WHAT IS GOOD BUSINESS WRITING?

–A case study of multilingual international students in the business school

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Agenda

1. **Background of this study;**

2. **Instructors' definition of good business writing;**

3. **International students' views of good business writing.**

4. **Disruptions, tentative Implications, and questions**

Background of this study

- **A business school**

  - **An entry level course— "Introduction to Business"**

    - **Three recitation sections—A, B, C. (1 lead professor, 3 instructors, 6 students)**
      - **Section A—1 girl**
      - **Section B—1 boy**
      - **Section C—2 girls, 2 boys**

Background of this study

- **2 written assignments**

  - **Case analysis :   3 cases   individual**
  - **Business plan :   1 product   group project**

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Background of this study

Instructions for Case Analysis

- **Lead professor:**
  - Provided 4/5 questions as an outline

Background of this study

- **Instructor Ann:**
  - the most rigid in terms of teaching writing
  - Provided the five questions as the outline
  - Developed and shared a guideline and format for each case
  - Using the common rubric
  - Providing detailed feedback and comments
  - Conferencing one-on-one with students

- **Instructor Beth:**
  - Provided the five questions as the outline
  - Borrowed the guidelines and formats from Ann
  - Using the common rubric
  - Providing some feedback and comments

- **Instructor Chris:**
  - Provided the five questions as the outline
  - Using the common rubric

Instructors' definition of good business writing (Instructor Ann on case analysis)

1. Core value of case analysis:

to think analytically and approach things managerially

2. Form of case analysis:

a business report, not Q&A, no more than 5 pages.

(5 sections: executive summary, introduction, analysis, recommendations, and conclusion.)

3. Art of case analysis:

not right-or-wrong type of situation….

logical sequence of arguments that are supportable

4. Methods of case analysis:

use the facts in the case and

use the analytical tools, (transferable)

Case Method
-David A. Garvin (2003)

David A. Garvin:

- the Professor of Business Administration at the Harvard Business School for nearly forty years,

- his (2003) article "Making the Case" featured by Harvard Magazine.

  - **3 distinct roles of cases and case discussions.**

  - **3 basic features of cases:**

Case Method
-David A. Garvin (2003)

3 distinct roles of cases and case discussions.

1. "diagnostic skills"

2. "persuasive skills"

3. "habit of making decisions" and the "courage to act under uncertainty."

- **These attitudes are what the case method prioritizes and cultivates.**

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3 basic features of cases:

1. <u>real</u> business issues in real organizations;

2. "<u>role of the protagonist</u>" and to <u>make critical decisions</u>

3. the information is "often <u>deliberately incomplete</u>, allowing for <u>many possible options</u>."

Students' Views of Good Business Writing (Case Analysis)

Sections A, B, C:
<u>Uncomfortable</u> with case analysis:

1. **It's difficult to understand the case**

   I don't have the knowledge in that area (e.g. business law, management theories/concepts)

2. **It's difficult to make a decision**

   The information is very vague. no right or wrong, just different directions, either one is okay; it's a struggle.

   this decision is not for CEO; it's too simple;

3. **I don't like having to connect with business concepts and theories.**

   I feel it's not my ideas; why I have to quote others; I want to explore my own ideas.

   Business situations change fast; business concepts and theories can be old.

   I don't read the textbook, no idea of those concepts and theories

Students' Views of Good Business Writing (Case Analysis)

Section A: **Formatting:** 1. **5-section Essay** (executive summary, introduction, analysis, recommendation, conclusion) 4-5 pages	**Sections B, C:** **Formatting:** 1. **Q & A** (answering the five questions provided by the instructor) 2-6 pages 2. **Essay** (similar to the research essay in FYW class) 2-7 pages

Students' Views of Good Business Writing (Case Analysis)

Sections A: **Features** of good business writing:	**Sections B, C:** **Features** of good business writing:
1. **Clarity** (listing significant issues, putting them into sections, easy to understand even for non-business readers)	1. **Finding novel ideas** 2. **Finding as many ideas as possible** 3. **Explain ideas in details** 4. **Using good logic** 5. **Clear structure for general academic writing**

Students' Views of Good Business Writing (Case Analysis)

Sections A:
--Do you like the 5-section format?
 	
1. **It's dry**
     too practical, ignoring emotions, transitions, & literary strategies, dry points, connecting with data, like informative writing
	Sections B, C:
	--Do you like the 5-section format?
	--Yes and No.
	
	1. Professor/CEO might like this format,
	     but it's easier for me to answer the five questions.
	2. For the purpose of learning, this format is better,
	     but it's more important to get a better grade.
	3. This format is for straight A students,
	     but for me, it depends on whether I want to use it or I remember to use it.
	4. This format is not a big deal. **I can learn it in 10 seconds.**
	5. This format is easy to read,
	     but I don't like it because it frames/constrains my thinking.

Discussion

1. **Genre/format** helps shape thinking. Is it good or bad for business students in the long run?

2. Students feel **uncomfortable** with case analysis. Is being uncomfortable a way of learning? How to encourage them?

3. Being **aware of the value** of case analysis can help understand the value of the genre/format. How to evoke/raise the awareness and also genre awareness? Through explicit instruction?

4. Instructor Chris seems to have little knowledge of case method. Was he just using different teaching philosophy? Does he need **instructor training** in using case method?