

2007

Daily Oral Language: Is It Effective?

Jeff L. Whittingham

University of Central Arkansas

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarworks.bgsu.edu/mwer>

[How does access to this work benefit you? Let us know!](#)

Recommended Citation

Whittingham, Jeff L. (2007) "Daily Oral Language: Is It Effective?," *Mid-Western Educational Researcher*. Vol. 20: Iss. 2, Article 6.

Available at: <https://scholarworks.bgsu.edu/mwer/vol20/iss2/6>

This Featured Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Journals at ScholarWorks@BGSU. It has been accepted for inclusion in Mid-Western Educational Researcher by an authorized editor of ScholarWorks@BGSU.

Daily Oral Language: Is It Effective?

Jeff L. Whittingham
University of Central Arkansas

Abstract

This study examines the Daily Oral Language (DOL) program aimed at helping students learn mechanics of writing through daily editing exercises. This nine-month study sought to determine if DOL improved editing skills and actual writing skills of seventy fourth-grade students. While the results of this study did not statistically demonstrate the effectiveness of the DOL program, there were indications of improvement in children's writing and editing skills. Recommendations for further investigation are provided.

Background of the Study

Across the country many students begin their day with a language activity in which the teacher places error-filled sentences on the chalkboard or overhead projector. The students correct the sentences and then orally discuss the corrections with the teacher and classmates. The process takes approximately five minutes and covers a myriad of grammar, usage, and spelling applications. This activity, commonly known as *Daily Oral Language* (DOL), is used widely as an alternative to traditional grammar instruction. Traditional grammar instruction is generally characterized by rote memorization of the rules or conventions and by "skill and drill" practice. This traditional instructional mode may have a detrimental effect on writing and does students great damage (Hillocks, 1984).

This study investigates the use and effectiveness of DOL as an alternative to traditional grammar instruction. Although DOL is an accepted practice to many and is even a promoted practice by instructional text publishers (Farr & Strickland, 2000), there is little research substantiating its use.

Review of Literature

Although the benefits of traditional grammar instruction have long been examined, the foundation of much of the mistrust in its use centers around the work of Braddock and Lloyd-Jones. In 1961, the National Council of Teachers of English charged Braddock and Lloyd-Jones with the task of reviewing what was, at the time, known and unknown about the teaching and learning of writing (Braddock & Lloyd Jones, 1963). The two investigators examined 485 studies. Studies meeting predetermined criteria were included in the review and the investigators determined that the teaching of formal grammar had an insignificant or perhaps damaging effect on the improvement of writing. Braddock and Lloyd-Jones further suggested that all of the time spent in skill and drill produces only minimal return. It can also foster boredom leading to a negative attitude towards the writing.

Hillocks (1984), taking up where Braddock and Lloyd-Jones left off, completed a meta-analysis of every experimental study related to traditional writing instruction produced between 1963 and 1983. The analysis concluded that the study of traditional school grammar had no effect on

raising the quality of student writing and when taught using traditional methods, had a harmful effect on student writing which resulted in significant losses in overall quality.

Taylor (1986) attempted to substantiate her own beliefs on traditional grammar education through an examination of related research. She reviewed grammar and usage research produced since the beginning of the last century and, upon conclusion, conceded the traditional method of teaching grammar was no more effective, possibly less so, than a variety of other modes for increasing students' language arts abilities. She concluded that research indicated the time spent teaching grammar was wasted because student writing did not improve.

Studies since the mid-eighties have produced research results similar to the previous findings. The prevailing notion still is that no relationship exists between traditional grammar instruction and learning to write well (Funk, 1994; Glenn, 1995; Glover & Stay, 1995). According to Sanborn (1986), however, drill and memory learning are still the predominant modes of instruction, with students naming parts of speech in order to complete assessments.

Noguchi (1991), in his analysis of grammar and the teaching of writing, suggests traditional grammar instruction is too separated from the daily use of language and, as such, reduces the spontaneity of everyday conversation. This separation causes students to find the study of traditional grammar dry, tedious, boring, and often dreaded. He also notes increasing traditional instruction does not create a corresponding level of writing development. Noguchi theorizes the three major areas of writing are style, content, and organization. While traditional grammar instruction has the most to offer to the area of style, development of content and organization are more critical in improving writing quality. Therefore, one cannot expect traditional grammar instruction to transfer to improvements in student writing.

