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Because of the tentative nature of linguistic theories, the lack of proof that linguistics is an efficacious approach to language study, and the prescriptive nature of many of the books themselves, a textbook series based on linguistics is not recommended for use in the classroom. True linguists suggest theories about the structure of language and the way in which grammar is acquired, internalized, and used, but have as yet shown little interest in educational matters. Although there is opportunity, on the other hand, for educational research to be built on the insights of transformational grammar, educators have neglected research and precipitately become concerned with linguistics in the curriculum. "The Roberts English Series" specifically fails, except in trivial ways, to relate reading and writing with grammar study, to suggest stimulating assignments, and to recognize the worth of the teacher. Rather than using such textbooks which set out new and inaccurate rules to replace the old rules, teachers in secondary schools should lead classes in the collection of language data and the formation of tentative generalizations. (JS)

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Paul Roberts' Rules of Order:

The Misuses of Linguistics in the Classroom

by Wayne A. O'Neil

The Roberts English Series: a linguistics program *is a series of textbooks published by Harcourt Brace & World which, since its first appearance in 1966, has been widely adopted by school systems throughout the country. By September 1968, the company expects to have sold one book in the series for every public school child in California. In several other states, including Florida, Mississippi, Louisiana, and Indiana, the series has been adopted on a listing basis, which means that it is recommended along with a few other books. To date, the publishers have issued six volumes (grades three through eight), but by this spring and summer they will have published the first and second grade volumes, and they are in the process of putting together a volume for the ninth and tenth grades and another for the eleventh and twelfth grades.* *—Editor*

Linguistics by now has a good deal of the educational world thoroughly frightened. It has made outrageous claims to efficacy in the teaching of foreign languages and in what is pretty much the same thing (those in the ling. biz. say), the teaching of second, preferred dialects, and in the teaching of reading, writing, literature, etc. You name it and the linguist can do it. There isn't (of course) a shred of evidence that any of these things can be done via linguistics. In fact the linguists never seemed to feel that empirical support was even a valid thing to hanker after. Thus claims are made and textbooks built on them: all this without any attention to the logical consistency of the claims, much less to their validity. Whenever anyone does bother to drum up research to check this putative efficacy out, the results are extremely embarrassing to the claim-makers.

Therefore when we see in the teacher's introduction to the elementary volumes of *The Roberts English Series: a linguistics program*, the following opening sentence:

> This series aims to improve children's writing by teaching in a thorough and sequential way, the main features of the writing system—in particular the sound and spelling relationship—and the nature of syntax.

we must realize that though this is the aim, there is no reason in logic or in research to believe that the contents of these seven volumes (grades three through nine) can in any way serve these aims. There is, of course, always the possibility that by good and improved writing Roberts means no more than correct spelling and complete sentences, in which case it is probably safe to conclude that seven years of these texts might indeed improve spelling and perhaps complete sentences, but at a cost to the child's sensibilities that is hardly to be tolerated. In fact the likelihood is strong that by all of his terms (language study, ability to write, literary study, etc.) Roberts is referring to nothing more than some weakened meaning of these expressions, in fact to some narrow set of skills that is quite unrelated to what the study of English has traditionally and rightly been. Regardless of how badly English may have been done, Roberts is the way not to do it, not a way to do it better.

Later in this discussion I will return to substantiate the criticisms here leveled at Roberts. But first I would like to suggest some of the dimensions of the problem caused by the entry of a very specialized university thing like linguistics into the school curriculum. I don't know if this problem is unique

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to linguistics: I suspect it is not. But I'll let others speak to that.

In recent months, in fact for the last year, a number of English department chairmen and language arts curriculum coordinators from Boston and other areas of the country have come to me with a set of related questions and problems: their school systems had for one reason or another (it's often a mystery how these things get done) adopted the Roberts books and these leaders were not casting about for advice on how to use them; on how to (re)train the teachers who would have to work out of these texts (in fact, this is no problem at all, for the books are made for automata, or in the current phrase, are "teacher-proof"); how to convince the teachers that linguistics and these books were *it*. In general, as these queries showed, teachers demonstrate remarkable good sense in realizing at once that these books are not *it* at all; but unfortunately they have to rely on intuition not information in getting that message across. In a business whose administrators place little value on intuition, the teachers are at a decided disadvantage.

