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Concepts advanced by grammarians, linguistic historians, dialectologists, psycholinguists, lexicographers, semanticists, and phonologists, together with new approaches to reading, spelling, and literature, can help the teacher make the English program more stimulating for children. For instance, discoveries made by psycholinguists have attested to the preschool child's grasp of principles of phonology and syntax and his habits of theory construction and validation in matters of sentence creation. Thus, a teacher in the primary grades, made aware that his students have learned their language well in the first 4 or 5 years of their lives, can attempt to interest children in understanding suprasegmentals of language, in expanding basic sentence patterns, in learning informal standard English, and in expressing their own ideas in writing. (JS)

The RANGE of ENGLISH

NCTE 1968 DISTINGUISHED LECTURES

NATIONAL COUNCIL OF TEACHERS OF ENGLISH

Trends and Emphases in Elementary English

Ruth G. Strickland

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Growth and change are the order of the day in every field and in none more than our own field of English. No one is completely satisfied with what he is doing, and each of us is looking for help to meet more adequately the needs of boys and girls in a world in which the significance of language and the need for communication are evident everywhere we turn. We are increasingly aware of the problems related to language in some of the countries of Asia and in the newly emerging nations of Africa with their multiplicity of languages and dialects. We are also becoming more deeply aware of our own problems of regional and social dialects in the United States and the way they divide people culturally, socially, and economically. At the same time we are gaining new information about language itself and about what children do as they learn their own personal language—the language their life experience makes available to them. Psychologists who study the learning process, linguists who study language, and educational practitioners who teach and guide children all are contributing to growth and change in the teaching of English.

All of this means, we hope, that we are lifting our eyes from the pages of textbooks, laying some of our traditional practices open to new evaluation, and, above all, looking at living language in the lives of real people. A glance at any newspaper makes it very clear that a great deal of the most important work of the world is being done through face-to-face talk on the international as well as on the national and local levels. The better we learn to do this, the closer we may come to a world of peace and equity. A few years ago J. N. Hook made a study of the jobs in the automobile industry from the miners of ore to the top executives and concluded that fully half the price one pays for a car is paid for words—the words of many people, from designers and policy makers to advertisers and the salesman who sells the car. Someone has estimated that seventy percent of the income of most people is dependent upon their ability to speak and listen. Language grows increasingly important as life becomes more complex and the lives and concerns of people more closely interwoven.

As we look at language, we who teach children need an immense amount of help, a portion of which can come from the field of linguistics. But for some reason linguistics has come to be equated in the minds of many teachers with grammar and grammar alone. This is an unfortunate state of affairs because the field of linguistic study is a broad one subsuming a number of specialized interests, each of which has values for us as teachers of children if we can become knowledgeable enough to select wisely what we shall bring to our boys and girls.

There are, first of all, the linguistic historians who have much in common with the anthropologists and to some extent the sociologists. All of these people are interested in the historical backgrounds of languages and how language has throughout the centuries influenced the lives of men and nations. Is there anything here for our children? I think so. To take some of the countries we always look at, what about the languages in eastern Canada, Switzerland, and Belgium? Somewhat in contrast and even more important, can we teach any aspect of the life of the newer nations of Asia or Africa without giving attention to their multiplicity of languages and dialects and the fact that in a number of countries English has become, for important reasons, the language of government? And what has been the relationship of language to our own mainland? Captain John Smith, Miles Standish, and John Alden spoke the English of the common folk of their part of England at the time that Shakespeare was writing of Puck, Queen Titania, and Oberon in his *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Do we tell and read children some of this and share with them Robin Hood and King Arthur so that they have a taste of English of this earlier day? And do we give attention to the languages brought by the earliest settlers into our immediate region, French, German, Spanish, Slavic, or whatever, and what we still find of them in place names, local expressions, and the like? Our children would find it interesting, and those who bear family names not of English origin might find a new pride in their origins.

