foundation Courses* 20-21, 26-27). Yet because new media instruction is still relatively new to the field, it is debatable at this time how much instruction should be allotted to each mode. This is particularly true of teaching electronic communication because the broadness and rapid expansion of electronic communication genres in a digital age makes it challenging to determine how far one should delve into teaching such a nebulous new media genre, and what exactly should be taught.

I argue that the frequency with which society uses email and its generic longevity—relative to other, less stable electronic communication genres, such as MySpace or Twitter—validates the need for its instruction. In particular, teaching email communication in composition courses may benefit the communicative arsenal of FYC students, who might lack experience with this genre, thus requiring more in-depth instruction before corresponding with the authority figures they write to, who have earned undergraduate and graduate degrees, and who, one can infer, expect students to compose emails more formally.

Because FYC courses are general education requirements at many universities, including

Iowa State University, English 250 seems to be the ideal site to reach out to test this instructional

unit. Teaching email communication in English 250 would ensure that most students passing

through the university receive adequate instruction on how to write a formal email.[5] This

"checkpoint" approach to guaranteeing email instruction is only somewhat ideal in that it does

not facilitate instruction of email communication as an ongoing, developmental learning process,

but it could function as a much-needed starting point. It is possible that students have received

instruction on email communication in other classes, perhaps even English 150, but email

writing is not included as a formal assignment in the curriculum materials prepared for incoming

teaching assistants and lecturers, so no assumptions are to be made that they have received such

instruction. It would be helpful if this sort of support existed for instructors wanting to teach

email communication in FYC courses. Additionally, early instruction in English 250 courses

might serve as a foundation for continued learning about email communication in advanced communication courses, such as English 302, taken later in a student's academic career.

One might also purport that such instruction better serves students when provided earlier in their academic careers, possibly in English 150. Yet this study selected English 250 as a better classroom site for testing because

Learning Outcomes for English 150
(*ISUComm Foundation Courses* 13)

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[5] From Fall 2009 to Fall 2012, ISUComm Foundation Courses has served 16,602 students, with an average of 2,299 students served during fall and summer terms and 167 students during summer terms. Averages of 120 sections were offered in the fall, 105 in the spring, and 7 during summer terms, but course sections have been on the rise every year (see Appendix H for additional information).

electronic communication tends to be emphasized more as a learning outcome in English 250 as opposed to English 150 (*ISUComm Foundation Courses* 13, 17). As evidenced by Figure 1, the learning outcomes of the English 150 course are adjusted in a way that allocates more instruction to the teaching of writing (W) as opposed to the other communicative modes (O, V, E). The next image, Figure 2, illustrates how traditional writing is featured in the curriculum as equally important to the other three communicative modes. Based on these programmatic determinations of learning outcomes, English 250 is a more appropriate site for email instruction because electronic communication skills and written communication skills are developed at similar rates.

Learning Outcomes for English 250
(*ISUComm Foundation Courses* 13)

Taking all of these considerations into account, I designed a study in which multiple composition classes were tested. All participants' email composing abilities were evaluated pre-instruction with an email to a perceived authority figure. In a post-instruction revision assignment, students were asked to implement the formal conventions learned in class to the earlier email they composed. There was also one reflection opportunity for students to take inventory, analyze, and reflect on their knowledge of email communication and what they learned after receiving the instruction I have designed (See Appendix E). I recognize that analyzing these reflections may weaken the conclusion—in that reflection activities are often approached with the intention of satisfying an audience with an authority figure (an instructor), and likewise, may be more complimentary of the instruction and its perceived benefits than not. Even so, the reflection activity serves as an additional, insightful source of data for
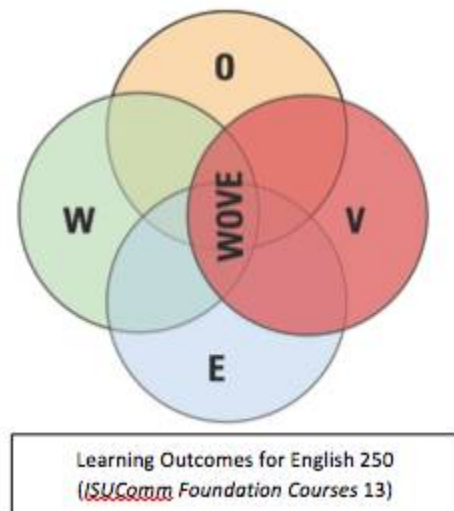
contextualizing the quantifiable outcomes of pre- and post-instruction evaluation, which merit

additional explanation and may be attained through these reflections.

Once collected, all data were reduced and analyzed in conjunction with evaluative grades

and any available comments made by the instructors. Differences between writers evaluated as

"Excellent," "Good," "Fair," and "Need[ing] Work" were explored by having participating

instructors evaluate their initial email compositions in relation to revised ones submitted after

two class periods (See Appendix D). This research coded for other emerging themes in student

emails and any themes prominent enough to merit analysis will be triangulated with peer review

from primary investigator's colleagues in order to ensure that other relevant findings are not

overlooked. Ultimately, the goal was to determine whether or not a need exists for this type of

instruction. FYC courses were investigated as a new site of instruction, one ensuring all students

are given the opportunity to learn the conventions of the email genre.

CHAPTER TWO: THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS

"These emails are incredibly unprofessional and even somewhat rude. I'm not trying to be on some high horse about being better than them or being an authority figure. I'm just hoping that students will treat their upper level courses like the professional training grounds that they are… So how do I get them to write me grammatically correct emails with descriptive subject lines?"

-SciWo, Anonymous Professor writing on the "Sciencewomen" blog of *Science Blogs*

Understanding Genre and its Power

A search for "bad student emails" yields thousands of results, many coming from morose anonymous bloggers expressing frustration with recent college graduates' struggle to conform to formal conventions of email writing or college instructors irritated with students' poor grammar. A remarkable example from a quick search was SciWo, an alias for a female professor of science. She airs grievances with student email writing, but tempers her comments with an expression of goodwill when she claims that she is not "an authority figure" riding "some high horse" (SciWo). Yet the denial of this authority indicates the contrary. Authority figures are frustrated by student email writing, but when was it assumed that email writing was formally taught? Or if this assumption is not being made, does contemporary culture assume that because email is a common form of writing it needs no instruction?

When Michael Spooner and Kathleen Yancey first predicted that email would become "boringly normal" by 2006, they were on to something (273). An astute prediction sixteen years ahead of its time, email has become a common fixture in the daily lives of middle-class Americans (Dabbish et al. 695, The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics). This commonness makes it relatively easy to overlook, even easier to disregard as a genre worthy of study. Yet this common, almost "primitive" type of writing has profound rhetorical power and this should not to be underestimated (Mehlenbacher 281). To understand this power and to teach it effectively, it is helpful to think about email communication through the lens of genre theory.

Carolyn R. Miller defines genre as it pertains to rhetoric; specifically, genre is "a particular type of discourse classification, a classification based in rhetorical practice" (155). According to her, the concept of genre is all too often overlooked, quickly dismissed as insignificant nomenclature for different types of writing. In reality, though, classifications of genre should not be so reductive, she argues. Echoing the scholarship of Karlyn Kohrs Campbell and Kathleen Hall, Miller acknowledges that most people view genre as little more than "taxonomy" that lets us discriminate between different writings; on the contrary, genres can illuminate the "social and historical aspects of rhetoric that other perspectives do not" (Miller 151). When Miller identifies genres as "hierarchical models of communication," her theory enables composition scholars to better understand rhetorical actions, and in turn, the social actions driving them (151). More often than not, those driving social actions are motivated by issues of power. In any genre of writing, certain conventions are used when power is to be asserted. Lack of adherence to genre conventions is often equated, however unfairly, with a lack of intellectual competency, and therefore, power. In both cases, the social consequences of genre writing determine the power dynamic in a discursive context.

Social action arises from the prolonged development of shared "social and rhetorical constructs" that hold "inventive and creative power" (Graban and Ryan 95). The process by which these constructs are created is known as "typification" across several fields of research (Schutz p. 234 ctd. in Miller 157). The typification process occurs when certain types of communication share specific qualities. These qualities are recognized, compared, and cognitively grouped together based on larger, overarching similarities. Thus, seemingly stable parameters for classification are defined, and although a type of communication may not always

fit perfectly within the generic parameters, it is grouped nonetheless within a genre with which

its "typifications," or conventions, most nearly match.

Adhering to the conventions of a particular genre is hardly arbitrary or purposeless.

Miller states that part of what she calls "successful communication" is the ability to follow

generic conventions (157). Those who follow conventions are more likely to be perceived

favorably by others (Beason 33). Likewise, from a recipient's perspective, successful emailing is

usually attributed to a sender who effectively incorporates recognizable genre conventions. To

give an email-specific example of this, some receivers may equate lack of conventions in email

writing with a lack of effort, whereas others will understand a lack of conventions as a lack of

knowledge (Leverenz 41). Hence, a student who correctly incorporates generic conventions of

the email genre when writing to professors will be viewed as a more rhetorically competent

communicator than one who does not. The reasons driving desire to communicate in a

rhetorically competent manner are wide-ranging. One of the simplest though may be the need to

feel as though one is being perceived competently in the eyes of others, whereas more

complicated reasons might hinge on issues of personal advancement.

Understanding the Email Genre, its Conventions, and its Corollaries

Another definition of genre that explains the concept more in terms of conventions is

Anis Bawarshi's, which states that recent reconceptualization of genre to include non-literary

texts not traditionally thought of as genres allow composers and readers to distinguish new

genres of communication based on conventions. Bawarshi states that "genres have come to be

defined as typified rhetorical ways communicants come to recognize and act in all kinds of

situations, literary and nonliterary" (335). This all-inclusive definition extends to more than just

traditional print-based writing, even going so far as to claim that the rhetorical conventions and

practices commonly practiced during a doctor's office visit can constitute a genre (Bawarshi 355). This reconceptualization might seem radical to some, and rightfully so, but it is significant in that it makes consideration of email as a legitimate genre easier to understand.

Still, there are those that discount email as a legitimate genre or as a genre that is so simple it is not worthy of teaching. It is possible that this is due to email communication's relative newness as a legitimate genre with distinguishable genre conventions to separate it from other genres of written communication or even its corollaries, such as the business memo (Lunsford 601). Not all scholars are in agreement on this, though. Spooner and Yancey, for example, advocate for thinking of email as a legitimate genre, articulating a few of email's conventions in the following passage:

> Email simple. Much like writing a letter, it is signaled by greetings, emoticons, closings, and other conventions; sometimes the author composes online, sometimes uploads a prepared text; author and topic are not unique, but audience is (as in letters). In its affective dimension, it feels like a hybrid form, combining elements one would expect in letters, on the phone, or in face-to-face conversation. (254)

This description seems as simple as the allegedly simple emails being described, but upon closer examination, one can begin to unpack numerous claims being made for email's legitimacy. First and foremost, Spooner and Yancey establish email as a legitimate genre by defining its conventions—both in terms of the rhetorical product as well as the rhetorical action of composing. Second, they legitimize it as a genre by arguing that it springs from other genres. The one they relate most is the letter genre, arguing that emails are a corollary of it. Spooner and Yancey assume that the average reader will see the significance of email if it is thought of as a

corollary genre. For readers who cannot, Joanne Yates and Wanda Orlikowski's research on the PowerPoint presentation as a corollary genre of twentieth-century business meeting presentations speaks to this point. The two argue that even corollary genres—genres evolved from earlier, related genres often utilizing similar conventions—function as their own, distinguishable genres and need to be taught from a critical-pedagogical approach because they too challenge conventional understandings and "suggest[] important implications" for a variety of discursive contexts (Yates and Orlikowski 306, 299). So despite its corollary status and despite the fact that email communications may be breeding new corollaries of its own—such as text messaging or online chatting—email is a valid genre of composition with specific reader expectations, or conventions.

Further, if Spooner and Yancey's pinpointing of conventions is not enough, the two go on to posit that even if the greatest skeptics persist in the opinion that email communication does not constitute a genre, the conventions associated with it still matter. Understanding email through genre theory can help scholars teach it as any other written rhetorical composition might be taught. And like any other written genre, the writing instructor is not "absolve[ed]… of the need to show students how to put such a piece together" (Spooner and Yancey 264). A foundational component of such instruction covers the most basic conventions distinguishing the email genre from others. Ancillary to laying a strong learning foundation that explains the conventions of a genre is the teaching of how to be critically aware of those conventions, the ways they influence a composition, for better or for worse. In keeping with this objective, instruction should never "oversimplify" the complex, rhetorical interworking aspects of a genre by teaching only conventions and nothing else. Students need to understand how adhering to conventions reproduces the genre itself, so that eventually, and only after a good deal of rhetorical

forethought, opportunities to break with conventions for greater rhetorical impact can be discussed (Spooner and Yancey 356). As Miller and others have hoped, by fostering a critical awareness in students about the ways genre conventions enable and constrain, one can begin to use genre knowledge to pursue positive social change. For email, such change could manifest itself in many forms. It could be an improvement in the treatment of communicators with less formal knowledge. Change might also manifest itself in the form of comfortable reassurance in knowing that one may communicate as one likes and without conforming to conventions. These are only a few possibilities; many more exist, and over time students might find others that could not have been predicted at this time or with current technologies.