I would rather speak to people before the decisions have been made and in fact have not endeared myself at all to a number of local people for informing them and their teachers that their choice of Roberts was a tragic mistake. For example, to choose Roberts for a ghetto school would be ludicrous. The simplest objection is that the language of these books is not the language of Roxbury or Harlem, much as it may be the language of Newton or Scarsdale. In fact the condescension shown toward any but the most formal language makes the text's language quite distant from anything real to children. But this is a sophisticated condescension because though it used to be the case that grammarians would remark on the simplicity of nonstandard dialects and the complexity of the standard, in the present climate of linguistic studies where "elegance" and "simplicity" are highly valued notions (though in their mathmatical sense, not in their lay senses), Roberts reverses the traditional criticism: "We content ourselves with a somewhat literary sort [of English], which coincides pretty well with the production of the simplest rules of the grammar."

Yet, no one has ever come to see me before the fact of adoption except a lonely lady from a California textbook selection committee (and she was already convinced and was not to be unconvinced that Roberts was the answer—which was, again, tragic since a general state adoption hung on the committee's word) and an Ipswich department chairman. The universities seem not in general to be consulted in such important matters. Perhaps the selection committees are sure, as I am, that the academics would charge a fee for their advice, whereas information from the publishers comes free (though often it is from academics turning a fast buck). In any case these important and lucrative adoptions are made on the basis of precious little information (often whatever "hard" evaluation there is, the [hardly disinterested] publisher provides) and of a great deal of hard sell. The manufactured press on the Roberts series has been incredible: e.g. in the Boston *Globe* for 28 April 1968 (Section B, page 40) there appears, apropos the news that California has adopted Roberts: "It's gangway for the new English." Whether through misinformation or someone's desire to deceive and convert, this half-page article is totally misleading. Thus "MIT's transformational grammar" did not (as the article claims) get its origins from "computer experts" at MIT and these experts did not come "with the new grammar in devising automated translations of foreign language documents into English." In fact the whole machine translation game went down the drain because *it* came up against the complexity of language as revealed by the transformational grammarians (by hand). No, transformational grammar is not computer-endorsed, -blessed: electrodes not laid on. And so it is throughout this article as it discreetly reveals the forward-mindedness of the West for the benefit of the East, about to make their textbook adoptions.

The more technical the field the books purportedly derive from, the less likely is it that any one of the pressured selectors will have the competence to judge the texts. To be sure the larger states, the more sophisticated

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communities, often seek and get third-party advice: still among interested academics it is becoming quite difficult to find one who hasn't himself invested that interest in a new textbook or series.

The academic world has been sadly derelict in not giving helpful disinterested evaluation, in not setting the kinds of larger questions and contexts within which school books must be evaluated. A major textbook venture may mean as much as two to three million gross profit for a publisher. There should be more than simply his conscience and his author's to guide him toward responsibility.

Let me now then try to consider the Roberts books in the somewhat enlarged context that I have in mind. I want first of all to sketch in what linguistics is about, then what its relevance might properly be to a school curriculum, finally to present what the new linguistics school books are about, Roberts being prototypical and therefore to be concentrated on. Further, since Roberts claims to be an English series I want to deal not only with its vis-à-vis linguistics, but also with its notions of writing and literature, and finally with its notion of what teaching is all about. For though linguistics is the academic discipline that the books emerge from there is much more than this at stake.

The linguists who have made the strongest claims for the educational importance of linguistics are not the linguists making today's linguistics. Paul Roberts was not, as the blurb puts it, an "eminent linguist": his contribution was entirely that of a textbook popularizer of linguistic theories. In fact with some important exceptions (e.g. Leonard Bloomfield, Freeman Twadell, etc.) the linguists who made yesterday's linguistics were not much interested in educational matters. And in general, as our understanding of language and of the complexity of its acquisition have deepened, so has our awareness of the folly of making claims to the effect that this way of teaching language or reading or writing follows from linguistic theory. It would be madness to believe that a knowledge of how an internal combustion engine works, of how an automobile in all of its complexity operates, would contribute anything to one's driving skill. All of that knowledge is crucially important to anyone trying to repair an automobile, but it is conceivable that if you constantly worried about the insides of your car as you were driving it, you would have more, not fewer accidents. So with language: to contemplate your internalized grammar while using it might tie your tongue and pen forever. Knowledge of your internalized grammar or of your car's internalized combustion engine are presumably important matters but surely not for your better operation of speaking or writing or driving. Exactly how this knowledge (of grammar) might be important is a matter I'll come back to later.