The linguistic geographer and the dialectologist, too, have some-

thing to offer our children. Through stories, poems, and songs, perhaps through recordings, we can help children recognize and savor the dialects of New England, the Pennsylvania Dutch, the hill people of Kentucky and Tennessee, and the Negro dialects of the spirituals that are sung in many parts of the world. Are there tales from India, Australia, Ireland, and other parts of the English-speaking world either originating in English or translated into English that we can share with our children? Certainly, through dramatics and role playing, we can help them accept the fact that not all speakers of English speak identically. They can learn to respect and appreciate the differences but come to recognize what is appropriate for *them* in a world in which what we call "standard English" is essential in many situations for social and vocational acceptance.

The lexicographer is another linguist whose work the children should increasingly understand. We want children to learn what a dictionary is and what it is not, what it does and does not do, and why. We want them to recognize that a language is a man-made product and that man expands and modifies his product to meet his changing and expanding interests and needs.

Along with the works of the lexicographer we can give attention to the area of the semanticist. Beginning with the Mother Goose rhymes, children can be made aware of the fact that words have had different meanings at different times and places.

The school works with phonology from the beginning of the program of teaching children the symbol-sound correspondence they must recognize in order to read. Of course, this is not the child's first awareness of phonology. He has in fact known the sound system of his language since the age of three or four. Now he is relating to it the visual symbol form of words he has long known by ear, tongue, and mind. New approaches to spelling and reading which build logically and naturally on what the child knows are gaining much of their inspiration from the work of the linguists. In Jeanne Chall's valuable new book, *Learning to Read: The Great Debate*, subtitled in a Car-

negie report *The Great Confusion,* she warns us against expanding and extending our work with phonology beyond its usefulness in reading and spelling. [1]

As we study the contribution of the linguists we must not overlook the basic and very valuable contributions of the psycholinguists, who are studying the way children learn their language. Thanks in part to them, we have in the last ten years learned more about the language of children than ever before. The methods and techniques of the descriptive linguist are being combined with those of the psychologist, giving the psychologist scientific methods for the study of language and the linguist insight into the problems of learning. The work of the psycholinguists has been limited largely to the language of preschool children and its early acquisition. Researchers in the field of English and in education have made available extended information regarding the language of school children which can serve as a basis for curriculum and textbooks in all school subjects. Little by little, we are learning how a child progresses from his first word to the infinite sentences he produces as an adult.

Though we do not yet know how a child learns his language, considerable evidence is accumulating regarding what he learns. A review of this accumulation indicates that language develops in the life of a child very naturally and regularly, seemingly according to a timetable. Among the most surprising and significant findings regarding preschool language development are those of Paula Menyuk of the Research Laboratory of Electronics at Massachusetts Institute of Technology. She says that any technique used to describe a child's language must permit us to (a) examine the language at particular times in its development as a self-contained system and (b) describe the changing processes of this system as the child matures. There is overt evidence for two aspects of language: phonology or the sound system and words or vocabulary items.

Children come equipped to learn any language, of course, and in their early babbling they produce sounds characteristic of many lan-

guages. If the child lives in an English-speaking home, toward his first birthday the sounds he utters begin to sound familiar to his English-speaking parents, and his intonation begins to sound like English. Between the time when the parents' eager expectation is rewarded with what they think they recognize as a real word and the age of about eighteen months, the child makes do with single-word utterances into which his listeners can read far more meaning than the word actually expresses. Then begins a period of what has come to be called "telegraphic speech." The child says, "Daddy come," 'Sweater off," "See truck, Mommy." He appears aware first of the meaning-bearing words in adult sentences, those that are pitched a little higher and stressed a little more vigorously than the structure words in the sentences. Efforts at this time to induce him to repeat complete sentences produce little or no result. Attempts to have the child repeat a complete sentence such as "It belongs here in the cupboard" or "I will not do that again" probably result in the echo responses "Belongs cupboard" or "Do again."

