Basic writers, oral strategies, and the writing process

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BASIC WRITERS, ORAL STRATEGIES, AND THE WRITING PROCESS

A Thesis
Presented to the
Faculty of
California State University,
San Bernardino

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Deborah Ann Johnson
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ABSTRACT

In this paper I analyze 54 essays written by basic writers from three colleges in Southern California: Barstow College, California State University, San Bernardino, and Victor Valley College. I examine nine features generally attributed to spoken language which are also found in the written texts, presenting the percentage of usage for each of these features. My findings show that basic writers have a high density of oral features in both the draft and final versions of their papers. I also examine comments and corrections made by readers of the draft version to see which features they identified as interference, and whether the presence of these oral features influences the grade the student received. The analysis of evaluations indicates that the presence of oral features does not necessarily influence the final grade of these essays. Finally, I discuss the ways basic writers' oral strategies can provide a bridge between their spoken and written language.
TABLE OF CONTENTS

Acknowledgements........................................................................iii
Abstract..........................................................................................v
Table of Contents..........................................................................vi
List of Tables..................................................................................viii
Chapter I
1.1 Introduction.............................................................................1
1.2 Historical Background.............................................................3
1.3 Linguistic Research.................................................................5
   1.3.1 Similarities of Spoken and Written Language.................6
   1.3.2 Differences of Spoken and Written Language..............8
   1.3.3 The Continuum of Spoken and Written Language........10
1.4 Composition Research............................................................13
1.5 Definitions..............................................................................17
   1.5.1 Basic Writers...............................................................17
   1.5.2 Writing Process.........................................................19
   1.5.3 Oral Strategies.........................................................20
1.6 Methodology............................................................................23
Chapter II
2.1 Introduction............................................................................29
2.2 Features of Production..........................................................29
   2.2.1 Coordinating Conjunctions...........................................30
   2.2.2 Generalized Vocabulary.............................................36
   2.2.3 Hedges......................................................................40
   2.2.4 Neuter Pronouns......................................................45
   2.2.5 Collocations and Fixed Expressions.........................51
LIST OF TABLES

Table 1 Percentage of Conjunctions.........................35
Table 2 Percentage of Generalized Vocabulary.................39
Table 3 Percentage of Hedges..................................43
Table 4 Percentage of Neuter Pronouns..........................50
Table 5 Percentage of Collocations..............................54
Table 6 Percentage of Features Attributed to Production.....56
Table 7 Percentage of 1st Person Pronouns.......................61
Table 8 Percentage of Hyperbole................................65
Table 9 Percentage of Emphatics................................69
Table 10 Summary of Interaction Motivated Oral Features.....72
Table 11 Ratio of Repetition.....................................76
Table 12 Questionnaire Responses................................85
Table 13 Percentage Summary of Oral Features....................90
Table 14 Comparison of Words/Features/Grades for BC.........92
Table 15 Comparison of Words/Features/Grades for CS..........94
Table 16 Comparison of Words/Features/Grades for VV.........96
CHAPTER I

1.1 Introduction

More than a decade of national concern about the quality of writing supports the intuition that "writing is as difficult as it is important" (Hendrix 55). Writing is complex as well. We may focus on one aspect of writing, but ultimately it must be viewed as a multi-faceted phenomenon with connections to cognition, social factors and aesthetic norms. In this paper I will examine one aspect of writing and its influence on the writing process--the oral strategies of basic writers.

My research is based on three hypotheses. The first of these is that basic writers employ oral strategies, with which they are more familiar, to deal with the less familiar writing task. Second, as basic writers revise, their oral strategies are "edited out" of the written discourse. Third, oral strategies are considered inappropriate in academic discourse, even though writing teachers may not recognize the "errors" as such, so that the student papers with the highest percentage of oral strategies will receive the lowest grades.

At the most general level, in Chapter I, I will identify the features of spoken and written language as studied and charted during the past three decades by historians,

\[1\] The term "oral strategy" is used throughout to refer to the use of features of informal, unplanned spoken discourse as set forth in the essay "Oral and Literate Strategies in Spoken and Written Narratives" by Deborah Tannen.
linguists and composition researchers. Historians debate the effects of language on cultures which have moved from an oral society to a literate society. Linguists consider on the one hand "the structure of a spoken language when it becomes a written artifact" (Havelock 24), and, on the other, the linguistic features of speech and writing. Composition researchers concern themselves about the relationship between the spoken word and the written text.

At a more specific level, I will discuss a number of oral and literate features identified by these researchers. Some previous research focuses on the similarities between speaking and writing. Many other studies look at the differences. I will also discuss the limitations and advantages of a frequency analysis of these features.

In Chapter II, I will examine student texts--essays written by basic writers--and present evidence of oral features in three categories. The first category includes features generally attributed to production constraints (coordinating conjunctions, generalized vocabulary, hedges, neuter pronouns, and collocations and fixed expressions). Features that are used expressively and evaluatively to engage the listener/reader, specifically personal pronouns and self reference, hyperbole, and emphatics, are discussed in the second category. The third category covers features of lexical and syntactic repetition.

Chapter III addresses how student texts are evaluated.
Both overall impressions and specific teacher comments offer insight into the oral/written relationship. One set of evaluations comes from the marginal comments, marked corrections, and final grade given by the students' teachers. The second evaluation comes from teachers who did not know the student writers. These evaluations were done on typed copies of student text, with a cover sheet asking the teachers to identify any "speech-like" features that they felt interfered in some way with the text. A final evaluation, my discourse analysis of the oral features discussed in Chapter II, characterizes texts in terms of the percentage of oral features used. A comparison of the three evaluations follows.

Chapter IV explores a pedagogy for incorporating oral strategies into the writing process of basic writers. The chapter begins with a comparison of pedagogical theories. An analysis of these theories in light of the data presented in the previous chapters follows. Finally, I briefly discuss several teaching approaches which are consistent with the findings of this study.

1.2 Historical Background

In the distant past, the message sender relied exclusively on the speaking mode to communicate. Early rhetoricians, notably Plato and Aristotle, devoted their attention and lessons to the various ways speakers could sharpen their skills for eloquent, or at least adequate, oral com-
munication. At the same time, the Greek culture was becoming increasingly literate (Havelock 5). Socratic education represented a marked shift in language usage. Socrates, according to Havelock, "played a paradoxical role" in the oral-literate transition, by adhering to the traditional oral approach, while at the same time using orality as a "prosaic instrument for breaking the spell of the poetic tradition [and] substituting in its place a conceptual [i.e., written-like] vocabulary and syntax" (5). Havelock also considers the Greek plays "a window on a cultural process of transition" (22). The plays combined "[s]inging, recitation, and memorization on the one hand . . . and reading and writing on the other," thus bringing together the two modes, a sign that oral and literate communication "were coming into competition and collision" (21).

Since that time, the written language has continued to compete and collide with the oral language. In modern times, numerous investigators have sought to understand and define the oral-literate relationship from a variety of standpoints and disciplines. Of the many studies that examine the relationship between oral and written communication, the following examples consider not only the historical development of the written word, but also the modern effect of the spoken word, aided by modern technology.

In *The Gutenberg Galaxy*, McLuhan's well-known phrase, "The medium is the message," summarizes his view that
communication is often shaped by the medium chosen. He contrasts the nonlinear, more dynamic, thoroughly acoustic communication of modern media and the linear, less dynamic, constricted communication of print. Twenty years later Ong's *Orality and Literacy: The Technologizing of the Word* provided additional insight into the intellectual and social effects of writing, electronic communication, and the resultant "secondary orality" in today's society (3). In secondary orality, the apparently oral nature of electronic communication, such as television and radio, actually relies on writing for its existence. The distinctions between what is oral and what is written begin to blur. Socio-historical researchers, for example Havelock, Ong, and Olson, consider this movement from orality to literacy "as a shift to markedly new kinds of consciousness and intellectual possibilities" (Horowitz 15). The definition and explanation of these cognitive changes, however, are still tentative and exploratory.

1.3 Linguistic Research

In much the same way that historical and socio-historical researchers changed their perspective as more evidence and new ideas emerged, the perspective of linguistic researchers has also changed. Early linguistic study focused on defining speech and its grammar. Little emphasis was placed on writing because the written language was considered "a purely derivative phenomenon" (Goody 261). There-
fore, since speech preceded writing, oral language was considered primary (Schafer 2). Ferdinand de Saussure, Edward Sapir, Charles Hockett, and other linguists of the Structuralist school studied the sound system but excluded the writing system from the language domain. Leonard Bloomfield's comment, "Writing is not language, but merely a way of recording language by means of visible marks" (21), summarizes the early linguists' position.

Hymes' 1972 study of communicative competence, and subsequent sociolinguistic research, marked the beginning of the acceptance of spoken and written texts for analysis. When both were considered legitimate objects of linguistic study, the natural next step was to compare them. Research and discussions have often dwelled dichotomously on either the similarities or the differences. Perfetti characterizes the assertion that 'writing is speech on paper' as "the commonality view" (355). The opposite extreme, in which spoken and written language are considered completely independent of one another, he calls the "distinctiveness view" (355). Neither extreme presents a clear picture of the relationship between speaking and writing. However, to begin an examination of the oral strategies of basic writers, it is useful to examine both the commonalities and differences between the two modes of communication as a precursor to a more integrated construct.

1.3.1 Similarities of Spoken and Written Language
In the broadest sense, speech and writing serve "an expressive language function," where the addressee expresses an intent or message outward to an addressee (Phelps-Terasake 303). Textbooks frequently depict the relationship between the sender, receiver, and message as a diagram with each facet represented as one leg of a triangle. Since speaking and writing share the same "leg," it is assumed that they have similar characteristics. The most obvious similarity is that both rely on common linguistic knowledge; that is, they employ the same basic rules of grammar and share a common vocabulary. Furthermore, as Halliday asserts, spoken and written language are systematic; "each is equally highly organized, regular, and productive of coherent discourse" (69-70). In addition, "both are used in a variety of every-day activities, [and] both are taken for granted by those who use them" (Cambourne 84). Speakers talk to each other without stopping to consider the complexity of the act of speaking or the subtle changes in register made between one conversation and the next. Likewise, writers dash off an informal letter or the draft of a research paper without thinking about the many manual and cognitive skills involved in writing. Once the speaking and writing skills become part of the user's repertoire, they can be accessed without conscious reflection to accomplish the communicative task. Despite the facility with which language is used by those comfortable in both modes, there
are still considerable differences between speaking and writing.

1.3.2 Differences of Spoken and Written Language

Barrett argues that if we "focus . . . on the experiences themselves, we see that writing and speaking are quite different" (132). The differences begin with mode of acquisition. All children, "given a normal developmental environment, acquire their native languages fluently and efficiently; moreover they acquire them 'naturally,' without special instruction" (Brown H. 15). As children mature, so too do their speaking skills. Few children, on the other hand, write before receiving writing instruction in school. "Even then, many children do not flourish as writers" and we cannot assume that their writing skills will mature as they grow older (Gundlach 132). By the time children reach college age, they are fluent speakers of their native language. They may not, however, be fluent in the written language.

A second, undisputed difference is strictly physical. The physical act of speaking involves the vocal apparatus—lips, teeth, tongue, vocal cords, etc. The production of writing involves the hand and eye (Herndon 87). Differences in production are related to differences in perception. "[T]he spoken form of the language is manifested in sound waves and involves the ear, whereas the written form of the language is manifested in light waves and engages the eye.
These physical differences of production and perception constitute an important difference between speech and writing.

Similarly, the amount of time involved in speaking and writing differs. Informal, unplanned speech occurs in the "here and now" and is characterized as "fast" (Chafe, cited in Horowitz and Samuels) and "spontaneous" (Ochs). Speakers must produce language quickly in order to hold the conversational floor. Conversely, writers have a relatively longer time to process and produce written language. Formal, planned writing is "slow" (Chafe, cited in Horowitz and Samuels) and "premeditated" (Kantor and Rubin 55). In addition, writing requires the "manipulation of a physical tool and the conscious coordination of specific motor and cognitive skills" which slows down the speed of production (Akinnaso 113).

Much early research emphasized differences such as these. However, many of the studies focused on only one or two major differences. Within a decade, the list of differences had become quite extensive and controversial. For each researcher who asserted that writing was typically more complex, explicit, or highly organized (see Halliday), another researcher attributed the same trait to speaking (see Chafe and Danielewicz). One source of the conflict concerned the definition of what was being described. Generally, researchers based their analyses on the sentence,
but most studies did not "define their particular uses of
the [term 'sentence']" (Biber "Resolving" 386). While
sentences are identifiable in written language by punctua-
tion, this marker is not available in spoken language.
Therefore, various alternatives have been proposed as more
equitable units of measurement. The notion of a "minimal
terminable syntactic unit," or "T-unit," proposed by Hunt
was an attempt to identify a unit found in both speaking and
writing objectively. A T-unit contains one independent
clause and any syntactically dependent complements. How-
ever, this measurement "fails to explain why certain gram-
matical units . . . are given greater prominence than others
in the analysis" (Akinnaso 107). Researchers continue to
seek ways to make more accurate comparisons between speaking
and writing.

1.3.3 The Continuum of Spoken and Written Language

As stated above, the majority of researchers have
looked at speaking and writing as dichotomous poles. Yet
they offer conflicting opinions regarding "the relationship
between the interlocutors . . . , the role of context. . . . ,
the type of structure and cohesive devices . . . , and the
way in which oral and written language interact to convey
meaning" (Horowitz 7). Each researcher draws the line
between speaking and writing in a different place. Con-
flicting delineations have prompted others to reexamine the
features of speech and writing and to define them more
clearly. Recent studies tend to conclude that the supposedly clear-cut distinctions between speech and writing are not so clear-cut. Chafe and Danielewicz represent this view. They state:

Written language is not simply speech written down, nor, of course, is spoken language a faulty rendition of writing. We . . . find different characteristics which are typical of each mode, even though spoken language often contains some written-like features and vice versa. (214)

A more accurate way of characterizing the two is to view them as more or less opposite poles of a continuum. The continuum between speaking and writing is full of intermediate steps, more spoken-like at one end and more written-like at the other. The poles are characterized by the clustering of contrasting features. Casual conversation occupies one pole and written academic discourse the other.