Understanding Genre and its Transformative Potential

Again, as one begins to understand genre, one may ask "Why try to please those in higher positions of authority?" Likewise, communicators instructed to be critical of genre may wonder "Are the benefits of being a successful communicator, according to pre-existing standards of authority, really beneficial to every communicator? Or can they be disenfranchising?" Certainly, they can be, and Miller gives a nod to this reality. Yet, teaching generic conventions is still a worthwhile cause. The most compelling reason why every student should be educated in generic conventions is because this knowledge can serve as a foundation for further empowerment (Bawarshi 82). If a student were completely unaware of the rules in a game, she or he would be at a severe disadvantage relative to other players. Knowing the rules, or conventions, empowers a student to use them and to change them. Ideally, these rules are changed for the better; genre conventions are effectively reconfigured to be more equitable. That is, knowledge of genre conventions is not a sort of means to be used to perpetuate existing ideas and conventions about what it means to be a successful communicator, but rather, to reevaluate what constitutes

successful communication. Additionally, by appreciating what is not conventional within a genre, one is better positioned to appreciate the value of unconventional communicative practices, particularly those coming from disenfranchised communicators who lack formal instruction in genre conventions or simply resist their implementation.

For instance, although an informal, unconventional email may appear hastily composed, that may, in fact, be most appropriate for the rhetorical situation within which the communicator is working. Using slang language and other informalities in an email to a peer or colleague might be expected by the receiver, and so if the communicator were suddenly to change his or her discursive practices to become more formal by adhering to genre conventions, the peer recipient might be confused as to why the rhetorical switch occurred. In this scenario, if all parties have similar rhetorical expectations, than where, one might ask, is the harm being done? Consider the same scenario, but enter a third party, a manager. This manager holds authority over one or more of the other involved parties, and if she or he disapproved of an employee communicating with parties outside the company, such as customers, in an informal manner, the manager's disapproval could lead to quietly-mounting dissatisfaction with the employee's performance over time or even immediate confrontation and reprimanding. This hypothetical illuminates just one example of how a simple communicative genre can influence people, and how breaking the conventions of any genre come with serious ramifications. But for this inquiry, the next most pressing problem for solving is not how to solve this problem—too many possible solutions would contend with one another. Instead, research is needed to investigate where problem-solving can begin—and with whom.

Writing program administrators are in ideal change-agent roles to revise curricula and work with instructors to teach students to think critically about these conventions and their

implications for everyday composing. Teaching students to think critically about the genre of email communication is just one way to validate the kinds of new media composing students do on an everyday basis.

For this implementation to occur, writing program administrators could rethink the teaching of this genre and approach it from a critical perspective, not an uncritical, all-accepting one. With that, it is important to recognize that the implementation of such instruction should be carefully considered by each program in conjunction with programmatic objectives and student needs. Yet, considering this and scholarship cited earlier in this section, the revision of curriculum to include email communication instruction remains compelling, as does Shelley E. Reid's argument for frequent revision of programmatic curriculum:

> …Curricular reform can break resistance to change on local and multivocal levels, liberate discussions about change from predetermined means or outcomes, and put WPAs and other program leaders at a greater advantage by modeling sustainable, collaborative practice" [and] "through a variety of means and genres." (ctd. in Graban and Ryan 89)

This study intends to bring about similar revisions to first-year composition curriculum to "break resistance to change," and this research is driven by the assumption that altering current curricula to feature more electronic composing will be a challenging one. This has been evidenced in candid conversations on the WPA-L, an international email listserv sponsored by The Council of Writing Program Administrators (CWPA) and open to all faculty and students interested in writing program studies ("The WPA-L Listserv"). In late August 2012, the researcher called on listserv participants to share whether or not their writing programs featured email instruction (Hoermann). She asked:

Hello everyone,

I'm interested in learning more about writing programs that teach email communication in first- and second-year composition courses. If your program does, would you be so kind as to share a little more information with me off record (i.e. objectives, methods of instruction, etc.).

Thanks,

Jackie

The response was underwhelming. Two participants said they teach it informally, on the side (Dickson, Armfield). A third responded on list as saying no, but he had a colleague that taught memo writing (White).

Two more responded off-list. Writing Program Coordinator for California State University—Los Angeles Christopher Sean Harris said his program does not, but when he directed the writing program at Louisiana College, instructors were asked to teach "email etiquette" using an informative section in their program guide. Another off-list respondent, University of Texas-El Paso doctoral candidate Randall Monty, shared his program's "Email Memo assignment," and noted, interestingly, that this genre fits well with his program's "hybrid format" of being taught partly online, at a distance, and in a traditional classroom.

What is most significant about this listserv exchange is that of the thousands of program administrators who contribute to this listserv, only five responded. Despite this, the lack of response provides useful insight, giving one good reason to believe that email instruction in FYC is not widespread. Even as FYC program administrators entertain the teaching of electronic communication more and more, the email genre is probably not featured in most FYC curricula.

A need for email instruction has been established from professional conversations in the field—or lack thereof—and by drawing on relevant literature. Likewise, the curriculum and instructional materials designed for implementation in English 250 courses was also informed by relevant literature, and these materials were tested revealing that instruction could benefit students. Therefore, this research turns now from its theoretical foundations to the methods designed to test whether or not email instruction belongs in the first-year composition (FYC) course.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODS

"An emerging form of research is offering another alternative… Some scholars in the field of computers and composition are mixing quantitative and qualitative measurements in order to draw conclusions about the impact of computers in our culture and our classrooms… With a multimodal approach, the data can lead to conclusions that rest on durable, overarching issues and can, therefore, be applied to more situations than the one described in the study… The multimodal approach lends itself to a wider application because it provides a comprehensive analysis of multiple measures that have a broader impact."

-Patricia Rose Webb, "Reconceptualizing Classroom-based Research in Computers and Composition" (463)

Theoretical Foundations for Research Design

To fully understand the rationale driving this study design, it is helpful to understand the methodologies influencing it. This study utilized a mixed-methods design—or the "multimodal approach," discussed by Webb in the epigraph to this chapter—to give scholars a more robust understanding of the results yielded from the instructional design to be tested. Raw quantitative data was collected and reduced to statistical means and checked by calculating standard deviation scores.

The investigator recognizes that within the field of composition studies, there has been a push to do more qualitative research, which is thought to be less "masculinist," less "marginaliz[ing]" to certain voices and theoretical perspectives (Charney 567). In 1996, Davida Charney also acknowledged this and that purely quantitative results can prove problematic and many notable scholars have advocated for "purging [the field] of lingering scientific propensities and for wavering resistance to dominant ideologies in the academy and the workplace" about what counts as "legitimate" data, which are usually cold, hard numbers (567-568). Yet it is not fair to say that quantitative data hold no usefulness for writing program administrators and composition scholars. Charney writes,

Certainly, the research methods we employ have important consequences for the

intellectual authority of our field, for the ethical, political, and intellectual value

of our work, and for its potential to effect beneficial changes in the classroom and

the workplace. But recent work in the rhetoric of science suggests that the motives

and consequences of methodological choices are more complex than these critics

have assumed. I will argue here that critics of [quantitative methods] often

conflate methods and ideologies in simplistic ways that have been challenged by

others sharing their political commitments. It seems absurd to assume that anyone

conducting a qualitative analysis or ethnography must be compassionate, self-

reflection, creative, and committed to social justice and liberation. Or that anyone

who conducts an experiment is rigid and unfeeling and automatically opposes

liberatory, feminist, or postmodernist values… Consequences of over-reliance on

qualitative methods are more serious. Rather than endorsing or condemning

methods a priori by ideological purity, we should consider how they affect our

ability to work with each other to conduct the very best research we can and to

expand our understanding of academic and nonacademic discourse. (568-569)

Charney's words should be read neither as a defense of quantitative methods nor a justification

for pushing back against qualitative ones. The point she makes is that every study design,

quantitative, qualitative, or mixed, should be selected on the basis of what it can reveal about a

phenomenon to be studied.

Again, this study utilized a middle-of-the-road, mixed-methods design to collect both quantitative and qualitative results separately, and then, in the results section, analyzed them in tandem. The raw, quantitative data evaluated by raters served as a strong foundation on which to begin conducting analysis; the qualitative data extends a greater understanding of the results from there, with the intention of augmenting the findings in the quantitative data set. For the more qualitative, this study explored emerging themes in students' free-write reflections. Collection of the qualitative data occurred on the last day of instruction, after post-test emails had been turned in. As a homework assignment, students were asked to submit free-write responses via email to a study387@outlook.com account, where they were stored until further analysis was possible.[6] Interestingly, several themes emerged in student responses, all of which are discussed in the next chapter. In the meantime, the investigator would like to draw attention to the methods used in designing and administering the instructional unit, data collection techniques, and the student participants making this research possible.

The investigator would like to note one unforeseen error that occurred. Students were asked to send their email compositions to study387@iastate.edu, a private, university firewall-protected account set up as a safe, password-protected repository for the collection and storage of all emails used in this study. However, there were unforeseen technical errors with this account in the beginning of the study that caused some student emails to fail to be delivered to the account. Consequently, some students received a "Failed Delivery" error message. As a solution, a second account was created using Outlook.com. This account experienced no delivery problems, so for the duration of the study, the researcher asked students to send email

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[6] The email usernames, study387@outlook.com and study387@iastate.edu, were chosen because the application identification number assigned to this study by the ISU Office for Responsible Research's Institutional Review Board was 12-387, and the nondescript identifier would not unduly influence the composing context for participants.

communications to this account exclusively both to maintain authenticity and consistency. It is

possible that this occurrence could have affected the authenticity of the experience for the

participants, but neither the investigator's observations nor the results of the study indicate that

this error significantly impacted the outcome of the study.

Participants

All study participants (n=177) were recruited from eight course sections of English 250,

which is typically taken as a second-year ISUComm Foundation Course at ISU.[7] Students in

these courses have either passed English 150 prior to taking English 250 or bypassed taking the

former because (1) their ACT scores were high enough to place them directly into English 250,

(2) earned "Advanced Placement (AP) credit for English 150," or (3) they challenged their

placement by taking and passing the English 150 Placement Assessment, administered through

the ISUComm Foundation Course Program several times a year ("English 150/250 Course

Descriptions;" "English 150 Placement"). Of the eight course sections, four met twice a week for

80 minutes, one day a week in a traditional, face-to-face classroom and one day in a computer

lab classroom. The other four sections met three times a week in the same classroom, a

traditional classroom featuring audio-visual presentation equipment as well as a laptop cart

stocked with enough Apple MacBook Airs for every student to have one. Two of these sections

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[7] "**ENGL 250. Written, Oral, Visual, and Electronic Composition.** (3-0) Cr. 3.
F.S.SS. *Prereq: ENGL 150 or exemption from ENGL 150; credit for or concurrent enrollment in LIB 160.* Analyzing, composing, and reflecting on written, oral, visual, and electronic (WOVE) discourse within academic, civic, and cultural contexts. Emphasis on supporting a claim and using primary and secondary sources… Throughout the course, [students] learn to summarize, analyze, and evaluate various types of communication and then use those skills in four kinds of assignments: summaries, rhetorical analyses, argumentative and persuasive texts, and documented research. Individual instructors incorporate both the course goals and specific types of writing assignments listed below into the syllabi they design." ("English 150/250 Course Descriptions").

consisted of students enrolled in a biology learning community[8], but the other six sections were not affiliated with learning communities or other university programs. Rather, because these course sections were selected somewhat arbitrarily—instructor colleagues volunteering their sections—there is no reason to believe that the demographic makeup of each section varied even slightly from that of the larger university, which aside from featuring a variety of academic disciplines, mostly consists of students who are under 21 years of age (55.4%), white (81.8%), male (56.3%), and in-state students (68%) (*Student Profile 2011-2012*).

Recruitment and Confidentiality

The primary investigator entered six of the eight classrooms to invite students to participate in the study approximately one month before the study's instructional module was to be administered in November 2012. One hundred and seventy-seven students volunteered to participate knowing that they could not be compensated but also would not be harmed while participating in the study. Each student was invited to participate and was made well aware of how her or his writing would be used, evaluated, and analyzed by the researcher, and she or he was also told that a follow-up interview might be requested by the primary investigator, but she or he had the right to decline this request as well as discontinue participation at any time.

The two English 250 sections the primary investigator did not enter were her own. In order to ensure that the researcher's students were not unduly influenced or persuaded to

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[8] Iowa State University frequently ranks among the top 25 public institutions in the country providing students with superior learning community opportunities (McCarroll). Per the Learning Communities Office, the "learning communities are small groups of students who generally take one, two, or three courses together and may live in the same residence hall. Other characteristics [include:] …Contact with students who have similar academic goals, common courses, [or] common place of residence…" (*Information*). The investigator thinks this site characteristic is worth pointing out because it is exceptional. Although the reported standard deviations give no indication that this characteristic impacted the data, it is a characteristic that should be taken into account if the study is to be repeated by other researchers.

participate, a doctoral student colleague was solicited to explain the IRB-approved study, administer and collect informed consent documents, and protect the identities of both participants and nonparticipants until the course ended and grades had been submitted. Identifying information and consent documents were sealed and stored in a locked filing cabinet until the start of the spring 2013 semester.

Administration of Instruction

Before the start of the fall 2012 semester, each of the four instructors was provided with print and electronic file folders containing the same instructional materials for the email communication unit, including the assignments, rubrics, lesson plans, and activities to be carried out in the instructional unit (Appendices A-E). Also, the instructional materials were introduced and explained to each instructor by the primary investigator, who also made herself available for guidance before, during, and after the instructional design was administered. These steps were taken to eliminate inconsistencies between the courses in terms of how instruction was administered. Instructors were not asked to compromise their curricula by revising out other assignments they wanted to teach; rather, then were encouraged to incorporate the instructional unit at a time in November that related to instruction on other genres of electronic communication composing.

Worth acknowledging, though, is that although all the instructors were prepared in a similar manner, their presentations of the instruction naturally invited variance. In practice, no two instructors would teach any instructional unit—or genre, for that matter—in quite the same way. Therefore, even though conditions and administration of instruction attempted to alleviate variances as much as possible, their undeniable existence mirrors a more realistic classroom

scenario, making the results more widely applicable. Later in the Results section, this variance will be discussed in more detail—and in terms of how it strengthens the findings.

