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ABSTRACT

Originating from a study group at the Dartmouth Seminar entitled "How Does a Child Learn English?" these four papers agree that all psychologically normal children come to school already highly proficient in operating a wide range of language structure. The first paper synthesizes some theories regarding language acquisition and discusses the role of the teacher in fostering the child's growth in language. The second paper concerns itself with the role of reading, especially in the secondary school curriculum where it is urged that all language activities be seen as reinforcing each other. The third paper voices a concern for the misunderstanding of language observed in the educational process and suggests that the vicious circle can only be broken by introducing into initial and inservice teacher training a strong component of corpus-based linguistic study of a fundamental kind. The fourth paper discusses the role of the school in building upon the preschool language experience of children. (HOD)

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STUDY GROUP PAPER NO. 4

How Does a Child Learn English?

by

Miriam E. Wilt

The process of the human child's internalization of his language during his early childhood years is one of the marvels of this complex and wonderful world. Most children when they arrive at school come with a built-in set of phonological and grammatical rules; lexicography of concepts and their labels; and the physical dexterity to manipulate the speech-making mechanisms and to understand the speech of other people. While the mode of the above may vary from the school norm, this is probably a cultural difference rather than an intellectual one. Whether the child is a "dis and dat" child or an "it is I" child, he is reflecting the labels, the word order, and the rhythmic intonational patterns of his social milieu.

How the child learned what he knows has been researched by reputable scholars.^{1,2,3,4} An attempt will be made here to synthesize some theories that seem reasonable. The argument as to what constitutes the first word spoken seems academic to the writer. The first babblings of the infant are indiscriminate and random. In the process of experimenting he eventually

1. John B. Carroll, "Language Development in Children," Psycholinguistics, Sol Saporta, ed. (New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1961.) pp. 331-345.

2. Wick Miller and Susan Erwin, "The Development of Grammar in Child Language," Monographs of the Society for Research in Child Development. (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1964.)

3. Jean Piaget, The Language and Thought of the Child. (New York: Harcourt, Brace, & World, Inc. 1926.)

4. L.S. Vygotsky, Thought and Language, ed. and trans. by Eugenia Hanfmann and Gertrude Vakar. (Cambridge, Mass.: Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 1962.)

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finds himself combining phonemes into morphemes. The production of non-English sounds is gradually abandoned as he more and more mimics the models he hears. While increased muscular control of the speech producing organs is the norm for most youngsters, many environmental as well as intellectual factors may determine the rate of development.

The point at which the child first conveys a message, telegraphic⁵ as it may be, seems the logical starting point. In the very beginning he is naming, finding speech symbols for the realia of his life and trying those labels out on his tongue and his ear. Sometime before his second birthday, as a rule, a child begins forming primitive sentences of two or more words. These combinations are ordinarily ellipses of longer constructions from which he has abstracted the main idea or stressed utterance segments that carry the information. To expand the message the adult often adds the function words and inflectional affixes and reflects it back to the child. Apparently a collection of heard models, the corpus,⁶ becomes the source of grammatical generalizations that permit him to generate sentences of his own, sentences that he has never heard. In the observations of language development of children, word order is usually maintained despite the telegraphic or abstracted form. Inflectional rules, rather trivial in English, are observed in models and applied in making certain logical conclusions for composing new sentences. These utterances often will be more logical than that which

5. Miller, op.cit.

6. Roger Brown and Colin Fraser, "The Acquisition of Syntax," Monographs of the Society for Research in Child Development, vol. 29, no. 1 (1964), 43-79.

is considered by many teachers to be "correct." The conclusion that children are generating their own sentences rather than mimicking only those that they have heard has been hypothesized from the mistakes which they make (mouses for mice) which they would never have heard in their environments.

From Chomsky:⁷

In general, it is a mistake to assume that--past the very earliest stages--much of what the child acquires is acquired by imitation. This could not be true on the level of sentence formation, since most of what the child hears is new and most of what he produces, past the very early stages, is new.