Although some contradictions continue to arise, a consensus has developed that while many factors influence both speaking and writing, few, if any, are exclusively attributable to one mode. One researcher, Douglas Biber, has sought to identify these factors. He has identified forty-one "potentially important linguistic features . . . organized in terms of eight communicative functions most commonly associated with each function" (388). Using multivariate statistical techniques and quantitative analysis on
a large variety of text types, he concluded that variations between speaking and writing occur along three textual dimensions. The dimensions are defined by texts that have opposite characteristics. Biber calls the first dimension "Interactive vs. Edited Text." In this dimension, he classifies face-to-face and telephone conversations as highly interactive because of the high density of "self-reference" words, whereas academic prose and press reports are highly edited and have a low density of self-reference words (401). The second dimension, "Abstract vs. Situated Context," includes texts that range from academic prose (with a high density of passives, nominalizations and prepositional phrases) to telephone conversations (with a low density of these features). "Reported vs. Immediate Style," the third dimension, is characterized by the frequent use of past tense, perfect aspect and third person pronoun forms. The highest density of these features, according to Biber, is found in fiction. Professional letters, with the lowest density of these features, are more immediate. All of the 545 text samples he examined fell somewhere along the continuum with respect to each of these dimensions, rather than at one pole or the other. Other researchers, using other methods, have come to similar conclusions (see Horowitz and Samuels). Current studies tend to consider particular discourse types, whether spoken or written, as occupying some position on the continuum between the two poles.
1.4 Composition Research

The earlier opinion that written language was simply an extension of speech, as expressed in historical and linguistic research, is also evident in American pedagogical theory. The 1897 Harvard Committee on Composition's statement that "Writing is merely the habit of talking with the pen instead of with the tongue" assigns primacy to speaking (Gere 113). It follows that writing, being simply a rendition of spoken language, was accessible to anyone who had mastered the mechanics of writing--making the letters and spelling the words. The mechanics of writing, along with the mechanics of speaking, were the proper province of elementary and secondary schools.

This democratic view accorded virtually all speakers the potential ability to write. It followed, then, that skillful speakers would have the ability to write well. Traditional American education embraced this view and taught primarily oral skills. Originally the MacGuffy Reader, despite what is suggested by the title, actually emphasized on training for public speaking through oral reading, memorization and oral presentation (Ong Literacy 46).

The emphasis on oral training, however, slowly shifted. Subsequent revisions of the Reader stressed silent reading and reflected "gradual inroads of literacy upon orality" (Ong Literacy 46). As American education responded to increased interest in universal literacy, schools and schol-
ars devoted more and more research to literacy and written communication. The public complaint, adopting the title of the December 1975 *Newsweek* article, "Why Johnny Can't Write" as a motto, concurred with and impelled educational efforts to increase literacy. This concern has expanded in the 1990's; Janie and Johnny still can't write. In fact, it seems as though "[w]riting deficiencies, like other vices, are perceived in almost everyone" (Hendrix 54). Researchers in several areas began to seek the causes and the cures for these "writing deficiencies." The growing interest in and development of pre-freshman composition classes at the university level is only one of the many academic responses to that concern.

The academic pendulum swung from teaching students the skills necessary for oratory power to teaching them the skills necessary for literary power. The earlier assumption that the ability to talk guarantees the ability to write has come under attack. According to Phelps-Terasaki, not only is the old assumption "faulty," but also "create[s] unreal expectations. Students must pay the final price of frustration and failure" when they discover that although they can successfully communicate orally, they are not successful in the written medium (303). Currently, rather than urging students to write the way they talk, writing teachers note the "deficiency" of student writing that contains speech features (Phelps-Terasaki 303).
The conflict between speech and writing continues. The National Council of English Teachers has published a booklet entitled *Students' Right to Their Own Language*, which asserts that all spoken languages and dialects are systematic and linguistically equal. English composition textbooks also give a nod of assent to the equality of dialects and languages, yet offer lessons which indicate that speech features, either dialectical traits or colloquial syntax, are not part of "good writing."

Part of the problem with these textbooks arises from an unclear definition of "good writing." A brief historical survey shows that what is and is not "good writing" depends on the era when writing is defined, and who does the defining. Early written texts, such as those of the Middle Ages and the Renaissance, exhibited the "fluency" and "fulnessness" of flowery prose, extensive description, and verbosity (Ong *Literacy* 41). While we admire these texts, by modern standards we consider the style to be excessive. Today, many academic discourse communities prefer sparse, even terse prose. Hendrix observes that most modern "educators have rightly stressed producing clean, even simple prose" as the appropriate definition of "good writing" (55). However, how the student's writing process might generate this good writing is still not clearly defined. Furthermore, the role of the student's oral strategies in the writing process matrix is even less clearly articulated.
Lisa Ede discusses the difference between speaking and writing from the perspective of a composition teacher:

In a surprisingly diverse range of studies, . . . speaking is described as natural, spontaneous, redundant, context-dependent, and collaborative while writing is characterized as learned, planned, precise, context independent, and individually produced . . . . These distinctions have an immediate commonsensical ring of truth to them—particularly to composition teachers who know just how much of a struggle learning to write can be for anyone, but especially for basic writers.

(320)

For student writers, the differences may not be consciously analyzed, but rather be implicitly recognized. Students talk fluently with their classmates before class begins, expressing opinions effortlessly, and they are fully understood. Then, sitting in the classroom, these same students struggle to express their opinions, uncertain whether what they write will be understood. Barrett summarizes the differences that make writing so difficult for the basic writer. He says:

speaking is social, easy, automatic and natural, while writing is solitary, difficult, controlled, and learned. Writing and speaking are quite different experiences. They are made to appear trans-
lations of one another only by overlooking the ordinary facts and focusing on the extraordinary. (132)

College students encounter spoken language in conversation, television, films, and the like. Their spoken language is natural, accomplished without conscious effort, and occurs within a familiar socio-cultural setting. They bring their oral competency with them into the classroom. In contrast, the written language they often encounter is the language of academic discourse found in expository essays, books, and journals. Writing is artificial, requires considerable effort, and, for many students, occurs in an unfamiliar socio-cultural setting. Although they may have rarely, if ever, enjoyed previous written communicative success, they are expected to learn academic writing in the short weeks of a composition class. Some writing teachers and composition researchers have therefore become interested in discovering the location of student writers' texts along the speaking-writing continuum. With this knowledge, they will be better able to help student writers, including basic writers.

1.5 Definitions

The present study is concerned with three interrelated topics: basic writers, the writing process of basic writers, and the oral strategies they use when they write. Before proceeding further, I will define these terms.

1.5.1 Basic Writers
The term 'basic writing' has become widely known, and reflects a new perspective for "meeting the needs of under-prepared students," particularly students with "adult interests but weak writing skills" (Troyka 3). However, the definition of basic writing, or who qualifies as a basic writer, remains a problem. The first and possibly the best known description of basic writing and the students who produce basic writing, is articulated in Shaughnessy's *Errors and Expectations*. Shaughnessy claims:

BW students write the way they do, not because they are slow or non-verbal, indifferent to or incapable of academic excellence, but because they are beginners and must, like all beginners, learn by making mistakes. (5)

Later in the same chapter, she points out:

not all BW students have the same problem; not all students with the same problem have them for the same reasons. There are styles to being wrong. (40)

The description she presents is thus partial and imprecise. Subsequent attempts to define basic writing or basic writers also fall short. Bartholomae claims that the definition of basic writing is imprecise because it is based on "writing that emerges in basic writing courses" (66). The definition, then, becomes circular; basic writers are students who are placed in basic writing classes, and the product of
basic writing classes identifies basic writers. In fact, basic writers are consistently defined in terms of "what they don't do" and by "the absence of whatever is present in literate discourse" (Bartholomae 67). Although what these writers "don't do" is as unique as each individual writer, many patterns nevertheless emerge.

1.5.2 Writing Process

The writing process, according to Scribner, is "typically identified with the production of written discourse or text" (75). He emphasizes the importance of the method of production, rather than of the product—the final text. The steps of the process are frequently identified as pre-writing, writing, revision, and editing. However, this description of the method of production seems to suggest a linear process in which one step follows the other in sequence. Current composition scholars claim such is not the case. From the moment the writer considers a topic until the final, polished copy of the text is presented to the reader, the steps above can occur and recur in any order and as often as the writer chooses. While the steps, as presented above, seem simple, the writer must also consider other issues at the same time in order to accomplish the process successfully. In discussing computer-generated language, McKeown identifies the task all writers face. She states:

A language generation system must be able to decide what information to communicate, when to
say what, and which words and syntactic structures best express its intent. (3)

The writer can make these decisions before writing as part of pre-writing, during the step called writing, and after writing while revising and editing. The strength of the process lies in its recursiveness. Ideally, the writer can decide certain information, wordings and style, then change any and all of them several times, either mentally or through successive drafts, until the final text achieves its communicative goal.

Numerous studies have been devoted to the writing process and its various aspects. Some studies have addressed pre-writing strategies, such as clustering or branching. Others are devoted to the length and purpose of writers' pauses or to the causes and cures for writer's block. Still others make comparisons between the process or product of expert and novice writers. Despite the abundance of research and the diverse insights attained, Scribner sees a major flaw in composition research, which is that most of what we know about writing, including "the skills it entails and generates, are almost wholly tied up with school-based writing" (Scribner 75). Since, however, this is an important context in which modern-day writing takes place, I, too, will be exclusively examining school-based writing.

1.5.3 Oral Strategies

The term "strategy" implies an intentional choice, and
when paired with "oral" could be understood to mean that the writer has intentionally chosen one or more of the features normally attributed to speech in order to accomplish a certain stylistic goal. According to Tannen, oral strategies are commonly found in fiction, where we may assume that they are intentionally employed by fiction writers. The introductory line of J. D. Salinger's *The Catcher in the Rye* offers a fine example:

> If you really want to hear about it, the first thing you'll probably want to know is where I was born and what my lousy childhood was like, and how my parents were occupied and all before they had me and that David Copperfield kind of crap, but I don't feel like going into it, if you want to know the truth. (3)

A cursory examination reveals at least three oral features in this sentence. Salinger chooses an informal style, signalled by words such as "lousy" and "crap." He chains his ideas together with coordinating conjunctions, such as "and" and "but," and he establishes an intimacy by revealing the thought processes of the narrator ("I don't feel like going into it").

Although it is impossible to identify with certainty the intentional choices made by any writer, it is not as difficult to identify speech features that are used effectively in writing, such as those found in the above example.
Effective or "stylistic" use of speech features rarely occurs in student writing, however. Instead, the speech features found in basic writers' texts are often inappropriate when viewed from the perspective of academic writing, even though they work very well for the students when they are talking. A strategy, however, may arise out of familiarity and habit rather than intentional choice.

According to Gumperz and Tannen, who studied the linguistic cues which accompany conversational inference, the "styles of communication or communication strategies," are "acquired while growing up and through peer group interaction" (313). It is in this sense that I employ the term "oral strategies" here.

The process of language acquisition, during which complex structures, vocabulary and communicative skills are internalized, requires little conscious attention from the learner (Brown H. 16). Writing skills, conversely, require attention. Student writers "intuitively feel that when they move on from speaking to writing, especially at a university, unfamiliar norms of grammaticality, accuracy, and style come into play" (Hanney 211). Despite this recognition, student writers, particularly basic writers, may rely on the familiar grammar and style of speech. Shaughnessy notes that some of the "errors" in basic writers' texts suggest an influence or interference from their speech. Flower associates "inner speech" and writing. What she calls "writ-
er-based prose" follows the "associative, narrative path . . . [and the] unexpressed contexts" of the writer's thoughts rather than creating "a shared language and shared context" (16-17). This type of prose uses the exploratory and ego-centric strategies of inner speech for hasty production, even in an environment that does not require haste. One of the reasons basic writers' texts can be considered as "writer-based prose" is because of the presence of oral strategies, which tend to leave much of the context for the writer's thoughts unexpressed.

1.6 Methodology

In order to discover to what extent basic writers rely on their oral strategies to accomplish the writing task, I chose to do a descriptive frequency analysis of nine features that are attributed to informal, unplanned, and spoken language, but which are also present in basic writers' texts. Some scholars doubt that counting the features of student texts is fruitful. First, the use of product cannot reliably be used to discover the writing process. Second, the purpose of the classification of features may not be clear. As O'Keefe points out, the examination of the differences between speaking and writing generally fail to clarify "why these differences should be important for either discourse or communication (139). However, I feel that the differences between speech and writing are important in the examination of basic writers' texts because the
oral features observed in these texts point to the areas where speaking skills are brought to the writing task. The role of these features is "tied to the achievement of intelligibility and the practical aims of communication" which the basic writer seeks (O'Keefe 139). An understanding of these features "can be used to guide learners in the transition from speech to writing" (Akinnaso 99).

An additional concern has been that seeking features of the spoken language in written text reflects the disfavored behaviorist view that the native language is a set of habits that interfere with the target language—in this case written academic discourse (Render 118). However, whether the oral features in basic writers' texts are considered a result of conditioned responses, or of cognitive development in which the oral features indicate a "disequilibrium" prior to mastery, the question can only be seriously debated after such features have been identified (Brown H. 48).

Though primarily concerned with second language acquisition, error analysis offers another research tool for exploring the areas of difficulty for the basic writer. The systematicity of errors reflects the hypotheses the learner makes about the target language. According to Kroll and Schafer, teachers of native speakers "can gain a new perspective by considering the matter of error from the second-language point of view" (208). Smith suggests that written academic discourse may be viewed as the target language for
the basic writer, and their first language is conversation. View in this light, oral features may be classified as "errors."

Examining error, according to some scholars, is not compatible with studying the writing process. The pedagogical emphasis has moved toward viewing writing as a process, and a focus on the written product could be misconstrued as a step backwards (Murray 86; Witte and Cherry 114). Odell, however, contends that "[t]he distinction between written products and the writing process is not so great as we sometimes assume" (53). By examining written products we may infer some part of the writing process. In fact, much of our knowledge of the writing process has been gained through inference. Even the best writing process research design leaves variables that cannot be controlled or explained, especially since most students cannot "verbalize accurately or completely what they're doing when they write" (Lindemann 23). Like most student writers, basic writers can rarely articulate their own writing process, so they cannot identify whether or not they are using their oral skills to deal with the writing task. However, by examining the preliminary and final drafts of basic writers' texts for the presence of speech features, we may infer the role of oral strategies in the writing process.

I assume that knowing which oral strategies basic writers use could provide the writing teacher with a useful
tool to help learners move their writing along the speaking-writing continuum.