Administering the Instructional Design

The actual instruction begins at the end of a class period when students were given a homework assignment of composing an email to a faculty member or other authority figure on campus with whom they would like to interview for a hypothetical class project. In this first email, they were asked to compose as they would normally, stressing that their instructor would not be grading this initial email at all and would not be seeing it until the end of the unit. Students were allowed to create fictional recipient names and projects if they liked. The only substantial suggestion made to participants was to introduce themselves, perhaps by explaining their interests, relevant academic or career goals, and any other information they deemed necessary to an introduction written in this genre. The medium of delivery was email, and all emails were sent to two nondescript addresses: study387@iastate.edu and study387@outlook.com, the former being the one that experienced technical errors preventing delivery. Emails were to be sent before the next class period began. The other homework assignments to be completed included two short articles, "Caution—Reply With Care" and "Instant Messaging and the Future of Language," and students were to bring to class 3 print copies of emails sent from people they perceived to be authority figures for an activity.

The instruction began the next time the classes met and carried over two class periods in all eight sections. The objectives for the first day of instruction were:

- To catalyze student thinking about email composing

- To explain purpose of email as a genre

- To explain purpose and transferrable skills of this instructional unit

- To introduce investigator and study participation opportunity

- To review and analyze current email composing processes

- To reflect on what changes to email composing are necessary

At the start of the first day, an inquiry arousal strategy was used to introduce the unit more

thoroughly and engage the students. First, the students were asked to take out the print copies of

emails they had received from authority figures. Then they were asked what they thought about

the way these emails were composed and how that might be different or similar to the way the

students composed their emails. So analysis of the authority-figure emails was shared, followed

by the students discussing how they composed the initial, pre-test email they were asked to send

prior to coming to class.

After contextualizing the unit with this inquiry arousal strategy to increase student

engagement, the final assignment was explained before in-class activities and discussions

commenced and a corresponding instructional sheet was provided (Appendix C). It was made

clear to students that they would be assessed primarily on their ability to incorporate meaningful

revisions based on the instruction and conversations had during the instructional unit. Moreover,

the following guidelines were given as additional support:

> You should use this revising assignment as an opportunity to synthesize the
>
> conventions you've learned in regards to email communication and apply them. It
>
> is recommended that you consult the assigned readings and your course's
>
> assigned style guide to revise and edit your original email. In so doing, the goal is
>
> that you will become a more effective email communicator because you've
>
> mastered the conventions of the email genre and are better able to determine what
>
> steps you can take to improve future correspondence. (Appendix C)

In addition to this, students were informed that this would be a graded assignment, but the

audience needed to remain the same—the perceived authority figure to whom they originally

wrote—and they were instructed to tailor their styles, voices, and other writing-related

considerations to the original audience. It was also made clear to students that the instructor

would take this into account.

       The next activity for day one of this instructional design included a discussion of the

assigned readings using "Think, Pair, Share," for which students were asked to review and write

down their initial thoughts on the assigned reading, turn to a nearby partner to share these

thoughts, and then turn back to the class to discuss as one whole group. This activity consumed

most of the class period, but the last 15 minutes of class were reserved for students to critically

reflect on what they had discussed. Students were asked to write about their email composing

processes with the following questions as optional ideas to respond to:

- Based on the composing suggestions made by the two authors we read for
  today, what changes do you want to make to your email composing process
  and why?

- How will you benefit?

- How might you not benefit?

- What will you not change?

- On what points do you agree or disagree with the authors?

Before leaving class, the instructor assigned a short article for reading, "How to Fail at Email,"

and points to be covered in the next class period were previewed. Namely, the wiki creation

activity to explore email conventions—and the fluidity/rigidity of those norms across contexts—

and then a discussion of how those norms can be both empowering and inhibiting to student

voices.

The objectives set forth for the second day of instruction were:

- To identify conventions of the email communication genre

- To develop awareness of potentially detrimental composing strategies

- To identify methods for writing effective email communications

- To understand how these methods enable and constrain student agency

- To differentiate between genres and corollaries of email communication

- To become sensitized and responsive to the needs of readers

To start class, another inquiry arousal strategy was used; this time in the form of a survey.

Students were asked "Have you ever used a style guide or other instructional text to help you

compose an email?" Survey results were viewed by a using simple show of hands and not

formally reported since not all of the students had agreed to be participants in the study. But the

results were to be discussed by each class and helped to segue into further discussion about email

composing conventions.

After this first activity, the longer wiki creation activity began.[9] The email composing

inventions listed by the author of the assigned reading were discussed as a class, and then

students formed small groups, approximately 3-4 individuals per group, to choose one of the

conventions, brainstorm descriptions of those conventions, research them, and then report them

back to the class in a collective space, the class wiki, which functioned as a helpful guide for

students to refer to outside the classroom. Each group's findings were presented to the class and

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[9] Note: Instructors with sections meeting only once a week in computer lab classrooms were asked to schedule the first and second day's instruction back to back, but the second day needed to be in a computer lab classroom.

discussed, letting students ask questions or mention relevant contradictions or exceptions to what each group reported. Relevant examples of both good and bad email convention usage were encouraged. The last ten minutes of class were reserved for critical reflection. Students were asked to reflect inwardly once more by writing brief responses to one or more of the following questions:

- Were there any conventions you were unaware of? Any you found surprising?

- Were there conventions that you were aware of, but chose not to employ in your regular email correspondence? Why or why not?

- Do you find the conventions helpful or alienating? Explain why.

Instructors were asked to emphasize that the responses could be brief, informal ones, and the responses were not to be graded. Rather, they were intended to ensure that the critical awareness objectives of the instructional unit were realized through careful, thoughtful reflection on the part of the students. They were also submitted to instructors so that the instructors might read them and respond. These responses also provided qualitative data points for further analysis in the case that the results of the email communication evaluations merited additional explanation or justification from students. And ultimately, the primary investigator determined that they did.

To end the second day of instruction, students were reminded about expectations and evaluation of the revised email assignment and any lingering questions were answered. Students submitted the final revised email by the start of the next class period, emailing it again to the aforementioned email accounts created for the collection of data as well as their instructors for review.

Evaluation

From the larger pool of one hundred and seventy-seven participants, slightly less than one-third (n=50) of the participants were selected at random for inclusion in the sample to be evaluated.[10] Another four were selected as "norming" examples, explained below. Each participant provided two initial data points—the pre-test email (before receiving instruction) and the post-test email (after receiving instruction)—making for a total of one hundred data points to be evaluated by five ISUComm-affiliated instructors. For the purposes of evaluation, each rater evaluated twenty submissions using the same four-level ("Excellent," "Good," "Fair," and "Need[ing] Work"), five-category ("Context," Substance," "Organization," "Style," and "Delivery")[11] rubric scale reflecting the assessment standards and curriculum set forth throughout ISUComm Foundation Courses.

This study used multiple raters, each of whom was prepared to evaluate the data fairly and similarly using norming strategies. These measures were taken with the intention of increasing the validity of evaluation results. Multiple raters were recruited as unpaid volunteers in order to increase the internal validity of the results. Before beginning evaluation, raters spent approximately one hour rating the four aforementioned norming examples. The examples represented a range of abilities in each rubric category, making for invigorating discussion about what constitutes an "Excellent" addressing of context or a "Fair" organization. The raters were also given an overview of the instructional design in order to orient them with the activities and information provided to students. This measure gave the raters more insight into why certain composing decisions were made by students. After this overview, each rater read the same

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[10] Random sampling was achieved using the random-sort function in Microsoft Excel [Rand ()].
[11] The specific definitions for each evaluative category are presented in Appendix D, the rubric. For more information on the five categories, refer to the *Instructor Guide: ISUComm Foundation Courses.*

norming example, scored it with the same rubric provided to students, and then all five

reconvened to discuss the scores and the reasoning behind them. This process was repeated four

times total.

At the end of each norming, raters decided collectively on a score for each rubric

category. The dialogue fostered among raters helped to establish reasonable expectations for

evaluating student writing, increasing the likelihood of similar approaches to scoring.

Throughout the norming and rating phases, the primary investigator was available to answer any

questions from the rater regarding the nature of the assignment and its accompanying instruction.

Rubric scores were marked on paper rubrics to indicate where students placed in each of the five

rubric categories, but the raters were not asked to provide or guess a composite score as a

precautionary measure taken to eliminate unnecessary subjectivity. The raters were also

informed that if they felt a student's work fell somewhere in between ability levels, the raters

were allowed to score in between. So hypothetically, if a rater felt that a student's work in the

"Context" category met some of the criteria for "Fair" as well as criteria for "Good" she or he

might score the student in between. If this were the case, instructors were asked to place the

scoring mark directly between categories, on the rubric line, instead of in one category. An in-

between mark was numerically factored into the overall score using half-points, so a score

between "Fair" and "Good" would be counted as a 2.5 on a 4.0 scale. An "Excellent" score

received a 4.0 rating; a "Good" score received a 3.0, a "Fair" a 2.0, and a "Needs Work" score

merited a 1.0 score. Unless a scoring category was, arguably, entirely absent from the

participant's work, all categories received a minimum score of 1.0 to reflect minimal effort.

All identities remained anonymous throughout and after the rating process. Raters were

not able to see the names of the students and additional identifiers, for example, email addresses,

were redacted from the documents (See Appendix F). Raters were also not told which

compositions were the pre-test ones or post-test ones. The primary investigator kept track of

identities by assigning randomized seven-digit identifier numbers to each selected participant's

pre- and post-test email communications.

Data Collection

All data were collected from the raters; the scores were recorded in an Excel spreadsheet.

In the spreadsheet (Appendix G), each seven-digit identifier for the pre-test set was matched with

its rubric scores and then paired to the post-test set's identifiers and corresponding scores. Put

another way, the seven-digit identifier and the reported scores for each were recorded parallel to

the pre-test. Statistical means were calculated for each rubric category, as was a standard

deviation for each. In the next chapter, these results are discussed and contextualized with

qualitative data provided by the critical reflection free-write activity conducted at the end of the

second day's instruction.

CHAPTER FOUR: RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

"I know the difference between a professional email and a personal email so that is not an issue. I think by keeping my emails more concise, I will benefit by looking more professional and knowledgeable to potential employers or professors. In today's society, so much is done by email that it is very important to know the rules and protocol for different interactions. It isn't like you would go up to an interviewer or a professor and be rude and loud right in their face. That is against the social "rules" that our society follows. Email is the same way. To get ahead you need to play by the rules and respect your audience."

- Ally, Student Participant, Email Reflection Response

The participant who wrote the above opinion, who will be referred to as Ally to protect her identity, confirms much of what one might guess about students' email composing processes. Students are familiar enough with the genre to distinguish between emails written for professional audiences versus personal ones. Yet the rest of her writing implies that despite the genre knowledge she currently has, additional learning can still occur. Likewise, the professional audiences she references are thought to appreciate a more formal approach to writing emails, oftentimes by adhering to conventions. In many ways, the insights Ally shares can be discussed as a representative of the collective opinions of most student participants taking part in this study. Throughout this chapter, the investigator presents several student voices to help scholars make sense of the study's findings. The investigator will also discuss how students understand email to be a legitimate genre and one with persisting relevance to modern communicative contexts with its own set of "social 'rules'" to play by in order to "get ahead." But as seen in Ally's response, this understanding may be limited. For scholars, this resurrects concerns regarding the need to teach critical awareness, but before delving too deeply into such analysis, the study's quantitative results are to be discussed to shed light on some of the investigator's original research questions, which were:

1. Will instruction on the email communication genre improve students' abilities to implement genre-related conventions?

2. Are FYC courses the best entry point for educating college students about the generic conventions of email communication?

3. How do students feel about conforming to genre conventions? Does it give them a sense of rhetorical agency or leave them feeling the limits on their rhetorical power?

Quantitative Findings

Quantitative data collected from volunteer raters were organized in an Excel spreadsheet and then statistical means were calculated for analysis. For each participant, pre-test and post-test composite scores were averaged based on the five sub scores of each rubric category.[12] From the composite scores, a mean score was calculated to determine where, on average, students' scores ranked before and after receiving instruction (Table 1). The statistical mean for the pre-test scores was 2.672; the mean for the post-test scores was 3.002, equaling an improvement in scores of .33.

	Context	Substance	Organization	Delivery	Style	Overall
Pre-Test Mean Scores	2.78	2.75	2.67	2.56	2.6	2.672
Post-Test Mean Scores	3.06	3.07	2.85	2.85	3.18	3.002
Mean Difference Between Pre- and Post-Test Scores	.28	.32	.18	.29	.58	.33
Standard Deviations	0.572	0.624	0.637	0.577	0.571	

Table 1. Breakdown of Pre-Test and Post-Test Means and Standard Deviations

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[12] See Appendix D for details on each rubric category.

Means were also calculated in pre-test and post-test scores for each of the rubric

categories to track which categories students were improving in and which ones they were not.