All the basic structures used by adults to generate their sentences have been found in the grammar of nursery school groups. The syntactical classification of words and their privileges seems to be absorbed with the culture itself. Children can and do put the right words together in the right order.

One of the greatest intellectual achievements ever made by human beings is the mastery of the complex systems through which communication occurs.

These systems, according to Henry Lee Smith:⁸

are thoroughly learned and internalized by all physiologically normal human beings in all cultures at about five and a half years of age! . . . the important fact is that about 98 per cent of all our species are in full control of the structure of their group's communication systems at about the same age.

7. Noam Chomsky, "Formal Discussion," Monographs of the Society for Research in Child Development, vol. 29, no. 1 (1964), 35-40.

8. Henry Lee Smith, Jr., "Linguistic Science and the Teaching of English," in Inglis Lecture, 1954. (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1956.), pp. 8-9

Before proceeding to the next question, perhaps a word might be said about the size of children's vocabularies and conceptualizations. Both of these elements are limited or fostered by the environmental conditions. In experience, experimentation, and inductive thinking the school begins where the home leaves off. Thus, children at almost every level of competency and performance in language input and output will find their way into the schools.

From the highways and byways, city, hamlet, and village five and six year olds come rapping at the school house doors. Gone are the days when the cozy little group of first graders all spoke the same language--and that language the same one the local teacher knew and understood. Those few children who deviated were quickly fitted into the prevailing mode as education went merrily on its way. A first grade today may include a child from almost any country, state, region, rural or urban slum, professional or blue collar home.

With the passing of an era, the problem of dialectalism has become acute. Urban schools as well as suburban and rural ones are feeling the effects of the ever greater mobility of people. The almost untouched Pennsylvania Dutch English is being adulterated by commuters moving into areas which were at one time closed societies. The impact of one on the other makes it imperative that both teachers and pupils respect the differences and grow together in appropriate language behavior.

How much teachers need to know is an open question, but certainly whatever the amount, it is more than they now know. While debatable just how much of the history of the development of English as a language should

be known, certainly a modest amount is helpful in becoming aware of how the child learns his language. The structures and patterning of the phonemic, morphemic, and syntactical systems give clues to just what it is that the child is attempting and where he fits into the schematic sequence of thought and speech production. The grammars of English must be understood, as well as the absurdities of the Latinate grammar as the sole arbiter of English teaching and learning. Perhaps of greatest importance is a thorough understanding of dialectology and the work of the Linguistic Atlas compilers.

A scholarly discipline with many and varied protagonists notwithstanding, some awareness is crucial for a teacher of English at any level, and in any sense of the true meaning of teaching children to read, write, speak and understand the prestige language of the school, Standard English.

One of the most intimate possessions of a person is his dialect. Teachers must keep reminding themselves and their neighbors that Standard English has many varieties, all good; that even substandard English is not bad, only inappropriate in certain situations. He must not confuse social and regional differences, nor make the children he teaches self-conscious about the fact that they and their family and friends naturally use a nonstandard dialect. The identification of the child with his community and his relationship to it must be protected. In schools where substandard English is widespread, the advisability of teaching standard English as a second dialect by methods used in teaching a second language seems worth considering.⁹

9. Cf. Raven I. McDavid, Jr., "Social Dialects: Cause or Symptom of Social Maladjustments," Social Dialects and Language Learning. (Champaign, Illinois: NCTE, 1965.), p.7.

As children experience together and individually in the schools, investigate, experiment, listen to language in stories and poetry, opportunity must be provided for talking about these activities and listening to each other on their own terms and in their own ways. To throttle their language at this level by correction and disdain is unwise at best, and possibly even inhuman, because it well may atrophy the only channel through which these children can be reached or can maintain their contact with the school. The teacher who listens and tries to understand without impatience or concern is probably the teacher who will be able to aid them on their way to literacy.