Our deepened understanding of language is the function of the work of Noam Chomsky and his associates at MIT, and of their students, a significant number of whom are now scattered among the major universities of the country. Far from being the narrow empiricist-behavioristic inquiry that linguistics had slimmed itself down to through the '20's, '30's, '40's and '50's of this century, linguistics is now a viable, rational science seeking to understand the very nature of human intelligence itself. The goal is certainly elusory, perhaps unattainable, but the race, though hardly begun, is well worth the running.

The inquiry is nativistic, i.e. it makes some difference to the linguist that language is human behavior, species specific behavior. Thus he holds that the constraints that lie on the diversity of human languages are inherent to the organization of mind itself. In learning a language a child is discovering the specific features of the language of its environment, these features falling within certain universal constraints, constraints that define the notion of "possible human language" and which are innately given, the function of human evolution.

In conducting his inquiry into the grammar or structure of any given language, say English, the linguist is faced with a typical black box problem.

All he can observe are certain data: the sentences of the language, speakers' (including his own) reported judgments about these sentences, the relationships among them, their acceptability, etc. He cannot observe directly the internal operations; he can only assign, on the basis of the fragmentary kind of evidence mentioned above, a certain structure to the mind, a grammar that not only correctly characterizes the observed data but that would correctly characterize the infinite set of possible data. For language has this peculiar property: the range of data is infinite (i.e. although all sentences are finite in length, there is no sentence such that it can be said that it is the longest sentence; thus no finite set of sentences) but the mind is finite. Therefore there must be a finite characterization, a finite set of generalizations or rules, a finite grammar for each language.

At present it seems to be a sufficient and adequate explanation to impute to the mind a finite set of rules that specifies the deep abstract grammatical structures that underlie sentences and then further transformational rules that relate these deep structures to surface structures (i.e. real sentences). The linguist argues (to oversimplify now a great deal) that since the grammatical relationships (the logical relationships of traditional grammar) of "for Mary," "to please," "John," "is easy" in

(i) for Mary to please John is easy
(ii) it is easy for Mary to please John
(iii) John is easy for Mary to please

are constant, these three sentences can be understood to be concrete manifestations of some abstract, not directly observable structure from which the three are derived by partially overlapping sets of operations, transformations that permute, insert, and delete elements.

On the level of syntax there are many clear examples of these deep-surface relationships, e.g. the terms "John—actor," "hit—action," "Mary—acted upon" can be related as in (iv)–(vii), etc.:

(iv) John hit Mary
(v) Mary was hit by John
(vi) it was John that hit Mary
(vii) it was Mary that John hit, etc.

What is true at the level of syntax is also true of the phonological structure of language. Here the notions "deep, abstract" and "surface" are again relevant. Thus, for example, in "reject" (v.), "reject" (n.), "rejection" (n.), the differing pronunications of the basic item "reject" as reJEKT, REEjekt, reJEKSH can be derived by rule from a quite abstract representation. In fact the common complaint that English spelling is not phonetic probably misses the point that English spelling is a quite consistent representation of the abstract phonological entities. It is a serious question whether a spelling system would in fact be serviceable if it consistently represented the superficial, phonetic level of phonology.

Linguistics thus seeks to find explanations of the structures of language, for the relationships among structures, consistent explanations of the complicated and fragmentary data of language. It is further concerned to offer explanations of the way in which the grammar is used and the way in which it is acquired and internalized by infants growing up in society. The grammar does not purport to be a model of how the human mind puts sentences together in speaking or takes them apart in hearing. But the grammar does presumably constitute the knowledge of his native language that the human being brings to bear on the tasks of speaking (and writing) and of hearing (and reading). Very little of this is at all well understood, but there is much interesting work in progress in psycholinguistics and some tantalizing bits of information are emerging.

Much of the psycholinguistic research is entering areas of interest to educators. But only entering, not yet there. It would be a serious mistake to begin building educational programs in areas where our understanding is so dim. In fact we have nothing like a completely formulated grammar of any language, much less a complete understanding of language in general.