Schuster (1999) predicts significant reforms in the English language arts will not take place until the traditional teaching of grammar stops. He insists teachers should stop teaching traditional grammar completely and posits there is no advantage in continuing to harm students with something they will never learn or need. He suggests teachers teach usage and mechanics using encouraging, non-technical, and innovative methods. Schuster goes on to add that alternatives

to traditional grammar instruction will not achieve acceptance until professional organizations take a stand and promote a transition away from the teaching methods of the past.

Daily Oral Language, an alternative to traditional grammar instruction, has gained sweeping acceptance and use (Farr & Strickland, 2000; Kiester, 1990, 1993; Lawrence & Levinson, 1987; Leik & Altena, 1993; Leshner, 1993; Vail & Papenfus, 1987, 1993; Williams & Evans, 1998). According to Puckett (1997) teachers believe *DOL* works for several reasons: "First, the students go through the exercises every day, reinforcing what they learn. Also, they read the sentences and explain the corrections out loud, which stresses the lesson and helps them hear subtle differences" (p. J13). Advocates believe the program's greatest benefit comes from requiring students to explain the corrections. This oral component, they posit, makes *DOL* different from "old-fashioned" traditional methods. However, the fact remains that while *DOL* is an accepted practice to many and even a promoted practice by instructional text publishers (Farr & Strickland, 2000), there is little research substantiating its use.

Although the *Daily Oral Language* program developed by Vail and Papenfus (1987) has received much attention and wide-spread use and acceptance, there remains a limited body of research related to its application in the classroom. Piotrowski (1987) studied tenth grade students enrolled in a one-semester composition course. Both groups were taught in the same manner except the experimental group was exposed to *Daily Oral Language*. No statistically significant relationship was discovered to exist in the area of objective test scores or student writing scored either analytically or holistically.

Mackenthun (1995) sought to determine if *Daily Oral Language* brought grammar rules to students' conscious levels, transferred to writing knowledge, and was affected by the source of sentences. The researcher concluded that grammar and writing skills did improve when *Daily Oral Language* was used.

A third piece of research related to *Daily Oral Language* only briefly describes its use. McIntyre (1995) investigated which writing skills were learned in a low-SES, urban primary classroom in relation to the students' instruction. *Daily Oral Language* was selected as a method of whole class, direct teaching of grammar usage. Although no data were collected as to the effectiveness of this instruction, the author, a whole language instructor, worried the instruction was too far removed from student writing.

Mullen (2003) taught editing using *DOL* and the textbook provided weekly grammar lessons. He found that although his students embraced and were successful with *DOL*, they were not able to edit their own writing. He conducted a study which eliminated the use of *Daily Oral Language* in favor of peer editing, checklists, and computer processing and found these strategies improved students editing skills.

This review of literature indicates traditional grammar instruction is still a prevalent teaching method despite

research demonstrating its use as ineffective in improving students' writing ability. *DOL* is believed by many to be a successful alternative to traditional grammar instruction; however, little research has been conducted to substantiate its use and effectiveness.

Research Questions

The following two research questions were answered separately using total scores for writing and editing:

- Is there a difference between control and experimental groups on post-test editing scores controlling for pre-test editing scores?
- Is there a difference between control and experimental groups on post-test total writing scores controlling for pre-test writing scores?

Methodology

Subjects

The students in this study attended a rural northeast Arkansas elementary school located in a community with a lower-middle socio-economic population. Although the original sample for this study included 86 fourth-grade students, the final sample size decreased to 70 students. This decrease was attributed to loss of students who had moved out of the district or to incomplete data from students who were absent during the administration of the pre-test or post-test. The students were divided into four classes. Two classes comprised the experimental group, and two classes comprised the control group. The researcher and the four teachers decided on classification of experimental and control groups based on teacher desire and familiarity with *DOL*. That is, the two teachers selected to implement the *DOL* program were the two most familiar with its use. Students were randomly assigned to the four classes by one of the building principals. Every attempt was made to ensure the anonymity of participants. The students were assigned a coded identification number known only to the researcher. The scorers of the pre-tests and post-tests had no contact with the participants.

Treatment

The control group was taught using traditional grammar instruction without the addition of *Daily Oral Language*. That is, the instruction followed the prescribed directions in the language arts textbook. After a short lesson pertaining to a specific aspect of grammar, students were usually assigned a daily lesson that entailed copying sentences from the textbook and identifying the object of the lesson. The language arts textbook also presented the writing process to increase writing skills.

The experimental group was taught using traditional grammar instruction with the addition of *DOL* following the third format suggested by Vail and Papenfus (1993).