The child has vocabulary; he has experiences; he has grammar, and he has his culture. Surely these are worth valuing and preserving. Surely these are worth using as a lever to broader, deeper and richer goals. But more important, perhaps, than the school using what the child brings may be the effect upon the child's self-image of the school's use of what he brings. Dignity and self-respect accompany acceptance of him as he is. Proud of his heritage, he can begin to raise his sights so that his goal will always be just beyond his grasp. On the other hand, if everything he knows is wrong and everything he does is bad, he is apt to close his shell like an oyster and silently drift away to stand against the world of the school rather than with and of it.

In our society, not only the children of the poor need the opportunities discussed above. Each in his own way is asking to be accepted, liked, taught and encouraged to become something more than he is today. Children will find many ways to tell their stories--what the child can draw or paint

he knows. What he can show in body movement, he knows--let him tell where he is in this mainstream of life and learning. Listen to the songs he sings, the tunes he hums. The clay objects he models give him another dimension for communicating to you the vast conceptual advancement he has made. The school's role is to pick up where he is and go on from there. Teaching another language or a new set of symbols may turn out to be a very simple thing once communication has been established.

Hard and soft ware available to aid in teaching today are almost unlimited. From computers to closed channel television, technology has provided more equipment than education is ready or able to use. Even choosing among easily available aids is a difficult problem. Courses of study are being prepared by regional curriculum centers, new methods are being tried out on a national, even international scale. New textual materials are being rushed to the presses, and every mail brings advertisements about more of everything. Programmed materials are accessible for everything from beginning reading to adult creative writing. Team teaching, individualized instruction, and giant lecture halls for mass instruction vie with each other for a place in the sun. Out of all this, teachers must find techniques and equipment that will match each child's, each group's needs in the most effective manner.

The teacher's place, however, is not being challenged. In spite of all the above there probably will never again be enough teachers for all the teaching that needs to be done. The teacher's role in the classroom is changing and his functions will certainly be different in the not too distant future.

The key to learning in the classroom is still the teacher. Study after study reveals that no matter what methods and materials are used, the teacher is still the major factor in classroom instruction and probably always will be. Fortified with knowledge about language, the teacher with patience and compassion will find ways to make every child sensitively aware of himself as a worthwhile human being.

In the beginning children's confidence must be courted. A new and often threatening world unfolds much too rapidly. In some instances the child for the first time must share his adults. For others the unfamiliar adult world of which they have never really been a part begins to encroach upon their consciousness. New demands are made, new routines imposed, new symbols introduced. For some children the transition is relatively easy, but for others the changes are traumatic. For all, the need to relate the school experiences to what happens outside the school is primary.

There will be talkers and listeners, and those that do neither. There will be those that are eager or reticent, shy or bold. To mold these individuals into a social group is only part of the responsibility of the school. To see that each one learns what he needs to learn, what he is ready to learn, what he can learn is the role of the school and the function of his teachers.

"How?" one may ask, "How?" Each child brings something with him, something he could tell about, if he had the words or some other media. He may lack the courage because nobody has ever listened to him before, or he may have the courage but not the skill. But patience and careful nurturing will

eventually release a flood of language that is often surprisingly picturesque and effective. This language is listened to and reflected back, sometimes in expanded utterances that give the child models including the function words and inflectional affixes.

As each child listens to poetry and stories, more models are added to his corpus. Earphone sets with attachments for tape recorders and record players provide other means of ear bombardment.

As children move from first hand experiences into vicarious ones with films, slides and film strips they are learning the names of the letters of the alphabet, learning to associate sounds they hear with the names they know. This beginning phonology should grow out of their own discussions and should be not just a game, but an intellectual exercise. It seems conceivable that as they compose and dictate copy, morphemes regularly patterned can become the stepping stone to such exercises as suggested by Bloomfield,¹⁰ Fries,¹¹ Smith¹² and others. Thus "say and see" becomes the source of carefully chosen phonemic regulars. Apart from but inherently related to their own utterances they will be gaining skills that will eventually give them independence in word identification.