There is then interesting educational research to be built on the insights and theory of transformational grammar. But the immediate concern and reaction of the educational establishment (the publishers, textbook professionals, curriculum center directors, *et alii*) has not been to get involved in serious educational research but rather to ask a less vital question (though an interesting one) about what role the "new" linguistics should play in the school curriculum: linguistics as a school subject. In general the answer to this question, though difficult, is fairly obvious, and that answer has relevance to some general issues of American education, e.g. what's the whole enterprise about in the first place? I do reject, however, the answers given so far: those given in books informing the English educational world of the virtues of linguistics. A. Marckwardt's *Linguistics and the teaching of English* (Bloomington, 1966), to pick a typical example of this genre, manages to miss all the issues, to ridicule real insight into, say, the nature of literary language, to promote myopia, and to totally misinform the educational world about the crucial issues in linguistics and related disciplines. The former president of the National Council of Teachers of English could hardly have served the anti-linguistics forces better than by writing his book.

I also reject the answers given in the flood of linguistics-based curriculums and textbooks. Some of these are of course no more than jokes: a veneer of linguistics, a few arrows and other symbols from the grammarian's bag of tricks: that's *all* that's linguistic about them. But even the books that are seriously linguistic are simply mistakes educationally pedagogically: the new Ginn secondary series, the Oregon Curriculum Study Center texts in language that I initiated, the Roberts books, etc. All of these texts and series are far from any real innovation. The Roberts series, however, marks a step backward in every respect. The others simply mark time.

But before I proceed to substantiate these remarks let me sketch in what I believe grammar and linguistics can do in the schools. Given what I have already said above about the incompleteness of linguistic theory, clearly linguistics cannot be a school subject in the way physics is. Our theories simply do not cover the range of facts to be explained with anything like the exhaustiveness of physical theory. It would thus be foolish to teach children the rules of grammar, say, as presented in R. B. Lees' *Grammar of English nominalizations* (Bloomington, 1960), for that set of rules is clearly wrong; any set of rules yet written is clearly wrong, even yesterday's. It would be a gross error to teach children (have them rote learn) anyone's rules. This is not what the enterprise should be all about; yet this is exactly what the new texts are about.

But what, then, should they be concerned with? In some new (science and math) curriculums there are attempts to get children to discover the generalizations that account for and explain an array of data. The difficulty with all of this is that the children can bring very little of themselves to bear on the problems. Thus the problems have to be tightly packaged, the possibility of error and contamination minimized. By our carefully constraining the data, the students can be led toward generalizations that may or may not be the only ones compatible with the data so constrained. The claim is that this inductive teaching and learning is "doing" science.

But that surely cannot be the case. Doing science is presumably hypothetico-deductive; theories are not built up inductively, they are blurted out, guessed at from a rich acquaintance with the data. If this is true then it is a mistake to teach the way of science in a poor context, in an area which is little known by the learner. Give him a context rich and full, one in which he is at ease, natural. There let him come to grips with the task of discovering generalizations that explain adequately seemingly quite disparate data.

Such an area is language (so also social behavior). A child has knowledge of his language in a way that he has knowledge of few other things. To be sure, that knowledge is not overt, but it is present and can be tapped in ways that his knowledge about English history, for instance, cannot be unless he has studied (in some sense of that word) English history.

Language study, by which I now mean attempts to do what linguists do, can proceed without prior information gathering. The data are readily available. For example, suppose that a class had been working along and had reached the conclusion that sentences were grossly binary in structure (i.e. contained subjects and predicates). It's a good generalization, one that children intuitively decide on in their gross parsing of sentences. Suddenly somebody realizes that sentences like

(viii) tell me a story
(ix) give him a penny, etc.

are not binarily structured in the same way. Do we give up the generalization? Well not quite, for many members of the group sense that there is a subject for sentences of this kind. In fact they know that it's "you." In other words we might save the generalization by modifying it somewhat to say that sentences in their *abstract* structure have subjects and predicates, but that in some of these (in particular for commands) the subject is later deleted (the "you understood" of traditional school grammar).

Is there any evidence beyond the intuitive that justified there being a "you" in the abstract structures of commands? Well, says somebody else, you can say

(x) tell yourself a story

but not

(xi) tell himself a story, tell ourselves a story, etc.

and we know that a "–self" of this kind is added to a form when the subject and that form refer to the same thing. That is, we can have

(xii) John bought himself a treat
(xiii) I helped myself to another piece of pie, etc.

but not

(xiv) John bought ourselves a treat
(xv) I helped themselves to another piece of pie, etc.