Lenneberg, of Harvard University and Children's Medical Center, states in a recent publication:

> The onset of speech is an extremely regular phenomenon, appearing at a certain time in the child's physical development and following a fixed sequence of events, as if all children followed the same general "strategy" from the time they begin to the period at which they have mastered the art of speaking. The first things that are learned are principles—not items: principles of categorization and pattern perception. The first words refer to classes, not unique objects or events. The sounds of language and the configuration of words are at once perceived and reproduced according to principles; they are patterns in time, and they never function as randomly strung up items. From the beginning, very general principles of semantics and syntax are manifest. Even if the maturation scale as a whole is distorted through retarding disease, the order of developmental milestones, including the onset of speech, remains invariable. Onset and accomplishment of language learning do not seem to be affected by

> cultural or linguistic variations. . . . The ability to learn language is so deeply rooted in man that children learn it even in the face of dramatic handicaps. [8, pp. 66, 67]

The child's intuitive awareness of principles of phonology and syntax is manifest in a number of ways. He appears to learn phonological contrasts, not sounds in individual words, and to apply his newly learned contrasts in a great variety of vocabulary items. He learns inflectional endings in whole words, not in isolation, and as he abstracts the rule he tends to apply it over-consistently. He early learns that the plural form of a noun ends in an /–s/ or similar sound. He adds a /–z/ sound in "boys," an /–s/ sound in "hats," and an /–əz/ sound in "wishes." To be sure, he over-applies his new-found principle to produce such combinations as "yours and mys," "foots," "sheeps," and "gooses." The same awareness of principle is evident as he forms the past tense of verbs. The verb "played" ends in a /–d/ sound, "walked" ends in a /–t/ sound, and "waited" in an /–əd/ sound. The child appears to understand the difference between the classes of words. He does not add an /–ed/ morpheme to a noun nor an /–s/ morpheme to a verb. He follows his pattern exactly, even with words which are irregular. He says, "I breaked my whistle and Daddy buyed me another one." Even when he begins to sense irregularities as in the verb "bring" or in forming comparatives and superlatives, he applies his own generalizations fairly consistently. He says, "Look what I brang you," following the pattern of "ring" and "sing," or "My book is more better than yours," applying both regular and irregular forms in the same sentence.

Interestingly enough, the child appears at this time to be doing just what the common folk of England did after the conquest by William of Normandy in 1066. That was a period, you will remember, when only those whom Hugh Sykes Davies of Cambridge University calls "the little people" used English and in approximately three hundred years regularized and simplified it at many points. [3] Davies holds that, given another hundred years in their exclusive

[illegible] all of its past tenses by adding -ed and [illegible] all of its comparatives and superlatives by adding -er and -est. Children's efforts show the same tendencies.

[illegible] tells of an experiment in which a child was [illegible] of two mice and said, "This is a [illegible] are two mice." The examiner then asked, "What is [illegible]?" Many of the children tested answered "A mouse and [illegible]" or in other instances "two gooses" or "the ball singed," [illegible] before heard the correct form. It appears that children [illegible] when they are already able to produce [illegible] a part of their repertoire. [illegible]

[illegible] Miller or Ulate is convinced that each child appears to [illegible] the phonology and grammar of his language. He says,

> [illegible] the notion that the child develops a set of [illegible] in the light of what he hears. [illegible]

[illegible], a writer and student of children's language in the Soviet Union, speaking of children's grammatical skill, says,

> . . . A child having no notion of grammatical rules uses quite correctly all noun cases, verb tenses and moods, even when he uses [illegible] words. This [illegible] use of words is a most amazing [illegible] of early childhood. . . . children's [illegible] are often [illegible] upon it. [illegible]
>
> . . . Not in vain did Leo Tolstoy, addressing himself to adults, [illegible] . . . The Child realizes the laws of word formation better [illegible] thinks up new words as children." [illegible]

[illegible] two examples of this from the talk of her own children. A child of two and a half was looking put upon when someone asked her, "Who loves you?" and she answered, "Nobody." [illegible] it, she was asked again, "Who loves you?" and she answered, "Yesbody," a creation by analogy which [illegible] all her own. Another child of three asked, "Mommy, [illegible]?" Following her mother's answer, "Well, they

eat leaves, usually," the child thought a bit and added, "And what do they eat leafs?" [9]