10. Leonard Bloomfield and Clarence L. Barnhart, Let's Read. (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1961.).

11. Charles C. Fries, Linguistics and Reading. (New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, Inc., 1964).

12. Henry Lee Smith, Jr., op.cit.

At the same time there is the possibility that for those children whose language deviates so far from the norm of the school that special attention must be paid to closing the gap, teaching Standard English as a second language or dialect might be the answer. At least what has been learned in developing English For Today¹³ should be carefully considered as a methodology.

A day rich in real experiences, poetry, music, stories, art activities, dramatics, and a generous amount of talking things over can spark content for all sorts of language development lessons. Encoding and decoding, first in speech and then in reading and writing, go on throughout the day. As knowledge is conceptualized through experience, labels are attached, sentence generating is encouraged, and children begin to recognize language as a useful tool. They see their own utterances encoded and appearing finally as graphic symbols.

When children have some independence in word identification and spelling out their messages, programed materials, basal readers, workbooks, and computerized instruction can be used to strengthen their independence. Much language learning must be individualized in terms of special needs. As performance in language approaches competence, hopefully the child learns to appreciate variety and sense the demand for appropriate conformity.

Language is power.
Used wisely it builds.
Misused it destroys.

13. William Slager and others, English For Today, 5 vols. (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1962-66).

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How Children Learn English - I

Both in the group and in the Seminar in general there appears to be ready agreement that all psychologically normal children come to school already highly proficient in operating a wide range of language structures. Moreover since the language of the preschool child has been closely studied we can say, for once, that research confirms, possibly even initiated, this point of view.

Two questions arise immediately:

- 1) How should the teacher build on this achievement?
- 2) Recognizing the scope of this achievement, what do we see as its limitations?

To pick up question 1, we need to accept the child's own language, but this is not a solely linguistic question, since it is only part of a total acceptance of the child and his way of life. (This is easily asserted as a pious principle but in practice raises enormous difficulties for many teachers.) It is only on the basis of the confidence built up in a child in this way that he is ready to be actively hospitable to the new language experiences that the school can offer.

To pick up question 2, Bernstein's ideas about restricted and elaborated codes suggest one kind of limitation. But all children need to extend their use of language to handle new ranges of experiences.

What the child has learned already he has learned under the pressure of the necessities and pleasure of daily living. If school is to continue the processes already started, it must stir the same kind of pressure and kindle

the same excitements. As in the preschool years, the context must remain meaningful, an area of personal concern and exploration.

All this probably seems innocuous enough but it implies a radical change in the role of the teacher, not an abdication of responsibility but a change in its nature. The teacher, too, has to be hospitable to new experiences. The wisdom-dispensing authority must become an active participant working alongside the children, sharing their concerns and learning from them.

The Seminar has on several occasions turned its attention to the ideas that language is one of the principal means by which we shape and order experiences. It arises from situation and context.* Changing the situation in which language arises is of crucial importance. The teacher needs to focus attention on two aspects of these situations:

1. The structured occasions when language is used.
2. The relationships within the group using language.

Is enough known about the functioning of groups?

The study of group dynamics has been too much separated from language study. Now that they are beginning to be brought together, some of the questions we should like to see investigated are:

- 1) How does children's language change in changing group situations?
e.g., problem solving as against gossiping?
- 2) What difference does the presence of the teacher make?
- 3) How far does size of group affect the style of utterance?

*Context is used here in contrast to the term context, which refers to
bal setting.

- 4) What kind of language emerges from the carrying out of a common task, self-initiated as against teacher-initiated?

Learning to Read

Can the "artificial" process of teaching children to read be grafted on to the natural uses of language we have considered above?

