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Widespread interest in English instruction and differing opinions about effective curriculums and useful materials indicate a need for a rationally conceived framework for the teaching of English as a unified discipline. The interrelatedness of the divisions of the discipline sustain the unity language includes the structures and varieties of English; composition is concerned with the disciplined formation of thoughts in language, and literature emphasizes the most memorable forms of composition. This interrelation should be stressed in each grade, with increasing specilization from junior high school through college, at which point a review of basic integrations is particularly necessary for prospective teachers. The teaching of English as a discipline is not accomplished through curriculums which separate composition and literature, for instance, or classes designed with particular emphases; but rather through concentration on utilitarian, artistic, and imaginative uses of language, composition, and literature, and through the teacher's responsiveness to new materials, new methods, research, and experimentation (JS)

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In This Issue

Transformational Grammar ~ Dramatizing Fiction
A Summer Institute ~ The New State Framework
10th Annual CATE Conference
The Discipline of English

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THEODORE C. MANN, JR./LINDA McCRARY
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CALIFORNIA ASSOCIATION OF TEACHERS OF ENGLISH

The Discipline of English -- A Reaffirmation

Four years ago, a committee of six appointed by the CATE Executive Board composed "The Discipline of English," a major position paper defining guidelines for the teaching of English in California. The paper was published in the Spring, 1965 edition of the JOURNAL *and is being reprinted at this time in view of the imminent distribution of the state's new* ENGLISH LANGUAGE FRAMEWORK, *described elsewhere in this issue. Authors of "The Discipline of English" are Helen Lodge, Josephine Miles, Nolan Noble, Everett O'Rourke, Anne Von Der Mehden, and Alice Scofield, Chairman.*

The public schools of the United States have for decades given to the teaching of English approximately one fourth of the total educational effort from kindergarten through twelfth grade. In 1958, after retiring a successful Commission on Mathematics, the College Entrance Examination Board announced its decision to establish the Commission on English. By 1960 the U.S. Office of Education recognized the importance of the subject in establishing under Project English a series of Curriculum Development Centers and in granting a considerable share of its funds under the Cooperative Research Branch to support basic research and current demonstration projects. After long debate, in 1964 the Eighty-Eighth Congress of the United States voted overwhelmingly to recognize the importance of English to the national interest by declaring its eligibility for support under the revised National Defense Education Act.

With increasingly widespread support, English has received criticism in at least equal measure. Spokesmen for colleges and universities have complained of a lack of rigor and discipline in elementary and secondary school English programs. Others, concerned about the drop-out rate, criticize the same programs for being too rigorous, too subject-centered. Grammarians of various persuasions point to the same language programs as too archaically prescriptive or too permissive. Spokesmen for the schools have lately and sometimes unfairly placed at the doorsteps of the institutions that train teachers the entire responsibility for poor programs and ineffective teaching. Meanwhile, a revolution in printing and publishing makes a wide variety of books available at little cost; yet organized groups and overscrupulous individual citizens exert considerable

pressure to restrict the content of literature-programs to safe books that will offend no one.

Finding themselves between supporting and opposing forces, members of the profession believe that a policy of neutrality is inadvisable, if not impossible. New text books and other materials are being written and adopted. New curricula in English emerge from differing and often opposing philosophical foundations. To ignore the forces against change would be blind. To ignore the new resources would be wasteful. Nowhere is the problem more pressing than in California with the largest school population in the nation, with the second largest college and university enrollment, with widespread public commitment to education and widespread criticism of education. Nothing is more needed than a clearly stated, rationally conceived framework for the teaching of English. Only within such framework can the English profession plan a program that takes maximum advantage of new resources, that pays intelligent heed to criticism, and that offers energy against narrow vision and premature conclusions.