The data used for this analysis are essays written by students enrolled in pre-freshman level English classes at three colleges, California State University, San Bernardino (CSUSB), Barstow Community College (BCC), and Victor Valley Community College (VVCC). At CSUSB the class level is English 95. The equivalent class level at BCC and VVCC is English 103.

I chose this class level because upper and lower skill parameters are defined by a placement test. California State University campuses require entering lower-division students to take the English Placement Test (EPT) which distinguishes "between students prepared for freshman composition and those who need additional instruction before freshman composition" (White and Polin 99). The EPT consists of an essay section and three multiple choice sections on reading, sentence construction, and logic and organization. Students whose total score is above 141 but below 150 are placed in English 95. A similar arrangement, based on results from the Community College Placement Test of combined reading and writing scores higher than 46 but lower than 53, assigns Barstow and Victor Valley students to the pre-freshman composition class. Students assigned to pre-freshman level composition classes are considered basic writers.
The corpus consists of twenty essays (ten drafts and ten final versions) written by ten CSUSB students, sixteen essays written by eight BCC students (a draft and final version by each student), and eighteen essays written by nine VVCC students (nine drafts and nine final versions), for a total of fifty-four papers. All of the essays were part of the regular course work, with students getting assistance from the teacher and either a graduate student assistant or intern.

In my analysis, the frequencies of oral features are separated by individual draft and final versions. In addition, the mean and standard deviation is calculated according to school for each version. The frequency of each feature is presented in a separate table, with the mean and standard deviation included at the bottom of each table. Such a separation (by text version and by school) shows not only the differences between individual writers but also the variation between groups of students.

I will use illustrative examples from students' texts in this and following chapters. To protect the students' anonymity, I have numbered the texts. The following abbreviations are used.

CS = CSUSB  BC = Barstow College  VV = Victor Valley
D1 = First Draft  F = Final/Graded

For example, CS-8-D1 [12,13] means the paper was written by a CSUSB student, subject number eight, and the selection is
from the draft version. The sentence numbers are indicated in brackets.

Four essays are included as appendices. The first essay (Appendix A) is taken from the Barstow College course textbook, and served as a model for the Barstow College student essays considered here. Appendix B is an excerpt from an essay written by a CSUSB graduate student in a Master's program in English Composition. These essays are included for purposes of comparison. Appendix C is an essay written by one of the basic writers (BC-3-D1) that contains a high density and the largest variety of oral features. Appendix D, also written by a basic writer (VV-4-F), is an example of an essay with a low density of oral features.
CHAPTER II

2.1 Introduction

Many questions are raised by the diversity of historical consideration, linguistic investigation, and pedagogical concern about the relationship of speaking and writing discussed in the previous chapter. To what extent do basic writers rely on their oral strategies to accomplish the writing task? Are the oral features removed as the basic writer revises and edits? The present chapter employs a discourse analysis of basic writers' texts as a means for investigating these questions.

2.2 Features of Production

The message sender engaged in casual conversation generally uses an informal style of expression. This style may include typical speech features such as initial coordinating conjunctions, generalized vocabulary, hedges, neuter pronouns and fixed expressions (Chafe; Horowitz and Samuels; Biber). One reason these features are used, as Brown and Yule point out, is that "the speaker is under considerable pressure to keep on talking during the period allotted to him" (5). The time that the speaker has is limited. If the speaker pauses too long, she may lose her turn. She uses these features, at least in part, as strategies for holding the conversational floor.

The following sections present a discussion of five features of production, along with examples taken from tran-
scribed conversations which show how these features are used in speech. Examples from the texts of basic writers which also have these features will be discussed as well. Finally, the density of each feature in the student texts is presented in tables as a percentage of the total number of words.

2.2.1 Coordinating Conjunctions

Initial coordinating conjunctions, or "paratactically organized chunks related by 'and,' 'but,' and, more rarely, 'if' (Farr and Janda 71; Brown and Yule 16) are one way speakers respond to time limitations. When the speaker has the floor, she must make decisions about the relationship between her utterances quickly. Speakers frequently choose to connect one simple utterance to the next with a conjunction. The following example, lines 60-71 of an oral narrative recorded and transcribed by Phyllis Gilbert, demonstrates the speaker's use of "and" to connect utterances.¹

(1) 60 ..I went to bed,
61 ...an--d...I couldn't sleep,
62 ...and I got up
63 ..and realized there was somethin' going on,
64 ..about...mi--....about 12:30 one o'clock
65 ..an' I...um..called Jonathan at work
66 ...an'.. they said he was on his way

¹Pauses are indicated as follows: .. a break in timing too brief to be measured as a pause; ... a pause less than 1 second long; .... a pause more than 1 second long.
...an' then he came home,
...an'.. my labor start-ed,
...an' that was fun
...an' we went to the hospital,

This speaker uses nine coordinating conjunctions in eleven lines of conversation. The speaker's intonationally-defined clauses are between four and eight words, which is consistent with the observation made by Chafe and Danielewicz that such units tend not to exceed the limitations of short-term memory, or seven items, plus or minus two (14). Overall, for every eight words used, the speaker uses a coordinating conjunction, and thus the density of coordinating conjunctions in this example is 1.6 percent (9 occurrences/58 words).

Basic writers commonly adopt the same type of connection between ideas, encoding each idea as a simple utterance. In the following examples, the writers rely on a chaining technique, thus establishing a paratactical relationship between clauses.²

(2) I also have a friend who is black and his girlfriend is white and they like each other very much. But they also catch a lot of criticism for their relationship (CS-8-D1 [12-13]).

(3) I choose to return back to college after the 3rd

²The feature under discussion is underlined in the example, even though it is not marked in the original text.
try, and completely finish my courses and get my AA degree (BC-5-F [4]).

(4) They had no running water and the women had to carry water from a well to their home, and if the source of water was a well, well your looking at about 253 feet from the house (VV-2-D1 [4]).

Example 2 contains sentence-initial coordinating conjunctions, and all three examples contain internal coordinating conjunctions which connect clauses and give the reader a sense that all of the clauses carry the same semantic weight. This writing style reflects the pattern of chaining ideas or utterances together noted in speech. According to Chafe, "idea units" in speech "have a tendency to be set off by . . . three . . . factors--intonational, hesitational and syntactic" ("Deployment" 14). Since the writer cannot rely on intonational and hesitational factors, the only remaining factor, syntactic, is used. Part of this syntactic structure is the use of conjunctions. The other part is the tendency for "idea units to consist of a single clause: one verb with whatever accompanying noun phrases are associated with it" (Chafe "Deployment" 14). Note that in the spoken narrative (example 1), with the exception of line 64, every idea unit contains only one verb. The written examples demonstrate this pattern as well. Example 2 has four simple

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3The examples given are direct quotes from student texts. No spelling or grammatical error is marked as such unless it is the feature under discussion.
clauses expressed by means of four verbs, and each clause is joined by a conjunction; example 3 has three clauses and three verbs. Example 4 has four clauses, three of which are joined by conjunctions.

However, these essays are not completely speech-like in two ways. First, more words are used in relation to conjunctions than what Chafe identifies as usual for speech. The percentage of coordinating conjunctions for the excerpt from CS-8-D1 (example 2) is 4 percent of the total words. This essay has a slightly higher percentage than the average. The highest use of conjunctions in relation to words (with 5.7 percent) is found in essay BC-5-F, which is closest to the ratio of 1:6 (16.7 percent) identified by Chafe ("Deployment" 14). Part of the reason fewer conjunctions are used in relation to words in the written data can be explained by the second non-speech-like feature found in these essays. The student writers also use subordination, i.e., "a clause which is morphologically marked so that it cannot stand by itself" (Thompson 86). In the examples above, adverbial clauses such as "even though there is a problem," and relative clauses such as "a friend who is black" in example 2, are typical of the kinds of subordination found in the essays. Such examples make use of subordinating conjunctions, rather than coordinating conjunctions, to link clauses.

Despite this use of subordination, the preponderance of
conjunctions in basic writers' texts are simple coordinating conjunctions. As Rubin and Kantor point out, the "unsophisticated use of connectives for signaling relationships between ideas" is one of the ways in which 'early' writing is similar to speech" (57). While such an evaluative comment, as indicated by the term "unsophisticated," tends to characterize speech as less valuable than writing, excessive use of this feature may indicate that the writer is not familiar with or comfortable using other types of connectives.

In all of the essays examined, the writers used sentence-initial and internal coordinating conjunctions to connect clauses. The final version of most of the essays contained more coordinating conjunctions than the drafts. The proportion of conjunctions to words does not increase, however, because the final versions usually contain more words as well.

A breakdown and comparison of the use of coordinating conjunctions (hereafter simply 'conjunctions') for the draft and final version are shown in Table 1 below. These basic writers' use of conjunctions in their first drafts range between 1.3 percent (CS-6) and 4.2 percent (VV-9) of the total words. The range for the use of conjunctions in the final draft is from 1.0 percent (VV-4) to 5.7 percent (BC-5). The majority of these writers, 77 percent, use a smaller percentage of conjunctions in the final version of their essays, which suggests that some of the relationships be-
ween ideas were established in another, perhaps more written-like, way in their final versions.

The use of coordinating conjunctions increases slightly in the final version of the essays written by Barstow College students.

Table 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th>TEXT</th>
<th>CONJ</th>
<th>TEXT</th>
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<td>.8807</td>
<td>1.3548</td>
<td>.9231</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Both Victor Valley (2.8 percent) and Cal State (2.9 percent) students have a lower average use of conjunctions, which decreases slightly in the final version. The overall average for the final drafts is 2.731 percent. These student essays can be compared with the Langan text and the graduate student essay included in the appendices. In the published
essay, coordinating conjunctions equal 1.8 percent and in the graduate student essay, 1.0 percent of total words. The final essays of the basic writers thus depend more on conjunctions to connect ideas than do the texts of the more experienced writers.

2.2.2 Generalized Vocabulary

On-line production constraints may also limit vocabulary choices, such that the first word that comes closest to the intended meaning is used. "Producing language on the fly, [speakers] hardly have time to sift through all the possible choices" (Chafe and Danielewitz 88). The use of generalized vocabulary—words such as "stuff," "things," and "everything else"—permits the speaker to continue to speak and hold the conversational floor, even if the message is not explicit. Inexplicit words, what Farr and Janda and Chafe classify as "fuzziness," are part of the speaker's strategy for dealing with the time constraints on spoken discourse. Tannen asserts that generalized language, also fosters "interpersonal involvement" because the "communicator and the audience collaborate in making sense of the discourse" ("Oral" 8). Collaboration in spoken discourse is assumed because listeners rarely "challenge" the speaker to "give reasons" for her statements or to define fuzzy terms (Langan 11). Instead, the listeners try to make sense of the message despite gaps or unclear references. The excerpt below, from an oral narrative collected and transcribed by
Beth Negrey, shows the use of generalized vocabulary in speech.

(5) 5 ... She's a fun-ny .. fun-ny person

6 ... ve-ry bright .. but tries ve-ry hard not to let
... anyone know.

7 ... that she's very bright.

8 ... I mean she makes the sort of stupidest statements.

9 ... and ... and everything else.

In Line 9, the speaker implies that there is more that could be said, but that will not be provided. In the 48 lines that follow this generalization, the listener did not stop the speaker or question what the "everything else" in line 9 meant. The pragmatic role of the generalized vocabulary item is to keep the conversation moving forward by employing a general reference rather than interrupting the conversational flow and taking the time to be explicit.

While basic writers are not under the same time constraint as speakers, their texts suggest that they perceive themselves to be constrained by time limitations. This perception has some grounding in the conditions of the writing assignment. Most of the first drafts were written partially or completely during scheduled class time, that is, in an hour or less. In addition, the drafts and the final papers had due dates, which also imposes a time constraint. Whether because of time pressures or for other reasons, the basic writers used generalized vocabulary
similar to that found in spoken narrative. The following written examples contain occurrences of generalized vocabulary.

(6) He was tall with sparkling blue eyes, and everything else she was looking for (CS-2-D1 [5]).

(7) Children suffer **alot** in a divorce because of **alot of things** (VV-6-D1 [11]).

These generalizations serve the same function for the writer as they do for the speaker: the generalized word choice allows the writer to continue without providing specific information or details. In example 6, the writer indicates that blue eyes are only one of many important features but does not specifically identify any of the other features or traits. The writer of example 7 makes two generalizations. In the clause "Children suffer **alot,"" the writer indicates a high, though non-specific degree of suffering by using this adverb. The second generalization, "**alot of things,"" identifies many causes of the trauma the writer is discussing without enumerating them. Although the reader may "collaborate in making sense of the discourse" as the listener does in conversation, the writer cannot be certain of the shared context and background knowledge of the reader. Therefore, when the basic writer uses generalized vocabulary, she risks lack of clarity and misunderstanding. Most of the essays examined show that basic writers use this oral feature at least once in their texts. The percentage of
generalized vocabulary usage in the essays is shown in Table 2 below.

Table 2

Percentage of Generalized Vocabulary

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TEXT</th>
<th>GEN VOCAB</th>
<th>TEXT</th>
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<th>TEXT</th>
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This table shows two aspects of the use of generalized vocabulary in the texts. First, 85 percent of the twenty-seven writers use generalized vocabulary in one or both versions of their papers. Second, 81 percent of the writers use less generalized vocabulary when they revise. Most of the revisions resulting in the omission of generalized vocabulary were suggested by teacher's margin comments on the drafts. Barstow College writers reduced the density of this feature from an overall average of .6 percent in the
draft to .5 in the final version. The highest percentage of generalized vocabulary, found in BC-3-D1 with 2.5 percent in the draft, shows a remarkable reduction to 1.4 percent in the revision. Victor Valley students' average use of generalized vocabulary in both the draft and final version is .5 percent. The Cal State students use generalized vocabulary an average of .9 percent of the time in their drafts and .8 percent in their final versions. Neither the sample from the Langan text nor the sample of graduate level writing has any generalized vocabulary.

2.2.3 Hedges

The next oral strategy, hedging, gives a sense of uncertainty to what is being expressed. Note that in the earlier example of spoken discourse (example 5), the speaker, in line 8, qualifies "stupidest" with "sort of." This hedge suggests that another word might provide a better description of the statements being discussed, but that the speaker has settled for a less explicit adjective and thus hedges. The following example from an oral narrative entitled "Captain Ram," collected and transcribed by Johnson, shows a similar use of a hedge.