(Note: See Barbara Strang's suggestion of the potential dangers inherent in the usual methods of teaching reading)

Firstly, we see particular advantages in the first material being the children's own language, dictated to and transcribed by the teacher.

(Yes, including dialects and "deviations.")

Secondly, the told story can be made the link between the spoken and written language.

Thirdly, learning to read and write leaves a child alone with language in a way which differs from his previous experience. This should not be made a sudden transition. These new activities should be preceded, accompanied and followed by talk.

Fourthly, the rewards of reading must, as soon as possible, be made the same as, or at least akin to the rewards of other uses of language. What is being read must arouse curiosity and not merely be an adult approved activity. (See Teacher and Spinster by S. Ashton Warner.)

Much of our early reading material is doctored or concocted English which in its unreality bears a resemblance to the exercises and drills which are put before the pupils throughout their school lives. Thus what is intended to encourage children to extend and enrich their language achieves the

opposite effect through this devitalising tradition. Of course, there will normally be a gap between the child's own language and that which he meets in reading, but the reading must be of such a kind that it supplies sufficient powerful reward for making the attempt.

The broad principles we have sketched out would apply at any stage in education (e.g., accepting the students' language, language related to context etc.) The student's ability to express in language his view of experience makes him ready to widen this view and receive and use the language appropriate to it. At this point we should note that the limitations of time and our sense of the difficulty of the problem obliged us to concentrate for the most part on the younger child. We are, therefore, only able to make the briefest comments on the secondary stage.

It is clear that the bulk of research on how children learn language has concentrated on the youngest children. We were unanimous in our demand that much more research needs to take place, especially into the secondary stage.

The secondary teacher of English needs to see himself as (among other things) a teacher of reading (even in, for example, literature lessons) and to be aware of the development sequence which controls his pupil's growth in reading. More specifically we need to pay attention to:

- 1) the role of "readiness" in easing the pupils transition to the later stages of the reading sequence.
- 2) the fact that a large part of almost every pupil's vocabulary is learned from reading, even though such learning commonly works

and reinforces learning which arises from the spoken language. (The "vocabulary lessons" which are still widespread seem to derive from a different and wholly erroneous assumption.)

- 3) The fact that it is to a large extent the child's reading that provides him with operational control over the structures and forms of standard written English.

It is in the secondary school above all where the explicit study of language becomes urgent. The only aspect with which we are concerned in this group is the question, "Does the study of language help us to use it more effectively?" Inevitably there is some difference of opinion but we can clarify the question itself. The study of language should raise to the level of consciousness what is already in operational use or subject to direct observation. If there is any feedback into use, is this direct or oblique? Must the study be confined to grammar? Must the pupil be expected to develop a highly systematized understanding?

The chopping up of the secondary school curriculum into separate subjects means that the student's learning of language has been thought of as a responsibility to be allotted to the English teacher and it has been assumed that others can wash their hands of it. It is the total language experience of the child with which we must be concerned. Right across the curriculum all language activities should be seen as reinforcing each other. Moreover it should be remembered that the child's dealings with language within the classroom form only a small part of his total language experience.

How Children Learn English - II

(I speak merely from subjective impression; I can't give conclusions, but I am concerned to point to a field needing, as I think, investigation.)

I take it as a general assumption that the child begins school with a repertoire of interest, delight in exploration and learning; and that components of this repertoire which are not developed and used in the child's education tend to die--and, like other dead material, not to vanish, but to degenerate into something nasty.

I apply this general assumption to the study of English language, which for our (U.S., U.K., Canada) purposes is the natural way into an understanding of language. That is, the child brings to school an interest, curiosity, delight, bearing upon English sounds, word-formation, certain aspects of grammar. He also has, at the appropriate level, a comparable feeling for comparative linguistics--not only experience of, but reasons to, varieties of his own language and their domains, and in many cases also experience of, and response to, differences between languages.