As the one statewide association for teachers of English in California, the California Association of Teachers of English assumes the obligation to represent them in reviewing those principles and procedures which unify English. Later papers will focus on grammar, composition, reading, administration, and other concerns. Particular emphasis on one part of the subject of English is important and necessary at times, whether it is enjoyment of *Reynard the Fox* or *Moby Dick,* analysis of sentences or plots, participation in dramatic play or entry into Shakespeare's world. In their intensity, however, these special emphases should not obscure the central and overriding concern of the teaching of English from kindergarten through college, the unity of English as a discipline. It is with the discipline and its unity that the California Association of Teachers of English concerns itself in this first working paper.

Principles and Structures

To most Americans English is both their own language and a subject in school, with the relation between the two often unexplained or misunderstood. In another, more specialized, sense, English refers to the best that has been written in the language, from simplest histories and lyrics to the most complex masterpieces of fact and fiction. Though each of these meanings is appropriate to a situation, to the teacher of English the unity found in the interrelation of the divisions is the principle by which the discipline functions.

The divisions of the discipline—language, composition, and literature—are interrelated in a way that sustains the unity. Language includes

the essential structures and varieties of English. Composition concerns the disciplined and patterned creation of forms of thought in language. Literature, emphasizes the most memorable forms of composition, the imaginative ordering of values in the medium of language.

In school, the study of language, of grammar, spelling and punctuation, and word-usage, leads to the study of composition. Composition in turn is the effective use of language in its written and spoken forms for both utilitarian and imaginative purposes. Literature includes the memorable forms of composition. From simplest unit of sound through word, sentence, paragraph, to whole composition or complete work, meaning finds form and significance in language. It may be conveyed directly or indirectly, by rational argument or by visionary embodiment. Recognition of its recurrent forms and significances extends and deepens the range of human understanding.

The terms used to name the interworking parts of language and literature are traditional: for sound patterns, *phonology;* for writing, *graphology;* for word patterns, *morphology* and *syntax,* or *grammar;* for reference-patterns, *vocabulary* and *semantics;* for statement patterns, *logic;* for patterns of relation between author and audience, *rhetoric.* Traditionally stable patterns of art as expressed in language are named by such terms of *form* or *genre* as *story, essay, criticism, debate, tragedy,* and *lyric.* For *function* the common terms include argument, lament, report, and *praise.* Every one of these terms is relevant to every other within the discipline. In a discussion one illuminates another. Knowledge of phonology adds a dimension to the analysis of a literary form. Knowledge of syntax and phonology clarifies the meaning of a poem or purpose in writing. Knowledge of form intensifies appreciation of the obligations imposed by a work of art and by daily life. Knowledge of the logic of argument illuminates also the logic of drama and narrative and of human relations. The teacher of English delineates and reaffirms these connections, noting the unifying interactions that make English a discipline.

It is true that the English language is our medium, of thought and feeling and thus of education. It is also true then that every teacher who presents his subject matter on the English language is a teacher in English. He demonstrates, teaches, and requires appropriate use of the language. The special function of the teacher of English is to keep before the student the relation of one use of language to another, in modern practice and in literary tradition, in the language he speaks and his school subject. It is the unified combination of medium, skill, and significance which defines English: comprehending literature and language, composing in language with reason and art.

PROCEDURES

The forms of English—language, composition, and literature—with their processes of speaking, listening, reading, writing, reasoning, imagining, inventing, need to be taught in their interrelation at each grade, at whatever level students are able to function. Teaching involves the double process of reinforcement and development. The teacher tries to identify and strengthen the prior learning and inherent ability each student brings to class. The variety of abilities and experiences of each child makes different each classroom in each community. Whatever expectations the teacher uses as guides, he knows that no two classrooms will or can be the same.

For example, the kindergarten teacher recognizes the individual patterns of oral language and literature which the five year old brings to school. The teacher is also aware of the folk traditions in song and story which the child has inherited from family and community. Such awareness helps the teacher to plan for each child experiences, direct and vicarious, that release and then increase his command over language.