(8) (14) ...and Bob set big four by four posts?
   (15) ...A--nd he had one set,
   (16) ..'n we moved him in there,
   (17) ..'n Captain smacked it a few times,
   (18) ..'n..'n it was kinda leanin',

40
The speaker claims that the pole was leaning, but in the course of her narrative, she does not specify the degree or amount of leaning, even though the speaker knew this information. Rather than interrupt the flow of the story to define how the pole was leaning, or seek a more specific descriptive word or phrase--particularly since a more specific description is not necessary to the meaning of the story--the speaker approximates by using a hedge.

Basic writers also use hedges in their written texts, even though they could feasibly seek more specific words. The following examples are typical of the kinds of hedges used by basic writers:

(9) The friendship that my mother and I share is somewhat similar to that of friends my own age (CS-10-D1 [18]).

(10) At the beginning of the relationship he sort of took charge by taking her out of public school and had her start a Christian home school (CS-2-D1 [14]).

Although the incidence of hedges, like generalized vocabulary, is lower than that of conjunctions, hedges contribute to the speech-like quality of basic writers' texts. Hedges enable the writer to make statements which lack certainty or supporting details. In example 9, the writer claims the relationship is similar to that of friendship but omits the details which define how it is like, or unlike, the friendships among her peers. The writer of CS-2-D1 (example 10)
uses a hedge to qualify "took charge" because the activities listed are not the only features of taking charge of another person. However, the writer does not clarify the difference, beyond using the hedge to suggest that there is one. In each case, the basic writer has used a hedge to indicate a topic that is not developed in the essay.

While hedges are used in the draft version of these texts, several of the writers eliminate some or all of the hedges when they revise and edit. Example 10 was rewritten in the final version without the hedge. 44 percent of the writers decreased the number of hedges in the final version. In contrast, 30 percent, in which CS-10-F (example 9) is included, did not eliminate the hedge. In fact, these writers use the exact same wording, including the hedge, in the final version and in the draft.

The comparison between the drafts and the final versions for the use of hedges in the basic writers' texts is presented in Table 3.

As this table shows, 70 percent of these writers use hedges in one or both drafts. Even though the percentages overall are fairly low, ranging from .2 to 1.6 percent, they are higher than the density of hedges found by Chafe and Danielewicz in academic papers, which had no hedges. In addition, some of these texts have an even higher percentage than the .4 percent Chafe and Danielewicz found in conversations (89).
Table 3

Percentage of Hedges in Draft and Final Versions

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<th>HEDGES FINAL</th>
<th>TEXT</th>
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<td>.2959</td>
<td>.3759</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In the texts with an increase in the use of hedges in the final draft, the notable difference is the addition of information to the essay in response to a margin note by the teacher, intern, tutor or other reader. The writer complies with the request for more information, but indicates her uncertainty about the added content by the use of hedges.

The following lines from the draft and final version of CS-1 are typical of the basic writer's way of revising by adding more information.

(11a) The age being from eighteen to twenty five.
Most of my participants were of the male gender. Could this be a reason that they are in higher positions in comparison to women. They live to fulfill their personal goals first (D-1 18-22).

Most of the students were between the ages of eighteen and twenty-five. Most of my participants were of the male gender. Careers seem to be the most important thing for men. Could that be the reason why we see men in powerful positions: for example the president of the United States is a man (F 33-36).

The first draft of this excerpt contains 40 words. The first line is a fragment, and the following question and answer sequence is reversed. The margin comment beside lines 18-22 of the draft version which stated, "What do you mean here?" indicated that the lines were unclear and should be explained. The final draft of this excerpt, with 54 words, provides additional information by identifying who is between eighteen and twenty-five, and also adds a generalization that precedes and contextualizes the question. However, the writer hedges the generalization. While the hedge allows the writer to be more accurate, which we assume aligns with the academic caution against unsupported generalizations, it is also a speech feature rather than a writing feature. Rather than choose a hedge, the experienced writer would presumably qualify the generalization.
in another way, such as "Careers are important for many men" or "For the men I interviewed, careers are more important than relationships." If the basic writer does not have these literate strategies to draw upon, however, then hedges and other speech features are available to meet the demands of the writing task.

Hedges are frequently associated with uncertainty on the part of the speaker or writer. However, overall these basic writers did not use more hedges in their final versions than either the textbook sample or the graduate student sample. The Langan sample contains one hedge, (.5 percent) and the graduate student's essay contains two hedges (1.2 percent). In fact, only four student essays contain more hedges than the Langan text, and only one, CS-5-F contains more than the graduate essay. This fact suggests that hedges may have functions in writing other than expressing uncertainty.

2.2.4 Neuter Pronouns

Another common oral feature is the use of the 3rd person singular neutral pronouns 'it.' Generally this pronoun fills either a subject or object slot in the sentence and is referentially non-specific. In some cases 'it,' as

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4Hedges have been observed to occur more frequently in the speech of women, especially in situations where they are relatively powerless (see Coates). In light of this observation, it is interesting to note that 71 percent of the essays that contain hedges (Table 3) were written by female students.
an expletive, can serve as the subject place holder for an extraposed subject (e.g., It is amazing that houses are built so close to the San Andreas fault). 'It' in this role is different from other pronouns which refer to an antecedent, in that it is "empty of meaning and does not refer to anything" (Burton-Roberts 171). In other cases, 'it' stands for an unspecified nominal referent. As Biber has defined this feature, the pronoun 'it' "can mark a highly inexplicit presentation of meaning ... in which a single expression can stand for any of several thoughts" (394). The 'it' in some sentences refers to an antecedent identified in the previous lines or to the overall topic. The presence of two or three neuter pronouns in the same sentence, none of which refer to the same antecedent, contributes to a sense of vagueness.

The following excerpt from the Negrey narrative demonstrates the plentiful use of 'it' in an oral narrative. Note the resultant inexplicitness that pervades the discourse:

(12) 36. I said...well it just seems like it lessens what they've done.
37. I mean you've got a group of people who really struggled and suffered...a great deal,
38. and then you make it look like it's a game.

In this example, the speaker uses 'it' four times. In line 36, the reference for 'it' is the topic of the previous lines about a crowd watching a parade of soldiers returning
from Desert Storm. The second set of 'it's' in line 38 refers to the war itself. In context, the meaning can be inferred. Taken out of context, as I have done here to show the presence of a certain feature, the meaning is unclear.

The use of 'it' in the basic writers' texts also relies on the writers' context. However, this context may not be shared by the reader. In the following example, the referent is not readily apparent and readers are required to "work at" making the connection.

(13) Already she has had two beautiful children with this disease. She fighting public opinion regarding their birth day about having these babies was she wrong to have a baby without fingers just to satisfy her motherly instinct. In her family it is something that would go unnoticed and totally excepted as a way of life VV-1 D1 [13-14]).

(14) Its not like the students in high school, even Jr. high, don't have enough problems of their own to deal with. Such as peer pressure (drugs, alcohol, sex), broken families, and loss of close friends (classmates). When students revel, admins need to punish them. On a first offense it is just a call home to warn the parents. OOOH the student is scared now! (VV-4-D1 [13-17])

(15) Breland fought 34 times as a professional winning 30, losing three and drawing one. Breland was
very good and successful at it (BC-2-D1 [9,10]).

In example 13, 'it' may refer either to having children with a disease, or to fighting public opinion. Example 14 shows two uses of a neuter pronoun. The paragraph is introduced with a non-referential subject. The referent for the second occurrence of 'it' apparently refers to the punishment that the students receive. The reader can infer this from the context, but the use of a neuter pronoun requires that the reader expend some effort to make the connection. Line 10 of example 15 is ambiguous because 'it' has four potential referents—fighting, winning, losing, and drawing. The reader must infer the meaning through the pragmatic context (i.e., it makes more sense to talk about being successful at fighting or winning than losing or drawing).

The most inexplicit cases occur when the surrounding sentences do not provide the referent, as seen in this example from a basic writer's text:

(16) To have an abortion in the fifth month would have been devastating, but the alternative of having a problem baby left me no choice but to be prepared to say "yes" in the event the test came out unfavorably. Ann Quindlen says it all comes down to our children (VV-3-F [26,27]).

The 'it' does not have a specific identifiable referent but rather must be inferred from the discourse as a whole.

Rubin and Kantor, who consider ambiguous pronoun references
in speech similar to those found in the above examples, assert that such pronouns are "typical of egocentric language," which requires "some effort on the part of the listener" to figure out the referent (58). According to Collins, the listener must "cooperate and collaborate to produce meaning" (110). The same appears to be true for the writer and reader as well. From the writer's point of view, the referent is perfectly clear. Without a shared context, however, the reader may not be able to discern the writer's meaning. The 'it' in this case can be considered an oral strategy rather than a lack of awareness about the rules for using pronouns because the writer has correctly used pronouns in other instances.

Basic writers' texts contain many neuter pronouns. Although these writers also use 'this' or 'that' occasionally as a neuter demonstrative pronoun (incidents where 'this' is used as a determiner were not counted), they use 'it' the most. A few of the writers do not use any neuter pronouns (n=3). At the other extreme, the feature is used one percent or more of the time in both versions by ten writers. Table 4 shows the percentages of neuter pronouns in the basic writers' essays, and shows that 89 percent of the basic writers use neuter pronouns. In addition, 70 percent have a lower density of neuter pronouns in the final draft, suggesting that the writers have more explicitly defined the referent during revision.
Table 4
Percentage of Neuter Pronouns in Draft and Final Versions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TEXT</th>
<th>NEUT. PRONOUN</th>
<th>TEXT</th>
<th>NEUT. PRONOUN</th>
<th>TEXT</th>
<th>NEUT. PRONOUN</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
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<td>FINAL</td>
<td>DRAFT</td>
<td>FINAL</td>
<td>DRAFT</td>
</tr>
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<td>0</td>
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<tr>
<td>BC-2</td>
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<td>VV-2</td>
<td>1.8</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BC-3</td>
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<td>VV-3</td>
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</tr>
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<td>BC-4</td>
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<td>VV-4</td>
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</table>

The margin comments, similar to those written concerning other areas of inexplicitness, indicate that the instructor wanted the student writer to establish more of a context. The comments—"need more here," "this is unclear," and "what does this refer to"—ask the writer to make the text more explicit and autonomous. They are in keeping with the view put forward by Halliday that written discourse "creates an environment for itself" and the writer must create that environment through explicit word choice (78). Nystrand, however, considers the claim that good writing should be autonomous an "oversimplification" (197). He as-
A well-written text communicates not because it says everything all by itself but rather because it strikes a careful balance between what needs to be said and what may be assumed. Clearly, what counts in effective composition is knowing how and when to be explicit. (201)

The basic writer faces the task of deciding what needs to be explained to his or her audience and what does not. The margin comments on the students’ essays suggest that the writer did not find the balance for the reader. In the revisions of these particular texts, however, many of the writers reduced the number of neuter pronouns, thereby increasing explicitness within the texts.

The sample essays written by non-basic writers show that these writers do not use many neuter pronouns. The graduate student essay contains no occurrences of neuter pronouns, and the published essay contains a mere .005 percent.

2.2.5 Collocations and Fixed Expressions

Collocations—idioms, cliches and maxims, and other pre-patterned expressions—pervade informal speech. These expressions are "not abstract patterns but actual bits of text which are remembered, more or less, and then retrieved to be reshaped to new contexts" (Backer in Tannen Talking 37). The speaker has a repertoire of words and phrases which
are readily available for use in speech. Chafe and Danielewicz consider that the lexical choices the speaker or writer makes involve "stylistic decisions" more than "operative constraints" associated with the speed of production (86). Collocations, however, are drawn from "the vocabulary of spoken language" (Chafe and Danielewicz 89). The following example, taken from the Johnson transcription, is such a use of an idiom in spoken language.

(17) (44) ..He's gonna kill Captain when we get home.
(45) ..he's gonna kill.
(46) ...my ram is dead,
(47) ..my ram is dead.
(48) ..my baby's gonna buy the farm.

Although the speaker could have chosen to say that her ram was going to be killed, she did not. Instead, she chose an idiom. By definition, the meaning of the idiom is not equivalent to the sum of the meaning of the individual words in the phrase. The meaning is clear only to those who are familiar with the phrase. In this conversation, the speaker assumes that the listener knows the meaning of the phrase.

A similar use of colloquialisms is found in the texts of basic writers:

(18) Groceries, everytime you turn around prices go up on meat and other items (BC-3-F [5]).
(19) When I arrived home, I hit the bed, out like a light (BC-4-F [20]).
The student is upset now, 2 or 3 days off from school.

No Problem! (VV-4-F [13,14]).

CS-1-Final (8): So silent and lonely that you could hear a pin drop (if one was dropped) (CS-1-F [8]).

For each of these writers, the phrase used is part of their colloquial, spoken vocabulary. In most cases, the writer uses the same phrase in both the draft and in the final version. Few of the collocations in the first draft were marked as needing correction, and the students did not change them. Haviland, during an informal interview, stated that she usually addresses the use of collocations toward the end of her basic writing courses, but until this feature is discussed in class, she does not consider it when grading papers. Since most of these basic writers used collocations but did not receive teacher comments about them, it is possible that this feature had not been discussed in any of the classes before these papers were written.

As such, this feature may be more of an indication of how basic writers draw on their spoken language when they are writing than the other features which have been discussed. Table 5 below shows the density of collocations in these essays.

Although collocations are made up of several words, to achieve a consistent measure for comparison, each phrase was counted as a single token of collocation. Because of this method of counting, the percentages are lower than they
would have been if every word of the phrase had been counted.

Table 5

Percentage of Collocations in Draft and Final Versions

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<th>TEXT</th>
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<td>.8</td>
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<td>.8</td>
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</table>

While most of the essays show a reduction in percentage for the final version, the actual number of collocations in both versions remained the same. The percentage is lower because the final drafts usually contain more words.

If we compare the basic writers' texts with the sample essays, we find that 93 percent of the basic writers use more collocations than the writer of either the Langan text or the graduate student text. Neither sample essay had any
occurrences of this feature.

2.2.6 Summary of Production Features

When considered alone, each of the previous features comprises a relatively small percentage of the total words of the student essays. However, basic writers are not limited to a single oral strategy. The five features already discussed may be employed by basic writers to deal with the real or perceived time constraints of the writing task. The cumulative effect of several oral features in the students' writing not only gives the reader the sense that students write the way they talk (see for example the sample essay in Appendix D), but also suggests that students are frequently calling upon familiar oral strategies to accomplish the writing task.