If we look at the output of the educational process, we find these interests still there, but, by and large, in corrupt and sometimes offensive forms. I refer for support to the correspondence columns of the British daily and weekly press; I cannot say how the American position compares.

In general, then, I seem to observe a process of degeneration arising from neglect, and I want teachers to be in a position to do something about this. But in one area the picture is different. I do not have the impression that the child arrives in school with a conscious model of language, or

a conscious interest in models, though it is well-known that he has in operation a general model. It is precisely in this area that the teacher is compelled by the necessity of teaching reading and writing. The model, by and large, implicit in written language, and therefore conveyed by the teaching of it, is that language is essentially a matter of yes-no questions, and not a matter of more-less, partly-partly, questions. Something in writing is, or is not, a sentence, a word, a right spelling, etc. The teaching of reading and writing is necessarily a prominent component of elementary education, and the weakness is that it is not accompanied by any, or by a sufficiently prominent, component of attention to the different model appropriate for speech. Central here is Randolph Quirk's conception of serial relationship ('Language,' 1965). That a child has an implicit grasp of serial relationship in language is shown by some of his mistakes (as well as his successes) in generating structures. He operates familiarly with the notion that a may be like b in respect of property x, but like c in respect of property y. But this knowledge is not (I suppose) normally conscious, and nothing is (usually) done to make it conscious. Indeed, (in England) the teacher is usually herself a person who has only the writing-dominated yes-no kind of model.

This vicious circle can only be broken by introducing into initial and inservice teacher training a strong component of corpus-based linguistic study of a fundamental, not merely career-oriented, kind. I do not mean to suggest that the trainee should be allowed to think that corpus-analysis is enough; he must also understand the limitations of this kind of work. But

it is work with texts that most vividly brings to attention the non-yes-or-no character of so much in language. When we have teachers trained in this way, they will work out for themselves how best to use their knowledge so as to avoid producing the kind of inadequate linguistic model now current amongst educated people. I do not think we can do that stage of the work for them.

How Children Learn English - III

Perhaps if we better understood the meaning of our question we could more easily come in a meeting of minds. Let me, therefore, restate the major question and the supporting questions.

4. How does a child learn English?
 - a. What aspects of native language learning are often overlooked in considering the role of the school?
 - b. How can the school build upon pre-school language experience of children?

The discussions, researchers, lecturers and readings lead us to believe that the child comes to school knowing the syntax of some English dialect. He has control of its structure in terms of his maturity and experiences. Vocabulary may be limited as well as the manipulation of its component parts. But he has internalized English phonemic-morphemic fusion and many of the processes that occur as tense, number and degree change in his sentence producing efforts. Assuming that the teacher has a grasp of the nature of language and language learning, of dialectal differences, and a positive attitude about accepting children's stage of development we can proceed to question 4b.

Let us now quickly look at the beginnings of English Education in the schools. First, we believe that everything that will ever happen to improve control of planting the seeds for later skill in reading, literary criticism, poetry appreciation, drama, composition, rhetoric etc. Perhaps the first mechanical approaches to handwriting, word identification, spelling, situation could be much more quickly achieved than has been apparent up

until now--but whether these mechanics can be speeded up or not, they are purely means to ends and as such should not occupy the whole time of the teacher of young children.

Most children in our elementary schools and the Great Britain primary schools arrive at the school house door sometime between the age of five and seven. In some schools they come on their birthdays, in others, children having had or who are going to have fifth or sixth birthdays come on a certain day. For many children this is their first school experience. What happens in those four to six hours of the school day? How do they learn English?

The teacher, fortified by training and experience in teaching, by knowledge of how children learn and an awareness of language and its primary importance in a child's feeling of worth, will with patience and compassion set the stage at levels that children can handle.

