INTRODUCTION

The value of good written communication skills for business students is clear based on feedback from faculty and employers [Enos, 2010; Kellogg and Whiteford, 2009; Parent et al., 2011]. Most college freshmen have confidence in their writing skills [Berrett, 2014]. National data, however, suggest that this confidence is misplaced. High-school graduates often lack the necessary basic writing skills to succeed at the college level [Achieve, 2015]. Historically, colleges have required students to gain and demonstrate competency in English grammar through standard freshman composition classes. Even so, employers are concerned about the writing skills of college graduates. Kleckner and Marshall [2014] found that employers rated basic writing mechanics as second in importance among communication skills for business college graduates, yet found that the employers' satisfaction level for this skill among business college graduates was the lowest among all communication skills.

In order to correct mistakes in basic writing mechanics, the mistake has to be apparent to the user. Improvements in grammar and spell checking provide visual cues to aid in editing at the sentence level. Still, software programs like Microsoft Word are not proofreaders and fail to catch many grammatical errors. An example of this is in the use of possessives. Such gaps leave users of Microsoft Word, for example, vulnerable to errors such as misplaced apostrophes that change the fundamental meaning of a sentence. College business graduates cannot depend on computerized grammar checking to catch all grammatical errors. They must learn to do this for themselves; thus, editing skills are important.

Written feedback is one of the most used methods for improving basic writing skills, yet the time commitment that it takes to give feedback is a problem [Bacon and Anderson, 2004; Bacon et al., 2008; Kellogg and Whiteford, 2009]. Moreover, universities are being asked to hold down educational costs, which has led to fewer resources for providing the individual feedback that is necessary to improve student grammar skills [Crisp, 2007]. The same pressure on universities to hold down costs also means that simply adding additional communication coursework requirements to the business curriculum may not be an option for fixing this problem, and, for students, an increase in required coursework means additional time to graduation. Recent movements toward writing across curricula and within disciplines, however, have shown promise for improving writing skills [Fallahi et al., 2006]. Reframing the view of writing as the responsibility of the whole university rather than the English department pushes students to learn to write across contexts [Bacon et al., 2008]. As most business students are already doing written assignments in their upper-division coursework, can feedback about writing mechanics in this coursework effectively increase business students' skill levels in grammar? That is the subject of this study.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Silverman et al. [2005] identified five individual precursors to accepting feedback: awareness, sense of necessity, confronting change, willingness for feedback, and development orientation. Awareness involves knowing that a problem exists and making the appropriate attributions of its cause. In somewhat of a vicious cycle, lack of awareness leads to a lower level of competence. It also leads to a lower ability to detect problems and subsequently a lower awareness of the value of feedback. Because of this, Silverman et al. [2005] regarded awareness as the most significant of the five individual precursors, which is consistent with earlier findings [Kruger and Dunning, 1999]. The sense of necessity involves the knowledge that a change must occur. This relies on an ability to undergo the unpleasant emotions involved with change. Confronting change similarly involves potentially threatening phenomena that require determination to scrutinize problems in order to resolve them. …