In addition, the co-occurrence of these features is important to the reader of such essays, usually the teacher. She does not have the time to isolate and identify each incidence of each feature; rather, she considers the overall effect. Thus, it is the cumulative effect of these features that plays a role in her perception of each essay.

As Table 6 below shows, when these five features—conjunctions, generalized vocabulary, hedges, neuter pronouns, and fixed expressions—are considered collectively, they constitute a significant percentage of the total words written by each student.
### Table 6

**Percentage of Features Attributed to Production Constraints**

<table>
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<th>TEXT</th>
<th>DRAFT</th>
<th>FINAL</th>
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<td></td>
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</tr>
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</table>

The table shows that 74 percent of the basic writers reduced the total number of oral features in the final versions of their papers. The use of oral features ranged from a high of 12.2 percent (BC-3-D1) to a low of 2.3 percent (CS-6-D1). The overall average density of oral strategies for the final drafts is 5.2093 with a standard deviation of 1.9280 percent. There is not only remarkable variation among students' use of oral strategies but also a large variation across student populations. The basic writers at Barstow College had the highest percentage of oral features.
in both the draft and final version. However, they also reduced the density of these features by the largest percentage (more than 1 percent). Cal State students and Victor Valley students lowered their percentage of features by less than .7 percent.

2.3 Features of Interaction

The second major domain in which speech and basic writing are related can be qualified as interactive. Speech has been considered more interactive than writing because of the higher density of features such as personal pronouns, hyperbole and general emphatics. The first feature refers to the relationship between the speaker and addressee, while the last two refer to the expressive or evaluative way in which the speaker engages the listener. After examining the texts of these basic writers, I found that they use references to both the self and the addressee (1st and 2nd persons) and the relationship between the two in proportions similar to that found in speech.

2.3.1 Personal Pronouns and Self Reference

Deictic terms are generally those words "whose interpretation relies on the context of the utterance" (Rubin, A. 433). For the hearer or the reader, interpretation of personal deixis, e.g., first and second-person pronouns (I, me, you), requires that they know the context and the participants involved. In conversation, personal deixis is practical and concrete, since 'I' and 'you' generally refer
to the speaker and listener who are physically present. The narrative transcribed by P. Gilbert shows one speaker's use of personal pronouns.

(22) 59. ...So-O...umm...I went home
60. ...I went to bed,
61. ...an--d..I couldn't sleep,
62. ..and I got up and realized there was some-thin' going on,

In this excerpt, a personal narrative, 17 percent of the speaker's words are 'I.' A similar percentage is evident in some of the student texts I examined. Most of the essays—81 percent—used personal pronouns. However, part of the explanation lies in the assignments themselves. When students are assigned to write about a personal experience or asked to give their opinion, it is reasonable that 'I' would be the dominant subject. All three of the assignments invited or encouraged the writers to write in a personal voice.

The following two examples from the students' texts reflect one interpretation of the assignment to discuss a relationship. Each writer has chosen to discuss her or his relationship with a parent.

(23) In my case, I didn't lose that someone for for good, just for a while. I just realize how much my mom means to me. I always thought she was old fashioned and she would never understand my
problems. I was never really close to my mom (CS-3-D1 [3-6]).

(24) I should not be so hard on my mother for making mistakes in her life, because we all make mistakes in life. I tried to help her with her problems and she did not take my advice to heart (CS-4-D1 [33,34]).

In the first example, the writer uses eight personal pronouns in 46 words, matching the 17 percent seen in the oral discourse above (example 22). The second example, with 39 words, contains four personal pronouns which is 10 percent of the words. When considering the density of 'I' as a measure of the degree of personal voice, this essay is less 'personal,' or at least less self-focused than the previous one.

At the other extreme, some of these essays were written without any personal pronouns. The first few lines generally establish whether the whole essay will be told in the first person or not, as the following example demonstrates.

(25) One summer day all the kids in the neighborhood were out playing in the yards. The sun was shining bright and the sky was bluer than ever (CS-2-D1).

The writer continues the third person point of view through the entire essay. In the revised version, the writer does introduce herself into the text with a comment that she knows about this story because she is a relative. Otherwise
she maintains the less personal third person point of view.

The following table shows that most of the writers chose a more personal voice. Although the presence of personal pronouns can be attributed to the assignment, the high density of this feature may indicate the writer is using an oral strategy as well.

Table 7 shows that the writers at Barstow College increase their use of personal pronouns (an average of 4.8 percent in the draft and 5.5 percent in the final version) more than the writers at the other schools. However, all ten of the students from Cal State use this feature in one or both versions, and have the highest average use, when compared with the other two groups of writers. In addition, the Cal State students reduce the percentage of personal pronouns more than the other two groups. It is interesting to note that except for two writers (CS-4 and CS-5), the actual number of tokens is about the same in both versions of the Cal State essays, but because the final versions contain more words, the percentage decreases.

Victor Valley students use this feature less than the other writers, for an average of 1.5 and 1.6 percent. These writers use personal pronouns slightly more when they revise. The average for all of these essays is 4.2028 percent and 4.3555 percent for the draft and final versions.
The standard deviation attests to the wide range of variation from student to student.

By way of comparison, the Victor Valley student essays exhibit personal pronouns in a proportion close to that of the graduate student paper which contains 2.9 percent personal pronouns. The Langan text sample has a greater density of this feature, 11.0 percent, than all but three of the final essays of the student writers.

Although these percentages clearly indicate that basic writers use 1st person pronouns, the nature of the assignment, and, for the Barstow College writers at least, the
type of model which was available, makes it impossible to take these findings as evidence of dependence on oral strategies in writing.

2.3.2 Hyperbole

Another interactional feature of speech that also appears in basic writer's texts is hyperbole, or exaggeration used to make a point. Hyperbole serves an important discourse function for the speaker. Speakers are "under constant if subtle pressure to impress their audience with the importance of what they are saying" to avoid a "so what?" response (Chafe, referring to Labov 1972, "Deployment" 34). Hyperbole is one of the speaker's ways of eliciting the listener's interest and impressing upon her the importance of what is being said.

Basic writers, too, attempt to avoid a "so what?" response by choosing qualifiers such as 'always,' 'never' and other exaggerations which bolster the intensity of their writing. Several of the texts examined here contain qualifiers which could be considered exaggerations, or figures of speech, where the writer does not intend for the comment to be taken literally. The intensifier, 'all' is often inserted "at a critical point" in the spoken narrative (Labov 378) to emphasize the comment. The following example shows that basic writers also use 'all' as an intensifier which makes the statement hyperbolic.

(26) Then there's Mr. Sleazeball, who staggers in
drunk and drools all over at the smell of a freshly baked pizza, but he never orders any (BC-8-F [20]).

This example indicates that the person being described drools or in some way indicates his appreciation for the smell of fresh pizza. The writer has amplified the action through the use of 'all.'

Qualifiers, such as the adverbs of frequency "always" and "never," are hyperbolic in these essays because the action which is qualified by these words is not likely to be carried out to such an absolute extent. For example:

(27) She had only brief pauses, hour after hour. He was always yelling "Faster, Faster" (VV-2-F [17,18]).

The writer indicates that while the woman worked, the husband was yelling. The writer emphasizes the point that the yelling was excessive or inappropriate through hyperbole.

Another way in which these writers use hyperbole is shown in the following example:

(28) I could hear millions of nerve endings scream out as they were cut and separated (CS-6-D1 [3]).

From a literal perspective, the writer could not hear the nerve endings "scream out," and the number "millions" is questionable. From a rhetorical perspective, this writer has employed hyperbole to make his point that the experience was intense and important.

These writers' uses of hyperbole are typical of the
group of essays I examined. The table below shows the percentage of uses of hyperbole found in these texts, and how usage varies from writer to writer. At one extreme, six of the writers do not have any incidents of hyperbole in either draft of their texts. At the other extreme, several writers use a high proportion of hyperbole in their essays, up to 2.5 percent. All together, 74 percent of these writers use some degree of hyperbole in their writing. The individual differences are similar to the differences noted for other features.

The Barstow College texts show the same pattern found for other features, with over half of the writers reducing the percentage of hyperbole, a small percentage, (about 10 percent), increasing their usage of this feature, and the rest staying the same. However, the other two groups of texts show a pattern not found for any other feature I examined. More than half of the Cal State texts, 60 percent, show an increase in the use of hyperbole in the final draft. In addition, none of the texts had the same percentage of tokens in both drafts. The occurrence of hyperbole in the Victor Valley texts, which had a small percentage in the draft versions, uniformly decreases. This inconsistent pattern suggests that other, unidentified factors may be related to the use of this feature. One possibility is that Victor Valley writers have been advised not to use hyperbole, but the other two groups have not received this advice.
### Table 8

#### Percentage of Hyperbole in Draft and Final Versions

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<td>.2811</td>
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</table>

The writers at Barstow College, who read the Langan text, have a percentage of hyperbole consistent with their model. The overall average percentage for Barstow College is about 1.2 percent in the draft and .9 percent in the final version. The percentage of hyperbole in the Langan sample is .9 percent. The Victor Valley texts more closely match that of the graduate student sample, which has no instances of hyperbole.

#### 2.3.3 Emphatics

As already discussed, speakers frequently use quali-
fiers to intensify a clause, thereby making some statements hyperbolic. However, not all qualifiers amplify the statement through exaggeration. Some qualifiers function to prevent the "so what?" question by emphasizing that the message is worth telling. Labov notes that intensifiers, such as "really" and "pretty," are a few of the "major modifications of narrative clauses" in which the speaker selects one of the events in the narrative and gives it importance through the intensifier (378). An excerpt from the "Captain Ram" narrative shows the speaker's use of an emphatic to intensify the statement.

(29) (49) ...After he gets stitched up
   (50) ..we're leavin',
   (51) ..'n..'n I said something to 'im
   (52) ..'n he goes..he goes
   (53) ..he was just doin' what rams do.

The speaker claims to be quoting another speaker. The emphatic 'just' indicates that the ram was acting in a normal manner, rather than in an exceptional manner. However, the quote also underscores the evaluative point of the story—the narrator's relief that the ram will not be killed, contrary to her earlier expectations. The speaker has intensified this clause because it is the major turning point in the narrative.

The texts of basic writers also contain emphatics, or intensifiers. These writers use emphatics much like they
use hyperbole; the emphasis indicates that the message is not ordinary, but rather special and worthy of telling.

(30) I have learned a very important lesson in my life. People only know how important someone is when they have already lost it. In my case, I didn't lose that someone for good, just for a while. I just realized how much my mom means to me (CS-3-D1 [1-5]).

The writer has included three emphatics in the introductory sentences of her essay, 'very' in the first line and 'just' in lines 4 and 5, thereby indicating that the following information is worth telling. The writer could also have chosen other, less colloquial alternatives (e.g., 'extremely,' 'simply,' etc.) for this kind of emphasis.

In the following example, another writer also introduces her essay with emphatics.

(31) My life at this time is very dull, I'm a mother of two which I love very much and I want to show them that their mom can be a better person for myself and towards them (BC-5-D1 [1]).

The writer emphasizes two points in this run-on sentence—first, that life is dull and second, that she loves her children. These two points are made to provide an explanation for the material that follows in which the writer discusses her career goals. This writer does not use emphatics anywhere else in the essay.
Although general emphatics are common in the introduction of many of the basic writer's essays, emphatics are also found scattered throughout the text as a whole. In a very short essay, containing only 129 words, the writer includes an emphatic in the introductory sentence and in the body of the text.

(32) A 64 Mustang, which came out in 1964 1/2 right then became very popular and on threw the years (BC-7-D1 [1]).

From 64 to 69 became very hot into the 70's (BC-7-D1 [4]).

The writer has emphasized the popularity of the car he is writing about in two ways; he mentions popularity twice and uses an emphatic both times. The writer does not emphasize the other information in his essay.

Another essay that contains emphatics throughout also emphasizes the same point several times in different places throughout the text. The writer repeatedly asserts that school administrators seek power instead of helping students. The following example is one of many variations of this assertion.

(33) It's just out of sight to them, just like we are just "supposedly" a bunch of rotten kids with no respect for our elders (VV-8-D1 [21]).

The writer's heavy use of emphatics gives a sense of how important the issue is to him. In each use of 'just' the
writer makes an evaluative comment to indicate that the proposition is worse than normal and therefore worthy of the attention he gives to it.

The preceding examples are typical of the use of general emphatics by basic writers. It is interesting that the same emphatics are repeated (typically 'just' and 'very'). The repetition of one or two common emphatics (at the expense of others) may be the result of production constraints, where the writer does not have the time to search for other words in order to vary the style of expression.

Table 9

Percentage of Emphatics in Draft and Final Versions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TEXT</th>
<th>EMPHATICS</th>
<th>TEXT</th>
<th>EMPHATICS</th>
<th>TEXT</th>
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The overwhelming majority of these basic writers, 93
percent, use general emphatics in their texts. Half of the writers decrease the number of emphatics used in the final version, or use the same number of emphatics but also use more words in their essay so that the percentage of emphatics is lower. Only two writers did not use any emphatics in either draft, VV-1 and VV-2. The essays with higher percentages contain emphatics throughout the essay as compared with those with emphatics only in the introduction. Table 9 indicates the percentages of emphatics in the student texts.

Once again, the Barstow College writers have a higher average percentage of this feature than the other two groups, with an average of 1.1 percent in the draft and 1.2 percent in the final version. The group of writers at Cal State averaged .7 percent in the draft version and .4 percent in the final version. Victor Valley writers had the same average, .6 percent, in both versions. However, the variation between the writers at Victor Valley is greater than at the other schools. By way of comparison, neither the sample essay from the Langan text nor the excerpt from the graduate student essay contain any general emphatics.

2.3.4 Summary of Features of Interaction

Each of the three features discussed above can be categorized as oral strategies that contribute to the sense of interaction between the speaker and the listener. In addition, hyperbole and emphatics are used evaluatively to
underscore the main points of an essay. As the previous tables for each feature show, most of the basic writers use interactive oral strategies. Chafe asserts that writing is depersonalized, which would suggest that if the students are revising toward academic discourse (the most depersonalized kind of writing, according to Biber), the features of interaction would decrease. Table 10 shows that the contrary is true. 52 percent of the writers had a higher percentage of all of the interactive features in the final version. Rather than removing these features, the writers revised and edited their texts such that they became, if anything, more interactive. The overall averages for each group show the upward trend for writers at Barstow and Victor Valley College. The Cal State average shows a slight decrease of interactive features in the final version. However, half of the Cal State writers also used more interactive oral strategies.