Children's language mistakes make it very clear that their language learning is not all imitation. Imitation [illegible] of mistakes in the learning of word inflections, but the child very early creates sentences of his own that are not copies of adult sentences. Whatever it is that the child does, it is extremely complex, a remarkable type of thinking, and he does it in an astonishingly short time. In her studies of the language of preschool children from the average or above-average socioeconomic level, Paula Menyuk discovered that almost all of the basic structures used by adults to generate their sentences can be found in the grammar of children as young as three years. The evidence appears to indicate that what the child achieves is somehow independent of intelligence, yet it is accomplished in a comparable way by almost all children. This appears to be true no matter where a child lives on the surface of the earth or what his mother language may be. It becomes increasingly clear that no theory of learning has yet been proposed, not even those of Skinner and Watson, which can possibly account for language learning. There is convincing evidence of what a child does as he learns his language, but we do not yet know how he does it. Unless a child is severely handicapped physically, mentally, or environmentally, he follows in his own idiosyncratic way the same basic timetable.

Linguists accept the fact that, in general, the child by the age of four has learned most of the phonology and grammar of his language. Indeed, classroom school readers can easily show, at least by the age of eight, children have learned their grammar so thoroughly that it is not easily mastered. Warren Jones, in a bulletin published by Harvard Press, maintains that by ten a child has learned all the grammar he will ever learn. [7] Be that as it may, every child comes to school with a language. That language tells the teacher three things: his usage and grammar tell the teacher a good deal about

the language of his home and the educational and cultural level of his parents; his vocabulary depicts his experience—multiplicity of nouns means actual or vicarious contact with many things and opportunity to share talk about them, while verbs tell of the child's activities and experiences; his attitude toward language and his ease and fluency in the use of it mirror his self-image—vocal: confident and outgoing; silent: timid and withdrawn. Teachers need to keep in mind what language does not tell them. It cannot tell with any degree of accuracy the intelligence level of the child, only what his life experience has enabled him to learn. Teachers in Head Start programs in the United States find language development a major responsibility because environmental deprivation almost always includes language deprivation.*

Two major studies of the language of elementary school children are well known. They are, of course, the more or less horizontal one completed a few years ago at Indiana University in which we studied masses of speech of first- through sixth-grade children [13] and the extremely valuable longitudinal study by Loban, of the University of California at Berkeley, in which he recorded the speech of more than two hundred children each year for thirteen years, from kindergarten through the twelfth grade [9]. Both studies found children using all of the basic kinds of sentences by first grade, most of them with flexibility. A smaller study at Indiana University compared the recorded speech of a group of four- and five-year-old children in the kindergarten with the speech of the same children four years later in the elementary school and found great similarity in all aspects of speech behavior.

Stating the findings of these studies in a perhaps oversimplified generalization, the best measure of the maturity of a child's language appears to be his ability to expand basic sentence patterns. It is not

* A portion of this section of the lecture was drawn from a lecture delivered in Vancouver in August 1968 at a conference of teachers of English from English-speaking countries.

so much the patterns of a child's sentences but what he does to achieve flexibility within the patterns that provides the best measure of his effectiveness and control of language. Certainly, those children who are most proficient in language are those who manifest, as Loban says, the most sensitivity to the conventions of language.

The findings of Loban's study and those of Basil Bernstein in England indicate that the basic problem of the language-deprived child is that he uses so little of the potential of his language. He needs guidance and stimulation to think with language, to imagine, to conjecture, to do cause and effect thinking, to hypothesize, and to test his hypotheses.

To these children of ours who have learned a language in four or five short years, what shall we teach in the school?

For one thing, we can call the child's attention to the way in which we handle what the linguist calls the suprasegmentals of the language, pitch, stress, and juncture or pauses. The child has been unconsciously aware of these from an early age. His telegraphic speech at two when he said, "Daddy come," "Red car," or "David's book," proved that he was using the meaning-bearing words which, in our English sentences, tend to be pitched a little higher and stressed a little more vigorously than the structure words he seems either unaware of or as yet unable to use. Primary grade children are interested in the fact that one's meaning in such a sentence as "Where are you going?" depends on the way in which pitch and stress are applied to one or another of the words.

