How did these variations influence the amount of money participants won? Figure 9.10 provides the answer. The participants in the control condition made a modest profit. After a few trials, they worked out a system that allowed one company to use the road while the other one waited for its turn. The situation was quite different when threat was available. When one company could unilaterally close the road down, the other company retaliated by parking its truck on the road, thereby blocking the other company’s progress. As a consequence, neither company made a profit. What about when both companies had control of the gate? Would parity force the two companies to cooperate and resolve the impasse? Inspection of Figure 9.10 indicates that it did not. Instead of resolving their differences and making money, bilateral threat capacity led both companies to become even more combative, resulting in a considerable loss of money. Clearly, threat potential was not an effective means of forging an agreement in this context.

Communication. Verbal communication was forbidden in the original version of the Acme–Bolt trucking game. Following up their research, Deutsch and Krauss (1962) found that the losses in the threat conditions were reduced slightly when the two sides were allowed to discuss the situation. Unfortunately, the effect was very modest, in large part because communication did not promote trust. Instead of reassuring one another that they would behave cooperatively, the two companies became bellicose and threatened to destroy one another.

2. The Graduated and Reciprocated Initiative in Tension Reduction (GRIT)

Fortunately, communication can promote cooperation if used effectively. Osgood (1962, 1979) formulated such a strategy known as the graduated and reciprocated initiative in tension reduction (GRIT). The GRIT model involves the following steps:

- One party makes a general announcement stating its intention to reduce conflict through cooperation and inviting the other side to cooperate (Lindskold, Han, & Betz, 1986).