Surprisingly, Figure 3 shows that the results suggest that students actually improved in every

Chart 1. Differences in Rubric Means for Pre- and Post-Test Scores
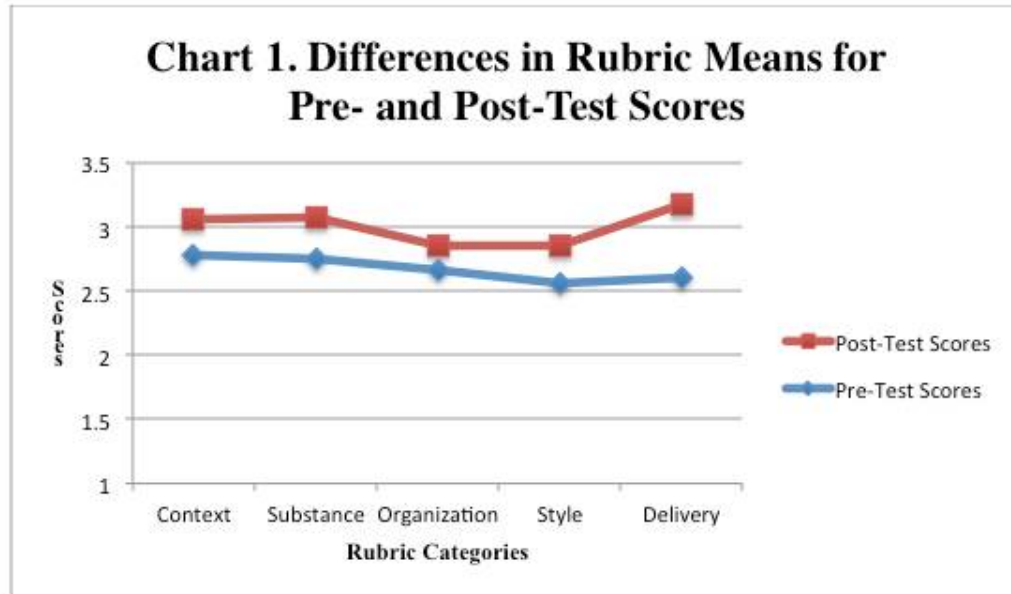
category. The rubric category that reported the most improvement was "Delivery" ($\bar{x}$=.58). The

rubric category reporting the least improvement was "Organization" ($\bar{x}$=.18).

Moreover, because the possibility of variance was a concern, standard deviation scores

were calculated to determine whether improvements in each rubric category were being biased

by one or more statistical outliers. Here again, the results of each standard deviation score

indicate minimal dispersion amongst participant scores, suggesting that the reported means are in

fact reliable, variance between scores minimal (Figure 3).

Question #1: Will Students Improve?

The quantitative data provide a relatively clear answer to this study's driving research

question. Based on the statistical difference between pre- and post-test scores, it seems

reasonably safe to say that, yes, overall improvement was observed, and the overall improvement

in scores speaks to the effectiveness and usefulness of email genre instruction.

More interesting is that a quantifiable improvement in students' composing abilities was reported after only 150-160 minutes of formal instruction. Despite the fact that the improvement is not drastic, it is substantial enough to help answer the first research question with a reasonable degree of certainty. Specifically in regards to email-genre conventions, on the whole students' abilities to implement genre-related conventions demonstrated notable improvement, too. This conclusion is fortified by the rubric category showing the most improvement, "Delivery" (See Appendix D). Email-genre conventions, such as formatting, subject lines, and e-Signatures, to name just a few, were deemed part of "Delivery," thereby supporting the assertion that students stand to learn the most about genre-specific conventions particular to email communication.

What's also interesting is the 0.18 improvement in the "Organization" category. It is possible that this category saw the least improvement overall because the compositions themselves were expected to be relatively short, introductory pieces that required less critical thinking about organizational considerations, such as paragraphing or transitional phrases. Had the students been assigned to write longer compositions, the results may have turned out differently, making greater improvement possible.[13] Regardless, the evidence collected provides an answer to the first question, an answer that many scholars may have suspected. A few may dismiss this finding as common sense, simply confirming what many writing program administrators may already know, but it is significant in that it establishes to a reasonable degree of scientific certainty that improvements can and did occur.

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[13] Considering the results in the "Organization" category, a follow-up study or a modification to the current one might prove useful in exploring how organization can be better taught within the confines of one unit of instruction. Issues to be explored related to this potential research activity might inquire as to what organizational models students rely on, if any, as well as how the technologies they use to send and receive such emails affects organization.

Qualitative Findings

Improvements—and remarkably, appreciation of such improvements—were discussed by students in the reflection free-write activities. Having now analyzed the quantitative data, the results of the qualitative data collection will help answer the first part of research question number three, "How do students feel about conforming to genre conventions?" as well as exploring the participants ability to increase critical awareness of their role as composers by answering the second part of research question number three, "Does [instruction] give [students] a sense of rhetorical agency or leave them feeling the limits on their rhetorical power?" This detour past research question two is intentional; possible answers to research question two will be addressed in the next chapter.

Question #3: How Do Students Feel About Email? Are They Critically Aware?

As explained in the preceding chapter, qualitative data were gathered by having students email their responses to the reflection free-write activity to study387@outlook.com. At the start of the spring semester, the primary investigator began analyzing those that had been submitted. From there, three major themes appeared in student writing, ones significant enough to be documented and presented for analysis and discussion because the three major themes provide useful insight into the perspectives of student participants. It is helpful to have statistical means to support improvement, but the scholarly community will, as Webb put it, have a more "comprehensive" understanding of the results if qualitative data are available to contextualize quantitative data, and vice versa (463). Likewise, the results can be applied more widely, having a "broader impact" on the field and becoming more reliable and significant if qualitative data help to strengthen or reinforce conclusions drawn from quantitative data (Webb 463). Building off of Webb as a grounding impetus for collecting and analyzing themes, the major themes

appearing in student reflections that will help gauge the components of the instruction that engaged the most student interest. These themes are best labeled as improvement, conventions, and authority figures, and each is defined and explained in the next sections.

Improvement

In most of the reflections collected, students wrote about what they were able to improve in their email composing processes, based either on a lack of prior knowledge or lack of value placed on certain aspects of email communication. In terms of prior knowledge, students often reported not knowing how to revise for concision or the quick conveyance of ideas as well as how to create an email signature and how to format email text, such as salutations, closing remarks, and paragraphs. In the epigraph to this chapter, student participant, Ally, touches on this major theme. For her, the major improvement she noticed had to do with issues of concision and brevity in order to appear more competent in professional contexts. Her insights were common, representing well the responses of many student participants. Her point also lends itself to the issue of value placed on specific aspects of email communication, which can be understood as the relative commonness or frequency that affects students' approaches to sending and receiving emails. This is significant and worth teasing apart from the theme of improvement as it pertains to knowledge gained because new knowledge gained is not the same experience as ascribing greater value to a bit of knowledge, new or old. So again, the relative commonness or frequency at which emails are sent may contribute to oversight or disregard of certain conventions as valuable ones that can improve email communication. In other words, because many students have never learned what makes a specific convention effective or ineffective, such as e-Signatures, for example, these aspects of email composing could be given little rhetorical value, and then, quite possibly, used ineffectively.

To illuminate this theme further, the theme of improvement in this study is typified another student's writing, whom will be referred to using the pseudonym Misty. After letting the reader know that she had not received prior instruction on email communication, Misty writes as many participants did, listing the noticeable improvements to her process, with occasional explanations as to why she ascribes greater weight to the conventions that she learned to improve:

> I always was self-conscious about writing emails, especially to professors. I have never been taught the proper way to communicate through an email. I now know that my subject line needs to be catchy but short and to the point. Also that my greeting, spacing, closing, and signature needs some definite work. My greeting needed to be more proper with better punctuation and wording. I never knew how to space so I now know how to break it up so the email flows in a more organized way. My closing needed to be better at wrapping all my topics up and being formal. Lastly, the signature needed more current information and contact information. I now know how I can compose an email to my professor and the different styles and words I can use if I was just writing an email to a friend. I will benefit from here on out by being more confident when emailing professors or businesses later on in my career. I might overthink my emailing maybe too much now that I know all the requirements for a good email.

In the mere ten minutes provided for this brief reflection activity, Misty was able to list almost ten noticeable improvements pertaining to communication style, audience, organization, and genre conventions. The number of noticeable improvements she was able to list in such a short amount of time demonstrates that improvements were not only observed in quantifiable numbers,

but that they were also observed by students. Some of these improvements stem from new knowledge, such as when Misty discusses spacing and organization issues, and some improvements stem from greater value on certain aspects of composing brought forth by new understandings of how these aspects can rhetorically impact an email communication. The latter is seen in Misty's word choice, describing what she has gained. She writes about how she expanded the knowledge she already had, saying "I now know that my subject line needs to be catchy… My greeting needed to be more proper." This student's voice represents many similar opinions, and it is included as further support for the driving research question. These improvements were not a series of flukes confirming the investigator's hypothesis; rather they are additional pieces of evidence confirming that students can improve their knowledge of the genre and ability to communicate in accordance with the genre's conventions. One might counter this finding saying, that it is possible that students might demonstrate the ability to improve, but this does not mean that they have mastered this genre of writing or completely internalized how to communicate in this genre effectively using conventions. As discussed earlier, some students may not fully internalize learning because they are simply learning the "social rules," but even so, these improvements are significant and can only benefit students as communicators by giving them a strong foundation of genre knowledge from which they can draw in future communicative scenarios.

Before moving on to the next major theme, the investigator would like to preemptively assure the reader that measures were taken to ensure that students like Misty were not "primed." To reduce the chances of "priming," or improperly influencing student participants to answer how they might think their teacher would like them to answer, students were informed that the free-writing response was ungraded. Additionally, they were encouraged to be as critical as they

like when providing their perspective, letting them know that the purpose of this activity was to increase their critical awareness of email as a communication genre. In an attempt to encourage student thinking about what they were not able to improve, the free-write prompt posed the following questions: "How might you not benefit [from the email instruction]?" and "What will you not change [about your process]?" A few students gave more than a sentence or two to these questions, but an overwhelming majority of students wrote instead about what they had learned to improve, and Misty's words capture the general sentiment about this ability to improve. Once more, this outcome was not anticipated and should be understood as another strong indicator that improvements to email composing are possible, useful, and effectively implemented in the FYC courses.

Genre Conventions

The second major theme emerging from student free-write responses is most accurately labeled as genre conventions. As was the case with Misty, students' self-reporting of improvement largely coincided with conventions specific to the email genre. In Misty's response, she mentions subject lines, e-Signatures, and proper salutations, as well as grappling organizational and length issues determined by a genre of writing that is used every day. In fact, most participant responses echoed Misty's response by providing almost a laundry list of conventions learned and discussing them more compellingly than answering the other questions posed in the free-write prompt. In addition to the two questions mentioned in the last section (questions three and four), students were also asked:

- Based on the composing suggestions made by the two authors we read for today, what changes do you want to make to your email composing process and why?

- How will you benefit?

- On what points do you agree or disagree with the authors?

Looking at these questions, one ought to note that "conventions" are not specifically referenced, but "changes" are referenced. Students seemed to have interpreted "changes" more generally, relating back to common writing considerations of context, audience, purpose, and so on, but what is interesting is that they did not. Instead, most participant responses feature a discussion of email-specific genre conventions, and that reinforces the conclusions drawn from the quantitative data, namely the largest mean of statistical increase in improvement, the "Delivery" category that dealt with most email-specific genre conventions. It also helps support previous conclusions drawn to answer the first question that knowledge of genre-specific conventions did improve.

Authority Figures

In both pre- and post-test writing prompts, participants were asked to write to an ISU professor. Discussions about ISU professors as authority figures were held starting on the first day of instruction, when students shared emails they brought in from communicators they perceived as authority figures. However, the idea of an authority figure is limited to professors. Some students brought in emails from past employers, ISU staff members, and internship coordinators, analyzing the way they composed, the genres they chose to adhere to, and patterns in the authority figures' compositions. Still, perceived authority figures were discussed in general terms, and expectations for emails sent between friends, or personal email, were discussed just as much, often as counterpoints to the authority figures.

One of the most interesting reflections on authority figures comes from Ally. Her language in describing how she communicates with authority figures is couched in a game-like metaphor:

In today's society, so much is done by email that it is very important to know the rules and protocol for different interactions. It isn't like you would go up to an interviewer or a professor and be rude and loud right in their face. That is against the social "rules" that our society follows. Email is the same way. To get ahead you need to play by the rules and respect your audience.

Her repetition of "rules" is one commonly seen in the responses of other participants. The line between grammatical rules and "social 'rules'" becomes blurry, conflating the two as one in the same. This language shows that students accept this approach as standard practice, as a situation that applies to every communicator, every communication genre. This also suggests that two of the central objectives laid out in the instructional materials were realized by many participants, which were "Understand how these methods enable and constrain student agency," and "Become sensitized and responsive to the needs of readers" (See Appendix A, "Lesson Plan: Session II"). Students began to better understand the needs of readers of email, but the needs of authority figures were reflected on substantially more than the needs of personal acquaintances. But the first objective of this instruction, understanding how email composing can both "enable and constrain student agency," is mentioned by Ally albeit in a somewhat underdeveloped way. Interestingly enough, it seems that the seeds for such critical awareness were planted in the minds of most students, but collectively the students articulated the impact of constraints on student agency far less than their discussion of conventions. This makes sense considering the bulk of instruction was designed to teach a foundation of conventions first, so that dialogues on critical awareness could supplement this foundation.

Responses like Ally's acknowledging how effective incorporation of authority figures' needs can enable students, or help them increase status with professional or academic

advancement, were articulated far more than how those needs constrain a student's rhetorical agency. Given the inclusion of critical thinking questions, such as "How might you not benefit?" and issues of rhetorical agency addressed in class, it is surprising that the needs of personal acquaintance readers were not addressed by students more. To substantiate this observation with another example, take the reflections of Robin (another pseudonym):

> Having a formal tone will allow me to transition from communicating with my peers and those close to me from communicating with higher ups with ease. This will pay off in the long run with my emails to future employers being more polished than the average twenty-something's blurb of an email. Having a more formal tone with my emails will not come without a cost. I will have to invest more time into drafting my emails. As I said before however, this will be an investment that can pay-off big in the future.

Unlike Ally and most of the others, Robin does acknowledge the needs of his "peers" or non-authority figures, but like other students, in most of the critical reflecting he seems more concerned with issues of personal advancement through learning genre conventions. One could theorize substantially on Robin, Ally, and other participants' use of advancement language to describe their improvements and perceived benefit, but for the purposes of this study, what is more relevant to this discussion is that some critical awareness fostered in class discussions, although future studies could expand on this much more.