From research, the primary teacher decides what combination of theories of learning—for improving speaking and for teaching reading, handwriting, spelling, and written composition—is most suitable for the particular group of children and for individuals in the group. The demonstrated success of these procedures with different kinds of children provides a criterion for choice. Choice is often eclectic, combining the best from a number of systems. As each child develops skills and acquires pertinent knowledge and attitudes, the teacher increases the complexity and the variety of literary materials heard and read, and indicates their relation to other arts.

In the intermediate grades, grades 4-5-6, this balanced program continues, its unity stressed by attention to both practical and imaginative uses of language. Note-taking is practiced, as is usage. Skill is developed in employing imaginatively a number of forms of writing, from sentences, to poems, plays, and short stories. As the child learns to recognize and use the written symbols of language, attention shifts from the spontaneous version of an experience to the artistic, one that involves selection and arrangement of ideas, sometimes accompanied by creative efforts in art or music. The teacher encourages appreciation for differences in dialect, word order, and patterned structures, and by stressing revision, emphasizes the power that resides in choice of method. The teacher continues to expand the child's background in literature, to strengthen his imagination, to increase his vocabulary, and to establish or affirm values with a generous sampling of literature, including plays, short stories, folk

literature, and poetry appropriate to his maturity. The teacher works to increase the independence with which the children select words for individualized reading. An increasingly sharp discrimination between the substantial and the shallow demonstrates the success of teachers dedicated to helping children establish lifelong independence and delight in reading.

Within the organizational patterns of many junior high schools, the teacher of English is a specialist in subject matter. At this stage may come the students' first experience with departmentalized instruction. Competence in language, from spelling to sentence making to reasoning, is now tested by a variety of demands and reinforced by a variety of teachers. The teaching of English becomes more systematized, with more consciously theoretical distinctions of ways and means. Grammar becomes not only a guide to using language, but also a general framework for description of the language. Conventions in languages are related to time and purpose. The student learns to choose consciously among syntactic and logical alternatives with regard to his rhetorical intentions, and he learns to see how choices have been made by English writers before him. Now earlier delight in sounds, phrases, characters, and actions leads to more systematic discussion of how such effects are achieved. At the same time that the student is increasing his understanding of form and structure in literature, he strengthens his skills in composition and in reading informative as well as imaginative literature. Some students need additional basic study and pattern-practice, but even for them there is no lessening of pressure toward the mature exploration of ideas and toward the ability to abstract and generalize.

In the senior high school specialization goes still further, through special courses in drama, journalism, and public speaking. Some schools even introduce into the curriculum separate courses in literature and in composition. Nevertheless, the unity of language, literature, and composition persists. Teachers help to heighten each student's consciousness of individuality and responsibility by encouraging self-reliance in making a choice of a book to read, a play to stage, an argument to develop in debate, a choice of theme or guiding idea in an essay. In high school the student practices extensively the control of a subject or topic by what he chooses to say about it, and by the development of his selected predicate in a series of subordinate steps. At no stage can such control be taught "once and for all"; new levels of difficulty always put great strain on thinking and writing, but at this stage especially the teacher sees to it that control of subject or topic finds further development and reinforcement in selective and critical reading of prose and poetry. At the end of a well-conceived, unified English program, the high school graduate uses the English language selectively and with conscious purpose and

respects the logic of emphases, assumptions, and subordinations. All students, including those with minimal ability, can develop some sense of time, of form, of irony, metaphor, and humor, so rich is literature as art. Further, direct awareness of differences in languages and literatures can lead to a sense of the past by comparative study of the classics in American and British literature and translations from other languages.

The professional and scholarly emphases of the college extend certain specializations: drama is concerned with stage production; journalism, with news and editorial production; and speech, with performance in interpretation and debate. College English, therefore, pays especial attention to the relation of historical patterns in the language and literature to contemporary critical and rhetorical theory and practice. In every field of study, sciences, social sciences, arts, the need persists to reinforce students' abilities in composition for each new subject-matter with its own terminology and rules of evidence. Reading and writing, never learned once and for all, grow in complexity and flexibility as new subjects and purposes are introduced. Even the most professional writer and scholar must rewrite and revise with each new study. So every scholar shares responsibility for focusing, and helping his student to focus, on the specialized use of English in his field.