These facts would suggest that a "you" subject must be present in the abstract structure of commands so as to allow sentences like (x) and exclude sentences like (xi). The facts also suggest that "you"–deletion would have to follow in order of application "self"–insertion, etc. (There is much more to be said here: I refer the interested reader to Paul Postal's "Underlying and superficial linguistic structure," *Harvard Educational Review*, 34.246–66 [1964].)

Now, without trying to go into too much detail here, let me simply say that in this way a class can proceed to come up with insightful generalizations, a consistent set of them that accounts for the complex array of English sentences. Grammar becomes then not a procrustean bed of *do's* and *don't's* in which every sentence must be laid, forced, crushed; but rather the grammar, the set of generalizations, becomes as complicated as is required by the data. The study of language then can in part be the writing of a grammar of a class's own language. What is learnt will of course be far more general than any set of generalizations upon English sentences, which is anyway guaranteed to prove wrong upon further examination. What is learnt is theory construction itself, how to come to grips with the problem of offering consistent explanations of complex arrays of data. In an area where the child has some knowledge, he will seek an understanding of some of the formal properties of that knowledge, and thus gain insight into the nature of formal explanations and formal systems.

The word "child" that I have frequently used here should be pinned down before going any further. Linguistics could be a secondary school thing: formal studies of all kinds are (I believe) for the secondary school. The only reason the new math, the new English, etc. are being driven down into the primary schools is because there is an educational vacuum at the primary level. No one knows what he should be doing there. Paul Goodman does (*New York Review of Books*, 4 January, 1968); Elwyn S. Richardson does (*In the Early World*, Wellington, New Zealand, 1964). A number of people have good ideas. But what the school systems want are systems, rigor, planned curriculums, all of these things being totally inappropriate at most educational levels; clearly offensive at the elementary level. With respect to language study there is a clear goal for elementary education to reach in informal ways: students (urban, suburban, rural) should have understanding of the naturalness of language differences. Instead of "enriching" the lives of urban children by plugging them into a "second" dialect (if that enterprise is to "enriching": why don't we let everyone in for the fun and games; "enrich" the suburban kid with an urban dialect), we should be working to eradicate the language prejudice, the language mythology, that people grew into holding and believing. For there is clear evidence that the privileged use their false beliefs about language to the disadvantage of the deprived. One way to stop this is to change nonstandard dialect speakers into standard dialect speakers at least for some of the time, i.e. when the nonstandards are in the presence of the standards, currying favor of them, jobs of them, etc. This seems to me intolerable if not impossible. Another response to language differences would be to educate (especially the people in power) for tolerance of differences, for an understanding of differences. This could be naturally done, easily done in elementary schools, but only by teachers who are themselves free of language prejudice. In many ways this is the more important kind of language study that needs to be accomplished in the schools.

In any case none of this can be done with the standard textbooks; with books that lock a teacher and pupils into a preconceived sequence of questions and answers; in fact very little can happen with textbooks at all. Given the openness and freedom of what can happen in language classes, the felicitousness of that freedom, it would be an egregious error to constrain it artificially. There is this basic difficulty with the new grammar textbooks: their existence and the fact that they exist as accumulations of generalizations out of a grammar of English. All of the new books that I know share this simple and fundamental difficulty. Furthermore, they simply present their putative facts, facts known to be wrong. The student is not asked to find the author's answer (much less articulate his own) in a set of data. Consider, for example, Robert's presentation of the imperative (compare our discussion of commands, above). It reveals clearly his only pedagogical style:

> The third kind of sentence is called a *request*. A statement says something is so or isn't so. A question asks whether something is so or isn't so. A request tells someone to do something or not to do something.
>
> Requests are transformed from statements [*not* true, W.A.O.] that have the subject you:

Statement	**Request**
a. You study the lesson.	→ Study the lesson.
b. You are polite.	→ Be polite.
etc.	

(*Book 6*, p. 102)

Any interest that there might be in discovering just those (misinformed) rules that Roberts has in mind is lost, not to speak of the interest that there could be in quarreling with his wrong rules or in going at data without preconceptions. This is the old rule-oriented study of grammar. The names and terms to be memorized are somewhat different, certainly greater in number, but not more tolerant of the complexity of natural language and no more engaging to the mind in their manner of presentation. *The*

Roberts English series is not a fair representation of what linguistics is about nor of what linguists do. Nor is it even a compendium of what linguists think is true about English. Insofar as this is the case, its subtitle (*A Linguistics Program*) is totally misleading.