The table below shows that there is a wide range of usage of these features. Only one writer, VV-1, does not use any of the features in this section. Six of the writers use these features more than 10 percent of the time.

Victor Valley has the lowest average incidence of interaction features with an average of about 2.2 percent in both the draft and final versions. Barstow College essays averaged 7.1 percent in the draft and 7.3 percent in the final version.
One explanation for the high incidence of these features in the final version is that almost none of these features were marked as errors in the draft version. Typically these essays were only revised in areas where another reader (e.g., the teacher, intern etc.) had identified a problem, asked a question, or requested more information. When the students provided more information, they often included more interaction features.

### 2.4 Repetition

Repetition, where the speaker or writer repeats a
sound, word, phrase, or syntactic structure, has been called "the heart of language" because it simultaneously serves several purposes in the discourse (Tannen Talking 46).

From the perspective of production, repetition provides the speaker a "less energy-draining way" of communicating (Tannen Talking 48). The silences are filled with talk that the speaker does not have to reformulate, thus easing the pressures of production. In addition, repetition reduces the semantic density of the discourse (i.e. repetition conveys less information, compared with a situation where every utterance carries new information), thereby allowing the hearer to absorb what is said at a slower rate. Finally, repetition may be used for evaluation and emphasis. The example below demonstrates the use of repetition in speaking.

(34) (44) He's gonna kill Captain when we get home.

(45) he's gonna kill.

(46) my ram is dead.

(47) my ram is dead.

(48) my baby's gonna buy the farm.

Note that line 44 carries the whole message, but line 45 repeats part of 44 for emphasis. Lines 46 presents the conclusion of the action, and 47 repeats 46 verbatim. Line 48 does not repeat any of the earlier words; a variation and an idiom convey the same information presented in the four earlier lines. Not only does the repetition allow the
speaker more time for the next bit of new information and
the listener more time to process the message fully, but
this repetition also serves to underscore the importance of
the message, and thus serves an evaluative function in the
discourse.

The following excerpt from the Negrey narrative shows a
pattern of repetition at the syntactic level.

(35) 24. ...I mean..we were not
25. ...We had a wa--r,
26. ....and I said it was rea--ly ve--ry distress-
    ing to..see that.
27. /'n/ she said..well I thought it was really
    nice
28. in fact..she said..we were driving along and
    it was so exciting
29. ...we were seeing all these guys..on the
30. ...coming home on the busses

The speaker uses two different parallel patterns. First,
she repeats a pattern of non-referential 'it,' an intensive
verb 'be,' an emphatic qualifier and an adjective sequence--
It was (qualifier) (adjective)--in lines 26, 27 and the
second clause of 28. The second pattern, in the first
clause of line 28 and in line 29 consists of 'we' plus the
past progressive tense of the verb (i.e., we were (verb)+
ing)). Although the speaker is providing a sequence of
events with new information in the predicate position, she
uses the same or similar syntax.

Syntactic repetition, or what Tannen calls "syntactic parallel constructions," can also be accounted for by the reduced planning time available during speech. "By repeating the syntactic construction, a speaker can stall for time, while planning new information to insert into the variable slot at the end" (Tannen "Oral" 7). As already discussed, the basic writer's perception of a time constraint may offer an explanation of the writer's use for syntactic repetition in the first draft. Adopting the same syntactic form frees the writer from having to consider the form and the content at the same time.\(^5\)

Basic writers use repetition for the same reasons that speakers use the same word or phrase; the word, phrase, or syntactic structure is readily available to their consciousness and will suffice. The positive effects of repetition are related to the property of increased surface coherence. Difficulty with repetition may arise, however, because "written language requires a higher concentration of new information, that is a lesser redundancy of lexical choices" (Cook-Gumperz 99).

Table 11 below shows the number of lexical and syntactic repetitions per hundred words computed as a ratio of the number of different words or features (types) to the total

\(^5\)Examples of repetition in basic writers' texts can be found on page 78.
number of words (tokens), which Chafe and Biber call the "type-token ratio."

Table 11

Ratio of Repetition

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Although this method provides a rough measure of lexical and syntactic repetition, there is much that it does not reveal. First, it does not identify the number of times a particular structure is repeated. For example, CS-10-D1 could contain 54 repetitions of the same word, six repetitions of nine words or syntactic structures, or any combination that yields 54 repetitions per hundred words. Second, a high degree of lexical and syntactic repetition is less
likely in short pieces of writing, no matter what the level of writing skill. Conversely, the more words the text has, the higher the incidence of lexical and syntactic repetition. Therefore, comparing longer essays with shorter essays is misleading. Thirdly, the ratio presented here does not show the phenomenon of "chunking" or clustering of repetition within rhetorical units which Gumperz, Kaltman, and O'Connor identified in spoken language, and which I also found in these basic writers' texts (8). The presence of "chunking" indicates that in many cases, the use of repetition in basic writing is similar to that in spoken language.

The following examples show the kinds of clustering of lexical and syntactic repetition present in the basic writers' texts.

(36) I mainly enjoyed the grave yard shift, it was quiet and slow, another shift I liked was swing shift. It was very rough. But boy when the trucks came in lookout. It sure got busy (BC-4-D1 [6-9]).

This writer repeats the same 'It was (adjective)' structure seen earlier in the Negrey narrative. This particular cluster of syntactic repetition does not occur again within the text; however, the writer does use four other clusters of syntactic repetition. In addition, she repeats 'shift' three times in this excerpt, and ten times in the 341 words of the text. Other words and phrases the writer frequently
repeats are 'boy' (4 times), 'one good thing' (3 times),
and 'mainly' (3 times). 'Boy' is repeated as an initial
expletive in the final sentence of each paragraph. Both
incidents of 'mainly' occur after a list of options, and all
three occurrences of 'one good thing' are in the final
paragraph.

More syntactically complex structures may be repeated
for several sentences as well. For example:

(37) Counting quickly I found ten fingers and toes.
Laying the screaming infant down on a scale I
watched as the digital number went up and down
finally settling on eight pounds, three ounces.
Stretching out my little girl the slide measure
read twenty and one half inches. "Shes a keeper" I
said to myself. Taking a closer look I exclaimed
"she looks like a Lawson, and look at all that
hair." Remembering my wife I quickly went to her
side and squeezed her hand.

In this excerpt, the writer uses an introductory participial
clause for five sentences in a row. In addition, he repeats
the syntactic structure of personal subject pronoun and
transitive verb, as in 'I found' and 'I watched.'

These examples show a lack of variation where variation
is otherwise expected. In this respect, they are more
speech-like than written. The same principle can be evoked
for collocations such as 'hit the sack'; the construction
which is uppermost in the writer's mind is used. The speaker or writer does not need to reformulate how to express an idea--the fixed expression, colloquialism, pat phrase, or idiom is already formulated.

As a comparison, the essay written by the graduate student has a .34 ratio of repetition. All but one of the final versions of the student essays have a higher ratio of repetition. The sample essay from the Langan text has a ratio of .40. Only three student essays have a lower ratio of repetition. Overall, the basic writers' texts show a significantly higher ratio of repetition than that found in the sample texts.

The oral features discussed in this chapter usually go unnoticed when they occur in informal spoken discourse. From one point of view, for example that expressed by Cayer and Sacks, many of these features have "little functional importance" (122). However, my research suggests that oral features may have functional value. In speech, these features are used to deal with production constraints and as a means for the speaker to facilitate evaluation, emphasis and interaction with the listener. These same features are present in the written texts I examined, and indicate that basic writers use oral strategies. Ochs claims that adults fall back on strategies learned in childhood when they are under pressure or lack planning time. Similarly, basic writers fall back on oral strategies when they confront the
writing process.

In this chapter, I have separated oral features into categories for analytic purposes. In practice, however, whether in speaking or writing, none of these features exists in isolation from the others. They are tools that not only contribute to the flow and interaction between conversants, but also help basic writers express thoughts in an unfamiliar medium.
CHAPTER III

3.1 Background

Educational institutions force students and teachers to participate in evaluation, or what Richie calls the "tangible outcomes at the end of a given unit of learning" (169). Students want to know if they have made progress, and teachers want to know what the students have learned. However, student writing and the writing process are difficult to measure objectively. There is no "uniformly codified body of conventions" for the teacher to consult or use as a guideline for grading (Otte 72). Teachers must therefore apply a standard based on "their expectations of and assumptions about student writing" (Zamel 82). Teachers face the difficult task of establishing a standard somewhere between an objective evaluation that measures every error in grammar and punctuation and a subjective evaluation that encourages the writer's process of creativity but is nearly impossible to define. Despite this difficulty, teachers manage to evaluate student writing.

Because teachers often devote considerable time and effort to deciding what constitutes a markable error or a superior essay, they may be uncomfortable having their evaluations examined. To scrutinize or criticize another teacher's evaluations is "academically equivalent to crossing a picket line" (Brown R. 1). In examining the teachers' margin comments and evaluations of these basic writers'
texts, it has not been my intention to criticize. My only concern, rather, is with how oral strategies might be considered errors and thus have a bearing on the grades that basic writers receive. Questions of what "in a text is most salient to determining good and bad writing" (Williams 7), are beyond the scope of this study. In assigning grades to the essays, the teachers have effectively defined good and bad writing according to their own standards. My 'standard' deals only with any correlations that may exist between oral strategies in the texts and the teachers' evaluations.

3.2 Principal Teacher Evaluations

Generally, student writers receive a single grade, one assigned to their texts by a teacher. As already stated, the emphasis on what is important differs from teacher to teacher. One teacher may consider correctness or improvement in an area discussed in class as the main criterion for a high grade. Another teacher may see error-free writing as the only way to earn an A. Neither or both may include content as part of their evaluation. Therefore, the evaluations which the teachers assigned to these essays are most useful to the teacher, moderately useful to the student, and of questionable utility to the researcher. Nonetheless, the assigned grade is the only available indicator of the teacher's evaluation of the texts.

The students' essays were graded according to three different scales. The Cal State essays were graded on a
scale from a low of two to a possible high of twelve. The lowest grade actually assigned was a six, and the highest grade was eleven.

The essays written by Victor Valley students could receive a maximum of twenty-five points. The lowest score given was 18. Four essays received twenty-three.

Barstow College essays were scored on a scale from one to eight. A single essay received a one, and two essays received a six.

All three groups of basic writers wrote one draft (several Cal State students wrote three or more drafts), and the draft version was read by one or more people (i.e., the teacher, intern, tutor, or classmate). All of the writers received margin comments from the readers, though the kinds of comments varied from identifying grammatical errors to asking questions about content or writing a note urging the writer to provide more detailed support for points made.

While several different aspects of the students' texts were addressed in these comments, I focused on only those comments directed toward the oral features discussed in this paper. The most common comments were directed toward infelicitous collocations and fixed expressions. Of the 412 comments and corrections made on the draft versions of all 27 papers, collocations received 2.9 percent of the comments. The majority of comments in this area were found in the Victor Valley College essays (10 out of 12 comments).
Another feature that received comments or corrections was the use of a conjunction resulting in a run-on sentence. This feature accounted for 2.2 percent of the marked errors. However, few comments or corrections were made concerning sentence-initial conjunctions, or chains of ideas connected with conjunctions provided that the punctuation was correct. Generalized vocabulary received a relatively high percentage of comment in the form of questions which asked for more information or detail (1.5 percent). Neuter pronouns received a few comments similar to those given for generalized vocabulary, but only when the reader could not identify the referent, which only occurred four times (1 percent of the comments). Few of the comments were directed toward the students' use of personal pronouns, emphatics or hyperbole (less than .5 percent for all three combined). None of the incidents of hedges were marked in the drafts. Overall, comments concerned with the oral features I examined accounted for only 8.1 percent of the comments and corrections made by the reader(s). This low percentage suggests that while some oral features are considered "errors" by the reader, overall they are not as significant as other teacher concerns.

3.3 Evaluations by Other Teachers

In order to supplement these evaluations, I asked five teachers, at least one from each institution, to examine a packet of seven essays according to the directions given on
the cover sheet (Appendix C). All five teachers currently teach at least one class of basic writers. The essays they evaluated included BC-3-D1 (Appendix D) and VV-4-F (Appendix E) along with five essays from an institution other than the one where they teach. The two essays common to all the packets served as a control for comparison between evaluators; they were chosen because of their high and low incidence of oral features, respectively.

Two other factors were considered potential influences on the way in which the evaluators might identify oral features as "interference": (1) the length of time the teacher has been teaching basic writing, and (2) the kinds of classes the teacher usually teaches. Teachers provided information about these factors in a brief questionnaire. Table 12 below is a summary of the questionnaire responses.

Table 12

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>EVALUATOR</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>C</th>
<th>D</th>
<th>E</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>YRS TEACHING</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% COMPOSITION</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LITERATURE</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RHETORIC</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OTHER</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As this table shows, all of the evaluators are primarily composition teachers; the most and the least experienced
teachers teach composition exclusively.

The evaluators were asked to mark the oral strategies which they thought interfered in some way with the students' writing, or in more familiar terms, to mark the features where the students write the way they talk (see Appendix C). The evaluators expressed concern that they were not familiar with the term 'oral strategy' and were uncertain that they would identify them correctly. However, since the purpose of the evaluation was to identify which features they considered "interference," and not that they confirm the specific oral features I was studying, I do not consider it a problem that the evaluators defined oral strategies in their own way.

All of the evaluators agreed in identifying two features as oral strategies which interfered with the effectiveness of the text: collocations and run-on sentences. All of the teachers marked every incident I had identified as a colloquialism or pat phrase. In the common essay, BC-3-D1, all of the evaluators marked "totely alfull" and "totley lost." In addition, each run on sentence was marked. For example, the evaluators identified this sentence (BC-3-D1 (6))-- "But the taxes have a lot to do with it, to this day taxes ar .0775%"--as a run on by circling the comma. However, only one evaluator identified "a lot" or "it" as an oral feature which interfered. The evaluators did not identify hedges, personal pronouns, emphatics or hyperbole
as oral strategies. Conversely, four of the five evaluators marked spelling errors, subject-verb agreement errors, and contractions as oral strategies. Two evaluators marked all punctuation errors. This suggests that they were marking 'errors' rather than 'oral strategies' per se. Nevertheless, the observations of the evaluators show what features they consider to be interference.

Overall, the original teacher and the evaluators agreed on which features were significant. Most of the oral features present in the students' texts were not considered features which interfered overall. One evaluator added a comment that although some of the essays were fairly "clean" (i.e. error free or without features which were considered interference) they had other, more serious problems. This comment suggests that these teachers do not typically separate out oral strategies from other aspects when evaluating student writing.