That is, the teachers placed two error-filled sentences on the board daily during the morning homeroom period. Students began the day by copying the incorrect sentences in a DOL notebook and then correcting them on their own papers. Next the students offered their corrections orally, giving the reason for each while the teacher corrected the sentences on the chalkboard. The control group was taught using traditional grammar instruction without the addition of DOL. Instruction took place during an entire instructional year. Pre-tests were administered in August and post-tests were administered in May for a total of 33 instructional weeks.

Pre-test and post-test editing exercises for all groups were taken directly from the published DOL material and then modified by the researcher, so a total of 12 errors occurred in each exercise. In addition pre-test and post-test writing samples were taken from all participants. Subjects were asked to write a paragraph from an assigned researcher-created prompt (see Appendix A) and were allowed 45 minutes to complete the activity. All participants completed the activity within the allotted time.

Design and Statistical Analysis

The design of the study was experimental and the statistical analysis used was an Analysis of Covariance. Analysis of Covariance is the marriage of Analysis of Variance and regression analysis, and it is often used to improve design efficiency (Kennedy & Bush, 1985).

According to Kennedy & Bush (1985), a function of Analysis of Covariance is to make statistical adjustments for the effects of a covariate when experimental control is impossible or inappropriate. An Analysis of Covariance was selected to make statistical adjustments for the covariate (pre-test scores) on the dependent variable (post-test scores) rather than experimentally controlling for the pre-test.

Kennedy & Bush (1985) further stipulate that to perform an Analysis of Covariance, the researcher must have a covariate. That is, one must possess a score for each participating subject on a covariate that is correlated with a dependent variable. If one is interested in comparing control and experimental groups with respect to their performance on a post-test and has pre-test measures on all participants, scores from the pre-tests could be used as the covariate. In this study a pre-test was administered to all subjects before the treatment began. This pre-test measurement was selected to serve as the covariate in the calculation of the Analysis of Covariance.

Scoring

In order to reduce scorer bias, the pre-tests and post-tests were randomly mixed and given to the scorers after both portions were completed. That is, the scorers scored all of the pre-tests and post-tests at one time without knowledge of which papers were pre-tests or which papers were post-tests.

Writing samples were rated anonymously by two readers using an analytic rubric (see Appendix B). Both readers were

trained by the researcher to use the scoring rubric. A Pearson Correlation Coefficient was calculated with the scores from Reader One and Reader Two using the SAS system. The pre-test correlation was calculated to be $r=.88$. The post-test correlation was calculated to be $r=.91$. These correlations determined sufficient inter-rater reliability.

DOL editing exercises were scored by the researcher and a colleague. For purposes of inter-rater reliability and to guard against researcher bias, both the researcher and colleague scored one-third of all responses. Percentages calculated by the researcher and the colleague were proofed by a second colleague for accuracy. Because the second colleague determined there was no difference in any of the first one-third of the scores that had been calculated, the researcher scored the remaining responses.

Results

The first question of this study asked: Is there a difference between control and experimental groups on post-test editing scores controlling for pre-test editing?

An Analysis of Covariance (ANCOVA) was selected as the statistical procedure of choice to control for the effect of the pre-test between the two groups. Prior to calculating an ANCOVA, two assumptions must be met: a) Is the covariate statistically significantly related to the dependent variable? and b) Is the homogeneity of regression assumption met?

In order to test that the first assumption had been met, a Pearson Correlation was calculated using SPSS. A correlation of .340 indicated there was a statistically significant relationship at the 0.01 level between the covariate (pre-test editing scores) and the dependent variable (post-test editing scores). This indicated the first assumption had been met.

The interaction of the covariate with the treatment that was used to test for homogeneity of regression for the editing test was not statistically significant $F(1,66) = .00, p = .949$. This indicated the assumption of equal slopes had been met and lent support for the use of ANCOVA in this study.

The raw score means, standard deviations, and least square means for editing reflect scores similar to those for writing (Table 1). Results of the ANCOVA for editing indicated an F ratio of .316 and a significance of .576 (Table 2). Results of the ANCOVA for editing revealed no statistically significant difference between experimental and control groups.

The second question of this investigation asked: Is there a difference between control and experimental groups on post-test total writing scores controlling for pre-test writing scores?

An Analysis of Covariance was selected as the statistical procedure of choice to control for the effect of the pre-test between the two groups. Prior to calculating an ANCOVA, two assumptions must be met: a) Is the covariate statistically significantly related to the dependent variable? and b) Is the homogeneity of regression assumption met?