But then it's just as misleading to call it an *English series*. Certainly it is written in English, but it does not deal in English. The reading and writing assignments are unrelated to the grammar study and unrelated to each other except in the trivial ways revealed below. The literature seems only to serve as aesthetic relief from grammar study and to justify calling the texts a complete English course. Yet the books are uniform in that they push, shove, and lead students whether they deal in grammar (including spelling), in literature, or in writing. Consider, for example, the reading of Hardy's "Lyonesse" and the associated writing assignment (*Book 6*, pp. 213–15):

> **A Poem**
>
> What happened in the place called Lyonesse to put magic in the poet's eyes? Did he fall in love? Read the poem and see what you think may have happened.
>
> [There follows the text of Hardy's "Lyonesse"—if the teacher wants she can play a reading of the poem for the children off one of "two LP vinyl 12-inch records" that supplement each book, readings "by outstanding dramatic artists."]
>
> **Lyonesse**
>
> Lyonesse is not the real name of a town. [He must mean "the name of a real town," W.A.O.] It is a kind of magic name of a place where magical things might happen. What does set out mean? [In the teacher's edition: a whisper in red print, "depart for."]
>
> The word *rime* is not just another spelling for *rhyme*. Here it is a different word. Look up *rime* in a dictionary and see what it means. Does this help you understand the meaning of *spray*? Guess what *spray* means here. Check your guess by using a dictionary. [Whispered in red for teachers: "discuss meanings."]. etc.
>
> **A Paper to Write**
>
> Look again at the poem "Lyonesse" on page 213 and note its structure. In the first stanza, the poet tells how he felt when he set out for Lyonesse; in the second, he tells of something important that happened there; in the third, he tells how it was when he came back.
>
> Write a paper with a similar structure, in three paragraphs. In the second, tell of something important that happened to you. In the first, tell how things were before, and in the third tell how they were afterward.

Tell how it was before you got hooked on Roberts, when you really didn't care whether the strange names you came across were real or not; you chose to believe they were unreal or real as the whim took you. Tell how it was when you didn't give a damn that the word *fathom* meant "six feet—as a yard means three feet, and a foot means twelve inches"; when you weren't asked, given that "the measure *fathom* has been used mostly by people in ships, to say how deep the water is"; "if the person measuring reports" six fathoms, "how deep is the water?" (Red whispering to the teachers, "36 ft." —*The Roberts "arithmetic" series, Book 6*, p. 214.)

And then find words for what happened to you as you learnt that writing a paper was plugging into empty forms and that reading a poem was nothing more than giving a synonym (or even a whole bevy of them) for random words in the poem, when as you were trying to get at "Ozymandias," your teacher dutifully explained "that Shelley lived in England in the first part of the nineteenth century" or that "the two parts of a sonnet are something like two paragraphs of a paper" (inevitably: "Write a two-paragraph paper retelling the content of the poem 'Ozymandias.' Use these beginning sentences:")—*The Roberts "criticism" series, Book 6*, p. 62.

Finally in your last paragraph, if you're still verbal, tell how things were after being pursued cradle to grave (it only seemed that way: it was really just K-12) by Roberts, after you have memorized ("memorization is the best way to achieve true familiarity with the poem") and copied ("Another useful exercise, though it may be thought an old fashioned one, is simple copying. If the standard is absolute accuracy down to the last comma and capital, it presents a considerable challenge."—*The Roberts "memorization and copying" series, Book 6*, p. 61—teacher's edition) an infinite set of mannered poems and written in frames an infinite set of times.

These books chain students and teachers into an intolerable set of assumptions about language, literature and writing. I hope that much is clear. In the name of progress, science, and sequence, this series promotes as respectable everything that has always been bad in the teaching of English. In one important respect, though, the books are worse than nearly anything else available: they deal with the teacher as if she were an automaton. The constant command is to keep strictly to the sequence of the books: "If a poem like Emily Dickinson's 'Autumn' happens to come at its proper season, it is a happy coincidence. It should in any case not be taken out of order": —*The Roberts "seasonal selections" series, Book 3*, p. 63, teacher's edition. Furthermore *all* the answers are fed to the teacher, lest she slip, for example, on such difficult matters as 6 × 6 = 36.