Based on this outcome, one can arrive at two significant conclusions. First, students may be more likely to prioritize learning the needs of authority figures over the needs of non-authority figures. This seems reasonable enough given that writers communicating with authority figures will view these conversations and their outcomes as higher-stakes ones than casual

emails sent between friends. Second, and more relevant to the third research question ("How do students feel about conforming to genre conventions? Does it give them a sense of rhetorical agency or leave them feeling the limits on their rhetorical power?"), one might deduce that two days of formal instruction may not be enough for the email genre. The conventions associated with the email genre are complex, but the successful implementation of these conventions requires a critical awareness of how email can limit rhetorical effectiveness. Like any communicative genre, email communication has set conventions and models thought to be the "right" way of composing, but knowing when it is better to be "right" or to break the rules can help communicators be more rhetorically effective.

From this point, the discussion continues in the next chapter with ideas about how to foster critical awareness in the classroom, which are taken up in more detail as is the issue of needing more time to teach email communication. The investigator will make several recommendations for future research to extend the findings of this study, and finally, provide an answer to the only remaining research question, "Are FYC courses the best entry point for educating college students about the generic conventions of email communication?"

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSIONS

"Tell your students they are just about the most politically powerful members of our constituency. They think they have no control, but they are the most powerful people lobbying for change… Email can be a wonderful way to get involved… I get 500 emails a day on the same thing."
--Former Minnesota State Representative Terry Morrow, November, 9th, 2012

In November 2012 at The Great Plains Alliance for Computers and Writing (GPACW), the keynote speaker, then Minnesota State Representative and Gustavus Adolphus College Adjunct Professor Terry Morrow addressed conference attendees on issues of civic engagement pertaining to composition studies.[14] Rep. Morrow, who previously held an adjunct professorship in the Gustavus Adolphus Communication Studies Department, stressed to a room of mostly composition scholars the significance of their contributions to civic communication contexts. For a short while, he discussed how strong writing skills empowered tomorrow's voters to become more engaged with the process, to write the old-fashioned letter to one's congressperson, which he stated he still honors. Yet this discussion was overshadowed by the discussion of another communication medium. Rep. Morrow quickly moved on to the importance of teaching new media literacies in the classroom, and then on to a third issue, speaking most passionately and probably most surprisingly, about email. Rep. Morrow came out from behind his podium, stood close to his audience, and went on at length about constituent emails.

Hundreds of emails a day is what he estimates receiving from concerned constituents. He explained how they influence his legislative actions. But the most salient point in his discussion focused on email as the best means of communication for modern times, and he asked composition scholars to relay this message to students. As seen in the epigraph to this chapter, Rep. Morrow allocated a sizeable portion of his keynote address to the significance of email

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[14] At the end of 2012, Rep. Morrow announced his acceptance of a position with the Uniform Law Commission in Chicago, Illinois, and that he would not be returning to the legislature in 2013 (Bierschbach).

communication, but this is not simply because he comes into contact with it most frequently.

Instead, the significance of email communication, from a politician's perspective, is not only

attributable to the increasing frequency at which it is used or its increased accessibility over other

means of communication that cost, but also, the power email carries. Email communications

have the power to influence civic contexts substantially; it can enable civic participation by

voices that might not have had access to direct communication activities as recently as half a

century ago. Email holds power.

The problem is this power requires knowledge of genre conventions to be realized in full.

Most people can create an email account and send and receive email communications as they

please, but not everyone is instructed in how to make use of this power by effectively crafting

messages to be carried in electronic envelopes. Time and again, the argument guiding this

research has touched on issues of power related to genre. Miller's "Genre as Social Action" shed

light on the power dynamics behind genre conventions, and how the learning or mastering of

these genre conventions has the potential to empower students through careful study and

effective implementation just as much as ignorance of genre conventions can disempower

students, limiting the effectiveness of the communications they send (165). A sloppily scrawled

email may fly into a legislator's inbox or spam folder, depending on how the sender wrote the

subject line. Or to build on Bawarshi's discussion of e-signatures and their importance, jobs,

titles, or other affiliations crafted into one's e-signature may influence whether a legislative aide

chooses to forward the email on to a congressperson for further consideration, file it away with

others, or simply click "Delete" (337).

Having revisited the problem in a different context, one beyond academia and the other

frequently-discussed communicative context, the professional workplace, one returns to the

problem of email communication, which hinges on the need for knowledge of genre conventions in order to write within the genre effectively. The solution to the problem, however, lies in instruction. As supported by the results of this study, designing and implementing instruction on the email communication genre has shown that when provided with instruction students can improve the emails they write by almost 9% (see Chapter 3, Table 1). This appears truer in regards to learning genre conventions. Earlier, Larry Beason's claims for the significance of teaching genre conventions was theoretically backed by scholarship on how a composer's inability to adhere to genre conventions is usually enough to render him or her incompetent in the opinion of his or her reader (33). The appearance that one is following genre conventions may carry the most gravity with readers, or to put it another way, readers are more inclined to notice when genre conventions are being broken or followed, more so than other aspects of writing, and consequently, conventions will receive greater attention making them more vulnerable to judgment.

This study's findings report that receiving two days' worth of instruction enabled students to improve their ability to implement email genre conventions more than any other aspects of writing, such as context or transitional phrases. More specifically, students improved their scores in the genre conventions rubric category ("Delivery") by 18%. Hence, it is important to point out that these significant improvements occurred after only two days. What one can learn about a genre, any genre, in two days' time can be quite limited. If a similar study could be replicated but extended to feature more instruction, more instructional materials and drafting opportunities over a greater duration, the results might yield an even greater improvement in scores. Likewise, the fields of writing across the curriculum and writing program administration studies stand to benefit from longitudinal studies on teaching email communication. For instance,

after receiving instruction in English 250, it would be interesting to track how students' email composing changes during their time at university. Might it improve because they will have had more experience writing emails? Or might evaluation scores wane after some time has passed because the instruction was not intellectually internalized? Longitudinal research could provide more insight into the teaching of email communication. It might even require scholars to rethink how much time should be allocated to teaching current-traditional modes of writing versus electronic genres of writing like email.

Implications for Programs and Future Research

Despite the fact that email instruction has the potential to improve students' email composing processes through increased knowledge of the genre, further research is needed to determine how best to implement such instruction. For the remainder of this study's conclusions, the researcher will make recommendations as to what further research is needed to understand how instructors can teach the email genre more effectively. Additionally, specific recommendations for instruction, instructional materials and learning objectives will be explored in greater detail. These recommendations will be both site-specific—associating the potential for future research and what it holds for ISUComm Foundation Courses—yet also generalizable, aimed at helping FYC programs across the field. The first of these recommendations will start where the last chapter left off. Research question #2, "Who's responsible for teaching email?" will commence the series of recommendations in because although data results support that instruction can improve email communication, the question of who's best suited to deliver this instruction merits additional study.

Question #2: Who's Responsible for Teaching Email?

The question that remains to be answered is the second one, "Are FYC courses the best entry points for educating college students about the generic conventions of email communication?" Earlier the researcher questioned what discipline is best suited for this challenge. Theoretically, because college students communicate with email from the time they begin college, the FYC course is one of the earliest, and therefore, best entry points for such instruction to occur. In addition to this, the common ability of composition scholars to teach many different genres of writing, even some they were not necessarily trained in but mastered, nonetheless, augments confidence in FYC courses as a fitting place for such instruction. Now given the results of this research, email instruction taking place in the FYC course has been shown to be conducive to such instruction.

In hindsight, though, the superlative of "best entry point" might have been better articulated as "relatively logical" or "relatively appropriate" for instruction. What is meant by this is that, realistically, email as a genre could be instructed in other courses, in other disciplines. Composing abilities could be improved in other courses and with instruction from scholars in other fields also, such as communication studies, business, or any writing-in-the-discipline courses willing to teach how to effectively email others in their fields of study or lines of work. One might also recall the investigator's questioning of disciplinary ownership in the introduction, positing that it might fit well in advanced communication courses, such as a business communication course offered by an English department. Recall too that such instruction was believed to be more effective if taught earlier, in FYC courses like English 250. The lack of answers surrounding this questioning has served as a strong impetus for this research, and the research itself indicates that FYC courses are, at the very least, viable sites for

such instruction and students in these courses value that instruction, too. This conclusion

buttresses what many scholars have argued all along; that the traditional composition classroom

is an ideal site for civic preparation and has been since ancient times (Jarratt 116, Mendelson

169). Now with Rep. Morrow and other public figures stressing the value of email to civic

contexts, it seems fitting for scholars to give due consideration to revising existing curricula for

FYC to feature email communication.

Future research might help scholars claim more confidently that FYC courses are one of

the most conducive points of entry for email instruction. To determine this, a series of other

studies would need to be conducted implementing the same instructional design in non-FYC

courses, such as Business Communication, English 302.[15] Statistical means and standard

deviations would need to be calculated for similar comparisons to be made. In keeping with the

methodologies undergirding this design, additional qualitative data from a new set of student

participants would be needed for close comparison. For interested researchers wanting to amend

the study design, it would be all the more enlightening if the qualitative data collected asked

critical thinking questions gauging students' opinions on when they need this instruction (at what

point in their coursework) and whose disciplinary expertise they think might increase their email

composing abilities most. It would be helpful if this qualitative prompts were worded in a way to

encourage students to engage with the complexity of this matter, inciting higher incidences of

well-reasoned justifications to support the opinions they provide.

---

[15] English 302: ("Business Communication") is one of several courses offered in advanced communication studies by ISUComm. Generally, the course is taken by third- or fourth-year students who have already passed through the prerequisite ISUComm Foundation Courses, ENGL 150 and ENGL 250. In this course, principles of written, oral, visual, and electronic communication continue to be explored, usually in a business or workplace context. Genres taught may include email correspondence in addition to the traditional letter, memo, proposals, reports, application letters, resumes, and much more ("ENGL 302").

Although this study has uncovered compelling findings supporting the benefits of including email instruction in the FYC course, it has some limitations. For one, expanding this research to test other communication courses or other disciplines as viable sites for instruction would enrich the answer to the second research question. Another limitation is that confidence in inter-rater reliability may be slightly compromised. In designing this study, the original intention was to increase inter-rater reliability by having each rater assess every one of the 100 data points, but due to the fact that the raters volunteered and no grant funding was available to compensate them for additional time, this initial plan was not able to go forward. If more time and compensation were available, future researchers could design a study for which raters would be more willing to commit time and resources to. Ideally, these raters could even be compensated for their efforts.

Recommendations to ISUComm and Other FYC Programs

The general demographic makeup of Iowa State University is similar to that of many universities across the country, thus making the findings of this study generalizable to institutions with similar student demographics and perhaps even those that are not as similar (see discussion in Methods chapter). The generalizability of these findings holds significant potential for universal applications to be tried and tested in similar academic contexts across the field of composition. So far as recommendations are concerned, writing program scholars might read the ones made specifically to ISUComm Foundation Courses as guiding points for effective revision of curriculum within their own programs. From this, the most interesting recommendation for writing program scholars pertains to revising curricular standards.

In order to ensure that ISUComm is meeting students' needs by "respond[ing] seriously to the lives its students live" and the types of genre-writing support they need most, it is

imperative that the program stop and reflect on its curricular goals (Shipka 11). Are the learning

outcomes intended by these curricular goals being realized? If so, what genres are furthering

this? If not, what needs to be revised in/out? Could revising current curriculum to feature email

instruction a good way to support students? And where do writing program administrators look

to determine necessary revisions? Perhaps, the best place to start is the nearest place. With

collaborative advice from all composition instructors in a program, writing program

administrators can begin to reassess whether or not email instruction is needed by the students

they serve. The value of instructors' perspectives can provide important qualitative data for

reflection on how email instruction can benefit students. Tarez Samra Graban and Kathleen J.

Ryan articulate the need for occasional reflection on a program's curriculum, claiming that some

of the most useful reflections should come from collaborating with instructors teaching in the

program:

> [Collaborative] curricular reform can break resistance to change on local and
>
> multivocal levels (12), liberate discussions about change from predetermined
>
> means or outcomes (13), and put WPAs and other program leaders at a greater
>
> advantage by modeling sustainable, collaborative practice for new instructors.
>
> (14, 19)

In the case of ISUComm, writing program administrators might gauge what new instruction to

test by holding a series of focus groups with seasoned instructors who have been teaching the

same curriculum for several semesters. The program might also inventory the opinions of new

and incoming instructors, perhaps at the end of teaching orientation weeks held at the end of

summer, before the start of classes, to get a fresh perspective on how future curricula might be

revised to feature new electronic genres of communication. For incoming instructors who have

taught before, it is likely that the email communication genre will be suggested because they might have prior experience with an FYC program that built email instruction into its curriculum. Equally likely is that email communication might be recommended as a genre for teaching without any priming because grievances regarding the impropriety of student emails are all too commonly vocalized by frustrated instructors.

Recommendations for Different Durations of Instruction and In-Class Activities

As previously stated, several pilot studies that vary both in terms of duration of time would be worth conducting because a correlation may exist between longer durations of instruction and ability to improve. Yet there are many other ways this study could be replicated with the manipulation of certain variables to see how email instruction can improve student writing even more. For instance, future researchers might design the assignment differently so that the anonymous authority figure created for the pre- and post-test email assignments seemed more authentic, perhaps with an animation of a gravatar or other visual or audio representation to increase the students' sense of exigency for this assignment.