The particular need of the college student who is to become a teacher is for thoughtful work returning him to the basic integrations of the primary and secondary schools; a conscious restudy of the past and present environments of varied language and culture patterns, and of traditional norms, of the books most effective in deepening and widening appreciation of various levels, of the basic powers of grammar, logic, rhetoric, and of major developments in English language and literature, and translated literature, as the student is able to grasp and use them.

Implications of Unity

The scope and variety of opinions about English, attested to wherever the discipline is discussed, should not be assumed to negate its unity. For any discipline, focus on a particular point at a particular time is essential for the proficiency of the learner. But such proficiency, with new knowledge, becomes meaningful as it makes meaningful the whole fabric of English. To this end the teacher-scholar strives.

Some curriculum procedures, however, deliberately limit English. They concentrate on parts, to the neglect of the whole. Segmentation then becomes fragmentation. There is, for example, a danger in the attempt to justify for the sake of proficiency a separation of composition and literature. Even when such proficiency is attained, it is accomplished at a high cost, and never approximates the range and power that result

from a program that recognizes the unity of English. If the student writes solely of everyday problems and drills daily on the conventions of English, he misses the experience of writing about some aspect of the literature he reads, with the attendant close rereading and testing of his own ideas that are the excellent concomitants of this process. Perfunctory memorized answers are no substitute for the student's testing of his own ideas in writing and talking about what he reads. Progression requires reinforcement and development, with materials and methods increasingly complex as they approximate and then advance the maturity of the learner.

Among the dangers of fragmentation are classes designed for the remedial student, with treatment of language limited and limiting. Regardless of his potential or attainment, this student should have continuing experience with imaginative literature and composing in whatever terms and at whatever level he is able to perform. Still another danger of fragmentation is present in the elective class which may emphasize one or another feature of English to the exclusion of the others. Such classes should not be substitutes for English.

The differences in students' abilities and interests in English defy easy administrative reconciliation. To educate California's diverse school population, a program both strong and flexible is needed. A bold attempt toward diversity within the unity of that program is more important than further divisions and specializations at the expense of the unity and thus the vitality of the field of English. All classes purporting to be English include attention to utilitarian, artistic, and imaginative uses of language, composition, and literature.

One of the strengths of the American heritage is its ability to encompass a variety of dimensions, current as well as classical, timely as well as time-tested. To represent the entire range of our heritage, inexpensive editions of literary works are available at low cost. Appropriately selected writings intended to inform and persuade, as well as writings intended to affect imaginatively, are available for every classroom. Literary works are read complete or, if abridged, abridged consciously by the teacher and the students; some classes, for example, abridge a work to fit a limited time-span. Multiple texts are important in language, too; they help relate the grammar, logic, and rhetoric of language to composition and to literature, and thus the vitality of the past to the present. Established sequences of content are a starting place for the variations in programs each school must establish for its own special school population. Both reading and composition make use of the widest possible range of human powers in reason and imagination, assuring emphasis on the central processes of thinking.

New and varied materials suggest new methods of instruction.

Probably in no other discipline today are materials and methods less in harmony with each other and with present knowledge. Classroom experimentation based upon appropriate scholarly research is necessary to provide the foundation for new progress. In daily meeting their classes, diverse as the society is diverse, teachers of English seek the opportunity to participate in study and research that will bring materials and methods into harmony with knowledge. No effort at curriculum reform in recent years has met success without providing opportunities for teachers to share with scholars in the study of new concepts and discoveries and their application to classroom use.

The teaching of English as a discipline thus conceived—unified as subject, sequential in presentation, alive to research and experiment, and always resourceful—is less a correcting and limiting function than a strengthening and liberating one. Its purpose is to preserve and increase in language and powers of imagination, generalization, and rational hypothesis which carry humanity from experience and memory toward wisdom.