3.4 Textual Analysis Evaluation

To supplement the teachers' evaluation, I conducted an overall textual analysis of the student essays. Several notable features are found in these texts. First, the majority of final versions, 81 percent, were longer (between 1 and 191 percent) than the draft version. While Chafe asserts that written texts are more integrated, and thus shorter than spoken texts, many of the student essays became simultaneously less spoken-like and longer. Richie proposes
an explanation for this reversal. The typical pattern of
development, according to Richie, is that "in the process of
revising and expanding, a three-page essay eventually be-
comes a twelve-page essay as the writer becomes better able
to express herself" (168). De Beaugrande and Olson came to
a similar conclusion. They find that basic writing is typi-
cally made up of "short, choppy sentences," but as the
writer becomes personally involved in the writing process,
"the length of the written ... version consistently
move[s] up" (22).

Another feature that is apparent in the texts is the
nature of the revisions made. The most common revisions
appeared to be motivated by the margin comments. According
to Zamel, "studies of revising strategies indicate that it
is the surface-level features of writing that inexperienced
writers attend to" (81). Part of the explanation for this
lies in the nature of the comments and corrections made on
the draft versions. A significant percentage of the correc-
tions marked (40 percent) were concerned with the surface
features of spelling, punctuation and grammar. In response,
the students edited these surface features. With the excep-
tion of spelling errors, however, many of the surface errors
which were not marked by the reader appeared in the final
version unedited. Since the Cal State students and the Vic-
tor Valley students produced their final drafts on comput-
ers, it is reasonable to expect that the spelling was check-
ed by the computer in the final versions.

The 54 essays examined offer solid evidence that the strategies used by basic writers in speech influence their written texts. While Collins and Williamson, Greenberg, and Hartwell (1984) argue that basic writers' difficulties are not caused by their spoken language or dialect interference, the material presented here supports the argument put forward by Cayer and Sacks, Epes and Farrell that the transition from spoken to written discourse is influenced by the spoken discourse. In addition, these findings are consistent with the findings of Ochs, in that basic writers draw on the familiar (the strategies of speech) when called upon to do a task (writing) for which they lack developed strategies.

The oral strategies examined here make up more than 10 percent of the words in the first draft texts of fifteen writers, and all of the writers' texts had incidents of oral features exceeding 5 percent. Table 13 below shows a summary of the percentage of features, excluding repetition, in each text.

While many of the writers' texts show the same or higher density of these features, most of the writers (55 percent) reduced the number of incidents of oral features in the final version. Overall averages for each group of writers show that Barstow College writers had the highest average percentage, with 14.5 percent in the draft version,
and that they lowered the density of features the most (an average of 1.3 percent) in the final version.

Table 13

Percentage Summary of Oral Features Used

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TEXT</th>
<th>SUMMARY</th>
<th>TEXT</th>
<th>SUMMARY</th>
<th>TEXT</th>
<th>SUMMARY</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>DRAFT</td>
<td>FINAL</td>
<td>DRAFT</td>
<td>FINAL</td>
<td>DRAFT</td>
<td>FINAL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BC-1</td>
<td>8.2</td>
<td>8.2</td>
<td>VV-1</td>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>2.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BC-2</td>
<td>13.7</td>
<td>7.3</td>
<td>VV-2</td>
<td>8.5</td>
<td>4.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BC-3</td>
<td>14.8</td>
<td>9.3</td>
<td>VV-3</td>
<td>4.6</td>
<td>5.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BC-4</td>
<td>15.7</td>
<td>15.6</td>
<td>VV-4</td>
<td>5.0</td>
<td>2.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BC-5</td>
<td>20.0</td>
<td>22.1</td>
<td>VV-5</td>
<td>15.5</td>
<td>18.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BC-6</td>
<td>19.5</td>
<td>18.7</td>
<td>VV-6</td>
<td>5.8</td>
<td>4.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BC-7</td>
<td>11.0</td>
<td>11.4</td>
<td>VV-7</td>
<td>6.0</td>
<td>6.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BC-8</td>
<td>13.2</td>
<td>13.1</td>
<td>VV-8</td>
<td>7.6</td>
<td>6.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VV-9</td>
<td>8.5</td>
<td>9.6</td>
<td>CS-9</td>
<td>6.9</td>
<td>5.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CS10</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>15.7</td>
<td>13.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SD</td>
<td>3.7257</td>
<td>4.9179</td>
<td>3.2610</td>
<td>4.6701</td>
<td>3.6678</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Victor Valley College writers also lowered the average percentage of features, from 7.3 percent in the draft to 6.7 percent in the final version, thus lowering the density an average of .6 percent. The Cal State writers averaged 13.2 percent in the draft and 12.1 percent in the final version, showing a decrease of features by more than 1 percent.

Biber, Chafe, Cook-Gumperz and others categorize formal, academic writing as being autonomous and explicit
and having a "high concentration of new information," (Cook-Gumperz 99) all features clustered at the "written" end of the speaking-writing continuum. The presence in student texts of generalized vocabulary, hedges and other speech features, combined with repeated lexical choices, may be considered inappropriate for written academic discourse in part because these features are clustered at the opposite end of the speaking-writing continuum. Thus, basic writer's speech features could be considered to interfere in the successful production of a written text. If nothing else, "[i]t should be clear that most of these problematic interference patterns, although being primarily surface features of the language, are nevertheless important, largely because they carry a high degree of social stigma" and mark the writer as uneducated (Reed 151).

3.5 Comparisons and Patterns of Evaluation

I hypothesized that the texts with the highest percentage of oral features would receive lower grades from the instructors. However, when I compared the density of oral features within each group with the grades assigned to the papers, I found no pattern which suggested a relationship between them.

The essays from students at Barstow College do not indicate a relationship between oral strategies and the grades assigned. The final version of BC-3, which received one of the highest grades, has 9.3 percent oral features and
a reduction of these features by 5.5 from the original draft. The other Barstow College essay which received a high score (6) has a 13.1 percent density of oral features with a reduction of only .1 percent.

Table 14
Comparison of Words/Features/Grades for BC Writers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TEXT</th>
<th>WORDS</th>
<th>% FEATURES</th>
<th>GRADE (Scale 1-8)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>BC-3 DRAFT</td>
<td>236</td>
<td>14.8</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FINAL</td>
<td>276</td>
<td>9.3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHANGE (%) +17</td>
<td>-5.5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BC-8 DRAFT</td>
<td>428</td>
<td>13.2</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FINAL</td>
<td>444</td>
<td>13.1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHANGE +4</td>
<td>-1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BC-4 DRAFT</td>
<td>341</td>
<td>15.7</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FINAL</td>
<td>358</td>
<td>15.6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHANGE (%) +5</td>
<td>-1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BC-6 DRAFT</td>
<td>258</td>
<td>19.5</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FINAL</td>
<td>251</td>
<td>18.7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHANGE -3</td>
<td>-0.8</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BC-5 DRAFT</td>
<td>160</td>
<td>20.0</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FINAL</td>
<td>158</td>
<td>22.1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHANGE (%) -1</td>
<td>+2.1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BC-1 DRAFT</td>
<td>119</td>
<td>8.2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FINAL</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>8.2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHANGE (%) +1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BC-2 DRAFT</td>
<td>139</td>
<td>13.7</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FINAL</td>
<td>181</td>
<td>7.3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHANGE (%) +30</td>
<td>-6.4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BC-7 DRAFT</td>
<td>129</td>
<td>11.0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FINAL</td>
<td>159</td>
<td>11.4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHANGE +23</td>
<td>+0.4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

These essays contain neither the highest nor the lowest percentage of oral features, although they are rather more
towards the low end.

Conversely, BC-7 received the lowest grade (1) but did not have a high percentage of oral features. In fact, this essay shows 1.8 percent fewer oral features than the overall average (13.2 percent) of all the final drafts. Nor did this essay show the greatest increase in the use of oral features between the draft and final versions. Finally, essay BC-3 contained the widest variety of oral features of all the essays examined, yet received one of the highest grades. These observations support the conclusion that no direct correlation exists between oral features and essay grade.

Nor is the length of essay a reliable indicator. The essays which received the lowest grades are less than 200 words, which suggests that the teacher had a minimum length expectation. However, length over 200 words does not correspond to the grade received. The longest essay, BC-5, does not have the highest grade.

Similarly, the essays written by Cal State students show no relationship between oral features and grades. The highest graded essays, CS-1, CS-4, and CS-6, had densities of oral features of 8.0 percent, 15.9 percent, and 10.9 percent respectively. Table 15 below shows the comparison of oral features and grades.

The lowest graded essays, CS-2 and CS-5, were the essays with the lowest (6.1 percent) and highest (18.4
percent) incidence, respectively, of oral features in the

Table 15

Comparison of Words/Features/Grades for CS Writers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TEXT</th>
<th>WORDS</th>
<th>% FEATURES</th>
<th>FINAL</th>
<th>GRADE (Scale 2-12)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CS-1</td>
<td>DRAFT 546</td>
<td>9.5</td>
<td>979</td>
<td>8.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>FINAL</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHANGE (%)</td>
<td>+79</td>
<td>-1.5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CS-4</td>
<td>DRAFT 630</td>
<td>14.3</td>
<td>902</td>
<td>15.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>FINAL</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHANGE (%)</td>
<td>+43</td>
<td>+1.6</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CS-6</td>
<td>DRAFT 547</td>
<td>10.5</td>
<td>1262</td>
<td>10.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>FINAL</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHANGE</td>
<td></td>
<td>+131</td>
<td>+0.4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CS-7</td>
<td>DRAFT 353</td>
<td>14.7</td>
<td>473</td>
<td>14.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>FINAL</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHANGE</td>
<td></td>
<td>+34</td>
<td>+0.1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CS-8</td>
<td>DRAFT 398</td>
<td>12.8</td>
<td>443</td>
<td>12.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>FINAL</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHANGE</td>
<td></td>
<td>+11</td>
<td>+0.1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CS-9</td>
<td>DRAFT 546</td>
<td>6.9</td>
<td>584</td>
<td>5.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>FINAL</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHANGE</td>
<td></td>
<td>+7</td>
<td>-1.3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CS-10</td>
<td>DRAFT 490</td>
<td>15.7</td>
<td>907</td>
<td>13.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>FINAL</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHANGE</td>
<td></td>
<td>+85</td>
<td>-2.1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CS-3</td>
<td>DRAFT 838</td>
<td>19.6</td>
<td>1003</td>
<td>15.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>FINAL</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHANGE (%)</td>
<td>+20</td>
<td>-4.5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CS-5</td>
<td>DRAFT 348</td>
<td>17.1</td>
<td>370</td>
<td>18.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>FINAL</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHANGE (%)</td>
<td>+6</td>
<td>+1.3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CS-2</td>
<td>DRAFT 252</td>
<td>10.4</td>
<td>733</td>
<td>6.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>FINAL</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHANGE (%)</td>
<td>+191</td>
<td>-4.3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

final version. The change made in the density of oral fea-
tures from the draft to final versions was also variable. Only CS-1 of the highest graded essays (CS-1, CS-4, and CS-6) showed a decrease in oral features (1.5 percent). Similarly, of the essays with the lowest grades, one showed a decrease in oral features of 4.3 percent (CS-2) and the other showed an increase of 1.3 percent (CS-5).

Again, no direct correlation between oral features and grade is found. Table 15 also shows that the length of all of these essays increased by 6 percent to 191 percent. That is, all of the essays became longer. The increase in length does not correspond to the higher grades, however. The essay which was 191 percent longer in the final draft received the lowest grade. Nor does the use of oral features consistently increase as the writer uses more words, as shown in CS-1, which received the highest grade, and CS-2, which received the lowest grade.

The Victor Valley essays show a similar lack of correlation between oral features and grades. At one end of the scale, the four highest grades (VV-2, VV-3, VV-7, and VV-8) showed percentages of oral features which ranged from a high of 6.7 percent (VV-8) to a low of 4.0 percent (VV-2). These essays contain neither the highest nor lowest percentage of oral features. Three of the four essays, however, have a lower percentage of oral features in the final version. At the other end of the scale, the essays that received the lowest grades, VV-1 and VV-5, showed a final
percentage of oral features at 2.3 and 18.5 respectively.

Table 16

Comparison of Words/Features/Grades for VV Writers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TEXT</th>
<th>WORDS</th>
<th>% FEATURES</th>
<th>GRADE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(Scale 2-25)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>VV-2 DRAFT</td>
<td>391</td>
<td>8.5</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FINAL</td>
<td>424</td>
<td>4.0</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHANGE (%)</td>
<td>+ 8</td>
<td>- 4.5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VV-3 DRAFT</td>
<td>742</td>
<td>4.6</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FINAL</td>
<td>959</td>
<td>5.6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHANGE (%)</td>
<td>+ 29</td>
<td>+ 1.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VV-7 DRAFT</td>
<td>255</td>
<td>6.0</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FINAL</td>
<td>301</td>
<td>6.1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHANGE</td>
<td>+ 18</td>
<td>+ 1.1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VV-8 DRAFT</td>
<td>535</td>
<td>7.6</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FINAL</td>
<td>557</td>
<td>6.7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHANGE</td>
<td>+ 4</td>
<td>- 0.9</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VV-9 DRAFT</td>
<td>190</td>
<td>8.5</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FINAL</td>
<td>189</td>
<td>6.7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHANGE</td>
<td>- 1</td>
<td>- 1.8</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VV-6 DRAFT</td>
<td>338</td>
<td>5.8</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FINAL</td>
<td>538</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHANGE</td>
<td>+ 59</td>
<td>- 1.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VV-4 DRAFT</td>
<td>527</td>
<td>5.0</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FINAL</td>
<td>383</td>
<td>2.6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHANGE (%)</td>
<td>- 27</td>
<td>- 3.6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VV-1 DRAFT</td>
<td>319</td>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FINAL</td>
<td>420</td>
<td>2.3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHANGE (%)</td>
<td>+ 32</td>
<td>- 2.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VV-5 DRAFT</td>
<td>239</td>
<td>15.5</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FINAL</td>
<td>199</td>
<td>18.5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHANGE (%)</td>
<td>- 17</td>
<td>+ 3.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

VV-1 showed a decrease in the percentage of oral features in the final version by 2.0 percent, while VV-5 had an increase of 3.0 percent. In this case, the lowest grade does in fact
have the highest percentage of oral features. However, the next lowest grade has the lowest percentage of oral features, which suggests that while oral features may be important, they are not the only factor determining the evaluation of these texts.