Another variable that could be manipulated would be featuring different in-class learning activities. The activities designed for this instructional unit were largely interactive, social ones that sparked dialogue among participants, but it would be interesting to see if improvements were greater or lesser in learning environments featuring less opportunity for collaborative learning. It might also be interesting to alter the epistemological approach of this instructional unit. In the unit designed for this study, each instructor taught email genre conventions as fluid, evolving, not static. However, if the assumption were that knowledge and corresponding instruction should be more static, more universal, one might conduct a similar study with ISU students to see if greater improvement occurs. Note, however, that this possibility for research is

not one that the primary investigator suspects will be most conducive to learning, or even holistically beneficial to the students' development. But by exploring a contradictory path, one that goes against more common assumptions underlying learning and knowledge in the field of composition, scholars would be better positioned to argue against epistemologies seeing writing conventions as set in stone. When scholars come into contact with other disciplines, say, ones wanting to collaborate with English departments on the teaching of email communication, a study like this might prove useful for the negative results it would yield. These results could be used to reinforce pedagogical approaches of composition when the time comes to talk about who's teaching what and how across disciplines.

Recommendations for Studying Different Groups

Furthermore, writing programs might benefit from research on the effects of instruction on certain groups of learners. Recall that in the introduction, difficulties composing competent emails were thought to be attributable either to lack of prior instruction or lack of prior exposure to model communicators. Those model communicators, the ones employing email genre conventions most effectively, might be parents holding a college degree or white-collar jobs for which they have to communicate through email exchange frequently. Ostensibly, these experienced email communicators may be able to better prepare their children for email writing, whereas a student whose parents have not attended college or held a job for which email communication is not necessary, may struggle with email communication concepts more due to the fact that she or he simply lacks this additional layer of developmental support.

Therefore, studying a group of participants who self-report as first-generation college students could shed light on other groups of learners sharing similar characteristics. Studying specific groups might also help scholars better assess which groups stand to benefit from this

instruction most, and which might become disengaged with a genre of writing they find too easy or familiar. The same sort of research could be replicated to make interesting comparisons between the needs of non-traditional students, commuter students, honors students, and many other groups, effectively positioning writing program administrators to better understand who needs email instruction most.

Recommendation for Studying the Effects of Different Instructional Materials

A final variable to be manipulated in future studies might be the instructional materials used. Interestingly enough, one of the student participants, Jaden (a pseudonym), anticipated this possibility. In her free-write reflections on the instructional unit, Jaden wrote:

> The readings gave some great insight on what NOT to do and what to add to make it a proper email. Some of the suggestions seemed like common knowledge, but it was nice to be reminded… I was also a little shocked by the lack of help in "The Everyday Writer" book. I tried to use it, but there was not really any new stuff to know.

The assigned readings for this instructional unit included three short articles. On the first day students read two articles, "Caution—Reply With Care" by Michael Laff, a senior editor for *Training and Development*, and "Instant Messaging and the Future of Language" by American University linguistics professor Naomi S. Baron (see Appendix A). The former discussed issues of respect and how to send emails responsibly; the latter discussed the fluidity of email genre conventions and how to recognize this fluidity so that it does not thwart the effectiveness of one's emails. On the second day of instruction, students were asked to read an editorial that functioned more as a proper email communication checklist called "How to Fail at E-mail" by University of Alabama professor Teena McGuinness (see Appendix A). These electronically-

delivered readings were selected over *The Everyday Writer* or other composition texts and style

guides because the pool to draw from for email instruction in composition texts is quite limited.

In the latest version, the fifth edition of *The Everyday Writer*, only three pages touch on email

communication, treating it as a legitimate genre.

      The fifth edition of *The Everyday Writer* had recently been released before the beginning

of the Fall 2012 semester, so students were not asked to purchase this new edition, which was

not yet stocked at the bookstore. Instead, the fourth edition of *The Everyday Writer* was required

as the designated style guide for the course. In the fourth edition, only three pages out of more

than 600 offer written instruction to support students needing to compose effective emails.

      Approximately the same amount of written instruction is provided in the newest edition

of this text, although one section does appear to be updated. Lunsford revised some of her

discussion of "Best practices" for electronic communication in Chapter 2, Section E. In it, she

states:

> Email was once seen as highly informal, but you will probably use it today mainly
>
> for more formal purposes, particularly to communicate for work and for school.
>
> When writing most academic and professional messages, then, or when posting to
>
> a public list that may be read by people you don't know well, follow the
>
> conventions of standard academic English (2b), and be careful not to offend or
>
> irritate your audience—remember that jokes may be read as insults and that ALL
>
> CAPS may look like shouting. Finally, proofread to make sure your message is
>
> clear and free of errors, and that it is addressed to your intended audience, before
>
> you hit SEND. (18)

She goes on to provide a list of bulleted pointers on writing email, pertaining to matters of subject lines, greetings, and concision—all of which were email genre conventions covered in the other readings designed into the instructional unit.

In both the fourth and fifth editions, the later "Writing in the Disciplines" section provides a visual image of a business memo directly before giving readers further advice on email communication:

> Business email can be formatted much like a print memo but is easier to create and store and faster to distribute. Remember, however, that email is essentially public and that employers have easy access to email written by employees. As always, it's best to use discretion and caution in email, especially on the job. (Lunsford 601)

The additional cautioning is useful advice, similar to that provided to students by Laff's article. Yet it is brief, delivering only superficial advice on email as a genre. Written instruction provided earlier in the text gives slightly more advice on writing emails, but it is housed under a larger genre concept of electronic communication. And even though revisions were obviously made between editions, the general content seems remarkably similar, save for some reformatting and repurposing. Surprisingly, Lunsford's *The Everyday Writer* is one of the more comprehensive writing handbooks on the market. For this study, ten other popular texts were consulted, such as *The Norton Field Guide to Writing*, and on the whole it seems that other popular texts are giving equal or less instruction to students, some giving none at all. This study shows that composition students need more textual support because what currently exists is minimal.

Implications for Composition and New Media Practice and Research

Returning for a moment to Jaden's insights, her surprise with the lack of written

instruction available to students is not a simple passing thought and not to be taken lightly. Even

though she considers a lot of the information presented in the readings to be "common

knowledge" she sought confirmation of this knowledge, nonetheless. When students like Jaden

need this additional written support to confirm their existing knowledge or to provide new

knowledge on the email genre, what is available to them? In Jaden's case, what existed was not

enough. This may come as a surprise to some scholars, and it begets further surprise, particularly

in terms of what it articulates about the field's appraisal of email communication.

If the lack of written instructional support were not surprising enough, what is equally or

more surprising is what this lack of support indicates. Either email communication as a genre is

not being taken seriously as a legitimate writing genre worthy of instruction by other scholars in

the field of composition, or it is simply thought unnecessary, a case of knowledge students are

expected to possess. Based on the qualitative data analyzed for this study, students do in fact

want this instruction and can benefit from it. The data also suggest that they ascribe value to it,

often commenting on how they will apply it to future writing contexts. So based on these

findings, the notion that students should already possess some knowledge of effective email

communication is a faulty assumption and one that would benefit from scholarly reevaluation.

Finally, the most interesting implication of this research is what this says about

assumptions the field has made regarding composition's relationship to email communication

thus far. With only a few exceptions, it seems that scholars are not teaching email, writing about

how to practice it, and studying the effects of learning email communication, clearly many FYC

programs are reluctant to feature it in their curricula as a genre of writing worthy of study. Of

course, it is important to recognize that there are plenty of other writing genres competing for

space on every instructor's syllabi. What is startling, though, is that one of students' most

frequently-used writing genres is infrequently taught. One can only guess as to why this is, and

perhaps, to avoid guessing, follow-up research gauging instructor perspectives on teaching email

would be useful to conduct.

Based on the collection of theory presented at the beginning of this research, email

communication can and should be counted among other viable writing genres. It merits

additional research in the composition classroom. It is through this that composition instructors

can improve the learning outcomes of their students. By meeting students where they are and

with the type of genre-writing support they need, composition scholars and instructors can

positively change the writing program curricula, devising curricula for modern students who

engage frequently with electronic communication. It also ensures that curricula stays current and

relevant to the larger university context, and, as always, improves the communicating abilities of

students.

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APPENDIX A

Email Communication Unit Three-Session Schedule and Readings:

Date	Do	Read	Due
_____	*Regularly Scheduled Lesson, +Introduce Email Assignment at end of class*		
_____	Review, Analyze, Discuss	"Caution—Reply With Care" (M), "Instant Messaging and the Future of Language" (M)	Due: Homework Email, & Print off & bring in 3 past emails to authority figures
_____	Conventions Discussion	"How to Fail at E-mail" (M)	
_____	*Begin New Unit*		Revised Email Assignment

Introduction of Unit

Objective: Introduce new communication unit,		
Compose initial email communication as homework (outside of class), Prime student thinking for genre conventions analysis		
Date:	Unit:	Instructor:
Materials: Copies of email writing prompt (half-size), Arrange to have emails shared with investigator,		

Sequence of Introduction:

:5 min Introduce Diagnostic Email Assignment
- o Pass out writing prompt sheets
- o Go over sheet
- o Preview what will be discussed in the next class meeting
- o Assign readings
- o Provide critical thinking questions to students to take with them and process as they read.
- o Ask students to bring in 3 copies of emails they've written in the past to authority figures for analysis and class discussion.

Reminders:

Caution—
Reply With Care

The lightening speed and convenience of email is often a double-edged sword. Avoiding some common problems can bring balance and decorum into professional communications.

It's another case of blaming the medium instead of the message.

For a host of reasons, email is a cursed medium. But by taking simple steps, emailers can save their colleagues from unneeded aggravation. Debra Hamilton, a communications consultant, outlines the most common mistakes in a recent report, "Top Ten Email Blunders That Cost Companies Money."

Although many of her prescriptions seem commonsensical, few people actually follow through as they race to send off an email. Some examples include not sending long messages, airing conflict, or discussing confidential information.

"There isn't a lot of thinking being done before people hit send," Hamilton says.

Most of the mistakes are the result of a failure to be direct with the recipient—for example, stating the purpose of the message. And nobody likes to receive negative news via email, yet supervisors often do it.

Beyond declining etiquette in email, the sheer volume is another aspect senders should contemplate in advance. Hamilton says that while people are tempted to send a thank you or "okay," such replies only add to the pile of incoming messages.

"People just don't know what to do," she says. "They say, 'Should I send a quick thank you?' I don't think you need to send a routine acknowledgement."

It might be hard to calculate an actual cost of email mistakes, but Hamilton's research estimates that email blunders cost companies with 100 employees an estimated $420,000 annually, a high figure for an organization regardless of size.

Email too often provides an escape hatch for executives or managers to try and explain complicated policies or changes. This, too, is wasteful, Hamilton points out, as the same executives might

have to follow-up on the email because employees were overwhelmed by the initial message.

Even without a nod, a handshake, or other symbol of cooperation, the need for collaboration in email exchanges should require the message sender to show respect.

Regardless of the subject matter, it is important to communicate the proper sentiment to the recipient, whether it be in the form of a "look forward to" or "appreciate" or a simple "please." Such words do not come naturally, especially in an email format, but they are essential to avoid the appearance of an abrupt or commanding tone. Such words are genuine expressions and can help to build a relationship without direct contact.

Three key elements are the subject line, the closing, and the tone. The subject line should clearly reveal the topic discussed in the message. This is a simple concept, but one that is often neglected in practice. Another element is an action item, specifically, what you want the recipient to do, if anything, in response to the message.

The slipshod nature of email is a direct consequence of convenience and speed—two products of the current workplace. Hamilton believes that it is acceptable for email to be a source of conversation but it should not be a substitute for face-to-face conflict resolution. She suggests that organizations include email instructions during orientation and post job aids on an intranet site.

What has changed from generations past is the nature of communication in an office. Previously, only a few individuals would communicate with co-workers or clients as a representative of a team. Now, almost all employees do so in one form or another.

"Years ago, when people were writing old-fashioned memos, they took time to think about it," Hamilton says. "They were more careful."

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Viewpoint | Naomi S. Baron

Instant Messaging and the Future of Language

The writing style commonly used in IMing, texting, and other forms of computer-mediated communication need not spell the end of normative language.

Computer-mediated communication (CMC) provides young users opportunities for social affinity and control over when and with whom they interact, but its long-term influence on language remains largely in the hands of parents and teachers, their traditional linguistic role models.

Are email, instant messaging (IM), and text messaging on cell phones degrading the language? This question surfaces in debates among language professionals and, perhaps more important, among parents and their teenage offspring. If some traditionalists are correct, we must take swift action now, before these children are reduced to marginal literacy. But if those celebrating linguistic innovation are correct, adults should get out of the way of normal language change. Families and educational purists have an obvious stake in the outcome of this controversy, but so, too, do the makers and marketers of computer-based software and devices—from IM platforms to predictive text programs for cell phones.

The problem with viewing CMC as linguistically either good or bad is twofold. On the one hand, such a dichotomous perspective ignores the variation in online communication, reflecting age, gender, education level, cultural background, personality, and years of experience with the CMC platform (listservs, for example, do not function like IM) or the purpose of the communiqué (a well-crafted email message applying for a job vs. a hasty blitzmail note arranging to meet at the library at 10). On the other hand, many evils attributed to CMC, especially as practiced by teens, can be traced back to ARPANET days.

Here, I highlight CMC issues in English-speaking countries, particularly the U.S. Admittedly, CMC practices vary in some respects elsewhere. For example, the international texting craze is just now taking hold in the U.S., while computer-based IM is a relatively recent phenomenon in Europe. However, the linguistic novelties cropping up in CMC are as pronounced in Stockholm and Seoul as they are in San Francisco.

If we look at the history of written English over the past 1,200 years (roughly from the time of *Beowulf*), we find shifting patterns in the roles speech and writing play in society. Up through the Middle Ages and the Renaissance, writing was essentially a handmaiden to speech and was generally rather formal. Preachers read the Bible aloud; written speeches were memorized and delivered orally; plays were intended to be performed, not published. Not surprisingly, orthographic conventions were not strict; even Shakespeare spelled his own name at least six different ways. Gradually, with the spread of literacy and the rise of print culture, writing became a distinct genre. Spelling began to matter, and even those with a grammar-school education knew the difference between formal and informal writing style.