Summary

In order to test the first assumption had been met, a Pearson Correlation was calculated using SPSS. A correlation of .482 indicated there was a statistically significant relationship at 0.01 level between the covariate (pre-test writing scores) and the dependent variable (post-test writing scores). This indicated the first assumption had been met.

The interaction of the covariate with the treatment that was used to test for homogeneity of regression for the writing test was not statistically significant $F(1,66) = .37, p = .544$. This indicated the assumption of equal slopes had been met and lent support for the use of ANCOVA in this study.

The raw score means, standard deviations, and least square means for writing reflected scores similar to those for editing (Table 4). Results of the ANCOVA for writing indicated an F ratio of .144 and a significance of .706 (Table 4). The results for writing revealed no statistically significant difference between experimental and control groups.

The results of the ANCOVA indicated there was no statistically significant difference between experimental and control groups in either editing or writing. This result demonstrates the need to further investigate the use of the DOL program.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Conclusions

This study of elementary students found there was not a statistically significant improvement in the students' editing and writing skills when Daily Oral Language (DOL) was used as an instructional methodology over the period of one school year. These results are consistent with the results of previous research. According to Piotrowski's (1987) study using DOL with high school students, while scores improved,

Table 1

Means, Standard Deviations, and Least Square Means for Editing by Treatment Group

Group	N	Mean	Standard Deviation	Least Square Means
Editing, Pre-Test, Control	36	28.808	21.8566	
Editing, Post-Test, Control	36	51.817	17.5480	51.347
Editing, Pre-Test, Experimental	34	25.459	21.0172	
Editing, Post-Test, Experimental	34	53.147	18.5138	53.645

Table 2

Analysis of Covariance for Editing

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Corrected Model	2644.530	2	1322.265	4.549	.014
Intercept	52689.515	1	52689.515	181.267	.000
Pre-edit	2613.582	1	2613.582	8.991	.004
Group	91.790	1	91.790	.316	.576
Error	19475.113	67	290.673		
Total	214784.240	70			

Table 3

Means, Standard Deviations, and Least Square Means for Writing by Treatment Group

Group	N	Mean	Standard Deviation	Least Square Means
Writing Pre-Test, Control	36	35.264	6.2558	
Writing Post-Test, Control	36	37.611	7.1884	36.334
Writing Pre-Test, Experimental	34	30.191	5.9212	
Writing Post-Test, Experimental	34	35.588	6.5661	36.941

Table 4

Analysis of Covariance of Writing

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Corrected Model	750.850	2	375.425	9.856	.000
Intercept	879.406	1	879.406	23.088	.000
Prewrite	679.298	1	679.298	17.834	.000
Group	5.475	1	5.475	.144	.706
Error	2551.993	67	38.089		
Total	97218.500	70			

no statistically significant relationship was found in the areas of objective test scores using the Writing Skills portion of the *Sequential Tests of Educational Progress III (STEP)*, Level J, Form X, or student writing scored analytically. Mackenthun (1995), while working with middle school students, found improvement in student writing while using *DOL*; however, no statistical analysis was used to substantiate these improvements.

Descriptive statistic results indicated improvements occurred in both the editing and writing portions of this study. However, closer analysis using an ANCOVA demonstrated that, while the scores improved, no statistically significant differences occurred.

The improvement that occurred, though not statistically significant, was evident in other ways. The students involved in the study began to be more aware of common mechanical errors when writing. This awareness was demonstrated when students were peer editing papers during writing activities. The classroom teachers observed that students were often much more capable of recognizing the mistakes of others than recognizing their own errors. This ability could have been caused by an over familiarity with their own writing. On the other hand, the task of editing the work of others is very similar to the task of editing unknown sentences provided in the *Daily Oral Language* program and, therefore, could have provided a more familiar editing situation.

Improvement also occurred in the amount of writing that students were willing to produce. Many of the pre-test writing pieces were short and seemed to have been written without much planning or thought to the end product. The post-test writing pieces were, on the whole, much stronger works of greater length. There seemed to be greater awareness of mechanics usage in the post-test writing pieces. This increased awareness was, perhaps, due either to natural development or to the time spent on writing tasks during the fourth grade year.

Recommendations

Although this study focused specifically on the *DOL* program, it is important to understand the impetus for the study was the belief that traditional grammar instruction is ineffective and at times detrimental to student growth. While the results of this study did not statistically validate the use of *DOL*, it is important for researchers to examine alternatives to traditional grammar instruction.