The children will be encouraged to talk about themselves, their families, their friends, their toys, the things they see, hear, taste, smell and touch. They will be helped to express how they feel and possibly why. The teacher will plan experiences that will enrich their cognitive development in science, human relationships, mathematical concepts etc. In a rich verbal atmosphere they will be encouraged to speak and listen to themselves, to each other, to the teachers and to other humans in their school living space. There will be dramatic play, painting, singing, dancing--all ways planned for helping them internalize what they know and to formulate questions concerning the things they wonder about.

From the very beginning literature (poetry, fantasy, realistic stories) will be a regular part of the school program. The day Christopher Robin goes off to school is a day just like the one they are having. They explore literature that is real or imaginary, they identify with the characters, they listen to the music and rhythm of language. Geared to their maturity, subject to their preferences, they enter the world of the printed work via the teacher's voice and skill.

But that is not all they do. If not today then tomorrow children will see their own talk transcribed into graphic symbols. What shall we say in this note to mommy, so that she knows school is over early tomorrow? Who wants to dictate a story so that I can write it down? We write "Susan" this way with a large beginning letter. I'll put a dot called a period here to signal a stop.

Teaching the mechanics of English as well as the art of English is for today. Learning the names of the letters and the sounds they represent, learning to spell, to punctuate, to capitalize, appropriate usage and all the other conventions are subsidiary to having something to say and the need to say it. The teacher and the printed word combine to add to the child's corpus as a sentence, paragraph and composition maker. Day by day the child will recognize more and more words automatically, will use more variety in his expression, will find real life needs for a record of what he thinks, knows or wonders about, will accept the help of an insightful teacher who recognizes the need to know on the part of the child and does something about it. Gradually the child in some schools moves from his own speech into books written for him. In a rich oral language climate children are immedi-

ately taught reading in primers written for them.

As children hear and discuss poetry and prose, teachers are offering them hopefully the best models available. As they look at their own language patterns, they see their own spoken language.

The teacher in this school has taught English all day. From the standpoint of maturation, he diagnoses the current state of development and through a diagnostic approach puts the teaching at the spot where it does the most good, where the need is apparent.

During the first year they will have learned to read something, they will have been involved in writing expository, imaginative, descriptive and reportorial prose and poetry. They will have read and been read to and the whole experience will have been encapsulated in furthering a literacy of the spoken word, thoughtfully expressed and thoughtfully listened to.

In subsequent years teaching is likely to become more formalized, but the components will change very little. During the second and third years the child has better command of reading and writing skills. This may endanger the oral language program. It should not--it must not. Drawing from the total curriculum including the content of English there is much to talk about, write about. No one is likely to see subtle changes in the way drama is taught and executed, skills for the complete oracy cycle are taught and practiced, language is manipulated to get the required effect and the reasons and ways for writing something down are explored. Literary models are provided that satisfy the expanding proficiency of the child to use spoken and written language for his unique needs and purposes.

Coincidental with the above children are learning to spell more words, read more complicated works, expand their speaking vocabularies, perhaps learning something about the grammars of English and being sensitized to the escalating nature of our English language that it is never finished being learned and being taught.

Needless to say as the child approaches eleven much of the drill and practice on the mechanics of English can be relegated to its proper position. Hopefully the children who for development or academic reasons are at a lower level of performance than the norm would indicate, will get the help they need individually. The literature program largely "heard" until the child is nine or so now becomes the kernel of the reading program. Talking, discussing, reporting, exhorting, persuading lend themselves well to self evaluation on the part of the learner and teaching on the part of the teacher. Formal lessons still may not be advisable but the rhetoric of English is here as it was earlier implicit in the school experiences.

This writing, reading, speaking, listening program or perhaps better language, literature and composition English program does not just happen. It is carefully planned and sequentialized. The choices the teacher makes spring from the needs of the children and are inherent in our educational systems. Tests can measure only a small part of growth and development in language but evaluation of the totality of teaching and learning is an on-going process. The teacher of English to boys and girls from five to twelve plans carefully, teaches steadily and constantly, and evaluates in terms of the children's needs and society's demands.