Children are equally interested in giving attention to other dimensions of communication. Kindergarten children are delighted to have their attention called to what is communicated when the teacher or parent says, for instance, "Come here, Jim!" in a lilting voice accompanied by a smiling face and relaxed bodily stance and possibly a come-hither gesture. They enjoy comparing that communication with the same words coming soberly from an unsmiling countenance, or again said sternly or angrily by a speaker whose

countenance is dark and forbidding and bodily behavior that of tension and anger. They can learn very early that meaning is not carried by words alone, even words arranged in clear, meaningful sequences. Thus they are made aware of communication in human relations. Surely, this will carry to some extent into their own use of language and later into their interpretation of language represented by graphic symbols on pages, signs, and chalkboard.

Now we must turn our attention to the contribution of the grammarian. I have left his branch of linguistic study to the last so that we can see it and its importance in perspective. It is important, but we have tended to give it more than its share of emphasis. It is not entirely our fault that this is true. The grammarian has been receiving lately more attention than he is accustomed to and, being human, has capitalized upon it by being very vocal as he enjoys his moment in the sunlight of our interest. But there are valuable ideas for us in transformational generative grammar if we select for ourselves what we shall teach and make sure that it is built firmly on what children need to know, *not* on what it is possible to teach them.

Again we have *facts* to build upon. Children like to manipulate language. They learned at an early age to be aware of rules and patterns for arranging words in sentences. The work of several researchers indicates that a measure of the maturity of a child's language may be his ability to expand and elaborate sentences. It makes sense, then, to utilize these facts in planning what we shall teach children in the elementary grades. Starting not with a textbook or a course of study but with sentences used by the children, we can take one of the basic sentence patterns of English and see what we can do with it. We may take a sentence built about a transitive verb, such as "The man bought some ice cream," or a sentence built about an intransitive verb, "He hurried home," or one built about a linking verb, "The ice cream was good" or "It tasted good," and put other words in each of the slots. We need to make sure that children rec-

ognize the pattern of the sentence and its unlimited variability. Then we can begin to expand our sentence by adding movable elements of time, place, manner, cause, and the like until children see how one welds parts together to make an expanded sentence. They can see what happens to emphasis or to meaning when parts are rearranged, added, or subtracted.

In the course of all this, the vocabulary of grammar can be used incidentally and functionally as it fits. "What other noun (or verb) could you use here? How could you describe the person more clearly? Are there other adjectives which will serve better? How can you make sure that people will understand what happened? Is there a better way to make clear what kind of person this is and how we know?" Some of the newer terminology will help if you want to use it: *noun phrase* and *verb phrase* are not difficult concepts; *determiner* may mean more to children than *article; head word* is not hard to understand, nor is *modifier*. Use what is helpful as you play with sentences and learn to build them skillfully.

Throughout our work, we must not forget that it is what the child does with language, not what he knows about language, that will influence his entire life. Usage is one of our great concerns. We accept sincerely and wholeheartedly what the child brings to school—Pennsylvania Dutch, an Appalachian dialect, that of an aboriginal Indian tribe or a Spanish-speaking home, or a deep South Negro dialect. But we must gradually help the child to add the so-called informal standard English that is good anywhere in the world. His life is dependent on this and we must not fail him.

At a luncheon on the Conference on English Education in Honolulu, Walker Gibson of Amherst talked on the topic "The Play of Rhetoric." [5] He used over and over again the ideas of dramatic playing, role playing, and play with ideas, words, and sequences of these as the way to teach rhetoric to older young people. How much *more* important is the idea of play with language for our elementary school children? What we must *not* do is to systematize, organize,

computerize, and mechanize all this through putting it into workbooks and drills. It must be living language--real sentences taken from the mouths or the pencils of children as they use language to express ideas and to influence people.

The study of grammar in the elementary school can be justified to the extent that it improves speaking and writing. Our older approach to grammar was a notable failure in this regard. Teachers are now trying to help children study grammar for what it is, not for what eighteenth-century grammarians tried to force it to be. Children enjoy learning how things work and can become deeply interested in how their language operates in human interaction. That they are inherently interested in language has been clear since their earliest efforts to master it at the age of two. The persistence of this interest is equally clear as one listens to the vocabulary of adolescents in high school. An elementary approach to transformational grammar helps children to see the possibilities of English sentences, but it does not help them know what sentences are best for their purposes in their own writing. The study of language is analytical; writing is a creative art that is more dependent on synthesis than on analysis.