The results of this study should not completely negate the effectiveness of the *DOL* program. Closer study of *DOL*, or of similar methodologies, is most certainly warranted. Although the short daily practice covering a multitude of skills is considered to be a non-traditional approach, the fact that the sentences are pre-selected and packaged gives the

program a somewhat traditional feel as these sentences are far removed from the students' daily lives and classroom experiences. Variations of *DOL* utilizing students' own "errors" in writing mechanics and usage may provide the closer fit needed for effective transfer of learning. Instead of using the canned program, teachers might use carefully selected sentences from student work, being cautious to maintain the anonymity of the writer. This variation might cause students to take more ownership in the program and spur them to achieve more significant results. It would also allow teachers to select sentences focusing on particular errors made by their students. Mackenthun (1995) advocates this practice, noting students become excited about the activity when checking to see if any of their work has been selected for use in the lesson. She adds that the age-appropriateness and personalization of the topics of these sentences appeal to students.

Further study might examine the use of the program with specifically identified groups such as gifted, special education, or ESL students. The *DOL* program may deliver necessary instruction and guided practice of particular benefit to such students, thus providing a needed fit for particular populations. For example, Whitmore (1985) asserts that underachieving gifted students often lack motivation due to the incompatibility of their learning styles with traditional instruction. *DOL*, with its focus on non-traditional instruction, might be better suited for gifted students. Large, Maholovich, Hopkins, Rhein, and Zwolinski (1997), in a study developed and implemented to improve and motivate the writing of elementary and special education students, concluded *DOL* was an effective way to improve skill development. Additionally, Hallenbeck (1999) believes students with learning disabilities often learn better by peer collaboration in a non-traditional setting than in a traditional classroom where their role is to passively receive information. *DOL* provides just such collaboration as teacher and students have daily dialogue about editing. The social aspect of *DOL* is also important to ESL students. Adunyarittigun (1993) suggests language acquisition is incomplete for ESL students unless time is allowed for social interaction, sharing individual interpretations, and question and answer sessions. *DOL* provides for these social opportunities.

Although the results of this study which was completed with fourth grade students over a nine-month period do not statistically demonstrate the effectiveness of the *DOL* program, there were indications of improvement in children's writing and editing skills. Such improvement needs further examination. While *DOL* has achieved wide-spread use (Farr & Strickland, 2000; Keister, 1990; Lawrence & Levinson, 1987; Leik & Altena, 1993; Leshner, 1993; Williams & Evans, 1998), this study should wave a red flag to educators who blindly accept *DOL* as a quick fix to overcoming grammar weaknesses. In fact, teachers and other curriculum stakehold-

ers should carefully review research before adopting any new curricular material.