Viewpoint

Fast forward to the mid-20th century. In the U.S., pedagogy underwent a sea change, fueled by progressive education (eschewing rote learning, celebrating creativity) and by the national confusion during the Vietnam War and afterward over the relevance of existing curricula. A student-centered agenda emerged, first in grade-school education and eventually in colleges, counseling teachers to be guides on the side rather than sages on stages. Writing instructors were commonly advised to focus on content and de-emphasize mechanics, with the result that many graduates from even the finest U.S. preparatory institutions could not spell and had no clue how to use a semicolon. Add to these new educational practices a growing social trend toward informality, and you had an environment ripe for teenage innovation of

or acronyms. Spelling is remarkably good, and punctuation isn't particularly bad either. Students use contractions (such as "don't" rather than "do not") only about two-thirds of the time, spelling out the full words the other third, with females significantly more likely to type full forms than males.

IM conversations are not always instant. An online survey we conducted in the fall of 2004 of the other activities the undergraduates engaged in while IMing—surfing the Net, working on a paper, listening to music, eating, speaking face-to-face, and managing up to 12 simultaneous IM conversations—revealed considerable multitasking among survey participants. People can physically be typing in only one IM conversation at a time, rendering the others asynchronous to varying degrees. Participants in

> The most important effect of IM on language turns out to be not stylized vocabulary or grammar but the control seasoned users feel they have over their communication networks.

the sort we now see in IM and text messaging.

Adolescents have long been a source of linguistic and behavioral novelty. Teens often use spoken language to express small-group identity. It is hardly surprising to find many of them experimenting with a new linguistic medium (such as IM) to complement the identity construction they achieve through speech, clothing, or hair style. IMs laced with, say, brb [be right back], pos [parent over shoulder], and U [you] are not so different from the profusion of "like" or "totally" common in the speech of American adolescents.

The IM behavior of many younger teens is not generally reflected in the language patterns we find in contemporary college students. For the past three years, my students and I at American University in Washington, D.C., have been investigating undergraduate use of IM on America Online Instant Messenger (AIM). Our research suggests that IM conversations serve largely pragmatic information-sharing and social-communication functions rather than providing contexts for establishing or maintaining group identity. Moreover, college students often eschew brevity. Our data contains few abbreviations

focus groups reported feeling comfortable juggling multiple online and offline tasks. Several of them indicated that engaging in only a single IM conversation (doing nothing else online or offline) would feel odd. IMing, they suggested, was something they did under the radar of the other virtual and physical activities vying for their attention.

The most important effect of IM on language turns out to be not stylized vocabulary or grammar but the control seasoned users feel they have over their communication networks. In earlier research (fall 2002), a group of my undergraduate students looked at away messages in IM that had been posted by members of their Buddy Lists. Users ostensibly post away messages to indicate that the person posting the message will be away from the computer (though still logged on to the IM system) and therefore unable to respond to incoming IMs. However, study participants used away messages for a variety of functions, including requests for virtual company ("Please disturb me") and screening incoming IMs ("Sleeping"). College students commonly read their buddies' away messages to catch up on the activities of people (such as friends from high school) they do not want to IM or call.

The shape of written language has always been as much a product of social attitudes and educational values as of technological developments. IM is unlikely to play a significant role in altering writing standards—unless we as parents and educators let it.

Our data suggests that when teenagers transition to college, they naturally shed some of their adolescent linguistic ways in favor of more formal writing conventions (such as correct spelling and reduced use of contractions) they learned in high school. But what about these students' younger siblings who often begin IMing at nine or 10? Anecdotal evidence suggests that a number of their teachers, not wanting to be branded as troglodytes out of touch with contemporary culture, tolerate IM novelties in classroom written assignments. No harm, but only if these same teachers ensure their students develop a solid grasp of traditional writing conventions as well.

Unless society is willing to accept people spelling their names six different ways or using commas, semicolons, and periods according to whim, we owe it to our children and to our students to make certain they understand the difference between creativity and normative language use. Knowledge of contemporary CMC style (and the social control IM and other media offer) is empowering. However, if today's teenagers are also to master more formal written language style, their parents and teachers must provide good models and, if necessary, even gentle sticks. $\blacksquare$

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Lesson Plan: Session I

Objectives: Catalyze student thinking about email composing,
Explain purpose of email as a genre,
Explain purpose and transferrable skills of this instructional unit,
Introduce investigator and study participation opportunity,
Review and analyze current email composing processes
Reflect on what changes to email composing are necessary.

Date:	Unit:	Instructor:

Materials:
Copies of stylistically diverse emails (for back-up in case students forget)

Sequence of Instruction:

:10 min Inquiry Arousal
- o Discuss the 3 emails they were asked to bring in
- o Take general comments on how they compose emails. How was that exemplified in the ungraded assignment from the last class meeting? How was it not?
- o Explain purpose of this communication unit in more depth
- o Go over sheet

:25 min Think, Pair, Share
- o Students review and write down initial reflections of the assigned reading
- o Students turn to a partner to share.
- o Class discussion of texts continues

:10 min Critical Reflection
- o Students are directed to journals to begin analyzing their own email composing processes.
- o Questions to Consider: Based on the composing suggestions made by the two authors we read for today, what changes do you want to make to your email composing process and why? How will you benefit? How might you not benefit? What will you not change? What points do you agree or disagree with what the authors say?

:5 min Looking Forward
- o Preview what will be discussed in the next class
- o Assign readings
- o Provide critical thinking questions to students to take with them and process as they read.

Reminders:
✓

Editorial

How to Fail at E-mail

Psychiatric nurses pride themselves on being leaders in communication. In our profession, words truly have meaning. There is one form of communication, however, that we frequently overlook: e-mail, the ubiquitous electronic form of conversation.

A variety of skills are necessary for effective e-mail communication. Words must be carefully selected, reviewed for spelling errors, and checked for readability. E-mail is notorious for its spontaneity, and we must take the time to review its content, both in employment and relationship contexts.

A wise psychiatric nurse will scrutinize e-mail composition before clicking the "send" button and ask, "Is this really the message I want to transmit?" A hastily composed message may be read differently than in the spirit in which it was composed, especially if relationships are tenuous. Government and private employers know their employees reflect their institutions in e-mail messages; poorly written e-mails will blemish both employee and company reputations. When you send an e-mail, you send yourself.

As an advanced practice psychiatric nurse, one of my favorite strategies in resolving problems is to offer paradoxical suggestions. Family therapist Jay Haley found that paradoxical techniques were helpful when working with troubled families (1955). Haley told families what not to do; in doing so, they did what was right. Thus, in the spirit of Dr. Haley, I offer a series of paradoxical commands to improve your e-mail skills:

1. Abbrev as many words as possible. By using excessive abbreviations, you will show that you know a lot more than the reader does. Use a lot of informal Internet gibberish, such as TTYL ("talk to you later") or TTFN ("ta-ta for now") as closings, whether or not you sign your name to the e-mail. The reader will be forced to write back and ask you what the abbreviations mean, making you look smarter.
2. RandomlY CapitaLize. Do not follow rules for capitalization; that was high school stuff that is not relevant to our profession. Feel free to capitalize when the mood strikes. After all, it is Your e-mail.
3. Refuse to use spell chek. Even though a spell-checking feature comes with almost every e-mail program, don't spend the extra 15 seconds required to use it. You have better things to do.
4. TYPE IN ALL CAPS. By typing in capital letters, you are yelling at your reader and will gain their attention. BY TYPING IN CAPITAL LETTERS, YOU WILL OFFEND MOST EVERYONE WHO HAS EVER READ AN E-MAIL. If you use standard capitalization, the impression you make will seem too calm and thoughtful.
5. Type in all small letters without the encumbrance of punctuation or capitalization that is just a bunch of silly rules and you know better anyway don't worry that this tactic may make you look lazy and stupid this is the instantaneous electronic age and punctuation and capitalizations are too much trouble.
6. Pick a unique e-mail address for yourself and don't include your name with your messages. After all, can't the reader see your name in the "from" line? Your address just might contain a hint of who you are. Everyone should know you are "Beachin RN," right?
7. Don't include a subject in the subject line. Your recipient should know that anything from you is *ipso facto* of great importance and will read it first. By doing so, you are likely to have your important message ignored in e-mail boxes already swamped with junk mail requesting your help with claiming fortunes in Nigeria and advertisements for mail-order erectile dysfunction drugs. You can then reprimand your intended reader regarding her lack of response.
8. Use multiple punctuation marks, especially exclamation points!!!!! What better way to express oneself????? Also, ellipses (. . .) are expressive . . . especially if overused . . . and you should overuse them. . . .
9. Always prepare an e-mail when you are in a particularly angry mood at the end of a stressful day. Get your feelings off your chest and direct your barbs at the most vulnerable targets. Try to use

Editorial

phrases like "if x happens, I'm never speaking to you again" or "you can't pay me enough money to stay." If the e-mail is sent within an employment context, your supervisor will be happy to print these e-mails and place them in your permanent record. The e-mail will come in handy when making salary decisions at evaluation time. If the angry e-mail is sent to family members, you will save time and money during holidays because the recipients of the angry message will, after a brief initial explosion, leave you alone forever.

So, write what you darn well please in your e-mails. There is an old saying that the spoken word is soon forgotten, but the written word endures. An e-mail not only endures, it will endure indefinitely and, with a

single keystroke, can be forwarded to your entire chain of friends, family, and supervisors. Your words will live on, perhaps after you.

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Reference

Haley, J. (1955). Paradoxes in play, fantasy, and psychotherapy. *Psychiatric Research Reports of the American Psychiatric Association,* 2, 52–58.

Lesson Plan: Session II

Objectives: Identify conventions of the email communication genre,
Develop awareness of potentially detrimental composing strategies,
Identify methods for writing effective email communications,
Understand how these methods enable and constrain student agency,
Differentiate between genres and corollaries of email communication,
Become sensitized and responsive to the needs of readers

Date:	Unit:	Instructor:

Materials: create open Google Doc for class to use for wiki project

Sequence of Instruction:

:5 min Perceptual arousal
- Survey: Have you ever used a style guide or other instructional text to help you compose an email?
- View survey results
- Discuss results, class reactions

:25 min Wiki Creation Activity
- Briefly recap ideas from last class meeting
- Segue into the day's assigned readings by listing some of the conventions discussed by the author
- In groups of 3-4, students are assigned one of the conventions and asked to write on it.
  - Begin with group brainstorming
  - Determine group roles (i.e. Will all compose? Will one person be in charge of locating examples? How will each member contribute to the wiki?)
  - Compose portion of wiki page (submit either to instructor or directly to Moodle page if it is a computer lab day).

: 5 min Viewing and Discussion of Wiki
- Copy and paste finished Google Doc entries into a wiki created via Moodle
- Publish the wiki and view as a class on the projector.
- Open discussion time for comments on what others wrote, relevant examples used, etc.

:5 min Reflective Free-Write Activity
- Ask students to free-write about these conventions.
  - Were there any conventions you were unaware of? Any you found surprising?
  - Were there conventions that you were aware of, but chose not to employ in your regular email correspondence? Why or why not?
  - Do you find the conventions helpful or alienating? Explain why.
- Note the informality and openness of the writing activity; responses should be brief.

:5 min Assign Revised Email Writing
- Handout assignment sheets
- Based largely on the assignment sheets and the conventions laid out in the wiki, explain to students that they are to revise the email they wrote on day one of this unit.
- Show students on projector where to submit or email directions for submitting.

APPENDIX B

English 250
Email Composition
Fall 2012

Task

Compose an introductory email to an anonymous instructor at Iowa State. Introduce yourself to this professor, explaining that you are a student at Iowa State. You might also introduce yourself by telling her what you study in school, what your academic goals are, and what career you intend to pursue after you leave Iowa State. Feel free to include whatever other introductory information you deem necessary.

Audience and Approach

Your immediate audience for this paper is the professor. Your instructor will neither be grading this email nor will he or she see it. Your instructor will see the revisions you make to this email later in this unit.

More importantly, this email is really for you. Without breaking from your normal email composing habits, write this email as you normally would any email. Remember, this is ungraded.

Criteria for Evaluation

Context: Clearly states relevant personal information about the author of the email, not giving too much or too little information

Substance: Provides specific and relevant examples or experiences that further the overall message

Organization: Uses paragraphing and syntactical structuring effectively

Style: Contains few errors in mechanics

Delivery: Uses conventional stylistic and formatting standards, and if applicable, credits sources

English 250
Revised Email Assignment
Fall 2012

Due_____

Task

As we close out this unit of instruction on email composing, you should use this revising assignment as an opportunity to synthesize the conventions you've learned in regards to email communication and apply them. It is recommended that you consult the assigned readings and your course's assigned style guide to revise and edit your original email. In so doing, the goal is that you will become a more effective email communicator because you've mastered the conventions of the email genre and are better able to determine what steps you can take to improve future correspondence.

Audience

Even though this email will be graded by your instructor, you should still consider your primary audience to be _____. You'll want to demonstrate to your instructor that you have learned and successfully implemented the conventions discussed in class, but it is of paramount importance that your writing style and voice remain tailored to the needs of your audience. In short, write for your original audience.