Some study has been made of children's writing by Kellogg Hunt at Florida State University and by teachers at Peabody College, Ohio State University, and Teachers College, Columbia University, but we need more attention to helping children learn to write. Hunt says in a recent report that there is no doubt people can learn, as they mature, to speak, write, and read complicated sentences without any regular instruction in language structure. That they can learn better and faster with suitable instruction he holds as an article of faith though not as a demonstrable fact. The process of turning ideas conceived in one's own mind into suitable sentences that evoke the same thinking in other minds is the task that the writer must learn. How best to help children accomplish this difficult task we do not know, but we do know the phenomenal language develop-

ment the child has already achieved and the competence he has developed without lessons and superimposed systematic drill.

Sybil Marshall of England, in her refreshing book *An Experiment in Education,* says of her experience in teaching English children in a school near Cambridge,

> I would give them enough patterns, but not in the form of exercises. I would give them patterns in speech, in books, in poetry, and in plays. I would not subject my pupils to ten minutes a day under the ultraviolet lamp of intense grammatical exercises, but would instead seek out every patch of literary sunshine and see to it that the pupils worked and played in its warmth and light until grammatical usage and good style, the balance and cadence of sentences, and the happy choice of the most significant words soaked into them through every one of their senses. . . . It is much more important, surely, to be bursting with things to write about and not know precisely how to write them, than to know all the rules and not have anything to write. [10]

Mrs. Marshall, serving as a consultant in the Anglo-American Seminar on the Teaching of English held at Dartmouth in the summer of 1966, greatly impressed the fifty English and American teachers and scholars with her method of teaching children to write. That method is found more and more generally in England, according to recent observation and report. Children are encouraged to do a great deal of free writing with emphasis on content and style rather than on neatness and matters of form. Gradually, through contact with literature, through wide reading, as well as through individual guidance as the child and teacher go over his writing, the mechanics of form are so thoroughly learned that the child becomes a capable and competent writer. American teachers who place major emphasis on handwriting, punctuation, spelling, and the like and give little attention to helping individual children respect their own ideas and learn to express them could learn a great deal from the English about helping children learn to write. The guidance of individual children in their efforts to write is what a professor of physics from M.I.T.

had in mind in a meeting on the Harvard campus when he said with conviction, "Everyone knows that writing has to be taught individuallyl"

American teachers have long since found that if children are to learn to read they must be taught in small groups with as much individual attention as possible, yet many of these same teachers still attempt to teach writing, composition, to an entire class, with little attention to individual needs and abilities. An Englishman visiting in the United States was quoted in a newspaper as saying, "You Americans use the spoken English more vividly and colorfully than any other speakers of English but your writing is deadly." If it is deadly, it is because teachers have put more emphasis upon teaching form than on helping children express their ideas and have handled *en masse* the most difficult of the language skills for children to learn. Our children as well as Mrs. Marshall's could learn to enjoy writing if we would steep them in good literature and emphasize significant ideas and clear individual expression of them rather than too much of the mechanics of prescribed form. Here I speak of writing, not "composition"—not the kind of school themes that even college students never write again after they receive their diplomas and for which there is no literary market.

In his report on the Dartmouth Seminar, John Dixon of England groups the activities in the field of English under four broad headings: on the one hand, talk and drama; on the other, writing and reading:

> . . . Talk is public and arises in the human interaction from which drama springs. By contrast writing and reading are private, solitary operations. But think again: plays become texts and texts can be enacted and read aloud. In fact, through most of its history literature has meant the public recital rather than the printed text. [4, p. 32]

The seminar groups gave considerable attention to the ways in which children learn their language and their understanding of communication in human interaction, both through direct experi-

ence and through role playing—in the trying on of the language as well as the activities of all sorts of live and storybook people. "What the child has learned already he has learned under the pressure of the necessities and pleasures of daily living. If the school is to continue the processes already started it must stir the same kind of pressure and kindle the same excitements."