Table 16 above shows the comparison of features and grades of the essays written by Victor Valley students. Most of these writers also increased the length of their final draft. Despite significant increases in word length in some essays, however, the percentages of oral features generally went down. A notable feature seen in this table is that VV-5, the lowest graded essay, not only reduced the number of words in the final version by 17 percent, but increased the use of oral features by 3 percent. However, no conclusion or explanation can be drawn from the limited data available.

As these tables show, the relationship between oral features and the grades given to the essays remains unclear. Of the essays which had the highest percentage of oral features in the final version, BC-5, CS-5, and VV-5, only VV-5 received the lowest grade. In addition, VV-5 is the only essay of the four which shows an increase in oral features in the final version and also received the lowest grade. However, when figures for the three schools overall are averaged, a pattern supporting my original hypothesis emerges. Overall, the nine essays that received high grades contained an average of 8.7 percent oral features while the
five essays with low grades contain an average of 11.34 percent oral features. The average change of oral features between the draft and final version for the nine high-graded essays was -1.166 percent. The low-graded essays show an average change of -.32 percent from the draft to final version (see Appendix E ). These observations suggest that there may be a general relationship between the use of oral features and the grade assigned. However, further study is needed to determine what are the most important features in evaluating basic writers' texts, and to what extent these features are oral strategies.
Chapter IV

4.1 Pedagogical Possibilities

In the previous chapters I discussed the oral features found in the texts of basic writers, and the extent to which basic writers alter their usage of oral strategies during the writing process. This research indicates, among other things, that basic writers use some oral strategies more than others. The prevalent features used were coordinating conjunctions (i.e., to chain idea units), collocations and repetition. This research also suggests that basic writers use more oral strategies than non-basic writers (i.e., via comparison with the sample texts).

I have also examined whether the presence of these features influences the grades assigned to the texts. Two of the features were identified by the teachers and evaluators as features which interfere in some way with the success of the text—conjunctions which lead to run-on sentences, and collocations. However, the majority of the oral features I examined which were present in the student's texts were not consistently identified as problematic by the evaluators.

As the writing teacher and the basic writer come together, each faces a difficult task. The teacher seeks a way to help the basic writer develop writing strategies. The student's task is comprised of various sub-tasks; the student must "invent, predicate and assemble ideas, control
syntax, observe conventions of usage and mechanics, and select proper words," in order to produce a successful text (Rankin 48). However, listing these tasks gives a false sense of sequential activity or of discrete factors that can be isolated one from the other. When the basic writer-- or indeed any writer--undertakes the writing task, all of these factors demand nearly simultaneous attention, particularly during the initial drafting of the text. These demands may be stressful, especially for the basic writer who has not yet developed sophisticated strategies for approaching the writing task. "Under the stress of cognitive overload, the student goes home to the oral dialect" (Rankin 48).

The high density of features such as coordinating conjunctions, generalized vocabulary and collocations can be attributed to the basic writer's way of coping with the stress of writing. Krishna suggests that students employ "general, abstract, imprecise words," and make other writing "mistakes", because "they find writing painful and words treacherous and are trying to tread as lightly as possible in the world of the written word" (45, 48). The high incidence of generalized vocabulary found in these basic writers' texts supports Krishna's assertion. Moreover, the margin comments made by the students' teachers suggest that this oral feature is responsible for some of the problems in the texts. Related features, such as the use of neuter pronouns and collocations, could also be classified as a way
for students to "tread lightly." In support of this view, it is noteworthy that when teachers ask for more detail and encourage students to write more, many of the students comply, but they also use more oral strategies. This suggests that even when students are pressed to use the written word and use more literate strategies, they transfer their oral strategies to the writing task.

Several researchers have proposed ways in which the teacher can help the basic writer develop literate strategies by making use of the student's ability as a speaker. Kroll proposes that writing instruction be designed to make use of the students' "oral language resources for 'independent' writing development" (41). The teacher can facilitate the development toward independent writing by designing "language activities in which the forms and functions of speech and writing are made similar . . . [then using] talk as preparation for writing assignments" until the students are able to identify the key differences between talking and writing (Kroll 44-47). Thus he advocates spoken and written language awareness.

Another approach is presented by Moffett. His theoretical approach is based on the "dynamic relations between . . . conversation and composition: how the former becomes the latter, how the latter can grow out of and return to the former" (Crusius 10). Moffett seeks to integrate speaking and writing. He proposes that the classroom become an
environment in which the student writer discovers options, one set of options being to draw on the aspects of oral language to accomplish literate goals. This option provides the basic writer with access to "the expressive qualities most typical of speech (voice, tone, naturalness)" (Kroll 47). Such an approach is not devoted to trying to eradicate all the oral features from writing. Instead, the goal of the approach is to find ways to integrate the apparently disparate features of speaking and writing.

While in Moffett's and Kroll's pedagogy, the teacher plays a significant role in helping basic writers identify their oral strategies, another practical application places more of the responsibility on the student. De Beaugrande and Olson propose a classroom procedure which they call the "Write-Speak-Write" approach. In their pilot project they had students write about a topic and then talk about the topic in a tape-recorded monologue. The students then examine both the written and spoken versions of their texts to "find and alleviate the specific instances [of problems] on their own" before revising (de Beaugrande and Olson 16). They claim that the goal of their approach is "to invest the learner's prior language skills" to accomplish the writing task (29).

Using basic writers' speaking ability as a means to develop writing ability, as Kroll, Moffett and de Beaugrande and Olson suggest, acknowledges that students use, or can
use, oral features in their writing. However, the difficulty for both the teacher and the basic writer lies in identifying which oral features contribute to expressiveness, and which features interfere. Payne suggests that the way to discover the most effective uses of oral language is "by making students more conscious of what they do when they speak" (194-95). As students become conscious of what resources they have available in their spoken language, they can choose which ones are appropriate for a particular writing task. Conversely, they can seek alternatives for those features which are not effective or appropriate.

Given this goal, helping students recognize the strategies of speech and how they differ from the strategies of writing becomes an important consideration for the writing teacher.

The writing class offers the basic writer a place for making such discoveries. The classroom environment, according to Rubin and Kantor, provides a language community that creates "a connection between the available audience in speaking and the unseen audience in writing" (71). Through collaborative evaluations, students and teacher can identify the oral and literate features which are most effective for communicating the intended message. In the classroom, the teacher can demonstrate "way[s] to bridge those gaps" that exist between speaking and writing (Rubin and Kantor 72) and help the basic writer learn a new system of "syntactic and semantic alternatives" that are available in a medium which
lacks the prosodic and interactive cues found in the spoken language (Cook-Gumperz 99).

This is not to imply that the features the basic writer is using are "wrong." Rather, she is using strategies that have served her well in spoken communication and calling upon them to serve her in written communication as well. These features of speech, while effective and appropriate in informal settings of either mode, are not as effective or appropriate for the formal requirements of academic discourse.

4.2 Directions for Further Research

This study has examined only nine features characteristic of speech. A complete list of oral features would be considerably longer. An examination of other features, and their functions within the basic writer's text, is suggested for a more complete picture of how basic writers use oral strategies.

Another possible direction for further research is an examination of which oral features are acceptable in writing (e.g., mature writing, including literature), and which are not. It is important for both teachers and students to know the difference.

Finally, an examination of the texts of more advanced writers, such as writers at the senior or graduate level, might provide an indication of which oral features are ignored at the basic writing level but become unacceptable
as the requirements for academic prose increase.
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APPENDIX A
Graduate Student Writing Sample

The introductory paragraph, 171 words, of a 3,512 word essay written by a graduate student in the MA program in English Composition, CSUSB.

Kurt Vonnegut's novel, *Cat's Cradle*, presents an eerie dystopia where science is irresponsible and religion is based on lies. With an apparent simplicity that delights some readers, repels others, and seems decidedly anti-intellectual in some critics' eyes, the 1963 novel was the first Vonnegut novel to receive some critical acceptance. Just as the reviewers' and critics' opinions differ concerning the value of *Cat's Cradle*, school boards and parents would take sides if this novel were proposed as part of the assigned reading for high school seniors. Rather than dwell on the debate of the value of the novel, I will proceeded as though the proposal had been approved (a gigantic assumption, I am sure). I have done this research to find a critical stance that would offer the best approach to teach this novel. I found three of the four criticisms included in this essay convincing. Although each approach would provide an interesting in-class discussion, I am convinced that none of them, by themselves, would be sufficient for my class.
APPENDIX B

Textbook Writing Sample

The full essay which the students at Barstow College read as an example of essay writing. This selection contains 218 words.

Floor-Cleaning Freak

The one habit that makes me unique is that I am a floor-cleaning freak. I use my Dustbuster to snap up crumbs seconds after they fall. When a rubber heel mark appears on my vinyl floor, I run for the steel wool. As I work in my kitchen preparing meals, I constantly scan the tiles, looking for spots where some liquid has been spilled or a crumb that has somehow miraculously escaped my vision. After I scrub and wax my floors, I stand to one side of the room and try to catch the light in such a way as to reveal spots that have gone unwaxed. As I travel from one room to the other, my experienced eye is faithfully searching for lint that may have invaded my domain since my last passing. If I discover an offender, I discreetly tuck it into my pocket. The amount of lint I have gathered in the course of the day is the ultimate test of how diligently I am performing my task. I give my vacuum cleaner quite a workout, and I spend an excessive amount on replacement bags. My floor-cleaner and wax expenses are alarmingly high, but somehow this does not stop me. Where my floors are concerned, money is not a consideration!

114
APPENDIX C

Evaluation Cover Sheet

Attached are seven transcribed student papers. Please read them and mark the oral strategies which you believe INTERFERE in some way with the students' writing. In other words, mark the words, phrases, or sentences where the students "write the way they talk," (which, if you were their teacher, you would suggest they edit out of their writing).

In addition, I would appreciate it if you would complete the brief questionnaire at the bottom of the page. I am asking these questions for two reasons. First, I would like to credit you in my thesis as an evaluator (your individual evaluation, however, will remain anonymous). Next, I am looking for collective evaluation patterns, and these patterns may be related to the length of time you have been teaching and the subjects you generally teach.

Please return your evaluations and the questionnaire to me or to Susan Herring's mail box as soon as possible.

Thank you for your help.

Deborah Johnson

QUESTIONNAIRE

NAME ________________________________
NUMBER OF YEARS TEACHING ________________________________

KINDS OF CLASSES YOU USUALLY TEACH AND PERCENTAGE:

___Composition ___%  ___Rhetoric ___%  ___Other ___%
___Literature ___%  ___Linguistics ___%
APPENDIX D

Control Essay BC-3-D1

Yes living alone can be very expensive.
These days everything is expensive rent, groceries, pleasures and many etc..

Lets take rent. for a one bedroom it runs from $300.00 to $450.00 a month. Thats not including first and last, key deposit, its totally allfull.

Groceries, everytime you turn around prices go up on meat and other items can goods go down. But the taxes have a lot to do with it, to this day taxes are .0775%.

Now for pleasures, to play Bingo for instant. It cost $20.00 for a slab of cards. which there is ten cards a slab thats high way robbery, it use to cost $5.00 a slab.

The price for gas is totally lost. There is times where you can get regular at .89c a gallon, but for unlead its anywhere from 1.13 a gallon to 1.39 per gallon, depends on the car you drive.

What a way to live, it doesn't matter how you live, by yourself or with someone else, its hard.

And specially living alone. Your wages are higher compared to a married persons wages. You have more to take out on your checks.

If you live alone, try to find the cheapest rent, with utilities included, plus closer to work, where you don't have to drive far And penny pinch every dime and penny you get.
APPENDIX E

Control Essay VV-4-F

The administrators of a school make rules and regulations, not knowing which ones are best for which students.

Shorts are considered to be a learning distraction, however, mini-skirts are not. Green hair is permitted because it is school spirit. Purple hair, on the other hand, is not allowed because "school isn't the place for multi-colored heads" (93).

Sooner or later students will rebel against some of the rules made, causing more problems for the Administrators. It's not like the students in high school, even Junior high, don't have enough of their own problems to deal with, such as peer pressure (drugs, alcohol, and sex), broken families and loss of close friends (classmates).

When students rebel, administrators need to punish them. In most instances, the first offence is just a call home to warn the parent's of their child's behavior. OOOOH! The student is scared now! (Most parents today actually don't care how or what their child is doing in school.) The second offence is a two or three day suspension, and a call home to the parents. (The student is upset now, 2 or 3 days off from school. No Problem! They'd probably miss two of the five days in a week by ditching, anyway.)

The students who are only in school because they have to be, really don't cause problems. They just take up space.
in the classrooms and earn the school their money for the day.

The "jocks" do just enough work to get they by, so they can participate in their sports.

The res of the "average Joe" students do what they need to, to graduate and get out into the "Real World."

The "Real World"... What is that supposed to mean? Unfortunately, to some students their worlds don't get any realer. Most students have jobs, and some have to pay rent and other bills, and some even have babies. That sure sounds like the "real world" to me.

Students are told to "act like adults" if they want to be treated like adults, but when you have a group of power control administrators nothing can be accomplished. Telling students what to write in "their" school newspaper and how strong "their" views and opinions should be, is not setting an example of how the "real world" REALLY is.
### APPENDIX F

**Comparison of Features of High and Low Graded Essays**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>% Features</th>
<th>% Change in features</th>
<th>% Change in Words</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Final Version</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>High</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>BC-3</td>
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<td>- .1</td>
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<td>VV-8</td>
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<td><strong>Average</strong></td>
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<td>BC-7</td>
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<td><strong>Average</strong></td>
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## APPENDIX G

### Percentage of Oral Features in Sample Essays

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<tr>
<th>Oral Feature</th>
<th>Textbook</th>
<th>Graduate</th>
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<tr>
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<td>1.8</td>
<td>1.0</td>
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<tr>
<td>Generalized Vocabulary</td>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hedges</td>
<td>.5</td>
<td>.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neuter pronouns</td>
<td>.005</td>
<td>0</td>
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<tr>
<td>Collocations</td>
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<tr>
<td>Personal Pronouns</td>
<td>11.0</td>
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<td>Hyperbole</td>
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<tr>
<td>Emphatics</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>14.205</td>
<td>4.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Repetition</td>
<td>39.5</td>
<td>33.9</td>
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</table>