Criteria for Evaluation

Context: Clearly states the writer's attitude toward various purposes, contexts, and technologies, and so on

Substance: Provides specific and relevant examples or experiences that further the overall message

Organization: Uses paragraphing and syntactical structuring effectively

Style: Contains few errors in mechanics

Delivery: Uses conventional stylistic and formatting standards, and if applicable, credits sources

APPENDIX D

Email Composition	Excellent (Writer responds thoughtfully, perhaps creatively)	Good (Writer responds fully, requiring some revision)	Fair (Writer responds mostly competently, requiring focused, substantive revisions)	Needs Work (Writer responds incompletely, requiring extensive revision)
Context				
Introduction	Introduction engages the audience, making the reader want to read more. Strong analysis of audience and purpose. Avoids introductory clichés not related to context. Approach to topic shows knowledge of formal email conventions, such as salutations, proper indenting and title usage.	Introduction uses adequate details to develop reader interest. Opening paragraphs mostly orient the reader to the student. Some introductory clichés may appear. Approach to topic demonstrates knowledge of some conventions.	Opening is vague and provides little orientation to the topic of the email. Strategy for approaching the email is not rhetorically effective or readily apparent to the reader. Adherence to conventions seems to be an afterthought.	Email does not meet audience needs by not providing engagement and orientation at the outset; Conventions aren't followed at all. The reader may take offense to the lack of formal convention because he or she is not being addressed properly, i.e. titles may be misused or completely absent.
Substance				
Purpose & Details	Clear and engaging articulation of content and purpose; the reader is well oriented from the outset. Details fully reflect and further the purpose of the email. Each of the writer's paragraphs is supported by detailed, factual, and descriptive sentences. Each sentence focuses on and states a single topic or idea in an	Content is mostly well selected and developed to meet most of the audience's needs in terms of focus and interest. Writer engages the reader in a complex description of the issue, but not all criteria laid out in the prompt are addressed. The details enhance various aspects of the email,	Some content is superfluous or not clearly connected to focus. Audience's needs are not consistently accounted for. By end of first page, reader may be somewhat unclear about the writer's purpose and therefore is less motivated to continue reading. Several areas are	All of the main criteria for this assignment are not addressed sufficiently. Focus of email is unclear. Content is not specific enough to engage reader. Reader cannot discern the writer's purpose and no attempt at incorporating interesting, detailed language is made.
Organization				
Body and Conclusion	Writing is organized logically and perhaps innovatively around a specific and interesting point in the email. The email is arranged for effective emphasis and audience engagement; transitions function well to tie one idea to the next. Shows attention to audience needs and awareness of email paragraphing conventions.	Organization is conventional, showing some attention to audience needs. The writer shows some deliberate arrangement for emphasis; most ideas are tied to the next one. Transitions used and email doesn't end abruptly, but not with a formal conclusion paragraph either.	Arrangement of information in the email is more writer-based than reader-based and is sometimes difficult to follow. Some transitions are weak, and the final sentences may be general or clichéd in a way that doesn't use the conventions of email effectively.	Arrangement of information shows little accounting for audience's needs. Transitions between ideas are also not clear or are missing entirely. Conclusion seems like an afterthought rather than warm and meaningful. The ending may be abrupt or give no acknowledgement to conventional email closings at all.
Style				
Sentence Level & Correctness	Style is particularly well suited for this electronic genre of communication. Writing is clear, fluid, and mature. Precise, vivid, and appropriate word choice. Sentences varied. Subordination and coordination used effectively. Assignment is free from sentence-level and word-level errors.	Style is conventional. Writing is understandable and competent with mostly precise and vivid word choice. Most sentence structures are varied, and subordination and coordination mostly used well. Assignment has a few sentence-level and/or word-level errors.	Style interferes with clarity in some places. Writing is vague and disjointed. Some sentences are structurally varied with some vivid word choice. Assignment has several sentence-level and/or word-level errors.	Style significantly detracts from clarity. Writing is confusing with conventional word choice. Sentences are structured similarly and/or are simple sentences. Sentence-level and/or word-level errors impede reader's understanding.
Delivery				
Document Formatting Conventions	Innovative accommodation of style and conventions; audience expectations and processing are carefully accounted for because the email is formatted correctly according to conventions discussed in class; the appearance of the composition is attractive and promotes audience accessibility. Subject line is purposeful. If an email signature is used it is designed effectively.	Adequate accommodation of style and conventions; audience expectations and processing are mostly accounted for because the email is mostly formatted correctly but may have missed one or two conventions. Subject line is purposeful or helpful to reader. If email signature is included it is designed and incorporated in a way that establishes the rhetorical competency of the writer.	Some problems with audience first impressions; inadequate formatting or lack of adherence to convention interferes in places with audience processing. The email may not be formatted correctly or is missing important conventions, such as indentation, punctuation in salutations, etc. A proper signature may be missing. Subject line may make the purpose of the email difficult to discern from the outset or lack helpful identifying information.	Delivery choices distract from the writer's purpose and interfere with audience expectations. Email may be formatted as a different genre or show no consideration of formatting. Few or no conventions followed. Email is overly lacking in terms of presentation.

APPENDIX E

English 250
Email Reflection Free Write
Fall 2012

Please consider and respond to a few of the questions listed below:

1. Based on the composing suggestions made by the two authors we read for today, what changes do you want to make to your email composing process and why?
2. How will you benefit?
3. How might you not benefit?
4. What will you not change?
5. On what points do you agree or disagree with the authors?

(Note: Although you are not required to do so, feel free to engage with your writing outside of class, i.e. if you'd like to write more than that for which budgeted class time allows, please do so and share with your instructor.)

APPENDIX F

Pre-Test Identity Numbers and Rubric Score Means

#	Content	Substance	Organization	Style	Delivery	Overall
8974139	3	3	2	3	3.5	2.9
8020601	2.5	3	3	3	2.5	2.8
3672730	3	3	3	3	3	3
1813849	3	3	3	3	3	3
3406248	3	3	3	3	3.5	3.1
1319704	2	2	2	2	2	2
5644962	2.5	2.5	2.5	2.5	2.5	2.5
1949336	2.5	2.5	2.5	2.5	3	2.6
8721805	3	3	3	3	3.5	3.1
4155275	3	3	3	3	4	3.2
4260775	3.5	2	3	2.5	3	2.8
2337102	3	3	2	2.5	2	2.5
5492566	4	4	4	3.5	2.5	3.6
8631910	3	3	3	2.5	3	2.9
2425731	3	3	3	1.5	3	2.7
5131089	3	3.5	3	2.5	3.5	3.1
5181190	3	2	3	2	2.5	2.5
8714236	2.5	3	2.5	1.5	3.5	2.6
9434979	3	4	3	3	2.5	3.1
6414765	3.5	3.5	3	2.5	3.5	3.2
2671662	2	2	3	2	2	2.2
7536402	2	2	3	2	2	2.2
9751087	4	4	4	2	2	3.2
4280015	2	2	3	3	3	2.6
5400364	3	3	3	2	3	2.8
6556943	2	2	2	2	2	2
6949530	3	3	3	2	2	2.6
6773606	3	2	2	3	2	2.4
7696681	2	3	3	4	2	2.8
9975887	4	4	4	2	2	3.2
3244813	3	3	3	3	3	3
9967005	3	3	2	3	3	2.8
3894494	2	2	2	2	2	2
4159210	1.5	1.5	1	2	2	1.6
6342129	1.5	1.5	1.5	3	2	1.9
2714166	3	3	3	3	3	3

4308064	2	2	1	1	2.5	1.7
5267157	3	2.5	3	3	2	2.7
1158086	2.5	2	3	3	2	2.5
9198216	3	3	2	2	3	2.6
9798275	3	2.5	2	2.5	2	2.4
2414171	3	3.5	2.5	3.5	3	3.1
6112247	3.5	3	2.5	3	2.5	2.9
1871549	2.5	2.5	2	2.5	2	2.3
4577769	3	2.5	3	2.5	2	2.6
6529057	2.5	2.5	3	2	3	2.6
1731580	2.5	3	2.5	3	2.5	2.7
9324238	3	2.5	3	2.5	2.5	2.7
3791254	2.5	3	2.5	2.5	2	2.5
2898969	3	3	2.5	3	2.5	2.8

Means	Context	Substance	Organization	Style	Delivery	Overall
	2.78	2.75	2.67	2.56	2.6	2.672
Standard Deviations						
	0.572855	0.624745	0.635754	0.577115	0.571429	

Post-Test Identity Numbers and Rubric Score Means

#	Content	Substance	Organization	Style	Delivery	Overall
4557473	3	3	2.5	3	3	2.9
3019611	2	2.5	2.5	2.5	2.5	2.4
6510477	3	3	3	3	3.5	3.1
5201016	3.5	3	3	3.5	4	3.4
3006461	2.5	2.5	2.5	2.5	3	2.6
5799839	2	2	2	2	2.5	2.1
4622246	3.5	3	3.5	3	3.5	3.3
5025413	3.5	3.5	3.5	3	3	3.3
9079992	4	4	4	4	4	4
1360550	3	3	3	3	4	3.2
5055817	3.5	2	3	2.5	3	2.8
3126503	3	3	2	2.5	3.5	2.8
5002217	3	3	4	3	3	3.2
5874401	3	3	3	2.5	3.5	3
4247148	3	3	2	1.5	3	2.5
5923657	4	4	3	3.5	4	3.7
7935480	3	3	3	2.5	3	2.9
5314453	2	3	2.5	1.5	3.5	2.5
4249386	3	4	3	3	2	3
6469550	3.5	4	3	3	4	3.5
7187266	3	3	3	3	3	3
4877312	3	3	3	3	3	3
7875364	4	4	4	2	3	3.4
1165075	3	3	3	3	4	3.2
1088939	3	3	3	3	4	3.2
5671358	2.5	2.5	2.5	2.5	3	2.6
9745321	3	3	3	2	2	2.6
5031686	4	3	3	3	3	3.2
7073668	2	3	3	4	2	2.8
6566344	4	4	4	3	3	3.6
1469434	3	3	3	3	3	3
5894631	3	3	3	3	3.5	3.1
1403996	2	2	2	3	3	2.4
5518390	2	2	3	3	3.5	2.7
3612416	2	1	1	3	2.5	1.9
1142040	3	3	3	3	4	3.2
6253551	2.5	3	2.5	3	3	2.8
9326901	3	3	3	3	3	3

8962377	3.5	3	3	3.5	3	3.2
8825428	3	3	2	2	3.5	2.7
4183848	3	2.5	2	2.5	3	2.6
2163587	4	4	2.5	3.5	4	3.6
5385967	4	4	2.5	3	3.5	3.4
4437051	2.5	3	2	2.5	3	2.6
8640101	3.5	4	3	2.5	4	3.4
3873612	3	3.5	4	3	2.5	3.2
1136776	3.5	3	2.5	3	3	3
1433269	3	4	3.5	2.5	3	3.2
6005482	4	3.5	3	3.5	3	3.4
6281579	3	3	2.5	3.5	2.5	2.9

Means

Context	Substance	Organization	Style	Delivery	Overall
3.06	3.07	2.85	2.85	3.18	3.002

Standard Deviations

0.603053	0.630921	0.608192	0.527315	0.551066

APPENDIX G

An example email used in the norming sessions held with the study's raters. Note that all identifying information, including names, emails, and phone numbers, have been redacted.

Fwd: Request for Interview

\- 8324180

From: [redacted]
Sent: Sun 11/04/12 6:34 PM
To: study387@outlook.com

Professor Anonymous,

My name is _____ and I am a sophomore in Aerospace Engineering. Currently, I am taking English 250 and we are doing a project in which we interview a professor in order to learn more about their job responsibilities. Would you be willing to let me briefly interview you?

Thank you,

Hoermann 98

1/24/13 Outlook Print Message

Request for Interview

— 529 3/05

From: Ryan Freeman (rfree17@iastate.edu)
Sent: Sun 11/04/12 6:33 PM
To: study387@iastate.edu; study387@outlook.com

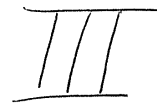Dear Professor Anonymous,

My name is and I am a sophomore in Aerospace Engineering. Currently, I am taking English 250 and we are doing a project in which we interview a professor in order to learn more about their job responsibilities. Would you be willing to let me briefly interview you?

Best regards,

Iowa State University
Sophomore, Aerospace Engineering
515-
        @iastate.edu

https://col002.mail.live.com/mail/PrintMessages.aspx?cpids=71fea44f-26e0-11e2-85f7-00215ad7abb2,... 1/1

APPENDIX H

ISUComm Chart of FC Sections Offered from Fall 2009-Spring 2012

150/250

SEMESTER	150 SECTIONS	150 STUDENTS	250 SECTIONS	250 STUDENTS	250H SECTIONS	250H STUDENTS	TOTAL SECTIONS	TOTAL STUDENTS
Fall 2009	51	1243	46	1113	14	314	111	2670
Spring 2010	20	484	80	1961	0	0	100	2445
Summer 2010	3	70	3	75	0	0	6	145
TOTALS	74	1797	129	3149	14	314	217	5260
SEMESTER	150 SECTIONS	150 STUDENTS	250 SECTIONS	250 STUDENTS	250H SECTIONS	250H STUDENTS	TOTAL SECTIONS	TOTAL STUDENTS
Fall 2010	54	1289	45	1073	15	329	114	2691
Spring 2011	16	344	86	2083	0	0	102	2427
Summer 2011	3	72	4	92	0	0	7	164
TOTALS	73	1705	135	3248	15	329	223	5282
SEMESTER	150 SECTIONS	150 STUDENTS	250 SECTIONS	250 STUDENTS	250H SECTIONS	250H STUDENTS	TOTAL SECTIONS	TOTAL STUDENTS
Fall 2011	60	1416	47	1107	14	339	121	2862
Spring 2012	14	340	91	2197	0	0	105	2537
Summer 2012	4	78	5	116	0	0	9	194
TOTALS	78	1834	143	3420	14	339	235	5593
SEMESTER	150 SECTIONS	150 STUDENTS	250 SECTIONS	250 STUDENTS	250H SECTIONS	250H STUDENTS	TOTAL SECTIONS	TOTAL STUDENTS
Fall 2012	65	1500	57	1370	14	297	136	3167
Spring 2013	17		96		0	0	113	
Summer 2013					0	0		
TOTALS								