In our schools in the United States our splitting up of English activities and our neglect of talk and drama have had disastrous effects on writing and also, all too often, on reading as well. Our methods of teaching children to read and write have borne little relationship to children's methods of learning their language. At best, "learning to read and write leaves the child alone with language in a way which differs from his previous experience. This should not be made a sudden transition. The activities should be preceded, accompanied, and followed by talk."

When the late William S. Gray of Chicago University made his study of reading and writing in the UNESCO countries, he found all of them teaching reading and writing together, more or less as two sides of the same coin. We have tended to teach each of the language skills—reading, handwriting, composition, spelling—with little or no relationship to one another and often with poor results. There is more and more effort, almost compulsion, in some school systems, to teach reading as a separate skill with no attention to the language the child brings to school and no effort to utilize the learning competences he has already acquired. Then more reading specialists are trained, more remedial reading teachers hired, and things go on much as before.

The surge of interest in education which is commonly attributed to Sputnik turned the attention of many people to the teaching of reading in our schools. A number of fresh approaches to reading have been devised, mainly by scholars in linguistics and language and by curriculum specialists, not by members of the reading establishment; Sir James Pitman's Initial Teaching Alphabet, the linguis-

tics schemes of Charles Fries and others based on the work of Leonard Bloomfield, the language experience approach to reading, and emphasis on individualized reading have all been initiated by people who do not call themselves reading specialists. Each plan is based on reasonable procedures: i.t.a. introduces one symbol for one sound, a one-to-one relationship, until the child has made a good start in reading; linguistic schemes start with the alphabet since English is written with an alphabet and introduce children to words which are regular in spelling before introducing irregular ones; the language experience approach starts with the child's own language and, through having him watch as the teacher writes his dictated captions for his drawings and the stories he invents, helps him to understand the relationship of writing to reading and encourages him to begin at once to both write and read; individualized reading recognizes that children are individuals who bring to reading not only different capacities and capabilities but also different language and experience backgrounds and different interests which can be utilized for their up-building in reading.

Interest in new approaches to reading encouraged the United States Office of Education to put more than a million dollars into comparative studies of a number of these approaches in twenty-seven cities. Variables that were impossible to control caused results to be inconclusive, but two generalizations can safely be drawn from the study: (1) it is impossible to meet the needs of all children by any one method, and (2) the most important element in any reading program is the teacher. It is the teacher, not the method, that makes the difference. A million dollars may have been a heavy price to pay for findings that prove to be only common sense, but at least the studies made it clear that the entrenched basal reading methods are not the only good way to teach children to read. [12]

Spelling is being given rigorous scientific study by Paul and Jean Hanna of Stanford and some of their students. Again, building on the work of linguists and their own scholarship, they are calling

attention to the startling regularity of English spelling when looked at in terms of pattern. They are well on the way to new insights which will enable the schools to improve both the quality of spelling and the speed with which it is learned.

Any discussion of trends and emphases in the teaching of English must give attention to the teaching of literature. In no other language, according to Paul Hazard of the French Academy, is there such a wealth of literature for children as there is in English. But all too often our children attend school from kindergarten through the sixth grade with very litt e exposure to it. Children need constant experience with literature in order to learn to understand life—how people think and feel and what makes them behave as they do. In these days when many of the major problems of the world lie in the realm of man's relationship to man, literature is of special importance for the building of attitudes and understandings and indeed for personal therapy. And how else can our children learn the potential of their language other than through examples of the best that the language has to offer? Through poems, stories, and plays, we can stock the minds of children with ideas that are bigger and run deeper than their own and stimulate their imaginations to develop creative power.

In all that we do with language we have two major assets with which to work. Children love language. They have in the preschool years put enormous energy and concentration into learning their language. And they have developed competence which we can and must utilize lest it wither and die. The English program can be made exciting and stimulating for children if we will, as I said at the beginning, lift our eyes from the textbooks, reevaluate some of our teaching practices, and, above all, look at living language in the lives of real people. Linguists, psychologists, students of child development, and a number of scholars in the field of English are willing to help, but we are the teachers. What we do with English in our classrooms day by day makes all the difference.

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