References

- Andunyarittigun, D. (1993). *Whole language: A whole new world for ESL programs*. Unpublished report. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 386024)
- Braddock, R., & Lloyd-Jones, R. (1963). *Research in written composition*. Urbana, IL: National Council of Teachers of English.
- Farr, R. C., & Strickland, D. S. (2000). *Hidden treasures*. Orlando, FL: Harcourt Brace and Company.
- Funk, R. (1994). *The uneasy partnership between grammar and writing instruction*. Partial proceedings of the annual conference of the Assembly for the Teaching of English Grammar, 5 (pp. 22-25). Normal, IL: National Council of Teachers of English.
- Glenn, C. (1995). When grammar was a language art. In S. Hunter & R. Wallace (Eds.), *The place of grammar in writing instruction: Past, present, future* (pp. 2-29). Portsmouth, NH: Boynton/Cook.
- Glover, C. W., & Stay, B. L. (1995). Grammar in the writing center: Opportunities for discovery and change. In S. Hunter & R. Wallace (Eds.), *The place of grammar in writing instruction: Past, present, future* (pp.129-135). Portsmouth, NH: Boynton/Cook.
- Hallenbeck, M. J. (1999, April). *Taking charge: Adolescents with learning disabilities assume responsibility for their own writing*. Paper presented at the annual convention of the Council for Exceptional Children, Charlotte, NC.
- Hillocks, G. (1984). What works in teaching composition: A meta-analysis of experimental treatment studies. *American Journal of Education*, 93, 133-170.
- Kennedy, J. J., & Bush, A. J. (1985). *An introduction to the design and analysis of experiments in behavioral research*. Lanham, MD: University Press of America.
- Kiester, J. B. (1990). *Caught 'ya! Grammar with a giggle*. Gainesville, FL: Maupin House Publishing.
- Kiester, J. B. (1993). *Caught 'ya again! More grammar with a giggle*. Gainesville, FL: Maupin House Publishing.
- Large, C. M., Maholovich, W. A., Hopkins, L. J., Rhein, D. M., & Zwolinski, L. J. (1997). *Improving and motivating children's writing*. M.A. Project, Saint Xavier University. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED411516)
- Lawrence, P. M., & Levinson, B. F. (1987). *Dictation - Alive and well*. *English Journal*, 76(6), 49-50.
- Leik, J., & Altena, S. (1993). *Thematic oral language for daily use*. Grand Rapids, MI: Instructional Fair.
- Leshner, T. (1993). Editing: The key to teaching grammar. *Proceedings of the Association of Teachers of English Grammar*, 4 (pp. 33-36). Williamsport, PA: National Council of Teachers of English.
- Mackenthun, L. E. (1995). *A study of the effectiveness of DOL in helping middle level students with their grammar skills*. Unpublished master's thesis, St. Cloud State University, St. Cloud, MN.
- McIntyre, E. (1995). Teaching and learning writing skills in a low-SES, urban primary classroom. *Journal of Reading Behavior*, 27(2), 213-242.
- Mullen, M. P. (2003). *Excellence in elementary editing*. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED479069).
- Noguchi, R. R. (1991). *Grammar and the teaching of writing*. Urbana, IL: National Council of Teachers of English.
- Piotrowski, J. (1987). *DOL exercises: Their effect in improving correct use of capitalization, punctuation, and usage*. Unpublished master's thesis, University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire, Eau Claire, WI.
- Puckett, P. (1997, October 16) School watch: Daily lessons emphasize grammar. *The Atlanta Journal and Constitution*, p. J13.
- Sanborn, J. (1986). Grammar: Good wine before its time. *English Journal*, 75(3), 72-80.
- Schuster, E. H. (1999). Reforming English language arts: Let's trash the tradition. *Phi Delta Kappan*, 80(7), 518-524.
- Taylor, S. J. (1986). Grammar curriculum - Back to square one. *English Journal*, 75(1), 94-98.
- Vail N. J., & Papenfus J. F. (1987). *DOL*. Evanston, IL: McDougal, Littell, and Company.
- Vail N. J., & Papenfus J. F. (1993). *DOL plus teacher's manual*. Wilmington, MA: Great Source Education Group.
- Whitmore, J. R. (1985) *Underachieving gifted students*. Reston, VA: ERIC Clearinghouse on Handicapped and Gifted Children.
- Williams, L. B., & Evans, M. (1998). *Daily language review: Grade four*. Monterey, CA: Evan-Moor Corporation.

Appendix A

Writing Prompts

Pre-treatment Writing Prompt: Almost everyone likes to do fun things during his or her spare time. Some people like to sing, dance, create artwork, collect things, or participate in sports. Tell about a hobby or activity that you enjoy, and explain why you enjoy that hobby or activity.

Post-treatment Writing Prompt: Think about how you spend Saturdays during the school year. Think about the things you do with friends and family members. Tell about one particular Saturday, and explain exactly what you did that day.

Appendix B

Scoring Rubric

Points

- 6 There are few or no minor errors. There are no major errors.
- 5 There may be a few minor errors, but no more than one major error.
- 4 There are some minor errors, a few major errors.
There is sufficient evidence of the mastery of sentence construction, given the writing conditions.
- 3 There are numerous minor errors, and some major errors.
Sentence construction is below mastery.
- 2 There are many major errors, causing some confusion.
- 1 Errors are so numerous and serious that they interfere with communication.
The amount of writing is insufficient to show that the criteria are met.

	Minor Errors	Major Errors
Usage	-Awkward or odd use of words/phrases, but meaning is still clear -Homonyms-its/it's; their/there; to/two/too	-Incorrect use of common words -Incorrect pronoun reference -Subject-verb agreement -Tense shifts
Capitalization	-In quotations	-Double negatives/subjects -Initial caps -Common proper nouns
Punctuation	-Periods for abbreviations -Commas in a series	Ending punctuation -Apostrophes -Commas separating quotations. -Parentheses
Spelling	-Unusual, less frequently used words	-Misspelled common words -Same word misspelled in counted only once

Illinois State Board of Education (1991). *Write on, Illinois!* Springfield, IL: Author.