Presumably this teacher-proofness is a commercial virtue of the series. The virtue of its contents (never of course justified) is not about to be contaminated by alien minds: "The teacher who does not happen to be also a grammarian should be cautious about formulating generalizations. They may turn out to be invalid and may have to be unlearned in later years" (just so for the grammar content of these texts). And "to abandon [the order of presentation of this series] would be to introduce intolerable confusion" (T-2, i.e. page 2 of the teacher's introduction, repeated in every teacher's volume).

In its intolerance of teachers, Roberts is some distance from a secondary series like Warriner's where there is little respect for sequence: "the text imposes no sequence; any chapter may be taught as a separate unit without regard for what immediately precedes or follows. This flexibility assures that the books will fit any course of study, whatever its organizing principle" (*Warriner's English grammar and composition, 7*, p. iv [New York, 1965]). In this respect Warriner's is superior to Roberts. One might argue: Well, this is the difference between secondary school teachers and elementary school teachers. But I think this is not the case: This is the difference between trying to by-pass teachers and respecting something of their integrity. Since the Roberts series respects integrity in no other direction, there is no reason to have expected that its treatment of its medium will be any straighter.

This series being adopted so widely so soon is a function of a complicated set of factors. The linguistic mythology of it I have already disposed of; it indeed is an important factor, but other factors too are important, more important. I have already suggested most of them: it comes on new in every direction; the series is an integral package, there are more publisher's things to hook on to the basic series than there are attachments for a Land Rover: records, workbooks, interviews with the author, a kingsized wall chart revealing the intricacies of the series (same color, same size as the one that accompanies Warriner's), etc.; it provides new and sequential busy work for the elementary grades: it leaps into a vacuum with Substance that smells like New Math.

For every wrong reason the series is being adopted widely. The question is why. One of the attachments to the series (the publisher's, *An Interview With Paul Roberts*) is designed to provide the answers. The questions asked there are the right questions, the answers given are not. In what follows I have used the best of these questions (though the last one is implied, never uttered—from their point of view it is redundant). The answers being mine, the last question is not redundant.

Q. At what grade level should a linguistic study of the English language begin?

A. If the formal study of language is deemed important at all (and that is an *open* question), it shouldn't begin until the child can deal honestly and freely (i.e. without being led to it through phoney inductive traps) in overt system building. What little we know of the growth and development of cognition (e.g., from Piaget, etc.) suggests that the secondary level would be a good place to begin such formal studies.

Q. At what grade level should the formal teaching of syntax and phonology begin?

A. Didn't I just answer that?

Q. Should students have a background of linguistic language study in the elementary grades before beginning such studies at grades seven through nine or ten through twelve?

A. No.

Q. What do you consider the most significant educational contributions to be gained from a linguistically developed program in English if begun in the elementary grades?

A. As far as I can see there are none. To develop such a program would only give a false sense of English having been provided with a subject matter. As for "practical" results, there is no reason to believe that such a program would have any effect beyond bringing "a much larger proportion of children to a capacity for writing sentences and spelling words."

There is no reason to believe that their sentences would be worth reading or that the well-spelt words would be very engaging. The sentences would in fact probably be empty of interest and ideas.

Q. Is a special type of training required for teaching a linguistically developed English language program?

A. Yes, a teacher who has a "new" grammar series or any series imposed on her has to learn how to subvert it, and how to put together from whatever she has available in her books and her experience a class-life in which children are truly freed in language. Read Herbert Kohl's *Teaching the "Unteachable,"* or Goodman, or Richardson, . . .

Q. This type of study makes use of a rather mature kind of literature as early as grade three. Are third-grade pupils expected to read these selections?

A. No. The selections (notice how mannered many of them are) are meant to appeal to the teachers and other people who populate textbook selection committees. Otherwise the poems and stories are thrown in to punctuate and provide some relief from the grammar and spelling lessons. Also where possible the selections coincide with the events and celebrations of the external world. Thus "Columbus" (*Book 6*, pp. 31–2) will fall out around Columbus Day, though "The Vikings discover America" (pp. 40–2) which follows (and is included out of fairness to Scandinavian-Americans and their various stones, towers, and maps) can not in this case be read on Leif Eriksson Day. Depending on your allegiances you can then either hurry through the lessons getting to the Vikings on their day or relax a bit getting to Columbus on his. Too much dawdling though and you'll end up doing "Winter" (p. 107) in spring and "Auld Lang Syne" (p. 165) on St. Valentine's Day.

Q. Would you recommend our adopting some such textbook series as *The Roberts English series?*

A. No.

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